

Cameroon

The Coalition of the NGDOs for NTD Control changes President

The Coalition of the Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs) for the Neglected Tropical Diseases/Preventive Chemotherapy (PC-NTD) control made up of Helen Keller International (HKI), SightSavers, International Eye Foundation (IEF) and Perspective has a new chair, Patrice Nkwellé, Director of IEF NGDO. According to the regulation, her two-year mandate is renewable once. The presidency which has just been occupied by Ann Tarini, the Director of HKI, for four years, rotates between the NGDOs.

Since the signing of the draft agreement of August 9th, 1995, which links it to the Cameroonian government, the Coalition initially assisted the Ministry of Public Health (MoH) in Onchocerciasis control through the setting up of suitable mechanisms for annual distribution of ivermectin and for the primary health care (PHC) system. The tasks of the coalition in the regions were thus distributed:

- Adamaoua: International Eye Foundation;
- Center: Helen Keller International;
- West and North: To River Blindness Foundation and later, The Carter Center;
- Center and East: SightSavers International.

In 1997, this assistance was extended to the Littoral Region. In 1998, at the instigation of this Coalition and of the African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control (APOC), the MoH created the National Onchocerciasis Task Force (NOTF). In 2004, all the ten regions of Cameroon were covered.

Then, in 2009, agreements widened the interventions of the Coalition to four other pathologies namely: Lymphatic Filariasis (LF), Trachoma, helminthiasis and schistosomiasis.

In four years, the stay of Ann Tarini as head of this group made it possible to achieve consistent results:

- Development of a single database by region for all the NTDs allowing collection of the indicators required by the programmes and the donors since 2011;
- Finalization of the mapping of five NTD/PCTs in 2012;
- Development of an advanced national plan, in 2014, for the elimination of the Onchocerciasis;
- Development of a strategy, in 2011, for organizing the motivation of the Community Distributors (CDs) by the community;
- Improved monitoring of projects by supporting coverage surveys and post-campaign monitoring in 2013 and 2014;
- Development, documentation and dissemination of best practices in the country through the presentations made during the annual review meeting and at the international level; the strategy for motivation of CDs by the community, during the annual meeting of the ASTMH of 2012;
- The introduction of several tools for quality assurance since 2012, such as:
 - ◇ Pre and post-tests during the training of nurses;
 - ◇ Frameworks for datasheets and report per activity;
 - ◇ Follow-up on the effectiveness through phone calls to DCs (their phone numbers would have been part of the training report, etc.);
 - ◇ Linkage of the financing to predefined results



Three NGDO Coalition officials with A. Tarini

At the time of transition of the Programme to a new entity for management of PC-NTDs, huge challenges remain nevertheless, and these include:

1. Integrated management of several diseases with co-financing and joint planning;
2. Quality and timely technical and financial reporting for all the partners to be supported through a single system;
3. Management of data through one system and a single national database in a context where the various donors would make concerted proposals;
4. Intensified management of serious adverse events to avoid deaths;
5. Consolidation of the quality of CDTI in spite of the fatigue effect observed with various actors;
6. Strengthening communication between APOC, the National Programme for Onchocerciasis Control and the Coalition to allow the NGOs to fully play their supportive role.

Portrait:

Ann Tarini, Director of HKI, leaves her mark of the Presidency of the NGDO Coalition for NTDs control in Cameroon

The Minister of Public Health of Cameroon and the Coalition of the Non-Governmental Development Organizations (NGDOs) for the control of Neglected Tropical Diseases using Preventive Chemotherapy (PC-NTD) bade farewell on June 26th, 2014, to Ann Tarini, President of this grouping and National Director of Helen Keller International (HKI), on her departure to Canada, her native country. For four years, this nutritionist who specialized in the study of deficiencies in vitamins and minerals in Africa offered her services to Cameroon in the specialized fields of nutrition and the NTDs.

In 2010, after 4 months of living in the country, she rose to take charge of the Coalition, mainly, thanks to her interpersonal capabilities from which she draws her merit to bring all the actors to work in synergy and focus on quality research. It is also under her control that the nutrition programme of HKI helped the government of Cameroon to set up legislation mandating the fortification of food oils and wheat flour with essential micronutrients, and that it improved the coverage of the Mother and Child Health and Nutrition Action Week (SASNIM) in the Littoral region, not to mention its support for Cameroon's membership to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.

On how she is and how she works, Dr. Joseph Kamgno, Director of the Centre for Research on Filariasis & Other Tropical Diseases (CRFiMT) and member of National Onchocerciasis Task Force (NOTF) said: "Her presidency has been quite successful and as a committed and available leader, Ann Tarini reinstated old projects like the document on Onchocerciasis elimination in Cameroon. He added that "With her strong personality, she remained firm in her positions but with diplomacy."

Ann Tarini: "With the option for quality assurance, Cameroon is on the right track for elimination"

"I think Cameroon is a beautiful country full of potential. For the big challenge of elimination of Onchocerciasis, the NOCP and its partners committed themselves on the right track to quality assurance."

The Coalition of the NGOs is strong and has great added value in the fight against NTDs, as it constantly seeks improvements and innovations that help the government not to fall into the routine. Also, it helps coordinate various external support to ensure complementarity and to facilitate integrated implementation.

"My work over the past four years has certainly not been easy, but with perseverance, I was able to discover available and competent human capacity that needed help only to coordinate. Over time, strong links have been created between the actors of oncho control, NTD and me. I really leave with a twinge of sadness. "



Patrice Bertrand Nkwellé, the new President: Ann Tarini leaves lines of work that we intend to exploit



An economist by training, he started working for International Eye Foundation in Cameroon as an administrator in 1992, before being promoted to Director of the same structure in 1998, a function he practices to date.

International Eye Foundation is an NGDO that supports the Ministry of Public Health in the implementation of activities to fight against NTDs in two of the ten regions of Cameroon: South and Adamaoua.

Alongside Ann Tarini, he was Vice-president of the NGDO Coalition to fight against NTDs for four years. He said he particularly appreciated her leadership qualities, "her nobility, her intuition and her firmness ". He continued: "As I take the presidency, I hope to maintain her philosophy and get the group to exploit the numerous tracks she leaves, notably quality assurance."