



Verification of measles and rubella elimination in the Americas

PAHO member countries collectively set the years 2000 and 2010 as target dates for eliminating endemic measles and rubella/congenital rubella syndrome (CRS), respectively, from the Western Hemisphere. Thanks to the successful implementation of measles elimination strategies, the countries interrupted endemic measles transmission in 2002 and have made tremendous progress toward the elimination of rubella and CRS.

In 2007, PAHO member countries agreed to begin documenting and verifying the interruption of endemic transmission of measles and rubella in the Americas. To ensure a standardized approach for this process, PAHO developed a regional plan of action to guide countries and their national commissions as they prepare and consolidate evidence on elimination.

Progress to date

- An International Expert Committee was formed, and 24 national or subregional commissions were established.
- Twenty of the commissions have submitted final elimination reports for review by PAHO and for comment by the International Expert Committee.
- The remaining countries (Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Haiti, and Peru) will submit their reports by the end of June 2012, or after the countries confirm that measles transmission has been interrupted by completing active/retrospective searches, implementing outbreak response vaccination, and/or implementing a successful vaccination campaign to close immunity gaps.
- After careful analysis of the reports submitted by the national commissions, the International Expert Committee concluded that transmission of endemic measles and rubella virus has been interrupted in the Americas. However, the committee asked countries that reported sustained measles outbreaks in 2011 to provide evidence that transmission did not extend over a period of 12 months or more. For rubella, countries with unknown source cases identified through the documentation process will need to conduct careful investigations to ensure that the cases are not due to endemic circulation.
- A progress report on elimination will be considered by the PAHO Executive Committee in June 2012 for presentation to the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference in September 2012.
- To maintain elimination, the International Expert Committee recommends that countries carry out active surveillance and maintain high population immunity through vaccination.
- The estimated cost of implementing the regional plan to maintain elimination of measles, rubella and CRS is US\$1.5 million.