Terms of Reference for the WHO Technical Advisory Group for Leprosy (TAG–Leprosy)

The WHO Technical Advisory Group for Leprosy (TAG-Leprosy) is the principal advisory group to the World Health Organization (WHO) for the elimination of leprosy. TAG-Leprosy has the mandate of advising WHO on overall global policies and strategies, ranging from epidemiology, monitoring implementation, patient care, research development to delivery of interventions and their linkages with other health interventions.

I. Functions

In its capacity as an advisory body to WHO, the TAG-Leprosy shall advise the Regional Director, WHO, SEAR on:

1. Leprosy situation globally and particularly in high endemic countries and countries closer to the target of elimination to accelerate efforts to reduce disease burden;

2. Implementation of Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030: towards zero leprosy (2021);

3. Strengthening national strategic plans to reach targets of interruption of transmission and elimination of leprosy;

4. Issues and challenges influencing progress towards elimination of leprosy;

5. Emerging evidence in management of leprosy to review and revise Guidelines for the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of leprosy (2018) and define research agenda for leprosy;

6. On co-ordination with partners and donors in accelerating efforts to elimination of leprosy;

7. Actions to be taken to improve disability care, combat stigma/discrimination and ensure respect to human rights of ‘persons affected by leprosy’;

8. Promoting integration of leprosy interventions in national health systems;

9. Improving surveillance of anti-microbial resistance and adverse drug reactions in leprosy;

10. Inter-sectoral activities and initiatives related to the control of leprosy to improve strategies and linkages with other health interventions.
II. Composition

1. The TAG-Leprosy shall have up to 15 members, who shall serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of areas of knowledge covering leprosy control activities.

   Members of TAG-Leprosy shall be experts from around the world in the fields of epidemiology, clinical leprosy, disability care, public health, infectious diseases, management, health-care administration, laboratory, social sciences and experience in combating stigma. In the selection of the TAG-Leprosy members, consideration shall be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation and gender balance.

2. Members of the TAG-Leprosy, including the Chairperson, shall be selected and appointed by WHO following an open call for experts. The Chairperson's functions include the following:

   - to chair the meeting of the TAG-Leprosy.
   - to liaise with the WHO Secretariat between meetings.

   In appointing a Chairperson, consideration shall be given to gender and geographical representation.

3. Members of the TAG-Leprosy shall be appointed to serve for a period of three years and shall be eligible for reappointment. A Chairperson is eligible for reappointment as a member of the TAG-Leprosy but is only permitted to serve as Chairperson for one term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by WHO if WHO's interest so requires or, as otherwise specified in these terms of reference or letters of appointment. Where a member’s appointment is terminated, WHO may decide to appoint a replacement member.

4. TAG-Leprosy members must respect the impartiality and independence required of WHO. In performing their work, members may not seek or accept instructions from any Government or from any authority external to the Organization. They must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed members/members shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment, or continuation of their appointment, shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the WHO Secretariat, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

5. Following a determination that a proposed member’s participation in the TAG-Leprosy would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed member will be sent a letter inviting them to be a member of the TAG-Leprosy. Their appointment to the AG is subject to WHO receiving the countersigned invitation letter and letter of agreement. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the WHO declaration of interest form, AG members have an ongoing obligation to inform the WHO of any interests real or perceived that may give raise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

6. As contemplated in paragraph II.4 above, WHO may, from time to time, request TAG-Leprosy members to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a TAG meeting or any other TAG-related activity or engagement, as decided by WHO. Where WHO has made such a request, the TAG-Leprosy member’s participation in the TAG activity or engagement is subject to

---

1 Members serve as full participants and partake in the decision-making process of the meeting in which they are involved.
determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of
interest.

7. Where a TAG member is invited by WHO to travel to an in-person TAG meeting, WHO shall, subject
to any conflict of interest determination as set out in paragraph II.6 above, issue a letter of
appointment as a temporary adviser and accompanying memorandum of agreement (together
‘Temporary Adviser Letter’). WHO shall not authorize travel by a TAG member, until it receives a
countersigned Temporary Adviser Letter.

8. TAG-Leprosy members do not receive any remuneration from the Organization for any work related
to the TAG-Leprosy. However, when attending in-person meetings at the invitation of WHO, their
travel cost and per diem shall be covered by WHO in accordance with the applicable WHO rules and
policies.

III. Operation

1. The TAG-Leprosy shall normally meet once a year. However, WHO may convene additional meetings.
TAG-Leprosy meetings may be held in person at WHO/SEARO in New Delhi or another location, as
determined by WHO) or virtually, via video or teleconference. TTAG-Leprosy meetings may include
open and/or closed session, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with WHO.

(a) Open sessions: Open sessions shall be convened for the sole purpose of the exchange of non-
confidential information and views, and may be attended by Observers (as defined in paragraph
III.3 below).

(b) Closed sessions: The sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to
WHO shall be restricted to the members of the TAG and essential WHO Secretariat staff.

2. The quorum for TAG-Leprosy meetings shall be two thirds of the members.

3. WHO may, at its sole discretion, invite external individuals from time to time to attend the open
sessions of TAG-Leprosy, or parts thereof, as “observers”. Observers may be invited either in their
personal capacity, or as representatives from a governmental institution / intergovernmental
organization, or from a non-state actor. WHO will request observers invited in their personal capacity to
complete a confidentiality undertaking and a declaration of interests form prior to attending a session
of the TAG-Leprosy. Invitations to observers attending as representatives from non-state actors will be
subject to internal due diligence and conflict of interest considerations in accordance with FENSA.
Observers invited as representatives may also be requested to complete a confidentiality undertaking.
Observers shall normally attend meetings of the TAG-Leprosy at their own expense and be responsible
for making all arrangements in that regard.

At the invitation of the Chairperson, observers may be asked to present their personal views and/or the
policies of their organization. Observers will not participate in the process of adopting decisions and
recommendations of the TAG-Leprosy.

4. The TAG-Leprosy may decide to establish smaller working groups (sub-groups of the AG) to work on
specific issues. Their deliberations shall take place via teleconference or video-conference. For these
sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply; the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to
the AG for review at one of its meetings.

1. The appointment as a member of the TAG-Leprosy may be terminated by WHO for any of the
following reasons:
a. failure to attend two consecutive TAG-Leprosy meetings;
b. lack of professionalism involving, for example, a breach of confidentiality.

2. [Reports of each meeting shall be submitted by the TAG-Leprosy to WHO (the Regional Director, SEAR). All recommendations from the AG are advisory to WHO, who retains full control over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the AG.

3. The TAG-Leprosy shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If, in exceptional circumstances, a consensus on a particular issue cannot be reached, minority opinions will be reflected in the meeting report.

4. [Active participation is expected from all TAG-Leprosy members, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email.] AG members may, in advance of TAG-Leprosy meetings, be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by the TAG-Leprosy.

5. WHO shall determine the modes of communication by the TAG-Leprosy, including between WHO and the TAG-Leprosy members, and the TAG-Leprosy members among themselves.

6. TAG-Leprosy members shall not speak on behalf of, or represent, the TAG-Leprosy or WHO to any third party.

IV. Secretariat

WHO shall provide the secretariat for the TAG-Leprosy, including necessary scientific, technical, administrative and other support. In this regard, the WHO Secretariat shall provide the members in advance of each meeting with the agenda, working documents and discussion papers. Distribution of the aforesaid documents to Observers will be determined by the WHO Secretariat. The meeting agenda shall include details such as: whether a meeting, or part thereof, is closed or open session; and whether Observers are permitted to attend.

V. Information and documentation

1. Information and documentation to which members may gain access in performing AG related activities shall be considered as confidential and proprietary to WHO and/or parties collaborating with WHO. In addition, by counter signing the letter of appointment and the accompanying terms and conditions referred to in section II.5 above, AG members undertake to abide by the confidentiality obligations contained therein and also confirm that any and all rights in the work performed by them in connection with, or as a result of their AG-related activities shall be exclusively vested in WHO.

2. TAG-Leprosy will be kept informed by the WHO Secretariat of progress in the implementation of strategies and the attainment of objectives at country, regional and global level. TAG-Leprosy will also be informed of policies and recommendations pertaining to leprosy set by the WHO STAG-NTD or regional technical advisory groups. The WHO Secretariat will determine what policy issues and
information from other WHO technical advisory/steering groups should be brought to the attention of TAG-Leprosy.

3. TAG-Leprosy members and Observers shall not quote from, circulate or use TAG-Leprosy documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.

4. WHO retains full control over the publication of the reports of the TAG-Leprosy, including deciding whether or not to publish them.