

New blood at Uganda Stop TB Partnership (USTP)

After a relative period of relative slow pace, the Uganda Stop TB Partnership (USTP) has now gotten into a high drive from the time it acquired a new home in July last year. The fully furnished and equipped home is located at Mukwasi house, Lumumba Avenue in Kampala, the Uganda Capital City. The Secretariat is well constituted with three full time staff, The Executive Director - Dr. Paul Kawanguzi Isiko, Technical Advisor – Dr. Paddy Busulwa and the Secretary- M/s Juliet Nakijoba and this was one of the major achievements in 2013. Thanks for the support from Global Fund to make all this to happen. The Secretariat is now a beehive of activities as it works to support the partners on a daily basis to contribute to the control of TB in the Country. The partners are indeed doing all they can within their mandate to work towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and meeting the national targets.

As soon as the staff had gotten into office they started off work immediately and they brought with them a wealth of experience by participating in the renewal proposal writing for Global Fund Round 10 Phase II. Certainly a lot was done in the process including doing the financial gap analysis part of the proposal, among the many things and hopefully the country shall be able to start implementing the activities for phase II later in 2014. News from Geneva indicated that Uganda was on the path to meet the MDGs for TB and the partners are even more energized to support the National TB program to achieve what is embedded in the Strategic plan which also ends in 2014/15.

The support from the global fund has enabled USTP to functionalize the working groups which include the Advocacy Communication and Social Mobilization WG, the TB/HIV WG, and the DOTS expansion WG. The working group meetings are being held monthly on a rotational basis and they feed into the quarterly partners' meetings which are held quarterly. The participation of the partners has been overwhelming and the Program Manager NTLP has been extremely supportive. During the WG meetings the partner organisations renewed their commitment to achieving the objectives of each group. On top of this the USTP went ahead to gather and compile information on members organizational activities. This exercise is expected to produce mapping information about the partners with respect to geographical distribution of their activities as well as on the technical areas they support. It is hoped that in the near future a partner directory will be produced which will guide the partners and the National TB program in planning. During the quarterly meeting many issues were addressed; the mission, vision, objectives as well as the relevance of the Partnership were explained to the members. This helped the organizations to renew their commitment to the Partnership and over 10 new member organizations were initiated into Partnership. The member organisations were also taken through the NTLP Strategic Plan and given guidance on how to relate with the NTLP and also how to support the Ministry of Health national program to realize its objectives. They were

equally given a presentation on World TB Day (history, objectives etc) and the guidance on how to commemorate this year's 24th March Day.

The secretariat has provided technical support to many of the member partners in the different areas of planning, M&E, resource mobilization including proposal writing and it is hoped that through these efforts more resources shall be obtained to implement TB control activities in the country. The partners are now fully engaged in the planning to commemorate World TB Day in their different districts including the national event. USTP is spearheading the national event and a lot of activities are being planned to take place centrally and at the host district especially during the preceding week.

A few challenges however still remain but which will be turned into opportunities, and these include how to harmonize the activities of the working groups and how to bring on board the non conventional partners from the business and corporate sector but inroads are already being built.

USTP is on the move and the priority activities include, recruiting more partners formalizing their membership, Producing an M and E tool for partner participation in the Partnership and using this to carry out M and E activities and publishing a quarterly news letter for all the in country partners etc.