



*executive committee of
the directing council*

PAN AMERICAN
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION

*working party of
the regional committee*

WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Item 7: NATIONAL PAHC/WHO COMMITTEES

In 1950, the Third World Health Assembly passed the following resolution:

"The Third World Health Assembly

1. APPROVES AND ENDORSES the view expressed by the Executive Board that national WHO committees can carry out a number of essential supporting and advisory functions for the benefit of the Organization as well as for national administrations, and
2. ASKS the Executive Board and the Director-General to take appropriate action in the light of the discussion at the Third World Health Assembly."

The Director wishes to bring to the attention of the Executive Committee certain information on the purposes and functions of national citizens committees for the World Health Organization and the Pan American Health Organization. National committees for the World Health Organization are now in operation in the following ten countries: Argentina, Austria, Canada, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, United States, West Germany. Although the organizations share the same long-range objectives, they vary in their formal titles, their specific programs, methods of financing, and structure. These committees may function in close relationship with associations for the United Nations, with national health groups, or with voluntary agencies interested in a specific phase of public health. In some countries the initiative for establishing these bodies and their financing have been from Government sources. In most countries the initiative has come from private citizens or from voluntary, non-governmental associations of citizens interested in public health.

It is believed that the following list of objectives is typical:

1. To support actively all efforts for the improvement of health whether in the national or international sphere.

2. To bring together a group of citizens in an association designed to support and strengthen the national health services.

3. To encourage the growth and development of an international outlook and concern for health and related matters.

4. To foster co-ordination of effort in health among governmental, non-governmental, professional associations, citizens' groups, and interested individuals.

Among the leaders in the establishment of national committees for the World Health Organization were Austria, Canada, and Finland. By 1951 a need for a similar committee had also been recognized in the United States. In the latter country, it was the joint interest of the National Health Council and the American Association for the United Nations that led to the formal establishment, in April 1953, of the National Citizens Committee for the World Health Organization. At the end of 1960 it had a membership of over 800 individuals, in addition to a number of organizational memberships held by voluntary health agencies, private foundations and business companies.

The United States Committee has stated its purposes in the following terms:

(1) "To inform Americans about the relationship between world health and world peace."

(2) "To increase the appreciation of the importance of international programs for improving public health."

(3) "To stimulate discussion and understanding of the aims, functions and purposes of the World Health Organization and other international health organizations."

The committee carries out its functions principally through public meetings and conferences, through the publications and membership of the Committee's Member Organizations, by recommending speakers and providing literature for meetings of other organizations, through press, radio, television, and popular magazines, and through the personal interest of the individual members of the Committee.

Basic policy guide lines for the U. S. Committee are set by a forty-man Board of Directors and the day-to-day work is in the hands of an Executive Secretary with a staff of three other full-time employees.

The most recently established national committee for the World Health Organization is that of Argentina which was founded late 1961. The functions of the Argentine Health Organization have been described as follows:

1. "...actuar como autoridad colaboradora y coordinadora en asuntos de sanidad nacional, provincial y municipal, ..."
2. "Establecer y mantener colaboración eficaz con el citado organismo mundial ... las administraciones oficiales de salubridad, las agrupaciones profesionales, etc."
3. "Ayudar a las autoridades a fortalecer sus servicios de salubridad."
4. "Proporcionar ayuda técnica adecuada y en casos de emergencia, prestar a los gobiernos la cooperación que soliciten o acepten."
5. "Establecer y mantener los servicios administrativos y técnicos que sean necesarios, inclusive los epidemiológicos y de estadística."
6. "Estimular y adelantar labores destinadas a suprimir enfermedades epidémicas, endémicas y otras."
7. "Promover la prevención de accidentes, el mejoramiento de la nutrición, la habitación, el saneamiento, la recreación, las condiciones económicas y de trabajo y otros aspectos de higiene del medio."

In summary, it is believed that national health committees have an important role to play both in supporting and strengthening national health programs and in increasing citizen understanding of international health programs. This is particularly true at the present time when the interest of the Governments of the Americas in health as a fundamental element of economic development has been clearly demonstrated in the Charter of Punta del Este and in the programs of the Alliance for Progress. An informed public will make possible a more effective attack on the health problems of the Americas. The Director invites the Executive Committee to discuss the matter and solicits the views of the Committee on this subject.