



## Background

1. Essential research for the development and application of innovative solutions in health is among the least developed of the 11 essential public health functions, according to the findings of a 2002 evaluation in the Americas. The indicators used to evaluate capabilities of planning in public health research scored particularly low in most countries.<sup>(1)</sup>
2. Research is crucial for development and for improving equity and public health. Functional national health research systems are needed to enable countries to develop and improve public health, to address the know-do gap, and to deliver innovative solutions that improve health and equity.<sup>(2,3)</sup> This is particularly relevant in poor- resource settings, where every expenditure is important and resources cannot be wasted on ineffective or unsafe practices.
3. The Mexico Statement on Health Research about *Knowledge for better health: Strengthening health systems*, issued at the Ministerial Summit on Health Research in Mexico City in 2004, listed strategies and actions needed to bolster national health research systems that address the needs of countries through the production of scientific research and the use of its results for informing decisions for health.<sup>(4)</sup>

## Progress since the Mexico Ministerial Summit 2004

4. The 58<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly acknowledged the Mexico Statement and issued Resolution 58.34 inviting different stakeholders to act. WHO has coordinated the response, including the technical cooperation addressing the issues raised in the Resolution, with its Global and Regional Advisory Committees on Health Research and Regional Offices.<sup>(5)</sup>
5. PAHO has coordinated the response to Resolution 58.34 in the Americas and aligned its technical cooperation and expected results with those of WHO, as reflected in the Pan American Sanitary Bureau's Strategic Plan 2008-2012.<sup>(6)</sup>
6. Ministers of health and other high-level stakeholders have committed to strengthening national health research systems and developing strategies to improve the systematic use and production of research evidence that informs decisions for health and equity. This is reflected in the Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2017,<sup>(7)</sup> participation in consultations and debates, and the organization of technical and ministerial networks.<sup>(8)</sup>
7. PAHO has participated in and organized regional consultations for defining WHO's roles and responsibilities in health research and preparing WHO's research strategy. PASB/AMRO is preparing a research policy, in consultation with its Advisory Committee on Health Research, that would complement WHO's research strategy. It will undergo a round of regional consultations and will be submitted to PAHO's Governing Bodies for consideration in 2009.



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8. Specific initiatives are in place to build public confidence in scientific research; broaden access to published and unpublished research; facilitate the use and production of research that informs health policies; strengthen national health research systems and research ethics; make the most of scientific knowledge, and address the unfinished agendas while preparing for new challenges. Examples of initiatives that respond to these calls include the development of the International Clinical Trials Registry Platform Search Portal and the regional implementation strategies;<sup>(9,10)</sup> the Evidence-Informed Policy Networks (EVIPNet);<sup>(11)</sup> the Evidence Portal;<sup>(12)</sup> and the First Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health.<sup>(13, 14)</sup>
9. Leaders in the areas of health and health research, policy makers, and other key stakeholders have attended sub- regional meetings to discuss strengthening national health research systems, human resources for health, funding and other issues, including how to build on existing partnerships and consultative and working bodies.<sup>(13-16)</sup>
10. To respond to this challenge and develop capacities, expertise, collaboration, and regional networks, PAHO is aligning its technical cooperation with PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centers, regional networks and strategic partners.

### **Preparation for the Bamako Ministerial Forum 2008**

11. The Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health, which is scheduled to take place in Bamako, Mali, in November 2008, will serve as follow-up to the Mexico Ministerial Summit. We encourage health authorities to use this opportunity to protect past achievements and focus on the commitments made in response to Resolution 58.34 of the World Health Assembly, geared towards strengthening national health research systems.
12. Within the framework of an encompassing primary health-care strategy, the Ministerial Forum is an opportunity to identify and address unfinished agendas, such as neglected diseases, the unmet Millennium Development Goals, and health inequities; to improve health systems, and to implement simple and effective strategies that would improve the life of populations and promote development.
13. The Ministerial Forum is also an opportunity to identify new challenges, such as environmental changes, emerging diseases, new technologies and their unexpected effects, as well as to set new standards, face emerging ethical dilemmas, develop tools to account for research and improve the governance and stewardship of research for health, and respond to new developments in the areas of innovation and intellectual property, such as the Global Strategy and Action Plan in Public Health, Innovation, and Intellectual Property.<sup>(16)</sup>
14. We believe that the significant progress that has been made during the past four years should be protected and that the development of a response to World Health Assembly Resolution 58.34 should be evaluated.



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15. We invite the parties involved in strengthening the national health research systems, especially the health, science and technology, and educational sectors, to coordinate comprehensive proposals leading to the strengthening of health research.
16. We propose that the implementation of PAHO's Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and of the agreements reflected in Health Agenda for the Americas 2008-2017 move forward.<sup>(6, 7)</sup>
17. This consultation will involve different actors and will be extended to several fora and virtual meetings in order to enrich it and to complement the conclusions reached at the First Latin American Conference on Research and Innovation for Health.<sup>(13, 14)</sup> Based on these consultations, a regional contribution will be prepared for the Ministerial Forum in Bamako, to be submitted to PAHO's Directing Council for consideration in September 2008.

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## Addendum: Regional Contribution to the Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health Pan American Health Organization. August 2008



### Strengthening Leadership

- Support countries in the development of clinical trials registers in coordination with WHO and avoiding duplication where possible.
- Research results (published or not) need to be made available as a requirement for public health research to be deemed as ethical and managed with responsibility.
- Access to research results that are essential for health and development:
  - Broaden and maintain regional access to scientific evidence that is essential to improve public health
  - Expand and maintain successful models such as the Virtual Health Libraries
  - Promote Open Access especially for knowledge produced with public funds
- Establish incentives to boost implementation research, innovation, and research on other issues that enable development, equity and health.
- Ensure that progress and agreements reached in the region and countries are acknowledged and considered in the development of new agendas
- WHO and other international agencies should lead by example in monitoring resources and outputs of their research.

### Engaging relevant constituencies

- Develop metrics to monitor and strengthen the health work force that does research for health.
- Incorporate health workers that conduct research to the “Human Resources for Health” plans, linking them to the Human Resources for Health Goals and to the initiatives championed by WHO, the Pan American Health & Education Foundation -PAHEF, and the Human Resources Observatory.
- Develop and implement strategies to engage other sectors in addressing public health priorities that contribute to development, equity and health
- Promote that health authorities exercise stewardship of the health research agenda and respond to national health research priorities.
- Establish national strategies to retain essential human resources for health research with the means and opportunities that allow them to thrive.
- Avoid duplication, harmonizing and allocating responsibilities in global research promotion initiatives such as the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Public Innovation & Intellectual Property, Patient Safety, Health Technology Assessment, Bioethics and Research Ethics forums, and other initiatives involving international organizations and leading research partners.
- Provide leadership for the development of research that responds to new challenges (e.g. climate change) in coordination with stakeholders and partners.

### Increasing accountability

- Ensure that taking stock of the state of knowledge becomes an integral part of research proposals, and that these are balanced (i.e. addressing benefits and harms / advantages and disadvantages)
- Standardized and organized essential data illustrating health research production, financing and human resources should be accessible for monitoring and evaluation purposes. A framework to monitor financial flows for research in the sectors of health and science & technology needs to be developed
- Evaluations of the effects of health research investment must be assessed considering its broad impact over the economy, trade balance, and the development of countries.
- Leading organizations should assess the effects of different governance and stewardship strategies on the development of research for health
- Develop basic indicators (standardized and implementable) to assess research development and coordination across sectors.
- Set up oversight mechanisms that allow research to: be viewed as public good; be transparent and has the public's trust; be benevolent and respectful of human rights; and addresses the needs of society with equity.