

Pan American Health Organization

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL RESEARCH

Fifth Meeting

Washington, D.C., 13-17 June 1966

Item 15.1 of the Agenda

PAHO/WHO RESEARCH AND TRAINING
ACTIVITIES IN POPULATION DYNAMICS
IN LATIN AMERICA

Ref: RES 5/6

14 April 1966

RESEARCH AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN POPULATION DYNAMICS
OF PAHO/WHO IN LATIN AMERICA *

During the past year, the Pan American Health Organization has continued its effort to promote the study of population problems and their health implications. These efforts have been directed primarily to a program of research training and research with emphasis on the role of physicians and health personnel in this field.

The Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization on October 2, 1965 approved Resolution IX on Aspects of Health Related to Population Dynamics⁽¹⁾ which is similar to the Resolution⁽²⁾ of the Eighteenth World Health Assembly (WHA18.49) of 21 May 1965. Also in Resolution XXI, Research Policy and Program of the Pan American Health Organization⁽¹⁾, the Directing Council "recorded its satisfaction that, in the field of research and training in population dynamics, as in other subject fields, PAHO and WHO are collaborating in developing a coordinated program for the Americas (under Resolution XXXI of the XV Meeting of the Directing Council and Resolution WHA18.49 of the 1965 World Health Assembly) aimed at achieving an harmonious integration of

* Prepared for the Fifth Meeting of the PAHO/ACMR, by Dr. R. R. Puffer, Chief, Health Statistics Branch, PAHO.

population growth and community development components of national efforts to raise the standard of living of populations throughout the Region".

At this time a summary of the activities in which staff of the Pan American Health Organization have participated is given.

A. RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM

In order to ascertain interest in research training centers * in Latin America a small working group³ was held in São Paulo. This was followed by definitive planning for research training in Santiago, Chile and São Paulo, Brazil. Agreements have been signed for the programs in Chile and São Paulo. Funds of the Pan American Health Organization have been committed for initiation of these activities in 1966.

1. Research Training on Health and Population Dynamics, University of Chile

The Pan American Health Organization and the University of Chile have signed an agreement for the initiation of the research training program in health and population dynamics by the School of Public Health of the Faculty of Medicine and the Organization is providing funds for the program. The plans for this program and for courses are described briefly. The details are given in separate documents. 4, 5, 6

During the two week period August 2-13, 1965, Dr. Irene B. Taueber, serving as consultant to the Pan American Health Organization, assisted the staff of the School of Public Health in the development of their program. The document⁴ prepared as the basis for the program, Health and Population Dynamics, has been distributed. The basic document⁵ for this research

* For the feasibility studies for training centers a grant was awarded to PAHO by the Agency for International Development.

program in Spanish with the title, Salud y Dinámica de Población, is available.

The objectives of this research training program are to extend the traditional field of health to include the interrelations of health and population dynamics; to diffuse knowledge of the process of population dynamics and their implications for health programs and activities among medical personnel, faculty of medical schools and other institutions, health personnel, health planners and administrators, and personnel in wider areas where health is involved; to develop a Latin American Center to cooperate and advise health institutions as to development in teaching, research or education in health and population dynamics; to promote interdisciplinary research in health and populations dynamics; and to make available the contributions of the research for the intersectorial planning of the government.

The first four-month course in health and population dynamics is scheduled for August 1 to November 30, 1966. The announcement ⁽⁶⁾ of the program (attached) has been released to medical schools to ascertain the interest of their faculties, principally of the departments of preventive medicine, in sending participants to this first scheduled course of this nature.

The outline of the subject matter to be covered has the following six subject headings:

- I Health and Population Change
- II Statistics of Health and Demography
- III Methods of Analysis of Health and Demography

IV The Design and Execution of Research

V Migration, Urbanization and Health

VI Population Dynamics, Planning and Health Programs

The Latin American Demographic Center of the United Nations in Santiago, Chile will cooperate in the teaching of this course. A Senior Member of the staff of the Milbank Memorial Fund is assisting the Organization and the School of Public Health in planning for the course. Instruction will be given by the staff of the School of Public Health, the Latin American Demographic Center and short-term consultants. The visiting faculty include professors from the Universities of North Carolina, São Paulo, Harvard and Princeton and Milbank Memorial Fund. During this four-month course it is hoped that guidelines for the teaching of demographic statistics in medical schools may be developed. Subject matter for lectures and seminars and laboratory exercises for these guidelines would be taken from the instruction in the four-month course.

Beginning in 1967, the course previously given for specialization in biostatistics at the School of Public Health of the University of Chile will be rearranged and supplemented as follows:

Five months - principal course in public health including epidemiology and statistics.

Four months - basic course in health and population dynamics.

Six months - health statistics taught in Department of Statistics.

or

the design and execution of research coordinated by the Department of Research.

If the 15-month course from March 1967 to June 30, 1968 is divided in these parts, there will be flexibility on the selection of courses. Some students may specialize in research while others in health statistics. Some students may be admitted for the four-month course in health and population dynamics.

2. Population Center of the University of São Paulo, Brazil

The Pan American Health Organization and the University of São Paulo have agreed on the development of a program of research and training on population dynamics and health. The Organization has committed funds for this program beginning in 1966.

Dr. Taeuber, a consultant for the Organization, spent the two weeks Nov. 8-20, 1965 in the Faculty of Hygiene and Public Health of the University assisting on planning for a training center.

Dr. Elza Berquó, professor of the Department of Applied Statistics, and Dr. Taeuber prepared a document (7) which gives the needs, the multi-disciplinary problem, present trends and new dimensions, goals and plans, the phasing of developments, organization and staff for research and teaching of the Population Center.

In São Paulo, in the first 18 months, the new staff added would undergo training both in the Department of Applied Statistics in São Paulo and in courses in the United States to prepare them for their specific roles in the Population Center. Several persons have been selected for such training including a pediatrician for specialization in medical demography, a sociologist for study of demography and health applications and an economist.

It is hoped that a course in population dynamics can be offered in the Faculty of Hygiene in the fourth quarter of 1966 and annual courses thereafter. If the time schedule for training can be met, in 1967 four quarters in statistical methodology and demography can be offered and the one-year program for population specialists can be initiated in 1968.

The Faculties within the University, of Philosophy through the Department of Sociology, and of Hygiene and Public Health through the Department of Applied Statistics, would cooperate in the initiation of the program. The Department of Applied Statistics has five full-time members with specialization in mathematical statistics, vital statistics, sampling and biostatistics. Two additional members are studying in the United States. There is one part-time member and another physician to be added who is studying at the School of Public Health in Chile. They are unusually well qualified in statistical methodology. The Department of Sociology is a large one with around 30 sociologists. The head of the Department is at present a visiting professor at Columbia University. Other Departments such as those with disciplines in human genetics and pediatrics may be brought into the Center at a later date. The first step is to prepare new faculty members for teaching of population dynamics with interrelationships with health.

The Population Center plans to develop one and two-year programs for qualified students who wish to specialize in population. These programs will include basic courses required for all students and diversified and specialized courses designed to meet the needs of those with different backgrounds and interests. The graduates of one and two-year programs will be qualified as teachers of research, workers in demography or population dynamics in universities, institutions or government departments. The extension of knowledge and

understanding of population to students or professional staffs in other fields will require the development of special short training programs.

It is expected that the University will provide graduate degrees to those with satisfactory educational requirements for admission who complete successfully courses of one and two years duration.

The Department of Applied Statistics is participating actively in research programs. The field work of the Inter-American Investigation of Mortality was carried out successfully with investigation of 4,361 deaths in 1962-1964. The computer center of the University is being utilized for analysis of the data in São Paulo.

A survey of a sample of the female population of the reproductive ages (15-49 years) is underway with interviews completed of 2,700 of the 3,000 women to be included. (For this survey a grant was received from the Population Council). Information on the sequence of reproductive events and the intervals between them as well as on several social variables will provide valuable data for better understanding of the problem of human reproduction. Also the computer facilities of the University are being used for tabulation of results. The planning, execution and analyses in this program provides excellent teaching material. Also this project is leading to other research projects in São Paulo.

In the design of the Population Center, research and training are recognized as interrelated processes and also that the Center has an interdisciplinary program in a new and complex field in which research is the best introduction to the cooperative search for knowledge of both the faculty and students.

B. RESEARCH

The Organization has promoted research programs in Latin America. At this time definite plans are reported for projects in Peru and Brazil.

In order to have full understanding of the factors affecting the growth or decline of a population, an epidemiological study of the population of three communities in Peru has been designed. Records will be kept of each member of families with detailed information for women of the child-bearing age (15-44 years); thus providing retrospective data from the first interview and prospective data through current observations over three years. Records regarding pregnancies, menstrual periods, dates and termination of pregnancy, breast feeding, fetal losses, live births and deaths in these families will be obtained currently.

A prospective study of women over a period of time is also planned in São Paulo, Brazil. From observations of a sample of women the frequency of abortions as well as of births will be ascertained and studied in relation to several variables including social and economic conditions.

These research projects will be financed by WHO and PAHO beginning in 1966. The Advisory Committee on Research in 1965 supported the development of an Inter-American Investigation of Mortality in Childhood. Planning is at present under way for this large collaborative project.

C. CENTER FOR STUDIES OF POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN PERU

The Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance created a Center for Studies of Population and Development by decree of December 4, 1964. The decree provided for a Directive Committee and Executive Office. Although this Center is financed by other agencies, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau

was asked to provide a member of its staff to assist for three months in 1965 to initiate activities.

Nine objectives as specified included the two following: To promote, design and carry out studies and investigations of the Peruvian population in general and the causes and consequences of the demographic cultural phenomena; and to organize and supervise the courses, seminars, debates or conferences, national or regional, for the study on population in general or of its problem in particular.

One of the first activities in this Center was the seminar which was held from 5-11 December 1965 in Paracas, Peru. The objectives of this seminar were to extend knowledge of the population situation in Peru and its inter-relations with development; to suggest lines of work which will facilitate study and research to serve as a basis of policy.

References

- (1) Final Acts, Directing Council of Pan American Health Organization, 1965.
- (2) Seventh Report of the Committee on Programme and Budget, Eighteenth World Health Assembly, A18/23, 1965.
- (3) Report of the Working Group on Research Training Centers in Medical Demography, São Paulo, Brazil, March 18-19, 1965.
- (4) Health and Population Dynamics, Document prepared as basis for program in Chile with assistance of Dr. Irene B. Taeuber, a consultant for PAHO, August 1965.
- (5) Salud y Dinámica de Población, Escuela de Salubridad, Universidad de Chile, Agosto 1965.

- (6) Announcement of the First Course of the Program of Research and Teaching in Health and Population Dynamics, School of Public Health, University of Chile.
- (7) Berquó, E.S., and Taeuber, I.B.: Population Center, a Projected Organization for Research and Education in Population Dynamics and Health, São Paulo, November 1965.