

## TB REACH

### Report of the first meeting of the Proposal Review Committee

The first meeting of the TB REACH Proposal Review Committee (PRC) was held on 16-19 March 2010 at WHO, Geneva.

The meeting was called to review and grade the applications submitted to the TB REACH Secretariat in response to the first call for proposals.

The specific objectives were the following:

- Review grant applications and make recommendations on which grant applications to accept and fund and which ones to reject.
- Recommend steps that may be necessary for successful applicants to meet with all conditions for TBREACH support.
- Prepare a PRC report for the STOP TB Partnership Secretariat and the PRC Review Form as feed back to each of the applicants regarding the quality of their proposal (including the clarifications or adjustments that are required, and the reasons for rejecting an application).
- Recommend successful proposals that may require baseline validation via a field visit.

The agenda of the meeting is annexed (Annex-1).

The meeting was attended by all TB REACH PRC members (see Annex-2)

In the opening session Dr Mario Raviglione, Director of Stop TB Department, WHO Geneva, addressed the PRC members.. Pointing out the fact that only about 5.7 million TB cases are notified globally out of an estimated incidence of over 9 million cases and the fact that the progress in case detection is stagnating, he highlighted the need for innovations to increase case detection and also the need to detect TB cases early in the course of their illness in order to have an impact on transmission. He highlighted that the large number of applications (over 190) received in response to the first call for proposal by TB REACH is an indication of the need at country level despite the presence of Global Fund and other donors on the international arena..

Dr Leopold Blanc, Coordinator TBS, STOP TB Dept. WHO Geneva, made a presentation to brief the PRC on the framework for early and increased case detection. He pointed out the need for moving beyond the 70% case detection target to the more recent target of universal access, i.e. aiming for 100% cases to be detected.

To achieve universal access it is important mainly to reduce barriers in accessing health services, particularly targeting the poor, the vulnerable, women, children and all sections of the population where currently TB cases are either not detected, or when detected are not notified. He also pointed out that results of recent prevalence surveys are indicating that symptom screening alone may not be enough to detect TB cases and therefore the

need for review of risk factors (e.g. HIV, smokers, diabetics) as suspects for TB. He underlined the role of active case finding and the evidence available so far from such interventions, e.g. contact investigations, screening of clinical risk groups, etc.). He also discussed about how to prioritize activities to increase case detection based on the country and local context.

Dr Karin Weyer, Coordinator, Laboratories, Stop TB Dept. WHO Geneva made a presentation to brief the PRC members on the new WHO policies on TB diagnostics (e.g. liquid culture, rapid speciation test, line probe assay, etc.), the upcoming policy consideration for diagnostics such as LED fluorescent microscopy, front-loading and MODS. She also discussed the roadmap for new diagnostics and how to move new diagnostics to country level and scale-up using mechanisms such EXPAND TB and the role of the Global Laboratory Initiative. She highlighted the fact that use of new laboratory technology could increase bacteriologically confirmed TB case detection when compared to sputum microscopy using ZN stain, having also a potential to detect cases earlier. She underlined as well where the TB REACH initiative can contribute to the overall global knowledge in terms of diagnosis and new tools.

The PRC Secretariat briefed the PRC members on the details of the TB REACH initiative, including the objectives, eligibility criteria, application process and application form.

The PRC was informed that the first call for proposals was launched on 25 January 2010 and applicants were allowed to submit applications till 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010 (12 noon Geneva time).

The total number of applications that were received was 192, of which 170 were actually received on the last day, i.e. on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

The 192 applications from 41 countries were submitted by NTP (33), non-governmental organizations (141) and 18 governmental organizations (other than NTP). The total amount of funding requested was US\$ 127 million.

The Secretariat screened all 192 applications for timeliness of their submission, eligibility, completeness of the form and attachments, the NTP support letter, and the audited financial statements.

Of the 192 applications 90 were screened out by the Secretariat based on one or more of the following:

- Submission from a non-eligible country
- Submission beyond the deadline
- Incomplete application form
- Incomplete attachments, especially the letter of support from NTP
- Incomplete audited financial statements submitted, or inadequate financial capacity of the applicant

The remaining 102 applications were submitted to the PRC for their review. The WHO Region wise break of these 102 applications were 3 from AMR, 69 from AFR, 6 from EMR, 3 from EUR, 17 from SEA and 4 from WPR.

Dr. Frank Bonsu, NTP manager Ghana was announced as the Chair of the PRC and Dr. D`Arcy Richardson from PATH as Co-Chair.

The way of working through these 102 proposals coming from 41 countries was discussed with the PRC members.

It was agreed to review the proposals by dividing the PRC into four teams (3 teams of 2 members and one team of 3 members) and taking proposals from one country at a time. The schedule included five plenary sessions to report, to discuss and develop consensus on the results.

Each proposal reviewed was reported to the plenary in a standard PRC reporting format, which included as well the consensus grading and recommendations of the PRC

All members of the PRC had access to all the electronic and printed applications as well as background material, e.g. WHO country profiles, country level TB notification data and some useful publications on case detection. The applications received in French were all translated in English for the review purposes.

Focal points for Regions within WHO Stop TB Dept. were available when desired by the PRC members for answering specific questions on the TB situation in specific countries.

The sheer number of applications to TB REACH was unexpectedly large considering that TB REACH is a new initiative and therefore the PRC had to work hard with very strict time management, no coffee breaks and shortened lunch breaks to complete the review of all proposals in the allotted four days.

The results of the PRC review are summarized in Table-1.

The complete list of all reviewed applications and their grading is attached as Annex-3

**Table-1: Results of PRC review of applications**

Total number of applications received	192
Applications that were incomplete, or not eligible	90
Number of applications screened by PRC	102

Category after review by PRC	Number of applications	Budget (US\$)
Category A	3	2,039,334
Category B+	8	4,646,343
Category B	19	11,762,193
Category B-	5	3,501,380
Category C	40	
Category D	27	
Total	102	

Total budget approved (A, B+, B, B-)	\$21,949,250
Total budget approved (A, B+, B)	\$18,447,870

In the last session of the PRC meeting, members made several recommendations to improve the application and proposal screening process for the TB REACH second call for proposals

The list of recommendations was collected by the Secretariat (Annex-4), but time did not permit in depth discussions on each of them.

The PRC recommended that the discussions on the recommendations should be taken up in another meeting of the PRC in late May - early June 2010.

**Next steps:**

- The TB REACH Secretariat will submit the results of the Proposals Review Committee to the Stop TB Partnership Coordinating Board for endorsement
- The PRC meeting, the TB REACH Secretariat will inform all applicants about the results of their application through a generic letter for the applications screened out by the TB REACH Secretariat and through the PRC review form to the applicants screened by the PRC (after editing the forms for language and consistency)
- Clarifications sought by the PRC for the successful applications should be obtained by the Secretariat from the applicants in a time bound manner and circulated to the PRC members (primary reviewer, Chair and Co-Chair) for acceptance.
- The Secretariat to organize a two-day meeting of the PRC to discuss the recommendations for improving the application and proposal review process for future Rounds of TB REACH.

Suggested dates: week 31 May - 4 June; or week 6-11 June

Location: Geneva; Duration:2 full days.