Report of the 47th Meeting of the TDR Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee

Professor Margaret Gyapong
STAC Chair

TDR For research on diseases of poverty

UNICEF • UNDP • World Bank • WHO

Agenda

- Opening of meeting

- Statutory Business

- Directors report and follow up of STAC46 recommendations

- Programme Performance review

- Programme budget and workplan

- Technical progress 2024-2025 and plans for 2026-2027

- Update from Scientific Working Group (SWG)

- STAC and SWG Governance

- TDR interface with WHO Departments

- Update from WHO

- Date and place for STAC 48

TDR For research on diseases of poverty
UNICEF · UNDP · World Bank · WHO

STATUTORY BUSINESS

Dr Thabi Maitin was appointed Rapporteur of STAC47.

Agenda of STAC47 was adopted as proposed.

Director's report

- Significant progress towards targets, with operations on track. Technically and financially.

- Maintaining a US$ 40 million budget while having reserves is seen as prudent.

- Despite losing CDC and USAID, opportunities are being explored with other major donors like the Wellcome Trust and Novo Nordisk.

- Innovative fundraising ideas would be appreciated.

- Three candidates short-listed for the new Director position.
  - Final decision has been pending with the WHO Director-General for several months.
  - Appreciate the support from the Standing Committee so far.

TDR For research on diseases of poverty

UNICEF • UNDP • World Bank • WHO

STAC 46 Recommendations and actions

NO	Recommendations	Actions taken
1	In efforts to implement the new strategy, there is the need to develop an investment case for resource mobilization, should be incorporated into the overall programme performance cycles.	TDR Investment Case was developed that includes each strategic priority area. Insights on impact, cost-effectiveness, and cost-efficiency have been provided by a health economist.
2	Clear linkage to the format of the annual results reports, including the addition of indicators at all levels, not only publications, and that further details on definitions be added.	• Performance Framework was revised with input from the SC and JCB. • KPIs expanded to include outcomes and outputs to align with the current strategy's focus on global health challenges. (JCB Approved)
3	TDR's approach to authorship by low- and middle-income country colleagues and junior researchers, be communicated to a wider audience	Guidance on publication authorship that helps TDR staff reflect the Programme's policy on strengthening LMIC leadership, including prioritizing main authors from LMICs.
4	Supported the idea of rationalization of training resources (e.g.MOOCs) and presenting the full range of modules available on a user-friendly site.	TDR training resources from across units were mapped and organized in categories, and are found within a user-friendly designated web repository Training Resources on TDR home page.
5	Continue supporting capacity building for data management and data analysis across TDR's activities.	• A video lecture series on data management and statistics (French) is available and will be published online in 2025. • Integrated EpiCollect5, a mobile-based data capture tool, and Jamovi, a free open-source statistical package (jamovi.org), into the SORT IT curriculum. • Training workshops on data management, analysis and sharing on vectors are jointly supported by TDR and the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF).
6	Explore opportunities for additional implementation research (e.g. health economics evaluation, root cause analysis) to strengthen policy engagement and operational systems related to global challenges addressed by TDR's activities.	• Root Cause Analysis, a full research package for facilitating the conduct of such evaluation to understand the reemergence of yellow fever outbreaks. • Economic component, • Research tool developed to integrate health economic components in operational research projects.
7	Continue working with WHO regional offices and departments (ethics, research entities, etc.) and engage in further partnerships with regional and global organizations (e.g. Africa CDC and others).	Annual Meeting with WHO regional offices took place in October 2024. Impact grants and other common areas of interests were discussed. 14 projects were supported in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and 10 in the European Region. New call is under development in the Western Pacific Region.

Director's report

- Endorsed the Director's report

- Commended Secretariat for acting on the recommendations of STAC 46

- RECOMMENDATION
  - *Considering the risks to quality of science and continuity involved from delayed confirmation of the incoming Director, STAC recommends that the Secretariat request the Standing Committee to intervene as a matter of urgency, to ensure a decision is made by the WHO Director-General on both naming Professor Reeder's successor and granting a one-month extension of his contract to ensure a smooth handover*

Programme Performance overview

- KPIs and how they are used to track performance
  - Concern about inequities in getting published (Article publishing charge)

- Need to track TDR work that has influenced policy

- Concern about the lower number of women applying for grants
  - ? Age limit of 35

- Pleased to note the success of SORT IT

- Philanthropic and non traditional sources of funding

- ENDORSED
  - Preliminary Financial report 2024 and outlook 2025–2027
  - 2024 Results report
  - 2024 Risk management report

- RECOMMENDATION
  - Explore how authorship and other contributions are evolving in TDR-supported publications and start to develop indicators to measure these.
  - Explore and document the barriers to publication by authors on TDR-supported publications, and explore potential.

TDR For research on diseases of poverty

UNICEF · UNDP · World Bank · WHO

Programme budget and workplan

- Clear and well thought through.

- Conservative planning and contingency measures are in place.

- Identify activities that can be more self-sufficient, perhaps with TDR in a supporting role and regional training centres assisting with certain components.

- Was endorsed by STAC.

- RECOMMENDATIONS
  - Monitor developments and risk manage the Programme budget 2026-–2027, including working with partners to potentially secure additional resources at country and institution levels.

  - Prioritise activities that can be scaled back and quickly scale them up again if resources become available.

Technical reports (Research for Implementation)

- Efforts to tackle antimicrobial resistance are expanding through SORT IT, with a new project in the Eastern Mediterranean.

- Working on eliminating visceral leishmaniasis in South-East Asia, with plans to shift focus to East Africa in 2025 following a WHO Strategic framework.

- Research packages like TDA4Child and ShORRT are enhancing TB diagnosis and treatment.

- Malaria activities involve optimizing seasonal chemoprevention and introducing vaccines in 13 countries.

- NTD-related projects focus on schistosomiasis, onchocerciasis and skin NTDs, use of Moxidectin and deployment of Paediatric Praziquantel.

- Promotes gender-responsive health interventions with studies in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, the Philippines and South Africa.

- Concern about the impact of USAID freeze.

- EXPECTED RESULTS APPEAR TO BE ON TRACK

TDR For research on diseases of poverty

UNICEF · UNDP · World Bank · WHO

Technical reports (Research Capacity Strengthening)

- RTCs still delivering IR Courses in the respective regions.

- RTCs aligning workplans with the new Strategy to address global health challenges.

- Mentorship program being piloted to support scientific leadership and career development.

- Tracer studies show majority of grantees working in LMIC.

- Plans to have an RTC in Francophone West Africa.

- MOOC is gaining grounds.

Technical reports (Global Engagement)

- Cross cutting area of the current strategy, Managed by various individuals and supported by additional staff and consultants as and when needed.

- Main area of interest Global Health Challenges.

- Impact grants are regionally integrated, addressing global health challenges with varying priorities.

- Gender and equity initiatives include research and training to address gender and intersecting factors in health innovations.

- Forty-six episodes of the Global Health Matters podcast have been produced, downloaded over 95 000 times in 195 countries, with growing audiences in LMICs.

- Social Innovation in health initiative gaining grounds with lots of interest in LMIC.

Technical reports (decisions and recommendations)

Decision:

- STAC endorsed the reports on technical progress and planned activities of all strategic priority areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Consider presenting the results of activities in the capacity strengthening strategic priority area in a manner that demonstrates their contribution to the four global health challenges of the current strategy, e.g. fellows/grantees.

- Group the expected results under the research for implementation strategic priority area into workstreams that reflect the global health challenges of the current strategy.

- Review the criteria for leadership fellows to ensure that fellows have adequate time for leadership training and not only competencies.

- Reflect on the principles of priority setting to ensure they align with TDR's current strategy. Consider the sustainability and partnership aspects when making decisions.

- Consider the impact of accessible formats for communications, especially for people with disabilities.

SWG and STAC Governance

- Combined SWG is working well and their report well received.

- List of new SWG members was presented.

- Paid attention to one health, environment and health, health/development economics.

- Call for STAC yielded over 300 members.

- Discussed genital schisto which is high on the agenda.

- *RECOMMENDATION*
  - *Consider expanding the focus to include male genital schistosomiasis and its impact on the transmission of other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).*

Interface with WHO departments

- NTD and AI
- Global Malaria Program
- Science Division's evidence-to-policy and impact work

TDR For research on diseases of poverty

UNICEF • UNDP • World Bank • WHO

STAC thanked the Director and secretariat for the hard work and conscious effort to monitor evaluate and improve their work in line with the new strategy and Plan.

STAC appreciated the work of departing STAC SWG members ending their term.

Acknowledged and appreciated TDR Director for his tremendous effort in steering TDR to a good place and wished him well.

Agreed that STAC (STAC48) will take place in Geneva 18–19 March 2026.

Thank you