

## **PAHO has led regional response to COVID-19 while striving to protect long-term health gains**

**Washington, D.C., 28 Sept. 2020 (PAHO/WHO)** – Since well before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a key area of the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO) technical cooperation was building its member countries’ capacities to prepare for and respond to disease outbreaks and epidemics. Since the pandemic arrived in the Americas, PAHO has continued that work while providing regional leadership and coordination of the COVID-19 response and helping member countries protect gains in other vital areas, including immunization, prevention of noncommunicable diseases, and expanded access to quality health care.

These and other highlights of PAHO’s technical cooperation between mid-2019 and mid-2020 are described in the 2020 Annual Report of the Director “Saving Lives and Improving Health and Well-Being.” PAHO Director Carissa F. Etienne presented the report today to health authorities from throughout the Americas who are meeting virtually this week for the 58<sup>th</sup> PAHO Directing Council.

The report notes that COVID-19 “has affected health, the economy, and the way of life in almost every country” in the Americas. The pandemic exposed severe inequities in and among countries and highlighted the particular vulnerabilities of certain population groups. It also “laid bare profound structural weaknesses within health and social protection mechanisms in the Region, highlighting the need for substantive reform and actions to ensure that countries continue toward the achievement of the ambitious goal of universal health by 2030.”

Against this backdrop, the report summarizes PAHO’s strategies, interventions, and achievements in its main areas of technical cooperation during the reporting period. These areas include health systems and services; communicable diseases and environmental determinants of health; health emergencies; family, health promotion, and life course; noncommunicable diseases and mental health; and evidence and intelligence for action in health. The report highlights special efforts to ensure improved health for all both during and beyond the pandemic, especially for those in conditions of vulnerability, reflecting the Organization’s overarching commitment to “leave no one behind.” The report also describes PAHO’s efforts to improve its internal efficiency and ensure continued transparency and accountability in all its operations.

“The health, social, and economic impacts of the pandemic will have far-reaching effects on progress for the achievement of national, subregional, regional, and global

health goals; on health financing and resource mobilization; and on our efforts and aspirations for health development with equity,” said Etienne in presenting the report.

She added: “We fully recognize that massive and sustained interventions will be required—in both the immediate and foreseeable future—to control and contain COVID-19, to tackle increasing poverty levels, to reduce health and social inequalities and, very importantly, to position health at the center of equitable and sustainable development.”

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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.*

## **LINKS**

Annual Report of the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (2020)

<https://www.paho.org/en/documents/cd58-3-e-annual-report-director>

[Documents 58<sup>th</sup> Directing Council](#)

[58<sup>th</sup> Directing Council](#)

[58<sup>th</sup> Directing Council Livestream](#)

## **CONTACTS:**

Leticia Linn: +1 202 974 3440 | +1 (202) 701 4005 | [linnl@paho.org](mailto:linnl@paho.org)

Sebastian Oliel: +1 202 974 3459 | +1 (202) 316 5679 | [oliels@paho.org](mailto:oliels@paho.org)

Ashley Baldwin: +1 202 974 3872 | +1 (202) 340 4025 | [baldwinash@paho.org](mailto:baldwinash@paho.org)

Daniel Epstein: + 1 301 219 2105 | [epsteind@paho.org](mailto:epsteind@paho.org)

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