UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases: Joint Coordinating Board (JCB) – Report on attendance at the JCB in 2023

The Joint Coordinating Board (JCB) of the UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) acts as the Governing Body of the Special Programme and is responsible for its overall policy and strategy. This document describes the background and composition of the Board.

Bangladesh represents the WHO South-East Asia Region under Paragraph 2.2.2 of the TDR memorandum of understanding (members selected by the WHO Regional Committees). Their four-year term runs from 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026.

Sri Lanka is a member under Paragraph 2.2.3 from 2019–2027.

The current membership of the India and Thailand constituency under Paragraph 2.2.1 runs up to 2025.

The Forty-sixth Session of the Joint Coordinating Board was held from 14–15 June 2023 at WHO headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland.

The attached Working Paper was presented to the High-level Preparatory Meeting for its review and recommendations. The HLP Meeting reviewed the paper and made the following recommendations for consideration by the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee:

**Action by Member States**

1. Proactively participate in the meetings of the TDR Joint Coordinating Board and contribute to the agenda and report of the meetings.
Actions by WHO

(1) Support the participation of SE Asia Region Member States in the meetings of the TDR Joint Coordinating Board.

(2) Present the final report of the Forty-sixth Session of the TDR Joint Coordinating Board, held in a hybrid mode on 14–15 June 2023 in Geneva to the Seventy-sixth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia.

The report on attendance at the JCB in 2023 and the HLP Meeting recommendations are submitted to the Seventy-sixth Session of the Regional Committee for its consideration.
Introduction

1. The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR) is a global programme of international technical cooperation initiated by WHO and co-sponsored by UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and WHO, and operates within a broad framework of intergovernmental and interagency cooperation and participation. The two interdependent objectives are developing improved tools for the control of tropical diseases and strengthening the research capability of the affected countries themselves.

2. TDR is governed by three bodies:
   - The Joint Coordinating Board (JCB);
   - The Standing Committee; and
   - The Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

3. The relevant governance documents are:
   - Memorandum of understanding (MoU);
   - Relevant resolutions of the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board of WHO; and
   - Procedures for the selection of members of the Joint Coordinating Board.

4. The Cooperating Parties are:
   - those governments contributing to Special Programme resources; providing technical and/or scientific support to it; or who are directly affected by the diseases dealt with by the Special Programme; and
   - those intergovernmental and other non-profit-making organizations contributing to Special Programme resources or providing technical and/or scientific support to it.

5. WHO is the Executing Agency.

6. TDR receives voluntary contributions from various donors. Contributing partners include our co-sponsors, governments (WHO Member States) and other funders (foundations, agencies, etc.).

The Joint Coordinating Board

Functions

7. The JCB shall, for the purpose of coordinating the interests and responsibilities of the Parties cooperating in the Special Programme, have the following functions:
   - Review and decide upon the planning and execution of the Special Programme by keeping itself informed of all aspects of its development, and consider reports and recommendations submitted to it by the Standing Committee, the Executing Agency and STAC;
   - Approve the proposed plan of action and budget for the coming financial period, prepared by the Executing Agency and reviewed by the Standing Committee;
• Review the proposals of the Standing Committee and approve arrangements for the financing of the Special Programme in that period;
• Review the proposed longer-term plans of action and their financial implications;
• Review the annual financial statements submitted by the Executing Agency, as well as the audit report thereon, submitted by the external auditor of the Executing Agency;
• Review periodic reports that evaluate the progress of the Special Programme towards the achievement of its objectives;
• Endorse the proposals of the Executing Agency and the Standing Committee for STAC membership; and
• Consider such other matters relating to the Special Programme as may be referred to it by any Cooperating Party.

8. The guidelines for JCB representatives selected by the WHO regional committees (Paragraph 2.2.2 of the MoU) are available in English, French and Spanish on the TDR website and are included in Annex 1.

Composition

9. The JCB consists of 28 members. The membership duration for all type of members, since 2009, is for four years.
• Twelve members shall be representatives from governments contributing to the Special Programme resources, selected by the contributors themselves. Each such representative may also serve as a representative of a constituency established by governments under this membership category. Each constituency will develop its own procedure to designate its representative to the Board. In the event a government intends to serve also as a representative of a constituency on the Board, it shall indicate this in its application for membership, it being understood that each government participating in that constituency shall be entitled to rotate as the representative of that constituency at any session of JCB (Paragraph 2.2.1 of the MoU).
• Six members shall be government representatives selected by the WHO regional committees from among those countries directly affected by the diseases dealt with by the Special Programme, or from among those providing technical or scientific support to the Special Programme (Paragraph 2.2.2 of the MoU).
• Six members are designated by the JCB itself from among the remaining Cooperating Parties (Paragraph 2.2.3 of the MoU).
• The remaining four members shall be drawn from the four co-sponsors of JCB (UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank and WHO) that comprise the Standing Committee.

10. Members of JCB shall serve for a period of four years and may be re-appointed. Other Cooperating Parties may, at their request, be represented as Observers upon approval by the Board.
Membership of the JCB from the South-East Asia Region

11. Currently, the following Member States from the SE Asia Region are members of the JCB:

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<tr>
<th>Member State</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Selected by</th>
<th>Paragraph of MoU</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<tr>
<td>India*</td>
<td>2004–2025</td>
<td>TDR contributor</td>
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<td>TDR contributor</td>
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<td>Thailand*</td>
<td>2010–2025</td>
<td>TDR Contributor</td>
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<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2023–2026</td>
<td>Regional Committee</td>
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<td>Nominated by the Seventy-fifth Regional Committee for South-East Asia in September 2022.</td>
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<td>Sri Lanka**</td>
<td>2019–2027</td>
<td>The JCB itself</td>
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<td>Designated by acclamation (4-year term beginning 1 January 2024). JCB46 agreed to designate for membership under paragraph 2.2.3 the two cooperating parties who submitted applications for the two vacancies.</td>
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* Joint constituency

** Earlier membership term of Sri Lanka under Paragraph 2.2.3 of the MoU was for the period 2019–2022. In 2022, Sri Lanka re-applied for its membership in the same category. Since the elections could not be held in 2022, the membership term of Sri Lanka was extended for one year.

12. Present and past JCB representatives from the South-East Asia Region from the year 2000 are given in Annex 2.

Information on the Forty-sixth Session of the JCB

- The Forty-sixth Session of Board was held in WHO headquarters, Geneva, from 14–15 June 2023. The summary report of the attendance of JCB members at the Forty-sixth Session is attached as Annex 3.
- From the South-East Asia Region, representatives from Bangladesh and Thailand registered to attend remotely. The representative from Sri Lanka, Dr Sunil De Alwis, who is currently the JCB disease endemic country representative, attended in person. Dr Sunil De Alwis also attends meetings of the Standing Committee.
- The Member State governments in 2023 are: India and Thailand (MoU 2.2.1), Bangladesh (MoU 2.2.2) and Sri Lanka (MoU 2.2.3).

Dates and venues of future JCB sessions

13. At its Forty-sixth Session, JCB confirmed that its Forty-seventh session will take place in Geneva on 12–13 June 2024 (with a briefing session on 11 June 2024).
Standing Committee

Composition and functions

14. The Standing Committee is comprised of the co-sponsors, namely UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank and WHO, and the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the JCB, the Chair of STAC, one representative from the JCB resource contributors group (a JCB member under paragraph 2.2.1), and one representative from a disease endemic country (which may be a JCB member under paragraph 2.2.2 or paragraph 2.2.3). The Standing Committee is guided by Standard Operating Procedures and has the following functions:

- Review the plan of action and budget for the coming financial period, as prepared by the Executing Agency, in time for presentation to JCB not less than 45 days before the annual session of JCB;
- Take proposals to JCB for financing of the Special Programme for the coming financial period;
- Approve reallocation of resources between programme areas and scientific working groups of the Special Programme during a financial period, upon recommendation by STAC and the Executing Agency, and report such reallocations to JCB;
- Examine the reports submitted by STAC to the Executing Agency and the comments thereon, make necessary observations, and transmit these, with comments as appropriate, to JCB;
- Review particular aspects of the Special Programme, including those that may be referred to it by JCB, and present findings and recommendations in the form of reports to JCB; and
- Inform JCB, as required, regarding Special Programme matters of interest to it.

Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)

Composition

15. STAC comprises 15 scientists and other technical personnel who serve in their personal capacities to represent the broad range of biomedical and other disciplines required for Special Programme activities. Members of STAC, including the Chair, are selected on the basis of scientific or technical competence by the Executing Agency, in consultation with the Standing Committee and with the endorsement of the JCB.

16. Members of STAC, including the Chair, are appointed to serve for a period of two years, and will be eligible for re-appointment. To maintain continuity of membership, the expiration of the initial terms of office of members of STAC are staggered.

Functions

17. STAC has the following functions:

- review, from a scientific and technical standpoint, the content, scope, and dimensions of the Special Programme;
• recommend priorities within the Special Programme, including the establishment and
dis-establishment of scientific working groups, and all scientific and technical activities
related to the Programme; and
• provide the JCB and the Executing Agency with a continuous independent evaluation
of the scientific and technical aspects of all activities of the Special Programme.

18. For these purposes, the STAC may propose and present for consideration such technical
documents and recommendations as it may deem appropriate.
Annex 1

UNICEF/UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)
Joint Coordinating Board (JCB): Guidelines for JCB representatives selected by the WHO regional committees

Background issues

(1) This document is intended to provide guidelines for those selected by the regional committees for JCB membership.

(2) Regional representatives are encouraged to proactively participate in the discussions at the JCB. Disease endemic country and other regional representatives can contribute to TDR, and in order to do this, they should play an active role during JCB sessions.

(3) To facilitate participation by the regional representatives at JCB, they need to be briefed about TDR before arriving for their first JCB session. A regional representative should be well versed not only of his/her country's relationship with TDR, but also know about TDR activities in their region. Good briefing should enable the representatives to participate in and contribute to the discussions at the JCB and benefit the cause of TDR.

(4) The TDR Secretariat and the regional offices will assist with this briefing.

Guidelines on the role of representatives

• Represent both the country and the region at the JCB, recognizing the importance of voicing the needs of the country, the region and the disease endemic countries in the Board's deliberations

• Familiarization with the work of TDR and the regional issues by:
  o reading background information provided by the Programme and/or the regional office - the TDR website is https://tdr.who.int/
  o making contact with (or visiting) current and/or past representatives who have attended JCB sessions
  o making contact with (or visiting) key national or neighbouring country scientists who are familiar with the work of TDR (details to be provided by TDR)
  o making contact with (or visiting) the Regional Office

• Secure national briefing before the JCB session and provide feedback to the Government after the JCB session.

• Secure briefing from the Regional Office before the JCB session and provide feedback to the Regional Office after the JCB session, with possible attendance at the Regional Committee meeting if possible.

• Participate in the following meetings just prior to or during the JCB:
  o the JCB briefing meeting
  o the meeting of regional representatives, aimed primarily at disease endemic countries

• Participate in the virtual network of regional representatives.
• Keep JCB dates free to ensure attendance for the whole term of office if nominated by the Government for the full period – if not nominated for the full period or if changes occur, brief the successor. Ensure availability of suitable alternates in case of absence and brief them thoroughly.

• At the end of the term of office, be prepared to provide briefing to the next regional representative.

• Assist, as required, in raising resources for research for health, especially for the neglected diseases, at the national, regional and global level.

*It is recommended that all JCB representatives have the following qualifications:*  
• Expertise in the field of infectious diseases of poverty, preferably from the research side or with good knowledge of the research issues. Disease programme officers with research knowledge, as well as those with experience in resource mobilization, within government or other relevant sources if the representative is from a nongovernmental organization, would be a distinct advantage.

• Experience preferably as a research coordinator in or linked to the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Science and Technology, with experience in the overall coordination of national health research activities and collaboration with the Regional Office and TDR.

• Fluency in English or French, the working languages of WHO as the Executing Agency for TDR.

• Familiarity with the workings of WHO or other United Nations specialized agencies and past experience in their governing body and/or international scientific meetings.

• Knowledge of the work of TDR or willingness to rapidly acquire such knowledge.

• Cooperating Parties participating as observers should preferably also meet these qualifications.
Annex 2

Past and present representatives to JCB from the South-East Asia Region (2000 – till date)

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Annex 3

Summary report of the attendance of JCB members at the Forty-sixth session of the Joint Coordinating Board (JCB)
Geneva, Switzerland, 14–15 June 2023¹

Attendance:

Members
Bangladesh*, Belgium, Burkina Faso, China, Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), Fiocruz* (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz), Germany and Luxembourg Constituency, Guatemala, India and Thailand Constituency*, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia*, Mexico, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama and Spain Constituency, Peru, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America Constituency, Zambia,


Observers
Australia*, Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, Nicaragua, Oman, Philippines*, Russian Federation, South Africa*, Fondation Mérieux, INDEPTH Network, Institut Pasteur, International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP)

Decisions
(1) Appointed Dr Dirk Mueller (representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) as Rapporteur for JCB46.
(2) Adopted the agenda of JCB46.
(3) Accepted the declarations of interests as presented to the secretariat, with no conflicts foreseen.
(4) Congratulated TDR on the enormous progress achieved by the Programme, despite the difficult financial situation, and approved the Director’s report.
(5) Welcomed the Standing Committee’s report which was considered very useful for the deliberations of the JCB.
(6) Welcomed the report presented by Chair STAC.
(7) Approved the 2022 TDR Results Report.
(8) Approved the 2022 TDR Risk Management Report.
(10) Approved the certified financial statement for the year ended 31 December 2022.
(11) Approved the TDR Strategy 2024–2029.

¹ The meeting report will be available on TDR’s website through this link - https://tdr.who.int/groups/joint-coordinating-board.
² An introductory Briefing Session for JCB participants was held on 13 June 2023.

* Attended remotely
(12) Approved the TDR Programme Budget and workplan for the 2024–2025 biennium.

(13) Designation by acclamation (four-year terms beginning 1 January 2024). JCB46 agreed to designate for membership under Paragraph 2.2.3 of the TDR memorandum of understanding, for a four-year term beginning 1 January 2024, the following cooperating parties:
   - Cuba
   - Sri Lanka

(14) Endorsed the proposed membership of STAC from 1 July 2023.

(15) Dates of future JCB sessions are:
   - JCB47 will be held on 12 and 13 June 2024 (with a briefing session on 11 June).
   - JCB48 will be held on 11 and 12 June 2025 (with a briefing session on 10 June).
   Both meetings will be held in Geneva, WHO Headquarters.

**Recommendations:**

(1) Recommended presenting exchange rate fluctuations and their impact on TDR finances over time.

(2) Welcomed plans for increased designated fundraising, as recommended by the Standing Committee.

(3) Recommended that the working capital be assigned a more appropriate name and highlight that this is required by WHO and was approved by the Board in 2014.

(4) Recommended that JCB members should consider and support opportunities for funding TDR, including like-minded potential funders highlighting funding gaps and the need to maintain support to TDR and its activities. Promoting TDR’s new Strategy can help in this regard and would support the Programme to disseminate the new document.

(5) JCB approved and welcomed the draft Strategy 2024–2029 and asked the TDR Secretariat to consider a few recommendations, at their discretion.