

Annex 6. Terms of Reference: Implementation of NTD Programs in the Context of COVID-19 Ad hoc Task Group

1. Background

NTDs are a group of treatable and preventable diseases that continue to affect over one billion of the world's most impoverished, marginalized people living in remote communities. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a key role in the fight against these diseases.

The NTD NGO Network (NNN) is a global forum for NGOs to contribute to the global control, elimination, and management of consequences of NTDs outlined within the internationally agreed World Health Organization (WHO) NTD Roadmap.

Our vision is a world free of NTDs.

Our purpose is to enhance the contribution of NGOs towards that vision.

Our objectives to achieve our vision and purpose are:

1. To be the unified NGO voice on common issues to achieve our NTD goals.
2. To enhance our community of practice through membership engagement, learning and sharing knowledge.

Our values of participation, legitimacy, creativity and independence guide our NNN community in achieving these objectives. Our Membership is open to any NGO or academic institution¹ that is engaged in the fight against NTDs. Other organisations are welcome to join our work as active observers.

2. Timeframes

- This timebound Ad hoc Task Group will operate for an initial 8-month period from June 2020 to January 2021.
- At the end of the initial period the Chair/Co-Chairs will report to the NNN Executive Committee the outcome of the proposed task. Depending on the need, the Executive Committee will decide to:
 - Disband it as it has completed the identified tasks for which it was formed
 - Extend its time for an additional period to complete the identified/additional tasks agreed with the Executive Committee, or
 - Become a Cross-Cutting Group if an ongoing need for the group has been identified.

3. Purpose

This timebound Ad hoc Task Group comprises of NNN members and others with an interest in working more closely together in the fight against NTDs.

¹ Based on the principle that most academic and research institutions are registered NGOs – they are welcome to become members based on the understanding of this principle

Rationale

In its interim guidance issued in May 2020², WHO recommended that community-based surveys, mass treatment, and active case finding for NTDs be temporarily suspended in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, it advised countries to monitor and re-evaluate the necessity for delaying activities at regular intervals.

Currently, many NTD-endemic countries are beginning to lift COVID-19 related restrictions and are planning to resume NTD activities. However, decisions to resume activities such as MDA should be predicated on the notion of “doing no harm”. There is increasing concern among NGOs that resuming activities prematurely may contribute to further spread of the virus. Thus, there is an urgent need for National NTD Programs (NTDPs) and their partners to objectively consider the risks and benefits of resuming field-based activities and to develop risk mitigation strategies to protect communities once activities resume.

Several NGO partners have begun to develop risk assessment tools and to consider mitigation strategies. The NTD NGO community will benefit from harnessing the experience and best practices being developed and work collaboratively to develop evidence-based approaches to these unrepresented challenges to NTD programs.

The key objectives of the Ad hoc Task Group are:

- To collaborate to develop best practices for objective risk assessment
- To collaborate to develop best practices for risk mitigation strategies for implementing NTD field activities in the context of COVID-19, while recognizing that specific strategies will need to be tailored to the country context
- To coordinate efforts in risk assessment and mitigation tools and strategies to prevent duplication of effort which may further burden NTDPs

4. Membership

The task team will be comprised of individuals with expertise in NTD program planning and implementation, development of NTD tools and best practices, monitoring and evaluation, and an active interest in supporting NTD programs to safely resume activities.

- The Co-Chairs will be Simon Bush (Sightsavers) and Angela Weaver (Helen Keller Intl)
- Members will include:
 - Phil Downs, Sightsavers
 - Margaret Baker, RTI (ACT EAST)
 - Kisito Ogooussan, FHI360 (ACT WEST)
 - Benoit Dembele, Helen Keller Intl
 - Lynsey Blair, SCI
 - Beth Long, Taskforce for Global Health
 - Lee Hundley sp?, Taskforce for Global Health
 - Kimberly Kamara, The End Fund
 - Nick Burn, CBM

² Community-based health care, including outreach and campaigns, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), 2020. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail/community-based-health-care-including-outreach-and-campaigns-in-the-context-of-the-covid-19-pandemic>.

- Emily Griswold, The Carter Center
- Kelly Callahan, The Carter Center
- Brett Sedgewick, Evidence Action
- Additional members are being recruited and membership in the Ad hoc Task Group will be opened to the wider NNN community.
- The Ad hoc Task Group will collaborate with existing Cross-cutting Groups such as Sustainability CCG, Conflict and Humanitarian Emergency CCG, WASH and DMDI, etc. Membership from these groups will be sought.
- Members will have the support of their organizations to contribute to the work of the Ad hoc Task Group.
- The Ad hoc Task Group will maintain an up to date contact list for members.

5. Meetings

The Task Group will convene virtually once per month (via online platform such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams). A schedule of meetings will be identified and agreed at the first meeting of the Task Group. The Co-Chairs will be responsible for sharing meeting agendas and reminding members of meeting dates one week prior to each meeting. Minutes will be recorded by a Sightsavers staff member and will be shared within one week to members of the Task Group. Co-Chairs will facilitate the meetings, and coordinate with members on action items. Members of the Task Group will contribute to action items between meetings aligned with the key objectives and deliverables outlined in the Task Group work plan.

Given the evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Task Group will periodically evaluate the frequency of meetings.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Applicable to all

- All members of the Ad hoc Task Group should adhere to the values of the NNN in all their efforts
- All members should actively contribute to the Ad hoc Task Group and attend the regular meetings
- All positions are voluntary and non-remunerated

The Chair/Co-Chairs

In addition to the above, the Chair/Co-Chairs will have the following additional roles and responsibilities:

- Sits on the NNN ExCo once the TG is constituted
- Acts as the liaison between the wider NNN community and this Ad hoc Task Group
- Leads the Ad hoc Task Group meetings, circulates meeting notes and oversees its work plan
- Makes recommendations to the Executive Committee through the Steering Committee
- Provides progress updates to the quarterly meetings of the NNN ExCo
- Reports back to the members at the NNN Annual Conference

Additional roles and responsibilities

- Not applicable

7. Proposed Workplan

The workplan for the proposed period of timebound operations includes:

Phase	Key Activities and Deliverables	Timeframe
Preparatory phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Draft ToRs and workplan for the Task Group. 2. Identify and recruit Task Group Members. 	May/early June 2020
First Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and arrange virtual meeting schedule via email. 2. Hold first virtual meeting to review proposed workplan with Task Group and propose any modifications, as needed, and establish workstreams and priority actions. 3. Update NNN Executive Committee. <p>➤ Key Deliverables: Final ToRs</p>	June 2020
Second Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collection and review of available risk assessment tools and survey of those under development by NNN members and other partners; 2. Collection and review of available risk mitigation strategies and survey of those under development by NNN members and other partners; 3. Literature scan of best practices and lessons learned in post-Ebola settings related to risk mitigation and uptake of health services following outbreak responses; 4. Begin to develop a set of case studies highlighting various risk mitigation strategies being developed and implemented by NGOs and NTDPs to support safe resumption of field based NTD activities. 5. Update NNN Executive Committee <p>➤ Key Deliverable: A summary and analysis of current approaches to risk assessment and risk mitigation for NTD activities and presentation at 2020 NNN</p>	June – August 2020
Third Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development and dissemination³ of best practices for objective risk assessment. 2. Development and dissemination³ of best practices for risk mitigation strategies for implementing NTD field activities in the context of COVID-19. 3. Development and dissemination³ of an advocacy piece highlighting effective strategies employed by NTD programs to utilize NTD platforms for COVID-19 response and/or vice versa. 4. Update NNN Executive Committee 	Aug – Dec 2020

³ Dissemination plans for these deliverables will be developed in consultation with members of the Ad hoc Task Group to ensure they are aligned with the needs of the broader NTD community.

	➤ Key Deliverable: A report consolidating best practices for risk assessment and risk mitigation strategies and an advocacy piece (to be further defined)	
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This work plan will be refined by the Task Group, with the Executive Committee being updated at regular intervals. Findings and recommendations would be presented at appropriate venues in 2020 and early 2021.

Depending on the continuation and severity of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the need for a longer-term Task Force on Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies will be considered and recommendations made by the Task Team to the Executive Committee.

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