

Summary

Background

The Union in collaboration with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Global Tuberculosis (TB) Branch has established a virtual Child and Adolescent TB Centre of Excellence (COE) to provide a regional platform for capacity building, create an evidence base and support national programmes to implement and strengthen TB prevention, care and treatment, and surveillance in children and adolescents.

A regional stakeholder meeting targeting 10 sub-Saharan African countries was conducted from 12 – 14 August 2019 at the Urban by CityBlue in Kampala, Uganda. Twenty-eight participants attended the regional stakeholder meeting. Representation included staff from The Union headquarters and Uganda Country Office; CDC Uganda Country Office and CDC GTB; National TB Programmes (Countries: Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe); Baylor-Uganda; EGPAF- Uganda; Civil Society (WEDNET); TB SPEED; and Chair of the Uganda Pediatric Technical Working Group.

The objectives of the three-day meeting were to:

1. Create awareness on the COE among national programmes, partners and other stakeholders in sub-Saharan Africa.
2. Conduct a situational analysis of child and adolescent TB prevention, care and treatment, and surveillance activities.
3. Solicit feedback from national programme staff, partners and stakeholders on the role and objectives of the COE.
4. Discuss how the COE could strengthen quality child and adolescent TB prevention, care and treatment and surveillance services.

Participating NTP staff contributed information on the current situation of child and adolescent TB prevention, care, treatment and surveillance activities in their country in advance of the meeting by completing a questionnaire. This situational analysis was presented and then followed by discussions on the challenges and gaps experienced in countries when addressing child and adolescent TB prevention, care, treatment and surveillance. A number of themes were identified during these discussions including the challenges of identifying children and adolescents with or at risk for TB, ensuring community engagement, and raising awareness of the importance of finding, treating and preventing TB in children and adolescents.

The COE arranged for a field visit for all participants to three health facilities that received support as part of The Union's DETECT TB project in Wakiso District. A data collection exercise was also undertaken as part of this visit.

Potential roles and activities for the COE as discussed by stakeholders include the following:

- Improve utilization of TB data, including harmonization and standardization of reporting tools across the region.
- Increase attention to TB in adolescents.
- Capture more detailed child and adolescent TB data using refined age bands and strengthen analysis by revised age bands.
- Review contact tracing tools including registers and electronic tools.

- Improve strategies to provide preventive therapy for children.
- Strengthen interventions to increase awareness of child and adolescent TB at all levels, including policy discussions, community involvement, training of health care providers, and engagement with political leaders and civil society.
- Build an evidence base for effective child and adolescent TB interventions
- Integrate TB activities with other programs such as Maternal and Child Health or Ministry of Education

The COE is a virtual platform established by The Union in collaboration with CDC GTB, and is coordinated by and based out of The Union Uganda Country Office. The COE will work with and support NTPs engaged in the COE, to improve child and adolescent TB prevention, care, treatment and surveillance activities. As initial outputs from the meeting, The Union in collaboration with CDC GTB will:

- Facilitate a webinar (scheduled for September 2019) on how countries can include operational research in their Global Fund applications. More information on the webinar will be shared with countries.
- Coordinate a symposium at the World Lung Conference focusing on “*Regional child and adolescent tuberculosis initiatives to promote efforts towards a tuberculosis disease-free generation.*” The aim of the symposium is to stimulate discussions around the role of regional leadership and collaboration in closing the child and adolescent TB policy – practice gap in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Consider facilitating regular webinars on topics identified as high-priority by NTPs, including for example how to include child and adolescent TB-specific strategic interventions and objectives into National Strategic Plans (NSPs), or standardization of data capture in TB recording and reporting tools.
- Collaborate with the NTP staff participating in the meeting to submit the situational analysis for publication by end of the year.
- Organize regular teleconference calls to be facilitated on a monthly basis, with the schedule adapted as needed/requested.
- Finalise the feedback from this meeting in a meeting report and share with NTPs.
- Support countries to identify and prioritize gaps in child and adolescent TB prevention, care, treatment and surveillance activities.

On behalf of The Union, CDC Uganda and CDC GTB, thank you for your participation.

