NEWSLETTER
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WARN/CARN-TB supports West and Central African TB programs in the fight against COVID-19

Numerous factors related to the pandemic, such as the psychosis and stigmatization of COVID–19 patients, the symptomatological similarities shared with TB, the contingency measures taken by national governments and the prioritization of COVID–19 by international health authorities and partners, have had a major impact on the functioning of TB programs. In these conditions, there was an urgent need to develop new approaches in order to preserve the performance of TB programs in West and Central Africa in the face of this new threat. Thus, since March 2020, the Executive Secretariat of WARN/CARN-TB, with the support of WHO/TDR, has put and continues to put in place a series of measures to support NTPs in the region to maintain TB services in order to minimize the negative impact of COVI–19 on program performance. These include:

- Developing and making available to the network an indicative contingency plan in order to help countries draft a national TB- COVID 19 contingency plan.

Read more
Survey on the impact of COVID 19 on tuberculosis control in general and TB input supply in particular

The WARN/CARN-TB Executive Secretariat conducted two surveys in April and June 2020. The first one concerned the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on TB control strategies in the network countries and the second one the impact on the supply and availability of TB inputs. The main results of these surveys are as follows

Impact of COVID 19 on tuberculosis control in the region (April 2020).

- All the countries in the region were already affected by COVID 19
- The general measures taken in most countries were border closures and barrier gestures. Less than half of NTPs participated in the response committee.
- Most countries had a contingency plan but faced the problem of funding.
- The majority of programs had had to update traditional infection control measures, teleworking, and work schedule adjustments to deal with COVID

Read more
Support of the TB-Lab project to the National Reference Laboratories (NRL) for Tuberculosis in West and Central Africa

The COVID 19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the functioning of TB laboratories in the region. Indeed, the clinical similarities between the two diseases have propelled TB laboratory workers to the front line in the management of COVID–19, particularly in the diagnostic area. However, in these laboratories, a need has emerged for new procedures and capacity building to address the new threat effectively and safely. Faced with this situation, the TB–Lab project, to strengthen the technical capacities of the National Reference Laboratories for Tuberculosis (NRLs) of West and Central Africa, has reinforced its remote support activities using several platforms (Zoom, Mentimeter, WhatsApp...).

During the months of March and April 2020, an online training course was conducted for NRL managers on how to write a contingency plan for the laboratory network, integrating the constraints related to the COVID 19 pandemic. A total of 16 countries out of the 24 in the network actively participated in these training sessions, which were held in both French and English. Read more
DISCOVERING THE NATIONAL PROGRAMMES AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS

Experience of the COVID 19 Pandemic by the Senegal NTP

In the dynamics of improving the visibility of NTPs, the WARN/CARN-TB Secretariat will publish from now on for each of its newsletters, a focus on the history, functioning and statistics of some NTPs of the region.

SENEGAL NTP

Senegal's National Tuberculosis Program was created in 1985. Since then, 15 coordinators have successively headed it, including the current one, Dr Barnabé GNING since November 2019. Located in the city of Dakar, the program consists of a management body and an operational network. The management body is composed of 8 main services (the offices of administration, finance and staff, monitoring-evaluation, training and research, care, communication, supply and stock management, the mobile radiography unit and the national reference laboratory), under the direction of the National Coordinator and the supervision of the Directorate for Disease Control.

The operational network is distributed in the 14 medical regions and 79 health districts of the country where it implements the technical activities of tuberculosis control in the country. This network also receives support from an international NGO (Plan International Senegal) which implements community-based interventions in conjunction with three local and international NGOs and 462 community-based organizations (CBOs) and civil society organizations.

Some statistics
The following table summarizes some statistics from the Senegal NTP over the last few years.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive TB case detection rate (%)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitive TB treatment success rate (%)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV test completion rate (%)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TB death rate (%)</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDR-TB case detection rate (%)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDR-TB treatment success rate (%)</td>
<td>73,6</td>
<td>80,3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXPERIENCE OF THE COVID PANDEMIC BY SENEGAL NTP

Senegal recorded its first positive case of COVID–19 on March 02, 2020. As of August 24, 2020, the country had a total of 13,013 positive cases for Covid–19, including 8,595 people cured, 272 deaths and 4,145 patients followed in the epidemic treatment centers set up in hospitals and health centers. The pandemic particularly affected TB services due to clinical similarities with COVID–19 and Senegal NTP had to implement a series of measures to maintain the performance of the program.

Some major difficulties encountered in maintaining TB services

- Significant disruption to the functioning of the NTP coordination unit due to the social distancing required.
- Suspension of training workshops and most field activities;
- Cancellation of the consultation meetings of the district medical technical committees because of the reorientation of the members of the district management teams to the fight against Covid19;
- Significant drop in the use of TB services by patients for both screening and treatment follow–up for fear of stigmatization.
- Significant decline in referral of suspicious and contact cases by community workers.
- Suspension of active screening campaigns with the mobile radiology unit as well as communication, sensitization, patient support and provider training activities are suspended due to travel restrictions induced by COVID–19.
- Suspension of outreach activities to the general population by CBOs in almost all regions, due to restrictive measures.
- Lack of surgical masks for patients and their companions;
- Insufficient FFP2 masks for staff who only use it to collect samples from suspected Covid–19 cases.

Some measures taken by the program to deal with the pandemic

- Organization of various important meetings and workshops by videoconference;
- Implementation of a system of permanence and telework;
- Provision of antiseptic masks and gels to the agents;
- Training of NRL agents on Cov 2 SARS screening by Genexpert;
- Submission to the Global Fund of an integrated TB, HIV, Malaria contingency plan to mitigate the impact of Covid 19 on the activities of the LAT;
- Development of a contingency plan for the NRL in collaboration with the supra national laboratory in Cotonou;
- Organization of a national supervision mission to assess the impact of Covid–19 on TAL activities after the relaxation of travel restrictions;
- Coordination by telephone with the TBMR management sites for the registration of quarterly orders of drugs and the follow-up of TBMR patients;
- Provision of 5 NTP agents to the Dakar medical region to support the fight against Covid–19.
- Redeployment of community supervisors to ensure the continuity of TB services and to contribute to the response against COVID 19 in Senegal.
- Submission to WHO TDR of a research project on the impact of Covid–19 on TSS services in the Dakar region.
- Decentralization of Covid–19 testing through GeneXpert devices of the NTP network.

Together with the government and partners, the coordination of PNT Senegal is resolutely working to put in place the mechanisms necessary for optimal program efficiency in these times of pandemic.

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**Upcoming**

**21-24 Octobre 2020**

51st UNION world conference on lung health (*Virtual Event*)

[More info]