



# XIV Pan American Sanitary Conference

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# VI Meeting Regional Committee



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## Topic 36: ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

The Seventh World Health Assembly, by Resolution 53, requested the Executive Board "to consult with the Director-General on the best means of stimulating Member States to give due prominence to projects in environmental sanitation, when formulating requests for assistance from the World Health Organization."

The Executive Board, at its 14th Session in May 1954, decided (Resolution 21, Rev. 1) "to limit 'environmental sanitation', for the purposes of the present study, to considerations of water supplies and the disposal of human waste and refuse", and taking into account the cultural, educational, and economic aspects influencing progress in these sanitation services, requested the Director-General, through the regional organizations, "to consider ways and means which can be adopted to stimulate action at the local level in Member Countries", for the purposes accepted by the World Health Assembly.

At the request of the Director-General of the World Health Organization, the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau brings to the attention of the XIV Pan American Sanitary Conference, Regional Committee of the WHO, the above-mentioned resolutions referring to programs in environmental sanitation.

Attachment: Resolutions WHA7.53 and EBL4/R21/Rev. 1  
WHO Document EBL4/18

RESOLUTION OF THE SEVENTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Environmental Sanitation  
(WHA7.53 - 20 May 1954)

Recognizing that more leadership is required from the World Health Organization in the field of environmental sanitation,

The Seventh World Health Assembly,

REQUESTS the Executive Board, at its next session, to consult with the Director-General on the best means of stimulating Member States to give due prominence to projects in environmental sanitation, when formulating requests for assistance from the World Health Organization.

RESOLUTION OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Environmental Sanitation  
(EB14/R21/Rev. 1 - 31 May 1954)

The Executive Board,

Having considered resolution WHA7.53, in which the Board is asked "to consult with the Director-General on the best means of stimulating Member States to give due prominence to projects in environmental sanitation, when formulating requests for assistance from the World Health Organization",

Having studied the report of the Director-General on this subject,<sup>1/</sup>

Deciding to limit "environmental sanitation", for the purposes of the present study, to considerations of water supplies and the disposal of human waste and refuse, and

Having discussed many aspects influencing progress in these sanitation services - cultural, educational and economic,

1. REQUESTS the Director-General, through the regional organizations, to consider ways and means which can be adopted to stimulate action at the local level in Member Countries; and, further
2. REQUESTS the Director-General to submit a report on this subject to the Executive Board at its fifteenth session.

DOCUMENT EB14/18 OF THE FOURTEENTH SESSION OF THE  
EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Stimulation of Environmental Sanitation Programmes

1. In resolution WHA7.53 the Seventh World Health Assembly requested the Executive Board to consult with the Director-General on the best means of stimulating environmental sanitation programmes in Member States. WHO's assistance to governments in this field may assume different forms and deal with varied problems of sanitation. However, WHO can exercise one of its most important functions in convincing governments that an attack on an isolated sanitation problem would be meaningless and wasteful in the long run if it were not to be considered as a step within a broader improvement scheme.

2. Types of WHO assistance

2.1 At the country level

Assistance to governments in environmental sanitation can be directed toward:

- (a) the organization of sanitation services on a national level;
- (b) the establishment of a national sanitation plan;
- (c) the improvement of teaching and training, and
- (d) the development of pilot projects.

2.1.1 Experience has shown that an essential prerequisite to a successful national sanitation programme is the establishment of an environmental sanitation unit at the appropriate level within the health department. Here, WHO can assist governments in organizing such units and developing their work.

2.1.2 One of the first steps in an environmental sanitation programme is to establish a national sanitation plan, which should rely primarily on local resources and take into consideration the level of development and the stage of evolution of the country concerned. The role of WHO is to assist governments in formulating this plan.

2.1.3 However adequate the organization, and however complete the plan, no sanitation programme can succeed without properly trained and experienced personnel to implement it. The desirability of training nationals under local or regional conditions is now generally recognized.

In addition, the training of medical and other personnel in sanitation and the organization of courses in elementary sanitation in schools and teachers' training centres, constitute important fields in which WHO is willing to assist by providing staff, equipment and literature.

2.1.4 The emphasis in WHO's environmental sanitation programme is not on the organization of projects involving large-scale construction of sanitary structures. Pilot projects for demonstration of acceptable techniques are desirable in certain circumstances, provided they are considered only as part of a broad improvement plan and serve as a training ground for all categories of health workers. Such projects need not involve large expenditures of funds. Here, WHO might favourably consider requests for assistance. The assistance of UNICEF, as explained below, might also be secured.

## 2.2 At the regional level

In addition to direct assistance to governments, WHO might be prepared to undertake the following activities in environmental sanitation at a regional level:

- (a) the organization of short courses for various categories of health and sanitation personnel;
- (b) the organization of symposia on environmental sanitation for the exchange of views between medical and sanitation officials of governments and for the dissemination of technical information;
- (c) the organization of travel tours which would enable key government officials to visit and observe sanitation projects, and
- (d) the granting of fellowships for study or field practice within the region.

## 3. UNICEF participation

The UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy has recommended, and the UNICEF Executive Board has approved, a set of guiding principles for the application of UNICEF/WHO assistance in environmental sanitation programmes undertaken jointly with governments.<sup>1/</sup> WHO's aim of establishing permanent sanitation services on a sure footing in health departments will be fostered by UNICEF's important contribution to joint undertakings.

<sup>1/</sup>Off. Rec. Wld Hlth Org. 49, 19

4. Channels and procedures for assistance to governments

WHO Regional Offices are responsible for guiding governments in submitting requests for the types of assistance previously described and for receiving and processing these requests. It is believed that considerable assistance can be given to governments by Regional Offices through the services of regional advisers, headquarters staff or short-term consultants.

5. Leadership and assistance from Headquarters

WHO Headquarters will continue to exercise its leadership responsibilities, which consist mainly in studying major problems of common concern to several governments, in disseminating technical information and in stimulating the interest of professional groups.

One of these activities is the preparation of a series of guides or "manuals" of recommended practice for environmental sanitation. Several fields, such as rural water supply, excreta disposal, refuse and wastes disposal and composting, could be covered by separate manuals. Many requests from health workers in under-developed areas have emphasized the need for guides for the construction of simple, practical, acceptable and economical rural sanitation works. Such an activity could be initiated quickly, and material is already at hand for one or two such guides.

6. The Executive Board might wish to consider adopting a resolution along the following lines:

The Executive Board,

Having considered resolution WHA7.53, in which the Board is asked "to consult with the Director-General on the best means of stimulating Member States to give due prominence to projects in environmental sanitation, when formulating requests for assistance from the World Health Organization",

Having studied the report of the Director-General on this subject,

1. REQUESTS the Director-General to undertake a study of the present organization and functioning of national environmental sanitation services, and of the present status of the educational and training facilities available for the instruction of environmental sanitation personnel, with a view to suggesting procedures which the Organization might use to develop programmes in environmental sanitation in countries, and

2. INSTRUCTS the Director-General to submit a progress report on this subject to the Executive Board at its fifteenth session.