SUPPORTING, MOBILIZING, AND ACCELERATING RESEARCH FOR TUBERCULOSIS ELIMINATION

SMART4TB

The Supporting, Mobilizing, and Accelerating Research for Tuberculosis Elimination (SMART4TB) Consortium brings together experts in TB tools development, implementation science, capacity strengthening, civil society engagement, and policy guidance, with a plan to collaborate to transform TB control in the next five years. SMART4TB's strategy involves targeted research in collaboration with local partners in priority countries, strengthening capacity for conducting future research by country partners, and ensuring that the knowledge derived from research studies is translated into policy and practice at the global, national, and local level. The consortium, led by Johns Hopkins University (JHU), includes the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation (KNCV), the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF), the Treatment Action Group (TAG) and regional collaboratives strategically based at research institutions in high-burden countries.

Technical Area 7: Policy Translation and Community Engagement

Evidence can only have an impact on the TB epidemic if the research is designed with end-users' needs in mind, and successfully translated into global and national policy. As such, the cross-cutting Technical Area 7 (TA7) focuses on community engagement and policy translation. For engagement in research, SMART4TB will ensure that all its studies feature input from affected communities. In doing so, SMART4TB will invest in and strengthen the TB knowledge and research literacy of TB-affected communities and civil society, to participate actively in every stage of the research process, from design to implementation through results dissemination. These community stakeholders will also play a catalytic role in supporting rapid adoption of evidence-based policies and generating demand.

More broadly, to support timely and effective translation of evidence into policy, SMART4TB will engage policy stakeholders to ensure that high-quality evidence can have benefit in real-world settings, is accessible, and reflects broader values and priorities, such as acceptability, feasibility and equitable resource allocation. By working with key stakeholders from early in the process, SMART4TB will systematically link evidence and analyses to practical policymaking through a two-way policy bridge, a reciprocal flow of information between research and policymakers. Policy needs will inform research design and research study outputs will inform policy. SMART4TB will seek to have a transformative impact on the process of evidence-to-policy translation. At the global level, SMART4TB will work with leading multilateral institutions including the World Health Organization, as well as funders such as the Global Fund, to support timely formulation of guidelines and policies that are both evidence-based and supportive of the priorities of national programs, clinicians, and people affected by TB. At the national level, SMART4TB will work with Ministries of Health and Finance, and with civil society, to ensure that evidence-based policies that meet local needs are prioritized and provide support to overcome barriers to doing so. Moreover, SMART4TB will collaborate with USAID

TB Global Accelerator programs, including the Local Organization Network, to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, are empowered to strengthen accountability and support policy implementation.

Policy Translation and Community Engagement Objectives

In Year 1, SMART4TB will build a strong framework for policy translation and community engagement in each step of the project's development, as well as achieve ambitious high-level global policy commitments to advance research to end TB. While SMART4TB develops infrastructure for community engagement at the regional-, country-, and site- levels (including identifying or developing three regional community advisory boards, and maintaining existing capacity, such as engaging existing community capacity at study sites), SMART4TB will engage the Global TB Community Advisory Board (TB CAB). The TB CAB, a global group of TB research literate activists, have extensive experience reviewing clinical trial protocols. They have already participated in a review of the concepts proposed by SMART4TB and begun more in-depth engagement starting with SMART4TB's diagnostics concepts (Technical Area 1). As SMART4TB's research protocols develop, study teams will feature community members, and engage TB CAB and other stakeholders throughout the research design process and eventual implementation. In particular, SMART4TB will look to community members for perspectives on how to appropriately include often-neglected populations, including children and pregnant persons, in research to fill important policy gaps.

On the policy side, several high-level global policy milestones offer opportunities to elevate the importance of ending TB, including through political and funding commitments towards ambitious research and programmatic objectives. Working closely with stakeholders including the Stop TB Partnership, the World Health Organization, civil society, and national TB programs, SMART4TB will work to influence the outcomes of these occasions. For example, in 2023:

- Many countries' Global Fund funding will be determined for the next three years. Working with community groups and Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs), SMART4TB will strive for National Strategic Plans (NSPs) and Global Fund proposals to reflect ambitious TB funding asks, research priorities, and adoption of highest standards of evidence-based care throughout the consortium of care, including for vulnerable populations;
- The second-ever United Nations High Level Meeting on Tuberculosis is expected to take place. SMART4TB and partners will encourage countries commit in the Political Declaration of the United Nations High Level Meeting to investing their fair share to support an inclusive TB R&D agenda, and to rapidly adopting evidence-based innovations and completing the continuum of care for TB;
- India holds the G20 presidency, taking over from Indonesia and eventually passing the reins over to Brazil. This rare troika of countries with high TB burdens leading the G20 may present potential for the G20 to support bold commitments to ending TB.