



# SeroSelect **TB** *newsletter*



Participants at the national SeroSelectTB project meeting in Hawassa, Ethiopia.

# *SeroSelectTB national project meeting in Ethiopia*

National Meeting in Hawassa, Ethiopia, was held on 18-19 September 2024.

Opening remarks were presented by Dr Adane Mihret on behalf of the Deputy Director General at AHRI, and Dr Kidist Bobosha.

Short introductions were provided by the participants. In addition to the SeroSelectTB team members and invited delegates from the Sidama regions, Professor Jörn Klein from the University of South Eastern Norway attended the meeting.



Dr Adane Mihret



Healthcare workers attending the national SeroSelectTB project conference.

SeroSelectTB Aims and Challenges was presented by Dr Carol Holm-Hansen. A short background of two projects, TB in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and TB Rapid Test, which paved the way for the SeroSelectTB project was presented. The SeroSelectTB project aims, progress to date, and challenges met were discussed. Solutions to curb the challenges were suggested. The updates on ongoing test accuracy evaluations conducted by FIND/FEND-TB were presented.



Dr Carol Holm-Hansen and Dr Kidist Bobosha.

Update on SeroSelectTB activities in Ethiopia was presented by Dr Kidist Bobosha. Dr Kidist showed the differences in the distribution of bacteriological confirmed, clinically diagnosed and extrapulmonary TB in Sidama and Amhara Region. The prevalence of pulmonary TB is higher in Sidama than Amhara while extrapulmonary TB is more prevalent in Amhara than Sidama. TRAC (TB Research Advisory Council) and the National TB Roadmap in Ethiopia will be very important for future activities. Activities with a high priority grade include implementing new diagnostic tests and reducing diagnostic delay. These aims align with SeroSelectTB project objectives.

## *Interviews conducted at the Haile conference venue*

We have a lot of healthcare packages to work on at the health post, including malaria screening and TB and HIV, and including seroselect TB testing. SeroSelect TB study increased the patient flow into health post, before the test was introduced patients preferred to go to health clinic.

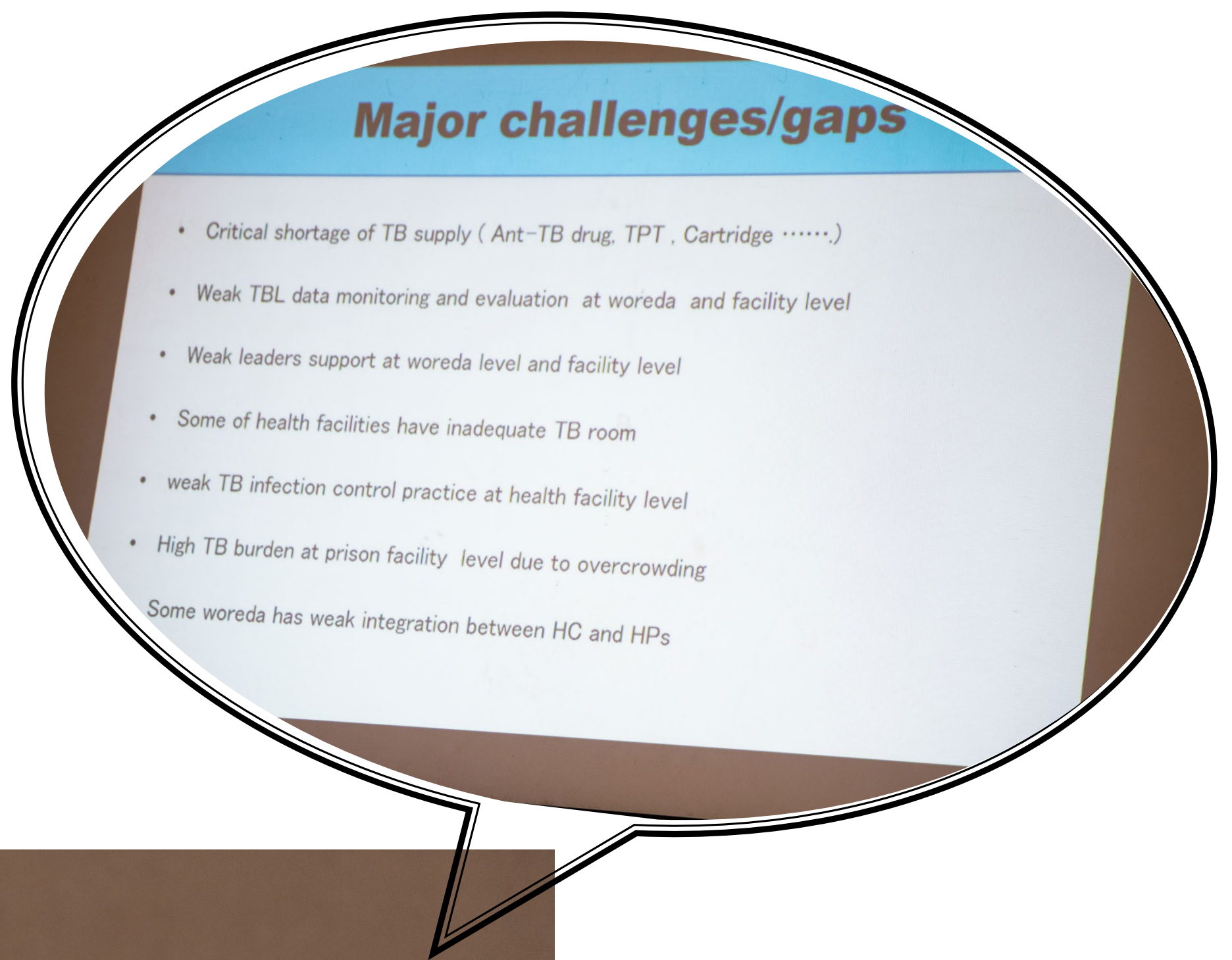


Ms Amelkach Amare, Health Extension Worker.

My work [in SeroSelect TB project] is to collect data in REDCap and to reply to requests from health extension workers. I also check inclusion and exclusion criteria and some data entry to ensure the data is complete... and if something is missing I call the health extension worker.



Mr Akale Desalegn, TB focal at a health center.



TB management activities in the Sidama Region were presented by Shibru Lencho, Sidama Region Health Bureau. Mr Shibru gave an overview of TB epidemiology, both global and national, and summary of major activities conducted in the Sidama region.

It is estimated that 27% of all TB cases in Ethiopia are not detected.

TB and leprosy care services in the region include 23 sites with Xpert and 551 health posts.

The project team at AHRI organized an excellent national meeting in Hawassa similar to the meeting held in Tanzania in February 2024.

The meeting was held in Hawassa because our initial sites in the Amhara region were closed late last year due to civil unrest and moved to the Sidama region.

The health extension workers (HEWs) and clinical officers actively participated, asked questions, and gave advice and shared experiences.

Ethiopia has faced many challenges during the SeroSelectTB project. It was good to meet the AHRI team members, HEWs, clinical officers and other invited guests, discuss the experiences, and witness the excellent progress being made in Sidama. It is very important and educational for all participants to have the HEWs and clinical officers present at these meetings.

*Ameseginalehu to Kidist, Yonas, Mekdelawit, Melese, and Tamirat for organizing the national meeting in Ethiopia!*

# Field visits



Site visits were organized by Ms Mekdelawit Wondiyfraw. Project team members from AHRI and international project members visited two health posts and two health centers in Dale woreda, Sidama region.

Many sites are difficult to visit during rainy weather due to very poor roads and are a long drive from Hawassa city.

We drove through beautiful scenery and small villages, on well-maintained highways and long, bumpy, and very dusty dirt roads. Our visits were much awaited and greatly appreciated!

*Ameseginalehu, Mekdelawit!*



At Bera Tadicho Health Center in Dale woreda, Sidama, Ethiopia.



Ms Netsanet Yohannes, TB focal at Bera Tedicho Health Center, Dale woreda, Sidama, Ethiopia.



Ms Elsabet Adamu, Lab technologist at Boa Health Center, Dale woreda, Sidama, Ethiopia.



At the health center the questionnaire is competed in REDCap, a venous blood sample is collected for the biobank (from participants in the intervention arm), sputum collected from all TB suspects, and AFB microscopy is performed at once!

TB suspects with positive AFB results start TB treatment at once, and sputum is sent to the centralized facility for Xpert confirmation.

This routine is in accordance with the national TB control guidelines in Ethiopia.



The front row (left to right): Welile Nwamba, Ergachew Zewde, Debora Kajeguka.

The second row (left to right): Netsanet Yohannes, Tigist Abdela, Tesfaye Tumiso, Mekdelawit Wondiyfraw, Kidist Bobosha.



Ms Asrat Kebede and Ms Tsedale Siyom, Health Extension Workers at Wicho Health Post, Sidama, Ethiopia.

*Postcards from the field sites*





## *A patient's journey*



Mekdelawit recruited a participant in the intervention arm who was willing to repeat the entire enrollment procedure, questionnaire, sample collection, treatment regime and 6-month follow-up for project documentation purposes.

The participant, a young woman named Haimanot, reported to a health post in Dale woreda in late 2023 after having been sick for 2 months. She was pregnant at the time of her diagnosis, received and completed her treatment, and reported for all check-ups and 6-month follow-up. Two months later she gave birth to a healthy little baby girl. Her two young boys also received the standard prophylactic treatment for 3 months.

Miloje Savic, Carol Holm-Hansen and Kidist Bobosha accompanied Mekdelawit and Haimanot through the procedure. The visit started at Haimanot's home, where Miloje conducted an interview with Mekdelawit translating.

After the home visit we went to the Duba Health Post where the enrollment procedure, first part of the questionnaire, and SeroSelectTB test procedures were repeated.

Thereafter, we accompanied Haimanot to the Dagia Health Center where the questionnaire was completed and all data entered in REDCap, and venous blood and sputum samples were collected.



The enrollment and SeroSelectTB testing at the Duba Health Post, with Ms Derartu Belachew and Ms Degnesh Hnchacha, Health Extension Workers (Dale woreda, Sidama, Ethiopia).



At the Dagia Health Center.



Mr Tamiru Hayiso, Lab technologist at Dagia Health Center, Dale woreda.



Mr Ashenafi Eshet, TB focal at Dagia Health Center, Dale woreda.

Within a few minutes of our arrival the entire village had gathered outside the house!

At the conclusion of the interview, Haimanot was asked if she had any advice for others in her village. Haimanot replied:

*“ I would advise anyone who was not feeling well to go to the health post at once because there they will receive medical attention from the health workers at once „*



*Ameseginalehu, Haimanot!*

## Looking ahead

- » The SeroSelectTB project will end on 31 December 2025.
- » The final year will be dedicated to data analysis and publications.
- » Participant enrollment in Ethiopia will continue through June 2025 to ensure statistically robust data collection.
- » A final consortium meeting will be held in September 2025.
- » The circle, which started 20 years ago, is almost complete. However, the activities may continue through local and national initiatives!



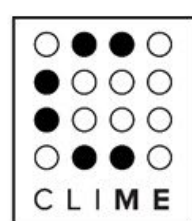
A fisherman on the Lake Hawassa, Ethiopia.

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