

executive committee of
the directing council



PAN AMERICAN
SANITARY
ORGANIZATION

working party of
the regional committee

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Topic 10: REPORT ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

At the 22nd Meeting of the Executive Committee (April, 1954), the Representative of Argentina called attention to the need for better public information on the activities of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. It was stated that Member Governments contribute more freely to organizations whose activities are well known.

The need for wider publicity, particularly that relating to conferences and field programs, was emphasized, and it was pointed out that many professional, nongovernmental organizations devoted to public health were largely ignorant of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau and of its function as Regional Office of the World Health Organization.

The Executive Committee resolved:

"To instruct the Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to study the manner by which the objectives, functions, and programs of the Pan American Sanitary Organization can be made known to the peoples of Member Countries, and report thereon to the Executive Committee." (Resolution XXII)

The Director presents herewith a brief review of the Bureau's efforts to inform government authorities, sanitarians and the public on international health work.

At the technical level, the Bureau maintains direct contact with Member Governments through individual communications and through contact maintained by Zone Representatives and Bureau staff. The Bureau supplies technical information to health officers, to the medical profession, to organizations and individuals working in public health through the monthly Bulletin of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the quarterly Health Statistics, the Weekly Epidemiological Report, and through three series of special publications: Technical, Official, and Miscellaneous.

The indirect effect of this, although difficult to assess, is far-reaching in the promotion of knowledge of the Bureau among the special, technical groups which might be consulted regarding international health matters.

In the nontechnical field, the Bureau works through press releases, through radio-television programs, through pamphlets, films, graphic exhibits and by direct correspondence with those seeking information.

The Bureau distributes news releases on all the major meetings of the Organization, on regional and intercountry health programs, especially eradication programs.

Citizens' groups and civic associations throughout the Americas are becoming increasingly valuable allies in assisting the Bureau in publicizing the work of the World Health Organization, by distributing regularly its literature, holding meetings, arranging speeches in furtherance of the work of the Organization, and by circulating films and exhibits. (One citizens' group in Chile, for example, distributes 3,000 copies of the WHO Newsletter monthly.) Worthy of special mention is the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization, recently created in the United States, and its local, but very active chapter in San Francisco, California. The formation, in other countries, of civic organizations for the support of international health would promote much greater knowledge and understanding of PASE/WHO.

The following specific data illustrate the extent of the Bureau's informational services:

Press Releases

The Bureau currently distributes 3,063 copies of each press release. These go to practically all newspapers, periodicals and broadcasting stations in Latin America, and to major newspapers, news agencies, radio networks and special publications in the United States and Canada. They are usually re-issued at United Nations Headquarters. The language breakdown is:

English	914
Spanish	801
Portuguese	1,348

WHO Newsletter (monthly)

The Bureau distributes the Newsletter in the four languages as follows:

English	18,000
Spanish	8,000
Portuguese	3,000
French	500
Total circulation	<u>29,500</u>

Certain numbers of the Newsletter have been so much in demand that up to 72,000 extra copies of a single issue have been distributed.

Exhibits and Posters

Twelve major exhibits built by the Bureau are now on display, one in Buenos Aires, one in Guatemala, one in Kingston, one in Lima, two in Mexico, two in Rio de Janeiro and four in the United States. Seven smaller exhibits are available for meetings and conferences on request. An average of 3,000 persons per day view a major exhibit at United Nations Headquarters. A single exhibit in Baltimore, Maryland, last October, was viewed by 30,000 people. The Zone Offices are reporting an increasing use of exhibits prepared at the Washington Headquarters. Literature is usually distributed at each exhibit.

In the past, the Bureau has distributed in the Americas World Health Day posters supplied by WHO Headquarters. This year the Bureau produced its own: 10,000 in English, 7,500 Spanish, 3,000 Portuguese and 1,000 French. This poster is suitable for use throughout the year.

Broadcasts

Information is supplied to the United Nations radio network, which broadcasts on shortwave a weekly program on WHO/PASB. This is beamed to the Americas in the four Bureau languages and is picked up and rebroadcast in most countries for local reception. The Bureau arranges occasional special broadcasts for individual stations and networks.

Distribution of Miscellaneous Literature

In 1954, 1,500 "kits" containing general information on PASB/WHO were mailed out by the Bureau in four languages, in response to requests. This does not include distribution of the Newsletter, press releases, specific information supplied, and general correspondence. The number of kits mailed in March, 1955, reached 380 during that one month.

The number of civic groups and associations that help to promote PASB/WHO publicity in ways earlier enumerated has now grown to 231. These may be divided roughly into two categories: United Nations volunteer associations and groups and other nonprofessional civic groups. The breakdown by countries is as follows:

<u>Country</u>	<u>United Nations</u>	<u>Other Civic</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Argentina	4	1	5
Bolivia	12	-	12
Brazil	1	3	4
Canada	27	7	34

<u>Country:</u>	<u>United Nations</u>	<u>Other Civic</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Chile	4	1	5
Colombia	8	1	9
Costa Rica	4	3	7
Cuba	14	6	20
Dominican Republic	7	1	8
Ecuador	10	1	11
El Salvador	1	1	2
Guatemala	3	2	5
Haiti	2	2	4
Mexico	7	3	10
Panama	-	1	1
Paraguay	-	-	-
Peru	2	1	3
United States of America	56	20	76
Puerto Rico	1	2	3
Uruguay	1	5	6
Venezuela	1	5	6
Totals	165	66	231

Five United Nations Information Centers, located in Bogota, Buenos Aires, Mexico, Rio de Janeiro and Washington, D.C., also render valuable assistance in the dissemination of PASB/WHO information.

There are some encouraging indications that the Bureau's informational activities are bearing fruit. Temporarily-contracted clipping services show wide press coverage throughout the Americas.

The most encouraging sign that the PASB/WHO is becoming known throughout the Hemisphere is the great increase in requests from the public and from civic and professional organizations. The Bureau now receives an average of thirty such written requests per day. Roughly 77 per cent of these are from English-speaking areas, 15 per cent Spanish, 5 per cent Portuguese and 3 per cent French. Many of these require specific information and cannot be treated routinely by form letter. The daily supplying of answers and the action resulting from these requests have become a major undertaking of the Bureau staff devoted to public information.

In addition to the work of the Bureau's small public information unit, all staff members participate, to a greater or lesser degree, in the Bureau's informational activities. Exhibits are prepared by one of the units in consultation with the staff concerned; much information is supplied by the Bureau library; the technical staff members are called upon frequently to supply or the check on information for press and radio, and they are often asked to make public addresses or broadcasts.

The Bureau publicizes intercountry and regional health programs, but there are definite limits to what the Bureau can and should do. Its efforts can only be supplementary to the work done within countries by interested administrations, organizations and individuals. The individual projects are, of course country projects, local and national publicity for which is the responsibility of the respective governments. The Bureau can, however, be instrumental in assisting governments in their internal publicity for cooperative projects. The impact of any information program is likely to be greatest when it is tied directly to an operating project, for it is then a newsworthy item, acceptable to local press and radio.

Project Publicity

The reports of the Bureau's field staff demonstrate that the success of public health programs often depends on the extent to which the health authorities have informed the public and obtained their active participation and cooperation in the various health programs.

The Bureau, in its capacity as an informational clearing house, must be prepared to cooperate with Member Governments in their task of providing information to the public, in the same way that it offers technical collaboration. The preparation of public opinion by national health administrations becomes effective when it is an integral part of projects in their planning stage. Public understanding and support are essential throughout all stages of the projects as they develop. The Bureau can be instrumental in bringing to all areas the best informational techniques for the governments' programs of public information, as distinct from "health education", helping to reduce initial resistance to public health measures with which the people may be unfamiliar. Such popular understanding and support contribute to the lasting success of health projects and toward continuity in the development of Member States' health programs. The Director feels that such technical orientation in the Member States' project publicity is a useful step in the Bureau's cooperation with governments.

The Making of a Film

The Director recognizes that a film depicting the work of PASB/WHO in the Americas, of the quality and attractiveness necessary to gain some commercial distribution, would be an excellent informational medium. In view of the interest expressed by several Representatives at the 22nd Meeting of the Executive Committee, estimates of the costs involved have been obtained. Since the costs are considerably higher than may have been anticipated, it seems appropriate to go into some detail on the subject.

A thirty-minute film on a continent-wide program, such as the eradication of malaria or the control of yellow fever, with documentary narration and music added, would involve the work of a director and camera

crew for four to six months, at a minimum probable cost of \$40,000, including the labor, equipment, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses.

For maximum commercial and noncommercial utilization, the Director is advised that two versions of such a film should be made simultaneously: a 35-millimeter print for theatrical distribution and a 16-millimeter print in color for general noncommercial showing, with a 13-minute edition of the latter for television. The production of these would require a little more time and would raise the cost to between \$55,000 and \$60,000.

At a cost of approximately one fourth more, two separate 30-minute films can be made, by utilizing the same general itinerary. In any 30-minute film, other important aspects of the Organization's work would be depicted, such as health demonstration areas, work in maternal and child health, etc. However, these could all be tied into a theme bringing out the essential unity of health problems and solutions and the advantages of international cooperation.

Role of Zone Representatives in Furthering Publicity

The Director is planning to ask the Zone Representatives to take a more direct part in developing the Organization's informational activities, through closer cooperation with the information services of the national health administrations. This is already being done to some extent, but there is room for further development.

The Representatives can be especially helpful in arranging for supplies of photographs, in obtaining articles by health authorities for publication, in promoting greater use of the Bureau's exhibits, extending mailing lists for the distribution of literature and, in cooperation with the health administrations, in broadening the collaboration of schools and of civic and professional organizations in the countries of their respective Zones.

The Bureau must devote more attention to the preparation of materials for release in the Member States, with greater orientation toward the specific programs and needs of the various countries. The Zone Representatives can be particularly helpful in the development of such publicity.