

1. Executive summary

The Observatory on Chronic Disease Policy was established in late 2003 between the WHO Collaborating Centre on Chronic Disease Policy at the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the Non-communicable Diseases (NCD) Unit at PAHO. The Observatory is to expand the necessary technical capabilities for NCD policy analysis and outcomes assessment in the CARMEN network of countries, in this way providing information to make compelling arguments for political action for the prevention of NCD. Since 2004, Observatory work has focused on research on the formulation of NCD-related policy. Research teams in three countries (Brazil, Canada and Costa Rica) have successfully piloted a qualitative research method to prepare case studies on an NCD-related policy and a cross-case analysis.

In 2006, PAHO launched the Regional Strategy and Plan of Action on an Integrated Approach to the Prevention and Control of Chronic Diseases including Diet, Physical Activity and Health. The Regional Strategy combines the Pan-American response to several WHO global strategies: for the prevention and control of NCD; the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control; for diet and physical activity; alcohol and cancer.

Policy and Advocacy together constitute the first of four Lines of Action¹ in the Regional Strategy. Within it, a NCD Policy Observatory role is articulated. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify the Observatory role over the next 2-3 years in support of the new Regional Strategy, laying the foundation for a strategic plan for the Observatory. Prior to the meeting, representatives of PHAC and PAHO agreed to structure discussions around five strategic themes with training/capacity building as a cross-cutting theme:

- Policy research;
- Policy monitoring;
- Advocacy for NCD policy;
- Policy dialogue;
- Policy development.

In discussion, participants identified and elaborated on the following:

- ***Elements in an achievable vision:***
 - The Policy Observatory successfully promotes intersectoral collaboration on healthy policies in both private and public domains, including health and non-health sectors. In the process, countries in the Americas become leaders in reversing the chronic disease epidemic.

¹ The other three are surveillance, prevention and health promotion, and management of disease and risk factors.

- The Policy Observatory becomes the trusted source for timely, relevant, accurate and well-communicated information about integrated, evidence-based, multisectoral NCD policies.
- ***Cross-cutting priorities:***
 - Expanding the CARMEN schools;
 - Creating a CARMEN NCD Infobase that combines epidemiologic and other elements of data for policy making, e.g., fiscal, poverty data;
 - Developing/improving country capacities for NCD policy development, implementation and outcomes assessment;
 - Fostering collaboration among and within countries;
 - Engaging institutions and civil society outside the health sphere;
 - Resource mobilization and partnerships for policy in NCD,
- ***Priorities within each strategic theme:***

<i>Policy research</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extend the conceptual analytic framework to include policy implementation and policy outcome assessment/evaluation. ● Prepare a module for the CARMEN schools to disseminate the qualitative research methodology and the “know-how” from the pilots to promote case study development and cross case analysis. Use the research teams as resources in the dissemination of the methodology. ● Use the CARMEN schools to develop inter-country networks and collaborations to encourage joint research proposals. ● Develop a research strategy for the Policy Observatory, making integrated and intersectoral NCD policies a priority for study, being mindful of topics of interest or likely to be of interest to the public and policy makers. ● Develop a knowledge transfer and exchange strategy for the Policy Observatory such that it moves beyond a passive observer role and becomes an active promoter of specific NCD policies.
<i>Policy monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage with academia and other institutions in the region to build a network that shares a common integrated framework for NCD policy-related data, with cross-sector indicators, capturing what is most important and feasible to collect using survey methods. ● Develop agreements with academia and other institutions or organizations to undertake the design and testing of survey tools, and the collection, validation and analysis of findings. ● Build a database/repository of NCD policy-related information. ● Combine passive broad policy monitoring with strategic selection of topics and aspects of policy to monitor, such that findings are of timely interest to policy makers.
<i>Policy dialogue</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stage national and international workshops to systematically review existing NCD policy case studies, and compare, consolidate and synthesize the knowledge they contain. ● Develop dialogue mechanisms, structures and processes. ● Identify a pool of experts willing to share their expertise on NCD policies and facilitate national and international dialogues. ● Develop an outreach approach to engage intersectoral partners.

<i>Policy advocacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train new advocates e.g. through the CARMEN schools. • Identify existing alliances already advocating with regards to NCD policy action and link them to public health NCD experts within countries willing to advocate, to encourage an exchange of experiences, skills and tools, and to develop consistent messages. • At the outset, at a minimum, target the MOHs to create a line item in their budgets for health promotion and NCD prevention using earmarked tobacco tax revenues. • Create networks to assess existing policies in other sectors and advocate changes for them to contribute to health promotion and health protection. • Align with the policy and advocacy work of WHO Geneva
<i>Policy development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing regional capacities and strengths for policy development and identify hubs of capacity and expertise that can be shared e.g. at CARMEN schools. • Promote intra- and inter-regional interaction between countries e.g. bring together smaller states or twin small and larger states to strengthen existing national and sub-national capacities.

- *Next steps*, including new Terms of Reference for the Observatory and the convening of a steering committee to finalize a strategic plan.