

THE MEASLES AND RUBELLA POST ELIMINATION REGIONAL MONITORING AND RE-VERIFICATION COMMISSION OF PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION

TERMS OF REFERENCE

BACKGROUND

The Region of the Americas was declared free from rubella and measles by the International Expert Committee for Documenting and Verifying Measles, Rubella, and Congenital Rubella Syndrome Elimination (CRS) in the Americas in 2015 and 2016, respectively, thereby becoming the first region of the World Health Organization (WHO) to achieve this distinction. However, maintaining the status in an increasingly interconnected world will be an ongoing challenge in the coming years because countries are constantly at risk of importing and reintroducing the viruses and thus undoing the progress they have made.

In September 2017, the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference approved a plan to maintain the Region free of measles, rubella and CRS. The plan lays out four strategic lines of action for countries to follow in order to sustain elimination: a) maintaining population immunity through high vaccination coverage; b) strengthening surveillance systems to quickly identify outbreaks of measles and rubella viruses; c) developing national capacities; d) and establishing standard mechanisms for a rapid response to imported cases of these diseases.

This regional plan also urges to PAHO to establish a new regional expert Commission to monitor maintenance of the elimination; and that the countries keep their national committees, with new terms of reference for monitoring the sustainability of their elimination gains in their territories.

In Venezuela in 2018 and Brazil in 2019 respectively, endemic transmission of measles virus was reestablished, after following 12 months of uninterrupted

circulation (genotype D8); while the remaining 33 PAHO Member States remain measles free.

PURPOSE OF THE PAHO – REGIONAL MEASLES AND RUBELLA POST ELIMINATION MONITORING COMMISSION (RMC)

The purpose and goal of the RMC is to review progress towards the sustainability or re-verification of elimination of measles, rubella and CRS in the Region of the Americas.

PRINCIPLES OF THE RMC

THE PAHO RMC WILL:

1. Function as an independent commission and report to PAHO's Director.
2. Monitor the sustainability status of measles and rubella elimination in each Member State.
3. Re-verify measles and rubella elimination independently for countries and for the Region (after national committees submit their reports).
4. Work with national independent expert bodies engaged in monitoring and re-verification processes.
5. Document the impact of the elimination initiative on strengthening national health systems.

FUNCTIONS AND WORKING METHODOLOGY OF THE PAHO-RMC

1. Guidance Function

- To develop a regional framework to assess the sustainability of the elimination of measles and rubella.
- The framework will establish the main objectives, basic principles, essential criteria and main components that Member States will need to follow for sustaining or re-verification of their elimination status.

2. *Re-Verification Function*

- To assess, upon request by a national committee, if a country is ready for re-verification.
- To re-verify the achievement of measles and rubella elimination status for individual countries and for the Region.
- To review, analyze and approve, when necessary, the annual reports provided by the national committees in each country. The RMC will provide recommendations when standard verification data is not enough or inconsistent.

3. *Advisory Function*

- To advise national health authorities and committees on the process for collecting and analyzing the data for maintenance of the sustainability; or re-verification of the elimination in the country.
- To conduct field visits when indicated, to monitor progress towards maintenance or re-verification of the elimination.
- To review, analyze and approve, when necessary, the annual sustainability plans provided by the Ministers of Health and national committees in each country. The RMC will provide recommendations when standard sustainability data is not enough or consistent

4. *Advocacy Function*

- To raise awareness on, and commitment to, measles and rubella elimination and control, targeting high ranking health officials, health professionals, partners and political leaders through multiple channels such as national health conferences, professional societies, scientific seminars, media, and personal contacts.

5. *Leadership & Management Functions of the PAHO-RMC Chair*

- To prepare a plan of action, schedule and preside over meetings to be held at least once a year.
- To define internal operating procedures and RMC members' responsibilities.

- To prepare, approve and submit annual meeting/re-verification reports to PAHO Director, who will, in turn, share it with Member States for feedback.

MEMBERSHIP

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Members will serve as temporary advisors to the PAHO Director and their service will be considered:

1. Honorary – Serve in an honorary capacity.
2. Independent - Not directly involved in the management and operations of a National Immunization Program or measles laboratory of a PAHO Member State. Members must sign a conflict of interest form.
3. Experts - On epidemiology, pediatrics, public health practice, virology, molecular biology or on any other relevant field.
4. Committed - Committed to carry out his or her responsibilities independently with the highest professional standards.

PROPOSED MEMBERS

The PAHO-RMC will be comprised of 8 members, including the chair. The chair will be nominated from among the members during the first meeting.

Membership will be for three (3) years, with possibility of extension at the discretion of PAHO's Director. The composition of the regular members will be as follows:

1. Member, International Expert Epidemiologist -(2)
2. Member, International Expert Public Health -(2)
3. Member, International Expert Virologist -(2)

4. Member, International Expert Clinical Medicine /Pediatrician-(1)
5. Member, Representative PAHO Immunization Technical Advisory Group (TAG)-(1)

Chairs of the Regional Verification Committees for Measles and Rubella Elimination (or such equivalent committees) from WHO Regions may be invited to attend the meetings as observers, at the discretion of the RMC.

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Termination of Membership will occur under the following conditions:

1. Automatically at the end of the tenure, unless renewed by PAHO Director;
2. By the Member's voluntarily resignation; or
3. By decision of PAHO Director.

SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

IM-PAHO will serve as the technical secretariat for the Commission.