



Communities Delegation at the 43rd Executive Board of Unitaid

The Communities Delegation to the Unitaid Board, representing people living with the diseases, actively participated in the 43rd Executive Board session at its semi-annual meeting held on 21 and 22 November 2023 in Brasilia, Brazil. The Communities Delegation was represented by the Board member, liaison officer and four delegation members who held pre-meetings prior to the EB43 session to discuss the board meeting agenda and support the interventions of the Communities Board member to represent the voices and concerns of the communities at grass root level.

This brief report summarises the key issues discussed at the Board meeting, the Communities Delegation's positions, and the resulting outcomes and decisions.

Firstly, the Communities delegation would like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Cecilia Kiku Ishitani, Head of the Brazilian Delegation and Vice-chair of the Executive Board and her Team for the warm welcome extended to the Board constituencies in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brasilia. With the return of an Executive Board session hosted in Brasilia, Communities remain grateful to President Lula da Silva for the invaluable role he played in the creation of Unitaid in 2006. We call upon President Lula da Silva, as chair of the Brazilian G20 presidency in 2024, to use this opportunity for resource mobilisation purposes with a renewed advocacy drive for Unitaid.

Performance Reporting

Communities living with HIV and affected by TB and Malaria commend the strategic approaches demonstrated in the Executive Director's Report which provided an overview of Unitaid's current challenges and opportunities as it implements its 2023-2027 strategy.

The ED highlighted key initiatives the organisation was driving, such as the Global Oxygen Alliance for equitable access to oxygen and the recent launch of the Health Products Manufacturing Support Platform who will address the challenges of technical capacity for regional manufacturers in Africa. The ED welcomed the contributions from civil society to the resource mobilisation efforts for the organisation and acknowledged the powerful role Communities play by explaining to donors how Unitaid's interventions benefit their health directly and help saving their lives and communities.

The Delegation thanked the Secretariat for the support provided during its annual delegation retreat in Johannesburg in September. The retreat provided an opportunity to meet with the implementing partners of Unitaid-funded projects in South Africa and to have a focused dialogue around the importance of effective and meaningful **Community Engagement in Unitaid-funded projects**. All implementers saw the value of engaging communities earlier in the project life cycle, from concept to implementation and delivery, and they would dedicate more resources to CE if they could readjust their budgets.

The Delegation also called on Unitaid to be bolder in its role as a convener and pathfinder and to develop strategies together with partners to speed up access in LMICs to long-acting HIV prevention methods such as CAB-LA and to implement a holistic cervical cancer prevention, diagnosis and treatment strategy including vaccines.

EB43 provided an opportunity for the Board to discuss changes to the strategic and organisational **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) proposed by the Secretariat for adoption in response to recommendations from the functional review. The Communities delegation supported the revisions whilst reinforcing previous suggestions for further follow up and discussion with the Secretariat during the implementation of the revised KPIs.

With regards to the proposed change on KPI 3.1 to set a target of 75% positive response on partner satisfaction, the Delegation reiterated the recommendation to disaggregate community organisations into community-led and community-based organisations in the next partner survey and continues to believe that 75% satisfaction is a low bar. On KPI 3.2 regarding effective engagement with Communities and Civil Society, the delegation advocated for 100% of the programs demonstrating a budget allocation for Community Engagement and welcomed further discussion on this vital metric. The delegation also pointed out that the organisation needs to create more inclusive and demand driven partnerships and encourage more diversity in terms of implementers from low and middle-income countries (LMICs), in order to ensure that the Global South implementers have equal access to opportunities and resources.

The Executive Board approved the proposed revisions to the KPI framework with an agreement that annual reporting on these changes will be conducted.

Resource Mobilisation and Communications update

The Deputy Executive Director's presentation on resource mobilisation outlined Unitaid's commitment to increasing the multi-year contributions, broadening the donor base, and amplifying visibility, with a strategic focus on climate work as a key element of resource mobilisation efforts. The Board Chair suggested that the communication tools be translated into various languages, to ensure that language is not a barrier for resource mobilisation.

To further improve Unitaid's visibility and brand recognition and in consultation with Communities, the Secretariat recently launched an updated visual branding and tagline.

The delegation in turn also updated its logo and adopted a new tagline "**Bringing Community Voices to Health Innovations.**"

Communities further stressed the importance of meaningful civil society and community engagement, emphasising proactive and timely communications to involve the delegation early in the planning of travel schedules in order to support the Chair and the Secretariat with their resource mobilisation activities.

The delegation remains a fervent supporter of Unitaid because its members, representing communities in all its diversities, have first-hand knowledge of the positive impact Unitaid's interventions make on our lives and the health of our communities.

2023-2027 Strategy operationalization

The Board approved a new Area for Intervention to enable access to **monoclonal antibodies** to treat and prevent infectious disease in LMICs and approved a new **climate and health strategy** to contribute to resilient health systems centered around climate-smart health products.

Monoclonal antibodies can treat or prevent a wide range of diseases – and are already revolutionizing modern medicine in high-income countries. They also hold great potential to transform how public health needs are addressed in LMICs, especially in infectious diseases, children's health, and pandemics. But this transformative technology is not yet a reality in many LMICs, due to high cost and other access barriers. Unitaid has identified opportunities to address these barriers and help establish viable business models, enabling access to monoclonal antibodies to treat and prevent infectious diseases in LMICs and the Board agreed to a phased approach for this new Area for Intervention, committing \$8-\$12 million in Phase I, with a review scheduled for 2025 onwards (Phase II).

The Communities delegation advocated for the need to dedicate considerable resources to fund meaningful demand creation and treatment literacy programs to educate communities on the complex technologies involving monoclonal antibodies and recommended that this shall be an independent funding stream to communities directly, instead of being part of the overall AFI budget. The Secretariat emphasised that community engagement would be included from Phase I, and the timeline for Phase II remains unclear but will be reviewed every six months, providing opportunities for ongoing assessment.

Governance updates

Key governance decisions taken at the 43th Board Meeting included the approval of the 2024 Operating Budget for the Secretariat in the amount of US\$ 31.9 million, including the budgets of the Office of the Chair, Communities, NGOs and the African Countries Constituencies.

During the two-day session, the Board also voted to extend until end of 2025 the terms of current Executive Board Chair, Marisol Touraine, and Vice-Chair, Ambassador Cecilia Kiku Ishitani, ensuring continuity and stability in Unitaid's leadership as the global health

infrastructure continues to recover from the unforeseen impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The extended terms of the Chair and Vice-Chair will end at the closure of the December 2025 Executive Board meeting and will align with the mid-term review of Unitaid's 2023-2027 strategy.

The next Executive Board meeting will take place on 19-20 June 2024.



Photo: Communities Board member Louis Da Gama, joined by Delegation members Maxwell Mumba, Lupakisyo Bukuku, Bahati Haule, Carol Nawina and Wim Vandevelde during the EB43 Board meeting in the Itamaraty Palace in Brasilia.

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The Communities Delegation to the Unitaid Board represents people living with and affected by HIV, TB and Malaria and those co-infected with HIV and HCV. The Communities Delegation has the goal of representing the views, voices, needs and interests of Communities living with the Diseases at Unitaid Board and Committee level. It aims to be transparent, accountable and to prepare communities to engage in Unitaid's work areas that directly affect those living with the diseases at grassroots and country level, especially in the global south.

The Communities Delegation to the Unitaid Board is hosted by the Cape Town office of the Global Network of People living with HIV (GNP+). For more information, please contact Wim Vandevelde, Liaison Officer of the Communities Delegation, at wvandevelde@gnpplus.net