



**FIRST MEETING OF THE SPECIALISED TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH,
POPULATION AND DRUG CONTROL
(STC-HPDC-1)
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
13-17 APRIL 2015**

STC/EXP/HP/VIII(I)

THEME:- “CHALLENGES FOR INCLUSIVE AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS “

**BREIFING NOTE ON THE INIATIVE TO DEVELOP A ROADMAP TO ERADICATE
RHUEMATIC HEART DISEASE IN AFRICA**

1. Background

Rheumatic heart disease (RHD) is the most common cause of acquired heart disease among children in developing countries, and it affects approximately 0.5 – 3% of school-aged children in Africa. RHD is the end result of acute rheumatic fever (ARF), a consequence of untreated throat infection (pharyngitis) by a bacterium called Group A Streptococcus (GrAS). Overcrowding, poor housing conditions, under-nutrition, and lack of access to antibiotics for sore throat are determinants of RHD. Because RHD is preventable with adequate medical care, it is a litmus test for the effectiveness of primary health care systems specifically and for economic development generally. Although GrAS pharyngitis and ARF are communicable diseases, the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies RHD as a non-communicable disease (NCD). The WHO NCD Plan adopted by member states at the World Health Assembly in 2013 calls for the reduction of premature mortality from RHD and other NCDs by 25% by the year 2025 (the 25x25 NCD target).

2. Objectives of project/initiative.

The objectives of the initiative include the following:

- i. Quantify the burden of RHD in AU Member States;
- ii. Develop a roadmap to indicate key actions and enhanced investments that are needed to eradicate RHD in AU Member States;
- iii. Engage key stakeholders and establish effective collaborations among the health care sector and other sectors that address the social determinants of health, NCDs, and access to care towards implementation of the roadmap under the leadership of Ministries of Health in AU Member States.

3. Mandate

The initiative is being implemented in line with the following mandates:

- i. The 6th ordinary session of the Conference of African Union Ministers of Health (CAMH6), adopted under the AU Executive Council Declaration *EX.CL/Dec.795(XXIV)*, that requested the African Union Commission (AUC) to develop a mechanism to control NCDs in Africa;
- ii. The first joint African Union and World Health Organization Ministerial meeting convened under AU Assembly Decision *Assembly/AU/Dec.506(XXII)* that pledged to action towards controlling NCDs in Africa under the AUC-WHO joint work plan;

4. Update on latest developments.

A meeting of experts from across the continent of Africa, was convened from 21 to 22nd February 2015 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. After considering the root causes of the high prevalence of RHD in Africa, the meeting came up with a few priorities as milestones for a roadmap to eradicate the disease. The team intends to proceed to work out mechanisms how these priorities can be attained including their cost implications.

5. Recommendations

The AUC is requesting the 1st Specialised Technical Committee on Health, Population and Drug Control to adopt the report of the experts meeting and the recommendations contained therein.