

**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE  
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA  
MÉDITERRANÉE ORIENTALE**

SEMINAR ON VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS

EM/SEM.VHS/2  
20 September 1963

Damascus, 19 - 27 October 1963

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR

1. PURPOSE OF THE SEMINAR

The purpose of the Seminar is to bring together Health Administrators and Health Statisticians to evaluate the present position and future needs in vital and health statistics, to exchange information and to design future action in the various fields of health statistics on the basis of national and international experience.

2. NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS ON HEALTH STATISTICS

A Conference on Health Statistics was arranged by the Regional Office as early as September 1950 and was held in Istanbul, Turkey.

A Seminar on Health Statistics was included in the programme of the Region for the year 1958 following a resolution by the Regional Committee in 1956. For various reasons, the Seminar had to be postponed.

The WHO Expert Committee on Health Statistics at its sixth session in 1956 stressed the great importance of regional meetings of health statisticians. These meetings serve a number of useful purposes, such as: a stock-taking of the health statistical situation in the countries concerned; an analysis of progress achieved in these countries; and a discussion of difficulties met in implementing national and international recommendations.

In addition to these uses, the regional meetings fulfil the important objective of creating a wider appreciation of the value of health statistics in the countries of the Region.

In the opinion of the Expert Committee on Health Statistics, international effort had been applied much more vigorously to systematic programmes of regional conferences and meetings of working groups concerned with developing types of statistics other than health statistics. The Committee had noted that the agendas of a large number of regional statistical conferences, convened yearly by United Nations and regional organizations, do not cover health statistics, but leave responsibility in this field to WHO.

For countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region there is a special need for international statistical meetings. The availability of accurate health statistics is very limited, and most of the countries are in the process of building-up their statistical services. It is hoped that this Seminar will prove useful in strengthening Health Statistics and in increasing the collaboration between persons responsible for the development of Health Statistics in the countries of the Region. It is also envisaged that health statistical meetings may be held regularly in the future.

### 3. AGENDA

It is realized that the provisional agenda, presented to the Seminar, is rather heavy, and that it will not be possible to discuss each item in great detail. It was, however, felt that in order to evaluate the present resources in health statistics, all the various health statistical fields should be dealt with.

The Seminar may wish to point out which health statistical subjects are of special importance in the Region, thereby providing guidance as to the topics which may be selected for more detailed consideration at future meetings.

Vital statistics proper are not included in the agenda of the Seminar; they will be dealt with only in so far as they relate to health statistics.

### 4. DOCUMENTATION

The questionnaire on health statistical organization and services in the countries of the Region has been designed for providing basic information for the Seminar. It is hoped that all countries will supply the information in advance. In addition, the Seminar itself will afford an opportunity for amplifying this information.

Comprehensive documentation is prepared for the Seminar in collaboration with various participants and consultants and by the WHO Secretariat. In addition, important background information is made available to the Seminar.

It would be much appreciated if participants from all the countries will supply the Seminar with all recent publications on health statistics and health services together with any legislation on vital registration, notification of diseases, organization of statistics etc. in their respective countries. The number of copies of such documentation should be sufficient to cover participants from other countries in the Region, observers and the secretariat (rough estimate: sixty persons).

5. SEMINAR STAFF

The Seminar staff consists of the technical staff, two special seminar consultants and the administrative staff. The technical secretaries for the preparation of the Seminar are the Special Seminar Consultant, Professor B. Pirc, Professor of Public Health, Andrija Stampar School of Public Health, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, the Special Seminar Consultant, Professor C.R. Lowe, Professor of Social and Occupational Medicine, Welsh National School of Medicine, Cardiff, United Kingdom, and Mr. J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Vital and Health Statistics. The Consultants during the Seminar will function as resource personnel in order to provide information on various vital and health statistics subjects.

6. ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR

It is planned to conduct the business of the Seminar through Plenary meetings and, if it is found desirable through meetings of smaller groups. The daily programme will consist in general of two plenary sessions in the morning from 8.30 to 11.00 and from 11.30 to 13.30. The afternoon will be free to continue discussions, if necessary.

7. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SEMINAR

The Conference Officer, Miss P. Cartoudis assisted by two secretaries, will be responsible for all administrative arrangements and will be available at the Seminar site for all enquiries.

8. NATIONAL PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

A National Preparatory Committee has been established to cooperate with WHO in all arrangements which need to be made in Damascus during the preparatory phase. This Committee has been set up under the presidency of Dr. Amine Saade, Director-General of Hospitals, Damascus, assisted by a secretary general, Mr. Madhat Mellah, Director of Public Health Statistics Centre, Mr. Adib Homs, Director of the Economic and Statistical Department, Ministry of National Planning and Mr. Nisar Sarraj, Director of Social Affairs, Statistical Department, Ministry of National Planning.