

TFI Members Meeting, Brazzaville, Congo
04-05 December 2014
Draft Recommendations

General considerations

- The TFI acknowledged that the current Ebola crisis has devastated communities and health services in the three most affected countries, and recognised the importance of the role of the WHO regional office in the response to the outbreaks. The TFI also recognised that the diversion of the Secretariat to work on the Ebola response was essential but that it had inevitably affected some immunisation activities. The TFI wishes to express its strong words of support to all national and external health staff engaged in the response to the Ebola outbreaks in affected countries and congratulate the WHO Regional Office for its current contribution to this effort. Finally, the TFI was encouraged by the speed of development of the various candidate Ebola vaccines.
- The TFI discussed the need to revitalize the working groups established in previous year and ensure that the Chairs of these working groups, with the assistance of the members of the WHO Secretariat, set up meetings or conference calls with working group members in the first quarter of 2015. The Data Quality and Use working group had met and gave an interim report. Highlights of this included: what tools are required; barriers to the collection of quality data including falsification because of incentivisation, fear of entering accurate data in case this is prejudicial to HCWs, importance of HCWs understanding what data is required for; how to align activities with GAVI; etc. A full report of the Data Quality and Use Working Group will be made available at the June 2015 TFI meeting.
- The structure of future TFI meetings was extensively discussed and the Members agreed on the principle of having future meetings held twice a year in June and December. Proposed dates for the next two years will be suggested very soon for TFI Members deliberation and to ensure that dates are set in diaries with good notice.
- The TFI noted that countries are receiving many recommendations for action from SAGE, TFI, GAVI, etc. The challenge is how the regional office can offer more support to countries as they consider these recommendations, prioritise them and implement them.
- The TFI also acknowledged the useful contribution of the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) to the achievement of polio eradication. TFI discussed the IMB recommendation that the WHO HQ take over the management of the Central African outbreak from the African Regional office, and expresses strong reservation about the suggestion as this fundamentally changes the mandate of HQ and regional offices which have the responsibility of working with countries.
- TFI commended the Regional Director and Member States delegates to the 2014 Regional Committee Meeting (RC64) for their adoption of the draft Regional Strategic Plan for Immunization 2014-2020 and noted with satisfaction their valuable contribution to further improve the document.
- The additional following considerations were also agreed upon by the TFI:

- The duration of future TFI meetings should be extended to three days and should also include the participation of representatives of different clusters within WHO/AFRO (e.g. Health Systems Strengthening, Disease Prevention and Control, Health Promotion, etc.) as well as representatives of major immunization donors/partners in the Region as observers. The first day of future meetings will be devoted to the TFI working groups' discussions as appropriate.
- There will be two conference phone calls prior to each TFI meeting. Each call will have preparatory discussions about agenda items with pre-reading materials where possible.
- Key documents pertinent to each topic on the agenda should be shared with TFI Members at least 5 working days prior to the TFI meeting. The number of slides in each presentation should be limited to a strict minimum to avoid information overload and allow ample discussion on the topics put forward to TFI Members. A copy of slides relevant to the topic of each presentation should be included in the binder given to TFI Members. The specific input from TFI on each item presented should be displayed at the end of each presentation. This invited input should be appropriately supported by the extent and depth of the information presented to the TFI.
- In addition, it was agreed that the June 2015 TFI meeting should include agenda items to allow for an extensive discussion on the progress towards measles elimination and rubella vaccine introduction in the Region.
- A major focus of the TFI's work will be to monitor the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan for immunization 2014-2020 and this will be a standing agenda item for all TFI meetings. The agenda of each meeting will be determined by TFI for the next two years allowing for addition of topical issues.
- TFI should have an in-depth review of progress against the GVAP goals and targets once per year. It was agreed that the best time to do this will be during a meeting held in June when country reports will be available for the previous year, and when the TFI report can be used to inform the subsequent SAGE GVAP working group discussions.
- At the June meeting, there should be enough time devoted to extensively review the available data in order to meaningfully assess the progress towards GVAP set goals and objectives in the African Region.

Recommendations on Polio Eradication in the African Region

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
1.	In order to support countries in the process of polio certification and containment, WHO/AFRO and the partners should undertake more advocacy activities to get countries committed to develop risk mitigation strategies as this is important to both polio eradication initiative and routine immunization strengthening.	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
2.	Considering the weak surveillance system as well as the suboptimal implementation of the response activities to the WPV outbreak in Equatorial Guinea, WHO/AFRO and Partners should undertake high level advocacy mission to Equatorial Guinea.	WHO/AFRO	Next TFI Meeting
3.	While AFP surveillance and overall coverage of SIAs have improved in Cameroon, quality is uneven with remaining gaps in detection and timely investigation of cases. A number of districts are still missing a large number of children in SIAs. Government of Cameroon is strongly encouraged to fully implement the recommendations of the Central Africa TAG meeting and other advocacy visits to ensure accountability of underperforming districts, enhance commitment and ownership of regional and national authorities.	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing
4.	The Central African Republic remains at a very high risk of an outbreak of polio. The program should put in place sufficient technical, logistic, operational capacity to support the government and engage all NGOs in implementing key risk mitigation strategies, particularly improving AFP surveillance, high quality immunization campaigns, and ensuring coverage of displaced and border populations.	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing
5.	<p>TFI noted that many national immunisation programmes are dependent on polio infrastructure and funding to support other routine services, including most recently being used in response to the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, and that there is a serious threat to these services once the polio eradication funding is withdrawn. Furthermore, there are best practice and lessons to be learnt from the PEI, and these need to be identified for application to routine immunisation services. The TFI working Group on Country Ownership is asked to review planning for the Polio Legacy, for which little progress had been made, as a priority question and provide a report to TFI in the December meeting.</p> <p>With regard to the development of a regional polio legacy plan as stipulated in the Regional Strategic Plan for Immunization 2014-2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocacy related to the management of Polio assets and infrastructure should be anchored on multifaceted ventures like the GVAP or the health systems strengthening broader agenda to encourage sustained support for implementation of national immunization programs. ○ Adequate communication strategy should be developed during the period of the legacy planning. ○ The TFI working group on country ownership should play a critical role in moving the polio legacy plan forward. 	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
6.	<p>In order to optimally support countries in the introduction of the IPV vaccine and prepare for “the switch” between the tOPV to bOPV vaccines, WHO/AFRO should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a risk management strategy for “the switch” in the African Region which includes at least one back-up strategy in case the planned scenarios are not met. The strategy should be simpler for easier understanding and higher likelihood of distinguishing preconditions, milestones and steps that are essential from others that are less critical to a successful “switch”. ○ Rehearsals for “the switch” must be built into the timeline of the process and this should include pilots of this switch in a limited number of countries. 	WHO/AFRO	Next TFI meeting

Recommendations on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Outbreak in West Africa and its Impact on Immunization systems

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
1.	Considering the negative impact the EVD outbreak has had on immunization systems in the most affected countries in West Africa, a TFI working group on Ebola should be established with the mandate of recommending the best ways of restoring immunisation services in the affected countries.	WHO/AFRO	Next TFI Meeting
2.	The spread of polio to an Ebola-affected country could be devastating and would be a major setback for polio eradication in the region. Recognising that historically, polio spread in West Africa is overland through known migratory pathways and populations, special risk mitigation efforts should be made in countries and districts surrounding the Ebola-affected countries to improve population immunity to polio and enhance sensitivity of poliovirus surveillance.	WHO/AFRO	Next TFI Meeting

Recommendations on GVAP & Regional Strategic Plan for Immunization 2014-2020

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
1.	Countries with the support of WHO/AFRO and partners should put in place specific mechanisms to ensure that civil society organizations are fully involved in the activities aimed at addressing vaccine hesitancy/confidence in the Region.	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing
2.	<p>In line with the endorsement of the Regional Strategic Plan for Immunization 2014-2020 by RC64 in November 2014:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WHO/AFRO and partners to use the opportunity of the next EPI Managers meetings to discuss the development and implementation of costed national immunization multi-year plans in line with the Regional strategy. 	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WHO/AFRO should provide relevant tools for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the costed national immunization plans. ○ WHO/AFRO and partners to support countries in setting up appropriate independent structures for the monitoring of the objectives and targets of their national plans. 		
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Recommendations on Implementation Research Guide for EPI Managers

No	Recommendations/Follow-Up Actions	Responsible	Deadline
1.	<p>The Implementation Research guide for EPI Managers in the African region was reviewed and endorsed by the TFI. The following amendments were suggested by TFI before its wide dissemination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ WHO/AFRO to incorporate feedback received from TFI members. ○ The implementation research guide should be presented to EPI managers during their next year meetings. ○ WHO/AFRO to publish and disseminate widely the guide to implementation research to all stakeholders. 	WHO/AFRO	Ongoing