



## PRESS RELEASE:

# UNITAID SUPPORTS A NEW COMMUNITY-DRIVEN PROJECT TO REVOLUTIONIZE DRUG-RESISTANT TB RESPONSE ACROSS HIGH-BURDEN COUNTRIES

The Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV & AIDS (KELIN), TB Europe Coalition (TBEC) and Center for Global Health Policy & Politics (GHPP) at the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law and the Georgetown University School of Health, are pleased to announce the launch of the **Community-Driven Approaches for Transformative Change to Combat Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (COMBAT DR-TB) Project**.

This three-year, global South-led project, funded by Unitaid, aims to transform the drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) response, building on the power of civil society- and community-driven demand and biomedical advances to reduce DR-TB morbidity and mortality, particularly among key and vulnerable populations in low- and middle-income countries with high burdens of TB (Kenya), DR-TB (Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Zimbabwe), TB/HIV (Kenya, Moldova, Ukraine, Zimbabwe), and TB, TB/HIV and DR-TB (Nigeria), with national/regional/global (N/R/G)-level impact. The goal is to leverage community responses to radically transform the global response to DR-TB, prioritizing people-centered care, accountability, and equitable access to lifesaving treatment.

The project is premised on the fact that despite recent biomedical advances — including WHO-recommended shorter all-oral regimens with over 90% cure rates — access to optimal DR-TB treatments remains limited. In 2023, only 23% of people with DR-TB received the WHO-recommended treatment regimens, while stigma, poor care quality, and lack of community awareness continue to hinder treatment success.

The project, coordinated by KELIN, will be implemented in three African Countries: Kenya (KELIN, Network of TB Champions), Zimbabwe (Jointed Hands Welfare Organisation) and Nigeria (TB Network Nigeria) as well as in three Eastern Europe Central Asia (EECA) Countries coordinated by TB Europe Coalition (TBEC): Moldova (SMIT), Tajikistan (STP Tajikistan, KNCV Tajikistan), and Ukraine (TBPeopleUkraine). Global interventions will be led by the O'Neill Institute's Center for Global Health Policy & Politics (Georgetown University) with additional support and coordination from the Global TB Community Advisory Board (TB CAB).

The Project focuses on four pillars: enabling policy ecosystems for access to DR-TB tools, strengthening community advocacy, implementing accountability frameworks, and scaling community-driven approaches. It aligns with the End TB Strategy, the 2023 UN HLM targets on TB, and Universal Health Coverage.

COMBAT DR-TB partners will work closely with governments, national TB programs, and communities to ensure that new treatments are available, affordable, and delivered in a way that respects the rights and needs of people living with DR-TB.

This project builds on the partners long experience promoting legal literacy and using the law to advance the right to health in their respective countries and globally. It aligns with Unitaids strategy of funding innovative interventions that can be scaled up by countries and partners. This project signals a renewed commitment to placing communities at the centre of global health responses.

**“***This project is a game-changer. It launches at a time community interventions had suffered a set back due to reductions in funding. The project will provide the much-needed lifeline and revitalise community leadership and actions in the TB response. With better treatments now available, it is unacceptable that so many are still dying from drug-resistant TB. The COMBAT DR-TB Project will demonstrate that considerable gains can be made with community-driven approaches.”* Allan Maleche, Executive Director, KELIN

This investment is part of Unitaids broader strategy to accelerate access to innovations that improve TB prevention, treatment and care in low- and middle-income countries. Unitaids support for community-driven solutions helps close policy gaps, reduce inequalities, and bring quality care closer to those most in need.

**“***For many people with drug-resistant TB, diagnosis and treatment remain logistically, financially and medically burdensome,”* said Dr. Philippe Duneton, Executive Director at Unitaids. *“Combat DR-TB seeks to address these challenges by harnessing community groups to support treatment adherence, expand coverage and improve outcomes.”*

For more information, reach out to KELIN at [info@kelinkenya.org](mailto:info@kelinkenya.org)

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# ABOUT THE PARTNERS

## 1. Unitaid

Unitaid saves lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries. Unitaid works with partners to identify innovative treatments, tests, and tools, help tackle the market barriers holding them back, and get them to the people who need them most — fast. Since it was created in 2006, Unitaid has unlocked access to more than 100 groundbreaking health products to help address the world's greatest health challenges, including HIV, TB, and malaria; women's and children's health; and pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. Every year, these products benefit more than 300 million people. Unitaid is a hosted partnership of the World Health Organization.

For more information, visit [www.unitaid.org](http://www.unitaid.org).

## 2. KELIN

The Kenya Legal and Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN) is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Kenya that utilises a human rights-based approach in implementation of its programmes, prioritising the key principles of community-centeredness, accountability, equality, and non-discrimination. For more information, visit <https://www.kelinkenya.org/>

## 3. Network of TB Champions (Kenya)

The Network of TB Champions Kenya is a community-led network that brings together TB affected communities from all 47 counties of Kenya, with a current membership of over 600 people. The Network engages in community activities through use of lived experiences for advocacy, contribution towards promotion of TB awareness and demand creation for TB services. Through this approach, the Network aims to strengthen identification of people with TB who otherwise would be missing, enhance treatment adherence and improve treatment outcomes. For more information, visit <https://ntbckkenya.org/pages/services/>

## 4. Jointed Hands Welfare Organization (Zimbabwe)

Jointed Hands Welfare Organization is a national organization focused on reaching KVP, ASMs and cross-border migrants with DRTB; quality health including diagnostic services, and advocacy, through innovative, integrated community-clinic collaborative service provision, mentorship, evidence-based program implementation, and research. Follow: [Jointed Hands Welfare Organization](#)

## 5. TB Network (Nigeria)

Civil Society for the Eradication of Tuberculosis in Nigeria (TB Network) coordinates civil society organizations in advocacy for increased access to high quality, comprehensive TB services in Nigeria. The Network's membership of more than 300 NGOs/CBOs is spread across the 36 states and Federal Capitol Territory. It works with national and

international partners, including STBP-Nigeria and KNCV, as well as public and private healthcare institutions, on stakeholder engagement, advocacy, communication, social mobilization and TB contact investigation, TB active case-finding, using gender-sensitive approaches, community ambulatory care and strengthening the capacity of community-based implementers. For more information, visit [TB Network](#).

## **6. TBEC (EECA)**

Since its launch in 2009, TBEC aims to address the gaps by bringing together civil society representatives (individuals and organisations) from across the region in order to strengthen the role of civil society within the regional response to TB, and to increase the political and financial commitment required to effectively control the epidemic. With more than 440 members in 42 countries, TBEC is increasingly recognised as the voice of TB-interested civil society across the WHO Europe Region. TBEC works twofold: first, to strengthen the advocacy capacity of civil society organisations and activists at national level, and second, to coordinate and carry out evidence-based TB policy advocacy at regional and international level. For more information, visit <https://tbcoalition.eu/>

## **7. SMIT (Moldova)**

Moldova's National Association of Tuberculosis Patients "SMIT" is a community-led organisation formed by DR-TB survivors. It supports people affected by TB and their families, focusing on TB rights; advocacy and policy change; community engagement in research and development; collaborative partnerships; active case finding and psychosocial support.

## **8. TB People Ukraine**

TB People Ukraine was founded by people with direct experience of TB treatment. It works with a large network of community representatives, including children, prisoners, people who use drugs, PLHIV, people living in poverty, and migrants, and it has productive relationships with national Ministries and health actors, hospitals, primary healthcare centers and NGOs implementing TB programs, and others. Its work areas include mental health care for children and adults during TB treatment, and advocacy to improve national TB policies, and are based on CLM results.

## **9. KNCV Tajikistan and Stop TB Partnership Tajikistan**

STBP Tajikistan is led by individuals affected by TB and maintains strong relationships with national ministries, health authorities, and NGOs involved in TB programs. The organization's activities focus on multisectoral collaboration, enhancing TB detection through contact investigation, and improving treatment adherence by implementing digital innovations.

KNCV Tajikistan is led by TB experts, NTP representatives, and Stop TB Partnership. Its work focuses on introduction of WHO-recommended new drugs, regimens and innovative technologies, including BPaL /M (via a pilot program), GeneXpert MTB/RIF and QuantTB for drug forecasting, developing regulatory and policy documents (strategies, national implementation plans, clinical guidelines and protocols, as well as SOPs and technical instructions).

## **10. Center for Global Health Policy & Politics (GHPP) at the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law and the Georgetown University School of Health**

The Center for Global Health Policy and Politics is a cross-campus collaboration between the Georgetown University School of Health and the O'Neill Institute, working at the intersection of global health, law, and political science. We explore and address the political determinants of health and support the creation of legal and policy environments that help stop pandemics, expand equity in access to medical technologies, and address inequalities in health. We are dedicated to building more just and equitable global health responses. Read more here: <https://oneill.law.georgetown.edu/centers/global-health-policy-politics/>

## **11. The Global Tuberculosis Community Advisory Board (TB CAB)**

The Global Tuberculosis Community Advisory Board (TB CAB) is a group of research-literate community activists from HIV and TB networks around the world that works to ensure TB research is driven by the needs and priorities of communities affected by TB and that the resulting innovations and interventions are accessible to everyone, everywhere

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