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MAINTENANCE OF HOSPITAL EQUIPMENT

The installed hospital capacity in the Region of the Americas is approximately 2,311,000 beds, of which 1,000,000 are located in 14,000 hospitals in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The conservation and maintenance of this important social resource is a complex responsibility that requires decision-making on appropriate technical policies and programs.

For several decades, the countries of the Region have referred to the need for granting due priority to the maintenance of equipment and physical plant in order to ensure their proper operation and fulfillment of the social function of the health establishments. They have also requested PAHO's support in assisting in the development and strengthening of their capacity to conserve and maintain the physical infrastructure of the services.

The economic crisis of the 1980s reduced the allocations budgeted for health programs, and consequently the allocations earmarked for conservation and maintenance programs. The failure to make the investments required led to accelerated deterioration of the health establishments and their equipment. This situation also made it impossible to develop the ability to plan, select, purchase, operate, and maintain the new technologies that are being incorporated into the health establishments.

The Regional Plan for Investment in the Environment and Health, prepared by PAHO, estimates that an investment of US\$64,480 million will be needed to expand, adapt, and repair the physical infrastructure required for delivering health care of the people between 1994 and 2004.

As part of the transformation of the national health systems and the strengthening of the local health systems that is presently taking place in the countries in order to attain the target of health for all by the year 2000, the physical infrastructure of the health services and its conservation and maintenance plays a decisive role in sustaining the provision of health services to the population.

Accordingly, the topic of maintenance of hospital equipment is being submitted for consideration by the 21st Meeting of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming to urge the governments of the countries of the Region to examine it as an urgent problem that can no longer be ignored in light of its repercussions on equity and economy in providing health services to the population.

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