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FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM

Pursuant to Resolution XV on this subject adopted by the Executive Committee at its 56th Meeting, the Director has the honour to submit to the Directing Council for its consideration the following report which covers all facets of the fellowship program, including some which may have already been dealt with in other reports submitted to the Governing Bodies from 1953 onwards.

1. Aims of the program

The constant advance of the medical sciences and the progress achieved in preventing disease have resulted in almost all the countries in a shortage of health workers such as medical practitioners, sanitary engineers, dentists, veterinarians, nurses, and auxiliary personnel.

The problem involved in training such workers varies from one country to another and depends on the level of development and the caliber of the teaching institutions. Despite the enormous efforts made by the Member Countries of the Organization to expand such institutions both at the undergraduate and at the graduate level they are still unable to satisfy the normal personnel training needs of the health services and of teaching institutions.

Furthermore, the continuous growth of the national health services is causing a marked increase in the demand for well-trained technical, professional and auxiliary personnel and underscores the shortage of teaching personnel.

As a result, most of the countries have had, year after year, to make some use of the international assistance to speed up and facilitate the training of such personnel. This is why the fellowships program of

the Organization has increased significantly by some 69% between 1959 (505 fellowships) and 1966 (854 fellowships).

In accord of the decisions of the Governing Bodies of the Organization the fellowship program is making a planned contribution to the technical, scientific, economic and social development of the countries and constitutes one of the most effective means of:

- a) assisting in the strengthening of national health services;
- b) promoting improved standard of teaching and training in the health, medical, and related sciences; and
- c) promoting cooperation among scientific and professional groups which contribute to the advancement of health.

2. Types of training

To achieve these aims the program provides opportunities and the necessary facilities for training and study abroad in the health, medical and scientific fields not available in the candidate's own country. Such study or training may take the form of:

- a) attendance of academic courses, especially those leading to a postgraduate certificate, degree or diploma;
- b) short courses sponsored by the Organization and dealing solely with a subject related to some program of particular interest to the Member Governments and the Organization and,
- c) observation visits for varying periods of time to teaching centers and health services.

3. Priorities

The priorities of the fellowship program are geared to the needs of the countries and the evolution which health problems are continually undergoing. In line with the long-term economic and social planning advocated by the countries and the Organization every endeavor is made to ensure that the fellowships are an integral part of the national health program in operation or about to be started. Preference is therefore given to candidates working in programs being conducted with the assistance of the Organization or holding key posts in the health services. High priority is also given to fellowships intended to promote facilities and services for university teaching and post-basic education of professional and auxiliary personnel.

The order of priorities is, of course, influenced by the need for qualified personnel for strengthening the health services; lack of local training facilities; inclusion in the national budget of the allotments necessary to ensure that use is made of fellows on their return home; the assurance given by the Government concerned that the candidate's absence during his study abroad will not adversely affect his status, security, salary, pension and similar rights and especially that full use will be made of the knowledge and experience gained by the fellow on his return home.

4. Selection of fellows

The selection of suitable fellows is one of the most important acts in the whole process of awarding a fellowship. The attention given and the efforts devoted to selection are always very worth while since the success of the fellowship program depends in large measure on the way the selection is made. The first persons to take a hand in this selection process are government officials since every fellowship application is processed only at the express request of the member governments made through the health authorities or university authorities as the case may be. This is a sine qua non of every fellowship application. Some countries have set up, within their government administration, a special fellowship selection committee composed of officials of the Ministry of Health, of educational institutions and of representatives of the professional group to which the fellowship applicant belongs. Experience has shown that in those countries the selection of fellows is better.

In the selection of candidates due attention should be given to: the general education of the applicant and his technical and personal qualifications; the use he has made of prior studies; his experience in the subject he wishes to study (the fellowship regulations require he has not less than 2 years experience); opportunities available in his own country for studying that subject; the post he holds at the time he applies for the fellowship and that which he will hold on completing it; the benefit to this country of the studies he will undertake.

It is also essential to take into account the age of the applicant (according to the regulations an applicant must not be over 55 years old if the retiring age is 60) state of health, maturity and emotional stability, vocation for the work desired and especially an adequate knowledge of the language in which the proposed studies are to be made.

In addition the applicant must be capable of being flexible rather than rigid in drawing conclusions from his studies and observations, so as to be able to apply them in his country of origin in the light of local conditions and without attempting to merely duplicate or imitate what he has seen abroad. He should also be capable of taking part in all

the activities which are assigned to him in the country of study, whether they are connected with his fellowship or of social nature, without continually complaining about the difficulties which always arise when living conditions, food and culture are different from those to which he is accustomed.

It follows from the above that the selection of candidates has a major long-term impact on the efficient operation of the program and has a considerable bearing on the most effective use made of the time and money for the government, the fellow, and the Organization. An unqualified fellow obviously not only impairs the efficiency of the program but also mars the good relations existing between the Organization that awards the fellowship and the institution that receives the fellow.

5. Planning and selection of the place of study

This aspect of the fellowship program is as important as the preceding. It proceeds smoothly thanks to the active assistance and good will of the national health administrations as well as the willingness of university institutions to accept fellows of the Organization. This has undoubtedly contributed to the efficient operation of the program.

However, to plan properly scheduled operation, the necessary documentation attesting to the competence and professional caliber of the applicant must be to hand. Photostat copies of the professional diploma and of other qualifications obtained in the course of university studies are required. In some instances complaints have been received about the difficulty in obtaining such documentation and it has been indicated that it is a routine and bureaucratic measure. Be that as it may, university teaching institutions in particular always require such documentation in order to make sure that the applicant does meet the conditions lay down for admission.

In the case of fellowships for academic studies, the arrangements are made with the universities direct. But in the case of observation fellowships or travel grants which involve visits to government services, arrangements are made with the national health services through the Country Representative.

The place of study selected must have the facilities, the equipment, services, and instructors commensurate with the great effort entailed by international studies and the specific needs of each fellow. As far as possible, efforts are made to ensure that fellows pursue their studies in an environment which is different from what they are used to, so that they can be stimulated by new ideas and ways of doing things, but which at the same time has living conditions and health problems similar to those of their own country. This arrangement facilitates the adaptation

of the fellow in his country of study and his return home and also his understanding of the new knowledge acquired during his studies. Hence, most of the fellows pursue their studies in Latin American countries. The only fellows who go to the United States, Canada, or other developed countries are those who have the necessary experience to discern what is useful and suitable for their own country or those who wish to pursue a course of study which is only available in a particular institution there.

6. Commitments inherent in the award of fellowships

The application for and the award of the fellowship create obligations and commitments for the Government concerned, for the Organization, and for the candidate.

The Government must certify that "the studies to be made under this fellowship are necessary for the strengthening of the national health service of the country" and that "in the case of a fellowship being granted full use will be made of the fellow in the field covered by its fellowship" and further that "the absence of the candidate during his studies abroad will not have any adverse effect on his status, seniority, salary, pension, and similar rights" and that "on return from the fellowship it is proposed to employ the fellow".

The Organization provides financial assistance for studies, establishes the appropriate plans of study and makes arrangements to ensure that the fellow gets the greatest benefit from his studies and pursues them in the most appropriate places.

The candidate undertakes to return to his home country at the end of the fellowship and to continue in or enter the services of his national health administration -or a technical institution approved by it- for at least the first three years after completion of his fellowship.

The normal operation of the fellowships program clearly depends on these commitments being honored by each of the parties involved in the granting of a fellowship as well as on their cooperation and coordination throughout all phases of the process. The Organization and the fellow always honor their respective commitments. Only exceptional circumstances such as lack of capacity to complete studies or a breach of discipline will lead to the cancellation of a fellowship. It is also very unusual for a fellow to refuse to return home on completion of his studies. The very rare cases which have occurred in the last eight years have been due to political reasons or to a desire to improve their financial position, which is related to what is known as the "brain drain".

Some Governments, on the other hand, do not honor the obligation to continue to pay the salaries of their fellows and to utilize their services on their return home; they cease to pay their salary or give only a fellowship grant which is a very small proportion of the salary. This situation obviously hampers the efficient conduct of the fellowship program since many candidates refuse at the last minute to accept the fellowship or, if they accept it and do not receive their salary, there are nearly always financial and family problems which have a prejudicial effect on their studies.

7. Fellowship conditions

Fellowships are awarded in accordance with the regulations set out in the PAHO/WHO manuals, a summary of which appears in the Fellowship Information Booklet. Normally, fellowships are awarded for not more than one year or less than six months. However, when justified, fellowships for longer or shorter periods may be granted in order to tailor them to the specific needs of a fellow. The financial assistance provided by the Organization is intended to cover only those costs which are directly related to his studies, such as:

- a) international travel, and travel in the country of study;
- b) tuition fees and the cost of visits included in the study program;
- c) a monthly stipend which is paid in the currency of the country of study and which varies in amount from one country to another, according to the cost of living and the regulations of the special committee of the United Nations composed of representatives of all the specialized agencies conducting fellowship programs;
- d) a book grant, the amount of which varies according to the length of the fellowship and the nature of the studies; and,
- e) excess baggage when the fellowship is for a period longer than two months.

8. Stipends

Stipends are of two types. One is paid to fellows who remain in any place for 30 days or less (travel stipend) and the other is paid to those fellows who remain more than 30 days in the same place (resident stipend). The travel stipend is always at a higher rate than the resident stipend, and all fellows receive it for the first month of the fellowship since their expenses are higher at the beginning until they find a place to live. Subsequently, in the second month only fellows who have remained less than 30 days in one place receive it.

As stated in the foregoing paragraph, a special office of the United Nations establishes, on the basis of special surveys which are carried out periodically, the amount of the stipend paid in each country of study and includes it in a common stipend scale to which all the specialized agencies awarding fellowships adhere.

In this respect it must be pointed out that the monthly stipend is not a salary or an honorarium; it is an allowance for room, board, and incidentals, paid to a fellow while on official assignment for study abroad. It is not supposed to cover the fellow's routine expenses at home for himself or for his family and should therefore not be regarded as a substitute for any salary paid to a fellow at home. This underscores the importance of the Governments continuing to pay the salaries of fellows while absent abroad since the monthly stipend only covers the expenses of one person.

On various occasions the Directing Council has discussed the possibility of establishing different types of fellowships in accordance with the professional or academic status of the candidate; his professional background; the post he holds; and the number of his dependents. But all agencies in the United Nations family are opposed to this system and have repeatedly stressed the difficulties involved in dividing fellows in various classes since the methods of education, designation of posts, grades, and titles, vary very considerably from one country to another and therefore would prevent a clear line of demarcation being drawn between the classes. Moreover, it is essential for all the international agencies providing funds for fellowships to have coordinated and uniform procedures. To be sure, there are certain private foundations which award different types of fellowships and pay family allowances. However, it must be borne in mind that those foundations operate on a very small scale and in very limited fields.

Another point to bear in mind is that any increase in the funds for a fellowship, either by way of family or other allowances, would undoubtedly have an effect on the program and would lead to a reduction in the annual number of fellowships awarded since the funds available to the programs are limited. It must also be pointed out that any recommendations to change this system and the regulations governing the fellowship program would first have to be agreed to by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Development Programme since a great many of the fellowships awarded by the Pan American Sanitary Bureau are financed with funds from those Organizations. Failure to obtain such an agreement would raise difficult problems in that it would be necessary to administer a fellowship program with two separate sets of fellowship regulations and almost paradoxical situations would arise, for example, that of having two fellows studying the same subject in the same place but receiving different stipends.

These are the reasons which on previous occasions led to the rejection of suggestions to establish different classes of fellowships and to include family allowances.

9. Notification of award of fellowship and travel arrangements

As soon as the program of study is confirmed and the necessary procedures have been complied with, the fellowship is granted and the Government concerned is notified. The candidate is sent a letter of instructions which contains the letter of award and information concerning the studies to be followed, the financial conditions of the fellowship, the person in charge of the program, and route to be followed, and the date of the beginning of the program of studies.

Together with the letter of instructions the fellow receives an information booklet about the fellowship program and he is told to obtain and take with him pertinent information on health problems of his country so as to be in a position to give such information to his instructors and fellow students.

10. Contact with fellows

It goes without saying that fellows often have problems not only of a technical and administrative nature but also problems of adaptation to the foreign country whose culture and living conditions are often very different from those of their own. Hence, the Fellowship Branch is in permanent contact with the fellows during their fellowship by means of personal interviews, either at Headquarters or at the place of study or through correspondence. Periodical visits to fellows have been found to be of great benefit both in facilitating their adaptation and in preventing some of the problems which always arise for persons who are travelling abroad for the first time.

In addition, contact is maintained through the reports which fellows must submit every three months describing the activities they have carried out.

11. Evaluation

For the purpose of evaluation, contact is maintained with ex-fellows for a period of not less than two years after the end of their fellowships. At the end of his fellowship, a fellow is required to submit a final report and subsequently to submit two additional reports on the opportunities he has had for applying the knowledge gained during his fellowship, the post he is holding, and the use being made of his services. Evaluation studies are made both by the questionnaire follow-up two years after the fellowship and in selected countries, by personal interview.

What has been said above shows that the fellowship program calls for considerable efforts by the authorities of the countries that select and propose applicants for fellowships, by the institutions of the countries that offer their facilities and services for the training and education of fellows, and by the persons responsible for the administration of the program.

Furthermore, the cost of the program accounts for sizable portion of the budget of the Organization, which is one of the reasons for our interest in knowing what the results of the fellowship program have been.

The undoubted value of international assistance in the education and training of certain persons who will subsequently use their knowledge they have acquired to improve the health of their country, has been repeatedly stressed. The Rockefeller Foundation, which has great experience in the field of fellowships, concluded after an evaluation of its program covering a period of 33 years (1917-1950) that, looking back, very few activities of the Foundation appeared to be of more enduring and general value.

Efforts have been made on many occasions to assess the value and usefulness of fellowships but these have always run into difficulties. There is no doubt that the selection of fellows and the quality of the studies they pursue have a major impact on the success or failure of the fellowship program. However, the use which the fellow subsequently makes of the knowledge he has acquired is the fundamental part of the evaluation.

The follow-up reports on the utilization of his services which the ex-fellow should send two years after his return home, show that in most cases they are making appropriate use of the knowledge gained during their fellowship.

These studies confirm that made some years ago by the World Health Organization. However, it should be pointed out that all these studies are based on a relatively small number of questionnaires and reports.

In view of the scope of the program -6,757 fellowships between 1954 and 1966- the advisability of making further efforts to evaluate the program by means of personal interviews with a significant number of former fellows in various countries, is under consideration. According to experience, this is the only efficient method of obtaining valid conclusions.

12. Coordination with other organizations

In the Americas a number of other organizations award fellowships for the same purposes as WHO/PAHO. Among these, the most important are the Organization of American States, the Agency for International Development, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Kellogg Foundation. Since the basic financing of these organizations differs and since they operate with different administrative methods, it has not been possible so far to achieve any uniformity in fellowship procedures. Nevertheless, through the Medical Information Center, which was established at the initiative of the Bureau in 1952, information is exchanged about the many problems relating to fellowships, and it has been possible to prevent duplication of effort to a certain extent.

For a number of years, close contact and collaboration have been maintained with the fellowship program of the Organization of American States, to which technical assistance in all matters relating to health studies is provided through a Special Committee.

In addition, some Member Governments which have conducted their own fellowship programs, for example the Government of Venezuela, also receive permanent technical assistance.

13. General considerations

This report clearly shows that the fellowship program constitutes an important part of the activities of the Organization; that it covers many fields of activity; that its operation is sometimes complicated owing to the number of problems it is necessary to solve and especially because all the activities relate basically to individuals. Despite the fact that on many occasions some fellowship applicants submit plans and express a desire for rather similar types of training, it is not always possible to prepare a similar program for all of them. There is an enormous variation among fellows in the matter of personality, concern with personal comfort, likes and dislikes, self-reliance and adaptability to other environments or countries. Even in the simplest of cases there is a number of details to be solved with each fellowship.

As a result of the active participation and mutual efforts of all concerned with the fellowship program, there have been very few serious problems. Each fellow who goes abroad to study undoubtedly receives appropriate training for his future activities. At the same time he joins the increasing number of men and women throughout the world who are directly acquiring experience and knowledge of their fellow men in this way.