



## RIAFRO URGES OAS MEMBER STATES TO INCLUDE AFRODESCENDANT SELF-IDENTIFICATION VARIABLE IN THE COVID-19 VACCINATION PROCESS

The II Extraordinary Meeting of the Inter-American Network of High Authorities on Policies for the Afro-descendant Population (RIAFRO for its acronym in Spanish) was held on June 7, 2021, to exchange information on the COVID-19 vaccination process within the Afro-descendant population and to propose a communication campaign to promote vaccination in their communities.

The meeting was attended by authorities on Afro-descendant population policy from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Peru, as well as representatives of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (OAS) represented by the Department of Social Inclusion of the Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity (SARE), and the Afro-Latin American Research Institute of Harvard University (ALARI).

In their interventions, the participants recognized the efforts made by the Member States and international organizations in the COVID-19 vaccination process. They also emphasized that the pandemic has made visible the conditions of inequality suffered by Afro-descendant populations, a reality that has been silenced and that various voices have denounced and fought against.

They also pointed out that most of the States do not have vaccination campaigns for the Afro-descendant population, nor do they have sufficient data disaggregated at the ethnic-racial level, nor do they include the variable of self-identification in the health systems. This makes it impossible to measure and evaluate the impact of the pandemic on Afro-descendants in the region and, consequently, to make decisions on relevant care for this population group.

They also expressed their concern regarding the worsening of mental health problems, the deepening of existing socioeconomic gaps, and the setbacks in the full enjoyment of the human rights of the Afro-descendant population as a result of the pandemic.

Due to all of the above, RIAFRO recommends that OAS Member States include the Afro-descendant self-identification variable in a cross-cutting and intersectional manner in the registration, diagnosis and vaccination process, considering that States are concerned about the possibility of a third wave of the pandemic; and in accordance with the recommendations of the Ethnicity and Health Policy of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the PAHO Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health (2019-2025), the OAS Permanent Council resolution "Equitable Distribution of Vaccines against COVID-19", and the Inter-American legal framework, which includes the American Convention on Human Rights, the Protocol of San Salvador, the Inter-American Conventions against Racism, All Forms of Discrimination



and Intolerance, and the Plan of Action of the Decade for People of African Descent in the Americas (2016-2024).

Finally, in line with the above, RIAFRO recommends that OAS Member States deepen/take further steps towards the implementation of PAHO's Strategy and Plan of Action on Ethnicity and Health (2019-2025); PAHO's Ethnicity and Health Policy; and the Plan of Action of the Decade for People of African Descent in the Americas (2016-2025).

RIAFRO is the Inter-American Network of the OAS that promotes dialogue, coordination, and permanent collaboration among national authorities, with the objective of seeking the implementation of policies for Afro-descendant populations, according to international and regional obligations in the Americas.

The Department of Social Inclusion of the OAS Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity serves as the Technical Secretariat, with the support of the Afro-Latin American Research Institute of Harvard University (ALARI) and the Gender and Diversity Division of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

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