

HEALTH IN BRAZIL AND LATIN AMERICA: THE UN MILLENNIUM GOALS AND THE ROLE OF NURSING

Isabel Amélia Costa Mendes¹

The Millennium Goals were defined by the United Nations Organization in 2000 and approved by consensus during the Millennium Summit, a meeting that joined 147 heads of State.

These goals reflect increasing concerns about the sustainability of the planet and about the serious problems affecting humanity. Constituted by a set of eight goals to be reached by 2015, they refer to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, universal access to basic education, gender equality promotion, infant mortality reduction, maternal health improvement, fight against HIV/Aids and other illnesses, guarantee of environmental sustainability and the establishment of a global partnership for development.

Sustainability and development are closely linked to health and imply joint actions by States and civil society in the attempt to minimize the influence of the huge gap that exists between countries and persons. Thus, health and particularly nursing professionals' actions are paramount and can lead to local actions with regional, national and international impacts.

Nursing research directly and indirectly focuses on these goals, which are present in their daily practice. Hence, both nursing scholars and nurse practitioners attempt to attend to the neediest and most excluded populations with a view to guaranteeing a comprehensive care.

Amidst countless difficulties that derive from political, economic, social and cultural factors, nurses must continue fighting for people's quality of life, multiplying knowledge and humanized actions and mobilizing joint activities by States and civil societies.

Therefore, the millennium goals are not something intangible that was established by a "far-off" international organization. Instead, they are already present in daily nursing practice in Brazil and Latin America, in its permanent search to decrease inequalities, in an attempt to guarantee access and high-quality health care.

¹ Editor of Latin American Journal of Nursing, Dean, Full Professor of the University of São Paulo at Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing - WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Research Development, e-mail: iamendes@eerp.usp.br

