



24 March 2024, Mogadishu, Somalia – WHO Somalia, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services, marks World Tuberculosis Day 2024 with a renewed commitment to end the tuberculosis (TB) epidemic. Under the theme “Yes! We can end TB!”, WHO aims to inspire hope and promote high-level leadership, increased investments, faster uptake of new WHO recommendations and innovations, and multisectoral collaboration to combat TB.

“Somalia’s TB programme has weathered recurring climatic shocks, insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic to show an 87% treatment success rate, 14% decrease in TB incidence, and increase in TB treatment centres from a mere 7 to 109 in the past 2 decades,” said Mr Mohamed Jafar, National TB Programme Manager, Federal Ministry of Health and Human Services. “Even though we are making progress, we still need more support to sustain the gains made over the years, especially in the form of molecular testing machines and outreach activities, as both are critical for case detection.”

TB is a major public health problem in Somalia. Despite the country’s fragility, Somalia’s TB programme has made significant progress since it was re-established in 1995 following its collapse early in the civil war. TB incidence has reduced from 286 cases per 100 000 population in 2010 to 246 cases per 100 000 population in 2023 – a 14% decrease over 14 years.

The number of TB treatment centres in Somalia grew from just 7 centres in 1995 to 109 centres in 2023. TB cases enrolled on treatment have also gradually increased in number, from 10 469 cases per year in 2010 to 18 604 cases per year in 2023. Overall, during this period, the programme enrolled a total of 211 554 TB cases on treatment. The programme successfully saved the lives of 184 052 TB cases from 2010 to 2023 – giving an average treatment success rate of 87%.

WHO Somalia helped the Ministry of Health to establish Somalia's first treatment centre for drug-resistant TB in 2013 and there are now 11 such centres, which together cover the whole country. Since 2015, a total of 2021 drug-resistant TB cases have been enrolled for treatment. Nearly 1456 of these cases were successfully treated (average treatment success rate of 72%).

Status of TB treatment in Somalia

Management of Somalia's TB programme is based on WHO's End TB Strategy, which involves adopting all its diagnostic and treatment regimens. The programme has deployed 100 molecular testing machines, 10 of which are coloured modules for rapid diagnosis of tuberculosis, including cases resistant to second-line TB drugs.

Introduction of this module is proving to be a game-changer in the diagnosis of drug-resistant TB in Somalia. Multidrug resistance can now be diagnosed in the country's peripheral TB centres instead of solely at its TB culture laboratories. It has three TB culture laboratories capable of diagnosing TB drug resistance to second line TB drugs.

The TB programme is slowly but surely integrating into the country's emerging primary health care system and private sector. Currently, nearly 50% of the TB centres are fully integrated with primary health care. Also, 7 private hospitals are implementing National TB programme policies to manage TB cases, including reporting quarterly to the TB programme.

Referral mechanisms are also in place to connect other private health providers to the National TB programme. In addition, community involvement in the programme is a key priority, not least because community health workers play an active role in identification and referral of potential TB cases. They also promote treatment adherence and advocacy in the community.

Dr Sindani Ireneaus Sebit, WHO's focal person for Somalia's TB programme, said: "As a major partner to the National TB programme, WHO continues to provide essential technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and plays a vital role in TB drug management to ensure that TB drugs are available to patients at their convenience, with no chance of stock-outs." He added: "As we celebrate World TB Day, let us remember that with the effective coordination created in country among various partners and by exploring further resources, **'Yes! We can end TB!'** in Somalia."

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<https://www.emro.who.int/somalia/news/world-tb-day-2022-getting-back-on-track-to-diagnose-and-report-tb-cases-to-save-lives.html>

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