

R E G I O N A L M E E T I N G



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

AGAINST ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

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Who

now doubts the power of microbes? We suppose no one. But what we have painfully learned in recent times should lead us to reflection and collective action for health. If not, this experience could be repeated in worse crises: antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the most alarming. According to the O'Neill Report, commissioned by the UK government, AMR, particularly antibiotic resistance (AMR), could cost the world 10 million lives annually by 2050.

We cannot passively wait for a disaster. We need to act now to prevent it. If we do not invest time and resources now, we will have to pay much more later.

At the 2015 World Health Assembly, its 194 States adopted a global action plan to prevent and control AMR. Based on the global plan, all countries had to develop their national plans by 2017. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the countries in this region had progressed differently, some had approved it, but none had begun to implement it. Everything came to a standstill with the advent of COVID-19.

Who now doubts the power of communities in health care? Perhaps many still do. However, never has the need for community participation been more keenly felt than in the current crisis. It is clear that without community engagement, the pandemic cannot be controlled.

We need to recognize the power of communities, their capabilities, their right to be protagonists in their health care. And in a process of dialogue, strengthen their resources, knowledge, and spaces for participation, while activating the still passive communities. To address COVID-19 and AMR, we need empowered communities.

Who doubts now that human health is closely linked to animal and environmental health? Millions still do not realize it, but both COVID-19 and AMR show us the interconnections: the new coronavirus is the result of a



zoonotic event precipitated by human actions on the animal world; the use of antibiotics in human medicine and agricultural production selects resistant bacteria that circulate among humans, animals, and ecosystems.

In 2008, ReAct Latin America and the Pan American Health Organization convened the international Workshop-Seminar 'Restoring ecosystem health to contain bacterial resistance'. From that meeting between health authorities, health professionals, researchers, social activists, and native populations representatives, came the Cuenca Declaration, a substantial call to action against AMR that advocated for social participation and an ecosystemic approach.

Thirteen years later, reaffirmed in their convictions, they call for this new meeting for the Region of the Americas, not only to avoid new pandemics and achieve a world free of untreatable infections, but also to cultivate a planet brimming with health and empowered communities.

The Regional Meeting: Empowering Communities against Antimicrobial Resistance in the context of COVID-19 is an initiative that seeks to engage community-based organizations, academia and research centers, as well as health, agricultural and environmental professionals working on AMR-related issues, so that together we can seek concrete, inclusive and sustainable solutions to combat this important health threat.

Special Program on Antimicrobial Resistance
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Health Organization

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