

# The Secretariat

Proper use of corporate information is essential for the execution of PAHO's institutional operations and provides the foundation for the planning and management of its activities, the deepening and expansion of its interinstitutional relations, and the dissemination of information on its activities and on scientific and technical issues. Through strengthening of the leading role of corporate information, PAHO has made enormous progress in regard to policy formulation and modernization of

# Info

information

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its institutional technology base, thereby facilitating internal and external access to information.

## ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

PAHO's technical cooperation and international coordination functions in the field of health require that the Organization make sound use of information on the population's health conditions and on the development of health systems and services in the countries of the Region. Not only is information necessary for the formulation of appropriate policy orientations that will enable the Organization to help address regional needs, it is also essential for programming activities and making the best use of resources so that PAHO can fulfill its constitutional mandates.

Based on the health information compiled by the Organization, as well as the analyses and information produced by other international organizations on economic, political, and social conditions in the Region, in 1998 PAHO drafted the proposed policy orientations for the next quadrennium. This proposal was approved by the 25<sup>th</sup> Pan American Sanitary Conference and was adopted as the Strategic and Programmatic Orientations, 1999–2002.

The Organization also undertook a study of the American Region Planning, Programming, Monitoring, and Evaluation System (AMPES), with a view to ensuring that the policy orientations would translate correctly into biennial technical cooperation projects. The Organization believes that an effective use of regional and national analyses will enable it to respond appropriately to the countries' needs and meet the goals established under the above-mentioned orientations. The aforementioned study included an analysis of the functional approaches to technical cooperation, as well as use of the corporate core data for programming, monitoring of projects, and evaluation of results and of the impact of PAHO's technical cooperation.

## EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The ever-changing international cooperation environment requires the Organization to maintain a permanent and consistent presence in national and international fora that have been established to plan, follow up, and evaluate development trends. PAHO particularly emphasized those social development sectors that considered poverty reduction and social justice as central themes. Equity and Panamericanism continued to function as the pillars for the Organization's programs in the Region.

PAHO coordinates relations and fosters alliances with key partners in and outside the Americas to promote health priorities in the

Hemisphere and provide a solid base for technical cooperation with and among Member Countries. It does so by gathering and disseminating information that emphasizes the importance of health in the development process and places health needs at the highest possible level within global and regional political agendas. Information is continually collected from the international financing institutions; multilateral development organizations; the United Nations and its specialized agencies; traditional bilateral partners; NGOs; foundations; and the private, for-profit sector. PAHO relies on this information to identify opportunities for joint initiatives, influence policy making of other entities in favor of health objectives in the hemisphere, and establish strategic alliances. The Organization also collects and processes information on major shifts in the international arena, such as the UN reform process, the inter-American system, and other subregional initiatives, in order to adapt its work to these changes and better respond to the countries' needs.

PAHO has been increasingly involved in the promotion and coordination of the health initiatives that have emerged from the inter-American summits and in the follow-up of resolutions for which the Organization has been assigned responsibility. Clear progress has been achieved in work that evolved from the Second Summit of the Americas, which led to the launching of a regional initiative known as "Health Technologies Linking the Americas." Central areas of work involve the development and production of affordable vaccines and essential drugs, the improvement of existing networks of health information and surveillance systems, and the development of effective low cost technologies for basic sanitation services, as well as the evaluation of health technologies.

Regarding the mobilization of resources, internal mechanisms were improved and closer working relationships with financing partners were forged, all efforts that required an effective use of information and communication. The exchange of information on trends, priority areas, and cooperation needs from a technical and political perspective have contributed to improve communication channels. This has enabled PAHO to find new partners and make optimal use of the complementary strengths and advantages of its various stakeholders, beneficiary countries, and the financing partners. Extrabudgetary contributions accounted for almost 50% of PAHO's entire budget. In 1998, the Organization raised funds from extrabudgetary activities approximating US\$ 70 million.

As its traditional financing partners continue to decentralize, the Organization has had to find a systematic approach for establishing local negotiation capabilities. In order to reinforce PAHO's capabilities in the field and to assist our counterparts in the Member Countries, many training sessions and presentations have been held at Headquarters and in field offices, as well as in centers and member government entities.

**The Secretariat is increasingly involved in coordinating health initiatives from the inter-American summits and in following up resolutions adopted by PAHO's Governing Bodies.**

A project tracking system for extrabudgetary activities is expected to be accessible Organization-wide by the end of the millennium.

Transparency and open communication channels are necessary conditions for sustainable cooperation programs. Building on this foundation, tools have been designed to enhance and integrate a participatory process in the management of programs and projects, and guidelines for project design and for monitoring project implementation have been elaborated for use throughout the Organization.

## ADMINISTRATION

During 1998, the Organization continued to actively pursue the use of information as a tool for and component and facilitator of its technical cooperation activities. PAHO adopted an information technology strategy that calls for a commitment in three major areas: a gradual shift from mainframe-based systems to a client/server environment, the adoption of a uniform software platform throughout the Organization to enhance productivity and facilitate the exchange of information, and the creation of a virtual private network based on Internet/Intranet technology to connect all of its offices.

As the demands for corporate information continue to increase, the Organization has worked to improve the processing of and access to information; to that end, in 1998 the Organization completed several large projects to upgrade its computing infrastructure. Local Area Networks at Headquarters and in several field locations were modernized to prepare for increased traffic and the growth of multimedia applications to process data, images, and voice. PAHO also began to convert its corporate E-mail system to Microsoft Exchange. This effort consolidates an Organization-wide corporate E-mail directory that allows all of its offices to communicate more quickly and efficiently and lays the foundation for a widespread use of remote access to E-mail services.

The advancement in Internet technology during 1998 was significant. Nearly every field office was provided suitable access to the Internet, and the PAHO Intranet emerged as a major forum for sharing information among the Organization's offices and staff. The PAHO Intranet provides information about such issues as the health situation in the countries and the progress of the technical cooperation programs. Along with having installed video conferencing facilities at Headquarters, the Organization is now capable of handling the complex and sophisticated information exchanges that increasingly are becoming part of today's global work environment.

Several information systems that provide continuous support to key administrative services were brought to the forefront during 1998. The reengineering of several existing Personnel systems resulted in a fully

The Organization  
strives to improve the  
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make this information  
more accessible.

integrated Personnel Administration System (PAS). All of the information on individuals working with the Organization is now available in a single database. The performance, planning, and evaluation system (PPES) also was made available and promises to be an effective tool in measuring and managing PAHO's activities and its human resources.

The use of the PAHO Intranet, combined with key enhancements to existing financial systems and the development of data warehouse technology, offers a wide variety of approaches for obtaining financial data on programs and projects. For instance, the difficult task of tracking regional and subregional activities is now fully supported, enabling PAHO managers at all levels and throughout the Region to access key financial information for effectively monitoring and implementing health projects being carried out simultaneously in several locations.

PAHO's proprietary machine translation computer and software continues to support technical cooperation in the Region, processing 30% more words than in 1997 with no increase in staff and at far lower cost than other international organizations. New licenses continue to be sold to non-PAHO users, and their number is expected to increase once the ongoing conversion to a Windows format is completed in mid-1999.

While making significant advances in information technology to prepare for the challenges in the new millennium, the Organization also is prepared to face Y2K problems in its systems and computing infrastructure. In 1998, several corporate systems and major components of the computing infrastructure were made Y2K compliant; the remaining modifications are well under way. A web page covering Y2K issues has been established in the PAHO Internet, as a way to increase awareness of potential problems Organization-wide.

## SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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The greater share of PAHO's publication work during the year involved preparing publications for and otherwise providing support for the 25<sup>th</sup> Pan American Sanitary Conference. Two books stand out. *Leading Pan American Health* is the latest quadrennial accounting of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau's work, examined in light of the strategic and programmatic orientations set by the previous Pan American Sanitary Conference. This book was also published in Spanish as *Liderazgo en salud panamericana*. The other, *Health in the Americas* (previously called *Health Conditions in the Americas*), also is published every four years. This two-volume set describes the Region's sociopolitical process and analyzes health conditions, services, and resources Regionwide and in each of the countries. Prior to publication, readers were surveyed, in order to better understand their use of *Health in the Americas* and to more efficiently target the book's promotion and distribution. Full-text electronic versions of both books are available on

*Health in the Americas, 1998 Edition, analyzes health conditions, services, and resources Regionwide and in each country.*

PAHO's website, assuring the widest possible broadcasting of this information. In addition, close collaboration with PAHO/WHO Country Offices led to 21 launchings of *Health in the Americas*, which resulted in coverage in all the major print media throughout the Americas. A live, multimedia presentation on the Organization's technical and scientific information output was part of the agenda of the Pan American Sanitary Conference, and delegates were given an opportunity to surf the net for health information sources and to access both electronic and print publications.

Publications on nutrition, health statistics, preventive medicine, AIDS, violence, the fight against tobacco, healthy municipalities, and health-promoting schools also were issued during the year, and the monthly, multilingual, peer-reviewed *Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública/Pan American Journal of Public Health* continued to be published (see Table 5).

To ensure that the Organization's work, as expressed through its publications, would be known by as wide an audience as possible, several marketing, distribution, and sales strategies were undertaken: the free distribution list was updated and rationalized, so as to target full coverage of PAHO's primary clientele; new agreements were established with sales agents; cooperative agreements with other institutions were struck; the network of PAHO Publications Centers in the countries was expanded; an online catalog was launched, which made it possible for consumers to acquire PAHO publications electronically; and scientific and technical panels were set up to discuss such topics as communicable diseases, health promotion, and epidemiology, issues with which the Organization and specific publications deal. As a result of these initiatives, customer service improved and operational expenditures decreased; sales revenue doubled over the previous year, thereby enabling costs to be offset proportionately.

The reach of the Organization's electronic communications expanded to include, in addition to the PAHO website, the PAHO Intranet site, comprised of administrative and technical information to improve staff performance. More than one hundred staff members were trained to enable them to contribute their respective technical program contents to the Web and the Intranet. The availability of full-text titles via the Web considerably enriched the site—as the content of the site grew, so did the number of visits and hits.

The Headquarters Library continued to provide bibliographic services, making optimal use of emerging information technologies, to PAHO staff and collaborators; to contribute to the database of the Latin American and Caribbean health sciences information network managed by BIREME; and to build PAHO's institutional memory.

An online catalog was launched, enabling consumers to acquire PAHO's publications electronically.

**TABLE 5**  
**Production of the Office of**  
**Publications and Editorial**  
**Services in 1998.**

Series Number	Series and Title
<b>Scientific Publications</b>	
566	Nutrition, Health, and Child Development: Research Advances and Policy Recommendations
567	Estadísticas de salud de las Américas. Edición de 1998
567	Health Statistics from the Americas, 1998 Edition
568	Prevención clínica: guía para médicos
569	La salud en las Américas. Edición de 1998 (2 vol)
569	Health in the Americas, 1998 Edition (2 vol)
570	Hacer frente al sida. Prioridades de la acción pública ante una epidemia mundial
<b>Official Documents</b>	
287	Liderazgo en salud panamericana. Informe Cuadrienal del Director, 1994–1997
287	Leading Pan American Health. Quadrennial Report of the Director, 1994–1997
<b>Technical Papers</b>	
46	Health, Social Equity, and Changing Production Patterns in Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>Communicating for Health</b>	
10	Violence in the Americas: The Social Pandemic of the 20th Century
11	Municipios saludables
12	Tabaquismo: una amenaza constante para la salud
13	Escuelas promotoras de la salud
<b>Electronic Publications</b>	
	Manual para el control de las enfermedades transmisibles. Decimosexta edición
<b>Periodic Publication</b>	
	Revista Panamericana de Salud Pública / Pan American Journal of Public Health (monthly)

## PUBLIC INFORMATION

As health news increased in 1998, so did the number of requests for information about PAHO's work, activities, and programs. This increased interest in information about the Organization stemmed in part to a shifting emphasis on health and healthy lifestyles, advances in health, and the ease of access via the Internet and electronic technology. Public information requests from the general public, media inquiries from journalists, and technical questions from academic institutions and nongovernmental organizations all rose notably. The supply of news met the demand; as is often the case, the demand, in turn, increased along with the supply curve.

There has been a growing recognition within the Organization that PAHO's messages need to reach the broad, general public, as well as the health community, partners, financial collaborators, and policy makers. To adequately promote its work, PAHO set up media training workshops and encouraged technical units to include communications

In 1998, three issues of the newsletter, *PAHO Today*, and two editions of the magazine, *Perspectives in Health*, reported on the Organization's activities.

components in the planning, programming, and implementation of projects. PAHO professionals used their communications expertise to speak about the Organization's work as part of the Speakers Bureau.

As part of the strategy to inform about PAHO's work, in 1998 three issues of the newsletter, *PAHO Today*, and two editions of the magazine, *Perspectives in Health*, were published. These publications received high acclaim and the magazine won a prestigious award for excellence. Contacts with the media rose dramatically in 1998 as new avenues were sought for articles and broadcast materials. PAHO was the primary source for scores of interviews from notable media outlets worldwide.

Also, in 1998, PAHO produced and distributed a half hour television show, "Perspectives in Health," which highlighted some of the work of PAHO's programs. Several public service announcements were produced and 30-second spots were aired throughout the Western Hemisphere. As a way to reach an even broader audience, PAHO came out with a series of one-minute Spanish language health messages and a radio program called "Salud Siempre" that was aired on thousands of radio stations.

Coordinated packages linking graphics, news releases, photos, and videos have been widely used throughout the Region. Much of this coordination was highlighted during such well-attended events as World Health Day, World AIDS Day, and the Washington Walk for Health. Working with the media, providing information about PAHO, and meeting the demand for health news are becoming an ever increasing part of the work for the Organization as a whole.