



Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE Americas

53rd DIRECTING COUNCIL

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RESOLUTION

CD53.R14

STRATEGY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEALTH AND UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

THE 53rd DIRECTING COUNCIL,

Having considered the *Strategy for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage* presented by the Director (Document CD53/5, Rev. 2);

Bearing in mind that the Constitution of the World Health Organization establishes as one of its basic principles that “the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition”;

Recognizing that universal access to health and universal health coverage imply that all people and communities have access, without any kind of discrimination, to comprehensive, appropriate and timely, quality health services determined at the national level according to needs, as well as access to safe, affordable, effective, quality medicines, while ensuring that the use of these services does not expose users to financial hardship, especially groups in conditions of vulnerability;

Recognizing that policies and interventions that address the social determinants of health and foster the commitment of society as a whole to promote health and well-being, with an emphasis on groups in conditions of poverty and vulnerability, are an essential requirement to advance toward universal access to health and universal health coverage;

Recognizing that universal access to health and universal health coverage are framed by the values and principles of primary health care in the spirit of Alma-Ata;

Observing that the countries of the Region reaffirmed their commitment to universal health coverage at the 52nd PAHO Directing Council (2013) by approving the PAHO Strategic Plan 2014-2019, and through their active participation in other international forums such as the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health (2011), the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) (2012), United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/67/81 (2012), the Panama Declaration on reducing inequities in reproductive, maternal, and child health (2013), and the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA67.14 (2014) on *Health in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*; and noting that current discussions focus on ensuring healthier lives and promoting well-being as key goals;

Noting the recent improvements achieved in health throughout the Americas due in part to the economic and social development of the countries, the consolidation of democratic processes, the strengthening of health systems, and the political commitment of countries to address the health needs of their populations;

Recognizing that despite the advances made, major challenges exist; that the Region remains one of the most inequitable in the world; that the process of reducing health inequities is made more complex by the new epidemiological and demographic patterns that require different and innovative responses from health systems and services; and that problems of exclusion and lack of access to quality services persist for large sectors of the population in the Region, especially those groups in conditions of greatest vulnerability;

Observing that the efforts to strengthen and transform health systems in the countries of the Region have generated considerable knowledge and experience that will facilitate continued progress toward universal access to health and universal health coverage;

Recognizing that advancing toward universal access to health and universal health coverage requires efforts to overcome exclusion, inequity, and barriers to access and to the timely use of comprehensive health services;

Recognizing the importance of prioritizing the strengthening of health systems; and adopting integrated, comprehensive policies to address the social determinants of health and health inequities, with universal access to health and universal health coverage as fundamental goals;

Considering the urgent need for the majority of countries to strengthen their health systems including from the perspective of the right to health where nationally recognized and promoting the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health with the fundamental goals of achieving universal access to health and universal health coverage; considering the need for strategic and comprehensive actions implemented in a progressive and sustained manner; and also considering that as democratic processes are

consolidated in the Region, there is a growing and increasingly organized demand for universal access to health and universal health coverage;

Observing that the Strategy articulates the conditions that will allow countries to focus and evaluate their policies and measure progress toward universal access to health and universal health coverage;

Recognizing that each country has the capacity to define its plan of action, taking into account its social, economic, political, legal, historical, and cultural context, as well as current and future challenges in health;

Recognizing the participatory process implemented for the development of the Strategy, including consultations by the Member States in coordination with the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, which led to quality debate with different analytic perspectives, as well as the contributions made by the Member States Working Group;¹

RESOLVES:

1. To adopt the *Strategy for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage*.
2. To urge the Member States, as appropriate to their context and their domestic priorities, to:
 - a) establish formal mechanisms for participation and dialogue to promote the development and implementation of inclusive policies, and ensure accountability in moving toward the objectives of universal access to health and universal health coverage;
 - b) establish national targets and goals, and define their plans of action toward universal access to health and universal health coverage; and set national priorities for the period 2014-2019, in accordance with the commitments established in the Strategic Plan of the Pan American Health Organization (2014-2019) and the Twelfth WHO General programme of work (2014-2019);
 - c) define and implement a set of actions to strengthen the governance and stewardship capacity of the health sector; and exercise leadership to impact on policies, plans, legislation, regulations, and actions beyond the health sector that address the social determinants of health;
 - d) advance toward providing universal access to comprehensive, quality, progressively expanded health services that are consistent with health needs, system capacities,

¹ The Member States Working Group, established by decision of the 154th Session of the Executive Committee, held 16-20 June 2014, was comprised of technical representatives of the countries that make up the Executive Committee in 2014, and representatives of countries participating as observers in the session.

and the national context; and identify the unmet and differentiated needs of the population as well as specific needs of groups in conditions of vulnerability;

- e) define and implement actions to improve the organization and management of health services through the development of health care models that focus on the needs of people and communities, increasing response capacity at the primary level of care through integrated health services networks;
- f) improve human resource capacity at the first level of care, increasing employment opportunities with attractive labor conditions and incentives, particularly in underserved areas; consolidate collaborative multidisciplinary health teams; ensure that these teams have access to health information and telehealth services (including telemedicine); and introduce new professional and technical profiles and strengthen existing ones, coherent with the model of care to be implemented to achieve universal access to health and universal health coverage;
- g) increase efficiency and public financing of health, as appropriate, noting that in most cases, public expenditure of 6% of GDP is a useful benchmark and that these resources should be allocated, as appropriate, on a priority basis to the primary level of care to expand the supply of quality services and quickly address unmet health needs;
- h) advance toward eliminating direct payment, understood as the costs that individuals face for health service fees, that constitutes a barrier to access at the point of service, avoiding impoverishment and exposure to catastrophic expenditures; the replacement of direct payment as a financing mechanism should be planned and achieved progressively, replacing it by pooling-mechanisms, based on solidarity, as appropriate to the national context, that consider diverse sources of funding such as social security contributions, taxes, and fiscal revenues, in order to increase the financial protection, equity, and efficiency of the health system;
- i) identify and implement a set of actions to improve the efficiency of health system financing and organization;
- j) implement plans, programs, and projects to facilitate the empowerment of people and communities, through training, active participation, and access to information for community members, in order for them to know their rights and responsibilities, and for them to take an active role in policy-making, in actions to identify and address health inequities and the social determinants of health, and in health promotion and protection.

3. To request the Director to:

- a) use the Strategy to facilitate the leadership of the health authorities in order to promote the mobilization of national resources to support the transformation or strengthening of health systems toward universal access to health and universal health coverage;

- b) prioritize technical cooperation that supports countries in the development of participatory processes to define targets and national goals, as well as action plans to advance toward universal access to health and universal health coverage;
- c) measure the progress toward universal access to health and universal health coverage using the indicators identified in the Strategic Plan of the Pan American Health Organization 2014-2019 and report on the advances through the biennial assessment reports on the implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- d) develop actions and tools to support the implementation of the Strategy;
- e) promote innovation in technical cooperation in health system transformation or strengthening toward universal access to health and universal health coverage, updating the Bureau's mechanisms to support cooperation among countries, establishing expert and knowledge management networks, facilitating the documentation and communication of country experiences, and making use of technological platforms, in a manner consistent with country needs and current capacities, and the lessons learned;
- f) strengthen interagency coordination and collaboration mechanisms to achieve synergies and efficiency in technical cooperation, including within the United Nations System, and the Inter-American System, and with other stakeholders working toward universal health coverage, in particular with subregional integration mechanisms and relevant international financial institutions.

(Eighth meeting, 2 October 2014)