

## THE UNION AFRICA REGION IN 2016



*Constance was living with HIV when she developed MDR-TB, and received treatment for both at one of the Union-supported clinics providing integrated TB-HIV care in Zimbabwe.*

*Photo: Dasha Burns*

## WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION RECOMMENDS SHORTENED MDR-TB REGIMEN

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced new recommendations for a shortened treatment regimen for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) patients – just nine months compared to the current 24-month treatment used worldwide.

The WHO announcement comes in response to the pressing need to improve treatment outcomes for MDR-TB — a public health emergency — and based on programmatic studies involving 1,200 patients with uncomplicated MDR-TB in 10 countries. These studies were conducted by The Union, Damien Foundation, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and the Antwerp Institute of Tropical Medicine in Belgium.

The studies referenced by the WHO include The Union-coordinated West and Central Africa Francophone study. This was the first multi-country MDR-TB patient cohort treatment using the nine-month regimen in nine countries across the region.

It followed an initial study in Bangladesh, and had similarly high success rates, demonstrating that the new regimen can be recommended in other environments and in settings with high HIV prevalence.

“This is a historic moment for the tuberculosis community and an endorsement of the tireless work completed by our researchers who have surmounted challenges of finance and logistics to deliver a shortened treatment regimen that has the potential to revolutionise how we care for patients in communities worldwide,” said José Luis Castro, Executive Director, The Union.

# FROM EVIDENCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

For nearly 100 years The Union has drawn together the best scientific evidence and expertise to address the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. Know. Share. Act.

## KNOW.

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- The Union and its partners have been awarded a \$500,000 grant to help Sierra Leone and Liberia use operational research to begin rebuilding health systems across West Africa, following the devastating Ebola virus disease outbreak in 2014–15.
- The Union launched a new observational study investigating TB transmission in children and using new paediatric formulations for preventive therapy. The research involves 2,000 children from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Central African Republic.
- 16 peer-reviewed research papers were published by Union experts and operational research specialists. These covered topics on TB, MDR-TB, and HIV from countries across the region, and were published in *Public Health Action*, *PLOS ONE*, and the *Lancet* among others.

## SHARE.

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- Union technical staff ran the first-ever international MDR-TB course on the shortened nine-month treatment regimen in Cameroon.
- The Union and partners facilitated a meeting of nearly 80 religious leaders and faith healers from KwaZulu-Natal Province to discuss what they can do to reduce stigma, encourage testing and treatment, and spread awareness about TB and HIV within their congregations.
- The Union supported national TB programmes in francophone countries by stimulating scientific exchanges, supporting national operational research, translating scientific articles into French and regularly distributing a francophone TB newsletter.

- José Luis Castro, Executive Director of The Union welcomed delegates to the opening plenary of TB2016 — the pre-conference to the International AIDS Conference, AIDS2016, in Durban, South Africa — calling for the TB and HIV communities to come together to beat both TB and HIV.

## ACT.

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- The Union offices in Zimbabwe and Uganda have begun work on integrated TB and diabetes mellitus care in the two countries through a two-year grant from the World Diabetes Foundation.
- The Union Zimbabwe Office partnered with the Ministry of Health and Child Care to run a nationwide screening for active TB among communities that have a high risk for TB. The project is co-funded by The Global Fund and USAID, through Challenge TB.
- The Union Zimbabwe Office, in collaboration with the Biomedical Research Training Institute, received a CDC grant to support TB infection control in health care settings. The Union will receive about one third of the awarded \$1.3 million grant money.