

**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

**BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE LA
MÉDITERRANÉE ORIENTALE**

SEMINAR ON VITAL AND HEALTH STATISTICS

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WORK IN HEALTH STATISTICS
IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

by

WHO Secretariat

INTRODUCTION

Activities in health statistics at the Regional Office are carried out as an integral part of the overall WHO statistical programme.

At the regional level the activities fall in the following major groups:

1. Assistance to governments for strengthening health statistical services.
 2. Training programme in health statistics.
 3. Arrangements for and participation in meetings on health statistics.
 4. Regional Adviser and statistical services at EMRO.
 5. Other activities.
1. Assistance to governments for strengthening health statistical services

This activity is of special importance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region where countries, generally speaking, are just at the beginning of efforts for creating reliable health statistics and for organization of statistical services.

The assistance has, in the Region, taken the form of establishment of projects in vital and health statistics, of visits to countries by consultants and experts and of provision for governments of technical literature and other supplies.

A method of improving national vital and health statistics is the establishment of field projects in such statistics in collaboration between the Organization and the Government of the country concerned. In several of the

countries of the Region such projects have been or are still in operation. Since development of a system of national vital and health statistics in general is a long-range process involving also such factors as legislation, training of personnel of various categories and collaboration with many agencies and professional groups, a field project in statistics does not usually show immediate signs of success. It is believed that in order to bring tangible results within a short period through a field project in statistics, the country in question must be at a stage definitively conducive to statistical improvement with national personnel already available for collaboration with international expert personnel. Otherwise field projects in statistics should have limited objectives such as the development of hospital administrative and morbidity statistics, statistics of causes of death, the institution of recording procedures for health centres, etc.

In 1952 WHO established the principle of participation by statistical consultants in the work of project teams and field missions, so that epidemiology and statistics may receive due consideration in the planning and execution of programmes. There has been an inevitable increase in the desire for guidance in these aspects as a result of the gradual shift from emergency or "ad hoc" programmes, which synchronizes with a growing interest internationally in coordinated research. This policy is doing much to extend knowledge of these sciences into many fields of medicine in most countries of the world.

On a number of occasions, visits have been made to countries in the Region by the Regional Adviser on Statistics, by Headquarters statisticians and by WHO short-term consultants to study and to discuss with national personnel problems in development of health statistics and methods for improvement. Reports on such visits, containing information on observations and recommendations for government or WHO action, have often been issued by the Regional Office. Annex I contains a list of such reports.

2. Training programme in health statistics

For improvement of health statistics, the availability of statistical personnel is necessary. Qualified health statisticians are a pre-requisite for establishing efficient statistical services in a ministry of health and for the planning and analysis of morbidity surveys.

In 1951 the WHO Expert Committee on Health Statistics recommended that special consideration be given in WHO training programmes to the training of statistical staff and the granting of fellowships for this purpose.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region a total number of 120 fellowships has been granted in health statistics from 1949 up to and including the year 1962. Fellowships are given to selected individuals to spend a period of study at a university, or of observation and practical training in the statistical offices of a country more advanced than, or otherwise different from their own. The award of these fellowships is a recognition that each country, whatever its development, must have at least a nucleus of health workers who have acquired the necessary statistical skills and knowledge to impart to their colleagues and students. As a method of promoting technical instruction, it is felt to be an investment out of all proportion to the original outlay, and to be a valuable stimulus of national efforts to improve statistical services.

A large number of the fellowships, namely 87, in health statistics was given for training at the International Statistical Education Centre in Beirut. In Annex II is given the distribution of fellowships in each of the countries of the Region and the number of these fellowships which were for studies at ISEC.

3. Meetings on health statistics

A Regional Conference on Health Statistics was organized by the Regional Office in September 1950 and was held in Istanbul, Turkey. The Conference was attended by representatives from twelve countries, apart from observers from specialized agencies. Delegates made statements explaining in detail the structure and activities of the services dealing with vital and health statistics in their respective countries. The Conference then examined in detail the various aspects of vital and health statistics in the Region and adopted a number of decisions and resolutions.

The Regional Office organized, together with the Government of the United Arab Republic and the United Nations Statistical Office, a Training Centre on Vital and Health Statistics for the Eastern Mediterranean, held in Cairo from October to December 1951.

The Regional Office has participated in a number of statistical meetings arranged by other Agencies such as the Conferences of African Statisticians.

The Expert Committee on Health Statistics at its Sixth Session¹⁾ discussed the importance of international meetings on health statistics. The Committee felt that WHO should expand its programme, including the convening of meetings of health statisticians together with health administrators.

¹⁾World Health Organization Techn. Rep. Ser. 164, 1959

Meetings of health statisticians would be useful for areas at any stage of development. A number of health statistics subjects could profitably be dealt with, such as the following:

- (a) health statistical systems in the various countries;
- (b) education and training of health personnel in health statistics;
- (c) the International Classification of Diseases and its application to various fields of health statistics;
- (d) methodology and results of health surveys.

It is hoped that the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office will be able to arrange regular meetings of health statisticians of the countries of the Region. Provision made for such a meeting in 1965 has already been adopted by the Regional Committee.

4. Regional Adviser and Statistical Services at EMRO

Since 1956 an Adviser on Statistics has been included among the technical advisers at the Regional Office. The Adviser on Statistics is in general at the disposal of the countries of the Region to advise, at their request, on vital and health statistical organization and on methodology and programme within the various specialized health statistical fields.

Among the other main functions of the Regional Adviser are the following:

- (a) Availability for all other technical staff in the Office and for field staff for consultation concerning statistical problems and statistical information within a great variety of health and other fields.
- (b) Designing of morbidity sample surveys and advice on processing and analysis of such surveys.
- (c) Study and statistical evaluation of reports from field projects.
- (d) Building-up in the Regional Office of a body of statistical information.
- (e) Collection of data from countries in the Region through questionnaires or special surveys.
- (f) Follow-up of developments in statistical methodology, especially in health statistics.

- (g) Participation in education and training in statistics at various training courses.
- (h) A variety of other functions such as collaboration with the Division of Health Statistics at Headquarters and preparation of documents for various meetings.

In 1960 an Epidemiological and Statistical Centre was established at the Regional Office as an Inter-Country project. This Centre was originally entrusted with the processing and analysing of the results of the various WHO assisted tuberculosis surveys carried out in the countries of the Region. It soon became of use also for planning and analysis of other health statistical surveys in the Region, as for instance, trachoma, bilharziasis and diarrhoeal diseases.

5. Other activities

Other activities include efforts for establishing an Arabic version of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death.

In collaboration with the Health Section of the League of Arab States, the Organization has translated the detailed list of this Classification into Arabic. This translation, accompanied by the equivalent inclusion terms in the English and French editions of the Seventh Revision of the International Classification, was circulated in 1961 to all the governments of Arabic-speaking countries.

This subject is dealt with in greater detail in document EM/SEM.VHS/18.

A N N E X I

LIST OF STATISTICAL REPORTS

<u>REFERENCE AND DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>
EM/ST/1 June 1956	Health and Vital Statistics in Libya Report on a Visit to Tripoli, 1 - 7 May 1956 By Dr. Bojan F. Pirc, Regional Adviser on Vital and Health Statistics
EM/ST/2 April 1957	Report on a Visit to Ethiopia 29 January - 10 February 1957 By Dr. B.F. Pirc, Adviser on Vital and Health Statistics - WHO/EMRO
EM/ST/3 May 1957	Report on a Visit to Beirut, Damascus and Cairo 24 February - 27 March 1957 By Dr. B.F. Pirc, Regional Adviser on Vital and Health Statistics
EM/ST/4 March 1958	Report on a Visit to Iraq 4 - 10 January 1958 By Dr. B.F. Pirc, WHO Regional Adviser in Vital and Health Statistics
EM/ST/5 March 1958	Report on a Visit to Jordan 10 - 19 January 1958 By Dr. B.F. Pirc, WHO Regional Adviser in Vital and Health Statistics
EM/ST/6 January 1959	Report on a Visit to the Province of Syria (UAR) September 1958 By Erik Soop, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/7 March 1959	Report on a Visit to Iraq 15 - 19 January 1959 By Erik Soop, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/8 November 1959	Report on a Visit to Ethiopia including Eritrea 14 June - 9 July 1959 By Erik Soop, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/9 IRAQ-6/TA December 1959	Status of the Vital Registration System in Diyala Liwa October 1958 By Mahmood Abolfazli, WHO Statistician
EM/ST/10 EM/PHA/86 IRAQ-6/TA December 1959	Assignment Report, Provincial Health Administration, Baquba, Iraq April 1957 - April 1959 By Mahmood Abolfazli, WHO Statistician

REFERENCE AND DATE

TITLE

EM/ST/11 JORDAN-20/Regular January 1960	Report on a Visit to Ministry of Health, Jordan 10 August - 9 September 1959 By Faiz el Khouri, WHO Short-term Consultant
EM/ST/12 August 1960	Report on a Visit to Iraq 15 - 24 February 1960 By Erik Soop, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/13 December 1960	Report on a Visit to Pakistan 21 December 1959 - 7 February 1960 By Erik Soop, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/14 EM/TB/58 February 1961	Regional Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey Report on Cyrenaica, Libya 11 July - 22 September 1959
EM/ST/15 EM/TB/64 June 1961	Regional Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey Report on Amman, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan April - October 1960
EM/ST/16 June 1961	Report on a Visit to Kuwait 18 - 30 April 1961 By J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/17 EM/TB/65 July 1961	Regional Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey Report on Selected Provinces of Tunisia October 1959 - February 1960
EM/ST/18 EM/TB/74 TUNISIA-24 November 1961	Visite au Projet de Lutte Antituberculeuse faite les 30 juin et 1er juillet 1961 par J. Nielsen, Conseiller régional statisticien
EM/ST/19 November 1961	Report on a Visit to Libya 11 - 18 July 1961 By J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Statistics
EM/ST/20 décembre 1961	Rapport sur une visite en Tunisie 25 juin - 11 juillet 1961 par J. Nielsen, Conseiller régional statisticien
EM/ST/21 EM/TB/79 April 1962	Regional Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey Report on Iraq, January - March 1961
EM/ST/22 EM/TRACH/32 April 1962	Report on a Visit to Eritrea 6 - 15 March 1962 Trachoma Control, Statistical Analysis and Evaluation of Activities and Results By J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Statistics

REFERENCE AND DATE

TITLE

EM/ST/23
EM/TB/82
May 1962

Report on a Visit to Kuwait
28 February - 27 March 1962
By Svend Christensen, Statistician
WHO Epidemiological and Statistical Centre

EM/ST/24
EM/TB/83
April 1962

Regional Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey
Report on the Syrian Arab Republic
September 1960 - November 1960

EM/ST/25
July 1962

Report on a Visit to Iraq
29 January - 18 February 1962
By J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Statistics

EM/ST/26
EM/TB/84
September 1962

Tuberculosis Survey in the Hashemite
Kingdom of Jordan
April 1960 - July 1961

EM/ST/27
EM/TB/86
February 1963

Report on a Visit to Ethiopia
6 - 27 November 1962
By Svend Christensen, Statistician
WHO Epidemiological and Statistical Centre

EM/ST/28
EM/TB/88
March 1963

Tuberculosis Prevalence Survey in the Blue
Nile Province, Republic of the Sudan
March 1959 - January 1960

EM/ST/29
April 1963

Report on a visit to the Sudan
10 - 21 February 1963
By J. Nielsen, Regional Adviser on Statistics

EM/ST/30
IRAN I
July 1963

Report on a Visit to Iran
(to the Institute of Parasitology and
Malariaology)
8 April - 20 May 1963
By Professor B. Pirc, M.D.
WHO Medical Consultant

A N N E X II

FELLOWSHIPS AWARDED BY WHO/EMRO FOR STUDIES
IN THE FIELD OF STATISTICS - 1949 - 1962

Country	Fellowships awarded for Studies at ISEC	Total number of Fellowships awarded
ETHIOPIA	4	6
IRAN	9	16
IRAQ	11	13
ISRAEL	-	5
JORDAN	15	16
LEBANON	-	3
LIBYA	5	6
PAKISTAN	3	8
SAUDI ARABIA	11	11
SUDAN	8	9
SYRIA	5	8
TUNISIA	4	5
UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC	7	9
YEMEN	5	5
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TOTAL	87	120
