In partnership with the Member States and UNAIDS, PAHO’s work in the Region over time has supported national planning and implementation of HIV/AIDS programs, systematic improvements in epidemiological surveillance, improvements in blood safety, and targeted prevention interventions, especially for youth and vulnerable groups, that include sexuality and a gender perspective. CAREC, a PAHO Center, has supported countries in the Caribbean in strengthening their response to HIV/STI in several important areas, including strategic planning, epidemiological surveillance, prevention, care, and treatment, and behavior modification communication. CFNI has provided technical support in nutrition and HIV.

As the focus of international HIV work has moved in recent years to a more comprehensive approach that includes both prevention and treatment, PAHO developed the Building Blocks, a series of modules detailing the core components of care for people with HIV. PAHO has championed equitable access to treatment by supporting Member States in the negotiation of ART and has established the Strategic Fund for Health Supplies to allow Member States to access medicines and supplies as well as technical advice on quality and other aspects of these commodities. PAHO has also offered considerable technical support from its core budget to the development and implementation of projects in the Region from the Global Fund, including in the areas of governance, management, procurement, logistics, and overall project design.

During the next ten years, PAHO will focus its technical cooperation on areas where it has a comparative advantage vis-à-vis other organizations and programs in the Region. PAHO’s work in HIV/STI will continue to focus on support to national and other health sector programs, with a special focus on their impact on the quality of life of people with HIV. Seven lines of action have been determined in consultation with stakeholders in countries and development partners. They are: (1) technical support to implementation of the Plan (2) facilitating technical cooperation between countries (3) advocacy (4) strengthening Regional alliances and partnerships (5) intensifying direct support to countries (6) mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in PAHO (7) costing and mobilizing resources.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL PLAN**

PAHO’s technical support to countries will focus on the health sector’s response to HIV. It will be based on strengthening the essential public health functions to effectively combat the epidemic and reduce its impact. Particular attention will be given to human resource development and upgrading, the development and adaptation of norms and guidelines, methodologies and tools, and the dissemination of strategic information.

PAHO’s Strategic Fund will facilitate not only the purchasing of supplies, but also the provision of technical support to countries to achieve effective pharmaceutical management and regulatory systems. This assistance includes training of human resources and harmonization of principles in source selection and quality criteria, with a public health perspective.

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21 This section refers specifically to the activities and programming of the PAHO Secretariat.
In collaboration with WHO, the Regional program will create and maintain a database of professionals with proven expertise that can support countries’ requirements for technical cooperation. The specific areas of collaboration will be determined by country and Regional needs as well as PAHO’s comparative advantage in the area vis-a-vis that of other organizations.

Policy guidance related to equitable and universal access to prevention, care, and treatment free of charge at the point of delivery will be provided by the Organization to advocate for long term sustainability of health systems initiatives.

PAHO’s technical cooperation is not limited to Ministries of Health but also includes all partners working in the health sector, including NGOs, people with HIV, and collaboration with bilateral and multilateral organizations.

The monitoring of the Regional Plan will be facilitated by the active participation of PAHO’s Technical Advisory Committee, which includes a multi-sectoral group of experts representing key stakeholders.

**FACILITATING TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN COUNTRIES**

As part of the Organization’s intensified focus on inter-country cooperation, PAHO has stimulated and enabled inter-country technical cooperation in HIV/AIDS. The use of PAHO’s mechanism of Technical Cooperation Among Countries (TCC) will be central to this process. PAHO will continue to facilitate the sharing of expertise, lessons learned, and resources among countries. The further promotion of horizontal technical cooperation will be achieved through closer coordination with the Region’s Horizontal Technical Cooperation Group, and with emerging initiatives in the Region such as Brazil’s International Center for Technical Cooperation on HIV/AIDS (ICTC/AIDS). Efforts will also be made to tap the expertise of Canada and the United States in a more strategic and consistent manner.

**ADVOCACY**

Advocacy for equitable universal access to prevention, care, and treatment is of pivotal importance for all organizations working in HIV, including PAHO. Advocacy for countries to scale up care and treatment as part of their commitment to the Declaration of Nuevo Leon has helped move the Region forward together towards a common goal. The Regional Directors Group of Co-sponsors of UNAIDS is also a useful mechanism for advocacy at the highest level, and a joint advocacy strategy already exists to promote the dissemination of common messages and strategies.

Stigma and discrimination against people with HIV and vulnerable groups is a major obstacle to the implementation of effective country responses. Equitable access to prevention and care for HIV/AIDS is based on the principle of health as a human right; a right that the Organization will continue to promote and defend at all levels.
Advocacy will take the form of Regional and national communication strategies, interventions by the Director and PAHO Representatives, policy dialogues, ongoing feedback to PAHO’s Governing Bodies and participation in relevant international fora, among others.

A communication strategy to support the roll-out of the Regional Plan, publicize progress and sustain momentum will be implemented and maintained throughout the ten year period.

**STRENGTHENING REGIONAL ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

The HIV epidemic is attracting an increasing number of stakeholders in the Region. They bring considerable assets (political, financial, and scientific) to bear on the issue and are valuable partners whose collaboration must be cultivated for the benefit of the health sector and people with HIV.

PAHO will work to clarify not only its comparative advantage, as an organization responsible for support to HIV in the health sector, but will work with other stakeholders to define the roles and responsibilities of other UN agencies, the Organization of American States, sub-Regional organizations, and other development partners. In collaboration with UNAIDS, advocacy for the effective implementation of the Three Ones will continue at country and Regional levels.

PAHO will ensure the effective participation of Member States including people with HIV and NGOs, relevant UN agencies, private organizations, and major development partners in the roll out of the Plan, including its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. PAHO will continue to play an active role in the Regional Directors Group of Regional Co-sponsors of UNAIDS as well as other related committees, and will continue advocating and supporting Regional, sub-Regional and national efforts to harmonize technical and financial resources.

**INTENSIFYING DIRECT SUPPORT TO COUNTRIES**

PAHO will take advantage of its unique position as an agency with established infrastructure in 28 countries of the Americas to intensify direct support to countries, emphasizing the strengthening of a comprehensive health response to the epidemic. PAHO HIV/STI staff will be strengthened with the core competencies necessary for a comprehensive technical cooperation approach. This cadre of professionals will be supported by other PAHO staff with expertise in health policy and health services, human resources, epidemiology, gender and health, health promotion, and mental health. All country offices will have access to these core competencies either on or off site.

PAHO recognizes that responsibility for the provision of technical cooperation does not lie in one specialized unit but is a corporate responsibility. Many other areas of the Organization have a role to play in strengthening PAHO’s response and implementing the Regional Plan. Inter-programmatic mechanisms will be strengthened and professional and administrative staff will be sensitized, trained, and constantly updated on HIV/STI issues. The HIV/STI Core Team consisting of representatives from relevant units will be maintained and similar teams established in each sub-Region. A team approach will be fostered at all levels of the organization in order to create a synergetic process that will position the Organization to effectively carry out

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Regional HIV/STI Plan for the Health Sector 2006–2015
its leadership and stewardship functions to coordinate and manage the implementation of the Regional Plan.

During the ten year period of this Plan, and in collaboration with countries, PAHO will monitor the magnitude and trends of HIV/STI and progress toward universal access at Regional and country levels, providing disaggregated data for different sub-groups of the population where possible. An interactive database with key indicators agreed upon with countries will be available on line to facilitate access to quality and timely information. PAHO's quarterly newsletters will be continued. Information will also be shared regularly with PAHO's Governing Bodies and at other relevant fora including summits of Heads of State.

In line with the sub-Regional policy being implemented by the Organization, the Regional and sub-Regional staff will coordinate inter-disciplinary “Sub-Regional Technical Response Teams” for HIV/STI (CAREC, Caribbean, Central America, Andean Region, Southern Cone). Strategic alliances with relevant PAHO units have been established to undertake this challenge and will be maintained. These Technical Response Teams will provide direct support to sub-Regional bodies such as CARICOM, SICA, MERCOSUR, ANDEAN to strengthen their action for universal access to prevention, care, and treatment.

Essential to this strategic approach is the decentralization of financial resources. PAHO will maintain its budget distribution policy for HIV/AIDS, allocating at least 70% of resources to countries. All countries in the Region will benefit from resources mobilized through the Regional Plan. PAHO's Centers will also increasingly assume responsibility for direct country support, such has been the practice of CAREC in recent years in placing CAREC/PAHO technical officers in high priority countries.

**MAINSTREAMING HIV/AIDS IN PAHO**

Assuring that the entire organization speaks with a single voice, from the Director to the PAHO support staff in countries is a powerful strategy to support the implementation of the Regional Plan. In 2005 PAHO recognized the need for greater participation of PAHO staff from different technical fields to join efforts in the fight against HIV, and to look inwardly within the PAHO Secretariat itself to assure that best practices were being observed. As a result, a decision was made to establish an internal HIV policy.

An HIV internal policy document for the PAHO Secretariat was prepared in 2005 to establish PAHO's commitment to comprehensive care and treatment for staff or family members with HIV and to the periodic training and updating of all staff in HIV prevention. This internal policy will be fully implemented in 2006-2007. As part of this policy, PAHO staff are entitled to request confidential and voluntary HIV testing as part of their routine annual physical examinations, and counseling services are available.

Accountability will be fostered by strengthening mechanisms for the external evaluation of PAHO's work and these will be undertaken with the active participation of Member States and other partners.
COSTING AND MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL PLAN

Despite the increase in financial resources in the Region for care and treatment of people with HIV during the last five years, there are still gaps in financing, particularly for the health sector. Gaps in both financial and human resources have been identified and efforts will be made to mobilize resources and coordinate with development partners in order to fill these gaps. PAHO will intensify mobilization of resources for effective implementation of the Regional Plan with Member States and development partners. Resources mobilized will be decentralized to country offices so that they can better support national authorities in the implementation of their country plans.

PAHO’S COMMITMENTS TO THE REGIONAL PLAN

TARGET 1: By 2015, all key national and regional stakeholders will have collaborated harmoniously to achieve the successful implementation of the Regional Plan.

> Milestones:

1.1 From 2006-2015, all key stakeholders will meet annually to assess progress and plan for jointly addressing weak areas and new challenges.
1.2 In 2010, a mid-term evaluation of the Regional Plan with the participation of all key stakeholders will be conducted and the Plan will be revised accordingly.

TARGET 2: By 2015, PAHO will be effectively supporting all priority Regional and country level needs for technical cooperation on HIV/STI in the health sector.

> Milestones:

2.1 From 2006-2015, PAHO will provide countries with strategic information on HIV/STI and health sector response in support of the implementation of the Regional Plan.
2.2 By 2015, adequate resources, as defined by bi-annual program budgets, will be mobilized by PAHO and countries to support the implementation of the Regional Plan in all countries of the Region.
2.3 By 2010, adequate resources will be mobilized by PAHO and countries to support the implementation of the Regional Plan in all priority countries for HIV/STI.
2.4 By 2007, PAHO’s human resources needs will be met at Regional, sub-Regional and country levels to ensure high quality technical support for the implementation of the Regional Plan.