

Terms of Reference

Pan American Health Organization

Civil Society Consultation Group for Health Emergency Risk Management

Purpose

PAHO's engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSO)¹ is a key component in achieving the Organization's overall strategic goals. The collaboration between PAHO and local organizations is even more critical in the context of emergency preparedness and response as emergencies start and end within communities. Community members are always the first impacted and the first to respond to any adverse event. They are also a pivotal component of recovery efforts and community resilience building.

CSOs are uniquely positioned to provide important coordination and support for health emergency preparedness and response efforts as they are directly comprised of and live within communities where immediate response is needed most. CSOs are trusted entities central to prevention, preparedness and the uptake of readiness measures to address health emergency risks.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated increased engagement and participation of CSOs in the response to and recovery from the pandemic, thus highlighting their influence and importance in communities during and after emergencies. During the pandemic, CSOs advocated for improved public health measures and funding and served as essential sources of information that aided in attaining services for those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

In response to lessons learned from the pandemic and other recent disasters, PAHO aims to increase its meaningful engagement with CSOs to strengthen community readiness and resilience to emergencies. To accomplish this work, PAHO will establish a Civil Society Consultation Group to inform and improve its work in health emergency risk management and enhance the systematic participation of civil society and communities in those efforts at subnational, national and regional level. The aim is to ensure a more inclusive approach to health emergencies preparedness and response in the countries of the Americas. The Consultation Group will provide recommendations and guidance on key priorities for more participatory and inclusive mechanisms and processes for health emergency management in the Region and how to enhance interactions between PAHO, Governments and civil society. Recommendations and feedback may ultimately aid in informing a wider discussion on CSO engagement across PAHO programs and departments.

¹ CSOs are defined as a wide range of nongovernmental or nonprofit organizations comprised of individuals with shared values and commitments to local communities and/or causes.

Goal

The goal of PAHO's Civil Society Consultation Group for Health Emergency Risk Management is to bring together a variety of voices from civil society and community-based organizations (CBOs) to share recommendations and learnings that will support PAHO's efforts to enhance engagement with CSOs at regional, country and local levels before, during and after emergencies.

Objectives

The objectives for this Consultation Group are to:

1. Establish a shared platform for dialogue and strengthen collaboration among PAHO and CSOs.
2. Advise and provide recommendations to PAHO on collaboration with CSOs before, during and after emergencies.
3. Inform strategies for enhanced representation and participation of CSOs and CBOs in health emergency management mechanisms, policies and operations.

The Consultation Group will be piloted for an initial phase of approximately 12 months, following which its ToRs, objectives, structure and methodology may be reviewed and adjusted.

The initial Consultation Group will be comprised of 15-20 representatives of civil society and community-based organizations. PAHO will strive to ensure adequate geographical distribution as well as language and community representativeness in the selection of participating organizations. Subsequent expansion of the number of organizations participating in the consultation group and the creation of thematic working groups will be explored as part of the initial phase.

Responsibilities:

During the initial phase of work, PAHO's Civil Society Consultation Group will:

- Meet at least three times throughout the course of one year.
- Discuss the adequacy of PAHO's existing forms of strategic engagement with CSOs for health emergency risk management.
- Identify and discuss the key roles and added value of CSOs in health emergency risk management.
- Share information and support the mapping of the presence and operational capacities of CSOs in LAC for health emergency preparedness and response support.
- Help inform and guide PAHO's Health Emergencies Department initiatives to ensure cultural appropriateness of its interventions and to strengthen accountability to beneficiary communities.

- Advise on opportunities for collaboration in preparedness and response efforts.
- Prioritize opportunities based on feasibility, ease of implementation, gaps, needs, etc.
- Create a report that summarizes opportunities and mechanisms for enhanced collaboration between PAHO and CSOs for health emergencies preparedness and response.
- Advise on next steps for the further development of the Consultation Group and the potential formation of a formal Commission.

Core Principles

The PAHO Civil Society Consultation Group for Health Emergency Risk Management will adhere to the following principles:

- Inclusivity and diversity
- Trust
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Communication
- Curiosity
- Open-mindedness
- Compliance with human rights law and PAHO policies

Members Eligibility Criteria

Who can participate in the Consultation Group?

Eligible participants in the PAHO Civil Society Consultation Group for Health Emergency Risk Management consist of non-governmental organizations, including, for example: grassroots and community-based organizations, civil society groups and networks, faith-based organizations, professional groups and patient groups, etc. The goal is to have representation from a cross section of civil society organizations including those from different income settings, a variety of issue focus areas and geographical regions and levels.

Member organizations must meet the following criteria:

- The aims and purpose of the member organization must be consistent with PAHO values and policies.
- Members must respect the intergovernmental nature of PAHO and the decision-making authority of its Member States.
- Members should be considered a nongovernmental organization according to PAHO's Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA) and have completed the due diligence and risk assessment process performed under FENSA.
- Members should contribute to the advancement of public health at international, regional and national and local levels and to the objectives, vision and goal of the PAHO Civil Society Consultation Group.

- Member organizations must be based in the Americas and have working knowledge of at least one of the four official languages of PAHO (English, Spanish, French, Portuguese).
- Members must be willing to commit to the Group for at least 12 months.

Each participant to the PAHO Civil Society Consultation Group for Health Emergency Risk Management is expected to:

- Adhere to the Terms of Reference of the Consultation Group.
- Actively participate in and support the Consultation Group, its purpose, goals, objectives, guiding principles, work and activities.
- Attend and participate actively and constructively in the PAHO Civil Society Consultation Group's meetings.
- Take responsibility according to the division of labor, and make meaningful contributions, in connection with the work and activities of the Civil Society Consultation Group.
- Act in the best interest of public health in alignment with PAHO policies; and
- Ensure effective communication with PAHO and other participants as it relates to activities relevant to the objectives.