

Global NITAG Network (GNN)

Standard Operating Procedures

26 March 2019, revised January 2025

1. Background and introduction

National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) are multidisciplinary groups of national experts responsible for providing independent, evidence-informed advice to policy makers and programme managers on policy issues related to immunization and vaccines.

A key objective of the Global Vaccine Action Plan (2011-2020) was for all countries to have, or have access to, a functional National immunization technical advisory group (NITAG) by 2020. The Immunization Agenda 2030 strategic priority 2 on commitment and demand further emphasizes the importance for NITAGs. It urges countries to build and sustain strong political and financial commitment for immunization at all levels, including through the strengthening of evidence-based decision-making, with technical input from bodies such as a National Immunization Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs).

To foster collaborations between countries and create opportunities for pooling resources and increasing effectiveness through sharing NITAG experiences, lessons learned, and documentation, the Global NITAG Network (GNN) was established in May 2016. The GNN provides a forum to communicate NITAG challenges and barriers to technical partners to move the NITAG support agenda forward.

The GNN Secretariat is based at the World Health Organization (WHO).

This document outlines the function and structure of the Network.

2. The GNN functions

The Global NITAG Network (GNN) is the main platform for information sharing among NITAG members around the world. It highlights NITAG challenges and barriers to technical partners to move the NITAG support agenda forward.

The GNN encourages and supports NITAGs by:

- + Fostering the exchange of information and knowledge through:
 - + Promoting dissemination and use of good practices
 - + Collectively generating information and knowledge on common topics
 - + Collectively promoting the use of new knowledge relevant to common issues

- + Capacity building through:
 - + Facilitating learning experiences
 - + Sharing technical resources
 - + Creating opportunities (virtual and real) for discussion on complex issues
 - + Fostering NITAG twinning or collaboration opportunities, including cross regional collaborations
 - + Supporting development of tools
- + Evaluating through:
 - + Regularly eliciting feedback from countries to ensure relevance of the GNN to country needs
 - + Facilitating NITAG evaluations
 - + Improving evaluation approaches and tools
- + Mobilizing resources for joint efforts through:
 - + Advocating for NITAGs with global partners
 - + Developing a pool of trainers and/or evaluators that can be readily accessed by NITAGs.

3. Membership

3.1. Joining

Membership is open to all NITAGs. NITAG registration requires at least two NITAG representatives designated as contacts with the GNN. However, the NITAG as a whole is a member of the GNN and all NITAG members and Secretariat are invited to participate in the collaboration and are free to benefit from the Network. It is therefore important that GNN focal points disseminate GNN information to their respective NITAG and Secretariat members.

Upon completion of registration, GNN members commit to respect and support the achievements of GNN's mission and strategic objectives in accordance with the agreed upon core values.

There is no charge or membership fee for joining the GNN.

Countries without a NITAG cannot formally join the GNN but may participate in GNN meetings to raise their awareness of NITAG activities, challenges, and benefits.

3.2. Members' responsibilities

NITAGs joining the GNN should:

- + Contribute towards the achievements of GNN objectives;
- + Bring common concerns and challenges to the attention of the steering committee and/or Secretariat;
- + Participate in GNN activities and surveys;
- + Provide input on GNN documents, work plans or articles when requested;
- + Attend relevant GNN meetings and events as appropriate;

- ✦ Provide the GNN Secretariat with up-to-date information related to their NITAG (change of members, new recommendation, meetings, minutes, evaluations, etc);
- ✦ Report timely any change of the NITAG focal point contact details to avoid disruption in the interaction between the GNN and the NITAG
- ✦ Ensure the information posted on the NRC about their NITAG is up-to-date.

3.3. Entitlements of members

Being a GNN member offers the opportunity to:

- ✦ Access GNN progress updates, policy papers, good practice and lessons learnt documentation, and associated on-line resources;
- ✦ Provide feedback on GNN development and consultation processes to identify and prioritize activities;
- ✦ Participate in the Global NITAG Network annual meeting;
- ✦ Vote on strategic issues when full engagement of GNN members is required;
- ✦ Meet, share experiences and engage with like-minded NITAGs and NITAG members;
- ✦ Attend regional meetings;
- ✦ Participate in twinning activities.

4. The steering committee

4.1. Purpose and mandate

The steering committee functions as the GNN's executive decision-making body and is mandated to act on behalf of the GNN members.

The purpose of the steering committee is to provide strategic oversight and management of the GNN and ensure the development and implementation of an annual work plan that reflects the needs and priorities of its members, and is consistent with the GNN vision, mission, and objectives as outlined in the "Strategic Document of the Global NITAG Network".

The working language of the steering committee is English. Records of discussion of all steering committee meetings and conference calls will be taken by the Secretariat.

4.2. Composition of the steering committee

The steering committee is comprised of six NITAG members, representing the different WHO regions, nominated for two years renewable once.

The GNN secretariat is supported by three advisors from long-established NITAG secretariats designated for two years, renewable once.

The steering committee's composition reflects the diverse range of maturity levels, organisational experiences, and socio-economic backgrounds within the NITAG community.

Steering committee members act on a voluntary basis and do not receive remuneration for their work on the committee. Travel costs associated with the fulfilment of their duties as steering committee members are covered by WHO and are based on WHO travel policies.

Decisions are made by consensus among the steering committee members.

4.3. Nomination process

4.3.1. Steering committee members

A call for nomination is posted on the NRC website and sent through the GNN mailing list, with the WHO regional offices in copy, two months prior to the end of term of a member.

Candidates should send a CV along with a letter to express interest to the GNN Secretariat and the GNN Chair.

To be eligible for selection the potential nominees should meet the following criteria:

- ✦ Active committee or Secretariat member of a NITAG registered in the GNN;
- ✦ Commitment to the GNN vision, mission, and objectives;
- ✦ Willingness to devote the necessary time and effort;
- ✦ Ability to incorporate global perspectives in the interest of the broader network;
- ✦ Interest in supporting NITAGs;
- ✦ Ability to communicate in English. Fluency in French, Spanish or Russian is also desirable.

Nomination will be confirmed based on assessment of declaration of interests.

The renewal of steering committee members will be staggered to maintain continuity of experience whilst allowing sufficient time for induction of new steering committee members.

The steering committee members are expected to serve for two years from their date of appointment. A single term renewal may be requested by GNN secretariat depending on needs.

Appointment of new members will officially be announced in the GNN monthly update.

A steering committee member term may be terminated prematurely, on the member's own request or, in particular circumstances, by the GNN secretariat in coordination with steering committee. Examples of such circumstances include evidence of a clear conflict of interest; gross misconduct in contradiction to GNN values and principles, and vision, mission, and objectives; consistent failure to contribute, participate and/or attend GNN steering committee events, and conference calls. In this case, a new call for nomination should be posted and circulated at the earliest opportunity.

4.3.2. GNN Chair

The Chair serves as the lead for the steering committee with specific duties in guiding, supporting, and facilitating the functioning of the steering committee, ensuring that the group interacts effectively with the GNN Secretariat, WHO regional offices, partners and broader GNN members. The Chair also has the duties and responsibilities of the steering committee members. The Chair participates in the SAGE meetings and the NITAG partners quarterly teleconferences.

The chair is selected among the steering committee members.

The selection should be done by consensus with the steering committee.

The Chair receives his/her authority upon appointment by the GNN Executive Secretary.

The Chair serves for a two-year term. A single-term renewal may be proposed at the discretion of the secretariat.

4.4. Specific responsibilities

4.4.1. Steering committee members

The main duties and responsibilities of the steering committee members are the following:

- ✦ Ensure GNN is operating in accordance with its mandate, strategic objectives, and core values;
- ✦ Make an active contribution to defining strategic direction, objectives, and annual work plans;
- ✦ Assist in the development and approval of tools - this may involve attending conference calls, leading technical working groups and providing information and feedback on GNN papers and internal developments;
- ✦ Oversee regular network evaluations;
- ✦ Attend relevant national, regional, and global meetings and provide feedback to the steering committee on issues relevant to the GNN mandate and work plan;
- ✦ Communicate regularly with GNN members at regional level to identify concerns, issues, and represent relevant constituency viewpoints and regional interests;
- ✦ Advocate for GNN and its members in the context of building capacities of NITAGs.
- ✦ Participate in “external” meetings and be an advocate for the GNN, in the context of NITAG capacity building; for instance at regional TAG meetings;
- ✦ Engage with relevant stakeholders and partners;
- ✦ Represent and communicate on behalf of the GNN upon request.

4.4.2. GNN chair

- ✦ Ensure there is an annual work plan and quarterly teleconference calls with a structured agenda
- ✦ Provide encouragement, guidance and direction to the steering committee, working groups, and GNN members to ensure a clear sense of direction, commitment and belonging to the network;

- ✦ Lead the development of the GNN's vision, strategic direction and work streams with the support of the Secretariat staff;
- ✦ Chair steering committee quarterly teleconferences, providing overall leadership and guidance to the steering committee members;
- ✦ Chair GNN meetings and GNN webinars, including "SAGE digest";
- ✦ Participate in NITAG partners' quarterly calls;
- ✦ Participate in-person in the SAGE meetings;
- ✦ Provide external representation and maintain good working relationships with external stakeholders and donors;
- ✦ Oversee and support the effective functioning of the GNN Secretariat in support of achieving agreed objectives and work plans;

4.5. Steering committee meetings

The steering committee will conduct teleconference calls on a quarterly basis and ad hoc calls as needs arise.

The steering committee members are expected to attend the annual face-to-face partners' retreat and the GNN meeting.

For decision-making purposes all face-to-face meetings and conference calls require a quorum of at least 50% of members to be present.

5. The GNN Secretariat

5.1. Purpose

The Secretariat is responsible for facilitating the development of and overall coordination and execution of the GNN strategy, annual work plan, and budget.

The Secretariat ensures the GNN members are kept informed of plans and actions through regular updating of the NRC website, the GNN monthly update, GNN webinars and GNN meetings.

5.2. Structure

The Secretariat is based in WHO Headquarters (HQ) in the Immunization, Vaccines and biologicals department and reports to the SAGE Executive Secretary. In addition to WHO Secretariat staff, external consultants may be employed by WHO HQ to undertake specific work for the GNN.

5.3. Secretariat responsibilities

The Secretariat is responsible for the following:

- ✦ Maintaining the regular administrative duties of the GNN, such as records of membership and records of discussion;
- ✦ Coordinating requests for support and information from members;
- ✦ Coordinating communication and liaison between NITAGs;
- ✦ Identifying areas of possible synergy and connecting members;
- ✦ Maintaining the existing NITAG Resource Centre website (<http://www.nitag-resource.org/>) and developing new functions, links, and resources;
- ✦ Producing and sending a GNN monthly update to keep members informed of NITAG activities and partners' resources;
- ✦ Managing the planning and logistics of GNN meetings, including webinars;
- ✦ Supporting the organization of NITAG trainings requiring the help of GNN members;
- ✦ Informing Steering Committee members of funded activities for GNN members to solicit inputs;
- ✦ Mobilizing resources from interested partners to support the GNN activities;
- ✦ Promoting the GNN activities to donors and partners;
- ✦ Fostering development of publications on progress and challenges recognized by GNN.

6. Partnerships

6.1. Regional NITAG networks

Existing regional NITAG networks will be represented within the GNN by individuals designated by the regional networks. Regional network representatives will represent the region rather than a specific NITAG. The regional NITAG network representatives should communicate the challenges, needs and successes of countries to the GNN to ensure the GNN work plan reflects the current NITAGs' situations in regions.

The GNN will be represented within the regional NITAG networks by inviting the Chair and GNN Secretariat to meetings and informing the Chair/GNN Secretariat of the regional NITAG network's activities and development. The GNN Chair and Secretariat participate in regional NITAG network activities and meetings as observers. The GNN can be consulted for advice and can respond to regional NITAG networks' requests for support.

Efforts will be made to coordinate activities of the GNN and the regional networks to avoid duplication of efforts and alignment of work plans when appropriate.

6.2. Technical partners

NITAG partners such as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US-CDC), the Task Force for Global Health, The NITAG Support Hub (NISH), the Robert Koch Institute, NCIRS, UNICEF, USAID and other global partners may attend the GNN meetings and activities, but they are not official members and will not participate in decision-making.

Technical partners may suggest topics for consideration to be included in the GNN work plan and GNN meetings, but the final decision is made by the GNN Steering Committee with the Secretariat.

GNN STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Technical partners are informed of GNN activities during the NITAG partners' quarterly teleconferences when the GNN chair reports on the GNN activities' progress to the NITAG partners' group.

Organizations interested in joining the group should contact the Secretariat.