



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



*Regional Office of the
World Health Organization*

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Washington – D.C.

**1st STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE REGIONAL PLATFORM
FOR ACCESS AND INNOVATION FOR HEALTH**

Washington, D.C., 27, 28 and 29 October 2010

CONCLUSIONS

Advisory Committee Meeting Regional Healthcare Access and Innovation Platform

The Advisory Committee for the Regional Healthcare Access and Innovation Platform

Between 27 and 29 October 2010, the Advisory Committee for the Regional Platform for Access and Innovation for Health conducted its inaugural meeting at the regional headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization in Washington, D.C.

The committee functions as an advisory body made up of experts and key stakeholders. Its goal is to provide orientation and strategic guidance for the development of the Regional Platform and technical cooperation activities related to the promotion and facilitation of innovation for health systems in the Americas. (See ANNEX I (committee terms of reference) and ANNEX II (committee members and meeting participants).)

Salient aspects of the discussion:

The advisory committee was informed about the framework in which technical cooperation and country-level activities related to innovation for health and the implementation of the Global Strategy and Plan of Action Plan (GSPA)/Regional Perspective are being developed. Next, the Regional Platform project was presented, and a discussion ensued about the Platform itself and related activities.

In general, the project was very well received by the Committee, which applauded PAHO's leadership and initiative in this area. **The Committee urged that this instrument be developed in an integrated manner with the development of a Regional R&D+i Fund, with a suitable governance structure to ensure the proper operation of both the platform and resource allocation.**

The discussion yielded the following comments:

1. Conceptual Framework.

- It was emphasized that member countries need to consider an increase in investment in R&D+i for health with a public health perspective to improve regional access and equity in health in the Region.
- These activities and instrument are valid only if accompanied by a political decision to promote innovation for health with the involvement of the central decision-making levels, emphasizing the countries' achievements and lessons learned, and avoiding duplication of efforts and the dispersion of resources.

- The implementation of the Platform and activities connected with the same (henceforth we will use the term Platform to refer to both the Platform itself and this series of activities) must have as a mission universal health access to healthcare and those healthcare products (medicines, vaccines, technologies) that are necessary to assure well-being and the highest attainable standard of health in the Region, in an equitable and inclusive manner. Social needs should become the driving engine of innovation.
- The Platform should be framed within the existing agreements of the member countries, such as the Health Agenda for the Americas and the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation, and Intellectual Property (GSPoA)/Regional Perspective, as well as other pertinent PAHO resolutions (for example, on Access to Medications, Neglected Diseases, and Regulatory Agencies, among others).
- This instrument seeks to facilitate dynamic interaction among regional stakeholders in innovation for health, with a public health perspective and considering healthcare products to be a social good.
- It should also permit the appropriation of the innovation for health processes by society as a whole and by member states, heightening appreciation for the production of knowledge and health innovation as factors in economic and social success.
- The Platform must serve as a source of reliable information to fuel the management and development of policies governing the sector, as well as rational use of healthcare products.
- In adopting a public health perspective and access both as the starting point and the goal of innovation for health, it will be necessary to review the criteria for stakeholders' inclusion and key contributing factors. Thus allowing a more efficient monitoring and evaluation of the project.
- The Platform should be far-reaching. It should not be limited to medicines, vaccines, and other health technologies, but also include issues that have high impact on public health like food and some aspects of animal health as well.

2. Stakeholders.

- Health authorities must spearhead the process, maintaining inclusive criteria with science and technology and production/economic authorities to ensure the integration of all relevant health innovation sectors. It is understood that this type of instrument envisages the incorporation of stakeholders with differing interests; nevertheless care should be taken to preserve public health and social welfare/development as the guiding principles.

- At a minimum, the following sectors must take part: decisionmakers, the elements of civil society to which the innovation processes are geared to, and those who “create” innovation (doers).
- The different health innovation sectors, including both public and private sectors, must be actively integrated.
- Civil society will play a critical role in the Platform; therefore, opportunities for its participation must be created. Consequently, it will incentivize transparency and, among others, generate a direct channel to people’s needs.
- The participation of researchers and the rest of the scientific community must also contemplate the inclusion of the international scientific diaspora.
- Regional industry can gain visibility and the information necessary to support its innovation and production efforts, at the same time assuming its proper social responsibility in the process.
- PAHO is the guarantee of unbiased management, serving as an honest broker to assure the trustworthiness of the processes and reliability of the information developed in the Platform, as well as viability and long-term commitment.
- The inclusion of other international entities can lend expertise, resources, and financing to the Platform, as well as prestige and additional means of dissemination.
- It will also be essential to map the capacities and pertinent stakeholders and seek out those that are needed for the project’s success.
- It is necessary to promote the incorporation and/or cooperation with existing networks and the development of a regional network of networks.
- Adequate dissemination strategies will be planned to promote the inclusion of pertinent stakeholders. In principle, the Platform must offer added value to attract relevant stakeholders, be it information, financing, or the possibility of finding the appropriate resource.
- It is anticipated that different stakeholders will establish different degrees of linkages with the Platform (for example, the authorities vs. occasional users).
- Although this is a virtual instrument, it is assumed that it will reflect and facilitate the legitimate interaction of stakeholders within the network.

3. Platform Activities.

- The discussion of the activities originally proposed for the project (see ANNEX III) did not produce much in the way of objections, and they were considered relevant and necessary. The criteria set by the GSPoA will be used to determine what activities will be developed and who should participate.
- The importance of national health authorities having systematized, good-quality information to support administration and management of the medicines, vaccines, and other health technologies sectors and of health innovation systems, was stressed.
- At the same time, emphasis was placed on the need to undertake specific activities -- with appropriate financing-- to obtain high priority healthcare products.
- The determination of technological innovation regional priorities must fuel the platform and its activities. The development of prospective studies that specify not only current health innovation needs but analyze future possibilities and the future of health innovation can be a key tool for setting priorities and choosing specific work areas.
- To ensure project operations and sustainability, the countries must make financial, human, and in-kind resource commitments. For example, Uruguay has decided that when it launches the Platform it will provide human resources at the local level and other means at its disposal so that the Platform will be able to operate in that country.
- The Platform must meet the needs of countries in the Region with different levels of development. Thus, the capacity building in member countries with less-developed health innovation systems must be considered as part of the activities and financing within the Platform.
- Traditional medicine should have a special section and receive particular attention, inasmuch as its importance in the Region is key and its financing possibilities scant.
- The search engine for experts must include investigators and all the other innovation sectors cataloged with innovation criteria so that they can easily be utilized. In addition, data must be broken down by group and institution for better systematization.
- The Platform must take advantage and make use of existing tools, which must be offered through the Platform in an integrated manner that facilitates access to them (for example, TDR/targets.org, database, etc.).

4. Financing.

- Two aspects of financing were discussed:

- Financing of the virtual platform, and
- Financing of the activities connected to this instrument.
- For both schemes, the need for a strategic/business plan to sustain the mobilization of resources, as well as a dynamic and trustworthy governance structure, was stressed.
- With regard to the financing of the Virtual Platform:
 - The countries' commitment must be obtained so that they participate actively and commit financial and/or human resources that will permit the flow of information with the local level.
 - It was proposed that one desirable strategy would be the development of packages and/or modules of Platform activities that can be funded by diverse and independent sources.
 - The Platform must be developed incrementally, and new elements and activities must be added in response to users' needs and financing possibilities.
- With regard to financing activities connected to the platform:
 - The creation of a fund dedicated to promoting priority projects was proposed. In principle, it was thought that it could be under the auspices of the Pan American Health and Education Foundation and that this foundation could be the fund's administrative entity.
 - In addition, existing financing/cooperation mechanisms at the regional and subregional level must be studied and the possibilities of this fund interacting with those mechanisms (Technical Cooperation among Countries, board subsidies, sectorial funds, etc.) must be looked at.
 - Project financing must meet health needs and consider the contributions of the countries whose health innovation systems are least developed. Capacity building in countries with fewer resources, as well as the installation of productive capacity that satisfies healthcare needs, must be used as part of the criteria for allocating those funds.
 - Industry and the private sector must be given incentives to finance activities under preestablished frameworks and criteria. To this end, cofinancing mechanisms for health innovation that obligate regional industry and other participating sectors must be created.
 - To ensure good administration and transparency in the allocation of resources, governance structures must have nimble mechanisms for deciding how to allocate funds.
- Resource mobilization will be fundamental to sustaining the project. Nevertheless, there is a need to consolidate the platform and the priorities to be embraced before bringing donors into the dialogue.
- One important element will be the inclusion of regional and subregional mechanisms as well as other agencies like the Inter-American Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, which have ties with national non-healthcare ministries and authorities of interest.

5. Promotion and Dissemination.

- The project's success depends in large measure on the participation of stakeholders and interested parties. To this end, a suitable publicity strategy must be designed to reach all key stakeholders.
- In addition, it will be necessary to consider organizing a wider-reaching meeting of stakeholders and interested parties to increase awareness about the project (first half of 2011).
- Advantage should be taken of different conferences and meetings to disseminate information on the projects objectives (consider the possibility of producing a demo for publicity purposes).
- Articulate the dissemination strategy with international organizations and NGOs that operate in the Region.

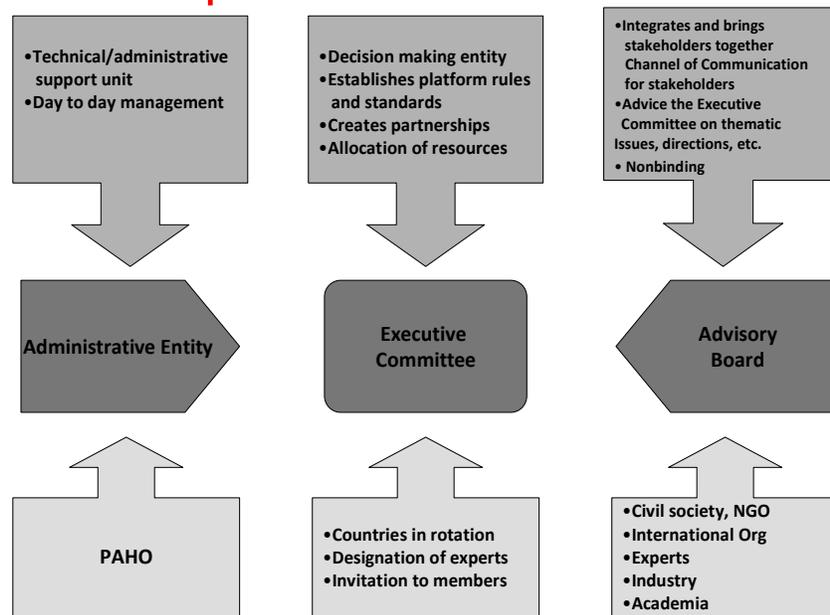
6. Governance.

- The governance structure must be dynamic, and the inclusion criteria for being part of it must be clear and assure transparency in the development and management of the Platform.
- The Platform's governance must be vigilant about maintaining a public health perspective, access, and equity in its operations, and the prioritization and financing of that perspective, and support regional research, development and innovation initiatives to improve efficiency and results.
- In addition, health sector participation in the development of national health innovation systems must be strengthened in a way that reflects the Region's heterogeneity with good representation of the countries.
- Efforts will be made to facilitate and optimize the participation of other highly relevant stakeholders: a good representation of investigators, academia, NGOs, industry, donors, and all other sectors that are critical to advancing national and regional health innovation systems.
- Governance must be capable of strategic management to ensure the Platform's sustainability and a high level of information and content reliability and quality. It will therefore be essential to ensure the absence of conflicts of interest among the members that make up the governance structure. Separation of functions is recommended: strategic and financial management from technical management of the activities, the function of an efficient secretariat to support the initiative's

management (PAHO should occupy this role). It is suggested that a mechanism be established for creating ad hoc working groups when circumstances so require.

- In addition, it must facilitate the Platform's development to achieve the objectives defined, facilitate the mobilization of resources, and provide standards for the inclusion and updating of information in the Platform and managing the communities of practices and networks.

Components of Governance



7. Next steps.

- A road map up to June 2011 should be developed that includes:
 - Developing a foundational document with the justification, rationale, and a strategic/business plan based on the committee's recommendations. It must make the project's mission and objective clear.
 - Organize a series of consultations and meetings with different sectors/nodes: NGOs, industrialists, academics, and others, with an eye toward partnerships and broadening participation (beginning with NGOs in January 2011).
 - A meeting to discuss the project with countries of differing capacities and to present the strategic plan (March-June 2011).
 - Development of the platform's technology base with INFOMED–Grupo Stela–PAHO, in coordination with other PAHO platforms.
 - An invitation to donors to sit down at the table, at which the initiative, progress, and opportunities to contribute will be presented (once the strategic plan is in hand / before December 2011).

- Design the communication and publicity strategy in general and targeting and specific sectors. This could include:
 - Virtual sessions with nodes/sectors.
 - Circulating national web pages that are heavily used and have similar subject matter.
 - Creation of a demo and publication on the PAHO web page.
 - Publication in a journal on scientific communication and a press briefing.
- Prepare a report to the 2011 Directing Council.