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REPORT ON THE NUTRITION PROGRAM IN THE AMERICAS

The XIII Meeting of the Directing Council of the PAHO which took place in Washington in October 1961 approved Resolution XI which requests the Director:

".... to present annually to the meetings of the Council a report on the nutrition activities carried out in accordance with this program, and on the progress made in overcoming the problems in this field".

The activities carried out by the Organization during the calendar year 1962 appear in the Report of the Director (Official Document No 50). The present report should be considered, therefore, as a supplement in which the information is brought up to date as of August 1963.

INTRODUCTION

During the current year increasing attention has been given to the development of the nutrition program of the Organization. Special attention has been given to the subject in all of the technical meetings of the Organization and of particular note were discussions held on the subject in the Meeting of the Task Force on Health for the Alliance for Progress, and the subsequent meeting of the Executive Committee of PAHO.

During the meeting of Ministers of Health convened in April 1963 in Washington, D.C., a document entitled "Nutrition in National Health Planning" was presented. (Document TFH/10). A committee was established to discuss the document and the programs of nutrition in the Americas. The following recommendations were formulated:

"1. It is suggested that Ministries of Health should establish minimum standards for adequate nutrition of the population, both for the individual and for the total population and, on this basis, national policies with respect to agriculture, including livestock and exploitation of other source of protein, should be rationalized in order to assure the fulfillment of these requirements.

2. It is recommended that Ministries of Health should participate actively in the planning and development of national nutrition programs and that nutrition should be effectively integrated into health programs in such a manner as to become a basic service at the local level.

3. It is recommended, in order that national nutrition programs may be more effective, that a greater degree of coordination should be established between the health, agricultural and education services as well as with other national and international agencies.

4. It is recommended that the education in nutrition of personnel at all levels be considerably increased in order that such personnel may work in applied nutrition programs at regional and local levels.

5. Environmental sanitation programs must give more attention to the control of rodents and insects which cause losses in food production and storage and greater efforts must be made to control enzootic diseases in order to achieve greater production of animal proteins.

6. It is suggested that the Governments introduce and implement practical legislation with reference to salt iodization and cereal enrichment.

7. It is recommended that Governments increase their research and development programs on the mass-production, distribution, and utilization of new sources of inexpensive foods, especially those with a high protein value.

8. It is suggested that Governments conduct studies to acquire information on food consumption as well as on national food production.

In the same month of April the Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization met in Washington, D.C., and a second document on nutrition was presented for discussion, as Document CE48/12, entitled "The Problems of Nutrition in the Americas from the Point of View of Consumption". This document was discussed by the Executive Committee and the following resolution was approved:

RESOLUTION XV

"The Executive Committee,

Having examined the report of the Director on the problems of nutrition in the Americas from the point of view of consumption, which contains general observations on a subject of such outstanding interest; and

Bearing in mind that, as indicated in the document, it is advisable to study the establishment of a means whereby it would be possible to define on a continuing basis the existing state of nutrition in the Continent,

RESOLVES:

1. To take note of the report of the Director on the problems of nutrition in the Americas from the point of view of consumption (Document CE48/12).

2. To recommend that the Director provide assistance to national and international studies as means of improving data on food consumption in Latin America and of keeping data on the existing state of nutrition in the Continent up to date.

3. To recommend that Ministries of Health participate actively in the planning and development of national nutrition programs and that nutrition be effectively integrated into health programs in such a way as to become a basic service at the local level."

The recommendations approved at these two meetings provided further orientation to the secretariat in programming activities in the field of nutrition.

For the purpose of describing the activities realized by the Organization during the year, the program of nutrition will be divided into 4 categories: Advisory Services, Training of Personnel, Scientific Research, Applied Nutrition.

ADVISORY SERVICES

During this year the Organization has maintained the same number of advisers as in the previous year. At present, there are advisers in 5 of the 6 zones of the region; of these, three function at the zone level and two at a project level within the zone and cover only certain countries (ZI and ZII). To date an adviser has not been nominated for one of the zones.

These advisers continue to work with the Ministers of Health in order to achieve a total integration of nutrition in the national health services. Specific priorities have been established for greater attention by the advisers; these are:

1) The establishment of an adequate technical administration structure for nutrition services within the Ministries of Health.

2) The selection of suitable personnel for training at the professional level in conjunction with the fellowships programs in the Organization and other international agencies.

3) The planning and evaluation of a short and long term nutrition programs on the national scale.

4) The preparation of suitable recommendations for the legislation in the field of nutrition.

5) The compiling of general norms for nutrition in public health.

In relation to the program for the development of cheap protein sources the Organization continues to maintain a permanent adviser in the technical aspects of the commercial production and sales of INCAPARINA. The activities of this adviser were extended to several countries of South America, during this year, in addition to the Central American countries where INCAPARINA is presently produced.

During the year PAHO and FAO received a joint request from the Standing Committee on Food and Nutrition (SACFAN) of the Caribbean Organization, to provide a short-term adviser to appraise the extent of nutrition activities at present under way in the Caribbean area. This request arose from a recommendation formulated during the first meeting of SACFAN in Puerto Rico, November 1962. The Organization has selected a suitable adviser who will carry out a tour of the Caribbean during a period of 3 months at the end of 1963. The principal objective of this assignment will be to establish whether the need exists for a Caribbean Nutrition Institute and to determine the facilities and resources available for its function and maintenance.

In view of the new extension of multilateral applied nutrition programs in the Americas since 1958, the Organization considers that there is an urgent need for the evaluation of these activities. For this purpose, PAHO is at present contracting a special consultant in applied nutrition who will plan and supervise the evaluation programme which will be carried out during the first part of 1964.

TRAINING OF PERSONNEL

During the present year the Organization has awarded 23 fellowships in the field of nutrition to professional level personnel in public health. This figure represents fellowships financed exclusively by PAHO/WHO. In addition to this, the Organization participated actively in the selection of candidates for an additional 8 fellowships for which UNICEF provided the necessary funds.

This represents a total of 31 fellowships related to the program of the Organization. The greater part of these fellows were trained at the INCAP, Guatemala, and the following table shows the distribution of fellows by country and by duration.

SEPTEMBER 1962 - JULY 1963

<u>COUNTRY</u>	<u>LONG-TERM</u>	<u>SHORT-TERM</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
ARGENTINA	-	1	1
BOLIVIA	2	1	3
BRAZIL	4	1	5
COLOMBIA	-	3	3
ECUADOR	-	4	4
EL SALVADOR	-	2	2
HONDURAS	2	-	2
PERU	-	1	1
TRINIDAD	1	-	1
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	-	1	1
TOTAL:	<u>9</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>23</u>

The Organization has also participated in the selection of candidates for fellowships financed by Columbia University for the course in nutrition (MS level) given by the Institute of Nutrition Sciences of the School of Public Health of that University.

During the current year, the Organization also cooperated in the establishment of 2 new training centers in nutrition:

The first was organized in Montevideo in collaboration with UNICEF and the Interamerican Institute of The Child for the training of teaching personnel in schools of social services, and the second in the University of Puerto Rico for training in the planning of applied nutrition programs. These training centers have for respective objectives the introduction of nutrition into the teaching program of social services schools in Latin America and training in improved methods of coordinated planning of applied nutrition programs in the fields of health, agriculture, and education. The Organization has provided general advisory services in nutrition to the centers and nominated short-term consultants to participate in teaching activities.

In Brazil the Organization has given financial and advisory support to 2 courses in nutrition for public health physicians. These are short courses which are carried out at the Faculty of Hygiene and Public Health of the University of Sao Paulo and in the Institute of Nutrition of the University of Recife, Pernambuco. The object of these courses is to provide a working knowledge of applied nutrition for public health physician working in the rural communities of Brazil.

The Organization has also contributed to the establishment of a training center in nutrition for agronomists, in collaboration with FAO,

UNICEF, and the National Agricultural University, Lima, Peru. This course has as a specific objective the training of qualified agronomists in the field of human nutrition to enable them to participate more actively in the coordinated nutrition programs recently initiated throughout the countries. The Organization is responsible for the preparation of the section of public health nutrition of this course and accepted to provide a short-term consultant to organize specific teaching activities in the field.

A meeting was held at INCAP, Guatemala, during the month of February 1963 to which were invited professors of nutrition of various schools of nursing of Latin America. The objective of this seminar was to discuss the principles of nutrition education in nursing schools and to establish guidelines for the preparation of a text in nutrition for nurses. The results of this meeting were published in a report entitled "Reunión del Comité Asesor del Libro de Texto de Nutrición para la Enseñanza de Enfermeras de América Latina." The meeting and the report were developed under the auspices of INCAP, PAHO/WHO, UNICEF. At present a draft of the text is being prepared by professional personnel of INCAP in consultation with the participants of the seminar and it is hoped that the textbook will be published in final form during 1964.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

In cooperation with the Office of Research Coordination and the research program of WHO, various activities of scientific research in nutrition have been carried out during the year in relation to the priorities established in the first meeting of the PAHO Advisory Committee on Medical Research, which met in August 1962 in Washington, D. C.

During the second meeting of the Advisory Committee on Medical Research which met in June 1963 in Washington, D.C., three documents on nutrition were presented: "Research Activities in Nutrition", Document RES2/24; "Research Activities of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama", Document RES2/10; and "Report of the PAHO Scientific Group on Research in Endemic Goiter", Document RES2/20. Two other documents on studies related to the nutrition program "Research in Maternal and Child Health", Document RES2/25, and "Salt Fluoridation Study in four Colombian Communities", Document RES2/15 were also presented. The Committee discussed in detail the various aspects of the program and arrived at the following conclusions as shown in their report:

"The studies by INCAP were felt to be of crucial importance for the understanding of nutrition problems in Latin America in the actual social context and there will no doubt provide a good basis for the eventual solution of such problems. The Committee congratulated the Director of INCAP for the excellent work which is being carried out at the Institute and strongly urge continued support of all phases of its research program.

The Committee also heard the report on the research activities in nutrition other than those at INCAP. One of the items in this report is discussed more fully in the report of the Scientific Group on Research in Endemic Goiter. With respect to the preliminary study of the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency, it is believed by the committee that the data as given suggests a higher prevalence than had hitherto been suspected and that further research to define the magnitude and the severity of the problem would be desirable."

During this year two special short-term consultants were nominated to study the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean with regard to nutritional anemias and avitaminosis A. These consultants carried out tours of representative countries in Latin America to determine the extent of the problem, current interest for carrying out scientific research, and the facilities and local resources available to establish a coordinated program in the respective fields.

During the first part of 1962, a special short-term consultant in endemic goiter was nominated by PAHO to carry out a similar review of research needs and possibilities in Latin America in relation to that problem. As a result of this visit it was recommended that a conference be called of the principal investigators in this field in Latin America in order to make a total review of existing research activities in the Americas, to define the areas which need further investigation and to standardize research methodology. Subsequent to this a conference was organized for this purpose in April 1963 at the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Investigation (IVIC), Caracas, Venezuela, which was attended by a group of research workers from Latin America, the United States, and Europe. The report of this conference was presented at the second meeting of the Advisory Committee on Medical Research (Document RES2/20).

As a result of the tour of the special short-term consultant in anemias a conference of research workers in the field of nutritional anemias is presently being organized along the same lines and with similar objectives as that relating to endemic goiter. This meeting will take place also at IVIC, Caracas, Venezuela, and will be coordinated with the research program of WHO in this field, from whence funds have been made available for the conference.

With regard to the study of avitaminosis A, the special short-term consultant attended a meeting at WHO/Geneva, at which were present other consultants who made similar tours in other parts of the world. Together with the WHO Headquarters staff, these consultants reviewed the current status of knowledge on avitaminosis A and proceeded to define the extent of the problem and to establish norms with regard to the treatment and prevention of severe avitaminosis A represented by various degrees of ocular pathology. The conclusions and recommendations of this meeting will be published in the near future for general circulation throughout the continent.

With regard to research in protein-calorie malnutrition, the greater part of this work continues to be carried out at INCAP, Guatemala, especially in relation to the effects of severe malnutrition on the physical and mental development of the child during the period of growth and development. In addition to this work, other programs in this field are being carried out in Ecuador, Peru, and Brazil with the cooperation of the Organization represented by advisory services and assistance in the administration of funds and purchase of materials and supplies.

With reference to the development of INCAPARINA, a joint program has been established between INCAP, Guatemala, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass., to continue research on this product in order to assure its more general usage in all regions of the continent. Specifically this program studies the substitution of cottonseed by other sources of vegetable protein and also the use of various additives to assure easier preparation of the product and, consequently, greater acceptability.

With regard to the production, Incaparina is at present being produced on a commercial scale in five countries of the continent and preliminary plans have been drawn up for its commercial production in two other countries. Due to the fact that Incaparina is now being produced by large food industries, it will be possible, for the first time, to make during the coming year a realistic evaluation of the future potential of Incaparina, when backed by modern sales and marketing techniques.

To date the evaluation of the extent of protein-calorie malnutrition in the Americas has been extremely difficult due to the multiplicity of terms used to describe this disease state. In an attempt to clarify this matter and to establish standardized terminology for morbidity and mortality recording, the Organization conducted a mail survey of opinion of the leading pediatricians of Latin America with regard to terminology for protein-calorie malnutrition. The results of this survey were presented at the Regional Advisory Committee on International Classification of Diseases which met in Washington, D.C., in June 1963. The classification suggested by the survey was adopted by this Committee and will be presented for consideration at the meeting of the next Expert Committee on Health Statistics of WHO, Geneva.

APPLIED NUTRITION PROGRAMS

At present there are 20 applied nutrition programs being carried out in 18 countries of this continent. These are multilateral programs in which the participants are the national Government, PAHO, FAO, and UNICEF. The Organization fulfills its obligation to these programs through advisory services of the Zone Nutrition Advisers and the public health advisers at the country level, and through the training in the field of health of medical and non-medical nutritionists to direct these programs at the national and local level.

In general these programs have continued to operate throughout the year, however, in many areas they have not met with the expected success

largely due to the lack of adequate trained supervisory personnel and to problems of an administrative nature. Furthermore, the absence of detailed plan of action to put in operation a basic nutrition program in each of the cooperating national services (health, agriculture, and education) has resulted in considerable difficulty in coordination of efforts between these agencies. It would appear more practical in the future to concentrate efforts on the establishment of a minimal nutrition program in each one of the relevant Government agencies and, on the basis of this, to realize coordinating activities.

In view of this situation, the Organization, together with FAO, is in the process of setting up a thorough evaluation of these programs which will facilitate the establishment of technical recommendations and administrative norms for this future development and extension. It is hoped that this evaluation will be carried out in the early part of 1964.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary it can be stated that significant increase has been registered both in interest and activity in the field of nutrition in the Americas during the past year. Within the budgetary limitations of the Organization, nutrition has continued to receive priority attention especially in the fields of fellowships, advisory services and research programming.

With reference to applied nutrition activities at the local level, it is hoped that, following the evaluation of existing applied programs during the early part of 1964, a considerable extension of this type of activity is foreseen along more specific lines arising with recommendations of the evaluation group.

In order to have precise means of evaluation for the future it is expected that, if budget permits, a cooperative program maybe set up with FAO and national Governments to obtain precise and homogeneous data on food consumption levels in Latin America. Such data will serve as a base line for the accurate measurement of progress in the future.