



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

**VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE 6TH JOINT EAC TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (JTWG) ON
REPRODUCTIVE MATERNAL NEWBORN CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND
HIV/AIDS AND SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)**

24TH TO 25TH SEPTEMBER, 2020

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The EAC Secretariat Integrated Health Programme (EIHP) holds regular Joint Technical Working Group (JTWG) comprising Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) and Nutrition, HIV / AIDS, TB and STI experts from the EAC Partner States. The JTWG meetings are held to provide an opportunity for the Partner States to provide technical guidance necessary for the successful implementation of the EIHP, as well as review progress.

Some of the key highlights of the EIHP programme since the 5th JTWG include the successful convening of the 2nd Joint Ministers, Investors and Donors' Round Table which was held in November 2019, with the support of Partner States and various stakeholders. Further, the programme finalized development of the Regional Minimum Standard for RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Integration and linkages, which was informed by the findings from the regional assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States. The Programme continues to draft the report for the regional baseline Study on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) - the *EAC Boresha Huduma STIs study, which will be ready by end of September.*

1.2 Convening of the Meeting

The EAC Secretariat is convening the virtual meeting of the 6th Joint EAC Technical Working Group (JTWG) on Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health and HIV/AIDS from **24th to 25th September 2020.**

1.3 The Agenda and Programme of the Meeting

The 6th Joint EAC Technical Working Group (JTWG) on Reproductive Maternal New-born Child and Adolescent Health and HIV/AIDS will consider progress in the implementation of key programme activities as well as other proposed initiatives as well as review programme and strategic documents developed during the reporting period. The Agenda and programme of the meeting are hereto attached as **Annex I** and **Annex II.**

2.0 Objectives

The EAC Secretariat is convening the 6th Joint EAC Technical Working Group (JTWG) on Reproductive Maternal new-born Child and Adolescent Health and HIV/AIDS on the to review progress in implementation of the programme. Specifically, the meeting will:

- i. Review the draft reports of the baseline studies

- a. Regional Report of the 1st regional baseline Study on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) in the EAC - *EAC Boresha Huduma STI Study*. This study aims to estimate the burden of STIs, generate evidence to strengthen STI programming, and inform standardization of STI programming in the region.
- b. Report of the regional assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States progress on development of the EAC
 - ii. Review the draft Regional Minimum Standard for RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Integration and linkages;
 - iii. Consider the Evaluation report for the EAC Integrated Health Programme;
 - iv. Consider the proposed broad areas for consideration for Phases II of the EAC Integrated Health Programme;
 - v. Review the draft Report and outcomes/recommendation of the 2nd Joint Ministers', Investors' and Donors' Round Table and way forward;
 - vi. Updates on the Regional initiative on Improving Access to Medicines for Postpartum Haemorrhage (PPH) in the East African Community (EAC) and the adoption of propose a road map for implementation in the Partner States; and
 - vii. Updates on the Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM) on Investing in Health and consideration of the proposed recommendations; and
 - viii. Plan for end or programme activities including dissemination of materials developed under the programme,

3.0 Methodology of the Meeting

The meeting will be held on a virtual platform and the meeting link will be shared with participants beforehand.

4.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE VARIOUS AGENDA ITEMS

4.1 Progress report on implementation of the EAC Integrated Health Programme (EIHP)

The EAC Secretariat in collaboration with Sida is implementing the EAC Integrated Health Programme - EIHP (2016-2020). The programme was designed to sustain the action and results from the EAC HIV/AIDS Programme and the EAC Open Health Initiative (OHI) for Reproductive Maternal Child and Adolescent Health, which ended in 30th September 2016 and 31st December 2016 respectively.

The goal of the EHIP is to contribute towards elimination of preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths, AIDS and improvement of wellbeing among women, children, adolescents and families in the EAC while the objectives are to:

- i. Harmonize and integrate SRHR/RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS Service Packages, Standards and Guidelines in the East African Community
- ii. Strengthen SRHR/RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Research, Innovations and Knowledge Management in the EAC
- iii. Strengthen SRHR/RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Leadership, Governance and Accountability in the EAC
- iv. Strengthen the EAC Regional and National Health Systems towards universal coverage of SRHR/RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS services
- v. Strengthen the capacity of EAC Secretariat and Partner States to coordinate and implement the project and related global and Africa regional Initiatives

The 6th JTWG is expected to consider the progress made under EIHP in the last one year and take note of the key achievements during the reporting period. The experts will offer technical guidance as necessary.

4.1.1 Consideration of the report of the 1st regional baseline Study on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) in the EAC - *EAC Boresha Huduma STI Study*.

The EIHP has undertaken the first ever regional baseline Study on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) in the region. The study aims to assess the prevalence, sensitivity patterns and management practices for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the EAC Partner States. The study, called *the "EAC Boresha Huduma STI Study*, will specifically::

- i. Document the STI prevalence by syndrome and/or causative agents within the EAC Partner States
- ii. Document policies, strategies and guidelines in STI management within the EAC Partner States
- iii. Document STI management practices including STI surveillance systems within the EAC Partner States.
- iv. Establish microbial occurrence and antimicrobial susceptibility of STIs in the EAC region
- v. Determine the phenotypic and molecular characteristics of common STIs isolates within the EAC region
- vi. To identify key areas of harmonization in STI management within the EAC partner states

It is expected that the study will help to estimate the burden of STIs, generate evidence to strengthen STI programming, and inform standardization of STI programming in the region. For ease of implementation, the study was implemented in a phased manner, with Phase I focusing on Objectives I, II, III and VI; while phase II is to address Objective IV and V of the study. So far phase I of the study is complete.

The EAC Secretariat, working in collaboration with the Partner States' respective National Steering Committees established to coordinate the study, have finalized the data collection process. The JTWG is expected to provide final inputs into the national reports and guide on the regional report specifically on the cross-cutting aspects that will form the basis for the standardized STI guidelines. The experts will also guide on the roadmap for adoption and implementation of the recommendations from Phase I while planning the implementation of phase II of the study. The draft national reports for Phase I of the STI study are hereto attached as **Annexes III (a) to III (f)**.

The JTWG expected to recommend to Senior Officials to recommend to the Permanent /Principal /Under Secretaries to recommend to the Sectoral Council to:

- a) Take note of the progress made in draft national report for the EAC Boresha Huduma STI Study;**
- b) Adopt the draft national reports for STI study and will recommend to the 20th SCM for approval;**
- c) Adopt a roadmap for finalising the regional report and the harmonized algorithm for prevention, diagnosis and surveillance for STIs in the region**
- d) Urge Partner States to allocate resources to undertake the second phase of the study**

4.1.2 Consideration of the Report of the regional assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States

The 13th Ordinary Meeting of the EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers responsible for Health held on 18th November 2016 directed the EAC Secretariat to develop regional harmonized integrated Reproductive, Maternal, New-born, Child, and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) and HIV/AIDS service packages, standards and guidelines (**EAC/Health/SCM13/Directive 77**). Following the directive, the EAC Secretariat is in the undertook a regional assessment on the status of integration of RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States with the aim of generating evidence required to inform the development of the recommended guidance documents.

The assessment was finalized in August 2019 and the draft national and regional reports have been finalized ready for approval. The regional report that will be used to advocate

for integration as well as appeal to policy makers to adopt the actions necessary to ensure accelerated integration especially in view of the SDGs is in place.

Some of the key highlights of the report include:

- ✓ there exist opportunities for integration and that in order to realize it, there is need to build on these opportunities as well as strengthen the coordination structures for better integration results. A key recommendation is that the region should develop regional and national frameworks, strategic and operational guidelines to promote integration.
- ✓ there are inadequate tools to operationalize integration in the Partner States and where they exist, there is minimal dissemination of existing tools to operationalize integration.
- ✓ coordination systems are very elaborate at national level but inadequate or almost non-existent at sub-national levels.

With inputs from a Consultant hired with support from UNFPA, RST, the EAC Secretariat has developed the Draft Regional Minimum Standard for RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Integration and Linkages. The JTWG is expected to review the draft minimum standard for RMNCAH and IV and AIDS Integration and the draft regional report to provide final inputs.

The JTWG is expected to recommend to Senior Officials to recommend to the Permanent/Principal/Under Secretaries to recommend to the Sectoral Council to:

- a) consider and approval the national reports on the assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States**
- b) consider and approve the report of the regional assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States; and**
- c) consider and approval Draft Regional Minimum Standard for RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS Integration and Linkages**

4.2 Review the draft Report and outcomes/recommendation of the 2nd Joint Ministers', Investors' and Donors' Round Table and way forward

The EAC Secretariat convened the 1st EAC Ministerial, Development Partners and Investors Roundtable held in February 2018. Following the meeting, the 19th Heads of State Summit approved the Ten (10) - Year EAC Health Sector Investment Priorities Framework (2018-2028). In addition, the Council of Ministers directed the EAC to mobilize resources to support implementation of the health sector investment priority projects; strengthen the region's capacity to effectively prepare and implement the priority projects; develop comprehensive strategies to combat cross-border health challenges; and convene heads of state retreats on health every two years.

It is against this background that the EAC Secretariat convened the 2nd EAC Ministerial, Development Partners' and Investors' round table in October 2019. The Roundtable meeting brought together representatives from Governments, Development Partners, CSOs, Private Sector, Investors, Philanthropists from the region and beyond. The meeting aimed at building and strengthening local and international partnerships as the region seeks to implement the health sector investment priorities. The report of the meeting as well as the Communique are hereto attached as **Annex IV and V** respectively.

The JTWG is expected to recommend to the Senior Officials to recommend to the Permanent/Principal/Under Secretaries to recommend to the Sectoral Council to take note of the outcomes of the EAC Ministerial, Development Partners' and Investors' Roundtable and urge the EAC Secretariat in collaboration with the Partner States to step up resource mobilization efforts to enable continued implementation of the EAC Health Sector Investment Priorities' Framework 2018 – 2028 .

4.3 Consideration of a Report on a Regional initiative on Improving Access to Medicines for Postpartum Hemorrhage (PPH) in the East African Community (EAC) and the adoption of propose a road map for implementation in the Partner States

The regional meeting on improving access to medicines for PPH was convened based on the fact that improving postpartum care for women and putting measures in place for preventing and reducing PPH related morbidity and mortality is key to achieving maternal health SDG targets. As such, healthcare workers, health managers, policymakers, and relevant stakeholders need up to date, evidence-based recommendations to guide clinical practices and guidelines to achieve this SDG objective.

The meeting focused on discussing ways of integrating the newly recommended uterotonics into national guidelines and essential medicines lists in order to improve maternal health through improving access to quality uterotonics in the region. The meeting noted that PPH morbidity and mortality create an enormous burden on families, communities, healthcare systems, and economies. In view of these challenges, it is therefore imperative for the EAC Partner States to standardize care by integrating guidelines into their systems that will mitigate further loss of lives due to PPH. The full report of the meeting is hereto attached as **Annex VI**.

The JTWG recommends to the Senior Officials recommend to the Permanent/Principal/Under Secretaries to recommend to the Sectoral Council to:

- a) Adopt roadmap for the adoption and use of the newly approved uterotonics into their national guidelines; and
- b) Direct the partner States to review and their essential medicines lists to include Uterotonic in order to improve maternal health through improving access to quality uterotonics in the region.

4.4 Updates on the Africa Leadership Meeting on Investing in Health and consideration of the proposed recommendations

AU Member States met at the ministerial level during the AU *Specialised Technical Committee (STC) meeting on Health, Population and Drug Control (HPDC)* in Cairo, Egypt in July/August 2019. The STC-HPDC meeting was the first meeting of AU Member States on health since the AU Assembly. It provided the opportunity to brief Member States on the ALM and the related AU Assembly Declarations on domestic health financing, and to set out the AU Commission's programme of work to implement the commitments.

Member States adopted a report by the Commission (AUC) on the *Africa Leadership Meeting (ALM)*. In addition to a detailed implementation plan for Member States to domesticate the commitments of the AU Assembly declaration the report set out that:

- The AUC will lead post-ALM implementation and will coordinate partners.
- The AUC will define the '**Regional Health Financing Hubs**', which are to be based **within the AU's RECs** (*Regional Economic Communities*).
- The AUC is to outline the process through which the *Domestic Health Financing 'Tracker'* will be developed and is to lead this process.
- **The AUC will report to AU Heads of State on post-ALM implementation through the AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) platform of African Heads of State**, which meets annually.

AU Member States adopted the AU Commission report with the following additions:

1. Development Partners are to align their spending on health to the health priorities of the AU and of Member States, using the *Regional Health Financing Hubs* as a means to achieve alignment and harmonisation.
2. Member States are to address tax avoidance through reconsidering exemption laws & regulations

In addition to the above engagement and commitments, the EAC Secretariat participated in a regional meeting in Kigali on sustainable financing organized by ALMA / AUC. As a follow up on this, the AUC team on financing as engaged with the EAC Secretariat and jointly developed some action points towards the piloting of a financing at the EAC secretariat.

The AUC plans to establish Regional Health Financing Hubs in each of Africa's five RECs to drive country implementation of the AU Assembly resolutions and the EAC region offers a good foundation, with well documented lessons to inform the establishment of a pilot hub in the region.

A draft update / concept note is here to attached as **Annex VII**.

The JTWG recommends to the Senior Officials recommend to the Permanent/Principal/Under Secretaries to recommend to the Sectoral Council to:

- a) take note of the recommendations of ALM;
- b) approve the draft TORs for the Regional Expert working Group on sustainable financing, to operationalise the AU proposed Pilot Health Financing Hub; and
- c) Approve the implementation of the proposed Pilot Health Financing Hub at the EAC Secretariat Health Department .

4.5 Propose broad areas for considerations for Phase II of the EIHP that will be considered during the annual review meeting scheduled for April 2020

As we move towards the end of the EIHP, the regional has registered achievements, value and benefited from the project. The EAC has engaged a consultant to conduct a mid-term evaluation and submit a report by April 2020 that will provide insights into achievements, gaps, challenges, and potential areas for consideration in the future.

As we wait for the evaluation, experts are expected to brainstorm, and build consensus on some areas to be considered for inclusion in Phase II of the project, based on in their technical experience, knowledge on already identified gaps in RMNCAH & HIV and AID programming that may be addressed through the use of a region approach

The identified areas for EIHP Phase II will be proposed and assessed during the Annual Review and the Joint Steering Committee meeting and in the development of the Phase II proposal for the EIHP.

5.0 Participation at the meeting

The following five (7) Experts from each of the Partner States will attend the second Joint EAC Technical Working Group on Reproductive Maternal new-born Child and Adolescent Health and HIV/AIDS:

- i. National Head of the HIV and AIDS Control Programme (1person)
- ii. National Head of Child Health (1person)
- iii. Principal Investigator for the Boresha Huduma STI study (2)
- iv. Principal Investigator for the Integration study (2)
- v. Representative of regional Civil Society Organizations

Expected outcomes

- a) Draft regional report for the EAC Boresha Huduma STI Study;**
- b) roadmap for finalization of Phase II for the EAC Boresha Huduma, and implementation of recommendations from phase I if the STI Study;**
- c) roadmap for the adoption and use of the newly approved uterotonics into their national guidelines;**
- d) Draft national reports on the assessment of integrated RMNCAH and HIV/AIDS services in the EAC Partner States;**
- e) Draft EAC regional minimum Standard for RMNCAH and HIV and AIDS integrateion and linkages; and**
- f) Identified areas of focus for Phase II of the EAC Integrated Health Programme (EIHP), and roadmap for proposal development.**

