

20 December 2016

Strategic document of the Global NITAG Network

This document was produced by the core group of NITAGs following consultation and deliberation at the first meeting of the Global NITAG Network. It will be endorsed by members of the Global NITAG Network at the second meeting in Berlin in **June 28th – 29th, 2017**.

Background and rationale

A key objective of the Global Vaccine Action Plan is for all countries to have a functional national immunization technical advisory group (NITAG) by 2020.

Globally, NITAGs have different levels of experience, resources and expertise. The statutory status of NITAGs also varies along with the willingness of Ministries of Health to fund and implement the recommendations. However, they face similar challenges such as limited resources, lack of access to data needed to make evidence-informed recommendations and a need for better methodologies.

In light of this, a meeting was held 11-12 May 2016 to consider establishing a global NITAG network that would create opportunities for pooling resources and increasing effectiveness by sharing NITAG experiences, lessons learned, and documentation.

During the meeting it was agreed that a global network would provide value by:

- ✚ allowing NITAGs to respond to needs with a more efficient use of resources;
- ✚ developing an easier flow and use of information;
- ✚ strengthening individual NITAGs through sharing of knowledge and promoting innovation; and
- ✚ strengthening the global immunization community through enhanced coordination, concerted action on common issues while respecting each NITAG's autonomy and influence changes.

As a result of the meeting, participants resolved that the Global NITAG Network (GNN) should be established to foster collaboration, to set standards for processes and thereby improve each NITAG's ability to support evidence-based decision making. A network will allow NITAGs to respond to needs with a more efficient use of resources (time and money) and an easier flow and use of information.

This document establishes the organisational make up and operating procedures of the Network.

1. Vision, mission and objectives

VISION: An environment where each country, using the best practices and data available, makes sound, evidence-based decisions on immunization that are most appropriate for their context in order to facilitate the implementation of those decisions.

MISSION: The mission of the Global NITAG Network is to enhance the ability of NITAGs to efficiently make evidence-informed immunization decisions through global collaboration and cooperation.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop a mechanism to share NITAG knowledge, lessons learned and innovation
2. To promote best practice and innovation
3. To facilitate the best use of resources in evidence-based immunization for decision making

2. Values and principles

For a network to be functional it requires genuine commitment from all members, shared accountability, and the appreciation that all members have contribution to make whatever their level of experience. The following are the key values and principles on which the GNN is based.

CONTRIBUTION: Each NITAG has something to offer from their knowledge and experience that others can learn from. The strength of the network lies in the contribution of all of its members, both through sharing of information and through technical support. All members are expected to contribute actively.

OPENNESS: In the same manner that applies to NITAG best practice, the GNN will operate with complete openness, ensuring that decision making processes are clear and held to the highest standards.

INDEPENDENCE: All GNN actions and dealings are independent from external influence.

RESPECT OF AUTONOMY AND CONFIDENTIALITY: The GNN acknowledges that each NITAG has varying regulations regarding sharing of information.

3. Type of network

The Network is voluntary; all NITAGs are eligible to be a part of the Network. Membership is formalised through official request from the NITAG Chair or authorized representative to the Global Network Secretariat and then certified.

The GNN is not a decision making or implementing body. It does not take the place of any other advisory bodies. Rather, it seeks to create an avenue for communication between such bodies.

Members of the GNN acknowledge that there is value in regional and global relationships. The GNN does not make any regional networks redundant. Rather it provides a wider base.

Regional collaboration can be based on geographical similarities, but also on other common factors such as language, disease burden, and economic status. The GNN does respect the value of regional networks, builds on them and helps to connect to the broader global context. Efforts will be made to ensure that burdens are not duplicated.

In acknowledgment of its limitations, the GNN cannot address each and every concern of NITAGs due to time, financial, and capacity constraints. It will be best to select key issues that are common across the Network or of high priority. The network decides the high priority topics according to NITAGs suggestions.

4. Membership

NITAGs as a whole entity are members, rather than specific individuals from each NITAG.

Each NITAG should nominate one person to be the key point of contact with the GNN. However, it is intended that the NITAG as a whole should participate in the collaboration and the sharing.

NITAGs may nominate who attends any meetings of the GNN or who will provide specific technical support.

Regional NITAG networks may also be represented within the GNN.

NITAG partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United States Centres for Disease Control and Surveillance, UNICEF, may form a part of the network as supporters and observers. However they are not official members and have no voting rights.

5. Functions

The role of the GNN is to encourage, facilitate and support NITAGs but not drive them. Efforts are supportive rather than prescriptive.

The GNN may meet its objectives by performing the following functions or others that may be deemed useful by the Network.

- ✚ Fostering the exchange of information and knowledge
 - Promoting dissemination and use of good practices
 - Collectively generating information and knowledge on common topics
 - Collectively promoting the use of new knowledge relevant to common issues
- ✚ Capacity building
 - Facilitating learning experiences
 - Sharing technical resources
 - Creating space for discussion on complex issues
 - Fostering NITAG twinning opportunities
- ✚ Mobilizing resources for joint efforts
- ✚ Developing pools of trainers and/or evaluators that can be readily accessed by NITAGs

6. Governance

The GNN will be governed by a board responsible for setting agenda and priorities. The Board will be made up of a group of NITAGs, rotating every 2 years, with 6 members representing the 6 WHO regions and 6 supplies.

The Board is responsible for agenda and priority setting. A criterion will be established through which the Board arrives at agenda decisions.

The Board is also responsible for developing and pursuing fundraising strategies.

The Board will develop an annual activity plan and accompanying budget.

7. Management

As a WHO Collaborating Centre for evidence based immunization decision making, the Health Policy and Institutional Development Centre at the Agence de Medicine Preventive was nominated to host the Secretariat of the GNN by participants at the May 2016 meeting.

The Secretariat is responsible for the following:

- ✚ Maintaining the regular administrative duties of the GNN; such as records of membership and meeting minutes
- ✚ Coordinating requests for support and information from members
- ✚ Coordinating the communication and liaisons between NITAGs
- ✚ Maintaining the existing NITAG Resource Centre website (<http://www.nitag-resource.org/>) and develop new functions
- ✚ Facilitating the sharing of information through a specific GNN portal on the NRC
- ✚ Identifying areas of possible synergy and connecting members
- ✚ Establishing and maintaining rosters of technical support
- ✚ Producing a regular newsletter to keep members informed of GNN news
- ✚ Managing the planning and logistics of GNN meetings
- ✚ Producing regular monitoring and evaluation reporting for members and donors

8. Sustainability and resilience

The Board and Secretariat should seek to mobilize resources from interested partners to support the activities of the GNN.

Fundraising should be carried out in a way that avoids conflicts of interest in terms of the agenda and priorities. Financial sponsors should not have influence over the agenda of the GNN.

In support of the GVAP, key partners such as WHO, UNICEF, Gavi the Vaccine Alliance and US-CDC should be considered for funding opportunities.

It is envisaged that funds will be required for the following activities:

- ✚ Operational activities
 - IT solutions
 - Translations
 - Organization of meetings (board at least)
 - Printing and distribution of materials
- ✚ Technical activities
 - Studies and research
 - Training
 - Evaluations