

# **SUMMARY REPORT**

## **WINDHOEK COUNTRY CLUB RESORT, NAMIBIA 02 & 03 DECEMBER 2011**

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### **Introduction**

The 20<sup>th</sup> TFI Members' Meeting convened at the Windhoek Country Club Resort, Namibia, from 02 to 03 December 2011. Key objectives of the meeting were for TFI members to be briefed on progress made in implementing the previous year's TFI recommendations, as well as exchange on technical updates and/or recent scientific developments with a particular focus on:

- (a) Interrupting endemic and re-established wild poliovirus transmission in Africa;
- (b) Responding to 2011 polio outbreaks in addition to preventing new international spread and outbreaks;
- (c) Reaching the unreached children with immunization services: strategy options for the African Region;
- (d) Planning for the 2012 African Vaccination Week;
- (e) Reviewing 2011 SAGE recommendations and their implications for the African Region; and
- (f) Assessing progress made in accelerated immunization control initiatives.

### **Major developments**

At the opening session, Dr Deo Nshimirimana, IVD Director, welcomed all TFI members on behalf of the WR Namibia and pointed out some recent developments:

- (a) The establishment of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) to monitor and guide the progress of the GPEI's 2010-2012 strategic plan;
- (b) The full engagement in the PE programme of the WHO Regional Director for Africa who convened Internal Consultations in June and October 2010 to be repeated quarterly;
- (c) The high level of advocacy of partners and Mr Bill Gates who visited Nigeria & Chad;

- (d) The high level of mobilization of resources from GAVI allowing new countries to apply for new vaccines (Pneumococcal conjugate & Rotavirus vaccines);
- (e) The creation of the IVD cluster directly reporting to the RD;
- (f) The AFR/RC61/R4 resolution adopted during the 61st session of the Regional Committee (RC61) towards Poliomyelitis Eradication and Measles Elimination in the African region;
- (g) The SAGE meeting with great emphasis on the PE programme;
- (h) The launching of the Decade of Vaccine (DoV).

The IVD Director also stressed the need for quick replacement of some TFI members who resigned (8 out of 15 members were present at the meeting) and to revitalize the TFI.

### **Status of implementation of past TFI meetings**

The IVD Director reviewed the status of implementation of recommendations of the 18th and the 19th TFI meetings held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso & Harare, Zimbabwe in December 2010 and May 2011, respectively.

The TFI members welcomed the full implementation on the following set of recommendations on polio activities: the high political engagement and high level advocacy of the countries; the timely detection & response to outbreaks; the development of an emergency plan for each priority country; fundraising including domestic resources; and advocacy meetings & events. With respect to the recommendations made to reach the unreached children, the followings were also fully implemented: local initiatives tailored for reaching un/under-immunized children; critical linkage between routine immunization and other accelerated disease control initiatives; development of a strategy paper on routine immunization.

The TFI noted however the lack of implementation of recommendations made to develop local operational research and regional communication strategy. In addition, the following recommendations were partially implemented: ensuring immunization communication strategy with strong advocacy & social mobilization components; developing innovative efforts and building capability of the EPI managers in the area of immunization financing.

## **Plenary sessions**

### **Polio Eradication**

Dr Matthieu Kamwa, Polio Eradication Coordinator, WHO/AFRO presented 2 sets of presentations. The first was on interrupting endemic & re-established wild poliovirus transmissions in Nigeria & Angola, Chad, DR Congo, in line with the Strategic Plan Milestones 2 & 3, respectively. The TFI members noted that Africa missed the milestone 2 and was not on track with regards to the milestone 3. Several issues and challenges were pointed out, and the presenter specifically requested that the attention of the TFI members be paid to two issues: 1) How to address waning commitment at decentralized levels? 2) What can TFI recommend as additional efforts/actions to reach the chronically missed children in order to achieve interruption of wild poliovirus transmission in priority countries in 2012?

The second presentation was related to responding to 2011 polio outbreaks in addition to preventing new international spread and outbreaks. This is associated with the Strategic Plan Milestones 1. The TFI members noted that Africa was on track in 2011 with the Milestone 1, even if there are persistently missed children during SIAs and surveillance gaps still remain at subnational level. In order to better predict importation and spread of wild poliovirus, the presenter reported the results of a more reliable and new standardized tool to be used by all the districts. Regarding the issues raised during the presentation, it was also specifically requested that the attention of the TFI members be paid to specific issues and what they can advise on the scope of risk mitigation to reduce occurrence of outbreaks.

### **Reaching the unreached children**

Dr Richard Mihigo, WHO/AFRO, presented a summary of a document developed by IVD/AFRO related to reaching the unreached children with immunization services in the African Region. The document provides an analysis of the immunization status in the region in relation to the immunization sub-system, the overall health system and the contextual environment in which immunization is evolving. It provides also a number of innovative approaches and strategy options to overcome challenges ahead. Three issues were pointed out for the consideration of the TFI members: 1) Is the proposed strategy options to reach the unreached children with immunization services adequate? 2) What additional options should WHO/AFRO consider? 3) How does TFI see the operationalization of these strategy options at country level.

### **African Vaccination Week**

Dr Richard Mihigo, WHO/AFRO, presented a second topic on implementing the African Vaccination Week in 2012. Two issues were raised for TFI consideration: 1) What additional guidance the TFI can provide to WHO/AFRO in order to better prepare for the next AVW edition? 2) What role should the civil society play in strengthening the AVW?

## **Measles elimination**

Dr Balcha Masresha, WHO/AFRO, presented the progress towards the 2012 measles pre-elimination targets in the African region, and indicated that a Regional measles elimination goal for 2020 has been adopted at the RC in Sept 2011. Although a drastic reduction has been observed in the number of reported measles cases alongside a steadily increasing routine immunization coverage in the last decade, several factors still contribute to the occurrence of measles outbreaks in Africa, including suboptimal coverage during SIAs, the existence of pockets of unvaccinated & resistant populations in some countries, and the critical accumulation of susceptible populations in older age groups leading to a shift in the pattern of occurrence of measles towards involving more and more older children and adults. The challenge of raising resources from local sources to complement partner funds for SIAs operational costs was also brought to the discussion. The presenter raised the following question for the consideration of the TFI: what innovative approaches can be put in place immediately ensure that more countries are on track towards the 2012 measles pre-elimination targets?

The presenter also requested the TFI to endorse the recommendations from the Regional measles TAG meeting which took place in April 2011.

## **Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus**

Dr Balcha Masresha, WHO/AFRO, presented the progress with Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus Elimination in the African region. He indicated that 24 countries have already eliminated MNTE, while 11 countries have completed scheduled TT SIAs. The remaining 11 countries are expected to complete planned activities in the coming three years. The challenge of reaching women in conflict areas, funding for TT SIAs, and the issue of maintaining elimination in countries that have already been validated (in the face of gaps in safety of deliveries, Antenatal care and immunization coverage) were discussed. The two questions/issues presented to the TFI members included the issue of maintaining MNT elimination, and the integration of maternal and newborn health services with immunization.

## **2011 SAGE Recommendations**

Dr Philippe Duclos, WHO/HQ, presented the conclusions and recommendations from the two SAGE meetings that took place in 2011 and their implications for the African Region. Several topics were covered to include polio eradication, rubella vaccination, and the Decade of Vaccines (DoV) .

He pointed out that SAGE stated unequivocally that the risk of failure to finish global polio eradication constitutes a programmatic emergency of global proportions for public health and is not acceptable under any circumstances. He also reported that SAGE added two major recommendations to those of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB): (i) there must be consequences at all levels for individuals, institutions or governments who fail to deliver on their mandates; (ii) IMB to produce country reports which identify in detail the

root causes why some infected countries are failing to interrupt transmission and holding appropriate individuals, agencies and authorities responsible.

The presenter recalled that the primary purpose of rubella vaccination is to prevent the occurrence of congenital rubella infection including Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) and for that purpose, there are two general approaches to using rubella vaccine.

With the topic related to the DoV, SAGE was asked to review the initial draft of the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP) prior to further consultations with member states and other partners.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the latest detailed immunization information provided to TFI Members, the following TFI recommendations were made:

### **Polio Eradication**

#### **Preamble:**

The TFI commends the efforts made by WHO-AFRO and partners to increase political commitment towards immunization, especially polio eradication, by continuous engagement with political leaders and holding high level advocacy meetings in priority countries.

The TFI appreciates that the Regional Director WHO/AFRO is holding quarterly consultations meetings with WRs of 4 priority countries to further accelerate the implementation of the emergency plans for the interruption of WPV.

In 2011 Nigeria has not been able to maintain the decline of new polio cases that was seen in 2010. This is worrying and requires urgent attention. The TFI acknowledge the difficult security situation in Nigeria.

The TFI condemns the loss of innocent lives including the UN staff during the recent incident in Nigeria.

Further, the TFI notes with concern that in DR Congo and Chad there have been increases in cases in the past 6 months. Although the number of polio cases has decreased, the transmission is still on-going in Angola. Despite the implementation of emergency plans in these three countries, the progress has not been rapid enough. There are still pockets of children who are not reached by immunization services.

The TFI notes with concern that there have been 7 outbreaks in 3 main areas, West Africa (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali and Niger), Central Africa (Central Africa Republic) and East Africa (Kenya and Uganda).

**The TFI recommends that:**

1. Countries revitalize political commitment through an intense advocacy effort at all administrative levels, civil society, religious and traditional leaders for polio eradication activities.
2. Emergency plans for polio eradication need to be implemented with urgency and sufficient quality to stop polio transmission.
3. The new risk assessment tool for better risk prediction should be used in all countries and actions taken to mitigate risks
4. Polio surveillance should further be strengthened at sub-national level in all countries to meet operational targets
5. Cross-border cooperation should be facilitated with supportive documents such as declarations and reports following meetings and visits and this mechanism should become routine.

**Indicators for measurement:**

- a. Number of political statements/events made by prominent leaders at all levels in relation to polio eradication.
- b. Number of advocacy events or interventions related to polio undertaken the different administrative levels.
- c. Number of countries fully implementing the emergency plans with measurable outcomes.
- d. Number of countries implementing the new risk assessment tools.
- e. Number of countries action plans arising from the risk assessment mapping exercise.
- f. Number of countries reporting a non-polio AFP rate  $\geq 2/100,000$  a year at national and subnational levels.
- g. Number of countries reporting  $\geq 80\%$  of stool adequacy at national and subnational levels.
- h. Number of cross border facilitatory policies developed and implemented.

## **Reaching the unreached children**

### **Preamble:**

The TFI notes that despite the progress made in improving the immunization coverage as measured by both the WHO-UNICEF estimates and administrative reported coverage during the last decade, the GIVS goal of 90% coverage in all countries and at least 80% in all districts which was supposed to be achieved by 2010 is still far from reach. TFI urges that there is an urgent need to do more and differently in order to reach the last unvaccinated child in the African Region.

The TFI welcomes the initiative of WHO/AFRO to develop strategy options to reach the unreached children with immunization services in the African Region. The document provides an accurate analysis of the immunization status in the region in relation to the immunization sub- system, the overall health system and the contextual environment. It provides also a number of innovative approaches and strategy options to overcome challenges ahead. The TFI endorses the strategy entitled *“Reaching the unreached children with immunization services: strategy options for the African region”*.

### **TFI recommends that:**

6. The strategy document should be widely disseminated among countries and partners in the Region.
7. WHO/AFRO should develop technical guidelines for the implementation of country plans based on proposed strategy options.
8. Countries, with support of WHO/AFRO and partners, are requested to develop plans to operationalize the proposed strategy options in order to reach the unreached children with the full participation of their communities.

### **Indicators for measurement:**

- a. Number of countries having received the approved document.
- b. WHO guidelines available.
- c. Number of countries with operational plans.

## **African Vaccination Week**

### **Preamble:**

The TFI notes with satisfaction that the first edition of the African Vaccination Week (AVW) with the theme *“Put mothers and children first, vaccinate and stop polio now”* was a resounding success with the participation of 40 countries (out of 46) in the WHO African Region. The initiative, which has successfully built on the experience of mother and child health weeks, generated a big momentum in raising community awareness and participation as well as advocacy for immunization.

### **TFI recommends that:**

9. Countries, with the support of WHO/AFRO and partners, start preparation for the 2012 edition of the AVW as early as possible to ensure successful implementation. This should include the involvement of media, private sector, civil society, opinion leaders and communities in planning, implementation and evaluation of the initiative.
10. Countries should also consider developing medium term goals for future AVW initiatives.
11. WHO/AFRO should publish a leaflet on AVW as a tool to increase awareness about the initiative.

### **Indicators for measurement:**

- a. Number of countries with 2012 AVW micro plans.
- b. Number of countries sensitized on AVW medium plans.
- c. AVW leaflet available.



## **Measles and Rubella**

### **Preamble**

The TFI endorses the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional measles TAG recommendations, and welcomes the Regional Committee resolution adopting a measles elimination goal for 2020. The TFI also notes the progress made over the last 10 years in terms of measles control in the Region; however, the TFI is concerned that two thirds of the countries in the African Region are at risk of not meeting the targets for measles pre-elimination at the end of 2012.

The TFI also noted the revisions to the WHO position paper on rubella vaccines, and the opportunities it creates for the uptake of the vaccine in the Region.

### **TFI Recommends that:**

- 12.** Countries with support from partners ensure the full implementation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Measles TAG recommendations in order to attain the pre-elimination targets for 2012, as a milestone towards the 2020 elimination goal.
- 13.** WHO AFRO should develop a Regional document regarding rubella / CRS control / elimination vis a vis the most recent revision of the WHO position paper on rubella vaccines and present it for discussion at the next TFI TFI meeting in May 2012.

### **Indicators for measurement:**

- a.** Proportion of the countries that meet the incidence, coverage and surveillance targets included in the measles pre-elimination goal, by the end of 2012. (Target at least 50%)
- b.** WHO AFRO position document indicating the way forward for the Region regarding rubella/ CRS control/ elimination available by the next TFI meeting.

## **Maternal & Neonatal Tetanus (MNT)**

The TFI notes that there has been progress towards the elimination of MNT in the Region, with 24 countries validated as of December 2011.

However, TFI notes with concern the challenges of maintaining elimination in these countries.

The remaining countries require close technical support and guidance in order to advance the implementation of the strategies towards the elimination of MNT.

### **TFI recommends that:**

- 14.** WHO and partners to provide technical guidelines and support to countries that have already attained the validation of MNT elimination, in order to assist them to sustain and monitor the progress regarding the status of MNT elimination.
- 15.** Countries, with support of WHO and partners, should develop strong program linkages between the immunization program and maternal & newborn health services, as well as other related programs in order to accelerate the attainment of the MNT elimination goal.
- 16.** Countries, that have not yet completed TT SIAs, need to scale-up the implementation of the MNTE strategies, including aggressive advocacy and communication efforts with women's groups, professional societies, etc. in order to reach the MNTE goals.

### **Indicators for measurement:**

- a.** A technical guideline document available and disseminated to countries that have been validated for MNTE by June 2012.
- b.** Number of countries that have developed and are implementing comprehensive national plans for MNT elimination by end 2012.
- c.** Number of countries completing high quality TT SIAs by the end of 2013.

# Agenda

**Friday, 02 December 2011**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
09:00-09:05	Welcome Remarks	WR/Namibia
09:05-09:10	Introductory Remarks	TFI Chairperson
09:10-09:20	Review of Implementation of Recommendations (TFI Members' Meeting,, Dec. 2010 + May 2011)	Deo Nshimirimana
09:20-09:40	Discussions	
09:40-09:55	Interrupting Endemic & Re-established WPV Transmission in Africa (Strategic Plan Milestones: 2&3)	Matthieu Kamwa
09:55-11:00	Discussions	
<i>11:00-11:30</i>	<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
11:30-11:45	Polio Outbreaks in West Africa, Kenya and Uganda + Preventing New International Spread & Outbreaks (Strategic Plan Milestone: 1)	Matthieu Kamwa
11:45-12:30	Discussions	
<i>12:30-13:30</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	
13:30-13:45	Reaching the Un-reached Children with Immunization Services : A Policy Paper for the African Region	Richard Mihigo
13:45-15:00	Discussions	
<i>15:00-15:30</i>	<i>Coffee/tea break</i>	
15:30-15:45	African Immunization Week - 2012	Richard Mihigo
15:45-17:00	Discussions	
17:00	Wrap-Up of Day 1	

**Saturday, 03 December 2011**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
09:00-09:20	2011 SAGE Recommendations – Implications for the African Region	Philippe Duclos
09:20-10:30	Discussions	

10:30-11:00	Coffee/tea break	
11:00-11:20	Accelerated Disease Control Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Measles Pre-elimination Targets</li> <li>▪ MNTE Update</li> <li>▪ Rubella Update</li> </ul>	Balcha Masresha
11:20-12:30	Discussions	
12:30-13:00	Review of ARCI/2011 Programme of Work	Deo Nshimirimana
13:00-13:30	TFI Recommendations	Chairman
13:30	Wrap-Up	

## List of participants

### TFI Members

- Dr Helder Martins
- Dr Lev Arevshatyan
- Dr Aziza Mwisongo
- Dr John Lusingu
- Prof Ibrahim Niang
- Dr Sue Goldstein
- Dr Federick Kaona

### IVD/AFRO

- Dr Deo Nshimirimana
- Dr Richard Mihigo
- Dr Matthieu Kamwa
- Dr Balcha Masresha
- Dr Mbaye Salla
- Dr Mala Rakoto Andrianarivelo
- Mr Keith Shaba
- Mr Alain Poy

### HQ

- Dr Philippe Duclos

### WR Nigeria

- Dr David Okello
- Dr Alex Gasasira

### IST/WA

- Dr Bocar Toure