



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

December 2015

31st Caribbean EPI Managers' Meeting

Karen Lewis-Bell, PAHO-Jamaica; Hannah Kurtis, Cara Janusz-PAHO-Washington, DC

Location	Georgetown, Guyana
Dates	17-19 November, 2015
Participants	73 participants including National EPI Managers from 24 countries of the English, Dutch and French Speaking Caribbean and partners/ advisors from CARICOM, the Caribbean Public Health Agency and PAHO.
Purpose	The overall objective was to analyze achievements in Immunization in the Caribbean for 2015 and plan activities for 2016 while sharing country experiences on their immunization program. Specific focus was placed on the Regional Immunization Action Plan (RIAP) to guide achievements of the Global Vaccine Action Plan, maintaining Measles, Rubella, and CRS elimination in the Region as well as the requirements for the Polio Eradication and End-game Strategic Plan including introduction of IPV in the routine immunization schedule of each country, polio containment and the switch from tOPV to bOPV.

The meeting was officially opened by the Honorable Dr. George Norton, Minister of Public Health, Guyana who welcomed all participants to Guyana and lauded the dedication of health care workers in the field of immunization. Their work under sometimes challenging conditions has helped to ensure that the Caribbean and indeed the Americas has been able to sustain the elimination and control of vaccine preventable diseases through consistent high vaccination coverage and quality surveillance.



Participants of the 31st Caribbean EPI Managers' Meeting 17-19 November 2015, Georgetown, Guyana.

The format of the meeting involved technical updates on various disease topics and programmatic areas in immunization by PAHO/WHO advisors and other technical experts, as well as the sharing of country experiences in disease surveillance, surveys/campaigns conducted during the year, vaccine introduction, ESAVI investigations, cold chain management etc. The EPI managers were divided in groups to facilitate discussions on their overall achievements with their Plans of Action for 2015 and to finalize their plans for 2016 with input from their peers.

Countries were urged to align their EPI strategies and targets to the RIAP, ensure high, sustained and homogenous coverage above 95% for all antigens to protect against the risk of importations and to be alert for the Zika virus through strengthened fever and rash surveillance.



International Expert Committee Meets in Brazil to Discuss Measles Elimination in the Region of the Americas

Pamela Bravo, Desiree Pasto, Gloria Rey – PAHO, Washington, DC

Location	Brasilia, Brazil
Dates	2 December 2015
Participants	Members of the International Expert Committee for Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Americas (IEC), authorities from Brazil's Ministry of Health, health authorities from the states of Pernambuco and Ceara, as well as immunization advisors from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) participated in the meeting.
Purpose	The objectives of the meeting were: 1. To review the evidence that verifies the interruption of endemic measles virus circulation in Brazil. 2. To discuss the evidence outlined in the country elimination report (period of 2012-2015), which provides an update of the main documentation and verification components. 3. To discuss the challenges and commitments necessary to sustain measles and rubella elimination in Brazil.

During the meeting, health authorities from the state of Ceará presented on the epidemiological situation of the measles outbreak that lasted for 20 months during the time period of 2013-2015. They also presented compelling evidence indicating that the outbreak had finally been interrupted, meeting PAHO's verification criteria (laboratory, surveillance and vaccination components).

The International Expert Committee (IEC) was satisfied with the evidence provided and agreed with the federal and state health authorities on the measles outbreak finally being interrupted.

Nevertheless, it is important that Brazil sustain these efforts and that there are no new cases of endemic measles for a period of one year following the last endemic measles case, confirmed on 6 July 2015.

To this end, the IEC remains confident that Brazil will succeed and that after the one-year period, PAHO will be able to declare the Americas as free of measles during next year's Directing Council (September 2016).



IEC Members and participants at the IEC Meeting in Brasilia, Brazil. Photo credit: Samia Abdul Samad.



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

Workshop for the Effective Management of Imported Measles and Rubella Cases in the Americas

Desiree Pastor, Gloria Rey Benito – PAHO, Washington, DC

Location	Bogota, Colombia
Dates	29-30 October 2015
Participants	122 Ministry of Health officials from the national and subnational levels attended the workshop. Officials from the immunization and epidemiological surveillance programs of the 32 departments and 4 districts of the country also attended the meeting. PAHO, the Colombian Ministry of Health and Colombia's National Institute of Health conducted the workshop.
Purpose	The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the national capacity for measles, rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS) surveillance in Colombia, to effectively respond to imported measles or rubella cases. This was a joint effort by the immunization and epidemiological surveillance programs and Colombia's Public Health Laboratory Network.

The workshop also included the participation of health officials from the National Police and from other public entities that enforce the monitoring of diseases that must be declared, such as measles, rubella and CRS.

Between 2011 and 2015, measles cases imported from other regions of the world have drastically increased, directly causing 4,357 imported cases during this period.

In the Americas, the most affected countries during that period were Canada, Brazil, Ecuador and the United States.

During the two-day workshop, knowledge of the global and regional measles, rubella, and CRS situation was shared to highlight the importance of good vaccination coverage and the strict surveillance of suspected cases to prevent spreading of the virus by those imported cases originating from other regions of the world.

Finally, 122 officials were trained to effectively manage imported measles cases through lectures, group work with case studies from the Region and simulation exercises for the management of these outbreaks.



*Participants at the Workshop for the Effective Management of Imported Measles and Rubella Cases in Bogota, Colombia, held on 29-30 October 2015.
Photo credit: Desiree Pastor, PAHO-Washington, DC.*



Experiences with Integrated Training for the Analysis of Vaccination and Deworming Coverage

Martha Velandia, Marcela Contreras, Hannah Kurtis, Ana Luciañez and Laura Catalá (PAHO/WHO) and Ana Morice (International Consultant)

PAHO's Immunization Unit and Neglected Diseases Unit have developed a Toolkit for Monitoring the Coverage of Integrated Public Health Interventions, which includes modules on topics including the analysis of administrative coverage, rapid coverage monitoring and the evaluation of data quality, among others. The Toolkit aims to facilitate the analysis and monitoring of vaccination and deworming coverage at all levels of national health systems, ultimately improving the health of the population less than 15 years of age.

During 2015, four Toolkit training workshops were carried out, including three national workshops in Mexico (120 participants), Honduras (70 participants) and El Salvador (30 participants), and a regional workshop in Roatán, Honduras. In this latter workshop, in addition to the host country, there were participants from Colombia (2), the Dominican Republic (2), Mexico (2), Nicaragua (1) and Paraguay (2).

In addition to presentations and group work, the workshops in El Salvador and Roatán also included field work during which participants conducted rapid coverage monitoring in schools and communities and data quality analysis; these experiences were particularly well-received.

One benefit of the Toolkit is that its modular design permits training workshops to be adapted to specific national objectives. In Mexico and Honduras, the workshops focused on strengthening participants' knowledge of vaccination data analysis, whereas the El Salvador and Roatán workshops counted on participants from both the EPI and neglected disease programs and therefore covered methodologies applicable to both immunization and deworming coverage monitoring. Following each workshop, the training materials were validated and adjusted, based on participant feedback.

The integrated workshops provided a unique opportunity to facilitate communication and cooperation between programs. Participants shared their experiences and committed to future integrated efforts to take advantage of each other's strengths and lessons learned. Participants agreed that similar trainings now need to be extended to the local level.



EVM Assessment in Honduras

Nora Lucia Rodriguez, PAHO/AMRO-Washington, DC

Location	Honduras
Dates	27 Aug — 11 Sep 2015
Participants	National health workers from the Ministry of Health-Honduras and international evaluators from Ministry of Health of Nicaragua, Paraguay and from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) participated in the Effective Vaccine Management (EVM) assessment.
Purpose	The purpose of the evaluation was to analyze Honduras's cold chain, vaccine supply chain and vaccine management operations.

During the evaluation, 42 randomly-selected storage and health facilities were visited and their records were assessed from 1 January 31 December 2014. The 42 sites included 7 of the 20 Health Sanitary Regions at the sub-national level, 16 vaccine stores from the lower distribution level and 18 service delivery points; furthermore, the evaluation included the National Vaccine Store (ANB).

A total of seven teams were responsible for data collection. Each team included one international assessor and two to three national health workers. Before initiating the evaluation, a review of the EVM tools and methodology was carried out in order to standardize the knowledge and the management of 1) the EVM tool and 2) the structured questionnaires.

In its first EVM assessment, Honduras obtained an overall average score of 97%, a very significant achievement considering that 80% is the minimum score established by EVM. This included the score reached for the 4 levels of the supply chain that is in place in the country and the 9 evaluated EVM criteria. With 97% as the average score achieved at the time of the assessment, Honduras is ranked first among the top 104 EVM assessments performed worldwide since 2009. The primary level scored 98%, the sub-national level scored 96%, the lowest distribution level scored 97% and the service delivery level scored 98%.

Regional Polio Meeting: Next Steps for Certification and Containment

Cristina Pedreira, Gloria Rey Benito and Elizabeth Thrush, PAHO - Washington, DC

Location	Brasilia, Brazil
Dates	30 November – 1 December 2015
Participants	A total of 72 people participated in the meeting from 24 countries in the Region. Participants included: • 20 National Certification Committees (NCCs) • 24 National Poliovirus Containment Coordinators (NPCCs) • 4 members of the Regional Certification Commission (RCC) on the Polio Endgame Representatives from PAHO, WHO, CDC, and the Ministry of Health, Brazil.
Purpose	1. Update NCCs on their roles and responsibilities for the polio eradication endgame. 2. Update NPCCs on their roles and responsibilities with the Regional Plan for Containment of Poliovirus in the Americas, and present the model for the Phase 1 Containment Report.



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

Joaquin Molina, PAHO Representative in Brazil, and José Agenor Alvares da Silva, Vice Minister of Health of Brazil, welcomed the participants to the meeting, and Arlene King, RCC Chair and Cristina Pedreira, Immunization Advisor, PAHO, reviewed the objectives of the meeting and expected outcomes.

The two main topics for this meeting were **(1)** the role and expectations of the RCC and NCCs and **(2)** the Regional Poliovirus Containment Plan, including the software application for the GAP III laboratory survey and the model for the Phase 1 Containment Report.



*Participants at the Regional Polio Meeting held on 30 November- 1 December in Brasilia, Brazil.
Photo Credit: Liz Thrush*

Additional topics were covered at this meeting to give the NCCs and the NPCCs a broad overview of the current progress and the next steps for the polio eradication endgame plan.

These topics included:

- Global polio eradication progress
- Regional update on the implementation of the polio eradication endgame plan
- Guidelines for monitoring the switch from tOPV to bOPV
- Protocol for notification, risk assessment, and response following detection of type 2 poliovirus after the Switch
- Regional dashboards to follow national and regional progress on the 1) switch and the 2) polio endgame
- Available documents and resources on the PAHO polio webpage: www.paho.org/polio

Some of the main recommendations of the meeting were:

- Strengthening AFP surveillance is essential in preparing for the switch due to the risk of the emergence of cVDPV2 in the period post -Switch.
- Countries should update their protocols to detect and respond to polio outbreaks during the final phase of the polio eradication endgame.
- In preparation for the switch, countries should analyze vaccination coverage and intensify immunization activities with in areas with low tOPV coverage.
- Countries should intensify preparation efforts for the switch from tOPV to bOPV to ensure a safe switch and comply with the established timelines.



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
AMERICAS

(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

NCCs should submit the revision and validation of the wild poliovirus containment report to the Ministry of Health in January 2016 (report should be prepared by the national poliovirus containment coordinator).