



*directing council*

PAN AMERICAN  
SANITARY  
ORGANIZATION

IX Meeting

Antigua Guatemala  
September 1956

*regional committee*

WORLD  
HEALTH  
ORGANIZATION



VIII Meeting

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CD9/5 (Eng.)  
24 July 1956  
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Topic 19: FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

The VIII Meeting of the Directing Council, after full discussion of this topic, approved the following resolution:

RESOLUTION III

The Directing Council,

Having examined Document CD8/15 presented by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, and considering the suggestions made on the Fellowship Program by several of the Member Governments as well as the views expressed during the discussion on this topic,

RESOLVES:

1. To take note of the aforesaid document.
2. To recommend to the Director that he continue to study the comments made by the Member Governments on the Fellowship Program of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, giving special attention to those on: (a) fellowship stipends; (b) the need for allowing a period of preliminary study and orientation for fellowship recipients who do not have a command of the language in which they are to pursue their studies; and (c) the need for establishing more definitely the commitments of the Member Governments with respect to utilization of the services of the fellowship recipients upon completion of their studies.
3. To request the Director to report on this matter to the Directing Council at its next meeting.

4. To recommend to the Member Governments the advisability of making provision for officers in their employ who are studying under fellowships to retain the salaries and privileges pertaining to the positions they occupy.

Pursuant to the above resolution, the Director has continued his study with respect to the comments made during the VIII Meeting of the Council, giving special attention to the three items set forth in paragraph 2 of the resolution.

With respect to item (a), fellowship stipends, up to the time of preparation of this document the situation has remained essentially the same as last year, except for the book grant, the increase in which has been definitely approved.

As pointed out on previous occasions, the development of the fellowship program is a complicated process, especially as regards the administrative aspect. It is essential to maintain, insofar as possible, the necessary uniformity and coordination with the fellowship regulations of the World Health Organization and with the practices of the other specialized agencies of the United Nations, as well as of governmental and nongovernmental organizations that grant fellowships in the same fields of study as the Organization. To this end, the Technical Working Group on Fellowships, composed of representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, meets periodically to study common problems related to this subject.

The application of the measures and decisions adopted by the Technical Working Group suffer unavoidable delays inasmuch as each organization has its own administrative procedures and many of the decisions must first be approved by the respective governing bodies. This accounts for the fact that the changes recommended by the Working Group in mid-1955, and reported to the last Directing Council meeting (see Document CD8/15), have not yet been put into effect.

The basic suggestions endorsed by the Bureau are:

- (1) To base the first stipend payment on the "travel status" rate, i.e., the highest rate, since the installation in a new locality occasions added expenses.
- (2) To extend the "travel status" period from 14 to 30 days, which will improve the financial situation of recipients of travel grants.
- (3) To revise the amounts of the stipends paid in certain countries at the present time, especially in the United States and Canada.

The problem of item (b), preliminary study and orientation period, has been solved by most schools in the United States, with the cooperation of Bureau officers, through the implementation of preliminary orientation courses of several weeks' duration. Students attending schools that as yet have no such orientation periods take a general course. However, all schools have adopted the policy of not admitting students who fail to show a thorough knowledge of the language in which they are to study.

In some cases, the countries defray the costs incurred by their candidates to take special English courses in the country of study during a few months before their fellowship begins.

The Bureau, giving special consideration to the fact that fellows would derive greater benefit from their studies if they took them in places where health conditions and problems are similar to those in their own countries, has for some time adopted the policy of sending the majority of fellows to public health schools in Latin America. This policy has proved of evident advantage, especially for fellows who do not have sufficient experience in the public health field to be able to profit fully from the knowledge and practice of methods not directly applicable in their own countries.

An attempt is made to send to the United States for study only those fellows who have worked in a public health service for several years, or who have had previous specialized training.

Preferential attention has been given by the Bureau to both item (c) of the above resolution, on the utilization of the fellow's services, and to paragraph 4, on the retention of salaries and privileges, since the fundamental purpose of the fellowships is "strengthening and developing national health services, as well as improving the level of teaching and training in the field of medicine and allied sciences." Consequently, fellowships are awarded at the express request of governments in fields of study that will make it possible to accomplish this basic purpose.

Unfortunately, some Member Governments have not given due attention to item (c) and do not employ the fellows in a service in keeping with the training they have received, despite having indicated at the time of application that the fellowship award was essential to the improvement of the services, and having assumed the commitment that the fellows would be assigned to specific posts upon their return. The failure to comply with this commitment affects not only the fellowship program but also the health services of the country concerned, since it means that the services of a professional trained with the Organization's funds are not being utilized and that the development of some service or specialty within that country is delayed, pending the training of another professional.

It has been suggested that the first page of the fellowship application form be reworded so as to make it a kind of agreement between the requesting country and the Organization.

With respect to paragraph 4, it should be recalled that "a stipend is not a salary" and that "it is not supposed to cover the fellow's routine expenses at home for self or family and should therefore not be considered as a substitute for any salary or allowance paid to a fellow at home." Certain Member Governments, however, for various reasons, have not as yet taken into consideration the nature of the fellowship or the commitment assumed on signing and sponsoring a fellowship application, and have suspended the payment of salary to officers receiving fellowships. As a result, many who receive fellowship awards refuse acceptance at the last moment, when all arrangements have been concluded and the necessary funds committed. For obvious reasons, this has an adverse effect on the general program of the Organization, since funds committed for fellowships cannot be used when required for other technical programs. Moreover, when the fellow agrees to study without the benefit of his regular salary, family and financial difficulties arise that affect his studies or even force him to return to his country before completing them. This has happened on various occasions and represents the loss of a considerable investment.

Other Member Governments, however, cooperate very effectively in the Organization's fellowship program. Selection committees composed of representatives of the health services and of universities have been set up in many countries by law or decree, and in addition the fellows retain their positions and salaries.

Taking the foregoing into account, the Directing Council may wish to consider the following:

Proposed Resolution

The Directing Council,

Having examined the document on the fellowship program, presented by the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau,

RESOLVES:

1. To take note of the said document.
2. To request the Director to inform the Directing Council once the changes relating to stipend payments to fellowship recipients have been incorporated in the fellowship program.
3. To reiterate to the Member Governments the advisability of providing for the retention, by officers in their employ who are studying under fellowships, of the salaries and privileges pertaining to the positions they occupy, and also the need to utilize adequately their services upon completion of their studies.