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Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases Program Track 2A Africa

End Neglected Tropical Diseases in Africa (END in Africa)

Semi Annual Report

October 2010 – March 2011

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FHI

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AOTR	Agreement Officer's Technical Representative
HQ	Headquarters
JSI	JSI Research and Training Institute, Inc.
KM	Knowledge Management
LATH	Liverpool Associates for Tropical Health
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MIS	Management Information System
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NTD	Neglected Tropical Diseases
NTDCP	NTD Control Program
PD	Program Description
PZQ	Praziquantel
RFA	Request for Application
SCM	Supply Chain Management
SOW	Scope of Work
TA	Technical Assistance
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
WHO	World Health Organization

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Executive Summary

This semi-annual report outlines the progress made during the first six months of the five-year Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-10-00050 for supporting the implementation of the project, “Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Tract 2A Africa”, which began on September 30, 2010. The project is entitled “End Neglected Tropical Diseases in Africa”, or “END in Africa”. Six initial countries were chosen by USAID for the FY2011 – Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Guinea – and USAID and FHI worked in collaboration to identify an effective management structure, strategy, and timeline for project execution as these countries transition from Track 1 to Track 2.

FHI provided leadership in the form of comprehensive project support from FHI’s office in Washington DC and its Operational Hub office in Accra, Ghana. Activities in Washington DC are overseen by the Project Director, while the Associate Director leads in the Ghana Hub. Additional project support is provided by three key partners: John Snow International (JSI), Liverpool Associates in Tropical Health (LATH), and Deloitte, with whom all Scopes of Work have been defined and all Subagreements either signed or expected imminently. FHI and all partners have also collaborated on a Year 1 project Workplan that has received conditional USAID approval pending a revised M&E framework.

During the reporting period, RFAs were issued for Burkina Faso and Niger after approved Program Descriptions were developed. FHI collaborated with USAID to form two Technical Evaluation Committees (TEC) for the purpose of scoring the proposals received. While FHI and the respective country’s Ministry of Health provided feedback on each proposal, all formal evaluations were conducted by the TEC members only. Out of the three proposals received for Burkina Faso and two for Niger, the TEC chose Helen Keller International (HKI) as the successful applicant for both countries. Documented debrief discussions were conducted, by request, for those organizations whose applications were unsuccessful.

In order to accelerate project startup, Letters of Authorization were issued to HKI for the purpose of facilitating a smooth transition to the new grantee. A standard Workplan template has been developed by FHI to ensure uniform plans and implementation across countries and grantees. FHI has also developed a Sharepoint intranet site that will allow FHI staff, sub-grantees, and partners to exchange information, disseminate documents, and coordinate calendars for all project-related tasks and communication in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

On the issue of procurement, USAID issued a restricted commodity waiver for the procurement of Praziquantel (PQZ) and Albendazole (ALB) in February 2011, which authorized FHI to procure these drugs from non-US manufacturers. USAID and JSI met to address the short term procurement needs, as well as to define future plans, including an MDA campaign in Guinea in

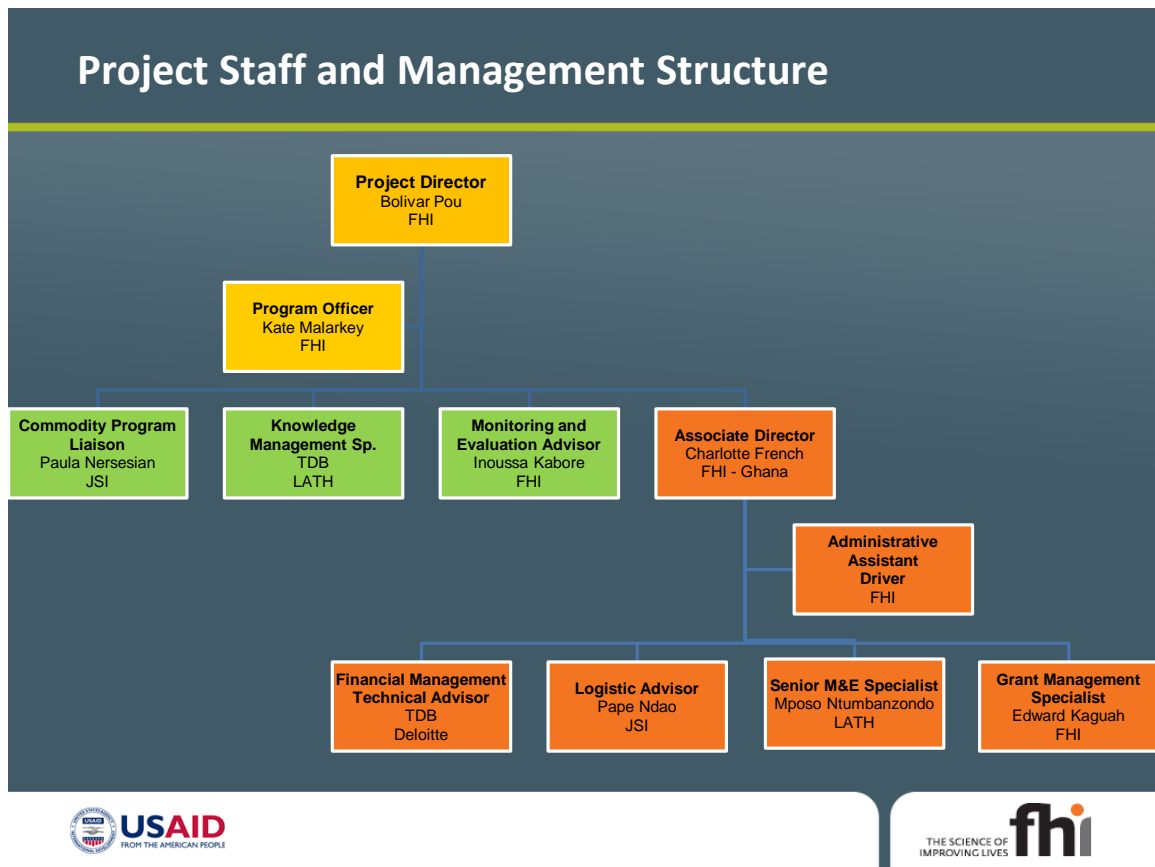
April 2012. JSI has taken the lead on these tasks and is compiling information for an outline that will highlight the necessary components for successful procurement and MDA execution.

In the six months period that follows this report, FHI will release RFAs for the remaining four countries (Ghana, Guinea, Togo and Sierra Leone), identify sub-grantees, and finalize subagreements for each. FHI will support all sub-grantees and MOHs on the implementation of M&E framework, finalization of documents describing procurement and supply chain management tools, and project execution. Based on past meetings with USAID, FHI is currently working on a revised M&E platform that will take into account information and requirements that have been provided by USAID, including indicators for gender reporting and sets of indicators to ensure uniform reporting, and to measure sub-grantee performance. All planned tasks will be executed in order to ensure compliance with USAID regulations and technical expectations, as well as successful achievement of the objectives that are outlined in the Workplan.

Project Management (startup phase)

- The Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-A-10-00050 for supporting the implementation of the project Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Track 2A Africa was executed with an effective start date of September 30, 2010 and ending September 30, 2015.
- The FHI-led team, which includes LATH, JSI and Deloitte as partners, held the first meeting as a team on November 1, 2010.
- The project start up meeting between the USAID NTD team, FHI and partners was held on November 3, 2010 at FHI. This meeting served to share a common vision of the project, exchange information, and establish general operational procedures for communication and decision-making. In order to foster an environment of cooperation between the two projects under the leadership of USAID, RTI was invited to share their experience implementing the USAID NTD Control Program for several years. .
- USAID defined the first six countries that will be phased into Track 2 for the FY2011. They are: Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Guinea.
- The project management structure was agreed upon with, and approved by, USAID. It was established that the project's senior leadership would reside in FHI offices in Washington, DC (Arlington), while the Africa Operational-Hub would be established in Accra, Ghana. This arrangement builds upon FHI's existing platform to generate costs efficiencies, while geographically placing a majority of the FHI-led team in a better position for supporting project implementation at the country level.
- FHI completed the sub agreement negotiations with JSI, LATH and Deloitte.
 - FHI issued Letters of Authorization (LOA) to each of our partners to cover expenses related to start-up planning and recruiting activities.
 - A Scope of Work (SoW) was developed and agreed upon with each partner. FHI received USAID feedback and inputs on defining the scopes of works during the revision of the first year project Workplan.
 - Subagreements were signed with JSI and LATH. The Subagreement with Deloitte is expected to be executed by mid April 2010.
- The project is operational and staffed in both Arlington and Ghana. Project staff has been incorporated according to the terms of the original technical proposal approved by USAID. The individuals for the positions of Financial Management Technical Advisor in Ghana and Knowledge Management Specialist in Arlington will be incorporated into the team once the grant execution is in progress, interaction with the MOH is in effect from the financial management perspective, and lessons and success stories are generated. This scale-up approach for incorporating project staff creates a lean structure that saves money and increases efficiency. The Senior Technical Advisers for Supply Chain Management (JSI) and M&E (FHI) serve as needed, giving additional flexibility to the team. The graphic below illustrates the project team and structure:

Project Staff and Management Structure



- The project Workplan (WP) for year 1 was developed in a collaborative fashion between FHI and the partners. The first version of the WP was submitted to USAID for review and comments on December 14, 2010. After receiving USAID comments, a revised version was submitted on February 9, 2011. USAID provided approval of the WP on March 13, 2011, with the indication that the M&E section of the plan would be updated once FHI receives additional guidance and information from USAID regarding the M&E framework previously designed for the NTD Project. The M&E meeting was held on March 22, 2011, and FHI is currently working on a revised M&E section for USAID approval.
- An expenditure tracking system has been designed for the project that allows tracing expenses by country and major activities. The system differentiates the application of funds according to the 80/20 rule, where at least 80% of the funds should be used for grants and country procurements, and 20% for supporting implementation, including direct technical assistance (TA) provided to countries. Distribution of the 20% can be also tracked by HQ, Ghana Hub and country specific expenditures.

Project Implementation

Issuance and Management of Grants

- FHI developed the grant making process, which was submitted for USAID approval in the first year Workplan. The mechanism is designed to allow a rapid startup of the project and prevents any gaps that may affect the achievements accumulated under previous phases of the program.
- Two Requests for Application (RFA) were issued according to the previously agreed upon plan with USAID. The Burkina RFA was issued on January 10, 2011, and the Niger RFA was issued on January 19, 2011. To complete the process the following tasks were successfully executed:
 - Based on the existing information of the status of the project, FHI assisted USAID to develop the Program Descriptions (PD) for Burkina and Niger.
 - Eligibility and selection criteria for the selection of proposals was defined.
 - A procurement website was developed so that the RFAs and other information pertaining to the project can be made available to the public. The RFAs were also widely circulated through existing mailing lists and published in DevEx. Bidding documents were available in hard copies and electronic format.
- Standard instruments for evaluating and scoring proposals were designed and thoroughly discussed with USAID in order to guarantee a uniform application of the selection criteria by all members of the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC). No scoring evaluation forms were developed to facilitate the participation of the MOH and FHI in the selection process.
- FHI collaborated with USAID in organizing the TEC, and supported its integration and operation. The TEC includes representatives from USAID, MOH, FHI, and consultants as decided by USAID. Non-disclosure and Conflict of Interest statements forms were developed and every member of the TEC was required to sign.
- Two meetings of the TEC were held at FHI:
 - March 4th : technical evaluation of the three proposals received in response to the RFA for Burkina
 - March 14th: technical evaluation of the two proposals received in response to the RFA for Niger
 - Representatives of the MOH for Burkina and Niger participated via conference call, as well as representatives of USAID for both countries. Based on the selection of the grantees by the TEC, Evaluation Memorandums were prepared and submitted to USAID for approval.
- TEC decisions were communicated in writing by FHI to all applicants. Helen Keller International (HKI) was the successful applicant for both Burkina and Niger. A debrief was provided to CRS for Burkina and SCI for Niger, both of whom requested feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of their technical proposals. Both briefings were documented and shared with USAID.

- FHI developed Supplemental Initial Environmental Examinations (SIEE) for Burkina and Niger based on the PIEE already approved by USAID. The SIEEs were submitted and approved by the USAID environmental officers for both countries.
- To ensure that grantees' annual Workplans are consistent across all countries participating in the project, FHI developed a Standardized Workplan template that should be used for all grantees. This template was submitted and comprehensively discussed with USAID.
- Letters of Authorization were issued to HKI in order to speed up the project startup in Niger and Burkina and allow a smooth transition to the new grantee. The release of these LOAs was approved by USAID on the 4th and 6th of April, respectively. FHI is currently completing the pre-grant activities with HKI and negotiating the final budget for each country in order to submit the final subagreements for OAA approval.
- Additional RFAs were developed and approved by USAID for the following countries: Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Guinea. The RFAs for the first three countries were released the second week of April, while the RFA for Guinea will be issued by mid-May. This plan strives to obligate all funds before the end of the FY2011. The project is currently on track to meet this goal.

Technical Assistance/Capacity Building

- No technical assistance or capacity building has yet been provided since the Burkina and Niger awards have not been executed at this point. The project approach for this component will be as follows: upon granting an award, the sub-grantee and representatives from FHI and USAID will conduct a joint introductory and consultative visit to further ascertain the capacity building needs of the Ministries and status of country's NTD control program. Sub-grantees will address technical capacity building needs of Ministries (M&E, financial management, supply chain management, and/or work planning) in their joint country-specific annual work plans. If an area in need of capacity building arises from this initial meeting, FHI will mobilize its resources at the regional hub in Ghana to better understand needs, and develop, with the MOH, an appropriate approach to address the need.

Data Management, Documentation and Lessons Learned

- A new name has been created and approved for the project: End Neglected Tropical Diseases in Africa, or END in Africa.
- A revised Branding and Marking Plan was submitted to USAID for approval. The new B&M Plan incorporates the newly-designed logo for the project, which is consistent with one that will be used for Asia, giving the project a uniform identity in both continents.
- The Africa and Asia teams are working together on the design of the END in Africa / END in Asia website. The new project website will be tested and completed in the next semester.
- Given that the project operates with offices in Washington and Accra, FHI designed a SharePoint, or intranet, site to exchange files, coordinate schedules and maintain a progress

tracking system in real time for all members of the team. The site also serves as an electronic repository of documents that relevant actors can access through the intranet according to the level of security that is assigned to each authorized user. The SharePoint site also creates working spaces for collaboration with grantees by country. This will allow implementers to upload and download country specific information to facilitate project implementation in a very cost effective way. This mechanism provides the project managers with a level of flexibility, accessibility and transparency that will foster a stronger collaboration among partners.

- A system for filing and tracking grant documents has been established at the Hub office in Accra. The purpose is to provide the operational Hub with a level of accountability and record keeping that meets USAID good practices and regulations.

Collaboration and Coordination

- Collaboration and Coordination at the country level with USAID, MOHs and existing USG-funded NTD programs in Burkina and Niger is in effect to ensure an efficient, transparent grant-making and transition process to the new grantee, without affecting the current achievements of the national programs. Coordination meetings are currently being scheduled for Burkina and Niger to facilitate a smooth transition into the project.
- FHI maintains a permanent open line of communication with USAID to facilitate the effective coordination of activities. In this regard, biweekly meetings are held at USAID to provide updates, discuss technical directions with the AOTR and NTD team, and plan forthcoming actions. Each meeting is organized according to a previously agreed-upon agenda.
- The project is fostering a constructive collaboration with RTI. Several meetings have been held focusing on exchanging lessons learned, providing updates and feedback of current processes at the country level, and demonstrating available tools. To facilitate this collaboration, we have recently agreed that USAID will lead the coordination of such meetings.
- The project has reached out to key players in the implementation of NTD activities in Africa in order to keep them informed of existing procurement opportunities and identify potential synergies with existing programs.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- A meeting was held on March 22, 2011 where USAID presented the existing M&E Framework for the NTD Project. USAID information needs were discussed and a data path/handling plan was outlined by USAID. Data collections forms were presented together with the newly developed Financial Gap Analysis Tool (FGAT). The END in Africa project will use these instruments to support the implementation process and report data to USAID. Though specific indicators were not discussed in the meeting, they were provided by USAID

in the following days. In the meeting FHI raised the issue of the need for reporting by gender and highlighted that the existing forms do not register the information with this level of segregation. USAID will provide further guidance on this reporting requirement.

- Based on the information provided by USAID, the FHI team is working on a revised version of the M&E platform for the project. This document will be presented to USAID for approval by mid-April.
- FHI is working on defining a set of indicators that will be used to monitor the performance of the project. This list of indicators includes those needed by USAID, which should be registered and reported uniformly by all sub-grantees and countries; and, a second set of indicator to measure the sub-grantee performance which are necessary for FHI to fulfill its fiduciary responsibility over the overall performance of the program in programmatic, financial and management components.
- Any new proposed indicator will be presented to USAID with its rationale and protocol for concurrence.

Procurement

- USAID requested that FHI assume responsibility for the procurement of Albendazole (ALB) and Praziquantel (PZQ) to support project implementation when needed.
- A restricted commodity waiver to procure PZQ and ALB for the NTD Program was issued by USAID on February 15, 2011. The waiver provides authorization to FHI for the procurement of non-USA manufactured ALB and PZQ in all formulations and concentration sourced from all manufactures.
- A technical coordination meeting was held between the USAID and JSI teams to discuss details of the project procurement needs in the short term, and seek clarifications on several topics related to the matter. The need for immediate action for procuring PZQ for Guinea was discussed. Further information received from Guinea clarified that the PZQ will be needed for the forthcoming MDA campaign scheduled for April 2012, which gives the project a more comfortable period to address this necessity.
- Based on USAID guidance, JSI outlined a procurement process and developed an accompanying form that allows for the collection of essential information from the full range of NTD partners, and which will enable JSI and FHI to undertake procurement of PQZ, which is not donated, and albendazole, if donated quantities are found to be insufficient.

Major Activities Planned for next six months

- Complete Subagreements for supporting national NTD programs in: Burkina, Niger, Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Guinea. For the first two countries, the procurement process has been completed and the sub agreements should be signed before the end of April. The RFA

for Togo, Ghana and Sierra Leone has been issued and proposals should be received in May. The Guinea RFA is prepared and will be released by mid-May. FHI will contribute to grant application evaluation process.

- Support MOH and sub-grantees for the sound implementation of the M&E framework for the project. Technical support will be provided from our Hub operation in Ghana.
- Develop and submit the SIEE for Togo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Guinea for USAID approval. The SIEE for the first three countries is already underway and should be submitted to USAID by the end of May.
- Support the introduction of new sub-grantees in all countries in order to facilitate a smooth transition and preserve project achievements.
- Support MOH and sub-grantees in the preparation of the first year Workplan for the six countries. The standard Workplan Template approved by USAID will be used to guarantee uniformity and consistency in the information and approach.
- Support MOH and sub-grantees in the application of the FGAT in the six countries as part of the preparation of the planning process.
- Finalize document describing procurement and supply chain management tools in collaboration with USAID and partners.
- Support MOH and grantees on developing drugs needs projections and procure PZQ for Guinea, Niger, Burkina, Ghana and Sierra Leone for 2012 MDAs. For new countries that will be phased into Track 2A in 2012; an anticipated drugs needs analysis will be conducted and necessary steps will be discussed with USAID. Conduct and/or validate quantifications in all project countries. Technical support will be provided by our Hub in Ghana through the established in house capacity.
- Ascertain supply chain management, M&E and financial management capacity building and technical assistance needs in all project countries. Based on this analysis, the appropriate coordination with USAID will be made for provision of such support.
- Monitor and supervise the execution of subagreements to secure that MOH needs are appropriately addressed and subgrantees are implementing the projects according to USAID regulations and technical expectations. This includes reviewing subgrantees' progress reports and monitoring project expenditures and cost share contribution.
- Develop the second year Workplan for the END in Africa project. This plan is due 45 days before the end of the FY2011.
- Compile and report to USAID indicators and data generated by the implementation of subagreements.

Travel Plans for next six months

Traveler	From	To	# Trips	Duration	Month	Purpose
Bolivar Pou, PD	W/DC	Ghana	1	1 week	May 2011	Team meeting for Semiannual Project review.
Charlotte French, AD	Ghana	Burkina Niger Togo S Leone Guinea	5	1 week/each	April – September 2011	Projects launch in Burkina and Niger with sub-grantee and USAID; agree on key elements for sub-grantee work plans, etc. Meeting with the MOH.
Mposo Ntumbansondo Local M&E Specialist	Ghana	Burkina Niger Togo S Leone Guinea	5	1 week/each country	April – September 2011	Provide support for M&E implementation as needed based on requests from the MOH.
Pape Ndao, Local Logistic Advisor	Ghana	Burkina Niger Togo S Leone Guinea	5	1 week/each country	April – September 2011	Provide technical support for MDA implementation and drugs projections as needed based on requests form the MOH.
Paula Nersesian, Commodity Program Liaison	W/DC	Atlanta	1	2 days	TBD	Introduce project to commodity donation program staff and identify areas of collaboration.
Charlotte French, AD	Ghana	Togo S Leone Guinea	3	3 days	June – August 2011	Pre-award assessments to sub-grantee (dependent on selection)
Bolivar Pou, PD	W/DC	Ghana	1	1 week	August 2011	Second year Workplan development.
Charlotte French, AD	Ghana	Burkina Niger	2	1 week	August – September 2011	Initial visit to sub-grantees to monitor financial management of subagreement, in lieu of waiver for pre-award assessments.
Pape Ndao, Local Logistic Advisor	Ghana	TBD		1 week/each country	April – September 2011	Drugs needs projections for countries that will be phase in Track 2A in FY2012.