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## **SMART4TB CONSORTIUM ANNOUNCES COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

*Community Advisory Boards representing Africa, Asia-Pacific and Eastern Europe and Central Asia will ensure research is needs-driven and new tools are accessible*

**BALTIMORE, June 15, 2023** — Supporting, Mobilizing, and Accelerating Research for Tuberculosis Elimination (SMART4TB) is a five-year cooperative agreement made possible by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with the assistance of the American people, that aims to transform tuberculosis (TB) prevention and care. The consortium is excited to announce Afrocab Treatment Access Partnership (Afrocab), APCASO, and Eurasian Community for Access to Treatment (ECAT) as community partners in the project.

“Engaging TB-affected communities in all parts of the research process is essential for developing locally relevant and translatable evidence,” said SMART4TB Chief of Party, Dr. Richard Chaisson, professor of medicine, epidemiology, and international health at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. “SMART4TB is delighted to partner with Afrocab APCASO and ECAT to enable community engagement and leadership on the consortium’s research and policy activities.”

Engagement with local, national, regional and global community partners is integral to the SMART4TB project. With support from SMART4TB Consortium member [Treatment Action Group](#) (TAG), these CABs will help shape the research agenda and protocols to ensure alignment with community needs and priorities; support trial sensitization and when available, results dissemination with the broader TB community and other key stakeholders; and drive the translation of SMART4TB research into evidence-based, progressive policy and programming. This will include support for generating community demand for access to the benefits of scientific progress.

“Afrocab Treatment Access Partnership is excited to leverage our experience engaging with researchers, normative bodies, regulatory agencies and other decision makers to support the SMART4TB project. We look forward to utilizing our longstanding network of advocates across the region and ability to mobilize community voices to demonstrate demand for change in TB programs worldwide,” said Kenly Sikwese, executive director of the Afrocab.

“APCASO is pleased to partner with SMART4TB to ensure a people-centered approach to TB treatment, care and research, and to prioritize the voices of affected communities in these efforts,” said RD Marte, executive director of APCASO. “We are looking forward to connecting TB-affected communities with researchers and policymakers and to holding governments accountable to ensuring communities needs are met.”

“The time is now for new approaches to removing barriers to TB prevention, treatment and diagnostics innovations. SMART4TB provides an opportunity to push for more equitable research and access for all,” said Denis Godlevsky, director of International Treatment Preparedness Coalition Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ITPC EECA) and ECAT coordinator.

CABs were selected by a panel of seven which included community advocates, SMART4TB representatives and community engagement experts. The panel reviewed over 30 applications, weighing each applicant’s governance structure and experience with TB, advocacy and research against the eligibility criteria published in the call for expressions of interest.

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The [SMART4TB Consortium](#) brings together experts in TB tools development, implementation science, capacity strengthening, civil society engagement, and policy translation. Led by [Johns Hopkins University](#), consortium partners include [Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation](#), [KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation](#), [Treatment Action Group](#), and [University of California, San Francisco](#).

Founded in 2011, **Afrocab** is a regional advocacy network focused on increasing access to effective diagnostics and therapeutics for HIV, TB and other co-morbidities such as Advanced HIV Disease (AHD). With members from 25 Sub-Saharan African nations, Afrocab has a storied history navigating the research to policy processes and fostering links between communities, industry, and researchers. Best known for its impressive track record in HIV, the Afrocab has also led advocacy efforts to tackle TB, a major cause of morbidity and mortality among people living with HIV. Afrocab co-chairs the Long-Acting Technology (LAT) CAB, focused on the research and development of long-acting formulations for TB prevention, and hepatitis C and malaria cures. And members of the Afrocab have also led work to improve access to a urine-based test for TB and TB preventive therapy (TPT), tools critical to preventing TB-related sickness and death among people with AIDS.

**APCASO** has served the Asia-Pacific region for three decades as a network of civil society organizations governed by an elected council of national representatives from APCASO’s member organizations. In 2016, APCASO established ACT! AP, a group dedicated to building the capacity of civil society organizations and communities to advocate for well-funded, people-centered national TB programs. APCASO and ACT! AP have partnered with critical TB stakeholders including the WHO Civil Society Task Force; Global Fund Community, Rights, and Gender Communication and Coordination Platform for Asia-Pacific; Stop TB Partnership; and country level TB advocacy networks to support capacitation and expand advocacy opportunities. APCASO’s work to develop and implement a TB accountability framework and scorecard is used across the region to drive investments in TB programs and research.

Founded in 2016, the **ECAT** brings together over 50 community advocates and experts from countries across the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region to push for timely and comprehensive access to diagnostics and treatments for HIV, TB and Hepatitis C. The ECAT has a reputation of holding policymakers and drug sponsors and their commercial partners accountable for ensuring equitable access to innovations in the region, where TB medicines and

other tools are often marketed at much higher prices than are available globally. ECAT is backed by the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ITPC EECA), which brings additional experience tracking research and development, engaging with research and product sponsors, and fighting intellectual property related barriers to access. Members of the ECAT have won price reductions and increased access to modern HIV, HCV and TB medicines in the region. The ECAT has led successful negotiations and advocacy campaigns targeting dolutegravir, sofosbuvir, bedaquiline and other essential medications to ensure both price reductions and increase generic competition on the market.

SMART4TB is made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this press release are the sole responsibility of SMART4TB and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID, the United States Government, or consortium collaborators or members.