

## PAHO Launches 2006 Internship Program

17 June 2006 – PAHO



On 16 June 2006, Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), welcomed over 40 university students to the Organization as participants in the PAHO 2006 Summer Internship Program. This marks the second year of the structured internship program, which doubled in size from the 2005 summer pilot program and expanded operations to include the PAHO country offices. Both graduate and undergraduate students from throughout the Americas and overseas join PAHO for the summer months to gain work experience in public health.

This year's cohort is a diverse group of graduate and undergraduate students from 30 universities; coming from the U.S., Canada and seven countries including Brazil, China, Ecuador, Haiti, Nicaragua, Hungary, and Romania; studying in 17 areas from international politics and public health, to political communications and marketing; speaking a variety of foreign languages including the PAHO languages (Spanish, Portuguese, and French), Arabic, German, Hungarian, Mandarin, Polish, and Romanian.

PAHO offers students an opportunity to use their writing, research and organizational skills to work on special technical projects. This summer an undergraduate from Duke University, working on a micronutrient foods fortification project with PAHO's Family and Community Health Unit, traveled to the Dominican Republic to participate in meetings with public and private sector health officials regarding the island's wheat fortification program and a future PAHO-sponsored workshop on the subject. Another intern with PAHO's Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Area, a graduate student from the University of Michigan's School of Social Work, wrote an article, "*The Price of Ignoring Mental Health*," for the PAHO publication, *Disasters*. The article reflects on his previous experience as a Red Cross worker in New Orleans, dealing with post-trauma issues of Hurricane Katrina victims. Another graduate student with the Women and Maternal Health Unit, a Nicaraguan physician pursuing a Masters in Public Health degree at South Florida University, helped organize and participated in a workshop on Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) in Guayaquil, Ecuador.

This year's group of interns has taken on a special team project, to organize a panel discussion on the Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) progress towards the reduction of HIV/AIDS. The panel, scheduled for August 9, 2:30 pm at PAHO headquarters, will include technical experts from PAHO, the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Human Right Watch, and the Family Health International. Prior to the event, the students will host a fundraising lunch for orphans from the Organization of Youth Empowerment (OYE) which has a health and HIV/AIDS education program in a low-income community of Honduras. Yet another intern team project is the publication of an intern newsletter.

In addition to these projects, PAHO offers the students a variety of training and professional development opportunities. A series of brown bag sessions are offered for students to learn and interact with health technical experts, and to understand the depth of the Organization's work in the Americas. The program also includes visits to sister organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the Organization of American States, the IDB, and Capitol Hill.

Managed by Farida Kerouani from the Human Resources for Health Technical Unit, the PAHO Internship Program grew from the need to increase human resources in health within the Region. "Building human resources for health is our primary role," says Dr. Charles Godue, Chief of the Human Resources for Health Unit. "One means to address this need is by investing in our youth, by training and inspiring graduate and undergraduate students to become future leaders in international public health." For more information on the PAHO internship program or the August 9 panel discussion, contact Ms. Kerouani at 202-974-3284 or [kerouanf@paho.org](mailto:kerouanf@paho.org).