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HEMISPHERIC PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF MALARIA PROGRAMS--
PROGRESS REPORT

Introduction

As requested by the XX Pan American Sanitary Conference and the XXVI Meeting of the PAHO Directing Council, a continental plan for the promotion and support of malaria programs is being formulated. This plan concentrates on collaborating with the countries to improve their antimalaria strategy, attract new sources of funds, coordinate actions between countries, and develop supportive continental programs for training and field research.

This report presents the activities carried out within the plan, including the review of the antimalaria strategy in seven programs and the planning of four more in 1980. Plans have also been made for a study of program needs for external assistance, the development of a training program, and the coordination of field research in malaria.

HEMISPHERIC PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION AND SUPPORT OF MALARIA PROGRAMS

Progress Report

1. Mandate

Resolution XVIII of the XX Pan American Sanitary Conference in 1978 reaffirmed that eradication is the goal of the malaria program in the Americas, declared 1980 the "Year of Frontal Struggle with Malaria in the Americas" for the purpose of intensifying operations to eradicate the disease, requested the formulation a Hemisphere-wide plan of action, and stressed the need for intensification of training and research activities in order to reach this goal.

During the XXVI Meeting of the PAHO Directing Council, the malaria program was reviewed and a resolution was adopted requesting PAHO to:

- promote and collaborate with the Governments in the formulation and strengthening of national plans fitted to the specific situation in each country;
- draw up a plan for the promotion and support of malaria programs in the Hemisphere;
- give highest priority to the financing and implementation of those plans; and
- explore all possible sources of funds for the support of malaria activities on the national and hemispheric scale.

2. Formulation of the Plan

In compliance with the above resolutions, a plan of action was developed for the promotion and support of malaria programs in the Hemisphere based on the guidelines developed by the III Meeting of Directors of the National Malaria Eradication Services, held in Oaxtepec, Mexico, in March 1979.

This plan identifies the following six areas of basic action:

2.1 Reformulation of antimalarial national strategies following the technical guidelines laid out by the Oaxtepec meeting. These bases permit the planning of an antimalaria program with sufficient flexibility to adapt to local conditions in changing situations. Essential elements of these strategies are: stratification of the malaria problem; selection of appropriate technologies; collaboration in the development and utilization of the primary health care services; maximum use of community participation in the program; and intersectoral cooperation.

2.2 Evaluation of the malaria problem and in the review of the antimalaria strategy in accordance with these guidelines.

2.3 Exploration of possible sources of funds which may be brought to collaborate in the antimalaria action program.

2.4 Coordination, interchange and consolidation of experiences and preparation of guidelines for the adoption of new approaches for the execution of antimalaria activities.

2.5 Development of supportive regional programs, particularly for the promotion, coordination and support of applied field research in malaria and the coordination, development and best use of the training facilities in the Region for improving the human resources of the services.

2.6 Promotion and coordination of technical cooperation among developing countries.

3. Progress in the Execution of the Program

The following activities have been carried out or are being programmed for 1980 in the main action areas of the program:

3.1 The technical bases were formulated in 1979 and presented to the XXVI Meeting of the Directing Council.

3.2 The continental antimalarial plan was presented to and discussed at the disease prevention and control subregional planning meetings held in Guatemala, Buenos Aires, and Lima, attended by the directors of health services and epidemiologists in February 1980, and will likewise be presented to the forthcoming meeting in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in May 1980.

In response to a survey carried out by PASB, most countries indicated that they planned to promote and review their antimalaria activities in 1980 in compliance with the "Year of Frontal Struggle with Malaria in the Americas," declared by the XX Pan American Sanitary Conference.

Malaria advisers, epidemiologists and other PASB staff have maintained a continuous promotion of the continental plan and, as a result of this, a number of requests have been received for PAHO's collaboration, and participation in the complete review of malaria programs, looking into technical, operational and administrative problems as well as available resources for the formulation of national plans. As of this date, the programs of Belize, Colombia, Dominican Republic,

Ecuador, Guyana, Haiti, and Nicaragua have been reviewed. Requests for PASB collaboration have been received from Bolivia, Brazil, Honduras, and Suriname for similar reviews during 1980. It is expected that all the programs in the Region will complete this work by the end of 1980, with or without the direct participation of PASB staff.

3.3 At a meeting in November 1979 to identify areas of collaboration between the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and PAHO, the antimalaria plan of action was presented as one of the priority areas for IDB financial support in the health field, and at a second meeting in February 1980 the fields of collaboration were explored.

A study is planned to estimate the needs for external collaboration of the antimalaria programs in the Hemisphere. A detailed evaluation of requirements will be made in a group of countries, representing the range of problems encountered in the Region, to be carried out jointly by the national authorities, PAHO malaria specialists, and public health administrators. This evaluation will concentrate on the requirements for advancing the fight against malaria in accordance with the strategical approaches recommended by the Oaxtepec meeting. Needs will be considered for financial and technical collaboration as well as for the support by regional programs for training and research. After the completion of this evaluation the PASB group will design a questionnaire to be sent to the countries not included in the study to complement the information and improve regional estimates. The findings of this study will permit better planning of international collaboration and provide a basis for regional contacts with possible financing agencies, and in particular for defining the support by IDB for the continental effort against malaria and the provision of better guidance to those agencies, such as USAID, already collaborating with the program.

PAHO has also collaborated with individual countries in negotiating financial assistance from agencies such as UNDP, UNEO, and UNI/CDF.

3.4 PAHO has been collecting information on the experiences of countries in engaging community participation in the promotion or execution of various antimalaria activities. The Malaria Action Programme and the Division of Strengthening of Health Services of WHO, and the Division of Comprehensive Health Services (CHS) of PAHO, are now exploring the possibilities of convening a working group in AMRO to consolidate the global experiences in community participation in antimalaria activities and to recommend future approaches to improve this participation.

The Division of Disease Control, jointly with the Division of Comprehensive Health Services, is also consolidating experiences for the preparation of guidelines for collaboration in disease control programs, particularly antimalaria programs, and in the development of basic health care services and their opportune and appropriate use in the delivery of control activities.

3.5 With respect to the development of supplementary regional programs, the following activities should be mentioned:

3.5.1 PAHO has, for a long time, been carrying out a substantial program for applied field research in malaria, which has resulted in the testing and evaluation of new insecticides and other antimalaria activities: the identification, delimitation and quantification of such problems as vector insecticide resistance and parasite resistance to drugs, and the improvement of field adaptation of techniques for insecticide susceptibility testing, insecticide excito repellency and sensitivity of malaria parasites to drugs.

Resources for malaria research have been considerably increased since the creation of the UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR). The Scientific Working Group on Applied Field Research of the TDR has had a continuous participation from the AMRO Region, but a need is felt for increased promotional and coordination effort.

During the forthcoming meeting of the Regional Advisory Committee on Medical Research (ACMR), a session will be devoted to the discussion of a continental plan for malaria research, articulated with PAHO's program for biomedical research, the TDR strategic plan for field malaria research, and the MAP/WHO evaluation and coordination activities on a global basis.

The Organization has reoriented the activities of the regional malaria field research project (AMRO-0901), now based in Tapachula, Mexico, towards "technical cooperation for research on new methods of malaria control or eradication," and is collaborating with the Government of Brazil in the study of the malaria problem, and development of control strategies applicable to the conditions of the Amazon River basin.

The Organization will continue to promote and support field research activities by national programs, such as the Studies on Malaria Immunology being carried out at the National Institute of Health in Colombia; clinical trials with the new antimalarial drug, mefloquine, being conducted with the collaboration of SUCAM and the Health Services of the State of Pará in Belem, Brazil; continental studies on the

susceptibility of P. falciparum to antimalaria drugs, being conducted in 19 countries of the Region; and evaluation and field trials of new insecticides by the National Malaria Eradication Services of El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Nicaragua.

3.5.2 With the collaboration of MAP/WHO, a plan has been drafted to strengthen training activities in order to ensure that the malaria programs will be able to acquire sufficient numbers of needed technical personnel. A study group will visit training institutions and selected malaria programs to prepare an inventory of resources, to review training objectives and curricula of courses, and to identify additional support needed for developing a regional training program. This study will serve as a basis for a meeting of a working group, consisting of the directors of participating training institutions, specialists, and representatives of collaborating agencies in the program. This working group will develop a medium-term training program for the development of technical resources, including the establishment of a coordinating mechanism. Financial support is being sought for these activities.

3.6 For a long time the Organization has been promoting and supporting collaboration among neighboring countries and countries sharing common problems, such as the multi-resistance of the vector in the Pacific Coast of Southern Mexico and Central America, the evasive behavior of some South American vectors, and the parasite resistance to drugs in many South American countries and in Panama.

In collaboration with PAHO's Liaison Office, the WHO focal point for TCDC, an evaluation is being made of the regional experience in TCDC in antimalaria activities, and recommendations will be made for future improvement in this area.