

## **Terms of Reference for a Technical Advisory Group to mobilize cardiovascular disease prevention through dietary salt control policies and interventions**

Name: The Technical Advisory Group: Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Dietary Salt Control Policies and Interventions.

### **Background and context:**

In September 2009, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) launched the initiative –*Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Population-wide Dietary Salt Reduction* – by convening an Expert Group with a 24-month mandate. Its key contribution was to supply tools and issue recommendations for strategies and interventions in aid of reducing sodium intake levels in populations in the Region. Its activities were to be in line with and support the World Health Organization global platforms for dietary salt reduction and were to take into consideration the specific features and context of the Region and its Member States. Critical among the latter are: that salt is still seen predominantly as a vehicle for micronutrient fortification; many countries in Central America and the Caribbean import much or most of their foods; surveillance capacities are often limited; national food regulatory agencies and capacities are often lacking; small and medium enterprises, the informal food sector and discretionary salt use can account for large proportions of total salt intake in many countries; and the nutrition transition emerging in several countries calls for timely action.

When Regional initiative was launched, three countries reported active national strategies to reduce salt intake at the population level. Two years later, several countries have strong approaches that stand at the forefront of a growing momentum that involves multiple sectors and stakeholders. The Expert Group has not only fulfilled its mandate, having provided technical inputs, products and guidance proven to be useful to Member States and globally, it has also strengthened the science that supports national cardiovascular and/or non communicable disease (NCD) and nutrition policies that include dietary salt reduction. These contributions will help countries in the Region to implement key interventions identified in the Political Declaration of the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011 in New York.

PAHO recognizes that more needs to be done, that several complex issues require careful and sustained attention so at the last meeting of expert group in October 2011 was proposed to PAHO to continue to facilitate experts to support countries in the Americas to initiate, secure and expand national action, to further catalyze and stimulate nongovernmental organizations, civil society, international organizations and the private sector to meaningfully participate in and contribute to reducing the overconsumption of salt in the Region.

### **Purpose and Objectives:**

The Technical Advisory Group is proposed to advise the Director of PAHO/WHO on the implementation of the regional initiative on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through

Dietary Salt Control Policies and Interventions. The group responds to priority interventions stated in the WHO package of “most cost effective interventions for NCD prevention” directly related to the lowering population levels of blood pressure and subsequently influencing the levels of mortality of stroke and overall group of cardiovascular diseases.

The topic is not covered or included in any other existing collaborative group. No risks in establishing a group as the issue has good scientific fundament and proposed group is comprised by experienced academics with technical expertise in related disciplines, public health practitioners, and representatives of governments' members of CARMEN network, WHO Collaborative centers and PAHO staff.

Objectives:

- To set and implement in the Region and sub-Regions:
  - Regional plan for 2012-13 of Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Dietary Salt Control Policies and Interventions as part of SO3, 6 and 9
  - Provide recommendations to EXM and address technical matters at international level that include:
    - Facilitate knowledge transfer related to the tools, products and guidance developed in Phase I of the initiative
    - Connect main players in the Region
      - Continue to disseminate the 2009 Policy Statement on dietary salt reduction and promote it being signed by key players in the Region (*e.g. international organizations, industry, nutrition institutes, societies of health professionals*)
    - Initiate and/or maintain regional contacts with the food industry and promote product reformulations to bring “best in class” and “best in world” products to the Americas, working whenever possible with the Pan American Forum for Action on Chronic Diseases
    - Identify advocates for dietary salt reduction in the Region and promote regional awareness and communication networks
    - Mobilize resources for the initiative
- To support sub regional and national initiatives:
  - Provide guidance on application/adoption of the Recommendations to Member States presented in the Phase I Report of the Expert Group for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Population-level Dietary Salt Reduction
  - Support coordination between salt reduction and salt fortification programs
  - Support the establishment of national task forces led by governments
  - Facilitate countries incorporating dietary salt reduction into their responses to the Political Declaration of the September 2011 UN High Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases

Key deliverables are: Regional plan for 2012-13 of Cardiovascular Disease Prevention through Dietary Salt Control Policies and Interventions; Guidance for implementation of Recommendations from Expert Group; Multi country Project proposals, the annual regional reports, national reports.

Proposed Technical Advisory group supports implementation of SO3 (3.4 &3.5) SO6 (6.5) SO9 (9.4) and Global Target on salt reduction from WHO NCD targets and indicators

Duration and membership:

The collaborative group is proposed for the period of 36 months.

Composition:

- The members are selected on the basis of having sound scientific and technical expertise, and related disciplines as needed, for each area of activity: advocacy and communication; surveillance; engagement with food industries; prevention of iodine deficiency through salt iodization; health economic analysis; science and research on dietary salt
- Two co-chairs for the Technical Advisory Group
- Six areas of work, one for each area of activity, with a leader and co-leader for each
- Secretariat hub in the PAHO Area of Health Surveillance and Disease Management
- An executive group (co-chairs, sub-group chairs, secretariat)

Members: (Annex)

Functions:

The co-chairs and area of work leaders with support from the secretariat lead the work in each area of activity as defined at the (Phase I) Expert Group Meeting of October 2011 in Washington DC.

Reporting (mandatory) and Evaluation

Reporting is planned to be on annual bases including advances in implementation of plan of work of TAG and specific areas of work; it will include qualitative and quantitative assessment.

The report will also monitor progress re which Member States have and do not have national initiatives; the nature of the initiatives currently underway, what has facilitated them, the barriers encountered and the kind of assistance needed to make further progress. It will include the barriers in countries with no initiatives to reduce dietary salt at the population level and what would facilitate overcoming them.

Frequency, Duration and cost of meetings:

- The executive and area of work groups will meet virtually in closed meetings approximately every 3 months.
- Depending on the meeting agenda, members who cannot attend may delegate a substitute who may be from their institution or another as long as they have the expertise required for the meeting.
- Non-members are invited by the secretariat in consultation with the co-chairs and sub-group chairs on an ad hoc basis.
- The secretariat produces and disseminates action items for each meeting.
- The secretariat disseminates a monthly report with updates on the activities of the Technical Advisory Group and its sub-groups.

Duration: three years (2012-2015)

Frequency	Duration	No. Members	Total Time (Hours)	FTE	Cost/Hour	Cost	
						-	
Quarterly- virtually	4	1.5	14	84	2080	85	7,129
						-	
Yearly- in person	1	1.5	14	21	2080	85	1,782

In the PPS of members of secretariat the work is included for 25% of the time of Branka Legetic, and 10% of the time of Ruben Grajeda.

Potential for sustainability, replication

The Declaration of UN High level meeting on NCDs has requested of WHO to set Targets and indicators till 2025, and one of the targets is on reduction of salt consumption to reach less than 5 g/day /person. The work of the collaborative group is predominantly intellectual so requires good coordination by secretariat and good task management of leaders of areas of work. Experience with Expert group that led the initiative previously proved high interest of members and very dynamic work on virtual bases.

The initiative directly supports WHO target and integrates several cross cutting PAHO priorities, as addresses differences in levels of BP and salt intake between men and women, different ethnic groups, intervention is through multi-stakeholder, community and primary health care approach. Salt as nutrient is ubiquitous, so intervention in its reduction addresses the whole population and contributes to the universal right to health.