PAHO Forward

An organization-wide approach to strengthen efficiency, transparency, and accountability

15 September 2023

On 31 January 2023, during my inaugural address, I unveiled a vision for our Organization built upon five pillars to guide us over the next five years. The fifth pillar – Strengthening the capacity of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to support Member States – is aimed at increasing efficiency, transparency, and accountability (ETA), building on the progress made by the Organization, harnessing innovation, and adopting modern tools and practices. **PAHO Forward** is an organization-wide approach to guide the implementation of ETA initiatives in a collaborative and coordinated manner. Up-to-date, streamlined, and strengthened management policies, processes, and systems are essential for PAHO to expand its relevance, technical expertise, and leadership in the Region of the Americas and globally.

As I reflect on these first months in my role as Director of PAHO, I take pride in the strides our Organization has made in terms of ETA over the years. This progress has significantly contributed to enhancing the health and well-being of the people of the Americas. As we embark on the next phase with **PAHO Forward**, my commitment is to build upon these successes and propel PAHO to the forefront of public health in the post-COVID-19 era within our Region.

Countries in the Americas face a complex public health landscape, characterized by significant inequities both between and within countries, as well as an accelerated demographic transition in Latin America and the Caribbean. PAHO is an essential organization for the health, and therefore the development, of the Americas.

By strengthening its country focus, PAHO can help countries to overcome persistent inequities, build health systems that can respond to emerging threats, recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, and achieve universal health. It has a unique capacity to deliver high-quality technical cooperation, maintaining a strong country presence, and being strategically positioned to address Member States’ needs and priorities.

To fulfill our mission effectively, PAHO must continue to innovate and ensure its internal processes and management systems integrate ETA measures. We must collectively nurture a culture of creativity, agility, and adaptability, while ensuring quality, responsiveness, timeliness, and gender equity in our Organization. Your participation, creativity, and ownership of these initiatives are essential for sustainable success.

Please join me on this journey to strengthen our organizational ETA. **PAHO Forward** can only be successful if we move forward together.

Dr. Jarbas Barbosa da Silva, Jr.
Director
Pan American Health Organization
PAHO Forward

Efficiency, transparency, and accountability

Overview

**PAHO Forward** focuses on modernizing, innovating, and streamlining policies, processes, and systems to strengthen internal management, controls, and decision-making. It fosters a culture of efficiency, transparency, and accountability (ETA) to enhance the effectiveness of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) across all levels. Through streamlined processes, technology utilization, advanced data analyses, and open communication, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (PASB) will become better equipped to address the evolving public health challenges of Member States.

Key actions to underpin ETA have already been implemented. In addition to optimizing PASB’s organizational structure, more authority has been decentralized to country representatives. To increase transparency, the Bureau has published the external independent evaluation of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue to publish reports of all external evaluations. PAHO internal audit reports have also been made available to Member States.

**PAHO Forward** is guided by PAHO’s Strategic Plan 2020–2025 with emphasis on Outcome 27: Leadership and governance, and Outcome 28: Management and administration. With this focus, PASB can become more agile and responsive through better application of its leadership, management, and administration. Through innovative management processes, **PAHO Forward** can contribute to placing health at the heart of the Region’s economic recovery and in policies to address the poverty, inequities, and inequalities that have deepened in recent years.

Staffing and talent management are essential components of **PAHO Forward**. PASB must cultivate an engaged, empowered, and diverse workforce equipped with the necessary skills and competencies within an increasingly complex public health landscape. Effective and innovative human resources management practices and processes are integral to achieving PAHO’s mission.

Information technology and communication systems also play a critical role in enhancing operational efficiencies and promoting transparency within PASB. They will help PASB leverage technologies, data management systems, and information-sharing platforms to streamline processes, facilitate evidence-based decisions and actions, and improve overall organizational performance.

**PAHO Forward** enables PASB to work with countries addressing specific situations, facing crises, or managing risks (e.g., social and economic challenges; social unrest; violence; disease outbreaks; climate change challenges; and gender and ethnic inequality, particularly affecting populations living in vulnerability), that can disrupt the delivery of technical cooperation at the national, subregional, and regional levels. During a crisis, the Organization must quickly assess the situation and determine the required level of support and additional resources needed. Resources must be strategically allocated to provide the required support and address the unique needs of countries, ensuring an effective response throughout the duration of the crisis. The importance of such technical cooperation was made more than evident in the COVID-19 pandemic response.

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PAHO Forward will strengthen PASB’s capacity to deliver technical cooperation to drive public health impact and sustainability for countries and peoples we serve.

The drive for innovation

Continuous improvement of PASB’s management propels the Organization onto a transformative journey of modernization and innovation. By integrating these elements into its initiatives, PASB can adapt to the changing health landscape and maximize its impact on public health in the Americas.

Technological advances play a key role in PASB’s modernization. At the country level, digital platforms and mobile applications are being improved and developed to enhance real-time information delivery, remote consultations, and health promotion campaigns, and to broaden access to healthcare services. PASB’s utilization of cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence and data analytics increases organizational results and impact.

Through PAHO Forward, innovation and evidence-based solutions will be integrated into PASB’s change management approach and decision-making processes. Data-driven decision-making and analytics will inform PASB policies and allocate resources effectively.

By embracing emerging technologies, fostering a culture of creativity, being solution-oriented, and leveraging data-driven insights, the Organization can strengthen its position as a trailblazer in public health throughout the Americas.

Key definitions

The PASB initiatives for ETA promote a shared understanding and guidance for commitment to improve effectiveness across the Organization. These initiatives are vital for effective management, governance, and organizational performance. Efficiency optimizes resources utilization; transparency fosters openness and disclosure; and accountability promotes responsibility and answerability for actions, resources, and results.

- Efficiency is understood as the ability to accomplish desired outcomes or goals with optimal use of resources, thereby maximizing productivity and minimizing waste. It involves improving processes, systems, and practices to achieve better results, enhance performance, and utilize resources effectively.

- Transparency is the open and accessible sharing of information, processes, decisions, and actions. Transparency involves providing clear and comprehensive information to stakeholders, including the public, about the Organization’s activities, policies, and practices. It entails the disclosure of conflicts of interest, financial transactions, and decision-making processes to ensure accountability. Transparency fosters trust, enables informed decision-making, and encourages meaningful engagement with stakeholders.

- Accountability refers to the responsibility of individuals and organizations to respond for their actions, decisions, and the resulting outcomes. Accountability involves ensuring that processes and resources are used effectively, efficiently, and ethically to achieve desired goals and objectives. Overall, accountability emphasizes the principles of transparency, integrity, and responsibility, and the commitment to delivering on the Organization’s mandate to protect and promote health in the Region.

PAHO Forward - An organization-wide approach to strengthen efficiency, transparency, and accountability
Purpose

To strengthen PASB’s capacity to effectively address evolving priorities in technical cooperation by promoting the continuous modernization of the Bureau’s management practices and enhance ETA with an engaged workforce that performs at consistently high levels and drives innovation, **PAHO Forward** will frame the PASB’s actions toward meaningful and measurable outcomes and results.

Specific objectives

1. Strengthen PASB’s ETA.
2. Bolster PASB’s visibility, country focus, and capacity to deliver technical cooperation.
3. Enhance PASB human resources performance and drive innovation to move the Organization forward.

1. Strengthen PASB’s efficiency, transparency, and accountability

**PAHO Forward** aims to strengthen internal processes to increase the PASB’s ETA. This will integrate several actions across the Organization, including but not limited to the following examples, some of which have already been initiated.

- Establish key performance indicators for different processes, providing a focus for strategic and operational improvement and creating the basis for evidence-based decision-making.
- Revise policies and processes to better streamline and optimize the use of the PASB Management Information System for increased efficiency, including elimination of redundant processes/requests and use of paper/memos outside the system, where applicable (for example, review travel policy).
- Strengthen the compliance and risk management functions, in partnership with business process owners and following the three lines of defense model.
- Work toward aligning with the systems of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the WHO Business Management System modernization, as much as possible.
- Explore options to expand shared services initiatives and outsourcing of transactional functions, considering potential cost savings and operational benefits for PASB.
- Implement environmentally sustainable practices and policies to make PAHO green by adopting modern energy-saving practices, implementing waste reduction and recycling programs, and promoting sustainable transportation options.

These and other actions will enable PASB to responsibly, measurably, and sustainably strengthen its capacity to innovate through stronger ETA practices and processes. **PAHO Forward** will enable the Organization to create efficiencies that expand its effectiveness and empower personnel to focus on current and future priorities with better planning and execution processes.

2. Bolster PAHO’s visibility, country focus, and capacity to deliver technical cooperation

**PAHO Forward** focuses on governance and strategic relations to ensure that PAHO’s focus and presence is well positioned with Member States and highly valued by key partners in order to remain the leading organization in supporting the countries of the Americas with the most innovative and efficient strategies to recover better than they were before the COVID-19 pandemic, overcome inequalities, and build resilient health systems to improve the response to emergencies and disasters and to achieve universal health. The aim is to be an organization that is well recognized at all levels and that facilitates **PAHO Forward** - An organization-wide approach to strengthen efficiency, transparency, and accountability
excellent and effective communications, internally and externally. Actions have already been initiated and will continue, including but not limited to:

- Optimize the Bureau’s organizational structure to better respond to the demands for technical cooperation, taking into consideration the new and evolving regional and global context and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strengthen the focus of PAHO action in countries, reinforcing representations and adapting technical cooperation strategies to the new epidemiological and social realities and national priorities.
- Enhance PAHO’s country presence, facing the post COVID-19 environment.
- Strengthen internal communications between the different levels of the Organization and the strategic communication of the Director with PAHO/WHO country representatives (PWRs).
- Approval and implementation of the updated delegation of authority for PWRs to make the management of the country offices more efficient and agile, allowing the decision-maker to address the technical cooperation needs in a more expeditious manner.
- Strategically position the Organization at the global, regional, subregional, and country levels.
- Forge strong alliances with new and existing partners, with which the Bureau shares common public health objective for the Region.

PAHO Forward will enable the PASB to continue to strengthen its country focus, to raise its visibility and voice, and to increase its recognition and reputation as a valued and trusted organization where technical excellence, transparency, and integrity are essential at all levels of the Organization.

3. Enhance PASB human resources performance and drive innovation to move the Organization forward

PAHO’s most important asset is its committed and resourceful personnel. PASB must create and support a respectful, diverse, and inclusive work environment where every person is valued, has the opportunity to build a career, and can feel confident and comfortable as their true self. PASB aims at counting on an engaged workforce, where personnel are involved and drive innovation and change. Actions have been initiated with more being planned, including:

- Review the People Strategy, adapt to current times, and define metrics for each objective.
- Enhance the PAHO selection process and streamline its onboarding process.
- Review the Performance, Planning and Evaluation System tool to make it more agile and relevant to the needs of the Organization in evaluating individuals’ performance. It will focus on alignment with strategic priorities and flexibility to adapt to changing needs.
- Review the Integrity and Conflict Management System, aiming to develop key performance indicators and increase transparency.
- Advance on a joint and collaborative work agenda with the Staff Association.
- Identify and support initiatives of diversity, equity, and inclusion such as, but not limited to, recognizing the PAHO Globe Initiative to support the rights of LGBTQ+ personnel.

These and other actions will help PASB foster a positive work culture for a supportive, respectful, and inclusive environment. This includes valuing diversity, facilitating inclusion, promoting work-life balance, and recognizing and rewarding employee contributions. Open communication, collaboration, and innovation will be encouraged to strengthen employee satisfaction and engagement. Through

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enhanced human resource and administrative management processes, PASB can strengthen its ETA for the benefit of all personnel, at all levels.

Through **PAHO Forward**, PASB will also be able to embrace and harness new technologies and innovations in ways that enhance and expand its technical engagement and reach, including digital health, data analytics, stronger surveillance, manufacturing platforms, and increased public health competencies.

**Accountability**

**PAHO Forward** sets the framework for an ongoing modernization process of the Bureau. A plan of action (PoA) will operationalize the framework, including key actions, expected results, timeline, and responsible entities. The PoA will be revisited yearly to ensure that clear targets for individual actions are established, that these are followed up, and that results are reported.

An operational group, led by the Director’s Office and with participants from each of the entities leading on a specific objective (the Office of the Director of Administration [AM Office], Country and Subregional Coordination [CSC], and Human Resources Management [HRM]), has been established for **PAHO Forward**. The operational group’s responsibility is to ensure the actions in the PoA are sufficiently planned, supported by enough resources, and executed within the specified time frame, within the agreed budget, and meeting established targets. Each entity leading on a specific objective will be engaging other entities with a stake in the success of the actions. The PoA will be updated yearly.

The operational group will report to the Executive Management (EXM) on a monthly basis, keeping the highest leadership of the Organization informed of progress. EXM will be presented with results, determine whether other actions are necessary, provide guidance, and approve all necessary changes.

**PAHO Forward** includes a communications strategy for internal and external audiences. This strategy seeks to demonstrate PASB’s commitment to innovation; to systematize progress in the implementation of the different actions; and to engage personnel and to recognize those who are part of the change.

**Conclusion**

Through **PAHO Forward**, the Organization is ensuring it remains the leading organization supporting the countries of the Americas to improve the health and well-being of their populations. Working together with Member States, PASB will reinforce its tried-and-true characteristics of solidarity, Pan Americanism, and dialogue. These elements have helped make PAHO a prominent and highly respected institution regionally and globally, that has been able to face many critical health challenges over its 120-year history.

Now more than ever, PAHO must be a leader and catalyst for the recovery and rebuilding of health systems and increased investments in public health. **PAHO Forward** will be an essential underpinning of the Organization’s success over the coming years.