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(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

December 2016

32nd Caribbean EPI Managers Meeting

Karen Lewis Bell, Cara Janusz, Karen Pereira

Location	St. George's, Grenada
Dates	28-30 November 2016
Participants	EPI managers, as well as other public health professionals from the Ministries of Health for the Caribbean countries, PAHO representatives from Comprehensive Family Immunization and PAHO country representatives. The meeting aimed to review the status of the EPI program in the Caribbean specifically, with a focus on the following objectives: • Update information on topics related to immunization programs • Develop country action plans to achieve goals set for 2017 • Discuss the sustainability of measles/rubella/congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) elimination in the region • Discuss implementation of the switch from tOPV to bOPV as well as polio virus containment • Discuss the status of surveillance and management of vaccine preventable diseases in the time of Zika • Assess strategies for new vaccine introduction in countries
Purpose	

The overall goal of the meeting was to analyze achievements from 2016, as well as plan country activities for 2017. Regional achievements included measles elimination and the switch from tOPV to bOPV. In response to these achievements, newly risen challenges, such as strengthening acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) surveillance as part of polio eradication endgame and the sustainability of measles/rubella/CRS elimination, were also discussed. In planning for country activities in 2017, workshops were held to develop country action plans, plan for new vaccine introduction, and review the Joint Reporting Form (JRF).



Experts presented updated information on a variety of topics, including fever/rash surveillance in the time of Zika, communication strategies for HPV, and budgeting for vaccines procured through the Revolving Fund. Country representatives subsequently shared experiences from their respective immunization programs. With a motto of “Go for the Gold” and featuring Jamaican Olympian Usain Bolt, Vaccination Week in the Americas (VWA) was highlighted by many countries, with an emphasis on the concurrent timing with the successful switch from tOPV to bOPV. Even with the continued success of the EPI, country managers were reminded to not remain complacent and focus on a vision for even stronger immunization programs for the future.



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

Regional Immunization Action Plan Workshop

Cuauhtemoc Ruiz, Martha Velandia, Carmelita Tirso, Cara Janusz and Marcela Contreras, PAHO Washington, DC; Karen Lewis-Bell, PAHO-Jamaica

Location	St. George's, Grenada
Dates	2 December 2016
Participants	Cuauhtemoc Ruiz, Karen Lewis-Bell, Martha Velandia, Carmelita Tirso, Cara Janusz and Marcela Contreras from the Pan American Health Organization 29 representatives from the Caribbean countries' Expanded Programs on Immunization. • To review as a group the process of filling out the questions and/or indicators of the JRF, as well as the data validation process. • To check the quality of the data submitted in the 2016 JRF • To review the status of the indicators for the GVAP and RIAP reports. • To discuss with the EPI managers the format and the existing indicators in the JRF in order to better understand the indicators and the completion of the forms.
Purpose	

The Regional Immunization Action Plan (RIAP) of the Region of the Americas was approved during the 54th Directing Council in September 2015 and it is immunization's map for 2016-2020. The RIAP provides Member States with the main principles, strategic lines of Action, objectives and indicators that will align the Region of the Americas with the Global Vaccine Action Plan. The RIAP also encourages countries to have an active role in reaching universal health coverage, as well as establishing activities to identify and approach inequities with the goal of ensuring that populations are protected against vaccine-preventable diseases.



Capturing the workshop on the Regional Immunization Action Plan in St. George, Grenada, November 2016. Credit: Marcela Contreras, PAHO.

According to the framework for monitoring RIAP objectives and goals, a workshop was conducted for the subregion of the Caribbean countries, where 29 representatives from the Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI) participated. The RIAP principles, objectives and indicators were reviewed during this workshop and the importance of fulfilling these objectives and current challenges was underlined. The methodology for RIAP/GVAP accountability and monitoring was reviewed, where the Joint Reporting Form (JRF) serves as the main source of information for reporting the indicators considered in both Plans of Action. Consequently, the importance of the JRF's data quality was emphasized, considering the current challenges faced at the national and regional levels.



Capturing the workshop on the Regional Immunization Action Plan in St. George, Grenada, November 2016. Credit: Marcela Contreras, PAHO.

This meeting aimed at facilitating continued collaboration between PAHO and country offices,



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

to minimize the reporting burden on countries while ensuring that all relevant data to monitor immunization systems and vaccine-preventable diseases is systematically collected and results in having consistent data at those levels

The workshop was organized around two different sessions, which permitted to maintain high involvement of all participants and a very positive dynamic:

1. One traditional session of presentations focusing on highlighting the importance of the RIAP and GVAP, global and regional indicators, and opportunities as reported in the JRF and on how they respond to the monitoring needs of the GVAP and RIAP.
2. A last session was dedicated to group brainstorming to review the process of filling the forms, and to run data validation rules to check the consistency and coherence of the data reported. The countries conducted a review of their own JRF so they can note the data quality of the JRF data. Simultaneously, the representatives of the countries provided feedback on how to improve the JRF in order to diminish the risk of reporting inconsistent or incoherent data.



*Capturing the workshop on the Regional Immunization Action Plan in St. George, Grenada, November 2016.
Credit: Marcela Contreras, PAHO.*



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Credit: Marcela Contreras, PAHO.*



Implementation of Tools to Monitor and Analyze the Data Quality of Vaccination Coverage

Martha Velandia, Carmelita Pacis Tirso and Marcela Contreras, PAHO-Washington, DC

Location	Santa Cruz, Chile
Dates	7 – 9 November 2016
Participants	• Martha Velandia, Carmelita Pacis and Marcela Contreras from the Pan American Health Organization • Samia Samad, International Consultant • Antonia Teixeira from Brazil's Ministry of Health • 70 participants representing the National Immunization and Statistics Programs from the national and subnational levels
Purpose	• Train the National Immunization Program team and the network of statisticians from the Regional Secretariat from the Ministry of Health and Health Services in the country to manage the concepts and tools to monitor vaccination coverage. • Apply steps for rapid coverage monitoring through door-to-door visits. • Learn the concepts and tools utilized to analyze the data quality of Vaccination coverage. • Identify the actions to improve vaccination coverage monitoring tools in Chile.

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 tools can be applied in an integrated way or individually, facilitating coverage analysis and monitoring for any health program.

PAHO, together with the Department of Immunization and Vaccines and the Department of Statistics within Chile's Ministry of Health, developed a training workshop, in which 70 representatives from the National Immunization Program and the network of statisticians from the Regional Secretariat of the Ministry of Health, health services and national level participated. The main objective of this training was to provide concepts and tools to monitor and analyze the vaccination coverage exposed in the toolkit.

During the training workshop, participants used a combined methodology with conceptual presentations, working groups and field visits to seven municipalities, where the door-to-door rapid coverage monitoring tools could be applied and data quality evaluations among health establishments could be done. The training was very well received by the participants, especially the field exercise according to the course evaluation and the progress reached during this evaluation.



Participants from the workshop to implement tools to monitor and analyze vaccination coverage in Santa Cruz, Chile, November 2016. Credit: Carmelita Tirso. PAHO.



Strengthening Peruvian Immunization Records through Mobile Data Collection Using the ODK App

Marcela Lazo Escalante¹, Maria Valderrama Calderón¹, José Perez Lu¹, Jhon Garcia Ruiz¹, Jorge Ruiz Cabrejos², Fabiana Michel³, Patricia Garcia Funegra¹

¹ Ministry of Health, Peru; ² Cayetano Heredia University; ³ PanAmerican health Organization

In Peru, traditional vaccination records are registered on paper forms before being entered into databases. This represents a challenge to obtaining timely immunization information. Moreover, the status of yellow fever vaccination coverage in population over 2 years old is unknown.



Mobile phone for yellow fever vaccination registries. The blue card is the DNI. Credit: Ministry of Health, Peru.

Peru's Ministry of Health, Junin's regional government, as well as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), joined efforts to improve the quality of vaccination records in the campaign against yellow fever, oriented to protect susceptible populations in the provinces of Chanchamayo and Satipo, where an outbreak had occurred, using an application (app) in Open Data Kit (ODK) on Android mobile devices running Android OS 1.6 or newer. Once installed, a form was loaded.

In Peru, every person has a national identification card (DNI) that includes their name, date of birth, gender, address and bar coding. The cellular app automatically recorded the vaccination date and GPS location and scanned the DNI bar code for the remaining data. The vaccine batch expiration date and health network information was also recorded. If the person being vaccinated did not have a DNI on hand, it was also possible to register the information using a questionnaire included in the app.

The data was not only recorded on each mobile, but also submitted automatically to an online server using the internet. If locations did not have internet connectivity, the recorded data was sent when an internet access point was available. A total of 650 health workers in 4 health networks were trained to use the device. The vaccination campaign was performed door-to-door in urban and rural areas.

More than 180,000 people in the region were vaccinated and all vaccinations were registered using the mobile and app, reaching 87% of coverage in the area. Most importantly, we had real-time data and immediate reports. Health workers reported that "cell phones and the app are simple to handle" and the "DNI scan is more practical since it contains all of the person's data" accepted the system very well.



6th Meeting of the Regional Certification Commission (RCC) for the Polio Endgame

Gloria Rey-Benito, Andrea Villalobos, Liz Thrush, Cristina Pedreira*

Location	Bogotá, Colombia
Dates	5-6 December 2016
Participants	Participants at this meeting included RCC members, the World Health Organization (WHO), US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and PAHO (FGL/IM) staff. The objectives of the 5th meeting were to: 1. Review the advances of the country reports for the containment of wild poliovirus (WPV), vaccine-derived polio virus (VDPV) and Sabin type 2; and 2. Review the final country reports on the supervision of the switch from the trivalent oral polio vaccine (tOPV) to the bivalent vaccine (bOPV).
Purpose	

17 of the 23 expected reports on the containment of WPV, VDPV and Sabin2 were reviewed during the meeting.

Reports were shared with the RCC members prior to the meeting. The analysis of the reports included the verification of the content and the clarity of the information requested in the model report template.

As of December 2016, the RCC had received at least one report of 23 expected reports of poliovirus containment, Phase I of GAP III, corresponding to 22 countries and one sub-regional report for the Caribbean (includes 13 countries, 6 UK territories and 3 associate member states).



Participants at the 6th Meeting of the Regional Certification Commission (RCC) for the Polio Endgame in Colombia, December 2016. Credit: Yanka Epstein, PAHO.

The main outcome of the 17 reports reviewed was as follows:

- **Infectious material of WPV2/VDPV2:** thirteen reports approved without modifications; four reports not approved.
- **Infectious material of Sabin2:** thirteen reports approved without modifications; four reports not approved.
- **Potentially infectious WPV2/VDPV2 material:** nine countries approved without modifications; one country approved with modifications and seven countries not approved.
- **Potentially infectious Sabin2 material:** seventeen countries not approved.

Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Mexico and USA have notified interest in designating 20 Poliovirus Essential Facilities (PEF).



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

The RCC noted significant improvements in the quality of containment reports. The RCC also recognizes that the containment process is a challenge for all member states and that additional efforts are needed to meet all requirements defined in the GAP III.

PAHO will continue working with the countries of the Region of the Americas to finalize Phase I of GAPIII, as well as facilitating Phase II as has been defined by the Containment Certification Scheme (CCS) and GAPIII.

Summary of the Revision of the Country Switch Reports

36 countries in the Americas participated in the globally synchronized switch from tOPV to bOPV in April 2016. All countries did an independent monitoring of the switch in the two-week period following their national switch date and continued supervision of the switch in 100% of the warehouses and vaccination service points in the three months following the switch.

The RCC recognizes the extraordinary effort made by countries to complete the switch. In this meeting, the RCC reviewed 12 reports where additional information was required. By 6 December 2016, the RCC approved 32/36 switch reports. Four country reports are pending complementary information.



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles



(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)

The Switch in the Americas: a Video-Documentary

Cuauhtémoc Ruiz Matus, Cristina Pedreira, Gloria Rey-Benito, Elizabeth Thrush, Lauren Vulcanovic, Harold Ruiz

In 2016, 155 countries and territories from around the world made history in a coordinated global health effort that took us one step closer to achieving polio eradication.

During a two-week time period in April, the health sector swapped out one type of polio vaccine for another, in what is known as “the switch.” Since this was a monumental event in global health history, PAHO/WHO created a documentary video that will contribute to the polio legacy in the Americas. This video explains the fundamentals of why the world embarked on the switch journey, and how the countries in the Americas planned, implemented, and supervised this process.



English: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPL9XQNH9h4>
Spanish: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9AaeQrWmbU>

QUOTES:

“The primary heroes of this effort are the countries, the immunization programs in the countries, and the thousands of health workers, that every day go out to look for children that are missing the vaccine or that we need to ensure have the vaccine.”

– Cuauhtémoc Ruiz Matus, Immunization Unit Chief, PAHO

“I think that the Switch was a mile stone for global public health. There has not been any similar experience in public health history. One moment where 155 countries unite and in a coordinated and synchronized manner, withdrew one vaccine, and started to use another.”

– Cristina Pedreira, Regional Advisor on Immunization, PAHO

“If we want to guarantee a world free of polio ... we must ensure that the containment of poliovirus really is indeed achievable”.

– Gloria Rey, Regional Advisor FGL/IM, VPD Laboratory Network

“We are writing the final chapter of polio history, and this is a chance that happens only once, I believe, in a lifetime.”

– Patricia Arce Guzman, Sub-secretary Bogotá, Colombia



PAHO Immunization GIN Articles

(GLOBAL IMMUNIZATION NEWSLETTER)



4th Regional Polio Meeting: Polio Eradication and Endgame Progress

Cristina Pedreira, Gloria Rey-Benito, Liz Thrush, Andrea Villalobos

Location	Bogotá, Colombia
Dates	7 -8 December 2016
Participants	Representatives from 26 countries of the Region, members of the Regional Commission for the Certification of the Final Phase of Polio Eradication in the Region of the Americas (RCC), as well as representatives of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).. The objectives of the 4th regional polio meeting were to: 1. Review progress on the implementation of the Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan. 2. Review the current status of IPV supply and the recommendations to address the limited supply or possible stock outs. 3. Review progress and identify challenges for the containment of poliovirus in laboratories. 4. Strengthen the capacity of countries to develop a response plan for the detection of poliovirus and polio outbreaks, as well as identify the measures to be implemented immediately, to be prepared for a rapid and effective response.
Purpose	

During the first day, all meeting participants received updates and had time to discuss the following topics:

- Global and regional implementation of the Polio Eradication and Endgame Plan
- Status of the Regional Polio Laboratory Network
- Environmental surveillance of poliovirus in Mexico and Haiti
- Results of a survey on the experience of IPV introduction and the switch in the Americas
- Status of the current global and regional IPV supply situation and TAG recommendations on how to address the limited supply or possible stock outs.
- Argentina's experience on the detection and investigation of an iVDPV2 case.



Participants at the 4th Regional Polio Meeting: Polio Eradication and Endgame Progress in Colombia, December 2016. Credit: Catalina Cardenas, PAHO-Colombia.

On the second day, participants split into a containment group or polio outbreak response groups:

- The containment group discussed the next steps for completing Phase 1 of GAPIII, including challenges that need to be overcome.
- The outbreak response group split into smaller working groups where they reviewed the advances on the elaboration of their national plans.

The final report with a summary of the topics discussed with final conclusions and recommendations will be circulated to all PAHO countries soon.