

Regional consultation on the WHO Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health

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Introduction

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the greatest threats to the control of communicable diseases. The misuse and overuse of antimicrobial agents in the human, animal and environmental sectors has been a major driver of the global increase in AMR. Other factors include lack of access to affordable and quality antimicrobials, lack of awareness and knowledge, lack of access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, and poor infection prevention and control in healthcare settings and in the community. Optimizing the use of antimicrobial medicines in human, animal and plant health is one of the priority strategic lines of action of the Global Action Plan on AMR.

In this regard, WHO developed, in response to Member States' request, [Global Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health](#).

In order to ensure wide dissemination and adaptation of the policy guidance, WHO's Department of Global Coordination and Partnership on AMR has liaised with WHO Regional Offices to organize regional consultations with regional and national stakeholders.

The Pan American Health Organization/WHO Office for the Americas, through its AMR Special Program in the Department of Communicable Disease and Environmental Determinants of Health and its Medicines and Other Health Technologies Unit in the Department of Health Services and Systems, organized two two-day workshops (July 14-15, 2021 for Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries; July 20-21, 2021 for English, Dutch and French-speaking countries) to consult Member States on the roll-out of the WHO Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health in the Americas.

Objectives of the workshops

Overall objective

- To disseminate the WHO Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health among key stakeholders and representatives of national health authorities in the Region, and discuss its adaptation and implementation.

Specific objectives

- Discuss the five pillars of the policy guidance; identify challenges and facilitators on in their adaptation to the local context and implementation at the national and sub-national levels.
- Identify needs for technical cooperation.
- Develop a generic roadmap for the adaptation and implementation of the WHO Global Policy in the Region.

Organization of the workshops

In order to facilitate and organize the discussion within the groups, working tools (e.g. Matrix for the identification of facilitators, challenges and technical cooperation required; Roadmap Model) and presentation templates were prepared and shared with the participants, moderators and rapporteurs before the workshops. In addition, the corresponding links to the WHO Global Policy Guidance in Spanish, English and French were shared via e-mail with all participants.

In addition to the individual presentations of each working group in the plenary sessions, a summary of the contributions of the different groups was prepared and shared with all attendees prior to the beginning of the following day's activities.

Participants

The participating countries and attendees of each workshop are listed below.

First Workshop (July 14 & 15) - Latin America

- **Participating countries**

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Dominican Republic
- Uruguay

- **Attendees**

- 18 countries
- 160 attendees from the region (divided into 5 working groups)
- 27 PAHO personnel
- 6 WHO collaborators

Second Workshop (July 20 and 21) - Caribbean

- **Participating countries**

- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Curaçao
- Guyana
- Haiti
- Turks and Caicos Islands
- Jamaica
- Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
- Suriname
- Trinidad and Tobago

- **Attendees**

- 11 countries
- 40 attendees from the countries of the region (divided into 3 working groups)
- 20 PAHO personnel
- 4 WHO collaborators

Activities

Dr. Pilar Ramón Pardo (CDE/AR, PAHO WDC) and Dr. Thomas Joseph (Unit Head for Antimicrobial Stewardship and Awareness Unit at WHO Headquarters) opened both workshops highlighting the Region's commitment to mitigating AMR and welcoming the participation of Member States to guide the roll-out and strengthening of antimicrobial stewardship policies.

During the first day of both workshops (Latin America and the Caribbean), local experiences of some countries regarding the implementation of activities related to the optimization of the use of antimicrobials in human health were presented.

In addition, Dr. Thomas Joseph presented the general concepts of the WHO Global Policy Guidance (Day 1) and the National and Facility Assessment Tools, along with considerations on the critical steps for the implementation and scale-up of Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities that should be considered and adapted to the national, sub-national and local context in each country (Day 2).

Country contributions on the first day of the workshop

During the first day of the workshop, representatives from participating countries reviewed the 5 pillars of the WHO Global Policy Guidance focusing on answering the following questions regarding their adaptation and implementation:

- ✓ What would be the challenges in implementing the pillars?

- ✓ What would be the enablers for implementing the pillars?
- ✓ What technical cooperation would be required?

The main results of the review and discussion are summarized hereafter.

Challenges and/or facilitators in pillar implementation

Policies, Regulations and Access

- ✓ Achieve the **support and commitment of the authorities** at different levels, for the implementation of the Global Policy, generating State Policies that guarantee its continuity and sustainability over time through government changes.
- ✓ **Adapt the Global Policy** to the specific realities of each country and within it, to each region, given the **existing heterogeneity**.
- ✓ Articulate the integrated activities of the **5 pillars** of the policy among **all interested areas or groups** (Ministries, Regulatory Authorities, Health Systems, Scientific Societies, Universities, Civil Society, etc...) aligning them to the objectives of the Global Policy within the framework of "One Health".
- ✓ Ensure **access** to all medicines, including safe and quality-assured medicines based on evidence, for the different countries in the region.
- ✓ Effectively **control** the importation and disposal of expired antimicrobials.
- ✓ Ensure in **all countries of the region** that **outpatient dispensing** of antimicrobials is effectively carried out through **prescriptions**.
- ✓ Ensure **access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene** (WASH) across each country.
- ✓ Adequately **articulate** the antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASP) with the **Infection Prevention and Control Program** at the health facility level.

Clinical guidelines and digital resources

- ✓ Ensure access to user-friendly, evidence-based **treatment guidelines at the point of prescription that take** into account local epidemiology.
- ✓ Ensure country access to **standardized databases** to capture validated information on the appropriateness of prescribing, antimicrobial consumption, pharmacovigilance, multidrug resistance, Healthcare Associated Infections (HAIs) and their impact, **generating publicly accessible indicators** while maintaining confidentiality of sources.

Awareness and behavior change

- ✓ Promote and achieve **cultural changes** (shifting established habits) in prescribing (physicians), dispensing (pharmacists), administering (nursing) and consuming (general population), by identifying and targeting the factors that generate such behaviors.
- ✓ Strengthen AMR **awareness campaigns** (such as the World AMR Awareness Week, "WAAW") on using, for example, social networks for a wider, more targeted reach.

Education and research

- ✓ To achieve an adequate level of **training of health personnel** in the different areas of health care.
- ✓ Include the topic of AMR in the curricula of the different levels of **education** (primary, secondary, tertiary, university).
- ✓ Promote **fundamental research and quality clinical trials** in the region in relation to the use of antimicrobials to generate local evidence.

Technical cooperation required for the implementation of the pillars

Generation of quality evidence

- ✓ Development of **economic evaluations** (ex. cost-effectiveness and cost-utility studies) of the use of new antimicrobials in the region.

- ✓ Development of high-quality **attributable impact studies** (mortality, costs) related to HCAs and in particular to multidrug resistance in the different countries of the region.

Implementation of interventions/activities

- ✓ Support for the **development of ASPs in low complexity hospitals, chronic care centers and ambulatory care centers.**
- ✓ Expand and validate **new indicators** in ASPs.
- ✓ Train and strengthen **Infection Prevention and Control Units.**
- ✓ Extend support to **reference laboratories** (laboratory networks).
- ✓ Increase and improve the **diagnostic capacity** of microbiology laboratories.
- ✓ Collaborate in the development and implementation of **multimodal and continuous improvement strategies for** the antimicrobial stewardship.
- ✓ Implement the **AWaRe** operational plan at all levels.
- ✓ Provide cooperation to facilitate **access to antimicrobials through** PAHO's Strategic Fund.
- ✓ Collaborate in the development and implementation of **communication campaigns** to raise awareness about AMR among all target populations.
- ✓ Collaborate in the implementation of **behavior change strategies** for health personnel and the general population.
- ✓ Support the **development of measurement tools for monitoring and evaluation.**
- ✓ Provide technical cooperation to develop a single universal **information system/database** for the entire chain related to the prescription and consumption of antimicrobials at different levels (hospital and outpatient).
- ✓ Facilitate access to **successful AMS models**, within and outside the region, and **sharing of learnings from country implementation.**

Partners and allies

- ✓ To ensure the support of **international organizations** and/or reference institutions in the Region.

Country contributions on the second day of the workshop

During the second day of the workshop, representatives from the participating countries worked on the development of a roadmap for the adaptation and implementation of the WHO Global Policy.

The main aspects identified by the attendees are detailed below.

Main aspects identified in the development of a roadmap

- ✓ **Leverage existing infrastructure.** In all steps, it is crucial to consider what human, material and financial resources exist and how they can be leveraged.
- ✓ **Conduct stakeholder mapping** and involve stakeholders from the outset in the design, implementation and evaluation of the Plan to foster ownership of the WHO Global Policy at various levels.
- ✓ **Use a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach**, engaging groups, institutions and agencies at regional, subregional and national levels (e.g., Ministry of Health, NGOs, academic institutions, professional associations, etc.).
- ✓ **Adapt the Plan to the local context**, based on national priorities, available resources and local evidence.
- ✓ **Identify gaps** to be filled and problems to be overcome, while formulating recommendations to address them. This can be achieved through the implementation of pilot projects.
- ✓ **Take into account lessons learned in the past**, in all these steps, to favor approaches and strategies that have worked and use resources effectively.

- ✓ **Ensure that all steps have reasonable timelines** for short-, medium- or long-term objectives, with clear deliverables and prioritization.
- ✓ **Planning should be cyclical**, with continuous assessment of progress and redirection of implementation as needed. Monitoring and evaluation will be the key to success.
- ✓ Mobilize human, material, and financial resources, taking into account the **Plan's sustainability**. Therefore, the proper identification of resource needs should not be overlooked in the planning phase.

Next steps

PAHO will finalize and share with all Member States the generic road map for the adaptation and implementation of the WHO Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health, developed during the workshops. PAHO will continue to provide technical cooperation to countries of the Region for the implementation of National Action Plans on AMR including its strategic line of action to optimize the use of antimicrobial medicines in human and animal health. Additionally, pilots for the roll-out of the WHO Policy Guidance on Integrated Antimicrobial Stewardship Activities in human health will be conducted in four countries in the region (Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, and Nicaragua) that may further inform adaptation and implementation of the Global Policy Guidance in other countries of the Region.