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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) was founded in 1902 and is recognized as the independent specialized health agency of the inter-American system, under the Charter of the Organization of American States. In 1949, PAHO agreed to serve as the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO), a specialized agency of the United Nations system. Acting in its capacity as WHO’s Regional Office, PAHO participates actively in the United Nations Country Team, collaborating with other agencies, the funds and programmes of the United Nations system, and with the United Nations Resident Coordinator to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at country level. For 120 years, PAHO has developed recognized competence and expertise, providing technical cooperation to its Member States to fight communicable and noncommunicable diseases and their causes, to strengthen health systems, and to respond to emergencies and disasters throughout the Region of the Americas.

Given PAHO’s dual legal status and the difficulty of disaggregating PAHO from WHO activities, this Annual Report reflects both PAHO and WHO activities in the Americas as related to technical cooperation in 2021. Approximately 80% of PAHO’s technical cooperation in health in the Region of the Americas is funded by PAHO’s own quota and voluntary contributions, as an inter-American organization. The remaining 20% of PAHO’s integrated biennial budget includes WHO-funded activities. Further detailed financial information for this Annual Report can be found in the Financial Summary section.
Mission
To lead strategic collaborative efforts among Member States and other partners to promote equity in health, combat disease, improve the quality of, and lengthen the lives of the peoples of the Americas.

Vision
To be the major catalyst for ensuring that all the peoples of the Americas enjoy optimal health and contribute to the well-being of their families and communities.
During the year, several pieces of equipment were donated to local hospitals and health centers in order to contribute to the prevention, care, and vaccination for COVID-19.
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In 2021, COVID-19 remained the greatest public health challenge of modern history. The Region of the Americas was hardest hit and, as new variants of the virus emerged, it became clear that the pandemic was not yet over. However, new vaccines heralded its ending and the advent of a new normal at work, at school, and in everyday social interactions.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) strengthened its technical cooperation to support Member States in vaccinating populations against COVID-19. However, vaccine hesitancy and misinformation sometimes hampered their valiant efforts. PAHO must continue to assist countries in implementing strategies to overcome such obstacles for the COVID-19 vaccination program and routine childhood and other immunization programs.

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on all countries. Given the attention focused on the pandemic response, we risk losing gains already made in other areas of public health and face a significant worsening in the socioeconomic determinants of health. The COVID-19 experience has underscored the need to continue to advocate for resilient health systems; strengthen the first level of care using a primary healthcare approach; promote health in all policies; and revitalize essential public health functions.

Therefore, in 2021 we focused more on those areas of health neglected earlier in the pandemic. These 2021 annual reports chronicle the work in countries and subregions as we prepare for the post-pandemic era.

I sincerely thank our Member States, partners, and donors for working with us to address the challenges of COVID-19. We need to continue to collaborate closely in the complex task of ending the pandemic; tackling the inequities and inequalities in health that plague our Region; maintaining health high on the political agenda of all Member States; and championing health equity as the cornerstone for sustainable development to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne
Director of the Pan American Health Organization
MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE

In 2021, with the availability of COVID-19 vaccines, there was much hope and expectation that the pandemic would become well controlled and that life, as we knew it in 2019, would return to some semblance of normalcy. However, this was not the case in 2021, when Suriname experienced two of the highest waves of SARS-CoV-2 infection with relatively high rates of morbidity and mortality. Vaccine hesitancy, even among healthcare workers, hindered the national goal of achieving 70% coverage among the eligible population. Moreover, healthcare workers continued to be pushed beyond their limits while still giving of their best in difficult circumstances. With PAHO’s ongoing technical cooperation and support, Suriname was able to maintain health services while addressing the need to build back stronger and more resilient health systems. In addition, vaccination reached, as of 31 December 2021, a 43% coverage for the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine and 38% for the second dose.

This report outlines the technical cooperation provided to the Ministry of Health and its key stakeholders in strengthening health systems and maintaining service provision, which was implemented through an inter-programmatic approach with great teamwork by the PAHO officers. While much effort continued focusing on supporting the response to COVID-19 and the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination, attention was also placed on rebuilding the essential health services. The Country Office conducted, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, assessments on the Essential Public Health Functions, the readiness of the front-line services, and the compliance with the International Code on Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. In addition, PAHO supported development of national policies and strategic plans for noncommunicable diseases, mental health, and healthy aging, and technical cooperation was provided for malaria outbreak investigations and control in the interior, as well as capacity building for healthcare workers and the Central Laboratory.

In accordance with the Constitution of PAHO, I have the honor of presenting the 2021 annual report on the work of the PAHO Country Office in Suriname.

Karen Lewis-Bell
PAHO Representative in Suriname
PAHO building laboratory capacity in Suriname through the hands-on training of technologists.
HIGHLIGHTS

- This year, PAHO’s technical cooperation focused on the national response to the pandemic as a public health emergency, with efforts targeting prevention of transmission, case management, vaccination, capacity building for the Central Laboratory, and procurement of supplies. These activities contributed to a vaccination coverage of 38% of the population with two doses, and 43% with one dose by the end of 2021.

- To ensure maintenance of essential health services during the various COVID-19 waves that swept through Suriname, PAHO collaborated with the Ministry of Health on assessments of health services readiness and capacity, harnessing and developing information and database resources, capacity building including translation to Dutch of several materials, and provision of essential medical equipment and supplies.

- Working toward elimination of malaria by 2025, PAHO contributed to several malaria control, surveillance, and elimination activities in the country within the context of the pandemic, offering technical support, refresher trainings, communication materials, transportation, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for joint malaria and COVID-19 surveillance, as well as COVID-19 vaccination missions to the interior supported by the Malaria Program.

- In 2021, the technical cooperation focused on specific areas of noncommunicable diseases and mental health, mainly on prevention and control, including hypertension, mental health and psychosocial support, suicide, smoking cessation, and cervical cancer.

- PAHO provided support to the implementation of the national maternal and newborn health strategy and operational plan, improving breastfeeding during the time of COVID-19 and, through the development of a draft national policy on healthy aging, care of older people.
Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be a health priority in 2021, therefore PAHO’s technical cooperation focused on the continued support of the
COVID-19

In 2021, the Country Office supported activities of surveillance, diagnostics, infection prevention and control, case management, and vaccination as part of the COVID-19 response. Ongoing technical support was provided for the analysis of the surveillance data, the maintenance of the diagnostic capacity at the Central Laboratory, the procurement of equipment and supplies for case management, protection of healthcare workers with personal protective equipment (PPE), and social mobilization for generating demand for the COVID-19 vaccine and promoting prevention measures. By the end of 2021, 38% of the population had received two doses of the vaccine, and 43% one dose.

Courses and training sessions

To strengthen the capacity of Surinamese front-line health workers specifically in their response to the pandemic, PAHO supported many initiatives to increase access to online health training modules, including some in Dutch – the official language of Suriname. In 2021, a dedicated page on the OpenWHO platform – an online training platform managed by WHO with access to over 120 online courses – was created for Suriname to house 10 Dutch-translated online courses that were developed in collaboration with PAHO. These courses included topics such as infection prevention and control, vaccination training, clinical management of COVID-19 patients, and standard precautions such as hand hygiene. At the end of 2021, over 4000 persons from Suriname had enrolled in these courses, and a qualitative survey conducted among nursing students indicated that the courses were helpful and increased their knowledge in the related technical areas. Winamba Bamoeje, an Education Manager at the Elsje Finck-Sanichar College COVAB in Suriname, said, “After the courses had been translated and offered in Dutch by PAHO, the participation rate went up and we received many positive responses from both staff and students alike.”

QR codes were printed on stickers and distributed to health facilities and training institutions to boost the uptake of courses throughout Suriname. Social media cards were also developed to expand the reach and inform more persons of this learning opportunity.

PAHO conducted training for medical technicians in the installation, use, and management of devices for COVID-19.
care, including ventilators, oxygen concentrators, patient monitors, and BiPAP machines, among others. To improve radiological health, five radiographers were trained in mammography techniques while 13 radiographers were trained in Computed Tomography (CT) basics and essential skills. Further plans for capacity building in these two areas are underway to improve quality assurance and quality control for improved radiological health in Suriname. Course participants and CT technologists from the Academic Hospital, Paramaribo, said, “The information from the courses has helped us to recognize various pathology and to acquire better images for various CT scans. This way we can improve patient care and patient dose as CT technologists. We also have more insight of the technical aspects of CT scanners.”

PAHO also provided two training sessions for nursing and assistant care personnel of care homes for older people, aiming to increase the quality of care in institutions for long-term care in relation to infection prevention and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, in support of data gathering, analysis, and visualization, PAHO led a three-day Tableau (data visualization tool) training for teams from the Epidemiology Unit, the Central Laboratory, and the Medical Research Institute, with the goal of enhancing the visualization of data analysis. PAHO also conducted training sessions for various health care entities in diagnostic methods and testing strategy to support data gathering for surveillance and reporting, case management, and infection prevention.

**Supporting COVID-19 prevention and case management**

As experienced in many other countries, the supply chain for medical equipment, consumables, medicines, and other essential supplies was disrupted as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and border closures. Therefore, to ensure that health services could be maintained, PAHO supported the Ministry of Health (MOH) and its stakeholders with donations of medical equipment, medicines for COVID-19 case management, as well as infection prevention supplies such as consumables for the continued functioning of other critical equipment. To streamline the management of all incoming donations, PAHO collaborated with the National Procurement Agency (BGVS) in initial activities to design a web-based logistics management information system.

PAHO also contributed to strengthening infection prevention and control in long-term care facilities by providing PPE to healthcare workers in these facilities. In an effort to improve waste management capacity in the interior, the Country Office donated incinerators to the primary health care organization Medical Mission, with additional training conducted on their use.

**National COVID-19 vaccination program**

The Country Office provided technical assistance for the development of the National COVID-19 Deployment and Vaccination Plan and technical guidance during the introduction and roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Vaccines were procured through the COVAX Facility as well as received though bilateral and multilateral collaboration programs. PAHO also provided extensive support to the national awareness/promotion campaign using all forms of media and employing messages in multiple local languages to generate demand for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Health service delivery at the primary care level was maintained while competing for scarce resources, mostly absorbed by the COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Thus, the Country Office donated foods and equipment to contribute to quality services in relation to the vaccination campaign. Targeted outreach to the more vulnerable populations in the hinterland focused on public awareness, education, and vaccination against COVID-19 in select communities in western Suriname.
PAHO also collaborated with the MOH and the University of Oslo, Norway, on the development and configuration of a national COVID-19 vaccination data management and reporting system using the DHIS2 platform. Lastly, PAHO provided technical assistance for standardization of the intake forms, the indicators for the country dashboard, and the considerations for inclusion of a module for the management of adverse events.
Health Systems and Services

The maintenance of essential health services was the focus of PAHO’s technical cooperation in health systems and services, while also providing continued support for the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Training exercises at the Emergency Room at the Academic Hospital Paramaribo using medical equipment provided by PAHO.
The activities undertaken included an assessment of the country’s capacity to perform essential functions in health governance; support to several capacity-building opportunities for Surinamese health workers; provision of essential medical equipment and supplies to ensure high quality care; reinvigoration of networks of integrated health services; and harnessing information and communication technologies to standardize health services to facilitate the use of data for decision-making.

**Strengthening health governance**

In 2021, Suriname agreed to participate in a regional assessment of country capacities to exercise the Essential Public Health Functions (EPHF). Following the renewed EPHF framework released by PAHO in 2020, Suriname undertook this assessment to identify systems and structures in place along with needed capacity to exercise the 11 functions within the framework. PAHO supported the MOH and key health actors to conduct a self-assessment of the current capacities under each of the related functions. This resulted in the development of a Situation Analysis of the Health System in Suriname, which analyzed the institutional, regulatory, and health system aspects of the current health system that have an impact on the formulation and implementation of the essential public health functions. An action plan to address any weaknesses in the system and to improve capacity building within health authorities will be developed in early 2022 with the MOH.

**Investing in health workers**

PAHO continued its support toward the inputs for a future National Plan on Human Resources for Health in Suriname. In 2021, PAHO’s technical assistance contributed to the development of a National Health Worker Registry with data on health workers in the public and private health sectors in accordance with the [WHO Minimum Data Set for Health Workforce Registry](https://www.who.int/workforce-planning/iwm/background/minimum-data-set). This Registry is an online platform that will facilitate standardized data collection at the national and subnational levels. Its outputs will allow Suriname access to more accurate and complete data on health worker density and distribution at the various levels of care to help inform planning.

**Securing essential supplies**

A fully equipped ambulance was donated to the MOH through a partnership between the Embassy of Brazil, the World Food Program, and PAHO to upgrade the fleet of ambulances in the country. PAHO also supported this process by providing the MOH with comprehensive technical specifications as a guideline for the future procurement of ambulances.

Maintaining adequate infection prevention and control measures at blood donation centers in Suriname was also an important priority of PAHO’s support during the pandemic. Therefore, the cooperation assisted the Suriname Blood Bank to advocate for continued blood donations during the pandemic, and appropriate management.
Building health networks

The MOH’s Strategic Direction for the period 2019–2028 highlighted the need for an integrated model of care at the primary health care level. Specific concerns on the management of chronic conditions throughout Suriname were deemed critical, and PAHO supported an assessment of the Chronic Care Model at select primary health care networks in the country, completed in June 2021. The findings were utilized in the design of a new Model of Care that will be linked to the implementation of the WHO HEARTS package for the management of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in Suriname.

Furthermore, PAHO and the MOH implemented the first front-line service readiness surveys in all hospitals and a sample of primary health care facilities in Suriname in September 2021. The three-module survey assessed capacities to respond to prolonged emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining essential health services. An additional module addressed community needs and perceptions on their access to health care during the pandemic, and 20 organizations shared their views in this survey.

Information systems for monitoring and decision-making

PAHO continued promoting the use of data for decision-making in 2021. In order to standardize the health data collected at the subnational and national levels, PAHO supported the MOH and its stakeholders with the development of a National Monitoring Framework for Universal Health that outlines all the national health indicators at output, outcome, and impact levels to be monitored by the country.

To complete the implementation of Medical Mission’s web-based patient management information system, PAHO supported its configuration in the final 18 clinics needing access to the system. This allowed for a more comprehensive analysis of the provision of health services by Medical Mission’s network of clinics. PAHO also provided technical assistance for the piloting of a teleconsultation feature within their network along with improved modules for logistics management of health commodities. While Internet and electricity coverage continue to challenge the work of Medical Mission in the rural interior of Suriname, this patient management information system will revolutionize the quality of care toward a life-course approach among the hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations in the hinterland.

Safe and Smart Hospital Project

PAHO supported the installation of solar powered external lighting to improve ’s Lands Hospital green rating and patient safety as part of the Safe and Smart Hospital Initiative. This hospital, one of three assessed a few years ago, has the highest number of annual births in Suriname.

Strengthening the National Influenza Center (NIC)

With the support of an international professional consultant hired by PAHO, the Central Laboratory received technical input for strengthening its status as the National Influenza Center with hands-on training in polymerase chain reaction (PCR) techniques and an electronic laboratory supplies and stock management system, including built-in alerts. In addition, as part of the activities to strengthen the laboratory capacities, PAHO trained technologists from the Central Laboratory in immunofluorescence assay (IFA) for diagnosis of several respiratory viruses (influenza A and B, respiratory syncytial virus, parainfluenza virus 1, 2, and 3, adenovirus, and human metapneumovirus). The training sessions comprised one full day of demonstration of the technique and three days where the laboratory technologists practiced their skills in IFA.
The road to sustainable enhancement and strengthening of infectious disease care in Suriname in 2021 saw PAHO’s technical cooperation include activities concentrated
Malaria efforts aiming at elimination by 2025

During 2021, Suriname worked hard to rapidly control the malaria outbreaks in the Amerindian villages of Tepu, Palumeu, and Apetina, with much success. Additional efforts focused on the interior as well as the border areas to diagnose, treat, investigate, and respond to imported cases as soon as they were detected. This year, PAHO contributed to several malaria control, surveillance, and elimination activities in the country.

Malaria transmission occurs in areas where a combination of mobile migrant population and the social and environmental health determinants of the disease occur. These include forested areas, hard-to-reach populations, and areas with low access to health services. With PAHO’s technical assistance, the Malaria Program is adjusting the national guidelines to be able to eliminate malaria by 2025. With assistance of the WHO Global Malaria Program, the country was provided with a short-term consultant to support the activities in the field and assist the Malaria Program to close the gaps as part of the STOP Malaria initiative.

The Malaria Service Delivery Network received refresher training from PAHO as part of the annual plan and continued support of delivery of services in the gold-mining areas. PAHO also contributed communication materials, transportation, and PPE for joint malaria and COVID-19 surveillance and COVID-19 vaccination missions to the interior, supported by the Malaria Program. The coordinator of the Malaria Program, Dr. Hélène Hiwat, said, “The relationship between the Malaria Program and the PAHO Country Office in Suriname, as well as the PAHO Regional Office, has always been very good, and we have been able to implement very much in the past years, which we are extremely grateful for.”

Yellow fever

Yellow fever continues to be a major public health threat in the Americas. Despite vaccination in endemic areas, sporadic cases and outbreaks continue to occur. To prevent international spread, it is essential that the International Health Regulations (2005) are applied and that travelers to high-risk areas present yellow fever vaccination certificates. In 2021, PAHO printed the manual on surveillance for epizootics and vector surveillance for yellow fever, which was provided to the MOH to support field activities in vector surveillance.

To strengthen event-based surveillance with a focus on One Health, PAHO organized a meeting in November with stakeholders, which was attended by representatives from the ministries of Health, Agriculture, Regional Development, and Education. The entities represented were the Bureau of Public Health, Medical Mission, Veterinary Services, Forest Service, Center for Agricultural Research in Suriname (CELOS), the Health Disaster Unit (HDU), the MOH, PAHO, and the directors of Health and Animal Husbandry and Health. The main objective of this meeting was to reiterate the importance of yellow fever surveillance, by gathering important stakeholders for surveillance, with the focus on the (event-based) surveillance of non-human primates and vectors. It also emphasized each entity’s role and the collaborative approach in the protection of public health related to risks of living and working in the interior or dealing with wildlife.
Antimicrobial resistance

For the past few decades, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has been a growing threat to effective treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria, parasites, viruses, and fungi. Despite having an AMR Strategic Plan, Suriname has not yet advanced in this area due to severe capacity gaps and absence of a structure for stewardship.

To address the need for a program to strengthen the overall approach to AMR and infection prevention and control (IPC), PAHO supported the development of a national plan to increase capacity in AMR and IPC under the leadership of the MOH, and the lead for quality health service delivery in each of Suriname’s health networks, in collaboration with the University of Radboud. In order to identify areas to be strengthened, improve national policy, and reduce hospital-acquired infections, PAHO conducted a comprehensive assessment of the situation regarding AMR surveillance and IPC, as well as a draft terms of reference for a national IPC committee. PAHO also provided guidelines for ensuring IPC in the neonatal ICU at the Academic Hospital, and for conducting blood cultures.

Food safety

PAHO supported the national capacity in food safety with the translation of food handlers’ material including the virtual training course provided by the PAHO Virtual Campus. The food handlers’ manual was reviewed with national counterparts and is now ready for publication with support of Panaftosa and the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. A pilot of the food handlers’ training has been completed for target groups in the food production sector.

Extending viral hepatitis services

Suriname has commenced preparations for a campaign to extend the services for viral hepatitis to those living in rural areas. The campaign aims to increase awareness about the disease, diagnosis, and treatment of the cases occurring in the rural coastal area. PAHO supported this initiative with the procurement of tests, communication materials, and transportation.
In Suriname, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), primarily cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, and diabetes, are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality.
as well as premature death and disability. With the priority focus placed by the Ministry of Health on the management of NCDs, PAHO supported the development of a Monitoring Framework for the NCD Program highlighting NCD-specific output, outcome, and impact indicators, which will be used in the finalization of the new National NCD Strategy and Action Plan. This year, PAHO also contributed to the introduction of the HEARTS initiative, a cervical cancer plan, a plan for mental health and psychosocial support during emergencies, and suicide prevention.

Introducing HEARTS

PAHO provided sensitization and awareness to the MOH and stakeholders on the HEARTS initiative, which seeks to integrate into health delivery services the global best practices in the prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases and their risk management. This initiative will support the further implementation of the Chronic Care Model in Suriname, which was assessed to determine the strengths, lessons learned, and any gaps in the current models for managing chronic illnesses at the primary level of care in Suriname.

Addressing NCD risk factors with International Health Days

PAHO assisted the MOH throughout the year with the production of materials to ensure improved knowledge and awareness on priority programmatic areas for specific NCD-related International Health Days. These materials included a television program on World Cancer Day on 4 February 2021 to promote the benefits of early detection, treatment, and support for cancer, as well as other cancer informational material; and production and broadcasting of an infomercial on the benefits of salt reduction and a video on cooking with less salt during World Salt Awareness Week.

For World Health Day, PAHO supported the MOH in efforts to sensitize government leaders on their role in ensuring an environment in which health is promoted. The Suriname Vice-President and his Cabinet received promotional material with the theme following the MOH presentation on the topic. A banner with the theme (translated into Dutch) was also placed at the MOH for continued awareness.

Strengthening of the cancer response

A cervical cancer plan, developed with PAHO’s technical support, is based on the PAHO regional plan for the cervical cancer response, considering the local context. PAHO supported the MOH with printing and launching their approved plan and further facilitated dialogue with the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) regarding the establishment of a national cancer registry as part of the strengthening of cancer surveillance.
On World Hypertension Day, PAHO collaborated with the Regional Health Services on organizing and participating in a television program that provided information about blood pressure and how to reduce the risk of and manage high blood pressure.

In addition, PAHO provided support to the MOH for the video launch of the translated training course on suicide prevention, provided by the PAHO Virtual Campus, on World Suicide Prevention Day. This course helped build awareness on the importance of healthcare workers’ knowledge of warning signs that can trigger early support to prevent suicide. On World Mental Health Day, PAHO launched the training on Psychological First Aid (PFA) in Disaster Management in the Caribbean (Second Edition – 2020), translated into Dutch. Ninety-three persons completed the training and received their certificates during a drive-through event.

For Caribbean Wellness Day on 11 September 2021, PAHO supported the MOH with the relaunch of the seki-siksi (shake at six) campaign, which aimed to encourage people to exercise on a regular (daily) basis. PAHO facilitated a collaboration between the MOH and the Ministry of Regional Development, Youth, and Sport for the development of a series of TV productions to guide viewers on effective ways to exercise at home. In addition, PAHO supported the MOH with two events commemorating World Diabetes Day, during which information on the prevention and treatment of diabetes was shared, along with a special focus on prevention of complications that might lead to dialysis.

**Commit to quit campaign**

As part of the Commit to Quit call-to-action campaign, PAHO collaborated with the MOH on activities including the introduction of a program supporting smoking cessation on World No Tobacco Day 2021. An opportunity was offered for smokers to participate in the online Allen Carr’s Easyway to Stop Smoking seminars; two of these seminars were facilitated by PAHO. The Country Office also cooperated with the campaign promotion through billboards placed in districts of Paramaribo and Commewijne as well as on advertisements on social media, radio, TV, and newspapers, including the publication of a poster on “100 reasons to quit.”

Rachim Sonodimedjo, a participant in one of the seminars, said, “By the time we smoked our last cigarette, I could not even light it. Tears streaming down my face, I thought to myself: ‘Did I really do this to myself all these years?’ It was emotional to realize that this was it. No more cigarettes. But it was a long time coming and I felt ready and empowered. Since that day, I have been smoke-free, and I am extremely grateful to PAHO for allowing me a chance to participate and realizing that I could do it. I can now even be surrounded with people who smoke, drink, dance, and not have the urge to smoke. I am a better version of myself. Thank you, PAHO.”

**Addressing mental health**

PAHO contributed to strengthening the mental health response in facilitating an evaluation of the mental health plan and the suicide prevention plan, and the development of new plans in both categories.

PAHO also provided technical cooperation for the development of a plan for mental health and psychosocial support during emergencies, accompanied by a risk communication plan for mental health during emergencies. These plans will facilitate a standardized and timely response for mental health during any national emergency or disaster.

**Raising awareness about road safety**

In commemoration of the sixth United Nations Global Road Safety Week, PAHO supported the MOH’s awareness campaign on the importance of reducing traffic accidents. Campaign materials were translated to Dutch and shared widely, while the media covered the subject during Road Safety Week.
Technical cooperation in this second year of the pandemic continued prioritizing a life-course approach to building health for people of all ages, with a National Vaccination mission to the villages in western Suriname to boost coverage in children through mop-up vaccination.
**Strategic Plan for Maternal and Newborn Health, interventions on infant and young child feeding, and a draft National Policy on Healthy Aging.**

**Maternal and newborn health systems strengthening**

Suriname has one of the highest maternal and neonatal mortality rates in the Caribbean subregion. As follow-up to the 2020 development of the five-year National Strategic Plan for Maternal and Newborn Health and three-year Operational Plan, the Country Office facilitated strengthening the capacity of the Family and Community Health Department of the Bureau of Public Health with respect to coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of the strategy and plan. PAHO supported a wide stakeholder consultation, including key civil society organizations and United Nations development partners, to present and discuss the strategy and operational plan, as well as the expected roles and responsibilities of each entity in implementing the key activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to negatively impact the access to health care services for women and children. Therefore, work commenced on the strategies to improve data collection and analysis for maternal, newborn, and child health in collaboration with the service providers. Discussions also recommenced regarding the implementation of the perinatal information system (SIP) and its inclusion in the Inter-American Development Bank-supported project for strengthening information systems for health in the country. A SIP working group is being established, and PAHO will provide technical cooperation in this regard.

Lastly, to improve the quality of care of newborns, such as phototherapy, and of equipment and supplies for infants, PAHO procured blankets and baby and toddler booklets to facilitate the ongoing monitoring of children’s growth and development.

**Improving child nutrition**

Suriname has a double burden of malnutrition, with rates of stunting and wasting higher than the regional average and concerning rates of childhood obesity. Tackling these, in addition to specific health interventions, requires a multistakeholder food systems approach. PAHO developed a video and counseling cards on infant and young child feeding in the context of COVID-19 for use in training healthcare workers and new mothers in support of breastfeeding. A NetCode survey was conducted in 2021 to provide baseline information on compliance with the *International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes* in Suriname during the period 2018–2020, in order to provide additional information to draft national policy and support the strengthening of strategies to improve rates of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months of life.

**Addressing the needs of older people**

With the launch of the *Decade of Healthy Aging in the Americas 2021–2030*, Suriname Country Office supported the development of a draft National Policy on Healthy Aging with an intersectoral and multistakeholder approach, which was handed over to the MOH for their review, finalization, and implementation. In continuation of support for ensuring adequate infection prevention and control in residential care homes for older people, PAHO provided additional PPE and promoted the use of the Dutch translated OpenWHO courses.
Nurse Toney: Leading a team of nurses in the COVID-19 ICU

Nurse Toney started her career as a nurse from the age of 17 years, with a dream of one day becoming a doctor. She finished her specialization in intensive care, as well as an additional training in supervision, and continued working at the ICU in AZP Hospital while also taking on the role of supervisor for new nurses in training. After working at the AZP Hospital for 16 years, Nurse Toney is now an intensive care specialized nurse with a degree in Health Management. Today she is Head Nurse of the COVID-19 unit and Coordinator of COVID-19 care at ’s Lands Hospital, where she has been leading a group of nurses since the arrival of COVID-19 in the country in March 2020.

“Because of the information about COVID-19 that PAHO provided early on, we were able to accompany the Minister of Health to the interior during the first mission after the disease was detected in Suriname,” explained Nurse Toney. She was part of the first COVID-19 care team of eight caretakers at the time. During the second wave of the pandemic, Nurse Toney succeeded in recruiting more nurses to join the team. However, at a certain point during the pandemic when all the ICU beds were occupied, healthcare workers and their families also succumbed to COVID-19 infection and some even died, leading to even worse staff shortages. Keeping the team motivated at such times was extremely hard, because taking leave or a moment to cope was all but impossible.
During the second wave, Nurse Toney completed the online course “Introduction to Critical Care Nursing” conducted by PAHO in collaboration with the University of the West Indies, which she found incredibly enriching and empowering in her role as COVID-19 caretaker and supervisor. She said, “There are certain differences in the critical care of COVID-19 patients that were not yet part of standard protocol, and this online course by PAHO provided us with the tools and knowledge to provide better and safer care for COVID-19 patients.” By the time the third wave hit Suriname, ’s Lands Hospital had to open its ICU for COVID-19 patients, and with the support of PAHO, among others, was able to assign a designated ward for ICU COVID-19 patients. Nurse Toney motivated her team and colleagues to complete the COVID-19 courses on the OpenWHO platform, which were translated into Dutch for Suriname by PAHO and have been an immense support. The team also expressed their gratitude to PAHO for providing donations for COVID-19 patients, saying, “We were able to take care of patients more efficiently and flexibly, helping us to provide better care in the COVID-19 ICU, thanks to PAHO.”

Phyllis Pinas started her career in October 2019 in the Central Laboratory of the Bureau of Healthcare as Head of the Bacteriology Department. Just over a year later, she assumed the position of Acting Head of the Central Laboratory in Paramaribo, Suriname, which she is very passionate about.

“It is a very challenging position, especially with this pandemic,” because I find myself on the work floor often enough performing tests and interpreting results in addition to managerial duties,” explained Pinas. “My goal for the Central Laboratory is to become a valued public health laboratory in the region and to retain its various ISO accreditations and recognition as a National Influenza Center. The latter accreditation would not have been possible without PAHO.”

PAHO has provided technical assistance from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling the Central Laboratory to operate accordingly and deliver accurate results. The Laboratory also received diagnostic equipment for PCR analysis, PPE, and consumables, as well as refresher trainings for laboratory staff from PAHO. Keeping track of inventory in times like these has also proved difficult for the Laboratory, and diagnostic material was occasionally out of stock. The technical assistance provided by PAHO has helped the Laboratory operate more effectively in terms of inventory planning and procurement. “Without the technical and financial support PAHO has provided, COVID-19 diagnostics and surveillance would simply not be possible in Suriname, and for that and all other support we are extremely grateful,” added Pinas.

Phyllis Pinas, Acting Head of the Central Laboratory in Paramaribo

In June 2020, the Central Laboratory in Suriname received its designation as a WHO-recognized National Influenza Center. Less than a year later, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and the Central Laboratory had a crucial role to fulfill in terms of diagnosis and surveillance.
Phyllis Pinas, Acting Head of the Central Laboratory of the Bureau of Healthcare.
PAHO’s reports on the budget and its financing cover a biennial period. Hence, the financial information shown in this report corresponds to the 2020–2021 biennium. For more information, visit https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/SUR and select the “Financial Flow” tab (upper right-hand part of the screen).

The Suriname Country Office received US$ 5.5 million for activities, contractual services, donation procurements, and personnel costs during the 2020–2021 biennium. The World Health Organization funded 51.79% of the budget, together with support from assessed contributions (27.85%), the US Government (8.3%), and Canada (4.52%). It is important to highlight that US$ 1.6 million was expended on pandemic influenza preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and US$ 361 000 was expended for the Malaria Program. Reviewing the expense of the 2020–2021 biennium, 64% of expenditures were completed during 2021.

See https://open.paho.org/2020-21/country/SUR for graphical descriptions of how funding was allocated and spent across program outcomes.
Figure. Outcome budget allocations, financing, and implementation: Base programs

01. Access to comprehensive and quality health services
02. Health throughout the life course
03. Quality care for older people
04. Response capacity for communicable diseases
05. Access to services for noncommunicable diseases and mental health conditions
06. Response capacity for violence and injuries
07. Health workforce
08. Access to health technologies
09. Strengthened stewardship and governance
10. Increased public financing for health
11. Strengthened financial protection
12. Risk factors for communicable diseases
13. Risk factors for noncommunicable diseases
14. Malnutrition
15. Intersectoral response to violence and injuries
16. Intersectoral action on mental health
17. Elimination of communicable diseases
18. Social and environmental determinants
19. Health promotion and intersectoral action
20. Integrated information systems for health
21. Data, information, knowledge, and evidence
22. Research, ethics, and innovation for health
23. Health emergencies preparedness and risk reduction
24. Epidemic and pandemic prevention and control
25. Health emergencies detection and response
27. Leadership and governance
28. Management and administration

In millions of US$
LOOKING AHEAD

The need to continue efforts in technical cooperation to build a better and more resilient health system was underscored as 2021 closed with ongoing concerns regarding the new Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, and the threat of a fifth wave for Suriname. The PAHO Suriname Country Office will develop, in collaboration with the MOH and its partners, the new cooperation strategy in support of the MOH’s implementation of the National Policy Plan for Health 2021–2025. The main areas of focus will be universal health coverage, the control of noncommunicable diseases, information systems for health, reduction of mortality, and strengthening human resources for health.

As PAHO celebrates its 120th Anniversary in 2022, the Country Office, along with the Organization, will renew its commitment to continue collaborating with all stakeholders to support the Suriname MOH in the post-pandemic phase, with the goal of strengthening the health system to reach health equity for its population.

We would like to thank our dedicated team at the Country Office and all collaborating partners for their hard work in 2021 that led to the successes, challenges, and lessons learned presented in this report.
As 2021 closed with ongoing concerns regarding the new Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, vaccination campaigns continue to be a priority for 2022.