

9. Conclusions

The meeting was a very important opportunity to discuss and share experiences among countries of the Amazonian Region.

Roll Back Malaria is strongly incorporated in national plans and the movement is reinforcing the decentralization process, the strengthening of the health systems and putting in evidence the importance of using malaria as a pathfinder to improve health and life situation of populations. Through the *Roll Back Malaria* Initiative malaria has come to the political agenda again and the countries are approaching malaria control as an integral part of all health problems and are using the initiative to promote equity.

The evaluation of this first year showed that *Roll Back Malaria* has achieved one of its most important objectives: to once again bring malaria to the government's agenda and to discuss the problem as a part of a health situation of marginalized populations. Furthermore, it has enabled governments to take into consideration the economic aspects of the disease.

The countries are very keen to continue working with the strategy and had discussed the importance of having regional and national technical support to malaria control in the region.

One very strong point during the meeting was the activity in border areas, called "areas of common epidemiological interest". All countries already have some joint activity with their neighbors and a movement of reinforcing these activities has begun. The countries are organizing bilateral and trilateral meetings with the support of RBM and the WHO/PAHO PWRs to develop the joint plan as a consequence of the Cartagena meeting.

Consequent to the awareness of the importance of working together, some specific planning meetings already took place during the Meeting in Cartagena. The countries that form the so-called "Guianese Shield" (Brazil, French Guiana, Guyana, Suriname and Venezuela) began the development of a joint plan to control malaria and to use malaria as a pathfinder to improve health and life situation of the population of their border areas.

Finally, the RBM Cartagena Meeting showed the importance of working together in partnership and the need to give emphasis to the areas of common epidemiological interest in order to significantly reduce the malaria burden in the Amazonian Region.