



## Second meeting of the WHO Diagnostic Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases

13 October 2020





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ISBN 978-92-4-002404-5 (electronic version)

ISBN 978-92-4-002405-2 (print version)

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**Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data.** CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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# 1. Introduction

Owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the second meeting of the Diagnostic Technical Advisory Group for Neglected Tropical Diseases (DTAG), an advisory group to the World Health Organization's (WHO's) Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, was held virtually on 13 October 2020.

The meeting was opened by Dr Daniel Argaw Dagne, Unit Head, Prevention, Treatment and Care, WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases, who noted the progress made since the last meeting (30–31 October 2019). He congratulated all the members of the subgroups and commented on their considerable progress in developing target product profiles (TPPs). He also noted that DTAG members and observers would receive an update on the status of the subgroups and discuss next steps.

Professor Patrick Lammie, Director, Neglected Tropical Diseases Support Center (a programme of The Task Force for Global Health), and DTAG chair, made additional opening remarks. He referred to the reports that were to be made on the progress of each disease-specific subgroup, and noted that these subgroups were formed in response to recommendations made at the last meeting that such groups be asked to generate landscape analyses and TPPs. He thanked the chairs and subgroup members for their significant time commitments and efforts during the summer in instituting the TPP process. He also noted that towards the end of the meeting the DTAG would review what had been done to date and consider what has not yet been accomplished; the DTAG would re-evaluate the prioritization exercise undertaken at its first meeting to identify if there were new use cases or diseases for which work should be accelerated. Professor Lammie ended by noting that it was important to mention that the generation of TPPs would not be the end of the DTAG's work and that TPPs do not in themselves create new diagnostics. The purpose of the DTAG is to bridge the gap between WHO and test developers and to encourage the process of bringing in new partners who will be able to help transform TPPs into tools that truly fit programme needs.

The list of participants is annexed to the report.

## 1.1 Declarations of interest

All the invited experts and observers were asked to declare any conflict of interest before the meeting. The declarations were returned to and reviewed by WHO in line with the procedures set for WHO experts and advisory group members, namely:

- a counter-signed copy of the invitation letter;
- a signed copy of the Memorandum of Agreement;
- the Confidentiality Undertaking; and
- the Declaration of Interest form together with a “Code of Conduct for WHO Experts”.

# 2. Background

The WHO Department of Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases manages a diverse portfolio of 20 diseases and disease groups, each with its own unique epidemiology and diagnostic challenges. Programmes to address each of these diseases have different goals according to a particular disease's profile – disease control, elimination as a public health problem, elimination of transmission, or eradication. These programmatic goals may also change over time as new tools are developed and global attention attracts increased support.

In spite of the diversity of disease programme goals, it was felt that there were common areas across programmes that would benefit from the establishment of a single working group for diagnostics. Therefore, a WHO working group was formed to help ensure a unified approach for identifying and prioritizing diagnostic needs, and to inform WHO strategies and guidance on the subject.

At its first meeting in 2019, the DTAG reviewed the status of diagnostics across the 20 diseases and disease groups, with input from WHO focal points around programmatic and diagnostic needs. Members discussed priorities for the year ahead as well as ways of managing the complexity of supporting the diagnostics agenda across the entirety of the WHO portfolio of NTDs. The recommendations are available in the meeting report (1).

The objectives of the second DTAG meeting were:

- to discuss the progress made by the disease-specific subgroups;
- to discuss the progress made by the cross-cutting groups and the resource mobilization group; and
- to review the recommendations from the disease-specific subgroups.

### 3. Progress reports from disease-specific subgroups

In the sessions that followed, the disease-specific subgroups presented feedback on the TPP development process.

#### 3.1 Soil-transmitted helminthiasis

The feedback from the subgroup on soil-transmitted helminthiasis was presented by its chair, Professor Bruno Levecke.

Professor Levecke explained that all use cases discussed were based on a 1% prevalence threshold. Since the community of experts or people interested in and working on research and control programmes for soil-transmitted helminthiasis has not yet finalized thresholds, it was decided to aim for the most stringent threshold under discussion. He also noted that the draft zero TPP would be reviewed on 21 October 2020.

The draft zero TPP is based on the programmatic need for a monitoring and evaluation tool. Key features include:

- sensitivity:  $\geq 60\text{--}76\%$ ; and
- specificity:  $\geq 99\%$ .

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