

Core Group for Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership

Report of the Meeting
Singapore, 8-10 February 2007



**World Health
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Executive summary

Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region bear more than 75% of the global burden of dengue. Though interventions that are known to work are available, current efforts to prevent and control dengue are constrained due to a lack of resources, sustained political commitment and effective coordination between the sectors concerned. Partnerships are needed to facilitate effective coordination among the countries since efforts to control dengue by individual countries are not likely to be successful on their own. A meeting of the partners organized by the World Health Organization and supported by the Government of Japan was organized in March 2006 at Chiang Mai, Thailand. The meeting recommended the formation of the Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership (APDP), a core group, and the preparation of a strategic plan.

A meeting of the core group supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was organized in Singapore from 8-10 February 2007 by WHO to review and refine the draft strategic framework of APDP and discuss the governance of the partnership. The core group meeting was hosted by the National Environmental Agency, Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Singapore. Participants at the meeting included members of the core group representing countries of the Asia-Pacific Region, partners and WHO. In the opening remarks Mr Lee Yuen Hee, CEO, National Environmental Agency, Singapore, highlighted the efforts made by that nation towards prevention and control and the successes achieved. Dr J. P. Narain, Director, CDS, WHO South-East Asia (SEA) Region acknowledged on behalf of the SEA and Western Pacific Regions the support of USAID. He emphasized the rapid emergence of dengue can be halted and reversed through increased cooperation between the two Regions and intersectoral action.

Mr Khoo Seow Poh, Director-General, National Environmental Agency, Singapore was appointed as chairperson; Dr Pratap Singhasivanon, Dean, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Thailand, as co-chairperson, and Dr John Aaskov, Associate Professor, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, as rapporteur for the meeting.

The draft strategic framework for APDP was discussed extensively during the meeting of the core group and suggestions made to refine the framework. Important issues relating to the governance and functioning of

the partnerships were discussed. The core group agreed on the formation of working groups on advocacy, resource mobilization, support to technical programme (case management and integrated vector management), strategic information, intercountry and intersectoral collaboration. Singapore proposes to organize a conference on dengue before the end of 2007. The core group recommended that APDP should advocate launching of the Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership during the proposed conference. Following the discussions a roadmap was prepared for implementation in 2007-2008.

The core group also expressed deep concern with the global emergence of dengue as a serious public health problem with adverse health, social and economic consequences and its disproportionate fallout in the Asia-Pacific Region. It was acknowledged that not enough has been done to reverse the rising trend of the disease and that sustainable prevention and control will require active bi-regional partnerships. Successful prevention and control should also be achieved by scaling up the use and application of currently available tools through community involvement that is also supported by policy and intersectoral collaboration.

Recommendations of the core group

The following recommendations were made by the core group at the meeting:

- Revise and finalize the Strategic Framework of APDP by June 2007 based on the recommendations of the core group.
- Core group should serve as an interim Executive Board for APDP until an Executive Board has been formed and governance put in place.
- Take immediate steps to establish a Secretariat for APDP with the resources discussed during the meeting as a starting point.
- Initiate appropriate action to constitute an executive board and working groups through a process of consultation.
- Secretariat should take necessary action to ensure inclusion of dengue prevention and control in the agenda of regional committee meetings scheduled for 2008.

- Of the five working groups recommended by the core group, ad hoc working groups on advocacy and resource mobilization should be formed immediately.
- A white paper on key issues relating to advocacy must be issued by April 2007.
- Organize a programme managers' meeting in June 2007 to review and finalize the Biregional Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of Dengue in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- Collaborate with the Government of Singapore to organize the conference on launching of APDP that is due to be held in Singapore in November 2007. Develop plans for advocacy with key ministers, high-level officials, the Director-General of WHO, Regional Directors concerned along with other interested partners during the November conference.

1. Background

A meeting of partners organized by WHO with support from the Government of Japan was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in March 2006 which recommended establishment of Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnerships (APDP). Based on the recommendation of this meeting a Core Group comprising of select Member countries in the Asia-Pacific region and partners was established by WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (WHO SEARO) and WHO Regional Office for Western Pacific Region (WHO WPRO) in consultation with the countries of the regions. A draft strategic framework for the Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership (APDP) was prepared subsequently.

The meeting of the core group was organized with support from USAID by WHO in collaboration with the National Environmental Agency of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Singapore, from 8 to 10 February 2007. Participants at the meeting included seven members of the core group representing two countries each from SEA and Western Pacific Regions, four representatives of the partners, and six representatives from WHO (HQ, SEARO and WPRO). A list of the participants is given in the annexure.

2. Opening ceremony

Dr Jai P. Narain, Director, Communicable Diseases, WHO SEARO, extended greetings on behalf of the Regional Directors of the South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions. Dengue is a serious public health problem in Asia-Pacific countries. It has spread to new areas, the frequency of epidemics has increased and the situation has become more susceptible to rapid deterioration. The disease was reported for the first time in Bhutan in 2004 and in Nepal in 2006. In many countries it is considered as the fastest growing public health problem. Fuelled by media coverage dengue has become an important public health issue and often gets front-page media coverage for many months. Efforts to control dengue are constrained due to inadequate resources, insufficient political commitment

and lack of intersectoral coordination. It is not enough if only a few countries develop and implement a plan for the prevention and control of dengue. Effective control requires sustained intercountry collaboration. A meeting of partners in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in March 2006 decided to establish the Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership (APDP), constitute a core group to enlist greater commitment and resources, and prepare a strategic framework for the APDP. There is increasing collaboration between the two Regions. The two Regional Offices have prepared a draft strategic plan (2007-2015) for the prevention and control of dengue in the Asia-Pacific which was discussed in this meeting. This strategic plan is to help the countries to prepare their implementation plans and the two should be harmonized, he informed. Dr Narain also acknowledged the support of USAID for this meeting.

Mr Lee Yuen Hee, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Environment Agency, Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, Singapore welcomed members of the core group on behalf of the Singapore Government. Dengue control is a key challenge for many governments. Singapore has spent substantial resources in the prevention and control of dengue. The country experienced a severe epidemic in 2004. Effective control measures helped reduce the impact of the epidemic. The strategy will serve as a generic framework to help countries elaborate their plans based on local circumstances. He also emphasized intercountry collaboration since the disease can spread rapidly. Partnership should leverage the advantage and mobilize resources needed to reduce cross-border transmission. It will be necessary to reverse the rising trend and reduce the adverse health and socio-economic impact of the disease. He wished that the meeting of the core group will be very fruitful.

Mr Khoo Seow Poh, Director-General, National Environmental Agency, Singapore, was appointed chairperson; Dr Pratap Singhasivanon, Dean, Faculty of Tropical Medicine, Mahidol University, Thailand, the co-chairperson, and Dr John Aaskov, Associate Professor, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia, the rapporteur of the meeting.

3. Objectives of the meeting

The following were listed as the main objectives of the meeting:

- To review the strategic framework of APDP and working mechanism of the partnership.
- To discuss the strategic plan for 2007–2015.

4. Dengue situation in the Asia-Pacific: An overview

The five-year averages for incidence of dengue have increased and the baselines are getting higher every decade. The situation is likely to get worsen due to relentless urbanization and rapid growth in mobility and transportation. More than 100 countries are reporting dengue and about 2.5–3 billion people are at risk. The problem has not yet been addressed adequately by most national governments and there is little intercountry collaboration to reverse the rising trends. The risk of yellow fever also calls for vigilance. Urban yellow fever spreads the same way and is caused by the same vector. Having already spread into Americas, there is likely to be a very dramatic movement of the disease in the near future. Laboratory surveillance, effective mosquito control, better tools, and most importantly, the political will to sustain these programmes are needed in considerable measure to reverse the rising trend of dengue.

5. The Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership Strategic Framework

The Asia-Pacific Strategic Framework for Dengue Partnership containing the guiding principles, goals, objectives and targets for the partnership was presented. The proposed structure and governance of the partnership was described. Key activities and the outputs expected for each objective were explained.

According to the partners, the Strategic Framework has been well prepared and is a step in the right direction. All the representatives of the partner organizations endorsed the approach used in the framework in principle. While articulating full support, the partners stressed the need for advocacy to mobilize funds and enlist the sustained commitment of the governments as a priority. The emphasis should be on prevention of dengue for which laboratory-based surveillance should be established. The countries need to upgrade the basic health infrastructure to respond better

to the threat of dengue epidemics. This is likely to be different in different countries based on the national policy and strategies. WHO has established a large number of partnerships for priority programmes and many of them are working well. The challenge is to make the proposed partnership on dengue work. This will require articulation of clear goals and objectives, governance of the partnership and a harmonization with the Strategic Plan (2007-2015) for Prevention and Control in the Asia-Pacific which focuses on preparation of operational plans by the countries. The Strategic Framework was discussed threadbare, section by section and changes were made when a consensus was reached.

5.1 Objectives and guiding principles

The Strategic Framework for Dengue Partnership should cover the period 2007-2015 so as to be consistent with the Strategic Plan for Dengue Prevention and Control in the Asia-Pacific (2007-2015). The goal should be to reverse the rising trend of dengue and minimize its adverse socio-economic impact.

The specific objectives of the partnerships should be reduced to four instead of eight. Specific Objectives 1 and 2 should be combined and Objectives 3-5 should be retained. The other objectives should be supported through harmonization with the Strategic Regional Plan for Dengue Prevention and Control in the Asia-Pacific and the efforts that are being made towards the discovery of new tools.

The revised objectives are as follows:

- To strengthen collaboration among existing partners and engage new partners in the prevention and control of dengue in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- To mobilize and manage additional resources for the prevention and control of dengue.
- To sensitize endemic countries and undertake advocacy for dengue and control.
- To support the implementation of technical programmes (case management and integrated vector management).

5.2 Structure and governance

Executive Board

There were considerable discussions on the composition of the Executive Board. It was felt that the selection of Executive Board members is crucial for the success of the partnerships. It was agreed that there should be 19 members of the Executive Board of the Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership with the following contribution:

- Four endemic countries (2 each from SEAR and WPR)
- Three endemic countries that contribute to the APDP
- Three donor countries
- Two foundations
- Two academic institutions
- USAID, AusAid and Japan International Cooperation Agency
- WHO and United Nations Children Fund

The membership of the Executive Board will be for a period of three years.

A larger meeting of the partners should encourage participation from the countries for them to have a stake in the partnership so that they develop a sense of ownership and belonging and are able to contribute fruitfully to the partnership without being a member of the board.

5.3 Secretariat

The core group felt that a functioning secretariat is crucial for the success of the effort. Initially, efforts should be made to encourage secondment of staff to contribute to the working of the secretariat. Currently, there is no funding for the proposed secretariat. Even one additional staff with the help of a secretary can undertake activities that would contribute to the establishment of the partnership. WHO is extending assistance in the development of capacity, advocating for a focus on prevention and control of dengue keeping in mind its threat levels and emergence, supporting the

networking of laboratories and undertaking information exchange. With the establishment of the secretariat it would be possible to help in the finalization of the structure and governance of the partnership, coordinate the working groups and promote greater exchange of information. This will be done in consultation with the core group until an executive board is constituted.

It was recommended to consider as an ad hoc measure the recruitment of a public health fellow to work under the guidance of WHO staff until a seconded person is appointed or regular staff member hired.

The secretariat should be established in the South-East Asia Regional Office for a period of three to four years. This can then be moved to the Regional Office for the Western Pacific for a similar duration.

5.4 Working groups

The working groups will help in guiding and supporting implementation and promotion of further research to ensure complementarity of research with the programme.

The partnership should form four working groups:

- (1) Advocacy and resource mobilization.
- (2) Support to technical programme (case management and integrated vector management).
- (3) Strategic information (monitoring and evaluation, operations research).
- (4) Intercountry and intersectoral collaboration and resource mobilization.

The working group should be formed for a period of three years. The number of working group members should be kept flexible and decided on the basis of their terms of reference (ToR), available expertise and the expected outputs. The working groups should function on output/product basis and not on process basis. The working groups should be constituted by the executive board on the recommendations of the secretariat. The secretariat will be responsible for scouting for talent to recommend to the Executive Board the names of the working group members. The working

groups will be interacting with the secretariat and the chairperson of each such group should present its annual report to the executive board.

The core group recommended the immediate establishment of a working group on advocacy and resource mobilization. A brief background paper (in the form of a white paper) should be prepared by selected members of the core group to serve as TOR for this working group. For 2007 mobilization of seed funds and advocacy during the forthcoming international conference on dengue should be the ToR for the working group. Non-traditional donors, regional and national donors should be tapped for mobilization of resources. A resource mobilization strategy has to be prepared for implementation.

6. The next steps

The following constitute the steps that are to be taken next:

- Finalize the draft strategy.
- Present the APDP Strategy Framework at a meeting of programme managers to get a wider endorsement from Member countries.
- Proceed to form an Executive Board.
- The core group should continue to function until an Executive Board is formed and becomes operational.
- Form a working group on resource mobilization and advocacy and take steps for the formation of other working groups.
- Establish a secretariat.
- Mobilize seed resources for immediate use in building the foundations of APDP.
- Prepare a white paper for the working group on advocacy and resource mobilization which should be widely circulated.
- Organize a meeting of the partners preceding the international conference for advocacy and support at the highest decision-making level.

- The key interventions proposed should be reviewed by the Regional Technical Advisory Group. The Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of Dengue in the Asia-Pacific (2007-2015) should be discussed and finalized in a meeting of programme managers.

There were detailed discussions on advocacy with the highest level of decision-makers and partners. It was felt that the partnership should piggyback on an important event. Singapore has proposed a conference and suggested a November-December 2007 launch for APDP. The objective of advocacy is to galvanize action, prepare a profile of the disease, develop a common understanding and prepare a consensus on the use of a regional approach to address the problem.

The core group discussed various options for staffing in the secretariat. To begin with a public health fellow should be appointed, it was suggested. WHO HQs will be approached for the same. For the secondment of the staff the options to be explored are Centre for Disease Control (USA), USAID, AUSAID, and the Government of Singapore.

7. Roadmap for implementation

Activity	Responsible organization	Dates
Mobilize seed money to implement the roadmap	WHO hire a public health fellow or junior public health professional as an interim measure and explore secondment.	Immediate placement of a JPP and finalization of a professional by January 2008
Finalization of the strategic framework of APDP	Through e-mail, WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) and Western Pacific Region (WPRO).	August 2007
Finalization of the Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of Dengue in the Asia-Pacific (2007-2015)	WHO SEARO and WPRO after discussions at programme managers meeting.	August 2007

Activity	Responsible organization	Dates
Secretariat	WHO, Public Health Fellow as an immediate option.	Immediate for a period of 10 months
Working Group: Resource mobilization and advocacy	Location of expertise for the working group; names by March 2007. Produce a white paper spelling out who, why and where regarding advocacy and resource mobilization.	White paper by Dr Guebler, Dr Joshi, Singapore, Dr John Ascoff by April 2007. Advocacy package material to be prepared by Singapore, in consultation with WHO, consistent with the objectives articulated by the white paper.
Constitution of other working groups	Suggest a list of group of names in June 2007.	
Meeting of Programme Managers and Regional Technical Advisory Group (RTAG) on Dengue	To be organized by WPRO and SEARO. To discuss the Strategic Plan (2007-2015), SEARO/WPRO, participants. Finalize the list of working groups.	Second week of June 18-25, 2007 - Indonesia Programme managers, experts and partners.
Meeting of the partners Conference to launch the APDP and dengue conference	Site Singapore Programme managers, partners, policy-makers. Partners for one day, back-to-back in the international meeting.	November/December 2007.
International Conference on Dengue		13-17 October 2008, Phuket, Thailand
Core group	To be continued till the Executive Board is constituted. Will meet as a part of the programme managers' meeting in June 2007.	June/July 2007
Executive Board established	WHO SEARO WHO WPRO or other acceptable mechanism	September 2008

8. Harmonization of strategic framework of APDP with the Strategy Plan (2007-2015) for prevention and control of dengue in the Asia-Pacific

The objective of the strategy plan (2007–2015) is to guide the countries to prepare operational plans for implementation. This includes the identification of resources required and resource gaps.

The Strategic Framework of APDP and the Strategic Plan (2007–2015) should be harmonized. The Strategic Plan (2007–2015) is proposed to be discussed at the meeting of the Regional Technical Advisory Group and then to the programme managers from the countries of the Asia-Pacific Regions.

9. Discussion on advocacy for Asia-Pacific Dengue Partnership in the forthcoming International Conference on Dengue in Singapore in 2007

At the forthcoming international conference on dengue proposed to be held in Singapore in November-December 2007 the advocacy for prevention and control of the disease should aim for the highest levels of participation. Efforts should be made to invite the Director-General of WHO, Regional Directors of SEA and Western Pacific Regions, ministers of health, their advisors, and if possible other ministers who have a stake in dengue. Ambassadors and missions should be briefed to enlist the highest levels of participation. It is recognized that it is not possible for this level of participants to stay for longer than one day. A crisp and interesting programme should be charted out and briefing of the advisers and managers may precede the event. A meeting in which people go back convinced to place dengue prevention and control high on the public health agenda was called for. It can also be a launchpad for the partnership. Planning for such an event should be started as soon as possible. An organizing committee needs to be formed and work would be required to ensure production of advocacy material and other packages of a very high quality. This should be an event co-sponsored by the Government of Singapore, WHO and other partners and key stakeholders.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

The core group is deeply concerned over the global emergence of dengue as a serious public health problem with adverse health, social and economic consequences that disproportionately affect the Asia-Pacific Region. It was recognized that not enough has been done to reverse the rising trend of the disease. Sustainable prevention and control will require strong bi-regional partnerships. Successful prevention and control should be achieved through the scaling up of the application of currently available tools through community involvement supported by policy and intersectoral collaboration. The following recommendations were made:

- Revise and finalize the strategic framework of APDP, based on the recommendations of the core group by June 2007.
- Core group should serve as an interim executive board for the APDP until an executive board has been formed and governance put in place.
- Take immediate steps to establish a secretariat for APDP with the resources discussed during the meeting as a starting point.
- Initiate appropriate action to constitute an executive board, and working groups through a process of consultation.
- Secretariat should take necessary action to ensure the inclusion of dengue prevention and control in the agenda of the Regional Committee meetings of the South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions scheduled in 2008.
- Amongst the five working groups recommended by the core group, the ad hoc working groups on advocacy and resource mobilization should be formed immediately.
- Produce a white paper on key issues relating to advocacy by April 2007.
- Organize a programme managers' meeting in June 2007 to review and finalize the Biregional Strategic Plan for Prevention and Control of Dengue in the Asia-Pacific Region.
- Collaborate with the Government of Singapore to organize the conference to launch APDP to be held in Singapore in

November-December 2007. Develop plans for advocacy with key ministers, high-level government and WHO officials and the concerned Regional Directors and interested partners during the November conference.

11. Concluding session

Dr Jai P. Narain thanked the National Environment Agency of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources and the Ministry of Health, Singapore, for organizing the meeting and USAID for supporting it. The Regional Offices for South-East Asia and Western Pacific with support from Headquarters will continue to make efforts towards ensuring the success for the partnership on dengue prevention and control in Asia-Pacific countries. Mr Khoo Seow Poh, Chairperson of the meeting, appreciated the efforts made since the Chiang Mai conclave in 2006 and expressed his satisfaction over the meeting of the core group. He also thanked WHO, all participants and his colleagues for making the meeting of the core group a success.

Annex

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