

Board Meeting Minutes

Date: Thursday 10th September 2020

Board Member Attendees: Carl Manlan, Ellen Agler, Francisca Mutapi, Kieran Daly, Laura Westcott, Maimouna Diop Ly, Mona Hammami (Chair), Peter Stevenson (Vice-Chair), Reiko Suzuki Kitaoka, Silvia Gold

Observers: Caroline Harper (Sightsavers), Max Gasteen (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation), Mwele Malecela (WHO)

Secretariat: Thoko Elphick-Pooley, Andy Wright, Leslie Weston, Matt Turney, Finlay White

Apologies: Ilona Kickbusch, Wang Yu

For further information contact info@unitingtocombatntds.org

1. Welcome and introduction

- Mona Hammami introduced and welcomed the newest Board member, Laura Westcott.

2. Update on Board meeting actions

- It was noted that almost every action has been completed and reported to the Board by email.

3. Approval of the Uniting strategy to 2030

- The Secretariat is seeking approval for the draft strategy which will be used as a basis for the operational plan.
- A brief overview and background was provided. Uniting was formed after the London Declaration in 2012 where partners pledged support for 10 diseases in the WHO Roadmap to 2020. Now Uniting has moved towards the new WHO road map to 2030 towards 20 diseases, with the focus on country ownership, financing, multisectoral collaboration and cross cutting themes to achieve the goals.
- The new strategy focuses on the value add that Uniting can bring, leading advocacy and resource mobilisation efforts, and facilitating endemic country leadership in line with greater country ownership and financing shift.

Uniting's Added Value

- Uniting is a platform that brings together partners for global political advocacy and resource mobilisation to support countries achieve the road map targets for all NTDs.
- Uniting supports the work of countries, WHO, partners and disease alliances by: providing a platform for the NTD community for collective advocacy to elevate the profile of NTDs globally; leading communications and facilitating an engaged partnership across all NTDs; being a trusted and credible voice to open doors at international level; and using its power to convene partners from across and beyond NTDs.

Strategy and Operational Plan – Progress

- The timeline for the development of the Operational Plan was presented and it was noted that the Strategy and Operational Plan Task Team was formed and has held 6 meetings.

- The Consultative Forum have defined the priorities for Uniting's work. The strategy was updated from that recommendation and was put out on an online partner survey, and specific groups were engaged, for example NGOs, WHO, Country programme managers. All the feedback has been compiled and shared with the Board.
- A slide depicting the structure of the strategy (four aims supported by eight goals) was presented, which was the basis of the questions for the NTD partners survey that went out in July.
- The partner network survey ran for 25 days and had 25 questions and received 210 responses. The answers were overwhelmingly positive, with over 90% of the questions being answered with strongly agree or agree. Only 3% of answers were disagree or strongly disagree, with two people answering strongly disagree for every question.
- The greatest responses came from NGO, Academia and endemic countries. Half of respondents left their name and email address.
- All responses were taken on board as best as possible and were incorporated into the current version of the mission, aims and goals.

Changes to the strategy following Partner feedback

- The Mission was edited to remove the word 'epidemic', which has been reworded to include the 'SDG goal to end NTDs by 2030'
- The Aim of "endemic country leadership" was moved to a goal under the aim to "increase the relevance of NTDs in the global and regional health agendas", to place greater emphasis on cultivating endemic country leaders to champion NTD programs in regional and global contexts.
- The multi-sectoral work goal has been reframed with a focus on mobilising new partnerships and resources and the word "action" has been removed.
- Language has been changed to refer to Uniting as a 'platform' that brings together partners.
- The language of the Strategy has now been changed to reflect that others also have convening power, such as WHO and Uniting will work in collaboration with those other partners.
- There were concerns about the cost of the governance structure. The strategy has been updated to clarify that the structure is made up of voluntary, unpaid roles. Further, the operational plan will include what Uniting "will not do", which will include implementing programmes or being a recipient of grant funding, which was an additional area of concern.
- Aim 4 has now become Aim 3. There were concerns around Uniting duplicating the work of WHO or NNN by carrying out "multi-sectoral action". Clarity has been provided noting that the Aim is about engaging the Uniting partnership, as opposed to the NTD community more broadly, so partners can feel ownership of the work of the partnership.
- An example of what endemic country prioritisation would look like from the perspective of cultivating country leaders as champions for NTDs in support of regional and global policy influencing and advocacy work, using DRC as an example. This was well received by the Board and WHO, as a useful prioritisation framework.
- There was a strong level of feedback from the Survey and from WHO that Uniting's strength is a global coordinating and advocacy body. Some said Uniting should not be mobilising resources directly from countries, however the Task Team had a different view and felt Uniting should have a role to advocate countries to sustain, or increase, spending on NTDs.

The question "*Should Uniting have a direct role in advocacy to mobilise domestic resources from countries?*" was posed to the Board as it merited direction and decision making by the board.

- The Board showed strong support for the inclusion of domestic resource mobilisation and that it should be made very clear how this would look in practice in terms of which countries should be targeted. The Board felt advocating for domestic resource mobilisation was a key component of the Strategy. Collaboration on private sector resource mobilisation was also highlighted.
- The Secretariat clarified that Uniting would only advocate with country leaders for domestic resource mobilisation in specific targeted countries, where Uniting feels it would have an advantage in doing so. It was noted that Uniting will not go into countries to do this as Uniting, but will support other partners/organisations which are already working in country to do so.

Following the review of the changes made to the strategy and the domestic resource mobilisation question, the Board was asked if it agreed with the framing of the strategy as presented, and if it approved the mission, aims and goals as the basis for the operational plan?

- **Decision: The Board approved the strategy as the basis for the operational plan.**

Actions

- Working with the Chair and Vice Chair, the Secretariat to extend invitations to constituencies as observers on the Board on an agenda driven basis.
- The Secretariat to make the Strategy a public document when it is complete

4. Update on Operational Plan

- It was noted that there is only two months until the next Board meeting, meaning that the consultation for the development of the Operational Plan will be different than the Strategy as the time to do so is more limited.
- Leslie Weston provided an overview of the different aspects of the Operational Plan, highlighting the Results Framework, the Staffing Plan and the Budget. This will be finalised by the Q4 meeting.
- It was noted that Uniting has looked at what prioritisation could look like at country, regional and global levels. The Board should send the Secretariat any thoughts with regards to the types of groups that should be engaged for prioritisation.
- Prioritisation impacts most of the goals, when considering what institutions or countries Uniting should be engaging with.
- It was noted that engagement with the multisectoral partners will require primarily engaging with WHO and partners in the NTD community to determine who Uniting is best suited to engage.
- The Secretariat will look to take a parallel approach to advocacy and resource mobilisation. Uniting will approach from the global perspective, considering its engagement at the global and regional levels, where the comparative advantage exists. This links to the value added, which is that Uniting is a trusted and credible voice. By prioritising NTDs in global and regional level Uniting can be a leading edge with engaging with endemic country leaders to establish connections where NTDs might not have a voice yet.
- The other approach is from a country perspective, which means recognising that there are partners on the ground that have relationships already, so it is a question of where Uniting can fill a gap or push something forward and which countries should be prioritised. Where can Uniting bring our country leaders voices and raise visibility. Uniting as an independent organisation can coordinate more freely.
- There could be multiple tiers of engagement. Firstly, from the global and regional lens, then the second tier could be those that were linked to what other donors were doing (e.g. linking to sustainability work). Then the tier three countries might be those that might not have as heavy engagement, which could be some of the top 10 burden countries. For these countries, it is a question of how Uniting can work with the partner networks to make sure they have what they need for advocacy content to help raise awareness with the leadership.
- Full details will be presented to the Board in the Q4 meeting on 5 November.
- The Board asked about how Uniting will be developing and finding a budget for November and how this will be done. It was noted that the finance committee will be working on this with the Secretariat.

Actions

- The Secretariat to prepare the Operational Plan for approval in the Q4 Board meeting
- The Secretariat to work on the Uniting budget for the new strategy with the Finance Committee

5. Update on the postponed Kigali Summit

- It was noted that the final decisions on the dates for the rescheduled Summit have not been announced yet, but the Secretariat has heard that there were no objections from countries.
- Given COVID-19 the secretariat recommended that there should not be a huge resource mobilisation push. The Secretariat proposed for the Board's approval a focus, as a key outcome of a political declaration, in the form of a Kigali Declaration on NTDs, signed by a diverse group of actors, led by countries and for the declaration to stand out for the number of countries signed up to it. It would not be a huge resource mobilisation target, rather a platform for new strategic and collaborative partnerships. This will lay the groundwork for a larger pledging event in the future.
- The Secretariat wishes the Kigali Declaration to help set the agenda for the next decade of action in the global fight against NTDs, and using the platform to amplify messaging around NTDs being a tracer for equitable access, given that NTDs affect the poorest people on the planet.
- The Summit will still be used to showcase integration with Malaria and NTDs. Who the signatories for the Kigali declaration will be will act as a key central goal and a decision will be made about when pledging can happen.
- The Board approved the plans for the postponed Kigali Summit as presented by the Secretariat.

6. Update from the Finance Committee meeting

- Carl Manlan provided an update on the previous Finance Committee meeting, which was attended by new member Maxwell Darkwa. The Board was requested for approval on the expansion of the remit of the Finance Committee to cover Governance in its Terms of Reference.
- It was suggested by some Board members that it is more common for the Governance committee to be separate.
- The Board discussed that with Uniting having a small Secretariat, two committees might be too many.
- It was noted that the three membership of the Finance Committee would be expanded to five people if Governance were to be integrated, in order to get new perspectives for the Governance element.
- The Finance Committee agreed to arrange terms of reference for the Governance Committee and in the interim the Finance Committee will function as both.

Actions

- The Secretariat and Finance Committee to compile a ToR for the Governance Committee before asking for Board nominations to the committee

7. Any other business

- No other business.