



Message from the Chair and the Secretariat of the TB/HIV Working Group of the Stop TB Partnership, March 2013

Dear members of the TB/HIV Working Group and friends of TB/HIV,

We have pleasure in sharing a brief update that includes an overview of the latest TB/HIV activities, news, research data, resources and upcoming events to note in the diary.

1. HIV/TB at CROI 2013

The World Health Organization and the Consortium to Respond Effectively to the AIDS/TB Epidemic (CREATE) convened their 7th CROI-affiliated HIV/TB research meeting on behalf of the TB/HIV Working Group of the Stop TB Partnership, in Atlanta, Georgia USA on 3 March, 2013. The meeting discussed critical knowledge and research gaps on TB prevention among children and adults and drug interactions between new TB drugs and ART. Co-chaired by Diane Havlir, Chair of the Global TB/HIV Working Group and Richard Chaisson, Director of Johns Hopkins University and CREATE, the meeting was convened by Haileyesus Getahun of WHO and attended by some 100 participants including the US Global AIDS Coordinator, Ambassador Eric Goosby, Principal Deputy Coordinator at the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, Deborah J. von Zinkernagel and Director of the HIV Department of WHO, Gottfried Hirsenschall.

Thanks to efforts by Working Group and Core Group members over the years in raising the profile of TB/HIV at CROI, there was a record number of abstracts at the main CROI conference this year including late breakers on TB and one full day of TB discussions as well as increased mainstreaming of TB discussions in all the critical areas of HIV care including basic science. For more details on the HIV/TB Research meeting and for a brief summary of the key TB-related studies presented, please visit the following [link](#). For more news from CROI please also consider visiting the NAM aidsmap [Conference website](#).

2. Western Pacific meeting to achieve universal access on HIV Targets

The Western Pacific regional office of WHO, in collaboration with UNAIDS regional office for Asia and the Pacific organized a meeting to review country progress and discuss programmatic and strategic approaches for achieving universal access HIV targets including PMTCT and HIV/TB. More than 90 participants from 11 countries attended the meeting, including programme managers of HIV and STI, TB and MCH, civil society representatives, WHO and UNAIDS staff. The unique organization of the meeting involving the three programmes helped to cross-fertilize and exchange best practices, and identify challenges, solutions and synergies across HIV and STI, TB and MCH programmes. These included lessons and synergies around nationwide scale-up of collaborative TB/HIV activities including integration into MCH and harm reduction services, HIV and TB drug resistance surveillance and the potential use of Xpert MTB/RIF as a platform for TB and STI diagnosis. Countries with commendable nationwide scale-up in the region included Cambodia and Malaysia. Cambodia is currently bracing itself for using its experience of TB/HIV scale-up to mainstream TB prevention, diagnosis and treatment services into maternal and child health services. With an average IPT adherence rate of 80%, Cambodia will also be expanding IPT to those people living with HIV who are receiving ART. Current ART coverage for HIV-positive TB patients was reported at 76%. Malaysia demonstrated a high level of political will and programmatic performance that has resulted in the scale-up of TB screening, IPT and ART coverage among TB patients living with HIV including drug users. It is now planning to use Xpert MTB/RIF as the first-line TB diagnostic tool for people living with HIV. Whilst its caseload is low, Mongolia was another country with an encouraging programmatic response to TB/HIV. Lack of coordination and collaboration between NAP and NTP particularly around the implementation of TB screening and IPT (e.g. China, Lao PR, PNG) were the main challenges observed during the meeting.

3. Amy Bloom - Interim Chair of the Board of the Stop TB Partnership

We would like to congratulate Core Group member, Amy Bloom, on her new position as Interim Board Chair of the Stop TB Partnership. Amy has been a long-standing member of the Core Group since its inception, representing USAID, and she has been a proactive policy leader in the global response to TB/HIV.

4. PEPFAR evaluation by Institute of Medicine

On 20th February the Institute of Medicine released their 678 page [evaluation of PEPFAR](#). The report was compiled from a variety of data sources, including more than 400 interviews with stakeholders in 13 PEPFAR partner countries, at PEPFAR's headquarters, and at other institutions and agencies involved in the global HIV response. The evaluation highlights PEPFAR's successes, calling on initiative to intensify efforts to enhance partner countries' management of programmes and to improve prevention. It concludes that PEPFAR has been globally transformative. The report also provides some analysis on PEPFAR's TB response, recognising PEPFAR's notable contribution towards advancing policies and systems for TB/HIV integration in partner countries. However, it acknowledges that progress in achieving adequate coverage of both HIV testing among TB patients and TB screening in HIV patients has been more challenging and that concerted efforts will be critical to reduce mortality from TB/HIV.

5. IPT to be rolled out in India

The National Aids Control Organisation of India has been considering adopting a policy of IPT for the prevention of TB among people living with HIV since early 2010. Acknowledging the recent strong evidence on the independent and synergistic efficacy of IPT when provided with ART in preventing TB among PLHIV, the National Technical Working Group has taken the policy decision and recommended the phased implementation of the IPT strategy by National AIDS Control Programme and Revised National TB Control Programme. This strategy will be implemented across two states of India for a period of 3-6 months to refine the operational guidance including monitoring and evaluation tools. After review of implementation experience in the two states and results from a parallel study conducted on efficacy and operational feasibility, IPT will then be scaled-up nationwide. We congratulate Core Group member, Dr Rewari of the National AIDS Control Organisation of India and all those involved for their work in making this happen.

6. Global Fund TB/HIV Operational Guidance

Recognising that progress in coverage of TB/HIV activities needs to be accelerated and that cumulative expenditure for TB/HIV collaborative activities (2002-2011) represents a mere 4% of TB and 1% of HIV Global Fund grants, a Global Fund Technical Working Group on TB/HIV was formed towards the end of last year. The Working Group comprises representatives from the Global Fund, PEPFAR, the Stop TB Partnership, UNAIDS, USAID and WHO and includes members of the Core Group. In order to address the gaps, the Technical Working Group has recently developed a TB/HIV Operational Guidance which describes concrete action steps for Global Fund stakeholders at national and global levels to improve the uptake of collaborative TB/HIV activities in Global Fund grants with the goal of nationwide scale-up. We encourage global and national stakeholders to use this guidance which will be made available from the Secretariat in due course.

7. Information Note on Xpert MTB/RIF

In light of the current expansion of Xpert MTB/RIF and WHO's recommendation to use it as a primary diagnostic test for TB in people living with HIV, the Secretariat has compiled an [Xpert TB/HIV Information Note](#) that outlines the early evidence on the use of the tool. The information note includes research findings and modelling results, providing algorithms for the management of people living with HIV and with presumptive TB.

8. Stop TB Partnership decision on Working Groups

Further to Decision point 22.9.4 of the 22nd Coordinating Board meeting of the Stop TB Partnership, the Executive Committee held a meeting on 7 February 2013 to review information collated from all Working Groups, in order to “*make a recommendation on the strategy guiding the number and focus of Working Groups including priorities, deliverables, and financing for the next three years for consideration at the next board meeting. A core principle of this recommendation will be aligning the structure and expectations of Working Groups with resources currently available, while making clear the additional impact that could be achieved if additional funding is made available to working groups by donors.*” The following observations and recommendations more pertinent to this Working Group were made:

- The Executive Committee agreed that the TB/HIV Working Group, the GLI and the three Research Working Groups are financially strong and doing well.
- The Executive Committee agreed there is a need for clear criteria for all Subgroups.
- The Executive Committee agreed that it will need to provide more guidance on what it expects from all the WGs and to develop a general TOR for all WGs on goals, scopes, membership, funding, and governance issues.

A full set of the minutes from the Executive Committee meeting can be found at the following [link](#). The Executive committee will be meeting again in Seattle, 14-15 March 2013 and, whilst the main focus of the meeting will be on governance reform, there will also be a session on the Working Groups. We will keep you updated.

9. UNAIDS Science Now

[UNAIDS Science Now](#) is based on what used to be the HIV This Week blog also produced by UNAIDS. The new platform however, consists of a bigger interactive site that not only includes access to what is new in scientific journals, but also provides space for discussions and debates on current issues around HIV science. Each month, every title of every paper published is systematically screened and a selection of about 20 abstracts of the most interesting papers compiled in the monthly digest HIV this month. Guest editors highlight the most exciting articles providing their perspectives on why findings from specific studies are important and where they fit into the broader context of HIV research. The online discussions will be an open space for the exchange of scientific information. They will be chaired by UNAIDS and will have guest speakers/discussants experts in different areas. The discussions will be webcasted and recordings of the discussions will be made available in the multimedia section of the new platform. If you would like to subscribe to HIV this month issues, please click [here](#). If you would like to recommend an article for inclusion, please contact the Science Now team at the following [link](#).

10. Activists Guide to Bedaquiline

Bedaquiline (also known by its trade name, Sirturo, or as TMC207) is the first new drug from a new drug class to treat TB to be approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in over 40 years. Treatment Action Group (TAG) has just released a new guide: [An Activist's Guide to Bedaquiline](#) which highlights important safety and efficacy data reported thus far and offers advocacy recommendations for activists to take forward and help ensure access, fair pricing and further research on bedaquiline and other TB drugs.

11. Upcoming events

Please find below details of upcoming events, offering further opportunities to increase the profile of TB/HIV. We encourage working group members and friends of TB/HIV to help ensure, where possible, that TB/HIV features on the agendas of these events by submitting abstracts and organizing events. Please make a note of the abstract deadlines.

The 3rd Women Deliver Global Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 28-30 May 2013

More than 5,000 participants are expected to attend the Women Deliver 2013 conference in 2013 and will focus on the links between women's health and other development goals, offering a perfect opportunity to mainstream TB onto the agenda. For more details please visit the conference website

Harm Reduction International Conference 2013, Vilnius, Lithuania, 9-12 June 2013

Harm Reduction 2013 is expecting attendance by over 1000 delegates and will focus on key issues affecting the Eurasian region. The theme for the conference is "the value/s of harm reduction". For more information please visit the conference website.

7th International AIDS Society Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 30 June – 3 July 2013

IAS 2013 will be organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS), in partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Research in AIDS (CERiA), University of Malaya a centre established in 2007 to undertake HIV-related research with a particular focus on HIV and substance use and related co-morbidities including tuberculosis (TB) and hepatitis C. For more please visit the conference website.

Key dates: Late breaker sessions open from: 3 April – 7 May 2013

17th International Conference on AIDS and STI's in Africa, 7-11 December 2013

ICASA is Africa's largest AIDS Conference and will be held next year at the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC), South Africa, from 7 – 11 December 2013. The theme of ICASA 2013 is "Now More Than Ever: Targeting Zero" More information is available at www.icasa2013southafrica.org.

Key dates: Abstract submissions and workshop/skills building applications open from 13 March to 13 June 2013

Please note that you can keep up-to-date with TB/HIV news on a more regular basis by monitoring the [TB/HIV Working Group homepage](#), by following us on Twitter @HIVTB or by liking our [Facebook page](#). We also encourage members to provide us with news items that you would like to be included in future letters.

Regards,

Diane Havlir
The Chair

Haileyesus Getahun
Secretariat