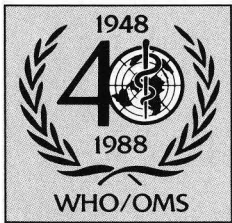


WORLD HEALTH DAY, 7 APRIL 1988

# Health for all—all for health

by Dr Halfdan Mahler

Director-General of the World Health Organization



Forty years have elapsed since men and women of goodwill and foresight laid the foundations of the World Health Organization.

For the first time in history there would be a truly global cooperative enterprise to protect and promote human health. Health which is rightly defined in the WHO Constitution as not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.

Remarkable progress had been made in science, technology and medicine. This was consolidated in the course of the first 30 years of WHO's existence. Sufficient know-how and expertise became available to ensure health care for all the inhabitants of our planet.

There is however a wide gulf between the health "haves" and the health "have nots". We unfortunately are still not equals in health on our Spaceship Earth. For instance:

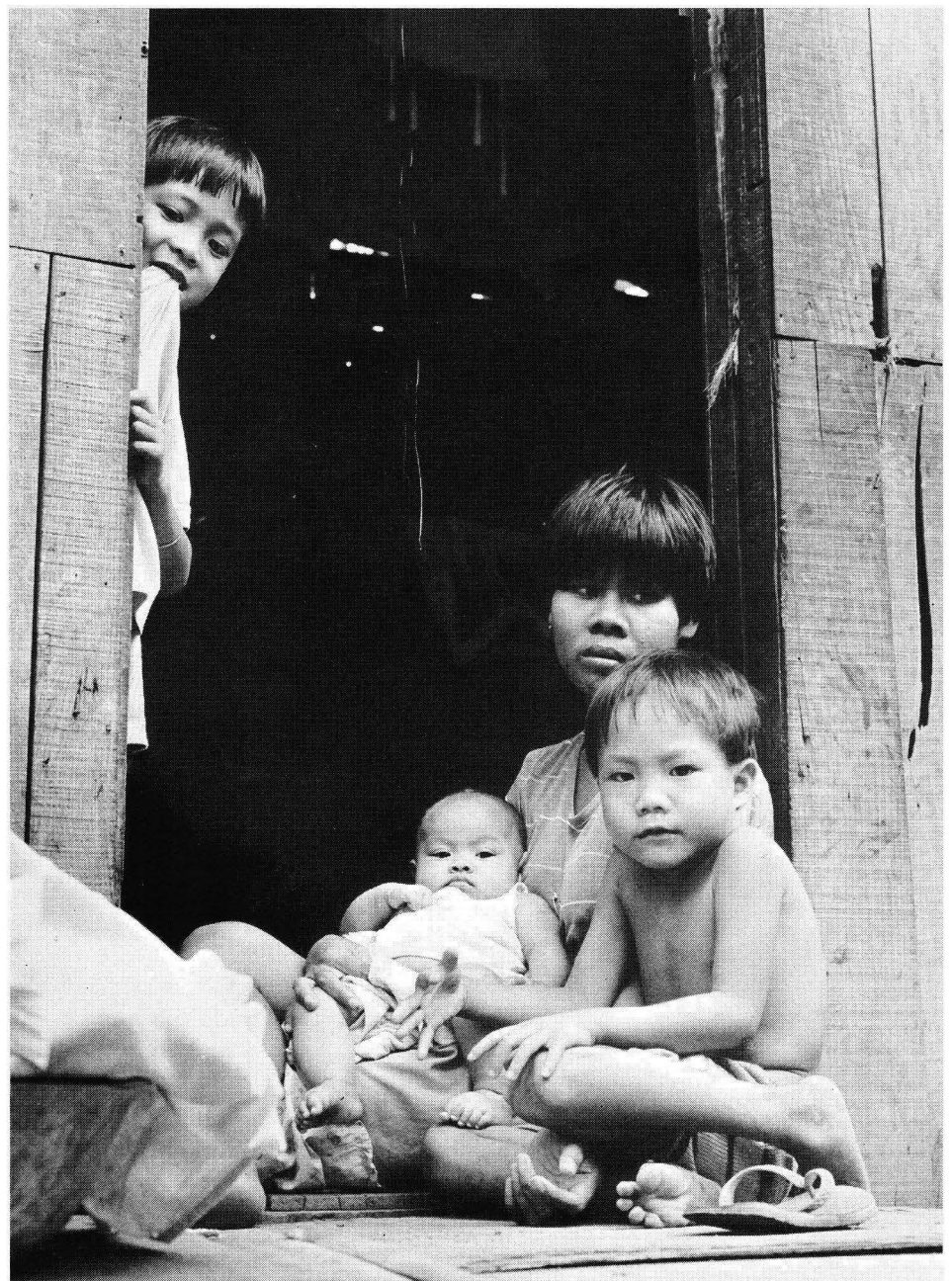
- Nearly 1,000 million people are trapped in the vicious circle of poverty, malnutrition, disease and despair that saps their energy, reduces their work capacity and limits their ability to plan for the future.

- Average life expectancy fluctuates between over 70 in some countries to barely 50 in others.

- In most developing countries, from nearly 100 to more than 200 out of 1,000 infants born alive die during their first year, although industrialised countries have succeeded in bringing this rate down to between 10 and 20, and even less.

- Women in most poor countries have a 200 times greater risk of dying during pregnancy and delivery than women in a rich country.

So it has become a matter of equity and social justice to make health progress available to all people through new approaches, new strategies and better management of available resources.



Facing page: *Closing the gap between the health "haves" and the health "have nots" means making health available to all—the young, the adults, the elderly.*

Right: *Health begins at home, with the individual. But it is all mankind who benefits.*

WHO photos by C. Stauffer, B. Zappilli, P.A. Pittet and Zafar

Within WHO, 166 Member States are now unanimously committed to Health for All: a strategy firmly anchored on four basic pillars:

- Technology—not necessarily sophisticated but appropriate technology, and by appropriate I mean not only scientifically sound but socially acceptable and economically affordable.
- Political will to improve health so as to enable people to lead economically productive and socially rewarding lives.
- Health sector cooperation with other key development areas such as education, agriculture, industry and information.
- Last, but by no means least, community and individual participation in the quest for better health: All for Health by the Year 2000.

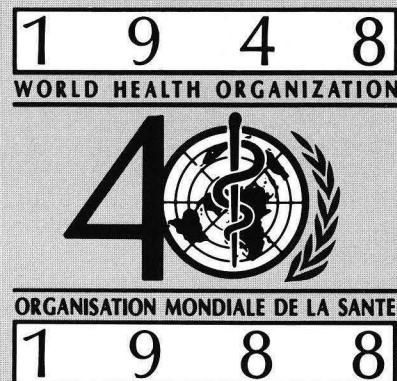
*A traditional midwife in India admires her latest arrival. Technology for Health for all need not be sophisticated, but it must be appropriate.*

Photo WHO/E. Schwab



The Alma-Ata Declaration on primary health care, now 10 years old, clearly mapped the road we are firmly engaged in. It is along this road that we should go forward, all of us, men and women everywhere who are not only the objects of development but are in fact the very subjects of that development and quite particularly of health development; men and women active in education, agriculture, industry, information and so many other different walks of life, who understand the mutually beneficial effects of development, in harmony with the protection and promotion of good health.

People everywhere, including top-level political and spiritual leaders, from north and south, east and west, are acknowledging over and above all their differences that health is good for all people and essential for human progress; that there is both economic value and social justice in health. Surely we must all recognise that health is not everything, but that there is nothing without health. In the interest of the human race there must be Health for All and All for Health. ■



## What is World Health Day?

The seventh of April each year is celebrated as World Health Day, because it marks the date in 1948 when sufficient countries had ratified their signatures to bring the Constitution of the World Health Organization into force.

Ever since 1950, a theme related to international public health has been chosen for World Health Day, with an appropriate slogan. Thus in 1954 the slogan was "The nurse—pioneer of health," in 1972 "Your heart is your health" and in 1982 "Add life to years."

All over the world, WHO national committees, United Nations associations and non-governmental organizations help to arrange events related to the theme. Over the years, the World Health Day events have attracted more and more coverage by the media—whether newspapers or radio or television. And the impetus does not cease when the Day is over: the theme is regarded as valid for the rest of the year.

This year's World Health Day, 7 April, is also WHO's 40th birthday. The Organization is in a mood to derive the lessons for the future from the achievements—and setbacks—of the past. A year that will also mark the 10th anniversary of the historic Declaration of Alma-Ata offers a golden opportunity to highlight the need for equity and justice in health, to re-state the aims embodied in the goal of Health for all by the year 2000 agreed by all WHO's member countries, and to emphasise once more that Health for all will be attained not by high-tech hospitals but by primary health care and the community's involvement in its own health.

This is why the slogan chosen for World Health Day 1988 is

**Health for all—all for health.**