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VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS
IN
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL COMMITTEE SESSIONS

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I. REPORTS OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR AND DISCUSSION

EM/RC3/22, 1950

... "The major task within this last year has been to collect information on the dominant health problems in the Region. Such information is indispensable because, without it, it is impossible to make comprehensive and long-term plans to realize the standards of health of the people in all the countries of the Region..."

EM/RC6/3, 195613.4 Vital and Health Statistics

In this Region, only two countries have carried out a population census before World War II and eight since. In six countries none has ever been made. There are five countries where no data on vital statistics are available and in most of the others, these statistics are incomplete and therefore of little use. The statistics of causes of death which are of special importance in planning a health policy provide some guidance in three countries only. Health statistics in general give very little information in this respect and that only in less than half the countries of the Region. In the others, they are not available. The only data which can be obtained for these statistics in the Region as a whole are figures on numbers of physicians and hospital beds. A separate document on vital and health statistics¹⁾ is put before the Committee.

Aware of these facts and also that vital and health statistics are essential to the development of health services, EMRO has, since its foundation, attached much importance to improving these conditions. As a first step as early as 1951, a two-months' statistical training course was organized. Its forty-four participants from nine countries were regarded as providing a foundation on which to develop statistical services but it was soon realized that most of them had little interest in the work and at present, only a few of those who attended are working in that field.

The next step was to grant fellowships for statistical education and training. In this respect, the work of the International Statistical Centre in Beirut must be mentioned. There, ten fellows from seven countries have

¹⁾ EM/RC6/13

followed a six-months' course; in 1954/1955 five were trained in vital and health statistics as well. The Regional Adviser in Vital and Health Statistics lectured there on that subject for a period of four weeks. Furthermore, three fellowships have been awarded for a higher statistical course in London.

A centre for advanced statistical studies is being set up in Cairo. EMRO has already declared its readiness to assist in its establishment. Thus, the centre in Beirut will provide training for statistical technicians and the centre in Cairo for statisticians holding a higher degree.

EMRO has been steadily increasing its activities in the study of the organization of statistical services of countries of the Region and has made suggestions for improvements. In the last year, surveys and recommendations have been made in five countries (Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Syria). These countries were greatly interested in developing their statistical services and some of the recommendations made have already been put into effect.

Besides these measures, which aim at raising the level of vital and health statistics in the Region as a whole, EMRO assigned a consultant to Iran for a period of fifteen months, ending in December 1955. Special surveys on population, trachoma and maternal and child health were carried out in that country and the interesting results obtained were published. In addition to these surveys, the conditions which influence the collection and organization of vital and health statistics were studied and proposals for the establishment of a statistical service in the Ministry of Health of Iran were submitted by the consultant.

As a result of this spadework and thanks to the efforts of United Nations and bilateral agencies, especially USICA, the possibilities of initiating efficient and adequate vital and health statistics systems in the countries of the Region are far greater than they were in 1949.

EM/RC7/24, 1957

The following main points emerged from the discussions of the Report of the Regional Director which covered the period 1 August 1956 to 30 June 1957:

- d) The importance of WHO short-term consultants in vital and health statistics to train personnel and help in the expansion of national services was stressed and the 1958 Seminar on the subject was expected to bring valuable results. The International Statistical Education Centre was mentioned as being of great assistance to countries of the Region.

EM/RC8/2, 1958

The following main points emerged from the discussions on the Annual Report of the Regional Director:

g) Vital and health statistics were essential in all health activities and there was a need for trained statisticians, statistical assistants, clerks and computers. The preparation of an Arabic adaptation of the Manual of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death was under study.

EM/RC9/14, 1959

The following main points emerged from the discussions on the Annual Report of the Regional Director:

f) Added emphasis should be placed on the development of vital and health statistics which were essential to progress in all fields of health.

EM/RC12/14, 1962

Following are some of the main points that emerged from the statements made by Representatives in considering the Annual Report of the Regional Director:

m) Evaluation of national health plans and achievements, as well as of WHO-assisted projects was important and should be undertaken regularly. In this connexion, the vital and health statistics services throughout the Region needed to be strengthened; here WHO assistance particularly in the form of advisory services and fellowships for training both inside and outside the Region, was needed.

II. RESOLUTIONS OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

EM/RC2/28 Rev. 1 (Items 9, Resolutions of the Second World Health Assembly)

EM/RC2/R.31, 1949 (October)

9. The Regional Committee

9.4. **REQUESTS** the Regional Director to make necessary arrangements for holding a conference within the Region for the purpose of studying health statistics and the methods of their initiation and improvement in the different countries and to arrange for the services of a consultant or an adviser; and

NOTES the offer of the Representative of Israel that the statistical services of his country are available to assist the members of the Region.

EM/RC6/13, 1956

EM/RC6A/R.5 (Resolutions on Public Health Services and Statistics)

The Sub-Committee considered the document ¹⁾ submitted by the Regional Director;

Recognizing the need of statistical data in planning and evaluating public health programmes,

1. **RECOMMENDS** that Member States make all possible efforts to establish or expand vital and health statistics services and take steps towards staffing these services with adequately educated personnel;

2. **RESOLVES** that a Seminar for senior personnel in vital and health statistics services of the Eastern Mediterranean countries be organized on the lines set out in the recommendations of document EM/RC6/13 as soon as the necessary funds can be made available;

3. **REQUESTS** the Regional Director to make a survey on vital and health statistics services in the Eastern Mediterranean countries and to present his findings to a future session of the Regional Committee;

4. **CALLS UPON** health administration of Member States to provide the Regional Director with the information required for the survey.

EM/RC8/14, 1958

EM/RC8/8

The importance of the availability to all countries of the Region of uniform information on health statistics for purposes of comparison was stressed. There was also a need for more field surveys for the evaluation of health measures and for the convening of a Vital and Health Statistics Seminar.

¹⁾ EM/RC6/13

Following is the resolution on Vital and Health Statistics:

EM/RCS/R.7

The Regional Committee,

Having discussed the situation as regards vital and health statistics services in the Region;

Aware that a knowledge of relevant facts is essential to a successful administration of health services;

Recognizing that collecting and analysing statistics is the safest and least expensive way of discovering the facts as regards health conditions in a country and a valuable help in supervising the activities of the departments and staff of the health services;

Recognizing the insufficiency, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of the statistical staff in the ministries of health and in other departments concerned with statistics in most countries of the Region;

Noting that the few statistics published are lacking in uniformity, making a comparison of data between the countries difficult;

1. ENDORSES the view that a well-developed system for vital and health statistics is essential in a proper health administration;
2. RECOMMENDS that the Member States of the Region:
 - (1) encourage the training of statisticians specialized in vital and health statistics;
 - (2) strengthen the statistical services of the health authorities by recruiting a sufficient number of well-trained statisticians and auxiliary personnel;
 - (3) co-ordinate activities between the countries in order to obtain the desirable uniformity in the data produced and in the statistical publications;
 - (4) undertake, when possible, statistical investigations before starting new activities in the field of health and the care of the sick, or re-organizing work already under way;
3. REQUESTS the Regional Director to increase the provisions for fellowships and lecturers on this subject to the International Statistical Education Centre in Beirut.

EM/RC9/14, 1959

EM/RC9/14

Sub-Committee B - Technical Discussion (Poliomyelitis)

The resolution adopted ...

1. URGES Member States:

- (i) to make the notification of poliomyelitis compulsory by law if it is not yet so; and
- (ii) to promote the system of reporting the disease in order to facilitate the accumulation of accurate statistical data that would give a true picture of the epidemiological situation;

EM/RC10/9, 1960

EM/RC10/R.8

Sub-Committee A & B - Technical Discussion (Tuberculosis Control)

Following is the resolution on the Technical Discussions:

The Regional Committee, ...

3. RECOMMENDS that:

...

- (4) Efforts be exerted to develop methods for more accurate measurement of the tuberculosis problem and the satisfactory reporting and registration of tuberculous cases;

EM/RC12/7, 1962

EM/RC12/R.7

The Regional Committee,

Having studied the document on Improvement of Vital and Health Statistics in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region;

Considering the basic importance to public health administration of the development and strengthening of systematic procedures for ensuring adequate vital and health statistics;

Noting that the existing data are not sufficient to allow for a quantitative evaluation of the health situation in the Region or comparisons between countries;

Noting that a major obstacle to the improvement of vital and health statistics is the shortage of trained statistical personnel,

1. URGES Member States to pursue their efforts in the field of vital and health statistics particularly by undertaking periodic population census, improving their legislation on registration and reporting of vital events and development of the various fields of health statistics, establishing, if they have not already done so, national committees on vital and health statistics; organizing seminars and meetings on the subject; stimulating the training of statistical personnel;

2. REQUESTS the Regional Director to continue to provide fellowships and teaching in health statistics and to render increasing statistical assistance and advice on statistical organization and development to countries requesting it.