



PAHO



10 years of implementation of the EMT initiative in the Americas



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What are Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs)?

EMTs are organized groups of health professionals, such as doctors, nurses, and paramedics, that help to provide essential and life-saving health care to individuals and communities affected by natural disasters, armed conflicts, disease outbreaks, and other health emergencies.

They may be deployed by governments, militaries, nongovernmental organizations, or international organizations. They may have different names, such as Disaster Medical Assistance Teams or Health Emergency Response Units.

EMTs are purposed to respond to emergencies in their own countries (national or subnational response), in other countries (regional or international response), or both.

They form a critical part of the rapid response and surge capacities of health systems, and contribute to the national, regional, and global health emergency corps (GHEC).

EMTs are an essential element in strengthening preparedness, response, and resilience in health emergencies and, ultimately, in saving lives and alleviating the suffering of affected individuals and communities.

About the EMT initiative

The implementation of the EMT initiative in the Americas has national leadership, with countries adopting the standards as their own and strengthening their capacities to cope with the surge in demand for health care, promoting the rapid mobilization and efficient coordination of both national and regional or international medical teams. The EMT initiative works to:

- Improve the quality and speed of health services provided by EMTs in response to a disaster, outbreak, conflict, or other health emergency; and
- Strengthen national systems and capabilities for rapid mobilization, interoperable deployment, and effective coordination of response teams.





- 1985**
Following the earthquake in Mexico and the eruption of the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in Colombia, governments and organizations from the Americas are meet in Costa Rica to create a Pan-American policy to improve health care in disasters.
- 1987**
Resolution CD32.R10 emphasizes consulting the affected country before sending medical assistance and prioritizes cooperation with neighboring countries in medical support.
- 2003**
PAHO publishes *Guidelines for the use of foreign field hospitals in disasters*.
- 2010**
PAHO publishes the report *Lessons to be learned from the health response to the earthquake in Haiti*.
- Global meeting in Cuba to improve speed and efficiency in the response and deployment of international medical teams.

- 2015**
First international EMT coordinators' course in Panama.
- PAHO presents the EMT image proposed by the Americas and it is unanimously approved during the global meeting held in Panama.
- The name Foreign Medical Teams (FMT) is changed to Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) to encompass the role of national teams.
- 2016**
Ecuador activates its Medical Information and Coordination Cell (CICOM) for the first time and implements EMT standards and tools during the 16 April earthquake.

- 2017**
The UNASUR Health Council approves a declaration of recognition of the EMT initiative, requesting Member States to implement it and to develop EMT registration and response mechanisms.
- Ecuador's Ministry of Health classifies the first two type 2 emergency medical teams in the Americas.
- 2019**
The Bahamas activates its national CICOM and coordinates the deployment of Emergency Medical Teams during the response to Hurricane Dorian.
- The Barbados Defense Force classifies the first military EMT in the Americas as an international medical team.



- 2012**
Resolution CSP28.R19 of the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference is approved for PAHO to facilitate coordination processes and flexible registration and competency development mechanisms for medical response teams.
- 2013**
The WHO publishes minimum standards and a system for classification for foreign medical teams (FMTs) responding to sudden-onset disasters, also known as the "Blue Book."
- 2014**
The FMT component is included for the first time worldwide in the SIMEX INSARAG organized in Costa Rica.
- Resolution CD53.R9 of the 53rd Directing Council of PAHO was approved, which includes the implementation of flexible procedures and registration for medical equipment in the Americas.

- 2016**
Haiti implements national EMT coordination training during the response to Hurricane Matthew.
- During PAHO's 55th Directing Council, the plan (2016–2021) for disaster risk reduction was approved, highlighting the need to strengthen the knowledge and procedures of response teams at the national level.
- 2017**
The regional EMT group of the Americas is created under the chairmanship of Dr. Veronica Espinosa, Minister of Health of Ecuador.
- Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social EMT becomes the first internationally verified team in the Americas.

- 2020–2023**
330 EMTs and 385 national alternative medical care sites (AMCSs) deployed by countries during the response to COVID-19.
- Honduras and Colombia use for the first time the Virtual CICOM platform to coordinate the deployment of Emergency Medical Teams during the response to hurricanes Eta and Iota.
- 2021**
Haiti's Ministry of Health leads the activation of CICOM and coordinates the response of 18 international EMTs during the earthquake emergency.
- 2022**
The SIMEXAmericas simulation platform is used for the first time during the CENTAM GUARDIAN multinational exercise in El Salvador.
- 2023**
Seventeen countries in the Region are developing their EMTs for national and regional responses.

Timeline 1985–2010

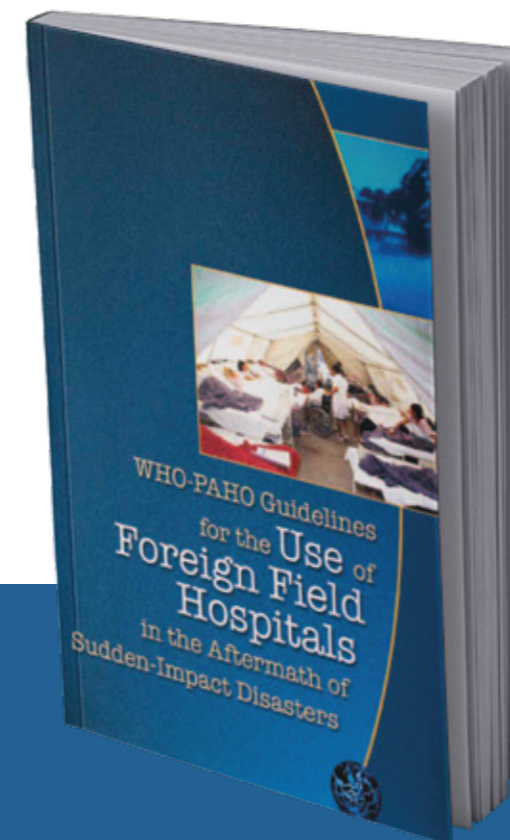
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**CLASSIFICATION AND
MINIMUM STANDARDS
FOR FOREIGN MEDICAL
TEAMS IN SUDDEN ONSET
DISASTERS**

Timeline 2016–2019

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Timeline 2020–2023

- 2020** 330 EMTs and 385 national alternative medical care sites (AMCSs) deployed by countries during the response to COVID-19.
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- 2021** Haiti's Ministry of Health leads the activation of CICOM and coordinates the response of 18 international EMTs during the earthquake emergency.
- 2022** The SIMEXAmericas simulation platform is used for the first time during the CENTAM GUARDIAN multinational exercise in El Salvador.
- 2023** Seventeen countries in the region are developing their EMTs for national and regional responses.



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How the EMT logo was born

In 2015, PAHO with the financial support of the Humanitarian Action Office of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), developed a logo to support and encourage the implementation of the EMT initiative in the Region of the Americas.



Americas Regional Group

The central design of the graphic highlights a stylized letter "M," which simultaneously represents the tremor of an earthquake, the surgical origins of the initiative, and the clinical aspect of medical equipment. This "M" resembles the line of an electrocardiogram (ECG), symbolizing a heart rhythm and emphasizing the "M" in the abbreviation FMT, which stands for Foreign Medical Team. The region implementing the initiative is included at the bottom of the logo.

The color of the logo is light blue, which is associated with quality and professionalism during health care and the importance of maintaining safe and clean environments, including access to clean water that allows for efficient clinical care.

The proposal was presented during the FMT Global Meeting in Geneva in February 2015 and obtained unanimous approval from all countries and organizations during the Second Global Meeting held in Panama in December of the same year. The meeting also agreed to change the name of the initiative to Emergency Medical Teams (EMT) to encompass the role of the national medical teams.



As of 2016, the logo was incorporated in the flags and patches that EMTs received when they were classified as international EMTs.



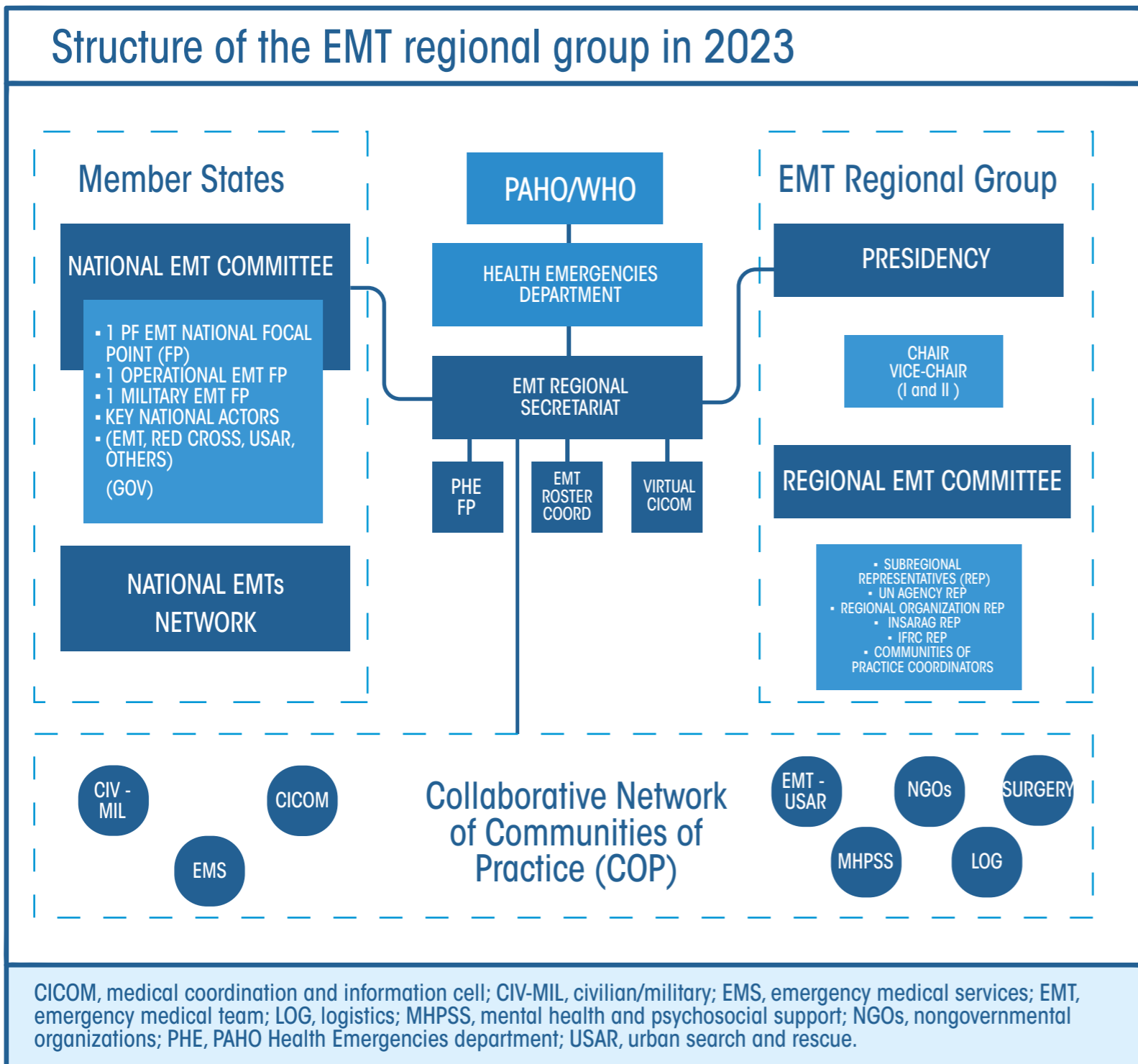
Over the past few years, a multitude of national EMTs in the Americas have adopted the logo alongside their country's flag and three-letter code.



Governance

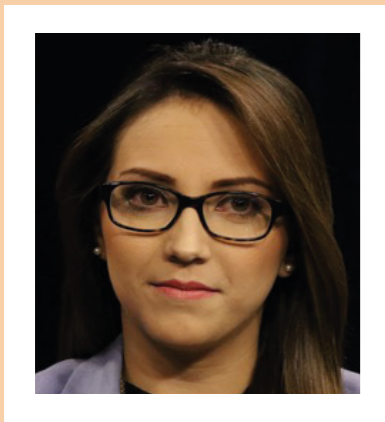
On 25 January 2017, PAHO presents to the countries the technical document with the structure for the creation of the EMT Regional Group of the Americas. A call for nominations for the presidency and the designation of national EMT focal points in the Member States to support the implementation of the EMT initiative is also made.

Three regional meetings in the Americas:



Regional group chairs

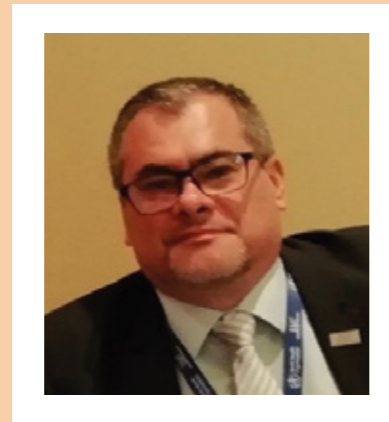
2017 - 2018



VERONICA ESPINOSA



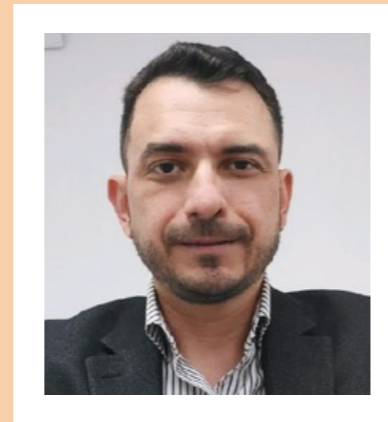
2019



GERARDO SOLANO



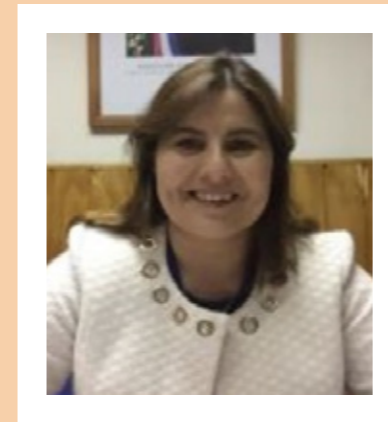
2020



RICARDO HUGHES



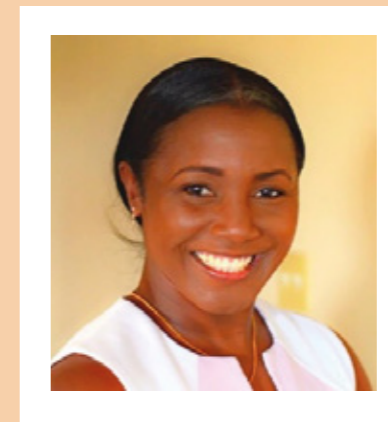
2021



PAOLA PONTONI



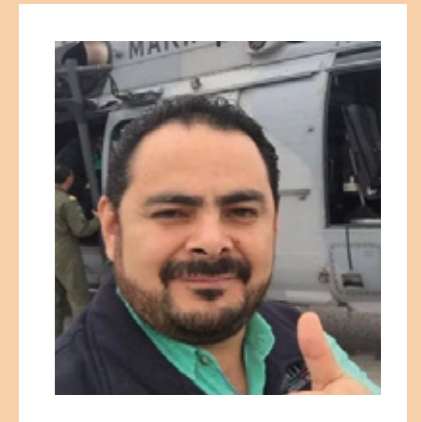
2022



VONETTA GEORGE



2023



GABRIEL GARCIA



EMT focal points

30 countries have designated national EMT focal points



EMT coordinators

Consolidated regional roster with 121 EMT coordinators from 35 countries and territories



Regional resolutions and regulations



Regional technical documents



National resolutions and regulations



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Regional implementation with country leadership

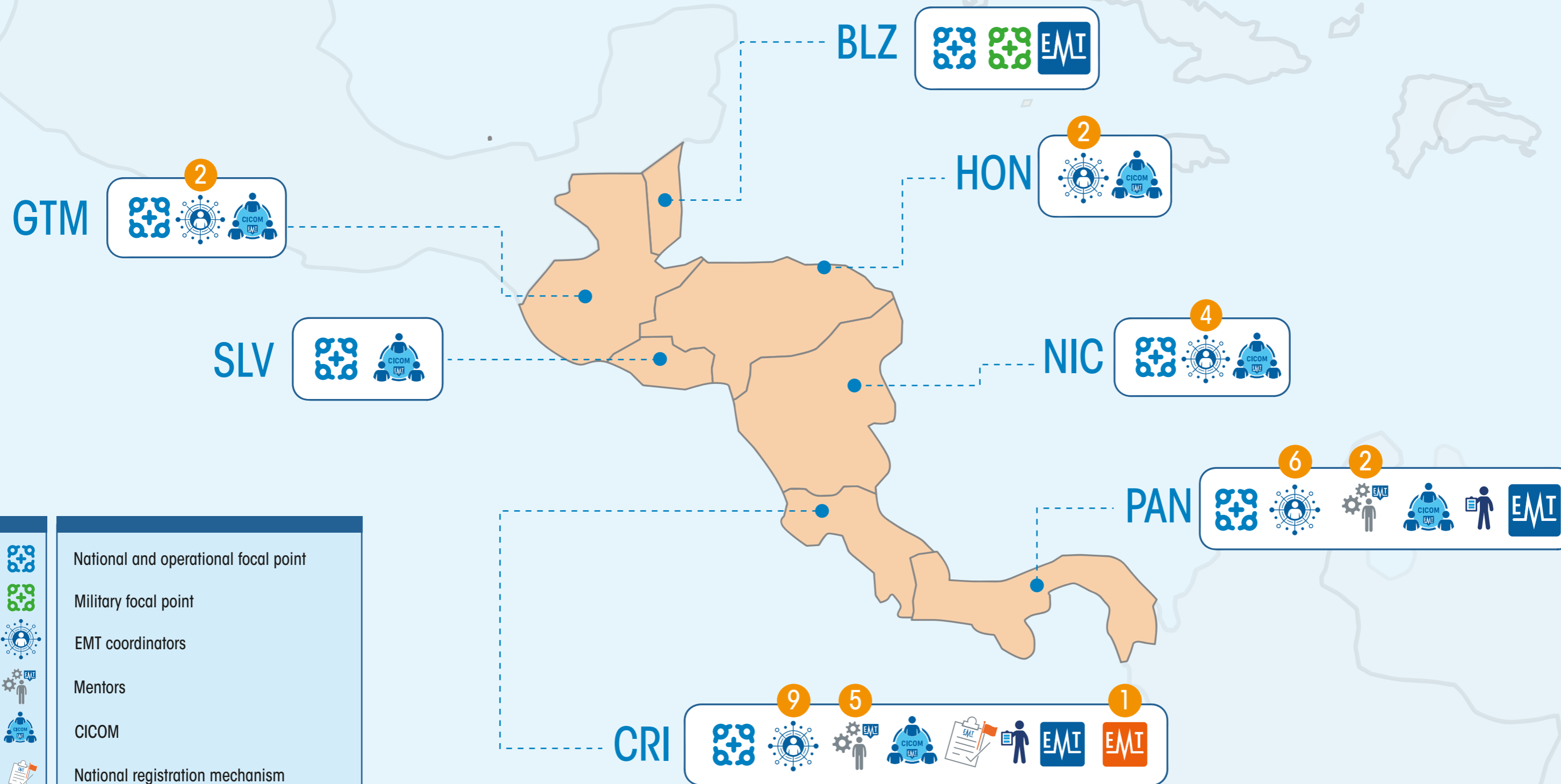
North America



	National and operational focal point
	Military focal point
	EMT coordinators
	Mentors
	CICOM
	National registration mechanism
	National regulations
	National EMT capacity
	Classified international EMTs

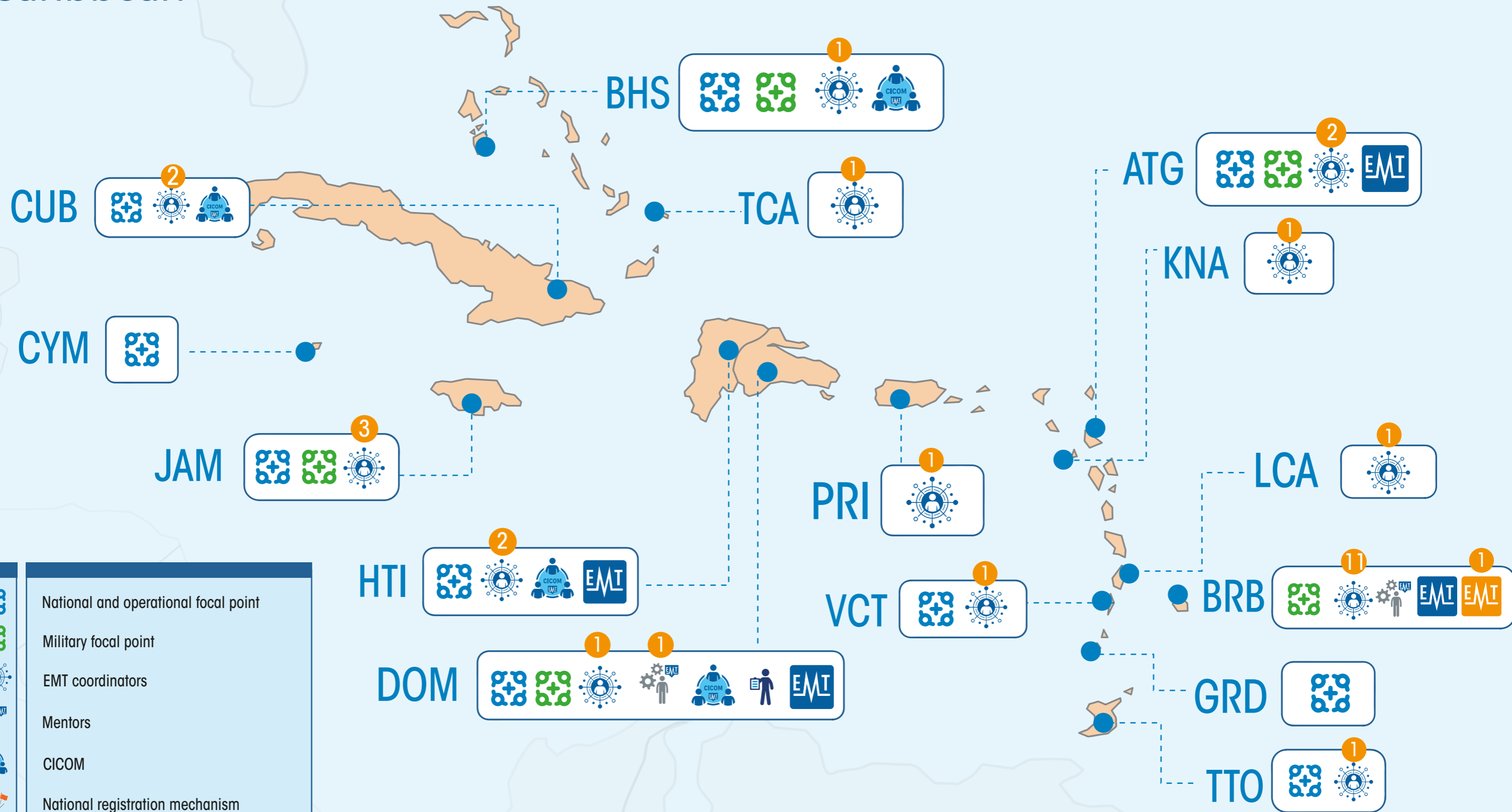
Regional implementation with country leadership

Central America



Regional implementation with country leadership

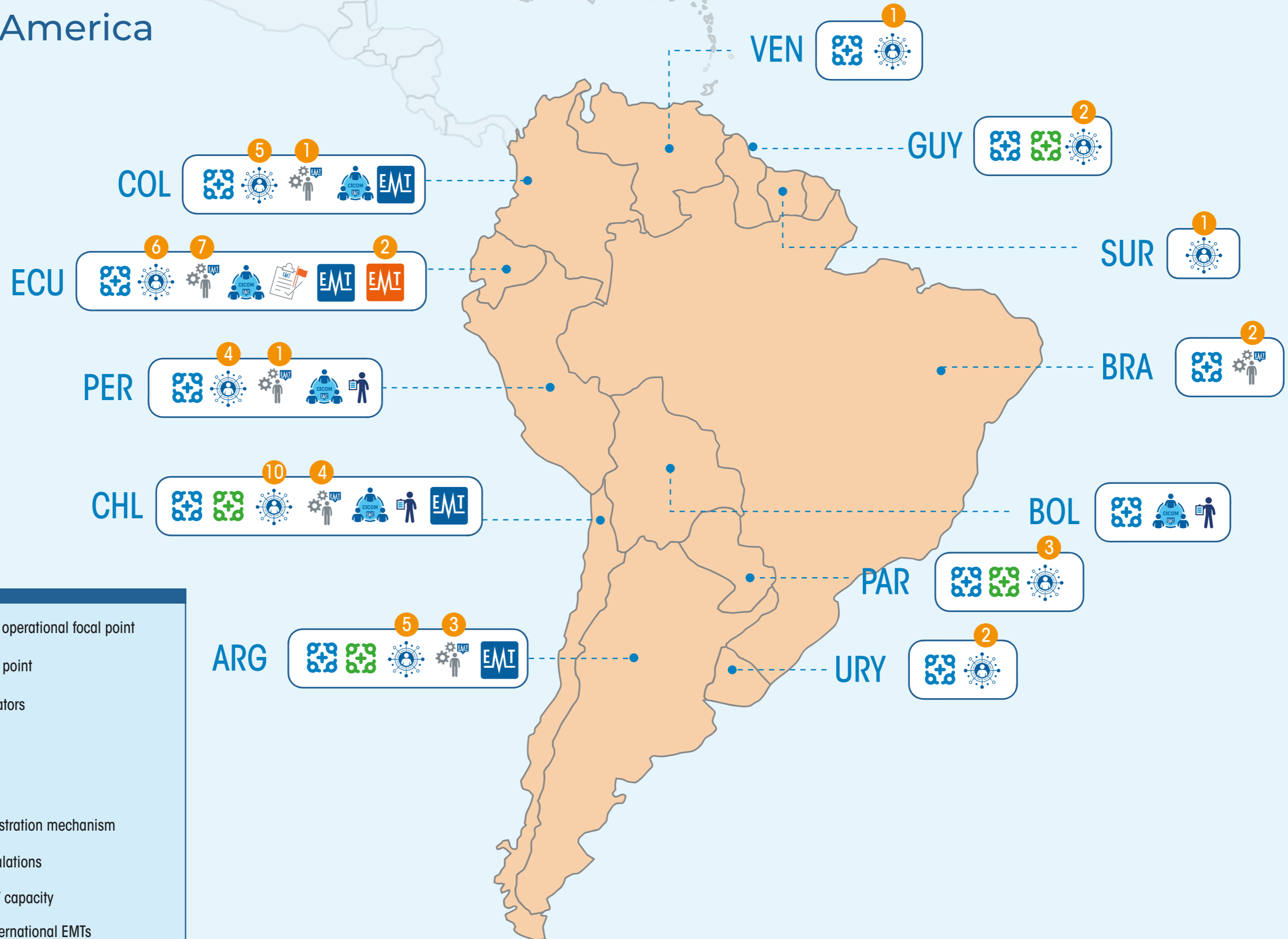
Caribbean



	National and operational focal point
	Military focal point
	EMT coordinators
	Mentors
	CICOM
	National registration mechanism
	National regulations
	National EMT capacity
	Classified international EMTs

Regional implementation with country leadership

South America



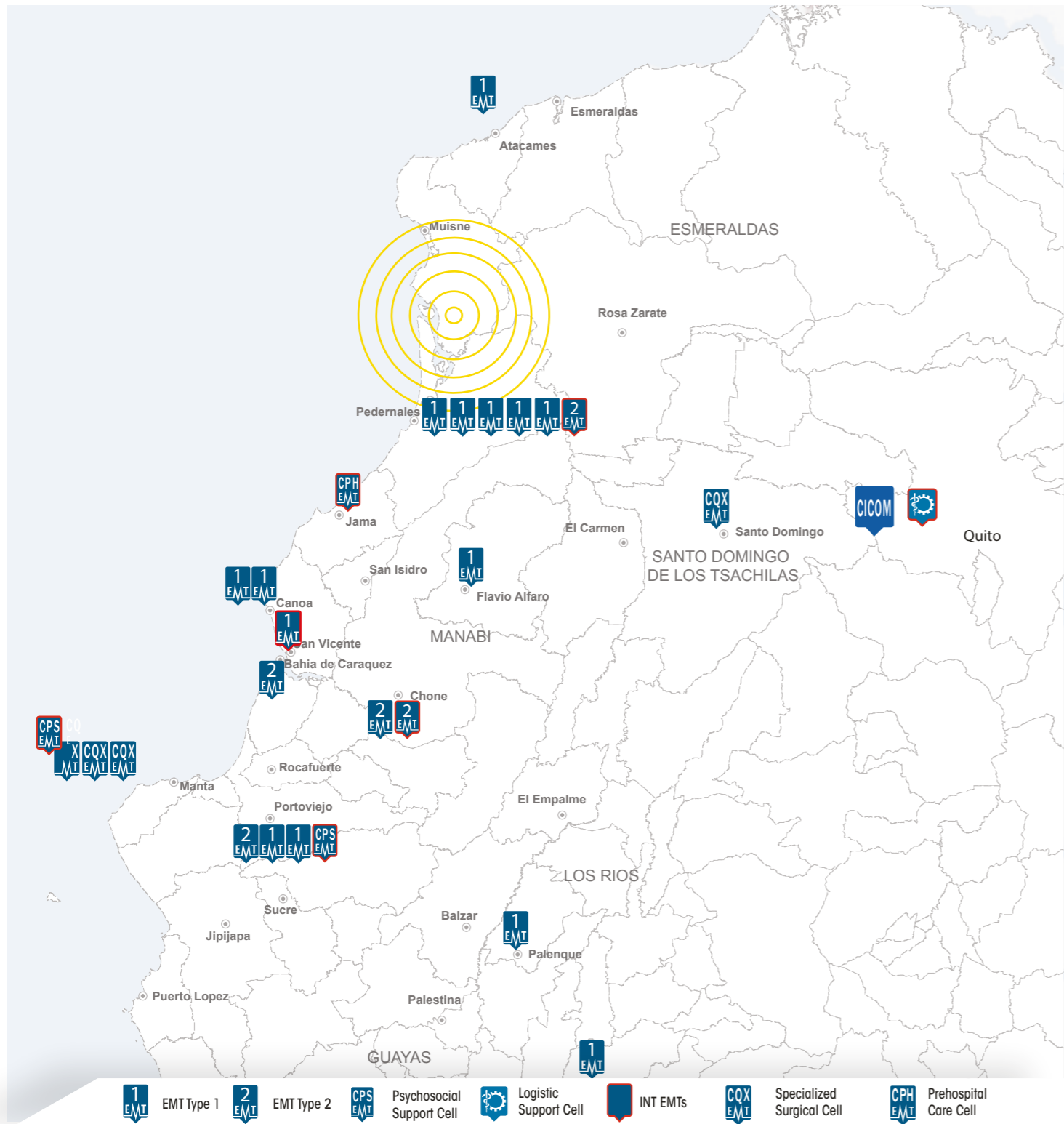
	National and operational focal point
	Military focal point
	EMT coordinators
	Mentors
	CICOM
	National registration mechanism
	National regulations
	National EMT capacity
	Classified international EMTs

Regional emergency response

Earthquake

Mobilization of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT)

Ecuador - 27 April, 2016



Hurricane

Mobilization of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT)

The Bahamas - 1–2 September, 2019



Hurricanes Eta and Iota

Mobilization of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT)

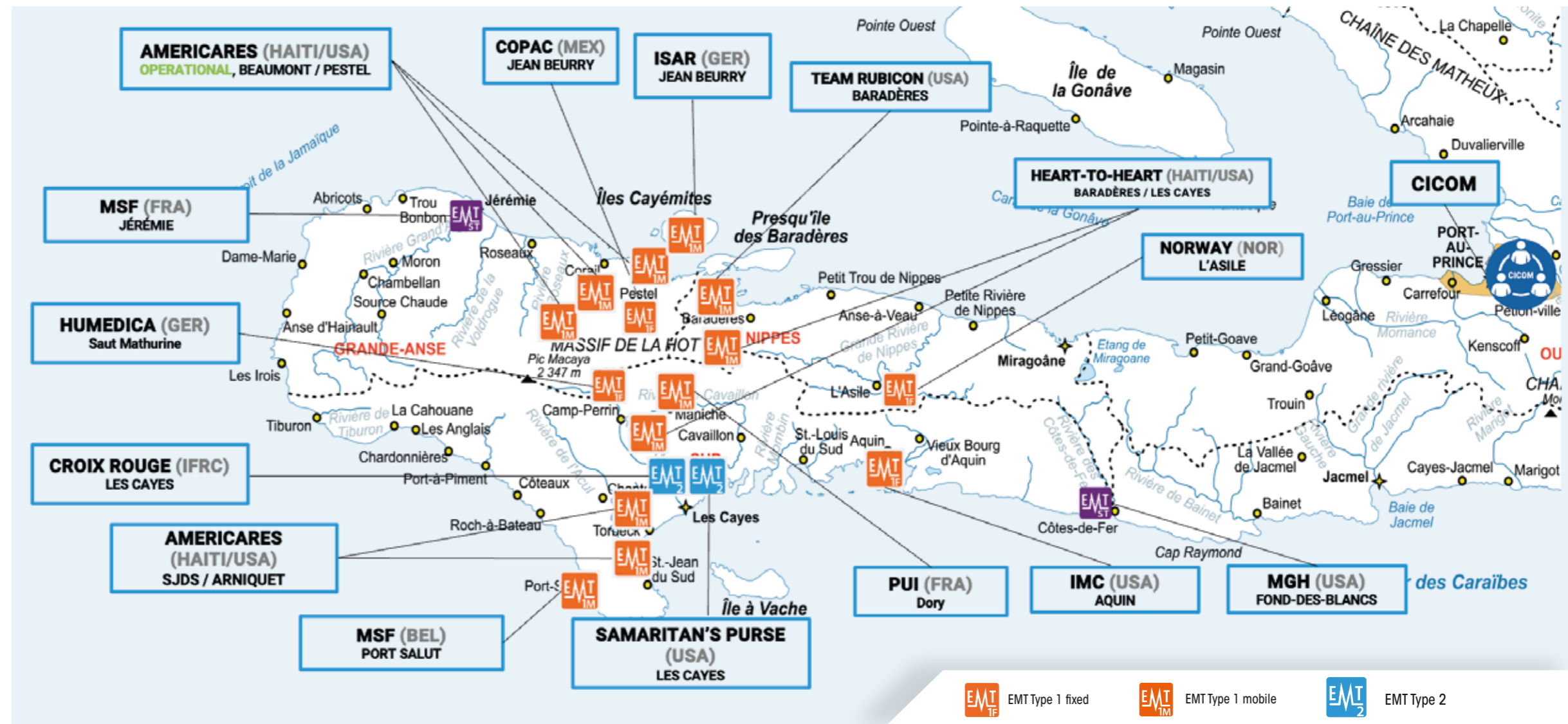
23 November, 2020



Earthquake

Mobilization of Emergency Medical Teams (EMT)

Haiti - 7 October 2021





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The EMTs played a key role in expanding the capacity of national health systems. PAHO worked with its partners and the regional network of EMT focal points to coordinate local responses and compliance with COVID-19 recommendations. Regional EMTs supported clinical care in border and remote areas, facilitating access to migrants and indigenous populations.

PAHO maintained up-to-date information on deployed EMTs and alternative medical care sites (AMCS) throughout the Region through the COVID-19 digital EMT response tracking dashboard.

The deployment of EMTs to support the COVID-19 response was primarily national, given the unavailability of international EMTs as a result of travel restrictions and the needs of countries to support their own national health systems.

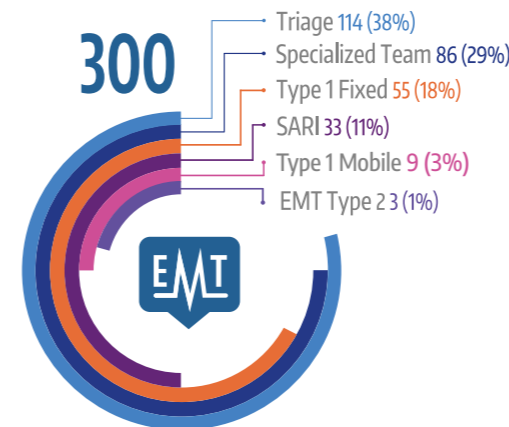
Regional EMT missions



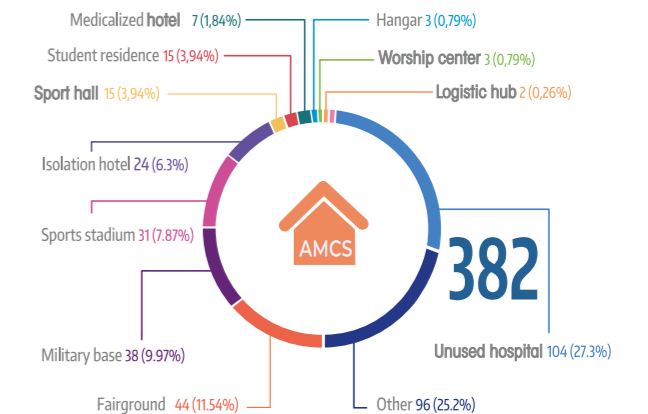
National response EMT/AMCS expansion beds



EMT: Emergency Medical Team



AMCS: Alternative Medical Care Site



**USD 5.8 M
PROCUREMENT**

With the support of:



EMT operational support kits donated

2020

8 Water supply kits

2021

7 Water supply kits
7 Waste management kits
2 VAX operational support modules

2022

6 Water supply kits
10 Waste management kits
1 Clinical equipment kit
2 Inpatient modules
14 Image kits

15 Field training missions (5 days) on operational support

ATG - ARG - BRB - BLZ - BOL - COL - CRI - DOM - ECU - HTI - JAM - MEX - PAN - TTO

EMT operational support kits donated



Evaluation of the response to COVID-19: Role of the EMTs

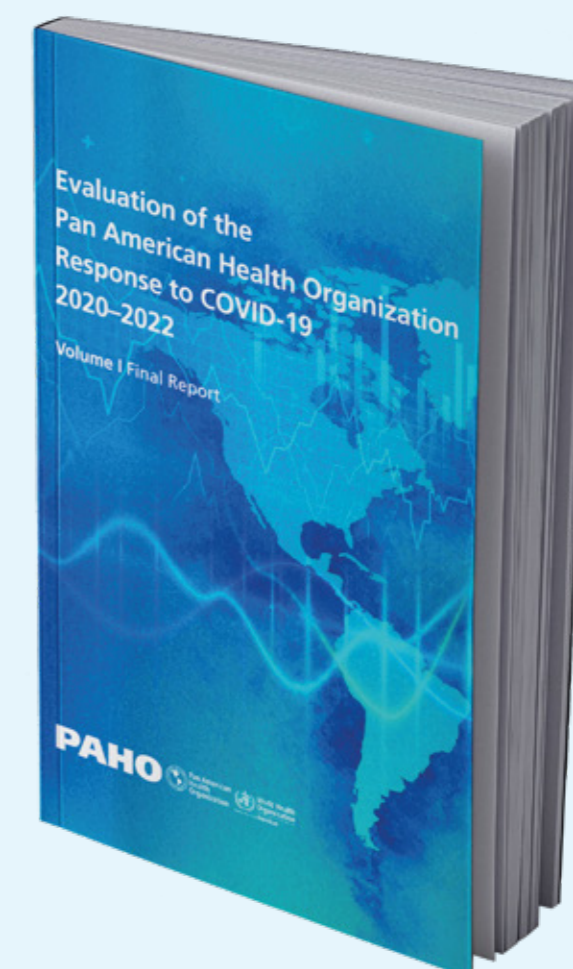
Rapid activation of EMTs was identified as one of the activities that worked well in the external evaluation of PAHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Region of the Americas.

In addition, the EMT response was identified as one of the most efficient measures adopted in the following strategic pillars during the pandemic:

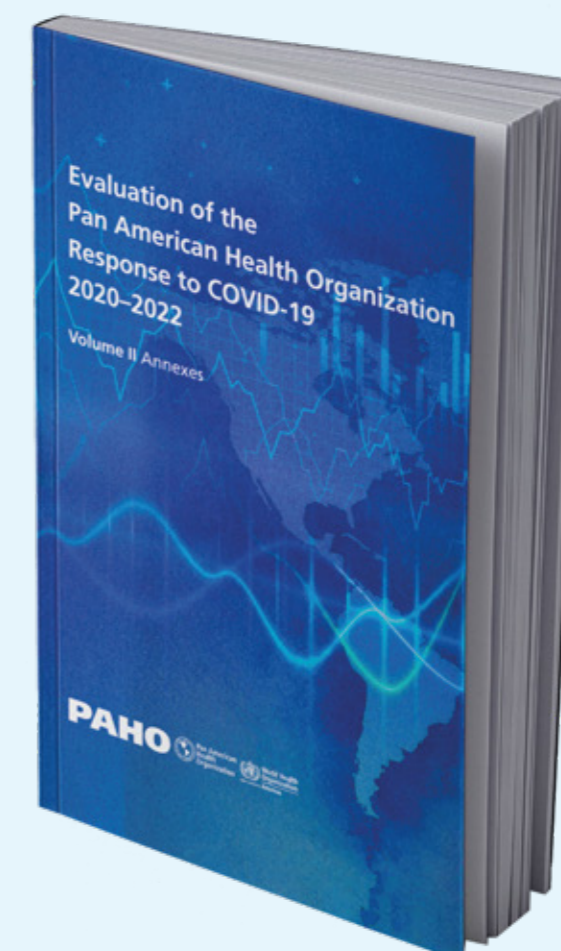
Pillars	EMT response
Pillar 4: Entry points, international travel and transportation, and mass events	The EMTs contributed to clinical care in border and remote areas, facilitating access to services for migrant and indigenous populations
Pillar 7: Case management, clinical operations, and therapeutic options	Organization of EMTs in auditoriums, stadiums, and other existing spaces suitable to be adapted for specialized medical care
Pillar 9: Strengthening essential health services and systems	Deployment of national EMTs and commissioning of alternate sites of medical care (AMCSs), providing capacity for inpatient and critical care beds



Vol I. Final Report

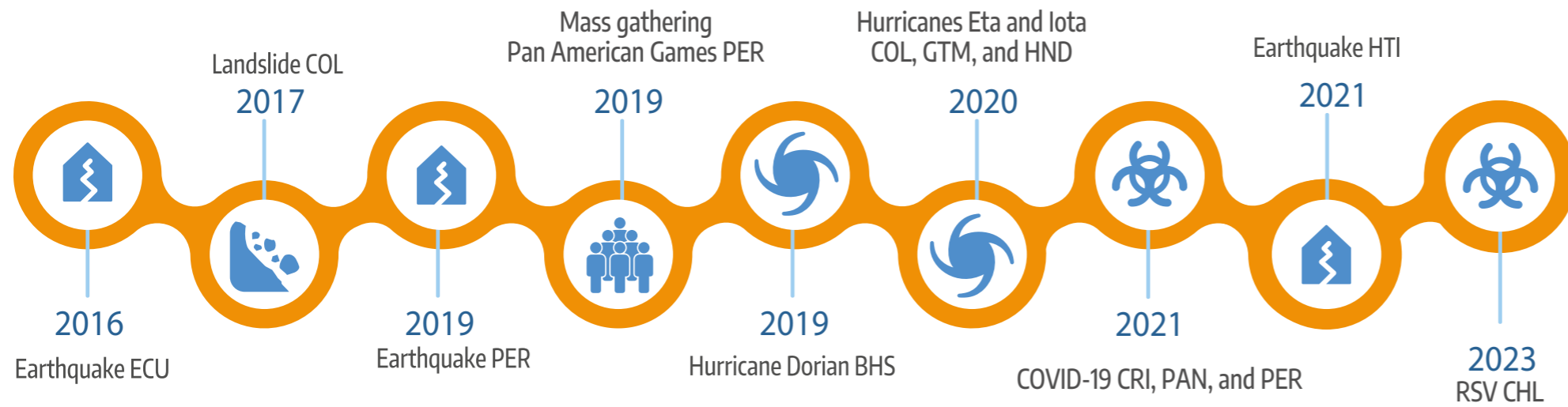


Vol II. Annexes



CICOM timeline 2016–2023

Activation in emergencies:



CICOM trainings

18 Regional

20 National

4 donated CICOM kits

(BOL, COL, GTM, and HON)

- ultrahigh-impact copolymer transport case
- laptop with printer
- router and ethernet/HDMI cables
- stationery and electrical equipment
- portable projector
- printed matrices for IM
- Led multiple time zone clock
- clipboards with field tripods

CICOM Activation

27

Activations

during emergency and/or SIMEX exercises

Online tools

CICOM online course

4741 professionals enrolled



CICOM guidance



CICOM toolkit



Virtual CICOM

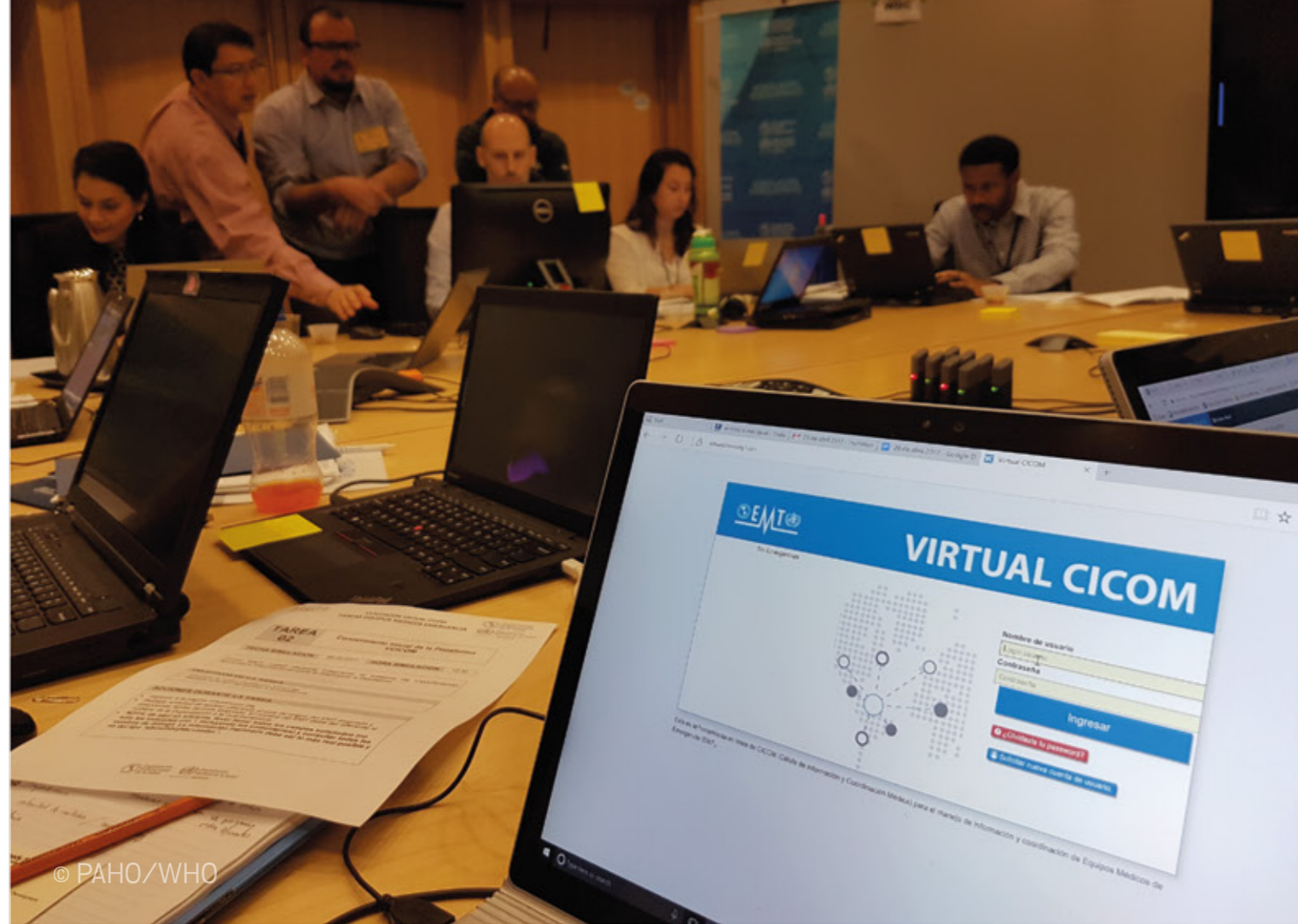
The Virtual CICOM is an online tool for information management and coordination for Emergency Medical Teams response, facilitating the flow of information among all the responding and coordination actors.

82 user accounts created from 18 countries

(CAN, COL, CHE, CHL, CRI, DEU, ESP, FIN, FRA, GBR, HTI, ITA, ISR, JAM, MEX, NOR, PAN, USA)

4 National Virtual CICOM

30 EMTs registered



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© PAHO/WHO



© PAHO/WHO

EMT participation during SIMEX exercises

36 SIMEX

REGIONAL

22

NATIONAL

14



BY EVENTS:



18
EARTHQUAKE



13
BIOLOGICAL EVENT



6
HURRICANE

BY CAPACITIES:

20
CICOM

8
CIVIL MILITARY COLLABORATION

23
EMT RESPONSE

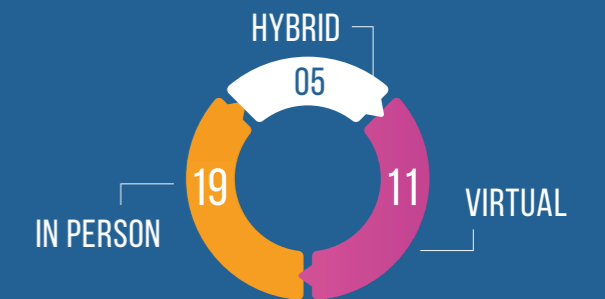
10
EMT OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

12
EMT/USAR COORDINATION

17
HEOC

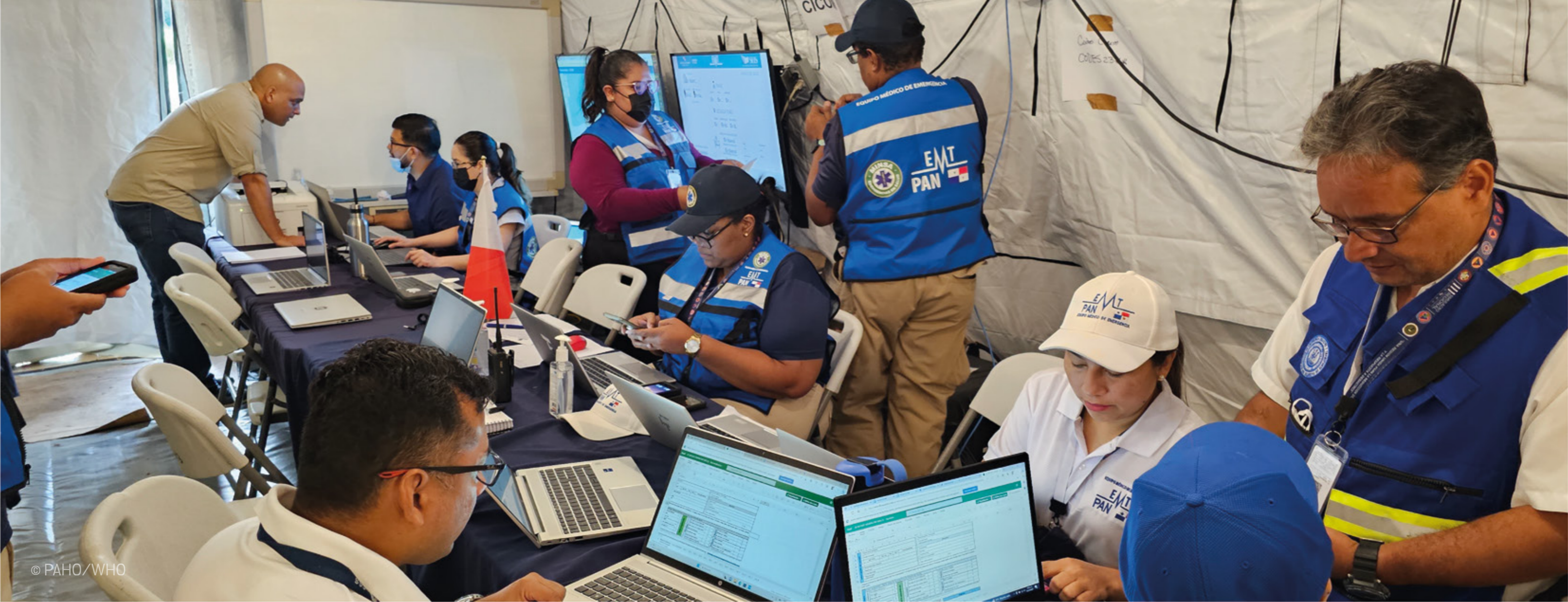
PARTICIPANTS

7925



Full-scale EMT-USAR exercises





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Global classification



Costa Rica

2017

- Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social - fixed type 1



Ecuador

2017

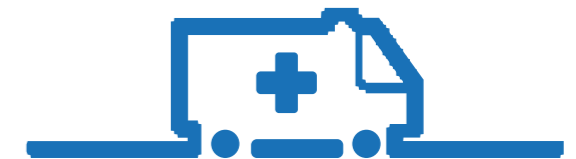
- Ministry of Public Health - two type 2
- Ministry of Public Health - specialized surgical team



Barbados

2019

- Barbados Defense Force - type 1 fixed



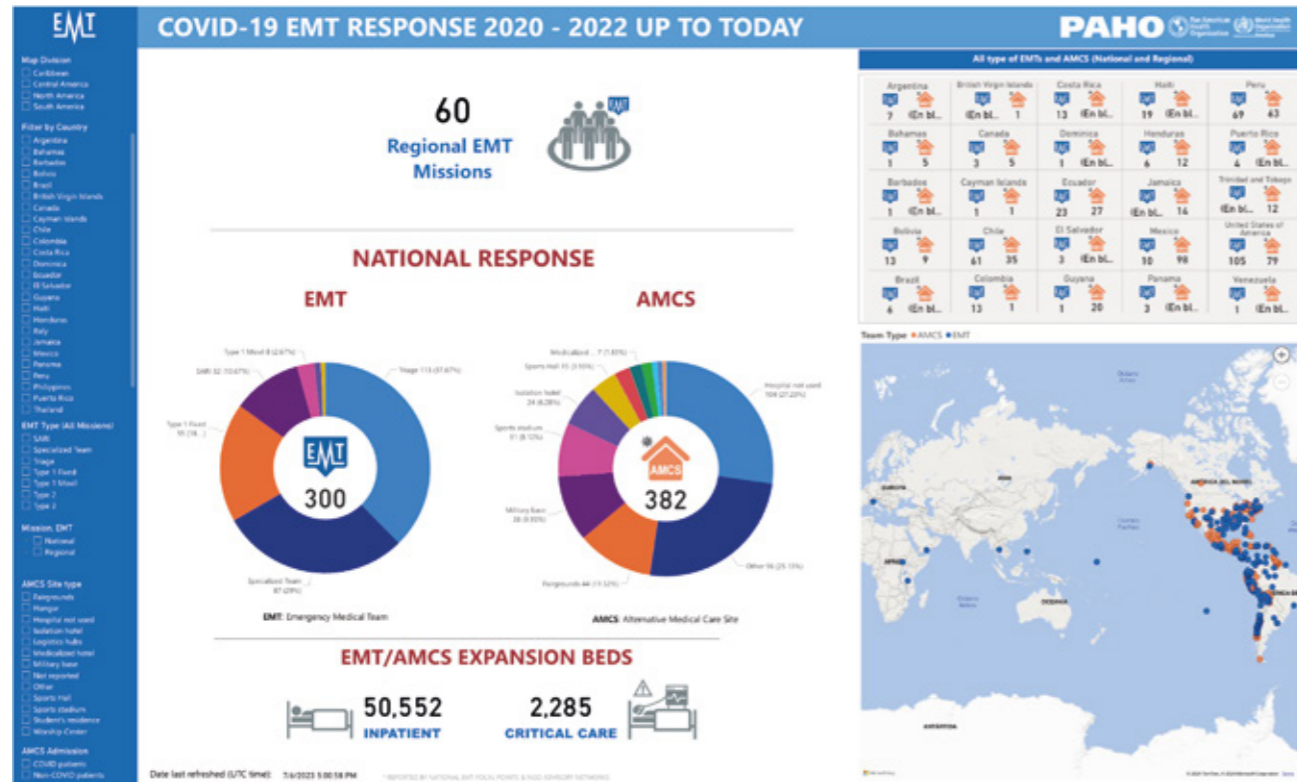
United States

2018 – 2023

- 2018 Team Rubicon - type 1 mobile
- 2021 International Medical Corps - type 1 mobile and fixed
- 2022 AmeriCares - type 1 mobile
- 2023 Heart to Heart International - type 1 mobile



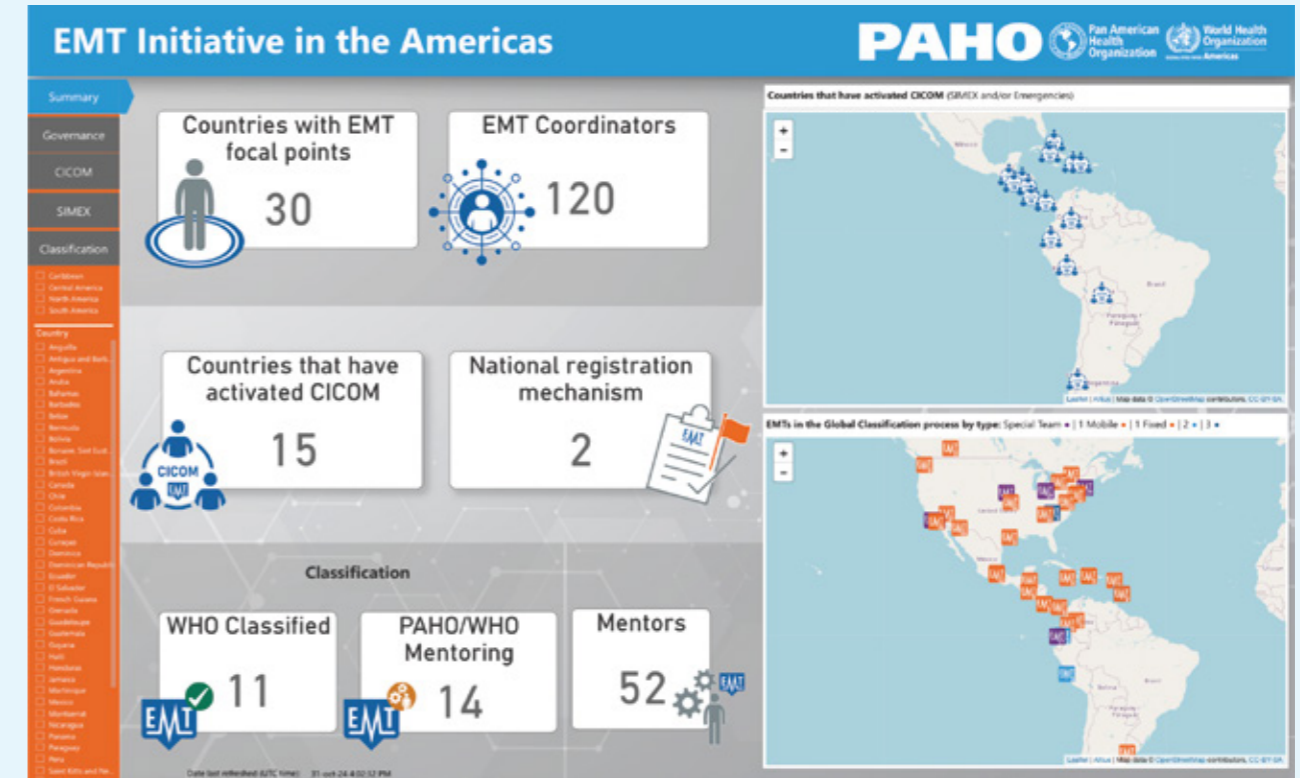
Applied digital innovation for EMT response



"EMT COVID-19" digital tracking dashboard



The "EMT COVID-19" digital tracking dashboard provided real-time updates on deployed EMTs and AMCSs throughout the region during the pandemic response.



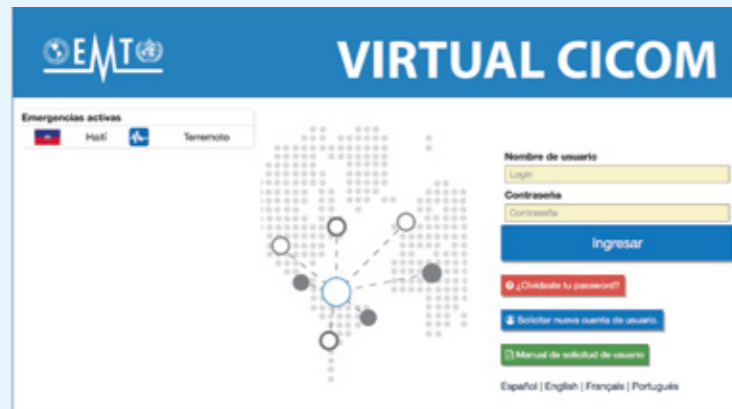
EMT Americas digital monitoring dashboard



The digital monitoring dashboard of the EMT initiative in the Americas reports daily on the progress of the countries and the Region in the implementation and adoption of standards, mechanisms, and tools to strengthen and coordinate the response of emergency medical teams.



Applied digital innovation for EMT response



Virtual CICOM is an online tool for managing the request and offer of emergency medical teams and the coordination of their response and deployment. The platform facilitates the flow of information between all response and coordination actors.



SISMED911 is a technological platform to optimize the processes of receiving and prioritizing 911 calls and coordinating and dispatching emergency response resources. When time is of the essence to ensure that the patient receives the necessary care and can be transported to the appropriate facility, this type of platform improves response times and ensures effective communication between all entities involved in the care and transport of the patient.



O2PREP is an application to support EMTs and new hospitals or hospitals in the process of expansion or remodeling in their medical oxygen management. The tool allows a projection of the expected oxygen demand according to the number of beds, as well as possible uses derived from emergency or contingency situations.



SIMEXAmericas is a collaborative virtual tool that allows simulation exercises focused on emergency, disaster, and pandemic response. The tool allows SIMEX to be adapted to a virtual or hybrid environment and facilitates the direct interaction of participants by performing tasks and exchanging messages in real time and asynchronously.

The EMT Ignite webinars have established themselves as an essential meeting point for the exchange of experiences and best practices. These webinars are designed to strengthen the clinical and operational capabilities of EMT and pre-hospital emergency medical services (EMS) in the Americas.

The webinars foster collaboration and joint learning, enabling real-time virtual interaction between panelists and participants. During the pandemic, they were instrumental in disseminating best practices and recommendations among EMT network partners, 911 systems, and health authorities for COVID-19 response

Number of EMT Ignites since 2018

79

Number of participants

12 082

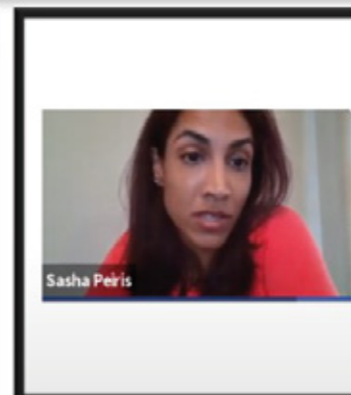
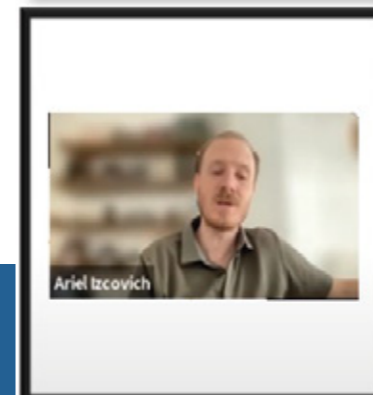
First webinar

20 April 2018

Technical standards and best practices in medical waste management for EMTs

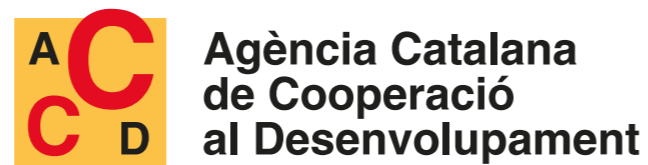
Distribution by area

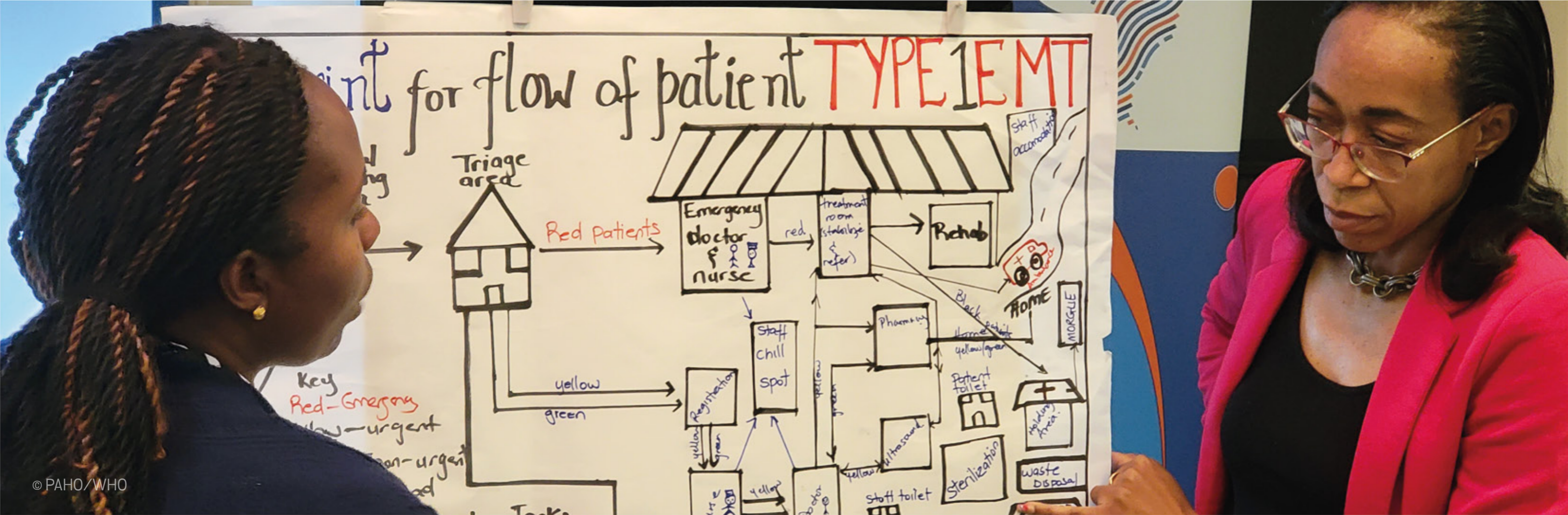
- Clinical: 19 webinars
- Rapid expansion of clinical care capabilities: 12 webinars
- Medical oxygen: 11 webinars
- Emergency response: 10 webinars
- Logistics: 8 webinars
- Pre-hospital emergency services: 5 webinars
- WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene): 4 webinars
- Coordination: 4 webinars
- Standards review and update: 3 webinars
- Management: 3 webinars



Partners in the regional implementation of the EMT initiative

PAHO/WHO sincerely appreciates the support for the strengthening of national emergency medical team capacities and the development of strategies for medical surge capacities during disasters and pandemics in the Region of the Americas.





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Together We Respond

#EMTamericas

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