



Malaria Day in the Americas:

2008 Guidelines for Commemoration, Communications, and Advocacy

I. Background

In September 2005, the *46th Directing Council* of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) adopted Resolution [CD46.R13](#), which highlighted, among other things, the need to establish policies and operational plans to achieve a reduction of the malaria burden by at least 50% by 2010 and 75% by 2015; and to designate a Malaria Control Day in the Americas on a selected annual date, to recognize past and current efforts to prevent and control malaria, promote awareness, and monitor progress. Similarly, in May 2007, the *60th World Health Assembly* passed resolution [WHA60.18](#): “Malaria, including a proposal for establishment of *World Malaria Day*,” which provides, among other things, that: “*World Malaria Day* shall be commemorated annually on 25 April or on such other day or days as individual members may decide ...” Guyana, which has been commemorating a *National Malaria Day* since 2003, proposed the date for the Americas to be 6 November, which coincides with the day when the presence of malaria parasites in the blood of patients with febrile symptoms was first observed by Charles Louis Alphonse Lavéran in 1880. With these precedents, the 27th Pan American Sanitary Conference held in Washington, D.C., from 1–5 October 2007 resolved that **November 6** will henceforth be observed annually as ***Malaria Day in the Americas***. (Full text of CSP27.R11 is available on the PAHO web at <http://www.paho.org/english/gov/csp/csp27.r11-e.pdf>)

Currently on its second year of commemoration, *Malaria Day in the Americas* is regarded as an important opportunity and mechanism for countries of the Region to engage various stakeholders in aggressively fighting malaria. In June 2008, the PAHO Executive Committee emphasized the need to build upon the momentum of *Malaria Day in the Americas* and for peoples of the Region to become strong and involved advocates against the disease.

II. *Malaria Day in the Americas: Concept and Objectives*

The Regional Strategic Plan for Malaria in the Americas 2006–2010 highlights communications and advocacy as among the key issues in malaria that needed increased emphasis in the Region. As PAHO implements the strategic plan, the Media Communications, Publications and Advocacy Plan for Malaria in the Americas was developed and consolidated in May 2006. An important element of the plan is the commemoration of *Malaria Day* in the countries of the Americas, which campaigns for increased advocacy and commitment among stakeholders and draws communities and the general population into concrete actions that contribute to the achievement of goals and targets in all levels – global, regional, country, and community.

Malaria Day in the Americas, which will be observed for the second time on **6 November 2008**, is envisioned to be the platform upon which countries of the Region can engage in a year-round aggressive campaign against the disease. Specifically, *Malaria Day in the Americas* seeks to attain the following objectives:

- Improve the communication process and extension of advocacy work to all stakeholders and target audiences.
- Enhance visibility/interest on Malaria in the Region of Americas and the global scourge that the disease brings to peoples of the world.
- Increase awareness and understanding of the key issues among target audience/population.
- Catalyze change of attitudes and modification of behaviors.
- Generate advocacy/support from the public, policy makers, clients and strategic partners.
- Encourage increased and enduring support to efforts against malaria.

Partners and malaria stakeholders in the Region are encouraged to consider this concept and objectives in the commemoration of *Malaria Day in the Americas 2008*.

Theme/Slogan for *Malaria Day in the Americas*
United Against Malaria - Overcoming the challenges of a borderless disease

III. *Over-Arching Message*

(Adapted from World Malaria Day 2008 Messages consolidated by the Roll Back Malaria Initiative)

Malaria is a global burden calling for a global solution through local efforts...

- Nearly 142 million people or 16% of the population of the Americas is among those who are at risk and 40 million of them are at moderate to high risk.
- Approximately 1 million people contract malaria annually in the Americas.

- Malaria continues to be a major public health problem in 21 countries in the Region.
- Malaria transmission-free countries in the Region also continue to be at risk of outbreaks and re-introduction of local transmission.
- Everyone is vulnerable and pregnant women, children, and persons living with HIV/AIDS are at higher risk.
- Without appropriate preventive, diagnostic and treatment measures, visitors and travelers are among the vulnerable groups for malaria infection.
- In the Americas, miners, loggers, banana and sugarcane plantation workers, indigenous groups, populations in areas of armed and/or social conflict, & people along areas of common epidemiologic interest / border areas are also susceptible to the disease.
- Climate change will likely increase the spread of the disease to new areas
- Malaria breeds poverty and underdevelopment in vast regions of the world, including the Americas, thus contributing to issues of global concern such as illegal migration and security.

Universal access to and use of good-quality interventions is important to achieve global goals and national targets ...

- Essential supplies for malaria prevention, diagnosis, and treatment must reach communities timely and must be used appropriately by people at risk.
- Diagnosis and treatment guidelines must be followed strictly by health providers and patients.
- Governments, corporations, international institutions, foundations, and non-governmental organizations need to unite for an aggressive scale-up of malaria control.

Investing in malaria pays off ...

- Treating malaria reduces death, disease, and poverty.
- Controlling malaria worldwide will avert more than 1 million deaths per year.
- Malaria control reduces burden of other diseases.
- Limiting the spread of malaria improves communities' health and productivity, thus helping them help themselves.

2008 is a year of opportunity for the malaria community...

- Broad international support is essential to achieve the *Roll Back Malaria* (RBM) targets in 2010 and the United Nations Millennium Development goal (UN MDG) on malaria in 2015.
- Partners in the fight against malaria are multiplying efforts to reach global and national targets of making malaria prevention, diagnosis, and treatment available to all people at risk of contracting the disease.
- Countries with continuing malaria challenges are stepping up in-country, regional, and international cooperation to secure funds for malaria control initiative through Rounds 8 and 9 of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). These funds represent a last chance for countries to achieve global goals and national targets.

- More funding is needed to maintain and scale up the good results of endemic countries and prevent reintroduction in areas where transmission has been previously eliminated.
- Success stories from the Region demonstrate that malaria can be reduced drastically. Four key factors account for this progress:
 - 1) Increasing commitment of governments to fight the disease
 - 2) Effective technical assistance by international organizations.
 - 3) Improved coordination at all levels: international, regional, national, local.
 - 4) Increased funding.

Success stories in the Americas (between 2000 and 2007) include...

- >32% reduction of malaria cases in the Region.
- Approximately 39% reduction in malaria mortality.
- 5 countries with >75% reduction in annual malaria cases, which indicates achievement of malaria UN MDG for 2015.
- 6 countries with 50% to <75% reduction in annual malaria cases, which indicates achievement of RBM targets for 2010.
- 5 countries with <50% decrease in annual malaria cases, indicating stronger malaria control status.
- At least 4 countries are currently on pre-elimination status.

**IV. Regional and National Events for *Malaria Day in the Americas*:
Examples from 2007**

In 6 November 2007, a month after the resolution for the commemoration of *Malaria Day in the Americas* was approved, the Region launched the event and simultaneous activities were held in Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela that include various exhibits, contests, health promotion activities, discussion forums, recognition ceremonies, and intensive multi-media campaign. In Washington, DC, a scientific session entitled “Combating Malaria: What Works?” was held during the 2007 American Public Health Association Annual Conference where the experience of the Region on malaria in the Amazon was featured and discussed.

Partners and stakeholders in the countries and communities are enjoined to hold similar events/efforts on 6 November 2008 or any time during the year. It is emphasized that while the commemoration is set annually on the 6th of November, advocacy efforts will be carried out throughout the year.

The Region envisions having stronger and more consolidated set of events for the annual commemoration in 2008. It is hoped that partners and stakeholders in all levels of work will also have increased and stronger participation in planning and commemorating *Malaria Day in the Americas* in the coming years. While a region-wide theme and activities are advocated, countries are encouraged to use the annual commemoration as platform to share a message and engage in activities that directly address national realities and specificities. Partners are enjoined to inform the PAHO Regional Malaria Program of specific activities scheduled in the countries

for the 2008 *Malaria Day in the Americas* so that the information can be disseminated accordingly.

Specific country activities and events for *Malaria Day in the Americas* 2008 will be announced to the public in advance.

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