



*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
the regional committee*

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Item 9: PAHO ORGANIZATIONAL UNIT FOR PLANNING

The XIII Meeting of the Directing Council unanimously decided at its fourteenth plenary session to transmit to the Executive Committee a draft resolution presented by the Representative of Peru. When that resolution was discussed at the 45th Meeting of the Executive Committee, it was agreed that the Director should submit a document to the next meeting of the Committee on the establishment of a planning unit, its structure, and its budgetary implications. Pursuant thereto, the Director has the honor to present the following preliminary report.

The new trend of social, economic and political events in the Americas - initiated at the Second Meeting of the Committee of Twenty-one in Buenos Aires, acknowledged at its Third Meeting at Bogota, and developed at Punta del Este at the Special Meeting of the OAS-ECOSOC at the Ministerial Level - has led to the recognition of health as a basic component of economic and social development; to the recognition in other words, that "public health workers must plan and implement, in common accord with other experts, activities aimed at economic progress and social well-being". This trend was especially reinforced when the Inter-American Development Bank commenced operations, and received great impetus with the establishment of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Development. The need for health planning had thus become evident and was one of the specific responsibilities assigned to the Bureau by the Charter of Punta del Este. The essence of planning is the considered assignment of priorities in the allocation of resources and, in its health aspect, is the treatment of the nation as a single unit in order to "obtain a better return from the investment of the knowledge, experience, equipment, and capital that a country has at its disposal."

Steps were therefore immediately taken by the Bureau to prepare itself to provide Governments with the kind of services they might require in this field, and by the end of 1961 an Office of Planning had been established to coordinate and promote the development of national and regional health planning and cooperation with other agencies participating in development under the Charter of Punta del Este.

A strengthening of the planning services of the Bureau is now necessary; not only must the Bureau be in a position to meet the requests of Governments for advisory services, it must become the focal point of such advisory services. Moreover, without a planning unit, the Bureau will not be able to fulfill its role as the specialized agency dealing with health planning in the Hemisphere.

Planning is a continuous process: the attainment of one goal is but the starting point for the establishment of new goals. Planning also calls for continuous evaluation of problems and their priority as well as of the areas in which those problems are to be attacked; and thus clearly has both short-term and long-term aspects. To translate the aims of the Charter of Punta del Este into reality, an endeavor in which the Bureau has already played an active part, calls for (a) a corps of planners, both at the international and the national level; (b) facilities for the training of those persons who will bear a major part of the responsibility for planning in the health agencies of the countries, i.e. assistance to existing training centers, the award of fellowships for training and observation, organization of courses, seminars, institutes, and the like; and (c) the preparation of instructional material to ensure sound planning both at the national and local level i.e. guides, manuals, handbooks, etc. But the Bureau must be not only prepared to meet the requests of Governments, it must take the initiative in working out planning techniques, planning administration, and so forth, and, in doing so, must secure maximum cooperation from other international organizations as well as from governmental, nongovernmental, public and private organizations active in that field.

At the moment it is clearly not possible to establish a definitive estimate of the cost of a planning unit or the number of staff required, since these two aspects will depend on the number and type of requests for advisory services received from Governments. Nevertheless, it is clear that the present staff of one medical officer will not be sufficient to cope with the projected activities, for which a sizeable amount of funds will be necessary. Full details will be presented in the Budget, covering salaries, staffing, duty travel, meetings, fellowships, training courses, etc.

The Director will keep these two aspects - staffing and budget implications - under continuous review so as to ensure that the planning services meet the needs of the Governments and do so in the best and most economical manner.

With this end in view, an Advisory Group on Health Planning was convened and met at the Washington Headquarters from 12 to 16 February 1962. The recommendations of that Group will be communicated to the Governments in due course.