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# **TB/HIV** research priorities in resource-limited settings

**Report of an expert consultation** 

14–15 February 2005 Geneva, Switzerland







UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)

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## **Executive summary**

Global consensus has been achieved around the new interim policy on collaborative TB/HIV activities. However, the implementation of joint TB/HIV activities has not yet been scaled up. Updating research priorities specifically aimed at informing future policy and improving the implementation of joint TB/HIV activities in the context of antiretroviral therapy programmes should accelerate scale-up.

For this reason, the Secretariat of the Global TB/HIV Working Group of the Stop TB Partnership in collaboration with WHO's Stop TB Department and Department of HIV/AIDS and the UNDP/UNICEF/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) convened an Expert Consultation on TB/HIV Research Priorities in Resource-limited Settings on 14–16 February 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland. The specific objectives of the Consultation were 1) to define TB/HIV research priorities and outline their research relevance, methods and feasibility in the context of programme activities and 2) to solicit and promote the building of TB/HIV research capacity at the country level through the involvement of national and international agencies.

Plenary presentations highlight major issues in implementing and evaluating joint TB/HIV activities. Community contribution to the delivery of the TB/HIV package, human resources, the relationship between multi-drug-resistant TB and HIV and special groups such as injecting drug users emerged as areas for which control strategies clearly need to be developed. In addition, research priorities were identified to accelerate the use of the policy on HIV testing in clinical settings and to integrate management strategies for people living with both TB and HIV.

Three discussion groups identified research priorities for five major areas.

- (1) Research priorities for preventive therapy for TB were identified with a distinction between the population and the individual levels.
- (2) Priority areas of research for co-trimoxazole prophylaxis include the role of cotrimoxazole in the context of antiretroviral therapy, delivery strategies and determining the efficacy of and optimal time for initiating co-trimoxazole prophylaxis among people living with HIV/AIDS and TB.
- (3) The major research priority area identified in relation to antiretroviral therapy for people living with HIV/AIDS who have TB or who develop TB is validating the optimal time for initiating antiretroviral therapy. Other research priorities include optimizing regimens and determining their efficacy and safety profile. Validating the definition of immune reconstitution inflammatory syndrome is also a priority.
- (4) Research priorities on intensified case-finding focus on ways to put this TB/HIV collaborative activity into operation to improve TB control.
- (5) The development of new tools and diagnostic algorithms is a top research priority to improve the diagnosis of smear-negative TB in adults and children.

During the Consultation, a wealth of evidence was presented on the implementation of collaborative TB/HIV activities. However, although many questions remain unanswered, participants felt that evaluating the implementation of the current policy package should be given more emphasis than generating more research questions.

The research priorities produced in this Consultation reflected a wide range of expertise and varying geographical needs. Participants felt that mechanisms to avoid redundancy of research should be identified and knowledge disseminated properly. An advocacy package, containing the identified research priorities, should be prepared to share the outcome of this Consultation with countries, stakeholders and research agencies.

Implementation of research priorities should capitalize on the financial momentum in which the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, among others, are mobilizing more funds for treatment and research activities. Budgeting to fill the research gaps is therefore essential, and advocating for additional resources to conduct more research aimed at improving TB and HIV control is needed.

The umbrella of research priorities identified in this Consultation provides guidance on what needs urgent attention. Donor and partner agencies and countries should then take these up and should implement the research priorities they consider crucial for improving TB and HIV control in their settings as soon as possible.

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