

Global South-South Development Expo 2022

Thematic Solution Forum “*Maximizing the role of South-South Cooperation in achieving Universal Health Coverage: Showcasing the Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV & syphilis*”

Organized by: The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Schedule and Location:

- 13th September 10:30 – 11:45 hrs. (Bangkok local time).
- **Venue: Hybrid**
 - **Meeting Room H**, Level One. United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC), Bangkok, Thailand
 - **Virtual participation:** <https://undp.zoom.us/j/83052266590>

Tentative agenda:

Moderator: Dr. Jos Vandelaer, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Thailand.

10:30 10:40 am	<p>Opening and introduction:</p> <p>“Building resilient health systems for UH and EMTCT: Challenges and lessons learned from the pandemic and SSC role”.</p> <p><i>Dr. Godfrey Xuereb, Head, Country and Subregional Coordination, Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)</i></p>
10:40-11:25 am	<p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Caribbean experience in EMTCT of HIV & syphilis: Country building resilient health systems”. <i>Dr. Rhonda Sealey-Thomas, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, and Chair of the Regional Validation Committee (RVC) for the Americas.</i> • “Paving the way toward UHC: SSC and achieving EMTCT”. <i>National Department of Health, South Africa.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “No Child should be born with HIV Every Child Survival is important: Leveraging partnerships for Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV”. <i>Ms. Shirley Mark Prabhu, Health Specialist - Adolescent Health, Mental Health and HIV, UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office (MENARO).</i> • “South-South and Triangular Cooperation in Ibero-America: improving regional capacities to face challenges on Health”. <i>Ms. Natalia Vargas, Technical Officer South-South and Triangular Cooperation, Social Cohesion and South-South Cooperation, Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB).</i>
11.25 – 11.40 am	Plenary discussion
11.40 – 11.45 am	Call to Action and closing remarks <i>Mr. Myo-Zin Nyunt, Deputy Regional Director East Asia and the Pacific, UNICEF</i>

Rationale:

Forty years since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action (BAPA) for promoting and implementing Technical Cooperation amongst Developing Countries and some 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), much has been achieved.

South-South Cooperation has evolved into a mature and critical modality for delivering development results. SDG 17 acknowledges that South-South and triangular cooperation are essential in delivering the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Over the same period, significant progress has been made in protecting the rights of children and improving their well-being. South-South and Triangular Cooperation is a valuable tool, not only for achieving the SDGs, but also in achieving universal health and fulfilling the rights of all children and young people, and as such, it is a standing pillar of the technical cooperation implemented by UNICEF and PAHO/WHO.

Development solutions and good practices are increasingly created in the global South accompanied by the growth of technical capacity, programme experience, financial resources and political leadership. These can be and are being harnessed for vulnerable populations.

Ensuring their health and well-being is not only an obligation, but the foundation of sustainable development. Major achievements in many countries of the global South in ensuring universal health coverage, focusing on vulnerable populations and increasing access to quality

maternal and child health services, as well as successfully eliminating the transmission of HIV & syphilis from mother to child eloquently speak on the value of South-South cooperation as an indispensable development tool for scaling-up solutions and good practices. Some of these experiences will be highlighted in this side-event.

Through the General Assembly Resolution on “Universal Health Coverage: moving together to build a healthier world”, Member States committed to take measures to reduce maternal, neonatal, infant and child mortality and morbidity and increase access to quality health-care services for newborns, infants, and children, as well as all women before, during and after pregnancy and childbirth. (A/RES/74/2) HLM on UHC/ Political declaration).

Progress toward universal health coverage has been made in Asia, Africa and Latin America and Caribbean countries, but the pandemic has affected this progress, increasing inequalities which call to recover lost progress and accelerate efforts on increasing coverage and access to health services, including preventive, curative, and specialized services.

In Asia, after the successful elimination of MTCT of HIV & syphilis in Thailand in 2016, the government has included EMTCT in their priorities for South-South cooperation – offering their experience, lessons learned and technical assistance to countries who are interested to learn from them. Through the Government’s South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) agenda managed by the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) the Government has been sharing its experience, knowledge and technical expertise with other countries globally. Since 2017, this collaboration has brought together key stakeholders such as the Department of Health (DoH), Department of Disease Control (DDC), Thailand MOPH , independent experts and other local civil organizations, resulting in the attainment of a comprehensive set of technical expertise, experience, inputs, insights and resources. Through Thailand’s South-South Cooperation initiatives, several countries globally have had a chance to learn from Thailand’s experience and receive support to adapt solutions to their context. These include Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, China, India and Myanmar, and more recently even during the Covid pandemic, Lao and Iran.

Malaysia is the second country in Asia certified by WHO in October 2018 to have eliminated the vertical transmission of HIV & syphilis, and has important experiences to share, especially around how the EMTCT was accomplished within the context of Universal Health Coverage (UHC). South-South cooperation is a powerful partnership tool that could promote Thailand’s experience, expertise and technical assistance by countries embarking on the same road to EMTCT.

Countries in the Caribbean have a history of engaging in technical cooperation with other countries to advance health priorities. One such technical cooperation includes the elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and syphilis. In the late 1990 and early 2000s, together with PAHO/WHO, The Bahamas led the Caribbean with the implementation of services for prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) and provided a learning environment for the transfer of knowledge and experience to other countries in the Caribbean.

The process included the implementation of regional workshops/training and technical cooperation with other countries with the overall aim of establishing and implementing similar programs based on their realities.

In 2000 Belize established a technical cooperation with the Bahamas for the development and implementation of PMTCT services within the MCH programme. Following a study tour by health personnel from Belize, MOH Bahamas provided direct technical guidance and support for the training of public health nurses from MCH, the development of communication strategy as technical guidance was provided for the establishment of the PMTCT service. Following the full implementation of the PMTCT services, Belize in turn was able to provide similar support to Suriname in the mid-2000s.

Following these initial experiences with PMTCT services in the Region of the Americas, PAHO Member States have committed, in 2010, to integrate to this initiative the elimination of congenital syphilis, leveraging on previous successes and the structure already deployed. Aiming to the dual elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis, the commitments to the EMTCT initiative were renewed and expanded in 2015, building on the experience and lessons learned from the first phase of the EMTCT, countries are encouraged to incorporate the elimination of perinatal hepatitis B and congenital Chagas as an opportunity to advance elimination of communicable diseases and further strengthen the quality and coverage of maternal and child health services.

Cuba is the first country that received WHO certification for EMTCT in 2015. Later they shared their experience with the wider English-speaking Caribbean Countries with PAHO/WHO's support and in collaboration with UNAIDS and UNICEF organized a regional meeting in Jamaica with the purpose of assessing the advancement of the countries toward EMTCT validation. It also provided the opportunity for Cuba to present their experience and lessons learned from the entire validation process. The strong leadership within the English-speaking Caribbean countries, coupled with a strong maternal and child health program contributed to the EMTCT validation of Antigua and Barbuda, Anguilla, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Montserrat and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Experiences in these countries can be ideal conduits for others to learn and benefit from the expertise and technical knowledge of the Ministries of Health, as well as the partners who were critical in achieving this milestone. Through South-South and triangular cooperation, countries could systematically gain access to lessons learned and best practices that could be adapted to support their own efforts to achieve universal health and eliminate MTCT of HIV and syphilis, also building resilient system to maintain public health gains.

Objectives:

Within the 2022 GSSD Expo, UNICEF and PAHO/WHO, in collaboration with Ministries of Health of Antigua and Barbuda, and South Africa are convening a thematic forum on the role of South-South and triangular cooperation in advancing the SDGs that impact children.

In particular, the thematic forum will seek to:

- Build a case for the greater role of South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) in delivering SDG 3 on good health and well-being, with focus on universal health coverage (UHC) and the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV & syphilis (EMTCT)
- Showcase success stories of Governments in UHC and EMTCT and how they have sustained its achievements during the pandemic, including challenges faced.
- Explore how South-South cooperation could be maximized to facilitate greater regional and global sharing of experiences, increasing access to solutions, good practices and technical expertise in the areas of UHC and EMTCT, including the role of international organizations.
- Call to action on collaboration for advancing SDG3 with focus on universal health coverage (UHC) and the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV & syphilis (EMTCT).

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