Building capacity on national strategic planning for TB: expanding WHO’s global pool of consultants in epidemiological and programme reviews

In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) released new guidance to support national strategic planning for tuberculosis (TB) response. This guidance emphasises the importance of developing a robust National Strategic Plan (NSP) that considers all available information on factors that are influencing the TB epidemic as well as the data and evidence to inform the choice of interventions. **Epidemiological reviews** and **programme reviews** are highlighted as two key complementary activities that are part of the situational analysis stage of NSP development. Both activities contribute to generating evidence and informing the root cause analysis for continuously improving the TB programme as part of routine monitoring and supervision.

**Epidemiological reviews** are carried out to analyse routine TB surveillance data over time, by population and by geography, while explaining any observed variation in terms of impact from planned interventions and/or other factors such as differences in the broader determinants of TB. The review also includes a comprehensive assessment of the surveillance system using the WHO checklist of standards and benchmarks. Expected outputs include a set of recommendations to address identified gaps and strengthen TB surveillance. Findings are used to guide the organisation, implementation and investigation of the subsequent programme review.

A **programme review** can be performed to assess the implementation of an NSP, evaluate health system factors that need to be addressed to optimize the country’s TB response, and address bottlenecks affecting the achievement of targets. The review outlines achievements made by the programme, and best practices and challenges in implementing the NSP. It should preferably be conducted at the end of every strategic plan, so that gaps in implementation of the previous strategy are considered during the planning.

The demand for supporting member states in developing robust NSPs has surged over the past few years, particularly as a result of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The current global expert capacity is not sufficient to meet this demand. The Global TB Programme of the WHO is therefore seeking to expand its pool of consultant epidemiologists and public health specialists to support epidemiological and programme reviews globally.

**Workshop objectives:**

- To build technical capacity among epidemiologists and public health specialists on conducting TB epidemiological reviews and TB programme reviews globally
- To harmonise global practices for implementing TB epidemiological reviews and TB programme reviews for national strategic planning.

**Expected outcomes:**

Consultants will develop their capacity to conduct epidemiological and programme reviews in different settings according to WHO guidance. Participants who successfully complete the training and demonstrate the relevant skills and competencies to undertake epidemiological or programme reviews may have the opportunity to be placed on a global roster of consultants managed by WHO.

**Use of WHO global roster:**

Consultants on the WHO global roster of consultants may then be contacted for future collaboration on TB surveillance and programmatic activities by different entities. These include:

**Future TB surveillance activities include:**

- Carrying out TB epidemiological reviews
- Facilitating regional or country-level workshops for strengthening capacity on TB data analysis and use
- Providing support in the review, strengthening or implementation of TB M&E plans and recording and reporting systems

**Future programmatic activities include:**

- Leading TB programme reviews
Participants will be familiarised on the following concepts:

- Context of epidemiological reviews, their link with programme reviews and the overall process of national strategic planning (cross-cutting with programme review stream)
- Terms of Reference for epidemiological reviews
- Planning, implementing, reporting and follow-up processes for epidemiological reviews
- Assessments of TB surveillance systems using the 2nd Edition of the Standards and Benchmarks Checklist
- Field work requirements, including visits to health facilities, laboratories and interviews with domestic stakeholders and partners
- Analysis and interpretation national and subnational, routinely collected TB surveillance data and other relevant data
- Developing recommendations for strengthening TB surveillance, based on evidence collected during the epidemiological review
- Comprehensive and effective synthesis of information, including evidence from a variety of sources (cross cutting with programme review stream)
- Diplomatic communication to domestic and international stakeholders and partners within the health sector and beyond (cross cutting with programme review stream)

Ideal candidates to participate in training for epidemiological reviews will match the following profile:

**Education:**

Essential:
- A first level university degree in a quantitative-related subject (e.g. mathematics, economics)

Desirable:
- An advanced university degree (Masters level or above) in epidemiology or medical statistics (or similar)

**Experience:**

Essential:
- At least five years of experience related to epidemiology, including analytical work with large datasets.
- At least two years of experience of working on projects, studies or analyses related to developing countries.
- Relevant experience of working at the international level in collaboration with governmental, academic and/or international organisations/institutions.

Desirable:
- Demonstrated experience working on epidemiological analyses for TB.
- Demonstrated experience in providing technical assistance to disease programmes.

**Skills and work ethic:**

Essential:
- Ability and willingness to undertake future international assignments (on average 2 weeks per assignment), with remuneration in accordance with WHO policies.
- Proficiency in a recognized statistical software (e.g. Stata or R).
- Excellent communication and presentation skills, including the ability to convey potentially sensitive messages/topics in a tactful and diplomatic manner.
- Excellent writing skills, with proven record in contributing to technical documents and/or journal publications.
- Ability to communicate epidemiological and quantitative concepts to a variety of audiences (e.g. health facility staff, ministries of health, other governmental departments and agencies, etc).
- Demonstrated understanding of routine surveillance systems, databases and M&E.
- Ability to work both independently and as part of an international and multi-disciplinary team.
Desirable:
- A good understanding of TB care and prevention activities.
- Familiarity with the roles, responsibilities and function of disease programmes, as well as their position within the health sector and global health architecture.
- Ability to work under pressure, with demonstrated adaptability when working in potentially complex, changing environments.
- Leadership skills, including the ability to take strategic decisions leading to a successful assignment.

WHO Competencies

- Teamwork
- Respecting and promoting individual and cultural differences
- Communication
- Building and promoting partnerships across the organization and beyond
- Knowing and managing yourself

Use of Language Skills:

Essential:
- Solid working knowledge of English.

Desirable:
- Solid working knowledge of French or other UN language.

Submitting your application for epidemiological reviews stream:

Interested candidates are requested to submit their CV and a one-page letter of interest that responds to the candidate profile above to TSC_TB@who.int, by Wednesday, 22 March 2023.

Please clearly indicate in the subject line of your e-mail that you are applying for Stream A – epidemiological reviews.
Stream B: Programme Reviews consultant roster application

Participants will be familiarised on the following concepts:

- Scope of programme reviews, their link with epidemiological reviews and the overall process of national strategic planning (cross-cutting with epidemiological review stream)
- Phases and steps involved in conducting a TB programme review
- Comprehensive and effective synthesis of information, including evidence from a variety of sources (cross cutting with epidemiological review stream)
- Formulation of recommendations
- The role and responsibilities of the person leading a programme review throughout the process
- The interplay between epidemiological and programme reviews, and their complementarity in the national strategic planning process
- Diplomatic communication to domestic and international stakeholders and partners within the health sector and beyond (cross cutting with epidemiological review stream)

Ideal candidates to participate in training for Programme Reviews will match the following profile:

**Education:**

**Essential:**
- Advanced level university degree (master’s level or higher) in public health, international health, quantitative methods, laboratory management and/or medicine, complemented by courses in TB.

**Desirable:**
- Infectious disease epidemiology.

**Experience:**

**Essential:**
- At least seven years' experience with successful track record in public health, in which at least four years have been related to TB programme activities at the national and/or international levels.

**Desirable:**
- Experience in participating in a programme review
- Knowledge and experience of TB care and prevention in developing country setting
- Knowledge of TB programmes and related programmatic activities within the health sector architecture

**Skills and work ethic:**

**Essential:**
- Ability and willingness to undertake future international assignments at least twice a year, with remuneration in accordance with WHO policies
- Excellent communication and presentation skills, including the ability to convey potentially sensitive messages/topics in a tactful and diplomatic manner
- Proven record of writing report

**Desirable:**
- Ability to act independently and think strategically
- Ability to function well in and coordinate a multi-disciplinary and international team
- Ability to synthesise the evidence effectively
- Ability to work under pressure, with demonstrated adaptability when working in potentially complex, changing environments
WHO Competencies:

- Teamwork
- Respecting and promoting individual and cultural differences
- Communication
- Building and promoting partnerships across the organization and beyond
- Knowing and managing yourself

Use of Language Skills:

Essential:
- Expert knowledge of English.

Desirable:
- Intermediate knowledge of French. Intermediate knowledge of WHO Language.

Submitting your application for Programme Reviews stream:

Interested candidates are requested to submit their CV and a one-page letter of interest that responds to the candidate profile above to TSC_TB@who.int, by Wednesday, 22 March 2023.

Please clearly indicate in the subject line of your e-mail that you are applying for Stream B – programme reviews.
Key references


