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## *Abstracts and Reports*

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# Renewing the Commitment to Achieve Health for All in the Americas

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In 1995 the Pan American Health Organization initiated a consultation process at the regional and national levels to renew the "health for all" goal and strategy, taking into account the global trends that are affecting or will potentially affect the health of the population of the Americas. These efforts are aimed at shaping a renewed vision of health based on equity, solidarity, and sustainability—one that will inspire and support national and hemispheric efforts to meet the challenges in health today and in the future.

The renewed vision of health for all, as expressed by everyone who has contributed to it and continues to do so, should comprise aspirational goals as well as realistic and concrete local, national, and subregional goals with quantifiable objectives in priority areas. The revitalization of health for all affirms our faith in building a world in which health is valued as a universal good. The initiative itself is a forthright acknowledgment of the persistent disparities in health and living conditions among and within the countries of the Region.

The proposal expands the role and merit of health by emphasizing a broader vision of the sector and its linkages, better organized political action for the achievement of health, and a comprehensive view of health problems and solutions. PAHO is committed to supporting these actions by strengthening its leadership and coordination roles in international health in the Americas, as expressed through technical cooperation activities.

The topic of renewing health for all has been discussed in national forums and subregional meetings and within the Organization during technical discussions held at Headquarters, country offices, and centers between September and November 1995.<sup>2</sup> A background document, which was produced by an interdivisional group led by PAHO's Office of Analysis and Strategic Planning (DAP), served as the basis for the discussions, and the document *Renewing the Health for All Strategy*, produced by the World Health Organization, has also been pivotal in guiding the discussions and regional work. The resulting suggestions and comments will be incorporated in a document on this topic to be presented for the consideration of the Governing Bodies in 1996.

As part of the consultation process, PAHO, with the cosponsorship of the Ministry of Public Health of Uruguay, is convening a Regional Conference on Fu-

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<sup>2</sup>A final report of the discussions is available from the Office of Analysis and Strategic Planning (DAP).

ture Trends and Renewing the Call for Health for All, to be held in Montevideo, Uruguay, 9–12 June 1996.<sup>3</sup> The main purpose of this first conference is to advance toward the consolidation of a Pan American position regarding the new vision and strategies to achieve health for all in the Americas, while generating a broader understanding and commitment to the vision. This event will include the participation of recognized public health leaders and other prominent experts from nongovernmental organizations, technical and financial cooperation agencies, and research and teaching institutions committed to improving the lives and health conditions of the peoples of the Americas. As part of the conference program, the International Health Futures Network will hold a special meeting on 9 June to work on the development of prospective global approaches that will favor health and the achievement of health for all.

To support the advancement of health futures methodologies in the planning process for health reform policy aimed toward achieving health for all, the *Health Futures Manual* will be presented during this event. This book has been produced in English by the World Health Organization with financial support from the Swedish International Development Agency, and it will be published in Spanish through the PAHO Expanded Program of Textbooks and Instructional Materials (PALTEX).

During 1995 PAHO's Governing Bodies were apprised of activities and progress on renewing the call for health for all. A consolidated document will be presented for the consideration of the 26th Meeting of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming, scheduled for 25–

27 March 1996 in Washington, D.C. This document will include elements derived from consultations with key persons in institutions dedicated to public health teaching and research activities; results from technical discussion reports and national consultations; the conclusions of other meetings and recent experiences in health sector reform, including the Pan American Conference on Health and the Environment in Sustainable Development and the Seminar on Rethinking Technical Cooperation in Health; and the analysis of world summits and international meetings whose resolutions have a bearing on achievement of the goal. After being modified according to suggestions emanating from the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming, the document will be further enriched by the results of the Regional Conference on Future Trends and Renewing the Call for Health for All.

The World Health Organization will approve a new Global Health Policy during the World Health Assembly in 1998. However, given the swift changes this Region is experiencing and the dynamic forces affecting health, it is expected that the renewed goal and the proposed strategies for the American Region will be approved by the Directing Council in September 1996. The regional position adopted by the Governing Bodies will be coherent with the current strategic and programmatic orientations and will be flexible enough to facilitate their varied modes of expression and application in the countries in the context of health sector reform and new health care models.

Unless the obstacles that limited the achievement of health for all in the past are removed, there is no guarantee that the strategy will succeed in the future. Renewal requires that health become an integral part of sustainable social development, with equity viewed as the most important value in any process of social transformation. The ethical dimension of

<sup>3</sup>For additional information about this meeting, contact the Office of Analysis and Strategic Planning (DAP) at PAHO, telephone (202) 861-3218, fax (202) 861-8873.

health, including recognition of the universal right to health regardless of gender or ethnic group, will be an essential element of the renewed vision and strategies. Special attention will be given to balancing health promotion, protection, reparative, and curative activities, so that both individual and collective needs are satisfied.

Despite the colossal challenge posed by the task, there is reason to believe, without being overly optimistic, that the current political and social context present unprecedented opportunities to renew health for all. Recent trends point to democratization and peace, greater commitment among authorities to the achievement of equity, and positive reforms that encourage social participation with redistribution of power and resources in some countries. Moreover, the dissemination of a positive view of health and a greater social consciousness about the importance of being individually and collectively healthy, coupled with the ef-

fects of the information revolution, constitute solid allies for health for all. The policies of international financial institutions currently favor investment in health, and increasing international experience in disease control is also an encouraging trend. There exist, therefore, more possibilities for interagency, intersectoral, and interinstitutional work, along with a greater managerial and technological capacity. Physicians and medical professionals are more aware and supportive of a broader view of health and health problems, and there is greater logistical support at the local level, which improves the capability to identify problems and fight poverty.

The achievement of previously set goals and new ones, as well as the successful application of strategies, depends on a variety of factors, some internal and others external to the health sector. Success will, however, ultimately depend on society's commitment to achieve higher levels of health and well-being for all.



## Regional Plan of Action on HIV/AIDS Control 1996–1999 and NGO–Government Collaboration

Since the beginning of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, PAHO has supported the countries of the Americas in their prevention and control efforts—support that has included both direct technical cooperation and resource mobilization. Dur-

ing the Summit of the Americas in December 1994, the Heads of State of 34 countries of the Region mandated PAHO to develop a program to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to identify sources of funding.

In response to that mandate and as a continuation of PAHO's work in the Region, the Organization has developed a Regional Plan of Action for HIV/AIDS Control for the period 1995–1999. It provides the necessary framework for col-

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*Source:* Pan American Health Organization. Poverty alleviation, health and human development in Latin America and the Caribbean 1996–2000: report of the Pan American Health Organization to the Canadian International Development Agency, January 1996. Washington, DC: PAHO; 1996.