

## The Partners Forum for Action on Chronic Disease

### Launch Highlights

3-4 December 2009

Washington DC

The [Partners Forum for Action on Chronic Diseases](#) was launched on December 3<sup>rd</sup> in Washington DC. It has been created as a catalyst for multi-sector partnerships that drive direct social, environmental, and policy action to promote health and prevent chronic diseases by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) in collaboration with: the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), the Pan American Health and Education Foundation (PAHEF), the World Economic Forum, and in consultation with: the CARMEN network, the World Health Organization (WHO), WHO Collaborating Centres; international NGOs working in heart disease, diabetes, and cancer; and Consumers International.

*"We have the potential to prevent 3 million deaths over the next decade; this should incite questions and actions. 80% of heart disease and diabetes and 40% of cancer is preventable. However the social determinants of the risk factors for these diseases are complex. No one can address them alone." - Jon Andrus, Deputy Director of the Pan American Health Organization*

This call to action was applauded by attendees, representing leaders from industries, civil society, academia, and governments from across the Americas. They enthusiastically endorsed the call for multi-sector collaboration and a holistic approach to the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases. In support, they volunteered a wide variety of resources: time; personnel; facilities; scientific and technical expertise; access to research and tools; financial support; political visibility; local and international platforms for advocacy; and access to business, community and stakeholder networks across the region.

The diversity, influence, and expertise assembled at the launch herald a powerful coalition, poised to draw global attention to the prevention of chronic disease in 2010. For example, with support from WEF, the Partners Forum could have the ear of over 70 CEOs, as well as a platform at Davos next February. PAHO's directing council, including the Ministers of Health from all the Americas, will hear from the Partners Forum next fall at their annual meeting. Sesame Street Workshop could provide a venue for influencing the health of children in over 100 countries.

### Early Successes of Multi-Sector Collaboration

By sharing best practice in action against the causes, and for the treatment, of chronic disease, the Partners Forum will be able to replicate, scale, and collaborate across sectors and regions. During the opening session, representatives shared stories of successful multi-sector collaboration to promote health. Some examples:

- In Argentina, the Ministry of Health has collaborated with the bread manufacturers association to dramatically reduce the amount of salt in bread
- The "choose healthy lifestyle" campaign, developed by the Mexican [Alianza por una Vida Saludable](#) (a food industry initiative), the Institute of Social Security, and media, has reached over 90% of the population. Almost all Mexican's (96%) believe the campaign has improved their lifestyle.
- The Framework for Healthy Workplaces (developed by the WHO in consultation with governments, labor unions and employers) has identified best practice in workplace wellness

and established a more standardized, global approach, allowing for the comparison of employer programs.

- [The Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation](#) was recently launched by a coalition of more than 40 manufacturers, retailers, nonprofits to reduce childhood obesity by 2015.

## Planning for 2010

The Partners Forum will catalyze action on the prevention of chronic disease by facilitating the exchange of successful practices, building capacity, and raising awareness. As founder and secretariat, PAHO will oversee general administration, provide technical expertise and political leadership, and broker new opportunities for multi-sector collaboration.

An overview of the organization of the Partners Forum was presented in the opening session (figure 1). In 2010, at the regional level, the secretariat will focus on outreach to key stakeholders (including organizations in the media and entertainment, transportation, information technology, finance, and insurance sectors) and building core infrastructure (such as a collaborative web platform). At the country level, the emphasis will be on building local capacity (through guidelines and toolkits) to negotiate win-win-win outcomes and providing advisory support for partnership implementation. The secretariat will also play an active role in supporting the Partners Forum Working Groups, which will drive cross-sector action in five initial areas proposed by PAHO/WHO (figure 2.)

The Partner Forum's interim steering committee will be established early in 2010. The committee will be responsible for overseeing the Partner Forum's: vision and objectives, governance models, membership criteria and fees, resource mobilization, operation and financial plans and communication/branding. Members will include representatives from the four initiating partners, government, civil society/academia, the private sector and each of the working groups.

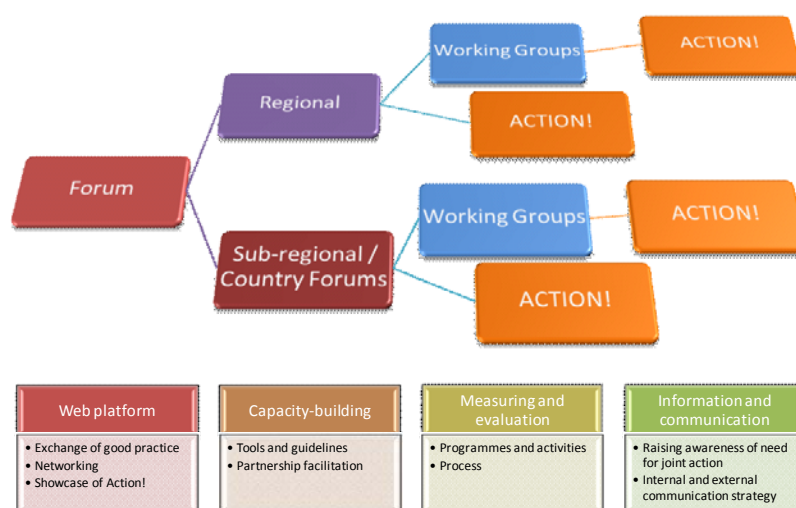


Figure 1: Partner Forum Structure

Working groups, comprised of organizations from all sectors, will be responsible for developing and implementing aspects of the Partners Forum 2010 Strategy on the initial areas of focus. Meeting for the first time on December 4<sup>th</sup>, each working group discussed how they would operate and identified and prioritized specific areas for action. A summary of their discussion is presented in Figure 2; detailed

notes are available at the Secretariat. Many of the groups agreed that early opportunities included items such as: sharing resources, tools, research and stories of success (through the virtual platform); developing inventories of current projects (so as to build on what has already been achieved); and mapping the relevant stakeholders who should be involved moving forward.

Figure 2: Summary of the Working Groups Meetings

	Healthy Workplace	Access to Health Services	Healthy Diet/Salt Reduction	Information, Communication and Advocacy	Physical Activity
Priority Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– SHAPE: <u>S</u>creening, <u>H</u>ealthy weight, <u>A</u>bstain from smoking, <u>P</u>hysical activity, <u>E</u>at healthy</li> <li>– Centralization of information</li> <li>– Tiered approach for implementation</li> <li>– Mapping of stakeholders and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Priority conditions and/or risk factors, including the main risk factors for CVD (hypertension, diabetes and high cholesterol) and cervical cancer</li> <li>– Concrete actions needed to create the conditions for expanded access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Education (e.g. children, responsible marketing, food labels)</li> <li>– Research (e.g. salt intake levels, major salt sources, children's diets)</li> <li>– Product Reformulation (e.g. affordability, barriers to consumer uptake)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Communications strategy including: social marketing, media advocacy, policy change and coordinated action of PF members</li> <li>– Communications campaign on the 'basics' (diet, physical activity) and available resources and tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Scale and support the Ciclovias Initiative</li> <li>– Promote the Active City/Healthy City prize</li> <li>– Develop a strategy to promote physical activity on a daily basis</li> </ul>
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Collect resources, tools, and best practice examples</li> <li>– Discuss collected materials and implementation strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Conduct a gap analysis to identify needs on the issue of access to health services</li> <li>– Identify successful practices</li> <li>– Document the pilot projects and support them</li> <li>– Generate concrete recommendations to scaling up access to health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identify missing stakeholders (Jan)</li> <li>– Divide into 3 sub-groups and identify chairs (Jan)</li> <li>– Complete brainstorm, decide on 1 objective per group, outline specific actions, and develop a work plan (Jan-March)</li> <li>– Re-convene virtually as a large group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Exchange information</li> <li>– Define key elements of communication strategy and advocacy calendar</li> <li>– Identify sub-groups</li> <li>– Establish timeline</li> <li>– Set up electronic information sharing platform</li> <li>– Circulate member contact details</li> <li>– Coordinate with WHO and NCD Net</li> <li>– Identify missing stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop a pre-amble statement outlining the group's focus</li> <li>– Map activities/ programs/ platforms that are currently working on physical activity</li> </ul>

### A Challenging Opportunity

The Partners Forum represents a new way of doing business – a 21<sup>st</sup> Century solution to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century problem. Only in the past decade have multi-sector partnerships emerged in the field of health, so the Partners Forum will undoubtedly face a few challenges. For example, the members must learn to set aside sectoral differences, stereotypes and misconceptions to work on shared objectives. *“Why are we working together? We all have comparative advantages. To have more impact, be less fragmented... we need to work on where we agree and set aside where we disagree.”* said James Hospedales, Coordinator Prevention & Control of Chronic Diseases, PAHO/WHO. In addition, the coalition understands that it needs to quickly identify low-hanging fruit and specific, tangible actions in order to maintain momentum and continue to build enthusiasm.

Acknowledging the hard work ahead, participants at the launch were eager to roll up their sleeves and begin to scale the fight against chronic disease. The opportunities to level the playing field through regulation, harness the power of markets with an informed consumer base, and develop and reformulate products and services, are enormous. Upon closing, Winston Churchill was quoted: *“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”*

With the launch of the Partners Forum, PAHO called on organizations from all sectors to sign the [Commitment to Action](#) to *“mitigate the growing chronic disease health burden and ... combine our resources, competencies, social capital, and reach through innovative collaborations to change the way we live.”* The Partners Forum working groups will begin the process of realizing this vision in 2010. They are currently accepting additional members and welcoming expertise and resources (financial and in-kind) as they make critical decisions on how to focus their efforts.

### **Contact**

To learn more please contact the Secretariat for **The Partners Forum for Action on Chronic Disease** at [info@partnersforum.org](mailto:info@partnersforum.org)

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