



Neglected Tropical Disease Control Program

Semi-annual report

October 1, 2006–March 31, 2007

April 30, 2007

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by RTI International.

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Cooperative Agreement No. GHS-A-00-06-00006-00

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Table of Contents

	Page
1. Summary of Activities	1
2. Management.....	1
3. Direct Implementation of Integrated NTD Control.....	4
4. Grants Administration for Country Programs.....	5
5. Technical Advisory Group.....	5
6. Documentation and Dissemination of Program Lessons	6
7. Advocacy and Resource Mobilization.....	6
8. Monitoring and Evaluation.....	8
9. Problems Solved and Still Outstanding	9
10. Activities for the Next Six Months.....	10

List of Acronyms

APOC	African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control
CDC	Center for Disease Control
CDTI	Community directed treatment with Ivermectin
EOI	Expression of Interest
GNNTDC	Global Network for Neglected Tropical Disease Control
GWU	George Washington University
ICTC	International Coalition for Trachoma Control
ITI	International Trachoma Initiative
IRs	Intermediate Results
LATH	Liverpool Associates in Tropical Health
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
LFSC	Lymphatic Filariasis Support Centre, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
LOA	Letter of Authorization
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGDO	Non-Governmental Development Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
PCT	Preventive Chemotherapy
PDCI	Partnership for Disease Control Initiatives
PI	Performance Indicators
RF	Results Framework
RFA	Request for Application
RTI	RTI International
SAE	Severe Adverse Event
SCI	Schistosomiasis Control Initiative, Imperial College, London
STH	Soil-Transmitted Helminthes
STTA	Short-Term Technical Advisor
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TOB	Technical Oversight Board
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Summary of Activities

The NTD Control Program was awarded on September 13, 2006 and substantial progress has been made over the past six months in starting up activities. Highlights during this period include the filling of the staff positions which were necessary to mobilize the Program; establishing and implementing activities in the five fast-track countries; participating in national and international meetings; establishing key working relationships with partners and stakeholders; laying the foundation for advocacy and document dissemination for the life of the program; and conceptualizing and implementing the monitoring and evaluation system.

Program progress will be presented according to program element as described in the Annual Work Plan.

2. Management

Start-up meetings were held on September 12-13, 2006 with Program partners and USAID.

The NTD Control Program is co-located with RTI's Washington, DC offices. We identified appropriate new office space for the Program and moved into these offices, located in the same building as RTI's Washington, DC corporate offices, in mid-November 2006.

The first Annual Work Plan was submitted on November 17, 2006. A revised Work Plan was submitted on December 22, 2006, incorporating comments from USAID. On January 16, 2007, USAID provided provisional approval for the revised workplan, and requested that the team hold a meeting to obtain technical guidance from a range of experts in order to discuss the workplan and gain broader consensus on proposed activities and approaches. This meeting of NTD experts and NTD Control Program staff and partners was held on February 27-28, 2007 in the Program's offices in Washington, DC. The meeting's recommendations are included as Appendix A, and informed the second revision to the first Annual Workplan, which was submitted to USAID on April 9, 2007.

The sub-agreement with partner LATH and letters of authorization for grantees SCI and ITI were all signed in the first quarter of FY07.

With the exception of two positions, all Program positions necessary to fully mobilize the program have been filled. Program staff are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. NTD Program Personnel

Team	Role
TBD	• Replacement NTD Program Director- estimated hire date May 2007
Mary Linehan	• Program Deputy Director
TBD	• Senior NTD Technical Specialist
Judy Webb	• Senior Grants Manager
Margaret Baker (PT)	• Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
Achille Kabore	• Africa Regional Manager- based in Liverpool
Marc Holler	• Communication and Advocacy Manager
Scott Torres	• Country Program Coordinator
Christine Davachi	• Program Assistant
Jaki Pitman	• Program Administrative Specialist (PAS)

2.1 Recruitment

Prof. Alan Fenwick resigned as Program Director at the end of December 2006, in order to return to his post as Director of SCI. He remains an important technical advisor to the program, and continues to work directly in the country programs managed by SCI. Ms. Barbara Kennedy has been acting as the Program Director since Prof. Fenwick's resignation.

As a result, we are currently recruiting for a Washington, DC-based Program Director who will be supported by a Senior Management Team composed of a Deputy NTD Program Director, a Senior Grants Manager, and a Senior NTD Technical Specialist. We both the Program Director and hope to have this position and the NTD Specialist position filled in the third quarter of the fiscal year.

2.2 Partners and Grantees

RTI conducted due diligence audits for grantees and has issued a letter of authorization (LOA) to each grantee for start-up planning activities in each of the fast-track countries. Final grant documents will be finalized in April following approval of final budgets, including indirect rates for grantees based on the results of audit and formal written justification.

As part of an early emphasis on developing relationships with key global NTD partners and informing stakeholders about the NTD Control Program, Program staff participated in a number of key conferences and meetings. Productive discussions with APOC, WHO, pharmaceutical industry representatives and the drug donation programs were held. These have been invaluable in establishing critical working relationships and informing the broader NTD community about the objectives and program elements of the NTD Control Program. Key meetings include:

- Alan Fenwick, former Program Director, Howard Thompson (SCI) and Jacob Kumaresan (ITI) attended the meeting of the Joint Action Forum of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control on September 26-27, 2006 in Yaoundé, Cameroon.
- In January 2007, Barbara Kennedy and Mary Linehan attended the Partnership for Disease Control Initiatives (PDCI) meeting held in Geneva to coordinate with drug donation partners and introduce the NTD Control Program to this group of stakeholders.
- Meetings were held with WHO to outline strategies for coordination and collaboration for integrated approaches to NTD Control in January 2007.
- Judy Webb and Margaret Maier met with Uche Amazigo, APOC Director, and other APOC senior officials in Ouagadougou on January 15-16 to determine possible avenues of collaboration and assess APOC's ability to support program activities.
- Margaret Maier attended WHO's Meeting on integration of CDTI in the National Health Systems and Co-implementation of Onchocerciasis Control, other Neglected Tropical Diseases and Malaria in Brazzaville February 12-15, and David Molyneux attended the Asia regional Meeting held simultaneously in Jakarta. Both presented information about the NTD Control Program.
- In December 2006 the NTD Control Program representatives attended APOC's 12th Joint Action Forum in Dar es Salaam, an event that presented a special opportunity for to meet with key representatives of the pharmaceutical industry donation programs.

2.3 Conflict of Interest

RTI has taken specific steps to assure management of the avoidance of any potential conflict of interest in the management and implementation of the NTD Control Program. Specifically we have sought legal advice for clarifying the roles of program partners and grantees in participation in the grants review process, participation in the TAG, and review and oversight of technical standards for country programs. Participants in meetings such as the experts' review of the Annual Workplan, where information about the grants process and other confidential issues are discussed, were required to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

We have established clear and transparent competitive processes and procedures for the grants issuance program as detailed in the Annual Workplan. We selected technical reviewers who were not involved in the NTD program's implementation for any country or potential applicant, and required all reviewers to sign non-disclosure agreements to assure confidentiality of the review process. In addition we have clarified the role of WHO as a technical advisor to any country program or Ministry of Health that requests assistance, and have excluded them as reviewers for the expression of interests (EOIs) or grant applications.

3. Direct Implementation of Integrated NTD Control

Implementation of activities is underway in the five fast-track countries: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda.

In November, a stakeholders' meeting was held in Uganda, and country stakeholder meetings were held in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Ghana in January and February. Following these meetings, the country level work plans were completed, with clear tasks for implementation of integrated approaches, timelines for implementation of activities and detailed budgets which have been submitted for funding through the Program's grants element.

3.1 Technical Assistance

USAID formally announced the NTD program and issued a letter to each USAID mission or regional office in the proposed fast-track countries to introduce the program and investigate the interest of the missions in participating in the program. In October and November, NTD Program representatives conducted initial visits to all the five fast-track countries to meet with USAID Mission staff and local stakeholders to discuss proposed NTD Control Program activities. All five USAID Missions have agreed to be included in the fast-track group.

In each of the fast-track countries, a written letter of commitment was obtained from the government for implementation of the integrated approach. These letters were included in our application, and have been reconfirmed through discussions and meetings held since the award of the program.

In Uganda a stakeholders' meeting was held during the last week of November. Judy Webb and Alan Fenwick attended the meeting which resulted in a well-developed program strategy for integration of NTD MDA into child health days.

A field visit to Mali was conducted by Mary Linehan, Howard Thompson (SCI) and Ibrahim Jabr (ITI) in late November, 2006 to meet with USAID, MOH and other stakeholders to initiate discussions about how to approach NTD integration.

In January and February, 2007 stakeholder meetings were held in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Ghana. Following the first of these meetings, held in Mali, the Program held a

meeting of all program partners (LATH, SCI, ITI, RTI) to formalize the process for stakeholder meetings in order to build on the experience of Mali.

Country program proposals and budgets were prepared for each of the fast-track countries, and formally approved by USAID in April, 2007.

4. Grants Administration for Country Programs

RTI completed due diligence audits of the pre-selected grantees, ITI and SCI, and issued a pre-grant, Letter of Authorization (LOA) for both grantees to take part in country visits, coordinate and attend country level stakeholder meetings, conduct situation analyses and prepare country program proposals and budgets, and recruit for necessary staff to support the NTD program.

RTI completed the design of a competitive, open and transparent grants selection process to solicit applications from additional, non-fast-track countries for funding under the NTD program with the goal of issuing additional grants in Year One of the program. A draft Request for Application (RFA) was sent for review to USAID and key advisors in March, 2007. Further comment on the proposed grants mechanism was provided by technical advisors during the February, 2007 work plan review meeting. Final USAID approval for the RFA was received on March 14, 2007 and the RFA was posted on March 15, 2007 on RTI's website. In addition notification of the RFA was sent to USAID Missions, WHO regional and Geneva offices, the GNNTDC, and widely distributed by email to potential applicants who had contacted the program over the previous six months. Expressions of Interest (EOIs) were received by the due date of April 16, 2007. A bidder's workshop to provide prospective applicants with additional information regarding the NTD program is scheduled to be held in May, 2007.

5. Technical Advisory Group

Based on guidance provided by USAID during the Program's start-up meetings, the terms of reference for the TAG were significantly revised and clarified in the First Annual Work Plan.

An informal TAG meeting was held on Tuesday, October 24, 2006, taking advantage of the presence in Washington, DC of a number of potential TAG members. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the goals and objectives of NTD Control Program and to discuss the role of the TAG in the Program. As the NTD Control Program has more clearly identified its needs, the terms of reference for the Technical Oversight Board (renamed the Technical Advisory Group) have been modified substantially.

A proposed date of September, 2007 for the first TAG meeting was determined during the February work plan review meeting, focusing on the findings of the first round of integrated MDA under the Program in the fast-track countries.

6. Documentation and Dissemination of Program Lessons

Documentation and dissemination activities have focused on development of program presentations and brief materials to describe the program. Specific activities include:

- A press release was created in September 2006 to announce the program. The press release was developed in collaboration with USAID, RTI and its partners. We provided additional support to partners on the development of presentations and press releases to ensure that information is accurate and correctly marked and branded.
- A NTD Control Program brief has been updated and revised for dissemination at events attended by members of the NTD team.
- A monthly update was initiated in December 2006 which keeps our partners updated on recent events, hires, and progress related to the NTD Control Program.
- The marking and branding plan has been distributed to all of our partners who are implementing programs in the five fast-track countries. We have worked closely with our partners to ensure that they are properly marking and branding materials especially with program launches imminent. We will continue to work closely with our partners, and use the lessons learned to improve the process as we work with new partners.
- A database of stakeholders has been developed, and will be used to disseminate best practices, lessons learned, and other materials.
- The website is currently under development and will include links to partner websites and other information sources, as well as providing country program information and progress updates.

7. Advocacy and Resource Mobilization

Advocacy and resource mobilization activities in the first half of FY07 have focused on raising the profile of NTDs and leveraging the contacts of our partners. Specific activities are described below.

7.1 Global Level

Advocacy at the global policy level included participating in or attending the following events:

- In October 2006, Alan Fenwick and Mary Linehan attended the George Washington University *Rapid Impact: Integrating the NTDs with Malaria and HIV/AIDS Control* conference. This was an important opportunity to describe the NTD Control Program to a wide range of global partners and to investigate opportunities for collaboration.

- In October 2006 Alan Fenwick presented at USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health Mini MAQ University: “Ending the cycle of misery caused by neglected tropical diseases.”
- In November 2006, Alan Fenwick, Jacob Kumaresan, Peter Hotez and David Molyneux attended the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene annual meeting, a key opportunity for profiling the potential for the NTD Control Program to contribute to the evidence base for the increased impact of integration for NTD control. Dr. Molyneux gave the keynote address at the opening of the plenary session highlighting the major issues of NTD control in relation to the MDGs.

7.2 New Partners

Outreach to new organizations and groups has been undertaken in order to develop new partnerships and strategic alliances with organizations that are part of the global health community. To raise awareness of NTDs, the NTD Control Program, and integration, and to identify opportunities that will result in increased resources for global health programs, we have initiated discussions about potential synergies with new partners. Activities currently under way include:

- Developing a 5 minute video to show during the Global Health Council meeting in May 2007. The video will focus on raising awareness of NTDs and focus on the launch of the program in one of the five fast-track countries.
- In February 2007, Program representatives from SCI, ITI, RTI and LATH participated in the First Joint Meeting of the International Coalition for Trachoma Control (ICTC), NGDO LF Network, and NGDO Coordination Group for Onchocerciasis Control in Oak Brook, IL and presented information on fast-track country programs and the grants application process.

7.3 Country Programs

Grantees play a significant role in advocacy and resource mobilization at the country level, assuring national commitment to NTD control, increasing commitment to integrated approaches, and mobilizing local resources (i.e. manpower for MDA, transport and logistics and other donors and stakeholders). Fast-track country programs were successful in securing government resources for implementation, conducting gap analysis to highlight the role of donors and local partners and increasing the number of partners included in the national MDA planning. Continued emphasis on expanding partnerships and involving local NGOs and other community groups will be a focus of future activities.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

The focus of activities in the first half of Year One has been the development of the M&E plan in consultation with a range of technical partners. To assure that the Program's M&E approach is consistent with global efforts, including the M&E guidelines being drafted by WHO, we have collaborated closely with WHO, CDC and Program advisors.

On March 12-13, 2007, Mary Linehan and Margaret Baker attended the WHO meeting in Geneva on situational analysis on current practices in monitoring and evaluation of diseases targeted with preventative chemotherapy. At this meeting, the WHO plan for M&E of NTDs was presented and we received valuable feedback on the Program's M&E Plan, including concurrence that measuring coverage was the most important indicator for documenting country program success.

8.1 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A results framework (RF) for the NTD Control Program was developed with input from USAID. This framework defines the four intermediate results (IR) that build towards the program's overarching objective, to reduce and control the burden of neglected tropical diseases:

IR 1: Proportion of the overall 'at-risk' and 'eligible' population treated with appropriate PCT through the NTD Control Program.

IR 2: Effectiveness of an integrated approach to NTD control demonstrated

IR 3: Efficiency of an integrated approach to NTD control demonstrated

IR 4: National and global commitment to integrated NTD control increased

- In order to track progress on the four IRs, we have developed performance indicators (PI). A total of thirteen PIs have been devised - eight for implementation at the country level and five at the international level. These are summarized in the M&E Plan and are described systematically using standardized indicator frameworks.
- We sought a wide range of expertise in developing the M&E plan. Technical experts from various organizations including the Program's partners, WHO, CDC, the Mectizan Donation Program and academic institutions were consulted.
- We are currently working on the details of a post-NTD MDA survey protocol to validate reported coverage.
- We are preparing a concept paper to better clarify the issues around integration and describing the Program's vision of the levels of integration, models of optimizing efficiencies, and benefits from integrating NTD control programs.
- We are preparing a protocol for collecting costing data in order to determine the financial and economic costs of integrated program and to identify whether an integrated approach is more efficient than separate vertical programs.

8.2 Country Level Activities

The NTD Control Program M&E system is not intended to supplant existing systems at the country level, but to build upon the existing monitoring and information systems. The Program is working closely with country level M&E stakeholders and grantees in gathering existing information and developing processes for data collection.

With an M&E approach drafted we are now completing the following deliverables:

- A country level M&E planning matrix was developed outlining the goals, elimination targets, treatment triggers, diagnostic methods, and data collection options for the five focus diseases.
- All available baseline data from the five fast-track countries has been summarized in a framework providing information on the number of districts and persons ‘at risk’ for NTDs, the number of these which have been treated, previous MDA implementation strategies, and partners. This matrix also highlights gaps in the data that are currently being addressed.
- An M&E situational analysis at the country level is being applied by the Africa Regional Manager. This analysis is designed to collect information on existing national and program specific M&E systems, on strategies currently implemented at country level to validate reported coverage, on how integration of NTDs is being implemented in each country, and on baseline data.

8.3 Development of M&E Systems

In order to facilitate the implementation of the M&E plan we are working on the following deliverables:

- Grantees will be required to report data to the program office two months following the end of MDA campaigns. To support this function, M&E guidelines for grantees are currently being drafted.
- We are developing a database at the Program office which will assemble the data collected from the countries and link to appropriate data analysis software.
- Forms to facilitate the reporting on indicators from grantees to the Program office have been drafted and feed back from partners is being obtained.

9. Problems Solved and Still Outstanding

Plans are also underway to provide further grants management training to the country offices in May 2007. This training will be formalized in order to ensure that new grantees can effectively initiate program activities and account for funds in compliance with USAID and RTI requirements.

The planning process for integration of NTD Control in fast-track countries involved significantly more time and effort than was originally expected. Our expectation was that

since the fast-track countries had existing programs planning integration would be a rapid process, involving stakeholders meetings and a detailed budget. However, our experience in these five countries was that there remains considerable resistance to integrated management of the program, and country partners continue to struggle with how best to achieve efficiencies and still maintain the needs of disease-specific programs. Integration will be a gradual process in each country, and we plan to hold country reviews in August that will allow us to modify approaches and discuss what worked and what did not.

In addition, the budgeting process was far more time-consuming and demanding than anticipated. Conducting an analysis of the existing resources and identifying gaps (gap analysis) was a new concept and one which took a several weeks of time in each country, at least in part because local staff were not able to devote all their attention to the task, having their existing program demands to meet. Future planning processes should be faster now that in each country an NTD Country Manager has been hired. In new countries it will be important for grantees to plan for this analysis and dedicate appropriate staff at the outset.

10. Activities for the Next Six Months

Management

- Hiring Program Director and NTD Specialist.
- Obtain final approval for Year One Work Plan from USAID

Direct implementation

- Review country programs in fast-track countries to modify approaches, evaluate integration approaches used in various settings and develop guidelines for new grantees based on the country experience in fast-track countries.
- Provide technical assistance as needed to fast-track country programs for development of systems, especially reporting and logistics management, and strengthening lines of communication with USAID missions as appropriate.
- Provide technical assistance as needed to fast-track country programs for development of systems, especially reporting and logistics management, and strengthening lines of communication with USAID missions as appropriate.
- Assess the availability and projected requirements for praziquantel, albendazole/mebendazole and any other drugs which must be procured in order to develop a strategy for securing additional donations of drugs or financial support from other donors, and planning a strategic approach to the issue of limited donations and high cost within the limitations of the NTD Control Program.
- Open the Uganda country program office, including hiring staff, and conducting micro-planning with the MOH, partners and local stakeholders to initiate activities in preparation for the MDA planned for October 2007.

- We will hope to obtain drug waiver from USAID and to receive final approval of our Year One work plan

Grants Management

- Implement the grants program element, including review of EOIs in April, conduct bidders conference in late May to provide guidance to applicants invited to submit full proposals, review and select new grantees in July.
- Conduct audits of grantees and award new grants in August.
- Provide training for grantees on USAID rules and regulations and RTI procedures for financial management of grants. Currently training is planned for West African countries May 17-18 and in Uganda May 23-25. Additional training and oversight will be planned according the needs of individual grantees and country programs.

TAG

- Hold first TAG meeting in September 2007

Document Dissemination

- Operationalize Program website.
- Prepare and finalize Program brochure

Advocacy & Resource Mobilization

- Sign agreement with GNNTDC to initiate their participation in specific advocacy and resource mobilization activities in support of the Program, including identifying donors for praziquantel.
- Strengthen relationships with pharmaceutical partners

M&E

- Work with country programs to finalize data collection forms for reporting on Program indicators
- Finalize M&E Plan and obtain approval from USAID.
- Develop concept paper for costing analyses.