

*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
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*working party of
the regional committee*

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ANDEAN SUBREGION, JOINT PLAN OF ACTION

The document on the Andean Subregion, Joint Plan of Action was presented to the XXII Pan American Sanitary Conference for its consideration. The Conference adopted Resolution CSP22.R22 supporting the formulation and execution of a joint plan of action, and requesting the Director to report on progress to the XXXII Meeting of the Directing Council in 1987.

It is in response to that request that the Director reports on the progress attained to date. The areas for common action were discussed once again with the Ministers of Health of the Andean area and reduced from nine to five. In collaboration with the Hipólito Unanue Agreement (CHU), several subregional meetings took place to define more closely the elements of a plan of action, namely, in June 1986, a subregional seminar on "Strengthening the Operational Capacity of Health Systems in the Andean Area"; in October 1986, a subregional meeting on essential drugs; the same month, a meeting of a group of experts in pharmacodependency; and in February 1987, the First Joint Subregional Meeting on Maternal and Child Health, sponsored by PAHO/UNICEF/CHU, was held.

Based on these experiences, a meeting of the Directors General of Health of the Andean countries took place in November 1986, at which broad lines of action were suggested. These recommendations were to have been reviewed, and hopefully approved, by the XII Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Andean Area in March 1987, but because of reasons beyond PAHO's control that meeting was postponed. In the interim, PAHO has requested the Ministers to review the document with a view to its approval.

Both in its regional and country programming, PAHO continues to develop activities designed to strengthen the subregional focus in the five priority areas defined by the Ministers.

ANDEAN SUBREGION, JOINT PLAN OF ACTION

The document on the Andean Region, Joint Plan of Action was presented to the XXII Pan American Sanitary Conference in 1986 for its consideration. The Conference adopted Resolution CSP22.R22 which supported the formulation and execution of a joint plan of action; requested the Governments of the subregion to give support to that initiative; and requested the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, together with the Hipólito Unanue Agreement (CHU), to support the efforts of the countries and to promote with other agencies the cooperation needed to support a joint plan of action. The Director was requested to report on progress to the XXXII Meeting of the Directing Council in 1987.

At the XI Meeting of the Ministers of Health of the Andean Area (REMSAA) in 1986, the Ministers and the Director identified nine areas of possible collaboration among the countries: the control of vector-borne diseases; production, control and utilization of medications; development of human resources in health; research on health services administration and appropriate technologies; strengthening and modernization of the health infrastructure; pharmacodependency; control of food safety and quality; disaster preparedness; and information exchange among countries on experiences and advances in the process of development of health services.

The broad outlines of a possible joint plan of action were discussed with the Ministers of Health of the Andean Countries during the XXII Pan American Sanitary Conference. At that time it was agreed to concentrate efforts. Therefore the scope of joint action was redefined to include five broad areas of common interest: development of infrastructure for the delivery of health services; maternal and child health; pharmacodependency; malaria; and essential drugs and biologicals. Within each of these priority areas the emphasis is on identifying a few key activities of interest to two or more countries whose actions may result in a significant impact. The actions should be feasible at the country level and be conducive to show results in a relatively short period of time.

Since then the Organization, together with the Hipólito Unanue Agreement, has sponsored several key meetings at the subregional level in order to develop a more detailed plan for the five priority areas. In June 1986, a seminar on "Strengthening the Operational Capacity of Health Systems in the Andean Area" took place in Cartagena, Colombia. The working groups identified several common needs: an improved managerial capacity; the redefinition and the broadening of the role of the Ministry of Health within the sector; intrasectoral and intersectoral coordination; decentralization and regionalization of health services administration; and the development of systematic research efforts in all aspects of health care delivery.

In October 1986, in Arequipa, Peru, a subregional meeting on essential drugs was held. In the area of policy formulation at the national and subregional levels, it was recommended that each country prepare documentation on its policies and experiences, the legal issues involved, as well as other important aspects of the matter. These analyses would be circulated for information. The possibilities for joint purchases and establishment of a subregional distribution system should be explored, as well as a uniform system for quality control of products imported or produced.

A group of experts met in Quito, Ecuador, to review and recommend possible actions in the area of pharmacodependency. They concluded that there was a need to define the scope of the problems in each country; to establish, and develop capacity and expertise within this area in the Ministries of Health; to identify and establish a network of collaborating centers; and to provide the necessary training.

In February 1987 the First Joint Subregional Meeting on Maternal and Child Health, sponsored by PASB/UNICEF/CHU, was held in Quito, Ecuador. This was a major meeting involving 80 experts representing all agencies and governments with interest in this subject. The recommendations covered four broad areas: training in managerial capacity and the strengthening of the administrative structures at all levels to carry out objectives; the need for educational methodologies; the establishment of systems of monitoring, reporting on progress achieved, and exchanging information; and the need to mobilize community participation and provide education.

As a further step in the preparation of a joint plan of action, PAHO and the Hipólito Unanue Agreement sponsored a Meeting of Directors General of Health of the Andean Area in November 1986, in Quito, Ecuador. At that meeting, the Directors General of Health of the five Andean countries expressed the views of their Governments on possible areas of collaboration in each of the five identified priority areas. The final report and the recommendations of that meeting were to be reviewed and, it was hoped, approved by the XII Meeting of Ministers of Health of the Andean Area in March 1987. Unfortunately, because of events beyond PAHO's control, REMSAA XII was postponed. Each government has been requested by PAHO to indicate for each priority area the focal point in their country for that program; the areas of competence which the country is willing to share; and the areas in which the country would welcome assistance and collaboration from the other countries of the area. In order to proceed to the next stage with the development of a joint plan of action, the Ministers of Health have been asked, on an individual basis, to endorse the recommendations contained in the Quito document. It is anticipated that the Director will have the opportunity

to discuss the next steps with the Ministers of Health of the Andean Area during the World Health Assembly in May 1987.

Thus, PAHO continues to promote the development of a Joint Plan of Action for the Andean Subregion. An updated status report will be provided at the time of the meeting of the Executive Committee.