

Regional Coalition for Water and Sanitation to Eliminate Cholera in the Island of Hispaniola

Background

The earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010 and the subsequent emergence of cholera underscores an inequitable situation in the Region of the Americas that requires a supportive, effective and sustained response. As cholera has also affected the Dominican Republic, and threatens to spread to other countries if left unchecked, control and elimination strategies must extend beyond Haiti.

The lack of universal drinking water and basic sanitation in Haiti and Dominican Republic reflects the social and economic disparities within each country, inhibits their development on a sustainable basis, and constitutes a severe public health issue that has exacerbated the cholera epidemic resulting in increased rates of avoidable water and foodborne illness. This situation poses a significant risk to public security because of its devastating impact on the economic, political, social-environmental and health spheres - collectively and individually.

An urgent need exists to heighten international solidarity to eliminate cholera in Hispaniola. As a result of the "Call for Action for a Cholera-Free Hispaniola," launched on January 11th, the Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its partners propose a *Regional Coalition for Water and Sanitation to Eliminate Cholera in the Island of Hispaniola*. This Coalition is being officially established on June 4th, 2012, at the XXXIII AIDIS Congress, and reconfirmed at Rio + 20 on June 19th. PAHO/WHO, CDC, UNICEF and its partners believe that such a Coalition can catalyze public opinion and stakeholders in partnership with donors, governments, financial agencies and NGOs to work toward a common goal: to eliminate cholera and promote the sustainable development of both Haiti and Dominican Republic. The Members of the Coalition acknowledge that improving water and basic sanitation would significantly reduce the prevalence of many water- and food- borne illnesses.

Members & Chairmanship

The members of the Coalition are UN agencies, multilateral, bilateral organizations and selected members of civil society who are committed to cooperating at the highest levels of decision making to contribute to the bi-national initiative, and to focus on the delivery of universal potable water and basic sanitation.

The strength of the Coalition lies in the sum of its parts. Each institution brings a unique perspective, distinct resources and complementary strategies.

Initial members of the partnership include PAHO/WHO, UNICEF, and the CDC. Future members may include the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank, Caribbean Community (CARICOM), cooperation agencies of the Governments of Spain (AECID), Canada (CIDA), France (AFD) and Brazil (ABC), the Gates Foundation and selected member(s) of civil society and professional societies, including the Inter-American Association of Sanitary and Environmental Engineering (AIDIS). Additional members will be added through recommendations from Haiti and the Dominican Republic and partners.

The chairmanship will rotate annually and will follow agreed decision making processes.

The co-leadership of the coalition in Hispaniola will be with the water and sanitation and health authorities from both countries.

Mission of the Coalition

The mission will be to promote sustainable “water and sanitation for all,” and articulate efforts to address protective actions and risk factors to eliminate cholera and long-term control of other food and waterborne diseases in Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In response to the call for action launched by PAHO/WHO, CDC, UNICEF and partners, a complementary integrated approach is to improve surveillance systems and medical response.

Objectives

Promote a new paradigm “water and sanitation for all” based on established strategies and call for hemispheric responsibility and solidarity.

Support the implementation of the Bi-national Plan (or agreed interventions), with strong involvement of partner offices in Haiti and the Dominican Republic and based on updated evidence, dialogue, joint planning and comprehensive strategies that build upon existing plans and programs on water, sanitation and hygiene.

Stimulate the participation of key partners such as national and international NGOs, Community Associations, PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers and Centers of Excellence proposed by UNICEF, CDC and other partners engaged in the water and sanitation sector.

Promote integrated efforts from the public and private sectors and leaders from civil society to ensure open and widespread participation leading to successful outcomes in the delivery of water and sanitation.

Incorporate the views of those population groups most affected by the lack of water and sanitation.

Proposed Activities

Create a regional network of leaders from all sectors;

Convene partners for communication and information sharing;

Establish joint mechanisms for technical co-operation in the design, implementation and evaluation of the bi-national plans and national initiatives;

Host meetings among partners to share interventions, studies, findings, reports and news;

Generate reports for policymakers on achievements to date and policy action items;

Develop a web site to share initiatives and knowledge;

Host seminars and workshops to support advocacy, research, data collection and evaluation;
Sponsor social marketing campaigns to raise awareness;
Engage media;
Organize training in leadership and management approaches, and technical discussions with policy makers, media, civic and faith organizations, corporations, foundations and NGOs;
Develop an on-going funding strategy for the Coalition and the Bi-national Plan implementation.