

The Southern African Tuberculosis and Health Systems Support (SATBHSS) project achievements

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Background

The African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) regional Implementation Completion Report (ICR) provides a comprehensive evaluation of the Southern African Tuberculosis and Health Systems Support (SATBHSS) project, covering all aspects in the main ICR, which will be published in a special issue of *Occupational Health Southern Africa* in August this year. This summary highlights key achievements, challenges, and lessons from the project.

The SATBHSS project supported innovative and progressive interventions over the seven years of implementation across Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia. Regional leadership was provided by the AUDA-NEPAD and the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC), with the AUDA-NEPAD taking leadership on occupational health and safety (OHS) interventions. The project development objectives (PDOs) were to i) improve coverage and quality of tuberculosis (TB) control and occupational lung disease services in targeted geographic areas of the participating countries, ii) strengthen regional capacity to manage the burden of TB and occupational diseases, and iii) strengthen country-level and cross-border preparedness and responses to disease outbreaks (this PDO was added during the 2020 financing meeting). The PDO was technically sound and highly relevant for the project.

Achievements

Several achievements have been registered across the region, challenges have been documented, and lessons have been learned during the implementation of the project. Summaries are presented in the report from the huge amount of data generated. The voices of the countries and partners highlight the achievements made towards ending TB and occupational lung diseases, using regional and country approaches.

The project has strongly and successfully supported countries with regard to reviews of OHS legislation/regulations, and human capacity development to bring issues of OHS to the top of public health intervention agendas in the region. The SATBHSS project has improved occupational and public health systems in project countries. Improvements include equipment, infrastructure, policies, and skills, such as the constructed and renovated OHS clinics in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia; procurement of GeneXpert machines, digital X-ray machines, occupational health and hygiene sampling equipment, and occupational hygiene and microbiology analysis equipment; the Centre of Excellence in Occupational Health and Safety (CoE-OHS); the OHS baseline study; reviewed OHS policies; and capacity development of several government officials. The project has been a success in the four project countries and needs to be scaled up to include the entire continent. The few project achievements listed below, and Figures 1–4, provide more information.

Key project achievements

- Regional occupational health and hygiene monitoring equipment guidelines that list all OHS, environmental, and hygiene monitoring equipment were compiled.
- An OHS train-the-trainer manual was produced (a regional tailor-made training manual for government inspectors and other government officials).
- Use of the International Labour Organization International Classification of Radiographs of Pneumoconioses (ILO-ICRP) to aid in the training of occupational medical doctors and radiologists in the correct diagnosis of occupational lung diseases such as silicosis, TB, etc. was implemented.
- Under the project's technical support, one OHS Act was passed in Lesotho, and one Mines and Minerals Act in Malawi was reviewed and passed into law, with a notable inclusion of artisanal small-scale mining.



Figure 1. Solwezi Occupational Health Services Centre (OHSC), Zambia
 Photograph: Norman Khoza



Figure 2. OHS and TB mobile truck, Zambia
 Photograph: Norman Khoza



Figure 3. Children's Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB) Centre of Excellence in Matola, Mozambique

Photograph: Norman Khoza

- COVID-19 regional interventions led to the publication of six workplace-specific guidelines, which were widely used by member states to develop their own national guidelines.
- Local and regional training in OHS was provided for occupational health nurses, medical doctors, hygienists, and health and safety inspectors.
- Several occupational health and safety laws, regulations, guidelines, and standard operating procedures have been developed and reviewed, and are waiting for in-country approval processes so that they can be passed into law.

Challenges

Like all projects, the SATBHSS project had challenges that impeded implementation, including i) procurement-related difficulties that resulted in delays in completion of civil works and equipment installation; ii) inefficiencies in government procedures in some countries, which resulted in delays in staff recruitment, release of funds, and legislative approvals; iii) inadequate sustainability plans and underfunding of national programmes; and iv) exogenous factors (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic, cyclones, and disease outbreaks).

Lessons and recommendations

The SATBHSS project has been instrumental in ensuring that learning can be applied to future regional health projects. Countries adopting and finalising the remaining OHS country legislations



Figure 4. Occupational noise sound booth, Ressano Garcia OHSC, Mozambique

Photograph: Norman Khoza

and policies will accelerate institutionalisation and financing of OHS interventions. Continuous mentorship is needed to provide technical support in OHS implementation and management. Countries need to develop means of funding the maintenance of equipment. Drafting and reviewing of occupational health and safety policies, laws, regulations, and guidelines need to continue to sustain OHS interventions. There is also a need for continuous collaborations between the African Union, the AUDA-NEPAD, member states, and development partners to sustain the project interventions.

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