



"Conditions have converged to create a unique moment for health in the Americas. I believe that we have the power to effect change in maternal and child health, in non-communicable diseases, in infectious diseases, in strengthening health systems, and in achieving universal access to care. We have a powerful potential for health to be a driving force for change."

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne
Director, PAHO

Health throughout the life course

PAHO has worked to enhance the roles of the family and the community in promoting and protecting health and in addressing people's health needs throughout the life course. Technical cooperation in these areas has focused on improving the health and development of children, expanding access to the benefits of immunization, and accelerating reductions in maternal and neonatal mortality.



Since I assumed the post of Director in February 2013, I have been pleased to find that the core values of universality, equity, and Pan American solidarity remain robust within the Pan American Health Organization. It is satisfying to find myself at the helm of an organization with a strong tradition of excellence as well as a palpable openness to change and improvement.

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne
Director, PAHO

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Building on the Past and Moving into the Future with Confidence

Annual Report of the Director – 2013



Continuity and change

The period 2012-2013 was a time of both continuity and change at the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO). PAHO celebrated its 110th year in 2012 and in 2013 welcomed its new Director, Dr. Carissa F. Etienne. Under her leadership, PAHO reorganized its internal structure in order to reposition itself as a flexible, transparent, and responsive organization that brings expertise and innovation to its collaboration with Member States.

Strengthening health systems

PAHO has worked with countries to strengthen their health systems based on the primary health care strategy, with a view to advancing the goal of universal health coverage. Its support has ranged from assistance for health systems restructuring and health workforce planning to training in the design of health-care benefit packages and capacity building in national pharmaceutical regulation.

Disease prevention and control

PAHO has supported countries' efforts to eliminate, where feasible, and to reduce the burden of infectious diseases. This work has focused on strengthening disease prevention and control, preparedness, risk reduction, and epidemic alert and response, including response to events of potential international concern as defined in the International Health Regulations.

Noncommunicable diseases and mental health

The epidemic of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) constitutes a major health challenge facing countries in the Americas.

To tackle this epidemic, PAHO has promoted an "all-of-society" approach to interventions, and this requires the involvement of governments, the private sector, academia, and civil society. PAHO has also promoted mental health policies, services, and legislation that respect the rights of people suffering from mental disorders, while promoting community-based approaches to treatment and care.

The environment and health

Environmental conditions have a major impact on health and social equity. In 2012–2013, PAHO worked with countries to promote healthy markets, schools, and communities and advocated for the inclusion of health in all policies and across all sectors. Other efforts in this area have focused on violence, road safety, chemical safety, water and sanitation, and workers' and consumers' health.

Disaster preparedness and response

PAHO helped countries build their capacity to respond to disasters and other emergencies, to reduce risks and improve preparedness in health systems, and to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations Health Cluster in responding to disasters. Support ranged from the deployment of experts to disaster zones and the promotion of "Safe Hospitals" to training, technical guidance, and the provision of software, manuals, tools, and equipment.