



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World Health
Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
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PRESENTATION OF HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS+ 2017 OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne
Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau

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**26 September 2017
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**29th Pan American Sanitary Conference
69th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Honorable President of the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference,
Dr. Antonio Barrios, Minister of Health of Paraguay,
Honorable Ministers and Secretaries of Health of Member States of the
Pan American Health Organization
Director-General of the World Health Organization,
Honorable Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,
Distinguished Member State Delegates,
Eminent Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Representatives of Nongovernmental Organizations in formal relations with the
Pan American Health Organization,
Representatives of the United Nations and Other Specialized Agencies,
Fellow PAHO and WHO colleagues,
Honored guests,
Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen:

One of the most important duties of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau has always been the collection, analysis and sharing of health information.

Indeed, collecting and sharing information about infectious diseases was the founding mandate of the International Sanitary Bureau when it was created 115 years ago, by delegates from 11 American Republics meeting at Washington's Willard Hotel in 1902.

For a number of years now, PAHO has fulfilled this mandate in part by producing a periodic report every five years that we call Health in the Americas, which by now is considered PAHO's flagship publication.

Today, I have the duty and pleasure of presenting the latest edition of that report. But this year's edition has a slightly different title: "Health in the Americas PLUS."

That “plus” signals a turning point from previous editions. Like its predecessors, this year’s Health in the Americas remains an indispensable source of information about the current health situation in our Region, based on data collected in collaboration with our Member States.

Also like past editions, the year’s report analyzes the most important trends in health in our Region and discusses strategies and actions needed to advance regional health going forward.

But **this** “Health in the Americas” is **more** than a publication. Our new edition comes to life via a virtual platform that does more than any print publication could:

- It provides a new **space** for ongoing analysis, monitoring and evaluation of health conditions, determinants and trends in our Region.
- It is a **knowledge-sharing hub** that allows users **on their own** to assess, monitor and evaluate the impact of ongoing health policies and programs.
- It facilitates **dialogue** to promote and strengthen inter-programmatic and inter-sectoral action.

We have great hopes that our Member States and all those interested in public health in our Region will find this new product to be an essential tool for gathering evidence and conducting analyses to improve decision- and policy-making toward the achievement of universal health.

What are some of the findings in this latest edition?

Well, you have in your hands a printed summary of the report but I invite you all to download the full expanded text of the report from the dedicated website. But in the meantime, I will share a few highlights with you.

- First, some of the good news: average life expectancy in our Region gained 16 years over the past 45 years, reaching approximately 75 years of age in 2010-2015, compared with just 59 in the 1960s.
- Today, 88% of people born in the Region reach the age of 60, and of these, 42% will live beyond 80.
- Infant mortality declined 24% between the early 2000s and 2015.
- Maternal mortality also declined, although by only 15%, and this remains a significant challenge for all of us. Let us not forget that we did not achieve the MDG for maternal mortality.
- Malaria cases decreased 62% between 2000 and 2015 and malaria deaths declined by 79%.
- The number of active foci of onchocerciasis (or river blindness) fell from 12 to just 1.

- In 2015, the International Expert Committee determined that the Region had interrupted the endemic transmission of rubella.
- In 2016, the same Committee declared the Region of the Americas free of endemic transmission of measles.
- Between 2005 and 2015, HIV-related deaths declined 67%.
- Between 2005 and 2010, institutional deliveries increased from 91.3% to 95.6%.
- And between 2005 and 2016, the proportion of pregnant women receiving at least 4 prenatal care visits increased by 11%, to over 88%.

Of course, the report also reviews the major health challenges that have faced our Region in the last few years. These include:

- Emerging and re-emerging diseases such as Zika, dengue, chikungunya, yellow fever, cholera, and Ebola.
- Chronic noncommunicable diseases, which continue to account for the largest share of our Region's burden of disease and mortality.
- Antimicrobial resistance and health-care associated infections.
- Violence, road accidents, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental health issues, including depression and dementia.
- And two of the most important and enduring challenges facing health in the Americas:
 - the challenge of completing the unfinished agenda for women and children in the areas of maternal mortality, anemia, chronic undernutrition, and childhood development.
 - And the challenge of closing the persisting gaps in health equity that keep vulnerable groups and individuals from sharing fully in the remarkable health progress our Region has made.

This year's edition of Health in the Americas also highlights the promise of further health progress as a result of our countries' commitments to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and especially Goal #3. And it delineates the way forward--what we must do to fully realize our regional vision of universal health.

This way forward includes:

- Transforming our health systems to overcome fragmentation and segmentation so they are able to serve all people—of all ages—equitably, comprehensively, effectively and sustainably.
- Shifting public health from reactive to proactive actions and promoting more cost-effective interventions. This means, for example, using epidemiology not

only to assess trends but as a predictive tool to generate epidemiological “intelligence.”

- Engaging all sectors through a “Health in All Policies” approach, so that those in the private sector, academia, and civil society join with those of us in the public sector to address risk factors and the social, economic and environmental determinants of health.
- Meeting health throughout the life course, as an integral aspect of health systems.
- And last but not least, taking advantage of the knowledge era and advances in Big Data to generate more evidence in social policies, health technologies and effective treatments.

Let me conclude by saying that increasing the **availability** and **quality** of health information is no longer optional in this age of information and knowledge. Indeed, more and better health information is so clearly within our reach that not meeting this challenge would constitute an inexcusable breach of duty.

I hope you will all seize upon this new “Health in the Americas Plus” platform as an essential collaborative tool for advancing health information and analysis as critical, indeed absolutely essential, inputs to our efforts to advance health for all in our Region.

Thank you.
