



EVENT REPORT



June 20, 2024
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



EVENT OVERVIEW

Based at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters, the Special Program for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) stands as a beacon of scientific collaboration on the global health stage. Established in 1974, TDR has been instrumental in addressing diseases of poverty, improving health outcomes, and bolstering research capacity worldwide.

TDR has been a steadfast partner in Ethiopia. It supports research programs, facilitates collaboration, and builds capacity within Ethiopian academic and research institutions. As we celebrate AHRI's long-standing partnership with TDR during its 50th anniversary, we recognize the pivotal role of major initiatives. These initiatives, supported by TDR, have contributed significantly to advancing health research, improving patient care, and fostering innovation.

On June 20, 2024, the global health community gathered at Elgel Hotel in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to celebrate a momentous occasion—the 50th anniversary of TDR. This milestone marks five decades of TDR's unwavering commitment to advancing health research, fostering collaboration, and driving innovations to combat diseases of poverty.

The event brought together the TDR community members from TDR Africa node representatives, TDR Ethiopia node members, past and present TDR fellows, grantees, trainees, guests from partner organizations and other researchers from AHRI.

The one-day event included engaging presentations, discussions, and networking opportunities. Distinguished speakers shared insights on TDR's impact, research achievements, and collaborations. The event provided a platform for reflection, celebration, and renewed commitment to advancing global health.

Attendees: 76

- o TDR GEN Ethiopia node members,
- o Representative from the TDR African node
- o Guests from partner organizations
- o AHRI community



OPENING REMARKS

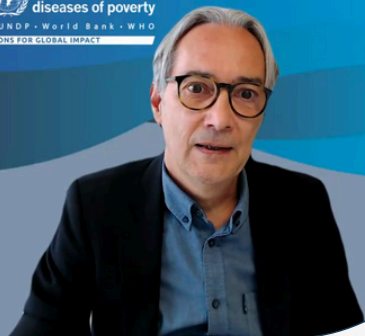
**Prof. Afework Kassu,
Director General of AHRI**

Prof. Afework Kassu commenced his opening address by introducing TDR (Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases) and inviting the audience to recognize and celebrate its 50 years of contributions to global health. He emphasized TDR's significant impact on Africa and Ethiopia, combating neglected diseases and fostering institutional and human resource capabilities over the years. He noted the collaboration between Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions, Research Institutions (including AHRI and EPHI), and TDR has played a pivotal role in addressing diseases affecting vulnerable populations. This partnership facilitated knowledge exchange, expertise sharing, and capacity building for research and development. Together, they focused on neglected diseases, elevating them to global health priorities and ensuring that research outcomes benefit those in need.

Prof. Afework highlighted TDR's efforts to enhance research capacity in Ethiopia and Africa, particularly through collaboration with the Armauer Hansen Research Institute (AHRI). This collaboration strengthened academic and research institutions, providing valuable insights and impactful healthcare practices. Notably, TDR's support, alongside AHRI's involvement, resulted in resources such as the malaria case management guide, childhood illness guidelines, biorepositories, and validation of a new TB diagnostic tool. He said that the AHRI-TDR collaboration positively influenced professional development and institutional visibility. Noteworthy achievements include establishing the Tuberculosis Research Advisory Council (TRAC) in 2001. Learning from TRAC's impact, TDR supported the creation of the Southern and Eastern African TB Research Network (SERN TB) in 2023. Additionally, TDR contributed to strengthening health and biomedical research ethics through initiatives like the Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) and the Ethiopian Bioethics Initiative (ETBIN), both based at AHRI. The development and launch of the "Health Research Mentorship Guide for Low- and Middle-Income Countries" further exemplify Ethiopia's contributions.

Prof. Afework also highlighted historical leadership connections. Dr. Tore Godal, who led AHRI from 1970 to 1973, later served as TDR's second Director General from 1986 to 1998. During challenging times for AHRI in the early 2000s, TDR provided support through Dr. Howard Engers, who led AHRI as its Scientific Director from 2002 to 2008. Notably, Dr. Abraham Aseffa, an African Science Giant with over two decades of service at AHRI, now serves as Unit Head of Research for Implementation, at TDR in Geneva.

He concluded, that the five decades of collaboration between Africa, Ethiopia, and TDR exemplify what can be achieved when institutions unite for a common cause. It is a story of shared vision, mutual respect, and collective action toward a healthier future for all.



Video Message by Dr. Jhon Reeder, Director of TDR)

The event was opened with a video message from Dr. Jhon Reeder Director of TDR. During his address, he noted that TDR has a long-standing partnership with AHRI evidenced by Dr. Torre Godal who served as director of AHRI from 1970 - 1973 and later became the second director of TDR, partly because of the important work he achieved in AHRI, and also until his retirement recently Dr. Abraham Asseffa who was a senior scientist at AHRI led implementation research unit at

TDR. Dr. Jhon also noted that TDR benefited enormously from the close relationship with Ethiopia, Dr. Reeder quoted Dr. Tedros Adhanom saying a crucial role at TDR shaped his career and he said that over the past 5 decades, the capacity-building efforts created a critical mass of the next generations of scientists who are now leading different research projects and institutions. He mentioned that with partners in Ethiopia TDR is now working toward global health challenges that require us to take down the barriers between academia and implementors.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

Experience from TDR Global African Node by Dr. Franklin N. Glozah

Dr. Franklin expressed his delight in joining this anniversary with the TDR global Ethiopian node representing the TDR global African node. He noted that the TDR African node was established in April 2019 and aims to establish a vibrant TDR Global community across Africa. The African node Prioritizes research mentorship as a core strategy for engagement and aims to Increase the number and engagement of TDR Global members across Africa, foster a collaborative network of researchers and mentors, and currently working towards having complete profiles on the TDR Global Discovery Platform.



**TDR Global Ethiopian node,
Dr. Alemseged Abdissa, Deputy Director General, AHRI**



- Dr. Alemseged initiated his presentation by showcasing photographs of TDR grantees, fellows, and trainees from Ethiopia. These images represented a diverse group of experts who launched their careers with support from TDR. TDR, as a global network of passionate scientists, provided a platform for these talents to give back and inspire others. Dr. Alemseged emphasized that TDR serves as a hub for multidisciplinary collaboration, knowledge sharing, and exposure—whether in laboratories or clinical settings.

- The TDR Ethiopia Node operates with four key objectives: Mentoring Early and Mid-Career Scientists: The node focuses on nurturing the next generation of researchers by providing mentorship and guidance. Attracting Research Funding and Strengthening Capacity: TDR's support extends beyond mentorship to include funding opportunities and capacity-building initiatives. Connecting Students to Global Learning Experiences: Through student mobility schemes, the node facilitates international exposure and learning-

opportunities. Coordinating Activities and Promoting Information Exchange: The node actively disseminates information and encourages collaboration among its members.

- Dr. Alemseged highlighted a significant achievement—the development of a practical guide for mentorship, made possible through collaboration with the Latin American Node and the U.S. Node (University of Carolina). This guide is now available and should be disseminated and implemented collectively. Sharing AHRI's experience, Dr. Alemseged revealed that monthly mentorship meetings inspire participants. Despite initial challenges in creating mentor-mentee matches, AHRI now boasts 13 successful pairings, each contributing to professional growth.

- In closing, Dr. Alemseged encouraged all TDR Global Ethiopian Node members to embrace mentorship within their institutions and update their TDR Global profiles.

The True Face of ‘Paying it Forward Culture’: Experiences of TDR/WHO and AHRI’s Collaboration in Ethiopia by Dr. Mirgissa Kaba

- This presentation comes from an exploratory study carried out to document TDR/WHO - AHRI collaboration during the last several decades (BMC Health Services Research (2023)<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-09767-z>)
- Dr. Mirgissa highlighted that the capacities created by collaboration with TDR at different levels influenced healthcare procedures with the introduction, testing, and branding of diagnostic tools and algorithms. He mentioned malaria case management, integrated management of childhood illness, Establishment of biorepositories, validation of a new TB diagnostic tool, Increased regional scope of TRAC, Ethical review and clearance processes as examples. He also noted that although AHRI does not have a formalized framework of collaboration with WHO/TDR, the support from TDR strengthened AHRI to be a chosen partner in areas of biomedical and clinical research culture of reciprocity founded on mutual trust.



Capacity Development for Clinical Trials in Ethiopia: Experience from 4FDC trial (Dr. Mekonnen Teferi)

- Dr. Mekonnen discussed the limitations of clinical trials (CTs) in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), including inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of clinical investigators, and regulatory challenges. As an example, he highlighted the 4FDC trial—a randomized controlled trial evaluating fixed-dose combination TB drugs.
- TDR’s contributions in Ethiopia included capacity building, training, and strengthening regulatory oversight.
- In conclusion, even small support can lead to significant impact, and initiatives like TDR play a crucial role in improving public health through CTs.





Equity in the Research Mentorship Program at Armauer Hansen Research Institute: A Pilot Project , Dr. Bethlehem Solomon

Dr. Bethlehem Solomon shared insights from an initiative that is aimed at ensuring equity and inclusivity in the research mentorship program at AHRI which encompasses various strategies that will be implemented in the different stages of the mentorship program, including having a targeted and inclusive recruitment strategy, a robust mentee mentor matching process, local mentors training, development of equity metric tools, assessment tools, and also doing periodic evaluations. She also acknowledged TDR/WHO for supporting the mentorship program.

INITIATIVES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) Prof. Yimtubezinash W/Amanuel



- Prof. Yimtu highlighted the founding of the Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN) during a pan-African conference on ethics in health research held in January 2001 in Lusaka, Zambia. The conference, organized by the World Health Organization (WHO)/TDR, brought together participants from 15 African countries and representatives from other nations. PABIN plays a vital role in advancing ethical standards, collaborating with national chapters, and participating in the global forum known as the Strategic Initiative for Developing Capacity in Ethical Review (SIDCER). Additionally, the Ethiopian Bioethics Initiative (ETBIN) focuses specifically on bioethics within Ethiopia, addressing ethical challenges related to health research, clinical practice, and public health interventions in the Ethiopian context.

TRAC, and SEARN-TB, Dr. Kidist Bobosha, Senior Scientist at AHRI



Tuberculosis Research Advisory Council (TRAC)



Dr. Kidist Bobosha, during her presentation, highlighted the significant role of Tuberculosis Research Advisory Council (TRAC) in advancing tuberculosis (TB) research in Ethiopia. TRAC was established in 2001 with support from TDR. It serves as a network of TB professionals, including researchers, program managers, and academia. TRAC's primary mission is to promote evidence-based TB prevention and control strategies. TRAC has achieved significant milestones in advancing TB research and coordination. Notably, TRAC has developed comprehensive TB research roadmaps, including the Roadmap for TB Operational Research in Ethiopia (March 2013, 1st Edition), the National Plan for TB Research (March 2017, 2nd Edition), and the National TB Research Roadmap 2022-2026 (March 2022, 3rd Edition). Additionally, it has prioritized capacity-building efforts, providing training in field research methods, epidemiology, health research ethics, operational research, and systematic review and meta-analysis. A noteworthy achievement is the 2023 USAID-TIFA initiative, which successfully trained 30 regional TB program implementers in operational research and facilitated 12 operational research projects. TRAC's strategic focus on research coordination, capacity-building, and evidence-based advice significantly contributes to Ethiopia's efforts to combat TB and other lung diseases.

Southern and East African Regional Network for TB Control (SEARN-TB)



Dr. Kidist Bobosha, in her comprehensive report, also highlighted the establishment of the network with support from TDR. During its inaugural meeting in May 2023, representatives from 22 countries (represented by their National TB Programs) convened to address critical objectives. These objectives include facilitating communication among NTPs, supporting advocacy and resource mobilization, promoting harmonization of TB control strategies, and facilitating implementation research (IR) for enhanced TB control.

SEARN-TB has achieved several milestones, including the creation of a WhatsApp group for NTP managers, hosting webinars on selected topics, publishing newsletters, collaborating with the WARN/CARN TB secretariat, and preparing to launch an official website. Additionally, SEARN-TB actively supports NTPs in capacity-building for IR, conducting week-long online training workshops, implementing research studies across six countries, providing technical and financial support, overseeing data collection processes, and assigning mentors.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND EXPERIENCE SHARING BY TDR FELLOWS AND GRANTEES

Panelists (Prof. Dilnesaw Yehualaw (Grantee), Jimma University, Prof. Asrat Hailu (AAU-CHS), Dr. Daniel Yilma (Fellow) Jimma University, Prof. Shitaye Alemu (University of Gondor), Dr. Amare (Grantee, Technical Director at ABH Partners)



Prof. Asrat Hailu (AAU-Aklilu Lemma Institute of Pathology) praised TDR for providing funding opportunities for studies on schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis, and leishmaniasis, even in rural areas of Ethiopia. He highlighted the upcoming VL elimination program funded by TDR and acknowledged the grant's impact on his career.

Dr. Amare (Grantee, Technical Director at ABH Partners) Amare expressed honor in being part of the TDR cohort and celebrating with the TDR community in Ethiopia. The TDR grant, his first ever, equipped him with essential skills such as project management, team leadership, and manuscript writing, benefiting both his career and personal growth.

Prof. Dilnesaw (Grantee, Director of Tropical and Infectious Disease Research Center at Jimma University) credited the TDR grant as an eye-opener that shaped his career. Despite its modest size, the grant provided valuable research experience, leading to the award of PhD grants for at least seven individuals. He emphasized TDR's role in establishing the Tropical and Infectious Disease Research Center (TDRC) at Jimma University, which has expanded its capacity and manages complex research projects.

Prof. Daniel (TDR Fellow, Internist at Jimma University) recalled his journey from hearing about the TDR fellowship program to becoming one of the few clinicians experienced in research. He appreciated the TDR Global Ethiopian node's support.

Prof. Shitaye Alemu (University of Gondor) highlighted her initial interaction with TDR while supervising students funded by the organization. Despite limited funds, TDR played a crucial role in establishing the Tuberculosis Research Advisory Committee (TRAC) and the Pan-African Bioethics Initiative (PABIN).



Following the panel discussion participants raised issues of sustainability with regard to initiatives supported by TDR. The testimonies of Ethiopian researchers and grantees underscore the transformative impact of TDR and TDR's contributions to capacity building have had a cascading effect, impacting research institutions and individuals across Ethiopia. It was also underscored while celebrating success stories, it remains crucial to address sustainability challenges for lasting impact.



A cake-cutting ceremony took place as part of the celebration



TDR GLOBAL ETHIOPIA NODE ANNUAL MEETING

The program aimed to highlight the achievements and contributions of TDR over the past five decades. As attendees gathered, an interesting success story was shared about how the mentorship program at AHRI (Armauer Hansen Research Institute) had positively impacted early career researchers. TDRGEN members and non-members were invited to provide suggestions on implementing similar mentorship programs at their respective institutes.

The discussion covered strengthening the central Ethiopian Node, creating reporting mechanisms, mapping mentors and mentees, and establishing a database. Node members emphasized the need for awareness among expert mentors, especially in LMICs where mentorship practices may be less familiar.

The meeting fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing among participants, with plans for follow-up meetings to align efforts

As part of the event, marking 50 Years of TDR Anniversary, participants also Visit AHRI's new research complex. They explore modern facilities designed to foster collaboration, innovation, and interdisciplinary research.

The event concluded successfully, commemorating TDR's remarkable journey since its establishment in 1974. Major initiatives supported by TDR were highlighted, emphasizing impact, empowerment, sustainability, and catalyzing growth. Lessons learned from past projects informed discussions on capacity building, mentorship, and the role of local expertise in shaping the TDR Global node in Ethiopia. The event also paved the way for future collaborations in research and academia within Ethiopia.

