

BOOK REVIEW*

HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS 2007. Volume II: Countries. Washington, Pan American Health Organization, 2007. 747p. illus. (Scientific and Technical Publication No. 622). ISBN 978 92 75 11627 X.

At its outset, the new millennium marked a major turning point in the universal understanding of human development. As a result, a consensus prevails today that the advance of humankind depends on progress made on each and every social front, and on all of them together. Efforts to improve education, work opportunities, collective security, and health must dovetail neatly into a unified enterprise and must, perforce, target the inclusion of everyone and the benefit of all. That enterprise, in turn, is playing out in a context of all-encompassing, all-engaging change: connectivity and networking, globalization, private-public partnerships, intersectoral collaboration, and a world community of united nations committed to social equity. Although action in all these areas is critical to the attainment of progress, none is as paramount as health.

The past several decades have registered immense improvements in human health. Communities from the local to the global level are learning the lessons of those improvements - namely, the essential role of political will, good health care systems and services, a competent health workforce, research and technology, and individual and family participation in healthy behavior and environments. Still, much remains to be done. Inequities in health - those conditions that are unnecessary, unfair, and remediable - loom large: health inequalities among countries continue to be significant, and health inequities among population groups within nations persist. The poor, the uneducated, ethnic groups, women, rural inhabitants, and others are less healthy than their more

advantaged counterparts. This inequity in health hinders economic progress and social welfare-to the detriment of all society.

Every actor in the arena of human development has an obligation to understand its contending forces and its unfolding events, to be informed about the causes of social inequity and the remedies required to redress such inequity. In that context, this publication aims to provide comprehensive content on every aspect of the state of health in the Western Hemisphere: its social determinants; diseases and other health conditions; the environment; health policies, systems, and services; international cooperation; and prospects for health. The two-volume set provides in-depth regional and country-by-country perspectives on these topics. And, whereas past editions of this publication targeted primarily health policymakers and workers, this edition of **Health in the Americas** serves to inform the vast community of all men and women interested in and committed to social progress. In so doing, it underscores the constitutional conviction of the Pan American Health Organization that in information and knowledge lies the power to improve the condition of all-*pro salute Novi Mundi*.

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*This book is available at the Library of the Instituto de Medicina Tropical de São Paulo