

STAG-TB 2019

Report of the 19th Meeting of the **STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP FOR TUBERCULOSIS**

11-13 June 2019

Geneva, Switzerland



WHO/CDS/TB/2019.12

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**WHO STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY
GROUP FOR TUBERCULOSIS (STAG-TB) 2019**



Report of the 19th Meeting

WHO STRATEGIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY

GROUP FOR TUBERCULOSIS

(STAG-TB)

11-13 June 2019

This report provides the conclusions and recommendations of the 19th meeting of WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group for Tuberculosis (STAG-TB).

In its work on TB, the World Health Organization (WHO) aims for a world free of TB and, as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, to end the global TB epidemic by 2030. It seeks to enable universal access to TB prevention and care, guide the global response to threats, and promote innovation. The WHO Secretariat, at all its levels, requires regular scientific, technical and strategic advice from the STAG-TB.

Mission and functions of STAG-TB:

The mission of the STAG-TB is to contribute to ending the TB epidemic, and eventually eliminating the disease, by providing state-of-the-art scientific and technical guidance to WHO. The STAG-TB reports to the Director-General of WHO, and members are appointed by the Director-General. The Terms of Reference for STAG-TB are provided at http://who.int/tb/advisory_bodies/stag/en/

It has the following functions:

- 1.1 To provide to the Director-General independent evaluation of the strategic, scientific and technical aspects of WHO's Tuberculosis work;
- 1.2 To review, from a scientific and technical viewpoint, progress and challenges in WHO's TB-related core functions, including:
 - 1.2.1 The content, scope and dimension of WHO's development of TB policies, strategies and standards in TB prevention, care and control;
 - 1.2.2 The content, scope and dimension of WHO's collaboration, and support of, countries' efforts to control TB, including the provision of guidance and capacity-building on policies, strategies, standards and technical assistance;
 - 1.2.3 The content, scope and dimensions of WHO's TB epidemiological surveillance, monitoring, evaluation and operational research activities, their relevance to countries' efforts to end the TB epidemic and approaches to be adopted;
 - 1.2.4 The content, scope and dimensions of WHO's promotion and support of partnerships, and of advocacy and communications for TB prevention, care and control worldwide;

- 1.3 To review and make recommendations on the establishment of committees, working groups, and other means through which scientific and technical matters are addressed; and
- 1.4 To advise on priorities between possible areas of WHO activities related to tuberculosis prevention, care and control.

The 19th meeting of the STAG-TB took place from 11-13 June 2019 at WHO Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was organized by the WHO Global TB Programme (GTB), which provides the Secretariat for the advisory body. Dr Ibrahim Abubaker, Director of the Institute for Global Health, University College London, was appointed by the WHO Director-General as STAG-TB Chair for the period of 2016-2019. He worked with the Director of the WHO Global TB Programme and the STAG-TB Secretariat in the development of the 2019 meeting agenda, found in **Annex 1** (*to be attached with final document*)

At the 2019 meeting, fifteen STAG-TB members participated. The STAG-TB members were joined by senior representatives from the National TB Programmes of China, India and Indonesia, the three countries that carry the greatest burden of TB globally, as well as Members of the WHO Civil Society Task Force on TB, and over 50 other partners including representatives of civil society and affected communities, member states, development agencies and technical, implementation and research partners. The meeting was also attended by WHO staff from Headquarters (HQ), regional and country offices, including from the 30 highest burden TB countries. **See Annex 2** *for the list of participants (to be attached with final document).*

Nineteenth meeting objectives:

At this 19th meeting, WHO requested STAG-TB to review and advise on a number of areas of WHO global TB work. The WHO STAG-TB Secretariat and the Chair of STAG-TB developed the agenda for the 19th meeting based on priorities of the WHO in its TB work in 2018 and 2019 and suggested issues proposed by the STAG-TB members at their 18th meeting and a follow up teleconference held in March 2019, including follow-up to the United Nations High-Level Meeting (UN HLM) on TB in September 2018.

The agenda items were:

- Follow up to the UN high-level meeting on ending TB
- Regional and country priorities and initiatives
- TB impact measurement update and new digital platform
- TB preventive treatment
- Civil Society Task Force Priorities and Progress
- The Multisectoral Accountability Framework
- Digital health
- Progress of the Find.Treat.All#ENDTB Initiative
- TB diagnostics, infection control and MDR-TB treatment
- TB research and innovation

Each STAG-TB meeting session began with an introductory presentation(s). Comments and suggested recommendations were provided by one to three STAG-TB members serving as session discussants, followed by comments and recommendations offered by other STAG-TB members, and additional comments by other participants.

The STAG-TB members serving as session discussants developed draft written recommendations, with the assistance of WHO rapporteurs. The recommendations were consolidated by the WHO Secretariat. The consolidated report was reviewed by the STAG-TB Chair and then by all STAG-TB Members. The report will be submitted by the Chair of STAG-TB to the Director-General of WHO.

The report will be posted on the WHO website:

http://who.int/tb/advisory_bodies/stag/en/

OPENING SESSION

Dr Tereza Kasaeva, Director of the Global TB Programme and Dr Ibrahim Abubakar, Chair of STAG-TB, welcomed STAG-TB members and all participants for their collaboration. Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist of WHO, made opening remarks on behalf of the WHO Director-General on the implementation of WHO 13th Global Programme of Work and the WHO Transformation process.

Dr Abubakar and Ms Diana Weil, Global TB Programme, noted the objectives of the meeting, introduced the agenda and meeting processes, as well as the efforts taken to follow-up with STAG-TB to inform them on actions taken on 2018 recommendations through an information note. Note that Declaration of Interest forms for STAG-TB members were reviewed in advance of the meeting and no conflicts of interest were noted that would preclude participation in any of the sessions of the meeting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY SESSION

SESSION 1A: FOLLOW UP TO THE UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON ENDING TB AND STRENGTHENING MULTISECTORAL ACTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY; AND

1B: REGIONAL AND COUNTRY PRIORITIES AND INITIATIVES TO STRENGTHEN CAPACITY AND REACH TARGETS

Dr Kasaeva provided an overview presentation summarizing the targets and commitments of the UN HLM on TB. She highlighted key WHO activities and progress to date since the UN HLM to support countries to address these commitments and to build on the opportunities of the WHO transformation.

Regional representatives from the six WHO regions - Dr Wilfred Nkhoma (AFRO), Dr Rafael Lopez

Olarte (AMRO/PAHO), Dr Muhammad Akhtar (EMRO), Dr Masoud Dara and Dr Askar Yedilbayev (EURO), Dr Mukta Sharma (SEARO), and Dr Tauhid Islam (WPRO) - presented on their efforts to support countries in pursuing the End TB Strategy and related UN HLM targets, focusing on distinct regional priorities.

Dr Nkhoma highlighted efforts to reach missed cases by supporting expansion of diagnostic capacity, coordination of TA with technical partners, improved impact measurement, and the development by WHO and the African Union (AU) Secretariat of a scorecard for African Continental accountability which has been endorsed by the AU. Dr Lopez Olarte spoke to addressing TB and cross-disease elimination efforts with low-incidence countries, and action to leave no one behind through work on TB with indigenous peoples, and TB in prisons. Dr Akhtar noted ongoing work on complex emergencies, and accountability steps. Dr Dara and Dr Yedilbayev highlighted the region's work to support coordination of TB and drug-resistant TB platforms, civil society engagement, policy dialogue to ensure sustainable financing, and measures to address the increase in HIV-related TB. Dr Sharma highlighted actions taken based on the Delhi Declaration and UNHLM, advances in reporting of TB cases and development of a regional strategy on TB preventive treatment. Dr Tauhid Islam noted support of special initiatives by Member States building on new targets and high-level action, and framing regional actions linked to UHC policies, preventive treatment scale-up and TB in the elderly.

Dr Ibrahim Abubaker and Dr Christy Hanson were the STAG-TB discussants for the session.

STAG-TB:

- Acknowledges the important role of WHO in monitoring global financing of TB and WHO engagement in strengthening methods for calculating the costs associated with ending TB, and encourages WHO to sustain this work;
- Acknowledges the progress being made, as reflected by declining incidence of TB in all regions. However, STAG-TB also notes that sub-optimal rates of treatment success in many regions is a risk to the pace of future progress;
- Notes and is encouraged by the positioning of the Global TB Programme within one of the two Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Divisions at WHO headquarters as this offers opportunities for TB to be mainstreamed into the momentum toward UHC;
- Commends WHO on its active follow-up to the UN high-level meeting on TB (UNHLM), particularly noting the six high-level missions in the past 8 months aimed at securing action against the commitments by these high-burden countries;
- Congratulates the regional offices on the important work undertaken during 2018-2019 to adapt and introduce new technical guidance, and to plan responses to changing funding and demographic landscapes; and
- Given the priorities of member states, recommends that WHO embolden its workstreams in support of the proposed recommendations that follow.

STAG-TB recommends that WHO:

1. Advance financing to end TB by:
 - a) Enhancing its work in support of countries along the continuum of health financing; i.e. improving costing methods/data, promoting resource optimization and domestic resource mobilization through UHC platforms and other domestic funding modalities (and including resources for research);
 - b) Tracking and reporting on country, regional and global funding gaps alongside progress toward epidemiological and programmatic targets; to consistently consider the role of adequate and efficient use of financing for progress;
 - c) Monitoring and addressing any negative implications for the availability of drugs and commodities that result as countries transition from donor to domestic funding;
2. Support improvement of quality of care by:
 - a) Continuing to enhance the availability of case-based surveillance systems and capacity for data use to enable real-time programmatic quality improvement in support of care continuation;
 - b) Promoting active engagement of civil society, affected communities and the private sector with a view to ensuring the quality of care provided by this sector;
 - c) Operationalizing multi-sectoral partnerships for expanding patient-support modalities;
 - d) Supporting countries in ensuring adequate numbers and training of health care workers, including community-based workers.
3. Strengthen prioritization in its own work planning and support countries to prioritize action based on evidence of impact against the SDGs, including towards achievement of UHC, to optimize not only epidemiological impact but to reach all people with quality care.
4. Advance multi-sectoral action and accountability by:
 - a) Developing clear guidance for countries on how to operationalize multi-sectoral partnerships; i.e. with whom, for what; to address the need to enhance patient support, reduce catastrophic costs due to TB, increase domestic financing, incorporate TB into health benefit packages and ensure quality of care;
 - b) Working closely with all sectors to support the accountability systems intended through the multi-sectoral accountability framework.

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