

The PAHO logo is displayed in large, bold, white capital letters on a dark blue background.

Pan American
Health
Organization



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

A stylized map of the Americas in a light blue color, positioned in the upper right corner of the banner.

News release

PAHO and Inter-American Development Bank celebrate 5-year collaboration on digital health in the Americas

Washington, DC, 25 July, 2023 (PAHO) – At an event to celebrate five years of collaboration in information systems and digital health between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the PAHO Director, Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, underscored the crucial role of digital transformation in pandemic recovery and improving access to health.

During the event – Connecting Health for all – which took place on 24 July in Washington D.C., Dr. Barbosa also highlighted the urgent need to ensure that countries have the data and information necessary to monitor progress towards universal health, identify gaps and ensure that everyone in the Americas can exercise their right to health.

“The alliance between PAHO and the IDB is crucial because it focuses on problems highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Dr. Barbosa said.

“During the early stages of the pandemic, there were countries of the Americas that were unable to see how many COVID-19 cases they had each day, because their information systems were too weak.”

Even now, “it is unacceptable that some countries in our Region do not even know their maternal mortality rate,” he added.

To tackle these issues, the PAHO/IDB partnership has developed over 40 strategic actions to ensure the digital transformation of the health sector and three regional policies: a [Plan of Action for the Strengthening of Information Systems for Health](#); a [regional Roadmap for the Digital Transformation of the Health Sector](#); and a [policy on the application of data science in public health using artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies](#).

“Most importantly, the partnership has led to more people receiving digital health services,” Dr. Barbosa said.

Digital transformation, which includes investing in services such as health information systems, telemedicine, and electronic prescriptions, as well as other digital innovations in medicine such as artificial intelligence, is crucial to ensuring a renewed vision of primary health care, Dr. Barbosa highlighted. “Technology is completely different today than 45 years ago at Alma-Ata.”

“The population of the Americas wants better public services and health is one of them,” IDB President, Ilan Goldfajn said. “The agenda we are building together has elements of what we believe are priorities,” including regional integration, data, efficiency, digitalization and addressing inequality.

Thanks to the PAHO/IDB partnership, more than 15 countries of the Americas now have improved digital health foundations, and 10 countries have digital health agendas with infrastructure ready for data sharing across borders.

Participant Quotes

Dr. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Health and Wellness of Jamaica

“For Jamaica, the digital transformation project has led to shorter wait times, reduced cost in providing health services and greater efficiency. The digitalization of health in the Americas has never been more important as it is urgent.”

Dr. José Ruales, Minister of Public Health of Ecuador

“For our country, information systems are a number one priority. We are investing heavily to improve our health system through digital transformation.”

Dr. Frank Anthony, Minister of Health of Guyana

“Investing in connected health, presents an opportunity to achieve universal health coverage and to provide health for all. We urge partners to prioritize digitization of health as a development platform.”

Dr. Ana Estela Haddad, Information and Digital Health Secretary of Brazil

“Digital transformation of the health sector for Brazil is a nationwide priority. We are convinced that it is a critical factor to ensure success as we strengthen the country’s first level of care.”

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.