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**UN agencies to increase coordination at regional level**

UN agencies efforts to curb the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Latin America and the Caribbean will be expanded and better coordinated. The decision was taken during a meeting in May, in Washington D.C., attended by UNAIDS and seven Cosponsors—UNDP, UNODC, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, PAHO/WHO and the World Bank. The agencies called for increased policy dialogue on HIV/AIDS at the highest levels, coordinated United Nations efforts to mobilize resources, enhanced cooperation, and stepped up involvement of the private sector and those living with HIV/AIDS. "The epidemic is threatening to undermine the realization of major development goals," said a statement approved in the meeting. The group will meet periodically to check progress on specific actions approved in the meeting. For a copy of the final statement email [sida@paho.org](mailto:sida@paho.org).

**10 Latin American countries achieve ARV price reduction**

Reductions from 30% to 92% on the first line of ARV triple therapy were the result of a negotiation between 10 Latin American countries and the pharmaceutical industry. The agreement benefited Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The negotiations were coordinated by the Andean Health Organism (ORAS) with technical support from PAHO. Out of the 37 drugs negotiated, 15 were offered with prices below the lowest price ever recorded for these countries. This was the third successful subregional negotiation, after the Caribbean (June 2002)

and Central America (February 2003). The meeting, which took place in Lima, Peru, in June, contained an important innovation: for the first time manufacturers of generic ARV participated in the negotiation, as well as producers of reactives.

### **PAHO and WHO appoint new managers for HIV programs**

In the space of a couple of weeks, PAHO and WHO appointed new managers to their HIV programs. The new head of PAHO's HIV Unit is Carol Vlassoff, a Canadian national. She has degrees on philosophy and sociology and a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Pune in India. Before the appointment she was PAHO's Representative in Suriname. The new head of WHO's HIV/AIDS Department is Paulo Teixeira, the former director of the Brazil National AIDS Program. Teixeira has been involved in the response to HIV for a long time, and in the last years led an international campaign to increase access to ARVs, which included discussions on pharmaceutical patents at the World Trade Organization. WHO also created a new senior post to supervise the programs corresponding to the Global Fund areas, the Assistant Director-General - HIV/AIDS, TB & Malaria. Jack Chow, of the United States of America, previously Ambassador, Special Representative of the U.S. Secretary of State for HIV/AIDS was selected for the post. He has extensive experience in the executive and legislative branches of the US government in both domestic and international public health.

### **LAC improve HIV estimates and projections**

Since 1997 country specific estimates of the burden of HIV infection have been published by UNAIDS and WHO/PAHO on a regular basis. Recently, however, the methods and assumptions used to produce HIV estimates have been improved based on increased knowledge of the HIV epidemic and its dynamics in different populations. Two workshops (Guatemala, June and Jamaica, July) organized by UNAIDS and PAHO, with participation of CDC and UNICEF, helped LAC countries to improve their estimates and projections of the number of people living with HIV. This process aims to share and to consensus the methodology used at the global level to prepare the estimates and create capacity at the country level to produce them. The Estimates and Projections Package has been developed to generate a curve of the HIV epidemic, based on sentinel HIV sero-surveillance data. Another software package, Spectrum, uses the epidemic curve as an input, and generates estimates of prevalence, incidence, and AIDS-related mortality, as well as orphans.

### **Health journalism network launched**

PAHO in partnership with the "Fundación Nuevo Periodismo" and the Communications Initiative has created a network of health journalists in Latin America interested in the sharing of professional experiences and in the contact with high-level experts. This Spanish speaking network is called RED SALUD. The project began in August with a debate on the coverage of HIV epidemics, SRAS and others. Every debate, or "Consejo de Redacción" (Newsroom Council), deals with a different topic is moderated by a distinguished journalist. Through a "public window" non-journalists can also follow the debate. More on <http://www.comminit.com/the/reds salud>.

### **HIV Communicators met for the first time**


Communication managers from 15 National AIDS Programs met in Brazil last May to share experiences and discuss ways to make their communication activities more strategic, in a meeting organized by PAHO and other agencies. In spite of the fact that communication is crucial for change at individual, social, and political levels, it was the first time that this group met in the region. It became evident that the communicators are very aware of the shortcomings of the past communication activities: use of fear appeals, stigmatizing messages, poor targeting, little involvement of people with HIV and the community, and fragmented campaigns, as well as serious flaws in planning and implementation. Overcoming these problems depends on a long-term commitment with communication activities, by governments, international agencies, and donors. UNICEF, which was also represented, followed up with a similar meeting for its communication staff (Panama, June), building on some of the materials and discussions from the Brazil meeting.

### **"Strategies for low prevalence" gets Spanish version**

The Spanish version of "Effective Prevention Strategies in Low HIV Prevalence Settings" is now available. The purpose of this publication is to identify those challenges and propose a prevention strategy that can maintain low HIV prevalence in the general population, while reducing existing or preventing potential HIV sub-epidemics in population subgroups with substantial levels of risk behavior. The publication is an initiative of the Family Health International, PAHO, UNAIDS, Impact, and USAID. For orders send an email to [sida@paho.org](mailto:sida@paho.org).

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The purpose of this bulletin is to share information on the efforts of PAHO professionals involved in the response to AIDS/STI. It is not an official document of the Organization. To add or remove your name from the bulletin's distribution list, contact [sida@paho.org](mailto:sida@paho.org). Use this email address to contribute articles for publication. We ask the PAHO AIDS/STI focal points to send us information on events, strategies, concerns, and needs. PAHO is the regional office of WHO in the Americas and a co-sponsor of UNAIDS.

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