



*Epidemiologists take a break after long hours carrying out COVID-19 PCR tests at Al Husun Comprehensive Healthcare Center in Irbid governorate in northern Jordan.*

Tremendous progress has been achieved in the global fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria – which lead global infectious disease morbidity and mortality. Collectively, they kill more than five million people each year.

TB and malaria are trending towards global elimination targets thanks to comprehensive prevention and treatment programs and the collaboration of global and regional alliances. In much of the world, HIV is becoming a chronic, manageable disease. Preventable death in women and children due to malaria and diarrheal disease has declined significantly.

Still, infectious diseases continue to exact a heavy toll worldwide. And neglected tropical diseases impact the lives of more than one billion people, with the world's poorest suffering the most.

## CHALLENGES

Emerging and re-emerging infectious disease threats – including avian influenza, Zika, Ebola, COVID-19, and the spread of antimicrobial resistant pathogens – demand a renewed commitment to rapid, coordinated disease surveillance and outbreak response. COVID-19 is threatening to erase the momentum built in the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria. Additionally, unforeseen outbreaks of a life-threatening disease can quickly overwhelm vulnerable health care systems.

Many of the world's most marginalized people remain out of the reach of essential health resources that prevent, test, treat, and manage infectious diseases. Avoidable morbidity and mortality, linked to poverty, threaten human lives and livelihoods. Continued efforts to strengthen country leadership, governance, and management of infectious disease programs, are critical.

## TAKING ACTION

URC has been a leader in the global fight against infectious diseases for decades. For example, URC has collaborated with national TB programs for more than 30 years, working to limit and prevent TB in 21 of the 30 high-burden countries.

As new pathogens have emerged – including Zika and COVID-19 – URC has developed and scaled up coordinated, effective responses. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have worked on the frontlines, supporting country efforts to control the spread of the virus by improving vaccine confidence and facilitating the rollout of vaccination campaigns.

The **USAID Regional Health Integration to Enhance Services Activities in East Central (RHITES-EC)** and **North Acholi (RHITES-N, Acholi)** in Uganda lead HIV/AIDS service delivery across all PEPFAR program areas in these large regions in Uganda, while simultaneously providing COVID-19 treatment, prevention, and vaccination support. These activities support quality improvement actions for the delivery of health care, significantly advancing malaria diagnosis, testing, and treatment.

The **Department of Defense HIV/AIDS Prevention Program (DHAPP)** projects in Eswatini, Niger, and Uganda are aggressively scaling up HIV prevention and testing services and antiretroviral coverage to achieve the UNAIDS 95-95-95 goals within the military populations and surrounding communities.

The ongoing **Defeat TB Activity** in Uganda and **TB Platforms for Sustainable TB Detection, Care, and Treatment Project** in the Philippines are contributing to the global effort to eliminate TB by finding missing cases of TB and increasing TB treatment success rates. Prior flagship projects such as **TB CARE II** and the **TB South Africa Project** worked with partners to develop sustainable systems to improve TB and drug-resistant TB diagnosis, care, and treatment.

The **President's Malaria Initiative Eliminate Malaria Activity** and the **Defeat Malaria Activity** in Myanmar and the **Cambodia Malaria Elimination Project (CMEP 2)**

are helping to contain multi-drug resistant malaria and move the Greater Mekong Subregion closer to malaria elimination.

## GETTING RESULTS

URC's work strengthens health systems holistically in multiple ways.

**Community-level prevention efforts, communication campaigns, advocacy, and engagement** ranging from insecticide-treated net distribution to community theater, immunization uptake campaigns, and leading DREAMS programs to empower young girls and women affected by HIV/AIDS. Under URC's Cambodia Elimination Project, more than 800,000 individuals were reached with interpersonal communication in target areas.

**Sub-national level support to district health leaders and providers to improve the quality of service delivery** through quality improvement collaboratives, knowledge management, shared learning, and health workforce development. In Ghana, the USAID Systems for Health Project carried out 16,000+ coaching visits with the Ghana Health Service at health facilities and 20,500 health workers trained in infection prevention and control.

**National-level efforts to strengthen a coordinated infectious disease response** including preparedness and planning efforts for outbreaks of Ebola and Zika, support to information systems and networks to improve surveillance, strengthening laboratory diagnostics, streamlining supply chains, and scaling up the use of innovative digital technologies. The USAID Defeat TB Activity facilitated a transition from paper records to the ministry's DHIS2 system facilitating consistency of delivery of services and patient care.

As emerging, re-emerging, and endemic pathogens continue to impact lives and livelihoods around the world, URC will continue to work for more equitable access to care. A key URC focus is on strengthening the systems that provide care and improving capacities for locally-led surveillance and monitoring for infectious diseases, especially in underserved communities.