

Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for Polio Eradication in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Terms of Reference

Function

TAG is the principal advisory group for polio eradication for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. TAG is an independent body charged with advising and making recommendations to each Ministry of Health and GPEI partners on polio eradication programme policies, strategies and operations. It is convened by the Regional Director WHO/EMR on behalf of EMR Member States and the GPEI partnership.

TAG advises each Ministry of Health and GPEI partners on interventions needed to achieve the goal of polio eradication, specifically on the:

1. Overall adequacy of progress towards the achievement of the goal of stopping transmission of poliovirus;
2. Priorities to address major challenges to achieving and sustaining high and equitable vaccination coverage and sensitive surveillance at sub-national level;
3. Prioritized interventions to ensure adequacy of communications, community engagement and reduction in vaccine hesitancy and increase in vaccine demand;
4. Prioritized interventions to support adequacy of the routine immunization programme for achieving polio eradication; and
5. Prioritized interventions to support integration with other health services.

Regional Director WHO/EMR and Regional Director UNICEF/ROSA will facilitate and provide oversight on implementation of the recommendations by the TAG.

Meetings and operational procedures

Frequency

TAG meetings will occur one time per year in person and one time per year by video conference. Additional virtual ad hoc meetings may be convened, as needed. TAG in-person meetings will be limited to two days.

Content & Agendas

Meetings will focus on responding to specific questions on which the Ministry of Health and partners will seek advice from TAG. Questions pertinent to reaching the goal of polio eradication will be defined at least one month in advance of the meeting by the government in coordination with in-country GPEI partners and GPEI Hub TAG Secretariat. The TAG may also define additional questions. Once the questions are defined, the TAG will assign a subcommittee consisting of at least two TAG members to work with the country team and GPEI Hub TAG Secretariat to review the evidence and develop documents to be presented to the TAG. TAG will also review conclusions and recommendations from national immunization technical advisory group (NITAG) meetings that are relevant to polio eradication.

TAG meeting agendas will limit general background or programme update presentations in order to ensure maximum time for technical and focused discussion to drive towards resolution of identified questions. In advance of the meeting, the NEOC and the TAG Secretariat will decide on areas for in-depth discussion, in consultation with TAG Chairperson, that need focused presentation.

TAG Meeting Process Overview

Action	Responsible
1. Define specific questions for TAG <u>at least 1 month ahead</u> of meeting date	1. Government, with support of in-country GPEI partners and GPEI Hub TAG Secretariat
2. Assign TAG subcommittee to review evidence and develop documents for full TAG review <u>at least 1 month ahead</u> of meeting date	2. TAG Chairperson
3. Define questions needing focused presentations during TAG meeting <u>at least 2 weeks ahead</u> of meeting date	3. TAG subcommittee Chairperson, with support of country team and GPEI Hub TAG Secretariat
4. Share preliminary conclusions and recommendations with the NEOC, GPEI partners and Observers <u>before the end of each meeting</u>	4. TAG Chairperson
5. Send the final official report to the WHO and Unicef Regional Directors <u>within 2 weeks</u> of each meeting	5. TAG Chairperson
6. Share the report with the Ministry of Health and NEOC <u>within two weeks</u> of each meeting	6. TAG Chairperson
7. Published report on the GPEI website once the national government has received a copy	7. GPEI Hub TAG Secretariat

Participants for annual in-person meetings

Participants in plenary sessions will include representatives from the national government, GPEI partners, a representative from the national immunization technical advisory group (NITAG) and Observers (e.g. from donor agencies, civil society organizations). Depending on the questions for TAG, regional/provincial levels may also be represented. Additional experts may be invited to participate in meetings, as appropriate, to further contribute to specific agenda items.

Participants in TAG internal deliberations TAG may invite representatives from the NEOC and implementing GPEI partners.

Participants for annual video conferences and additional virtual ad hoc meetings

Participation will be more limited compared to the annual in-person meetings and will be determined by NEOC and TAG Secretariat according to the agendas and in consideration of the practical challenges of video/tele conferences.

Decision-making

TAG will reserve the right to make conclusions on progress towards stopping poliovirus transmission, and decisions and recommendations on the questions they are requested to address and other findings. Conclusions, decisions and recommendations by TAG will, as a rule, be taken by consensus. In instances where consensus cannot be reached, final decisions will be taken by the Chairperson. Observers and invited experts will not participate in the decision-/recommendation-making process but will be allowed to contribute to the discussions as directed by the TAG Chairperson.

Reporting

To ensure TAG's independent voice, the TAG will have a dedicated Rapporteur, recruited from outside the country programme, that will be responsible for writing TAG meeting reports. The TAG Rapporteur will write the conclusions and recommendations of TAG meetings under the direction of the TAG Chairperson.

For in-person meetings, TAG will share its preliminary conclusions and recommendations with the NEOC, GPEI partners and Observers before the end of each meeting. For virtual meetings, conclusions and recommendations will be shared the day following the meeting. TAG will send the final official report to the WHO/EMR Regional Director and the Unicef/ROSA Regional Director. The WHO/EMR Regional Director will share the report with the Ministry of Health and NEOC within two weeks of each TAG meeting. Reports will be published on the GPEI website once the national government have received a copy.

TAG Secretariat

The TAG Secretariat will reside in the GPEI Amman Hub and will be comprised of GPEI partner staff as a working group of the Country Operations area of work and under the coordination of the GPEI Amman Hub Coordinator and guidance of Director Polio as a representative of the Regional Director, WHO EMRO. A TAG Focal Point will be assigned in the Hub. The TAG Secretariat will be responsible for keeping the TAG updated on polio eradication activities and progress throughout the year.

TAG Membership

The Afghanistan and Pakistan TAGs will be comprised of 6-8 independent experts – a common group of at least four global experts shared by both countries along with two national experts from Afghanistan for the Afghanistan TAG and two national experts from Pakistan for the Pakistan TAG. The Chairperson of the TAG may invite individuals with relevant subject matter expertise to help the TAG address any specific questions. The Chairperson will nominate a Co-Chairperson from amongst the TAG members.

TAG members will be recruited and selected as acknowledged experts in applicable fields and national and regional contexts. Membership selection will seek to reflect a representation of:

1. *Professional affiliation*, e.g., academia, medical profession, public health profession, research institutes, and governmental bodies including national immunization advisory groups [e.g. NITAG Chairs], public health departments; and
2. *Major areas of expertise*, e.g., polio eradication, virology, immunization/vaccine delivery, public health communications including social media, community engagement and social mobilization, disease modeling, impact monitoring.

TAG members will be identified through a formal online Call for Nominations process and will be selected in consultation with the GPEI Strategy Committee and appointed by the WHO/EMR Regional Director. Prior to being considered for TAG membership, nominees shall be required to complete a WHO Declaration of Interests form. Members will be selected on the basis of their qualifications and ability to contribute to the accomplishment of TAG's objectives. Utmost consideration

will be given to ensuring gender balance and will include a requirement of at least one female be selected as a member from each country.

Members of TAG shall be appointed to serve for an initial term of two years, although accommodation may be needed to avoid replacing all members at the same time. This two-year term may only be renewed once. Decisions for renewal of term will also be taken in consultation with GPEI Strategy Committee before re-appointment by the WHO/EMR Regional Director.

TAG members will serve in their personal capacity as experts and should refrain from promoting the policies and views and products of the institution for which they work or may be sponsored.

Membership in TAG may be terminated for any of the following reasons:

1. failure to attend two consecutive TAG meetings;
2. change in affiliation resulting in a conflict of interest or involvement in activities resulting in a conflict of interest incompatible with serving on TAG;
3. a lack of professionalism.

Roles and responsibilities of TAG members

Members of TAG have a responsibility to provide high quality, well-considered advice and recommendations on matters described generally in these Terms of Reference, and specifically on the questions identified by the NEOC and TAG Secretariat. TAG has no executive or management function. Its role is solely to provide advice and recommendations to the Ministry of Health, GPEI and other stakeholders. Members play a critical role in ensuring the reputation of TAG as an internationally recognized advisory group in the field of polio eradication.

TAG members are expected to attend all annual meetings. TAG members are expected to have reviewed relevant background documents provided in advance of meetings to ensure proper preparation and reduce the amount of time used during meeting days on general background presentations.

Active participation will be expected from all TAG members throughout the year, including participation in ad hoc video and telephone conferences as necessary, as well as frequent interactions via e-mail, and field visits as needed. Review of documents may also be solicited. TAG members may be requested to participate as observers in other important WHO or GPEI partner meetings. As a result, TAG members are expected to commit to invest a substantial amount of their time to TAG.

The TAG Chairperson (or designated TAG member) will participate in meetings of each country's NITAG.

TAG members will not be remunerated for their participation in TAG; however, reasonable expenses such as travel expenses incurred by attendance at TAG or related meetings will be compensated by WHO.