

SPECIAL REPORT: WORLD HEALTH DAY 1988

HEALTH FOR ALL—ALL FOR HEALTH

World Health Day commemorates the date 7 April 1948 when the Constitution of the World Health Organization was adopted. The theme in this fortieth anniversary year of WHO, "Health for All—All for Health," expresses the idea that attainment of health for all by the year 2000 will require both the political will of governments to provide for the health needs of their peoples and the commitment of individuals and communities to promote healthy lifestyles.

WORLD HEALTH DAY MESSAGE

**Dr. Halfdan T. Mahler, Director-General
of the World Health Organization**

Forty years have passed since men and women of goodwill and foresight laid the foundations of the World Health Organization, creating the first truly global cooperative enterprise dedicated to protecting and promoting human health. As defined in the WHO Constitution, health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being.

The remarkable progress that has been made in science, technology, and medicine in the course of WHO's existence has made available sufficient know-how and expertise to ensure health care for all the inhabitants of our planet. But a wide gulf exists between the health "haves" and the health "have nots"; we are still not all equals in health. Nearly 1,000 million people are trapped in the vicious circle of poverty, malnutrition, disease, and despair that saps their energy, reduces their work capacity, and limits their ability to plan for the future. Average life expectancy ranges from over 70 years in some countries to barely 50 in others. In many developing countries, 100 to 200 out of every 1,000 infants die during their first year of life, even though industrialized countries have succeeded in bringing this rate down to between 10 and 20, or less. And women in most poor countries have a 200 times greater risk of dying during pregnancy and delivery than women in a rich country.

Equity and social justice demand that progress in health be made available to all people through new approaches,

new strategies, and better management of resources. Thus, the 166 Member States of WHO are now unanimously committed to health for all, a principle firmly anchored in four basic strategies:

- provision of appropriate technology, meaning technology that is not only scientifically sound but socially acceptable and economically affordable;
- encouragement of the political will to improve health so as to enable people to lead economically productive and socially rewarding lives;
- cooperation between the health sector and other sectors integral to development, such as education, agriculture, industry, and information;
- participation in the quest for better health by communities and individuals: all for health by the year 2000.

The Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care, now 10 years old, pointed the way for us to proceed. Men and women working in all sectors must realize that they are not only the builders but also the beneficiaries of development, in particular health development. People everywhere, including top-level political and spiritual leaders, must recognize beyond all their differences that health is for the good of all people and is essential for human progress, that there is both economic value and social justice in health. Health is not everything, but surely there is nothing without health. The best interests of the human race depend upon health for all and all for health.

WORLD HEALTH DAY MESSAGE

Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo
Director of the Pan American Health Organization

On 7 April 1988 the people of the Americas join with others around the world to observe the fortieth anniversary of the World Health Organization (WHO). This year's World Health Day celebrates four decades of dramatic progress since the founding countries of WHO adopted the worthy ideal that "health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition." To further this objective, the nations of the world united under the WHO banner in 1977 to declare that their main social target in the decades ahead should be the "attainment by all the citizens of the world by the year 2000 of a level of health that will permit them to lead a socially and economically productive life."

In the Americas and throughout the world, our quest is to make this promise of health for all a reality. We must build upon the significant accomplishments of WHO's first 40 years by improving the harsh realities of life that confront so many persons on the planet today.

Our accomplishments to date are important. We have helped to establish new value systems that give priority to improving health conditions. We have worked together to increase life expectancy, reduce infant mortality, and provide clean drinking water to millions. We have been successful in bringing together the world's nations, regardless of ideology, to eradicate smallpox, one of mankind's oldest and most dreaded scourges, and to join in the struggle to reduce the toll from other diseases. The Pan American Health Organization, WHO's regional arm in the Americas, is proud to have shared in and contributed to these advances in the human condition.

Now we must continue to collaborate to meet the many challenges ahead: to help restructure health services to make primary health care available to the millions who lack it, to improve nutrition, and to bring adequate water and sanitation to many poor areas. We must intensify our efforts to control diarrheal diseases, achieve universal immunization, and eliminate the transmission of poliomyelitis in the Americas by 1990, further reducing the toll from preventable childhood diseases. And we must combat the many lifestyle-related health problems, which are largely avoidable.

In recent years, PAHO/WHO's program of technical cooperation has focused on ways to bridge the tragic gaps that remain between the health status of the fortunate and those who are less fortunate. We have sought to improve the use of available resources for health care so that adequate services can be offered at the local level to everyone who needs them, immunize all children against major communicable diseases, and help countries prepare for and deal with natural disasters and many other pressing needs.

PAHO/WHO has helped countries work together to solve common problems, even in areas torn by conflict. In Central America, under an initiative called "Health—A Bridge for Peace," the seven nations that make up the isthmus of Central America and Panama have agreed on common health needs and mounted intercountry programs to tackle pressing health problems. In the Caribbean, 18 countries and territories are moving forward in a joint plan called "Caribbean Cooperation in Health." And in South America, the five countries of the Andean group (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) are working together on

a plan of action addressing six priority areas of common concern. The subregional approaches have already proved successful in increasing international collaboration for health and exemplify the concept that developing countries have much to offer each other in solving their health problems and achieving health for all their citizens.

This fortieth anniversary year is a time to pledge anew our commitment to WHO and its ideals, and to redouble our political will to solve our health problems. That is why the theme for World Health Day 1988 is "Health for All—All for Health."

"All for Health" means that responsibility for health is everyone's. Individuals, communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and international agencies, including PAHO and WHO, all have important roles to play, and must work together to achieve the common goal of health for all.

For individuals, health for all begins by making healthy choices in diet and lifestyle. The risk of death and debilitation posed by many of the health problems we are faced with today—such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, many cancers, and the modern menace of AIDS—is significantly lowered by healthy living. Further, reducing the incidence of needless lifestyle-related illnesses will lessen the strain on already overburdened health budgets and permit scarce resources to be redirected toward resolving other health problems.

To choose a healthy lifestyle, people must have access to health information. Truly, health education is the key to a healthier way of life. For this reason, World Health Day 1988 is also the occasion of the "World's First No Tobacco Day." Let us take this opportunity to choose health—not tobacco—and to educate ourselves about the dangers of smoking and tobacco use and the benefits of a tobacco-free society. It is especially important for young people to affirm that tobacco has no place in their lifestyles.

During the past years, we have learned many crucial lessons, among them that health and development do not stand alone but go hand in hand—each depends upon the other. We also have learned that building healthy lives requires global solutions, and that no country can be expected to find all the answers by itself.

From the tip of Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, within our local communities and among governments, we must build a new spirit of cooperation based on universal participation. As WHO enters its fifth decade, we in the Americas pledge to continue our tradition of leadership in achieving better health for people everywhere, and to make health for all possible by assuring the commitment of all for health.