

## **Structure - Partnering initiatives to stop TB at country level**

### **1. Background**

Human and financial resources for implementing national TB plans in country are usually scarce and inadequate within the national TB programme. Partnering initiatives build on recognizing the role that other partners from civil society (nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations) and private/business sector play in TB prevention, care and control, and provide an opportunity to support them.

Partnering initiatives at country level could offer an inclusive platform to all stakeholders to come together to develop and implement a shared national TB plan to achieve the objectives of TB prevention, care and control.

If the initial core group of partners decides it is worth to create a partnering initiative, they could take on a partnering process. This is a dynamic process based on three continuously evolving components: partnership exploration, building and maintenance. As part of this process, partners will be faced with the need to structure the partnership. A partnering process does not always lead to the establishment of a formal Stop TB partnership arrangement. Therefore, we speak of partnering initiatives at country level. *These entities should not be considered in any sense branches of the global Stop TB Partnership*, as they are fully autonomous and they choose the legal status that best suits their purposes.

### **2. Objective of this document**

This concept note aims at providing initial partners with the basic principles, steps and options to create a structure adequate to the partnership function. It is based on experiences collected from current partnering initiatives.

### **3. Basic principles**

The structure of partnering initiatives to stop TB at country level shall take into consideration three basic principles:

1. The structure must be based on the function (goal/strategy) of the partnering initiative, and not vice versa.
2. Start small and keep it simple. Expand only if partners decide that there is an additional function to be carried out.
3. Stay flexible so that the structure can be easily adapted to possible changes.

### **4. Baby steps to create an adequate structure**

When thinking of setting up the structure of a partnership, the core group of partners might consider the following options. In general, the structure is composed of three elements: the secretariat, the governing bodies and the working groups.

Secretariat - this is a basic management structure. It is the real catalyser that helps with facilitating/brokering the partnership and ensures continuity to its work in between the meetings of partners.

1. From the beginning, it is key that a focal point of the partnership be in charge of facilitating/brokering the partnering process. Secretariat functions, such as planning and following up on partners' meeting as well as facilitating communications among partners, would be usually taken care by this person, among his/her other duties.
2. When the number of partners increases and the partnership becomes more structured, the secretariat could become a full-time dedicated secretariat and be expanded depending on the functions needed by the partnership. The head of the secretariat would then be a selected Executive Secretary. Other staff could take care of the following: communicating with current and potential partners; planning and following up on partners' meeting; building partners' capacity on the needed areas; monitoring and evaluating the work of the partnership; mobilizing resources. These functions could be taken up by partners, if there were not sufficient resources for the secretariat as such.

Governing bodies - these are usually a plenary body and an executive body.

1. Start small and simple by holding a meeting of all partners on a regular basis. In this setting, partners can discuss the vision and goals of the partnership and conduct a resource mapping exercise (see tools 1 and 3). This plenary body (e.g. forum or general meeting or assembly) serves as a forum for information exchange and discussion on common plans and activities.
2. If the number of partners increases and/or the partnership function moves from information exchange to implementation of a common plan, there might be the need to create an executive body that takes decisions on behalf of the partners (e.g. coordinating board or planning group) in between the meetings of the plenary body. This body will be composed of elected/selected representatives of the constituencies (e.g. national TB programme, nongovernmental organizations, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, business/private sector entities) of the partnership. This body can elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for a term of two/three years.

Generally, decisions are taken by consensus, unless partners (usually the Chair and hosting organization) decide that certain discussions require a majority voting. Consensus is a key partnership principle, as all partners are considered as equal and dialogue is highly valued.

Working groups. Depending on the differentiation of the areas of work of the partnership and the number of partners, the partnership might consider to create groups of work to facilitate the engagement/contribution of partners. Topics will be decided based on the function of the partnership. The role of working groups in national partnering initiatives is usually focused on: 1) gathering evidence on a particular operational challenge in TB prevention and care; and 2) on the adaptation to the local context of internationally recommended policies. As such, the activities of working groups and any ensuing recommendation is meant to contribute and support the normative role of the national TB programme. All partners, based on their roles and responsibilities, will also contribute to the operationalization of such policies.

## **5. Legal framework of secretariat**

Depending on the development of the partnership, the core group of partners might consider the following options for the legal framework of the secretariat:

1. Initially, the secretariat could be hosted by one of the partners. In this case, the host organization provides the legal umbrella under which the partnership

operates. In any case, the partnership would have governing bodies as a form of self-organization even without being established as a separate legal entity. WHO Country Office usually has a comparative advantage to host the secretariat, as it is mostly perceived as a neutral partner with convening power. The national TB programme or an NGO could also be functioning as hosting organization.

2. If the partnership becomes more structured and needs to be directly receiving funds, the secretariat can be constituted as an independent legal entity in the form of a not-for-profit organization under the law of the country. As the WHO Country Office and the Ministry of Health/national TB programme cannot be members of a nongovernmental organization, they may decide, if invited to do so, to serve as ex-officio members on the governing bodies of the national partnership.

In both cases, the partnership is not a branch of the global Stop TB Partnership and remains legally independent.

## 6. Comparing structure options

Most partnerships start informally and grow increasingly formalized over time as their programme of work becomes more complex and more resource intensive.

Summarizing, the options can be:

<b>Less formalized</b>	<b>More formalized</b>
All partners meet on a regular basis.	- All partners meet on a regular basis in the plenary body. - Executive body meets in between meetings of plenary body to take the needed decisions.
Secretariat is hosted by one of the partners.	Secretariat becomes an independent legal entity, such as an NGO.
Partners exchange information on different areas of work but do not have a shared workplan.	Partners contribute to the design and implementation of the national TB control plan, each with clear roles and responsibilities, and they may decide to carry out part of the work, if need be, through working groups.

Note: Partnerships can mix elements of the first column with elements of the second column along their development.

In general, there can be advantages and disadvantages for both options:

	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
<b>Less formal</b>	Less costly as major resource demand is time rather than cash.	More occasional commitment, if partners have other competing priorities.
	Less processes and administration rules to be followed.	Not structured enough for the coordination and management of resources.
	Freedom to explore new ideas and relationships.	Might not be taken seriously by other stakeholders.
<b>More formal</b>	Increased authority and capacity to exert influence.	Subject to legislative restrictions on action.
	Enhanced ability to mobilize and manage large-scale resources (e.g. Global Fund grants).	Increasingly high administrative costs.
	More focused activities and greater likelihood of sustainability.	Requires more agreement on operational principles, and might tend to become over-bureaucratic.

## 7. Examples

Current national partnerships provide different structure examples:

### Swaziland

- General Meeting as plenary body
- Coordination Committee as executive body
- Secretariat hosted by National TB Programme

See the Partnering Agreement at:

[http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/agreement\\_swaziland.pdf](http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/agreement_swaziland.pdf) (pg. 7)

and

[http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/governance\\_swaziland.pdf](http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/governance_swaziland.pdf)

### Brazil

- General Assembly as plenary body
- Secretaria Executiva composed of 8 representatives of the constituencies, as executive body
- Secretariat hosted by BENFAM, one of the partners

See the Partnering Agreement at:

[http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/agreement\\_brazil.pdf](http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/agreement_brazil.pdf) (pg. 2)

### India

- Steering Committee, composed of representatives of constituencies of the partnership. NTP, WHO and The Union are standing invitees.
- Secretariat hosted by The Union, one of the partners

See at: <http://www.tbpartnershipindia.org/aboutcom.asp>

See letter of commitment:

[http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/letter\\_of\\_commitment\\_india.pdf](http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/letter_of_commitment_india.pdf)

### Uganda

- Annual General Meeting, as plenary body.
- Board of the Partnership, as executive body, comprising the Chair, Vice Chair, Executive Secretary, NTP, WHO and Chairs of the Working Groups.
- Secretariat initially hosted by WHO Country Office. After a few years, the partnership has been registered as a local nongovernmental organization.

More examples will be added after a collection of good practices/lessons learned being carried out by the Secretariat.
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