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Strengthening Institutional Capacity for Improved TB Diagnostics Laboratory Services in the Kyrgyz Republic

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Background

The Kyrgyz Republic is among the 30 countries with the highest rates of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). According to the WHO 2020 Global TB Report, the estimated MDR-TB rates for new and retreatment cases are 29 percent and 60 percent, respectively.

Laboratory diagnostics play a crucial role in stopping the TB epidemic, supporting effective treatment options, and ultimately reducing TB morbidity and mortality in the country.

However, the **Kyrgyz Republic faces several challenges that hinder TB case detection and addressing the root causes of MDR-TB**.

USAID's Cure Tuberculosis Project, led by JSI in partnership with US Pharmacopeia (USP), is providing support to **strengthen the capacity of TB laboratory networks in the Kyrgyz Republic to meet national TB reduction targets**. In 2021, the project conducted a situational analysis, which included quantitative lab assessments and qualitative interviews with 60 national, regional, and district level TB stakeholders to improve the country's ability to diagnose, treat, and cure people with MDR-TB.

Design Method

Cure Tuberculosis conducted a **situational analysis** using diverse methods, including document reviews, key informant interviews with stakeholders, as well as JSI ATLAS survey and GLI SLIPTA assessment tools to collect both qualitative and quantitative data.

- **37 facilities** with **34 TB laboratories** from each level (district, regional, PHC) performing various types of diagnostic tests (microscopy, GeneXpert, etc.) were selected for the analysis.
- **24 key stakeholders** involved in TB program management were interviewed.
- **7 key components** of the national TB laboratory network were assessed:
  - Organization
  - Policies
  - Forecasting and procurements
  - Funding
  - Storage and distribution
  - Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
  - Supervisory visits

Results

The situational analysis found:

- **Budgeting.** Gaps in line-item costing that prevent the government from fully funding a sustainable TB program.
- **Funding.** More than 60% of key informant interviews at facility level indicated lack of proper and appropriate funding methods as underlying challenges within the TB network.
- **Procurement.** Provision of quality-assured reagents for TB diagnostic laboratories is at risk, given that current national public procurement policies limit the procurement of health products from the international market.
- **Donor Reliance.** Significant dependence on international donors (Global Fund) for material and technical support (including laboratory devices and equipment maintenance) of TB laboratories and samples transportation.

Conclusions

As the Kyrgyz Republic continues to graduate from donor funding to state financing of TB laboratory services, in order to sustain improvements in the fight against TB, the National TB Program **must better identify specific line-item costs** to ensure budgetary requests are sufficiently funded.

Moving forward, a study should be conducted to **identify the actual costs involved in financing TB laboratories**. Based on this study, the government should include a budget line item for financing TB laboratories activities, including annual preventive and post-warranty maintenance of laboratory devices and equipment.

The **Ministry of Health recently developed an updated National TB Strategy (Tuberculosis – VI 2022-2026)**, which presents an opportunity to incorporate the results from the situational analysis to effectively meet future operational needs.

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