





**Comments from the National & Municipal Program Managers:
“How To Better Tap Resources To Meet National Program Needs?
Comments on Enhancing Cooperation & Coordination**

Manuel González, Dominican Republic; Shamdeo Persaud, Guyana; Helen Freitas, Tereza Lyra, Herbert Charles S. Barros, and Reinaldo Braun, Brazil

 **Dr. Manuel González** said the region had many valuable resources in the countries involved in the challenge to eliminate lymphatic filariasis (LF) but that they had not taken sufficient advantage of the opportunities for collaboration across countries. He noted that some incredible work had been done—meticulous and labor-intensive—and said the knowledge gained would be useful in taking better advantage of these capacities to obtain more productive information exchange between all the countries to fulfill the mission of eliminating LF as a public health problem. He thanked the group for the opportunity to participate in the meeting and said good results had been achieved that would lead to professional and personal growth.

 **Dr. Helen Freitas** agreed with the previous comments (from Dr. Gonzalez) and said she found the research community in the region, especially the technical experts, to be a harmonious group, and that the information exchange she experienced in a meeting she had organized with them had proven very helpful.

 **Dr. Shamdeo Persaud** said he thought collaboration had been building and cited some examples regarding in-country capacity, such as the arrangement with St. George’s University (SGU). He noted the program had also trained two people from the University of Guyana to begin research there, but cited some issues preventing program access to much of the research, training, and research capacity-building in the region, including language barriers and the distance and cost of travel. He said he wasn’t sure how to address these issues, and said there was a need for entomology and hydrocele training, noting that such training did exist at some of the focal points, including those in Haiti or Brazil. He said there was technical cooperation with Brazil, and suggested the possibility of additional research-building capacity and/or training, adding that there was a lot of potential in the region [for collaboration] but that solutions needed to be found for some of the challenges.

 **Dr. Teresa Lyra** thanked the group for the opportunity to participate in the meeting and noted the importance of exchanging information, listening to others’ experiences, and incorporating new ideas. She said the meeting had demonstrated that the program was already working in partnerships with local infrastructure (e.g., city health departments); research organizations (e.g., Aggeu Magalhães Research Center (*Centro de Pesquisas Aggeu Magalhães*; CPqAM); universities (e.g., those in the State of Pernambuco, which had the capacity to train program staff); and the Ministry of Health (MoH). She also cited the importance of assistance given by the Secretariat of Health Monitoring to the Program to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (PELF) in the City of Recife, and the systematic support received from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), through Dr. Ault and Dr. Ehrenberg, who had followed the development of the work since 2002. She also noted that through these partnership the City of Recife had stimulated its human resources, building capacity through the experience acquired in providing services, citing as examples one master’s thesis by a technical expert who evaluated the population for the first mass drug administration (MDA), another that focused on the question of morbidity, and a doctoral thesis on

the question of vector control. She said these achievements were important because they were made by people who worked in local institutions and would thus be able to use what they had learned in their daily work and she described the partnerships with local institutions such as Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (*Fundação Oswaldo Cruz*; Fiocruz) / Recife and the universities as fundamental to the process.



Dr. Herbert Charles S. Barros thanked the group for inviting him to present the data from Maceió and confirmed the importance of inter-institutional collaboration. He emphasized that in Maceió the city's Department of Health (DoH) was involved with the program, along with the University of Alagoas (*Universidade Federal de Alagoas*; UFAL), CPqAM, and the endemic community, and explained that within the DoH, an LF Committee was created during changes that occurred in municipal management in 2005. He said the Committee (which was currently inactive, but could be reactivated) was composed of the program coordinator within the DoH, Dr. Rocha, and Dr. Fontes in the UFAL, and included the participation of the State Secretariat of Health, community agents, a resident from either the endemic area or an area population chosen by its representatives, and these same representatives, and that it had the right to vote. He noted that the interaction between public agencies, research organizations, and the community was extremely important in Maceió, and that a recently created nongovernmental (NGO) would also be integrated with the program in Maceió.



Dr. Reinaldo Braun reiterated his earlier comments about the importance of the research institutions in supporting the work. He noted that in the case of Belém the partnership and support from UFAL and CPqAM was fundamental for consolidating the work of various decades — not only their participation in the training of human resources but also their active collaboration in the work, including the operational fieldwork, which involved the participation of technical experts and researchers from the area.

The Chair commended the meeting participants who worked in the research institutes, especially those at the management level, for continuing to make a real attempt to improve the integration across their organizations and to reap the maximum advantage of collaboration to benefit the PELFs and ultimately the populations in their countries.