Foreword

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Health for All – global, regional and in countries – is the most ambitious health policy ever set. The WHO Member States have pledged to attain for their people more than a reduction in disease and disability. They are working for a kind of health: a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. Reaching such a goal requires a wider view of the factors that affect health; research for better health shall therefore encompass studying the ways in which the physical, biological and social environments determine the health of individuals and populations.

The present international research project focuses primarily on equity in oral health of young children. It is the most important issue in public health and, as for other diseases, inequalities relate to social status or class, sex, ethnic group, geographic location or poor access to health services and care. As emphasized by WHO, this research project aims at defining concepts, creating indicators and developing global methodologies to measure inequality in oral health of young children, thereby gaining a better understanding of the factors and mechanisms that create and maintain inequalities. Knowledge is essential to transform a policy into reality and developing effective and efficient methods of providing people with appropriate care, this will allow effective intervention strategies and approaches to be designed for improved oral health at community and country levels.

This oral health research project is a comprehensive international collaborative study based on a common protocol of work. The intercountry research network established by the project provides a model for research bridging the gaps between developed and developing countries, and illustrates how WHO Collaborating Centres can facilitate interdisciplinary research central to WHO goals.

The results of the present research project will help the WHO Global Oral Health Programme assist both developed and developing countries in their efforts to improve oral health in young children.

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