

Editorial

HEALTH STRATEGIES FOR THE AMERICAS

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Two important documents, recently published together, describe health sector developments in the Americas over the past decade and present a compilation of Regional strategies for attaining the world goal of Health for All by the Year 2000. The following account describes the nature of these documents and the major developments leading to their preparation.

The World Health Assembly decided in 1977 (Resolution WHA30.43) that the main social target of the Governments and the World Health Organization 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."

The Declaration of Alma-Ata adopted by the International Conference on Primary Health Care, held in the Soviet Union in 1978, emphasized that "primary health care is the key to attaining this target as part of general development, in the spirit of social justice."

Subsequently, the World Health Assembly in 1979 (Resolution WHA32.30) urged the Member States to define and implement national, regional, and global strategies for attaining the goal of Health for All by the Year 2000.

In the Region of the Americas, the III Special Meeting of Ministers of Health concluded in 1972 that the principal goal of the 1971-1980 Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas was to increase the life expectancy of the people of the Region. The main objective established was the extension of health service coverage to all unserved or underserved rural and urban populations—through reorganization and expansion of health systems, augmentation of their operating capacity, and development and utilization of appropriate technology according to conditions in each country—all with the aim of maximizing the effectiveness and productivity of the systems.

In 1972 the XXI Meeting of the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization, in adopting the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas, agreed on the need to design and implement a mechanism for systematic evaluation of the progress of the plan, at the national and hemispheric levels. In 1976 the XXIV Directing Council, after reviewing the efforts made by the Member States, adopted Resolution XXVIII setting 1980 as the year in which the final evaluation of the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas was to be made.

In 1977 the IV Special Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Americas, after reviewing the experience acquired during the decade, reaffirmed that it was necessary and possible to attain the coverage-extension target, and declared primary care the key strategy to be pursued within the context of intersectoral economic development.

In 1979, with the intent of providing mechanisms for meeting the commitment made

by the Governments of the Americas to implement the World Health Assembly's resolution on formulation of strategies, PAHO's Directing Council adopted Resolution XXV approving a work plan. This joined in a single process the evaluation of the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas and the formulation of national and regional strategies.

To facilitate implementation of the work plan, that same year the PAHO Secretariat made available to the national health authorities a "Guide for Evaluating the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas" and a document entitled "Implications of the Global Goal of Health for All by the Year 2000 for the Countries of the Region of the Americas: Guidelines for the Analysis and Formulation of National and Regional Strategies." The Secretariat also provided assistance to the countries as requested.

The work plan was developed jointly by the Member States and the Organization, and in 1980 twenty-four Governments formulated and presented their national strategies for attaining the goal of Health for All by the Year 2000. These national strategies constituted the basis for preparing a document (CD27/34.A) entitled "Developments in the Health Sector in the 1971-80 Decade, and Strategies for Attaining the Goal of Health for All by the Year 2000." This document was approved by PAHO's Directing Council (Resolution XX) at its XXVII Meeting in 1980.

The Council also established an ad hoc working group to prepare a document complementing CD27/34.A that would classify and summarize the comments, observations, and proposals put forward by Member Governments during the discussions of this agenda item. That document, prepared pursuant to Resolution XXI of the same meeting, summarized the highlights of CD27/34.A and also included the individual contributions presented by representatives of the Member States. The document makes explicit the relationship between the health sector and the objectives of the New International Economic Order and the New International Development Strategy, and specifies the Regional objectives and goals involved. In addition, it poses the question of how to relate the social and environmental conditions that constitute risk factors affecting the health of priority population groups with the sectoral and extrasectoral activities and resources needed to control those conditions. It also defines a set of minimum indicators for monitoring and evaluating the aforementioned strategies. Finally, it sets forth the implications of adopting the Regional strategies for individual governments, for cooperation among countries, and for PAHO and WHO.

Both Document CD27/34.A and its complementary document (a compilation of Regional strategies representing the contribution of the Region of the Americas to the global strategies for attaining the worldwide goal of Health for All by the Year 2000) are contained in the PAHO publication entitled *Health for All by the Year 2000—Strategies* (PAHO Official Document 173. Washington, D.C., 1980).

These Regional strategies constitute the health policy that will guide the plan of action to be designed and implemented by the Governments and the Organization in meeting their collective commitment for the attainment of the goal. The recognition of this goal as a conceptual and basic instrument for initiating and guiding the process of change provides a valuable opportunity for social progress in the Region of the Americas. In turn, the development and evolution of that process, in the light of conditions and realities in each country, will enrich the initial guidelines and substantive meaning of this goal.