Elimination Initiative
30+
Accelerating the Elimination of Communicable Diseases in the Americas

PAHO Pan American Health Organization World Health Organization
Accelerating the Elimination of Communicable Diseases in the Americas
The global response to COVID-19 is evidence of our capability to unite and rally against pandemics. Having overcome the enormous task of protecting populations from the virus. It is essential that we prepare ourselves for future outbreaks and proactively strive not only to control communicable diseases but also to accelerate the elimination agenda by 2030, a goal well within the reach of countries in the Americas.

History shows that when people work together, communicable diseases can be eliminated. Following a global effort, smallpox was eradicated worldwide in 1980, and just 14 years later, polio was eliminated from the Region of the Americas.

Since then, rubella, congenital rubella syndrome, measles and neonatal tetanus have also been eliminated, and remarkable progress has been made against other diseases and conditions.

By 2023, 19 countries of the Region were free of malaria, eight had eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, and only one focus of river blindness remained in the Americas.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the commitment of governments, agencies, and individuals from diverse fields and across communities and countries.

By building on and learning from these successes, the Region of Americas has the potential to eliminate many more communicable diseases in our lifetime. The PAHO Elimination Initiative points the way.

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Focus: the principal site of an infection or other disease
On our way to reaching the goal

Since the launch in 2019, we have made commendable progress, despite the trials posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Remarkably, this global crisis served as a catalyst, not just as a challenge. The pandemic amplified the importance of establishing more robust and resilient healthcare systems and sparked rapid advancements, some of which include the inception of novel technologies, and a pronounced shift towards community-based service delivery.

The embrace of digital health has also gained momentum, reflecting a deeper appreciation for its transformative potential. These pivotal learnings from the pandemic can be harnessed and integrated into our strategies, making the Elimination Initiative even more potent. With the collective efforts of governments, civil societies, academia, the private sector, and communities, we are optimally positioned to realize our ambitious goal of eliminating more than 30 communicable diseases and related conditions in the Americas by 2030.

The momentum gained over the past 4 years reinforces that it can be done. The Region of Americas is considered both an incubator of innovative public health practices and a worldwide leader in elimination practices. But more work lies ahead. It can only be achieved through local, national, and regional cooperation, to ensure an acceleration of motion towards meeting the goal of eliminating 30+ communicable diseases by 2030.

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4 LINES OF ACTION

1. Strengthening and integration of health systems and service delivery
   - Strengthening existing programs and community approaches through continued innovation to better integrate and synergize primary health care services, supported by appropriate laboratory capacity for screening, diagnosis and monitoring of treatments. This means creating and reinforcing linkages among health provider networks, community services, disease elimination programs, and environmental health initiatives to optimize prevention, care and treatment while controlling costs.

2. Strengthening health surveillance and information systems
   - Increasing the capacity of health information systems at the national and subnational levels to improve data collection, analysis, and monitoring of progress towards elimination.

3. Addressing the environmental and social determinants of health
   - Monitoring and addressing key interacting factors that impact health, such as poverty, gender equity, access to clean water and safe air, and effective waste management, among other determinants. This includes strengthening community infrastructures to prevent environmental contamination and supporting financial investments that address these determinants and socioeconomic gaps.

4. Strengthening governance, stewardship, and finance
   - Strengthening leadership and accountability by mobilizing participation of key players such as local governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, businesses, philanthropy, and the academic sector. This includes streamlining the implementation of interventions while optimizing efficient use of financial resources to deliver them.

During Life Course
- Pregnant women & newborns
- Children & adolescents
- Adults
- Older adults

Cross Cutting:
- Human rights
- Gender equality
- Populations in situation of vulnerability

Integration to achieve targets for each disease
Programmatic objectives for each disease

Accelerating the Elimination of Communicable Diseases in the Americas
A history of elimination successes

HIV, mother-to-child transmission and congenital syphilis
- Anguilla 2017
- Antigua and Barbuda 2017
- Bermuda 2017
- Cayman Islands 2017
- Cuba 2015
- Montserrat 2017
- St. Kitts and Nevis 2017
- Dominica 2020

Human rabies, dog-mediated
- Mexico 2019

Neonatal tetanus
- Regional 2017

Foot-and-mouth disease
- 41 countries and territories free from FMD in domestic bovids without vaccination

Onchocerciasis
- Colombia 2013
- Ecuador 2014
- Mexico 2015
- Guatemala 2016

Chagas disease transmission by primary vector
- Guatemala 2018
- Honduras 2018
- Nicaragua 2018
- Paraguay 2018

Chagas disease transmission by blood transfusion
- All 21 endemic countries (last Mexico in 2015)

Congenital rubella syndrome
- Regional 2015

Trachoma
- Mexico 2017

Rubella
- Regional 2015

Malaria
- Grenada, Saint Lucia 1962
- Trinidad, Tobago 1965
- Dominica, Jamaica 1966
- USA 1970
- Cuba 1973
- Argentina 2019
- Paraguay 2018
- El Salvador 2021
- Belize 2023

Measles
- Regional 2016

Poliomyelitis
- Regional 1994

A history of elimination successes
On our way to 2030: Bringing inspiration & innovation to health

The essentials are in place throughout the Region of Americas: health promotion campaigns, universal vaccination programs, and a “treat all” approach to achieve elimination. The Elimination Initiative seeks to integrate and synergize existing resources, technologies, and strategies across individual disease programs, and foster intersectoral collaborations and partnerships from the local to the national level in each country.

Individual countries are not expected to address all the targeted diseases. Instead, each country’s efforts are encouraged to focus on those communicable diseases that have the greatest impact on the health of their populations and communities.

The people most at risk for communicable diseases are those living in situations of vulnerability, such as populations with lower incomes, indigenous communities, Afro-descendant persons, migrants, people with disabilities and LGBTQI individuals.

The Elimination Initiative will positively impact the health and social well-being of these communities as well as the society as a whole. Commitment to the Elimination Initiative is a pledge to create thriving communities throughout the Americas.

"I envision a future where all countries in the Americas champion the health and well-being of their populations. The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as from previous elimination experiences, present countries with an opportunity to leverage the Elimination Initiative and accelerate its pace. Other opportunities include the arsenal of vaccines, diagnostics, medicines and other technologies available through PAHO, as well as the push for digital health and a deeper understanding of health inequalities and increased community engagement. I am convinced that the Region of the Americas is in a unique position to take the response to eliminating communicable diseases and related conditions to a new high, and that includes the elimination of as many as 30 of them by 2030."

Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, PAHO Director
Together, we can make history again.

Making History
In Public Health

Since its inception in 1902, PAHO has been instrumental in major hemispheric and global accomplishments in communicable disease elimination. The PAHO Elimination Initiative seeks to protect these landmark achievements and to build on the momentum and lessons they provide to reach new milestones.

This is an ambitious effort, but the prospects for its success are solid. As long as public health professionals and allies across our Region persist in their collaboration and actively cultivate fresh partnerships, both within and beyond the confines of the health sector.