

Establishment: May 8, 1958¹

Director: Dr. Carissa Etienne (as of February 1, 2013 until 2018).

Member States: Anguila, Antigua y Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Canada, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ecuador, French Guiana, Grenade, Guadalupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Mexico, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay, Venezuela, United States, Aruba, Curacao, Saint Marteen².

Areas of Work: Improving health and living standards throughout the Americas.

Areas of Cooperation with the OAS: Group of Friends of Haiti; ICTs for health improvement; drug abuse; gender issues; childhood welfare; agriculture and rural health.

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BACKGROUND

The Pan American Sanitary Bureau was established in Washington DC on December 1902 through a resolution of the II International Conference of American States which recommended that "a general convention of representatives of the health organizations of the different American republics" be convened. In 1958 the organization changed its name to the Pan American Health Organization at the XV Pan American Sanitary Conference in Puerto Rico.

In 1949, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and the World Health Organization agreed that the Pan American Sanitary Bureau would serve as the regional office of the World Health Organization for the Americas. In 1950, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau was recognized by the Permanent Council of the OAS as a fully autonomous and specialized Inter-American organization. Thus, PAHO is considered to be a part of both the United Nations and Inter-American systems. Currently, PAHO is composed of the 48 countries in the Americas, Puerto Rico as Associate Member, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as Participating States and Portugal and Spain as Observers States.

¹ Originally, PAHO was called the Pan American Sanitary Bureau when it was established in 1902. The name was changed to PAHO in 1958.

² Aruba, Curacao and Saint Marteen were accepted as members on September 2012.

The basic objectives of the Pan American Health Organization are to promote and coordinate the efforts of the countries of the Americas to combat disease, lengthen life, and promote the physical and mental health of their peoples. In its efforts to improve health, PAHO targets the most vulnerable groups including mothers and children, workers, the poor, the elderly, and refugees and displaced persons.

The Organization provides technical collaboration in a variety of specialized public health fields and organizes emergency preparedness and disaster relief coordination. It supports efforts to control malaria, Chagas disease, urban rabies, leprosy, and other diseases that afflict the people of the Americas. PAHO collaborates with governments, other agencies, and private groups to address major nutritional problems, including protein-energy malnutrition, and is working to eliminate iodine and vitamin A deficiencies.

OBJECTIVES

The Organization has the mandate to lead strategic collaborative efforts to support “equity in health, to combat disease, and to improve the quality of, and lengthen, the lives of the peoples of the Americas”³. This Organization strives to promote and endorse values such as, equity, excellence, solidarity, respect and integrity.

COOPERATION AGREEMENT

The Directing Council of the organization that preceded the current Pan-American Health Organization –the Pan American Sanitary Bureau- and the Organization of American States adopted a [Cooperation Agreement on June 29, 1950](#). However, the first General Cooperation Agreement between both organizations adopted under the Pan American Health Organization was signed in 1984, through the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN).

DIRECTOR



Prior to her election as Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Dr. Carissa F. Etienne served as Assistant Director-General for Health Systems and Services since February 2008. Prior to that, she was the Assistant Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, which is the Secretariat of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and of the American Regional Office of WHO. As Assistant Director since July 2003, she directed five technical areas - health systems and services; technology and health services delivery; health surveillance and disease management; family and community health; and sustainable development and environmental health.

A national of Dominica, Dr. Etienne began her career as a medical officer at the Princess Margaret Hospital in her country, where she eventually became the Chief Medical Officer. Throughout her career, she has gained extensive knowledge and experience in various aspects of health management, health systems and health-care delivery, including management of essential drugs, human resource management for primary health care and the integration of health programs and systems.

Dr. Etienne has held high-level posts such as the Coordinator of Dominica's National AIDS Program, Disaster Coordinator for the Ministry of Health of Dominica, Chairperson for the National Advisory

³ http://new.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=95&Itemid=163

Council for HIV/AIDS and the Director of Primary Health Care for Dominica. She received her MBBS degree from the University of the West Indies, Jamaica and her M.Sc. degree in community health in developing countries from the University of London.

Dr. Etienne has been very active in the regional public health arena, particularly in the transformation of health systems and the introduction of a primary health care approach. She has had a long history of collaboration with PAHO/WHO, and was a founding member of the Technical Advisory Group for the Eastern Caribbean Drug Service. Dr. Etienne has also conducted a significant amount of research on health services in Dominica.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

PAHO publishes bi-annually a budget with contributions and funds originating from Member Governments, the World Health Organization allocation for the regional office of the Americas, and extra budgetary funds. The Organization executes projects with specific funds provided by other United Nations agencies, international organizations such as the World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank, official development cooperation agencies of various governments, and by philanthropic foundations.

PAHO's total budget for 2013-2013 is in the order of US\$626.725 million, of which 31% comes from quotas provided by the Member States, 54% comes from the WHO, 13% from the AMRO share, and the remaining 2% is catalogued as miscellaneous income.

GOVERNING BODIES

The structure of PAHO comprises the following bodies:

1. **The Pan American Sanitary Conference:** The supreme governing body in which each Member Government is represented. The Conference meets every five years in late September or early October, defines the Organization's general policies, serves as a forum on public health matters, elects the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, and approves PAHO's strategic orientations and program priorities for the coming quinquennial.
2. **The Directing Council:** Consists of one representative of each Member Government; meets once a year and acts on behalf of the Conference in years when that body does not meet. It also reviews and approves the Organization's program and budget.
3. **The Executive Committee:** Composed of representatives of nine Member Governments elected by the Conference or the Council for staggered three-year terms; meets twice yearly to consider technical and administrative matters, including the program and budget, and submits its recommendations to the Conference or Council.
4. **The Pan American Sanitary Bureau:** Headed by the Director, acts as the Executive Secretariat and carries out the directives of the Governing Bodies.

Main Meetings of PAHO

28th Pan American Sanitary Conference – 2012

Health authorities from throughout the Americas agreed on a series of joint public health actions during the 28th Pan American Sanitary Conference, including a regional strategy on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that seeks to prevent 3 million deaths due to cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other NCDs in the hemisphere by 2025. A plan of action to prevent the reintroduction of endemic measles, rubella, and congenital rubella syndrome in the Americas; a strategy and plan of action on child health that seeks to improve health and reduce child mortality; a resolution urging stronger capacity, procedures and mechanisms for coordinating international humanitarian assistance in health during disasters and emergencies; a knowledge management and communication strategy that seeks to “close the gap” between knowledge and decision-making on health and that encourages the production, exchange, communication, access, and effective application of knowledge to benefit health; as well as the election of Dr. Carissa Etienne as the new Director of the organization. The next Conference will be held in 2017.

Directing Council Meeting – 2013

In 2013, the 52nd meeting of the Directing Council will meet from September 30 to October 4, 2013, as decided by the Executive Committee.

MAIN AREAS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN PAHO AND THE OAS

➤ GROUP OF FRIENDS OF HAITI

PAHO and the OAS have several projects in common related to Haiti. These are a part of the efforts of the “Group of Friends of Haiti”⁴, an informal group chaired by Ambassador Albert Ramdin, Assistant Secretary General, created in 2001 through General Assembly Resolution AG/RES. 1831 / (XXXI-O/01) and includes representatives of Member States, Permanent Observers of the OAS, international organizations and those in the Inter-American System⁵ which provide support for activities in Haiti related to strengthening of democracy, promotion and protection of human rights and social and economic development.

In September 2009, the “Group of Friends of Haiti” undertook, with support of the Government of Haiti, the first Inter-American Mission to Haiti.⁶ The objectives of the visit were to:

- Continue the dialogue with Haitian authorities on the support to be provided to that country on the basis of the needs and priorities identified by the administration of President Rene Prével and Prime Minister Md. Michelle Pierre-Louis;
- Highlight successful projects and programs being financed, executed or supported in Haiti by Inter-American agencies and member states which positively impact the lives of Haitians; and
- Begin crafting a policy that could lead to a strengthened Inter-American partnership and improved coordination for support to Haiti.

After the tremendously destructive earthquake of January 2010 in Haiti, the OAS organized several meetings of the Permanent Council and the Group of Friends to discuss the situation and how to

⁴ The General Assembly through Resolution AG/RES. 1831 / (XXXI-O/01)

⁵ The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO); the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB); the Pan American Development Foundation (PADF); Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture; and the Organization of American States (OAS).

⁶ The General Assembly through Resolution AG/RES. 2487 (XXXIX-O/09)

coordinate disaster relief. The OAS activated the Inter-American Disaster mechanism, calling daily coordination meetings for relief activities with representatives of partner organizations, including PAHO as well as representatives of the OAS, PADF, IICA and the IADB. The Group of Friends of Haiti continues to meet regularly to coordinate efforts and report on the progress of ongoing projects.

➤ **TELE-HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS**

In June 2012, the OAS signed a Memorandum of Understanding with PAHO for Programs on Human Development, which allowed for the preparation, development and implementation of online courses.

A book entitled “*Tele-Medicine in the Americas*” was published in 2006 as the result of a joint project agreed in 2005 between the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL/OAS), PAHO and the ITU (International Telecommunication Union), the purpose of which was to study the status of telemedicine and tele-health in the Americas. The book examines how the different countries and their institutions (public, civil society, academic, and private sector) are preparing for the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the health sector and is the first initiative of an ongoing joint OAS-PAHO project called “*Tele-Health Network of the Americas*”⁷.

➤ **DRUGS**

At the VI Summit of the Americas held in 2012 in Cartagena, Colombia, the OAS received a mandate to study the results of existing drug policy in the Americas and explore new and more effective ways to approach this problem. On 9 May 2012, PAHO and the OAS signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate for the reduction of drug demand in the Americas by strengthening coordinated technical cooperation centered on human rights, public health, and scientific evidence. According to the memorandum, PAHO and the OAS will establish a Joint Regional Cooperation Program for the Reduction of Drug Demand to undertake institution building, training, and technical assistance activities with the countries of the Hemisphere.

In response to this mandate, the OAS, supported by other institutions including PAHO, prepared a Report on the Drug Problem in the Americas, which includes an assessment of current policies, best practices and challenges, in addition to a report on potential scenarios to consider a future-oriented perspective. The final report was presented by the OAS Secretary General at the Fifty-third Regular Session of CICAD, Special Session, May 20, 2013

Previously in 2006, PAHO and the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD/OAS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the subject of Drugs and Public Health in Latin America, in which the two organizations pledge to cooperate in establishing the Network on Education and Public Health for sharing information on drugs and international public health in Latin America.

The main objectives of the project for the Network on Education and Public Health are to facilitate: i) communication among the members of the network; ii) the effective exchange of information and joint activities; and iii) the realization of projects to address drug-related issues. PAHO is contributing US\$15,000 to the OAS/CICAD for the implementation of the project.

On July 29th, 2013, the Director of PAHO, Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, the Executive Secretary of CICAD, Paul Simmons, and the Secretary-General of the OAS, José Miguel Insulza met at the OAS headquarters in Washington, D.C. to discuss about the drug problem in the Americas. They agreed that their organizations must work more closely together in order to address drug-related issues in

⁷ CCP.I-TEL/doc. 1687/09 rev.1

the hemisphere. The strategy and plan of action that they agreed upon call for coordination between PAHO and CICAD and promote a public health approach focused on prevention, early intervention, treatment, rehabilitation, social reintegration, health systems management, and reduction of adverse consequences of substance use.



GENDER ISSUES

On March 2010, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) co-organized an event with the PAHO Gender, Ethnicity and Health Unit to celebrate International's Women Day, entitled: "Gender Equality in Health: a Right for Adolescents". PAHO also participated in the meeting that CIM held at the OAS Headquarters with the Minister for the Status of Women and Women's Rights of Haiti In February 2010, in order to examine the situation of women and girls following the January earthquake.

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In December 2011, the OAS and PAHO established a joint program to promote peace and democracy in the Member States through the integrated management of water resources, which has resulted in the systematization of good practices at the local level in the basins of Central America.

CONSUMER SAFETY AND HEALTH NETWORK

The Consumer Safety and Health Network, implemented jointly between the OAS and PAHO pursuant to the mandate of General Assembly Resolution AG/RES. 2494 (XXXIX-O/09) on Consumer Protection, which recognizes consumption as one of the main factors that determine health.

The Network allows consumers and authorities of the region to exchange information and experiences and disseminate information on these issues. It also stimulates education on product safety and their impact on consumer's health, and provides easy access to relevant information on products deemed unsafe by markets from different parts of the world that have advanced warning systems.

From 22 April to 28 June 2013, PAHO and the OAS held a graduate course on "Management of Market Surveillance Systems on Consumer Product Safety" with emphasis on surveillance systems in the health sector, in collaboration with Pompeu Fabra University of Barcelona (UPF). The course aimed at strengthening the technical capabilities of institutions of the Americas in charge of consumer product regulation, and their impact on health.

CONSULTATION ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The Regional Hemispheric Consultation on Social Determinants of Health from a Civil Society Perspective, involved over 3,000 organizations and provided an important insight into the perspective of civil society in the Americas regarding the impact of economic, social and environmental determinants of health on the quality of life, the reduction of the gap in health access inequality, and the advancement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The results of this exercise also provided valuable inputs on the reflection process in the observance of the right to health within the framework of the Additional Protocol of the American Convention on Human Rights on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, "The Protocol of San Salvador".

On May 22, 2013, the OAS Permanent Council received a report of the Pan American Health Organization and submitted draft resolutions to the General Assembly. The report highlights the

technical cooperation work done by PAHO and covers the core areas of its work in compliance with the Millennium Development Goals. Among the central themes of the report are: the fight against chronic diseases, the rise of non-communicable diseases, the expansion of immunization coverage and social health protection, the reduction in child mortality rates, and the elimination or significant reduction of "poverty diseases," including leprosy, Chagas disease, onchocerciasis, and lymphatic filariasis.

➤ **RIGHT TO HEALTH AND PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY IN LATIN AMERICA**

From April 18 through June 7 2013, PAHO and the OAS sponsored the first virtual course on the Right to Health and Parliamentary Activity in Latin America, which sought to expand knowledge of and exchange information about health policy development, debate, and decision-making processes in Latin America. The course covered processes and tools that can be used to develop health policies and legislation in Latin America and was designed for regional and national parliamentarians and parliamentary advisers, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, and experts interested in legislative developments related to health policy.

SOURCES

[PAHO Website](#)

OAS Website

Updated: July 30, 2013