NITAGs: A survey of needs and challenges

With support from the Wellcome Trust, the Vaccines for Africa Initiative (VACFA) at the University of Cape Town is collaborating with the World Health Organization (WHO) to explore the feasibility of establishing an academic-based Regional Scientific Hub in Africa. If established, the Regional Scientific Hub will provide technical/scientific support to NITAGs in Africa in liaison with the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO-AFRO). Additionally, the Regional Scientific Hub would support other national decision-making healthcare groups that work with NITAGs on the utilization of evidence-informed decision-making.

We, at VACFA, are conducting a scoping exercise that is collecting key information to inform the feasibility of establishing a Regional Scientific Hub. Several activities are being conducted during this scoping exercise, among them, a canvas survey.

**Why are we doing this survey?**

The survey will inform us of the priority needs of NITAGs in Africa as well as the challenges faced by these advisory groups. In addition, we will use the survey data to design and deliver optimal strategies and solutions to meet the needs of the NITAGs and address the challenges they face.

**Who are the survey participants?**

Participants will be NITAG members from Africa represented by the following categories:

1. Chairs
2. Core members
3. Members of the Secretariat
4. Liaison members

**What is involved?**

We are requesting about 30 minutes of your time to complete the survey. Participation is completely voluntary and if you participate in the survey, you can withdraw from it at any time.

**How will the investigators use the data collected from you?**

Your participation in the survey will assist in obtaining the following information:

1. The priority needs of members of NITAGs in making evidence-based immunisation recommendations to inform practice and policies
2. The challenges that members of NITAGs face in relation to fulfilling their expected mandate
3. The types of support available to you as a NITAG member
4. Types of support the Regional Scientific Hub should prioritize in assisting NITAGs

**What about confidentiality?**

The raw data is only available to the investigators. All data will be stored in a secure and password-protected area. We will de-identify the collected data and combine it. Subsequently, we will summarize and report the findings without the mention of your individual information or the information about your country’s NITAG.

**What are the benefits and risks of participation?**

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant, but we hope your NITAG will benefit from a well-designed Regional Scientific Hub, if established. There are no known risks for your participation in the survey.

We will not provide any monetary compensation for your participation in this study.

For any questions about the study, please contact us:

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| Dr. Benjamin Kagina  VACFA Investigator, University of Cape Town  +27 21 4066692  [benjamin.kagina@uct.ac.za](mailto:Benjamin.kagina@uct.ac.za) | Prof. Gregory Hussey  VACFA Investigator, University of Cape Town  +27 21 4066050  [gregory.hussey@uct.ac.za](mailto:gregory.hussey@uct.ac.za) |

I declare that:

1. I have read and understood the information provided to me about the survey.
2. I understand the project team is interested in collecting my personal views, and my name will not be mentioned in any reports arising from this survey
3. I can ask the investigators any questions related to the survey at any time and the answers must be to my satisfaction
4. I understand that taking part in this survey is voluntary. I can withdraw my participation at any time and will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way if I withdraw from completing the survey.
5. The questionnaire might take about 30 minutes to complete.

**Name:**

**Email address:**

**Select “yes” and continue to the next page if you consent to participate in this survey.**

Yes

No

# A: BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR NITAG

1. Select one category that describes your current NITAG role:

NITAG chair

Core member

Secretariat

Liaison

2. How old (years) is the NITAG in your country?

3. In which country is the membership of your NITAG?

4. How many core members does your NITAG currently have?

# B: REGIONAL SCIENTIFIC HUB FOR NITAGs IN AFRICA

5. What are your thoughts on the idea of a Regional Scientific Hub that will provide technical/scientific support to NITAGs in Africa?

# C: NEEDS AND CHELLENGES FOR YOUR NITAG

6. List the priority needs of your NITAG that the Regional Scientific Hub can address

7. List all the challenges that your NITAG faces and considers as most interfering to its function.

# D: FUNCTIONALITY OF YOUR NITAG

8. Select all the WHO functionality indicators that your NITAG currently fulfils

Having a legislative or administrative basis

Having formal terms of reference

Having at least five areas of expertise represented among its membership

Having at least one meeting per year

Distribution of agenda & background documents at least one week prior to meetings

Having a mandatory disclosure of conflict of interest

9. Name any key professional expertise that should be represented in your NITAG but is currently NOT REPRESENTED

# E: TYPES OF SUPPORT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE FOR YOUR NITAG

10. Name the entity (e.gMinistry of Health, Academic/Research Institution, Technical partner etc) that provides secretariat support to your NITAG

11. Select all the types of scientific support that your NITAG receives from the secretariat

Defining questions to inform recommendations

Developing recommendation framework

Accessing and using the evidence

Conducting systematic reviews

Rating the quality of the evidence (e.g by use of GRADE)

Writing up of the technical dossier and policy briefs

Updating evidence

Interpretation of the synthesized evidence

Participating in working groups’ meetings by expert in evidence synthesis

Economic evaluation

Mathematical modelling to inform policies

Training

Other

*Please give details if the answer above is “training” or "other*"

## F: AGENDA SETTING FOR YOUR NITAG

12. Who determines the topics for discussion at your NITAG meetings? Select all that apply.

Minister of Health

EPI manager

Secretariat

NITAG chair

NITAG core members

NITAG non-core members

Technical partners

Other

*Please give details if the answer above is “technical partner” or "other*"

## G: EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATION

13. What is/are the most recent policy question/s that your NITAG has addressed or is addressing? Select all that apply.

Introduction of a new vaccine

Introduction of a new vaccine dose schedule (includes booster)

Revision of existing vaccination dose schedule (includes timing)

Vaccination strategies (includes delivery strategies via school)

Mandatory immunisation

Interventions against vaccine hesitancy

Interventions to increase demand for immunisation

Improving immunisation data quality

Reducing the costs of the immunisation program

Financing of the immunisation program

Mathematical modelling to inform immunisation strategies

Economic evaluations for existing vaccines

Post GAVI support (graduating from GAVI support)

Other

*Please give details if the answer above is "other"*

14. What types of evidence did you use to address the recent policy question/s that your NITAG has addressed or is addressing? Select all that apply.

Existing systematic reviews

Conducted new systematic reviews

WHO/SAGE position papers

Government reports

Conducted new primary studies

Expert opinions

Guidelines from other countries

Industry reports

Do not know

Other

*Please provide details if the answer above is "other". The details can include other evidence-based methodology and/or country-specific criteria for recommendations*

15. What are the areas of scientific support that you would have wanted when your NITAG was working on the recent policy question? Select all that apply.

Defining questions to inform recommendations

Developing recommendation framework

Accessing and using the evidence

Conducting systematic reviews

Rating the quality of the evidence (e.g by use of GRADE)

Writing up of the technical dossier and policy briefs

Updating evidence

Interpretation of the synthesized evidence

Participating in working groups’ meetings by expert in evidence synthesis

Economic evaluation

Mathematical modelling to inform policies

Training

Other

*Please give details if the answer above is “training” or "other"*

## H: FUNDING OF NITAGs

16. Who provides funding for your secretariat? Select all that apply.

Ministry of Health

Technical partner

Other

## *Please give details if the answer above is "technical partner" or "other"*

## I: INTERGRATION WITH OTHER NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING BODIES

17. List all other bodies that currently engage with your NITAG (These bodies could include health decision-making groups, formal committees, research groups or others).

18. List all the names and role of any other national health decision-making groups or committees in your country that you think should work with your NITAG but DO NOT

## J: TIME COMMITMENTS TO YOUR NITAG

19. Explain whether you have enough time for your NITAG duties?  
     

20. How could the Regional Scientific Hub support your time constraints?