Universal health with equity, leaving no one behind*

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In September 1978, world leaders at the first International Conference on Primary Health Care signed a historic agreement aimed at achieving the right to health, considering that the enjoyment of the highest standard of health is a fundamental right of all people and one of society's most important goals. The Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, as this milestone document is known, has been essential in guiding the development health systems in most countries of the world over the past four decades.

As the backdrop for this global event, Brazil was going through a historic period of re-democratization, achieving among other objectives the end of military government and the promulgation of a new Magna Carta in 1988, popularly known as the Citizen Constitution. In this context, national stakeholders, including political leaders, health professionals, intellectuals, and student and union organizations, came together in a movement for health sector reform, promoting discussion and debate that culminated in the transformation of management and health care models. This marked the end of an "individualistic" model that was both segmented and strongly focused on private medical care, giving rise to the Unified Health System, which is public, universal, and free of cost to users.

The creation of the Unified Health System—known by its Portuguese acronym, SUS—represented the greatest movement for social inclusion in the history of Brazil. SUS is one of the world's biggest health systems, with universal access to services and activities that promote health. The system is enshrined in the Federal Constitution of 1988, which consecrated health as a "right of all and the duty of the National Government and [which] shall be guaranteed by social and economic policies aimed at reducing the risk of illness and other maladies and by universal and equal access to all activities and services for its promotion, protection and recovery." SUS supports social development in Brazil today and dignifies all Brazilians.

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) considers Brazil to be exemplary as a nation committed to universal health and participatory public management, as well as a source of knowledge for the Region of the Americas and countries in other parts of the world. SUS's structure and outcomes in Brazil are internationally known, generating scientific interest and positive assessments.

In 2018, we are commemorating the happy coincidence of the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata and the 30th anniversary of SUS. This special supplement of the *Pan American Journal of Public Health* is a way of celebrating advances and innumerable victories, as well as acknowledging the challenges facing Brazil in the field of public health.

We are aware that a strong SUS is vital to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and we are absolutely certain that an active SUS will have an impact throughout Brazilian society in addressing the most challenging goals and aspirations for the development and well-being of Brazil and its people.

In Brazil, PAHO/WHO has worked hard on a technical cooperation agenda for the strengthening and sustainability of SUS. We trust that the articles in this supplement will help explain the process of construction of the Brazilian health system, as well as identifying some of the lessons learned and fostering a better understanding of current challenges. Relevant topics are discussed here, such as primary health care, indigenous health, continuing education, health equity, and human resource development.

* Official English translation from the original Portuguese manuscript made by the Pan American Health Organization. In case of discrepancy, the original version (Portuguese) shall prevail.

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We believe that the experiences presented in this supplement devoted to Brazil, in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of Alma-Ata, will serve as a source of inspiration for other countries at a historic moment in which the Region of the Americas is positioned to become the first region in the world to achieve universal health with equity, leaving no one behind.