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STATUS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE PAN AMERICAN CENTERS: INSTITUTE OF
NUTRITION OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA (INCAP)

STUDY GROUP ON THE INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION
OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA

FINAL REPORT

STUDY GROUP ON THE INSTITUTE OF NUTRITION
OF CENTRAL AMERICA AND PANAMA (INCAP)

FINAL REPORT

In compliance with Resolution IV of the XXXII Meeting of the Council of INCAP, adopted in Managua, Nicaragua, on 17 July 1981, a Study Group consisting of representatives of each of the Member Governments was set up and met in Panama City, Panama, on 2, 3 and 4 September 1981.

The purposes of this meeting as mandated by the Council of INCAP were as follows:

1. To review the third draft of the Proposed Basic Agreement for the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama with a view to its approval in an Extraordinary Meeting of that Council, tentatively scheduled for a few weeks later, in Washington, D.C.
2. To discuss and approve the Program of Activities of INCAP for 1982.
3. To review the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING

The meeting was opened with an inaugural ceremony graced by the presence of Drs. Jorge A. Medrano V., Minister of Health of Panama; Edith de Bethancourt, Vice Minister, and Julian A. Rodríguez, Acting Program Coordinator of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

In his address Dr. Medrano expressed the gratification of the Government and people of Panama that his country had been chosen to host a meeting of such great importance for the future of INCAP. He thought it was essential and urgent that the interests of all the Member Countries be clearly stated so that INCAP could be maintained and strengthened not only for its prestige as a quality scientific institution, but also as a source of support for the plans, programs and investments going forward in each of the countries, since INCAP had been and would remain the most important technical resource in the field of food and nutrition for all the countries in the area.

Also in his address the Minister asked the participants to conduct their discussions with objectivity, balance and in awareness of the history and the current situation both of the countries and of INCAP itself, without losing sight of the prospects for the social, economic, cultural and political future of their peoples, so that real gains could be made in the health and nutrition of all Central Americans.

Following the inaugural ceremony, the Study Group began its work under the Chairmanship of Dr. Joaquín Solís, Vice Minister of Health of Nicaragua. The Rapporteur was Dr. Cutberto Parillón D., National Director for Nutrition in the Ministry of Health of Panama, and the Secretary, Dr. Carlos Hernán Daza, Regional Adviser in Nutrition of PASB.

The Study Group then adopted an agenda scheduling specific activities for each day of the meeting, as follows:

1. Review of the Proposed Basic Agreement of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (third draft).
2. Discussion and approval of the Program of Activities of INCAP for 1982.
3. Review of the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982.

The Study Group then took up the following subjects in the order given.

1. Review of the Third Draft of the Proposed Basic Agreement of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama

The Study Group decided to scrutinize in detail both the preamble and the operative part of the document, and to make comments and take decisions where appropriate.

It was also of the view that this should be the last session of the Study Group convened for this purpose, and that the work should be done objectively and in light of the progress already made in the discussion and approval of the Proposed Agreement in the countries.

In other words, the work was to be done in such a way that, while leaving the door open to improvements in the drafting--in some cases by changes in the form--it would be difficult to make changes of substance that would not yield any of the ground gained so far or that would do anything to make the document better.

With this working approach, the Group proceeded to a discussion of each preambular paragraph and the articles, and succeeded in improving the wording of some of them and in making the ideas clearer and easier to understand.

Moreover, and based on legal considerations, Article 42 was entirely rewritten, since the new Basic Agreement requires ratification by all the Member Countries to enter into force.

A new Transitory Article had to be written to reaffirm the financial obligations acquired by the Member Countries under the current Basic Agreement.

There was extensive discussion of the suggestions and changes presented by the Member Governments to the second draft, which have been incorporated into its third version. The Group felt that some articles needed changes of form, and those changes were incorporated into the final version.

During the discussions, and in the light of the current situation, the Group agreed to recommend to the INCAP Council that every effort be made to speed up ratification of the new Basic Agreement of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama (INCAP) by all the Member Countries, such ratification being legally required for it to enter into force so as to clear the way for the Institute's long awaited technical and structural transformation.

With these observations, the Study Group approved the third draft of the Proposed Basic Agreement of INCAP.

2. Discussion and Approval of the Program of Activities of INCAP for 1982

A Program of Activities of INCAP for 1982 was presented based on the priority fields of action enunciated by the Study Group convened in Washington in 1980 and then approved by the INCAP Council in Mexico that same year, and reaffirmed by it in Nicaragua in 1981. This Program covers activities in the following fields:

- a) Manpower Training and Development;
- b) Technical Cooperation;
- c) Research.

The following program areas are indicated as the strategies for carrying out those activities:

- a) Manpower Training and Development;
- b) Technical Cooperation;
- c) Research;
- d) Administrative Development of INCAP.

The Study Group discussed these program areas separately in order to make particular observations on each of them.

The areas that elicited most discussion in the Group were those of Manpower Training and Development and Technical Cooperation, which did not imply, however, that the others were regarded as any less important.

a) Manpower Training and Development

This was one of the areas of greatest interest and discussion by the Study Group, which noted the great need for manpower at different levels in the countries.

There was no disagreement with the proposition that the current level of training should be continued, but it was felt that the training of auxiliary personnel should be made a priority in some of the countries in support of the primary health care strategy.

After discussing the scope of the Graduate Course in Public Health it was decided to approve its new name of Master's Course in Public Health Nutrition, whose advantages were obvious. Following extensive discussion, the other aspects of this program area were approved.

It was recommended that consideration be given to whether the resources of the United Nations University could be utilized with greater impact in the countries of the area. It was further recommended that each country take the initiative in immediately launching a thorough study of its existing nutrition manpower with a view to effective planning and programming for its training and development.

b) Technical Cooperation

This area was also discussed in depth, and there was agreement with the objectives stated and the programs and subprograms presented.

The Study Group suggested a few changes of form, not substance, in order to make the language clearer, and then approved this program area.

c) Research

The Study Group acquired a thorough understanding of this program area and of its potential for meeting the interests of the countries in the area in the field of food and nutrition.

In the course of the discussion it was requested that consideration continue to be given to the establishment of research projects in all the countries of the area, as appropriate, as expressed in the philosophy of the new Basic Agreement. Moreover, while efforts were being made in this direction, it was worthwhile to insist that the results of the research be accessible not only to professionals and technicians, but to the largest possible number of people interested, particularly in agriculture, where it should ideally reach the small farmers in the countries of the area, who provided an important part of the food supply for the entire population.

It was also noted that, while research was of benefit to many program areas, more specific programming was needed in some subjects, and should be taken under study in the Member Countries in the coming months in accordance with their interest and requirements.

The Study Group approved this program area with the considerations mentioned.

d) Administrative Development of INCAP

This program area had been drawn up in response to suggestions and needs for changes in the operation, organization and administration of the Institute.

The Study Group noted with satisfaction the progress of this administrative development of the Institute concurrently with the drafting of the new Proposed Basic Agreement, to be signed and ratified by the Member Countries.

In this connection the Study Group repeated its recommendation to the Council of INCAP "that every effort be made to speed up the ratification of this Agreement," which would give the Institute the legal authority to make the needed administrative and organizational changes.

The Study Group viewed the program area of administrative development as an additional source of technical support to the Member Countries, and so approved it with its various programs and subprograms.

3. Review of the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982

In Resolution III on the Proposed Program and Budget of INCAP the XXXII Meeting of the Council of INCAP in Managua, Nicaragua, authorized a 20 per cent increase in the quota assessments of the Member Governments. The INCAP Management presented the Study Group with the Budget of INCAP for 1982, adjusted to projected financial availabilities, for review and the formulation of recommendations for its final approval by the Council.

Following a thorough review of the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982, the Study Group deemed it important to note that this was the first time that a draft of this kind was submitted for consideration by a Study Group representing all of the Member Countries, which made the countries and the Institute jointly responsible for this budget.

During the deliberations of the Study Group the Representative of Costa Rica entered the reservation that he could not recommend approval of the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982 because it provided for the 20 per cent increase approved by the Council; this increase had not been approved by his Government, which had made appropriate official notification to that effect.

The Representative of El Salvador explained that, after the necessary consultations with his Government, it had decided to confirm its acceptance of the 20 per cent increase of the annual assessment for INCAP, and that the official notification to that effect was being made.

The Study Group recommended that the Council approve the Proposed Budget of INCAP for 1982 and commended the staff of the Institute for the work it had done and the great efforts that were being made to meet its obligations to the Central American population.

In order to step up the process of implementing the activities in the new priority areas of work of INCAP, and in view of the current financial limitations, the Study Group recommended that the Council of INCAP request the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to initiate action to bring in as Associate Members of INCAP other international and bilateral cooperation agencies and other institutions that might be interested in providing regular financial support to the programs of the Institute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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It also thanks the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and the acting PASB Program Coordinator in Panama, and the technical and secretarial personnel, for the support and facilities provided to the Study Group for the performance of its task.

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