

PAHO's Sixth Regional Polio Meeting

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Location	Guatemala City, Guatemala
Dates	4-6 December 2018
Participants	Over 140 professionals participated in this meeting, including representatives from 29 countries in the Region, members of the Regional Certification Commission for the Polio Endgame in the Region of the Americas (RCC), as well as representatives from the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Rotary International, UNICEF, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the World Health Organization Headquarters (WHO-HQ), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), both headquarters and country offices.
Purpose	The Sixth Regional Polio Meeting was designed to prepare the countries of the Region for the process of certification for global polio eradication.

The meeting was opened by Dr. Oscar Barreneche, PAHO/WHO Representative (PWR) in Guatemala, Dr. Cuauhtémoc Ruiz Matus, Chief of PAHO's Comprehensive Family Immunization Unit, and Dr. Roberto Molina, Vice-minister of Health for Guatemala.



Photo credit: Fernando Revilla, PAHO/WHO.

The meeting was divided into six main sessions, following the outline and order of key aspects from the Polio Annual report:

Session 1 • Vaccination Coverage: Is polio vaccination coverage high enough to prevent the circulation of WPV or the emergence of cVDPV?

Session 2 • AFP surveillance: Is AFP surveillance sensitive enough to timely detect a WPV or VDPV?

Session 3 • Containment: Has the country minimized the risks of reintroduction of poliovirus associated with facilities that obtain, handle or store infectious or potentially infectious poliovirus materials?

Session 4 • Risk assessment: Has the country conducted a risk analysis?

Session 5 • Risk mitigation: Has the country prepared a risk mitigation plan?

Session 6 • Preparation, investigation and response to an event or outbreak: Does the country have an adequate and updated response plan to an event or outbreak of polio?

In addition to the six main sessions, the meeting included the following topics:

- **IPV supply:** potential supply for 2019, SAGE recommendations based on priorities, cost increase;
- **iVDPV:** Global data, development of surveillance guides that are in the process of development, and experience in Colombia;



- **fIPV:** New evidence on immune response, advances in the Americas region in training (10 countries) and introduction (2 countries);
- **IHR:** general guidelines in the case of detecting a polio case;
- **nOPV:** Advances in the development of this vaccine, why it is necessary and research that is being developed;
- **Effective communication:** Storytelling as a new approach to presenting the value of an experience.

Main Conclusions and Recommendations

- The countries of the Americas should retake the leadership and technical quality demonstrated in 1994, when the Region became the first to be certified polio-free.
- Countries must ensure homogeneous vaccination coverage and address the unfinished agenda.
- Countries must finalize the inventory of facilities and the final disposal of poliovirus materials.
- PEFs must initiate the containment certification process before their National Containment Authority (NAC).
- Risk analyses must be carried out at least once a year at national and subnational level.
- Mitigation plans must be made and documented at the subnational level and must be included in the annual report.
- Countries should complete and submit outbreak response plans to their corresponding NCC's and submit them to PAHO by 1 April 2019.
- Annual reports should be used to advocate for the need to secure funding for the immunization program.
- Countries should submit their annual reports to PAHO/WHO by 31 August 2019, with an approval form signed by the NCC.





Kick-Off Meeting of the Regional Measles and Rubella Post-Elimination Monitoring Commission

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On 18 January 2019, the Assistant Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva, officially established the eight members of the Measles and Rubella Post-Elimination Regional Monitoring Commission (RMC), with Dr. Jon Andrus being appointed as its President.

This Commission has the purpose of monitoring the sustainability of measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome elimination in the Americas, for which, a new regional framework will be developed in alignment with the regional Plan of Action for the Sustainability of Measles and Rubella Elimination approved by the Pan American Sanitary Conference in 2017. This Commission is considered an independent body of experts, reporting directly to the executive leadership of PAHO.

The Commission is comprised by a group of renown experts from the fields of epidemiology, immunization, virology, molecular biology and clinical medicine. Membership has been nominated for three years with possibility of extension at the discretion of PAHO's Director. The Commission will also support PAHO's ongoing efforts of advocacy at the highest political level, halting measles outbreaks, verifying the evidence for the re-certification of countries where endemic transmission has been reestablished, and resource mobilization.

Finally, the Commission will work very closely and harmoniously with other regional and global advisory bodies such as PAHO's Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Vaccine-preventable Diseases, the SAGE's Working Group on Measles and Rubella from the World Health Organization, among others.