

Rwanda is making significant strides towards a future free of tuberculosis (TB). With an ambitious goal of complete eradication by 2035, the country offers valuable lessons for other nations battling this infectious disease.

Their success hinges on a multi-pronged approach that prioritizes early detection, ensures treatment completion, and fosters strong community engagement.

Previously, a significant challenge in Rwanda's fight against TB was the gap in early detection. Dr. Migambi Patrick, Head of the Department of Tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases at the National Health Center, RBC, highlights the improvement: "Screening and diagnosis rates jumped from 69% in 2021-2022 to 91% in 2022-2023." This dramatic increase is attributed to two key solutions:

Empowered community health counselors, contributing 33.4% to case identification, are a crucial link between patients and healthcare facilities.

Rwanda tackles TB treatment on multiple fronts, ensuring accessibility and maximizing recovery rates:

The government provides free anti-tuberculosis drugs to families with identified patients, eliminating financial barriers to treatment.

Around 86.7% of patients complete their TB treatment, significantly improving recovery chances. This high rate is likely due to a combination of factors, such as patient education and support programs.

However, drug resistance remains a challenge in TB treatment globally. Here, Rwanda demonstrates another solution:

In addition, the country boasts a high success rate (95%) in treating patients with drug-resistant TB. This potentially life-saving approach requires robust diagnostic tools and specialized treatment regimens.

Rwanda's integration of TB treatment into existing HIV programs ensures over 93% of HIV-positive individuals receive anti-tuberculosis treatment. This significantly reduces co-infection risks and improves overall health outcomes for this vulnerable population.

Further, the East African nation goes beyond traditional methods by using public events like the International TB Day celebration in Rubavu District to educate the

public about TB prevention and treatment, fostering a more informed and engaged citizenry.

Dr. Albert Tuyishime, Director of the Department of Disease Prevention and Control at RBC, captured Rwanda's ambition at a recent ceremony: "We have the goal of eradicating tuberculosis in Rwanda by the year 2035." This ambitious target signifies Rwanda's unwavering commitment to eliminating TB within 11 years.

Rwanda's progress offers valuable insights for other countries battling TB. Their success highlights the effectiveness of a comprehensive strategy that combines early detection, accessible treatment, strong community engagement, and innovative approaches to drug resistance. By learning from Rwanda's example and implementing similar solutions, the global fight against TB can be significantly bolstered, leading to a healthier future for all.