



MESSAGE OF DR H.A. GEZAIRY  
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TO THE  
SIXTH MEETING OF THE REGIONAL SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP  
ON DIARRHOEAL DISEASES RESEARCH

Amman, Jordan, 30 - 31 March 1985

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to send you this message of welcome on the occasion of convening the Sixth Meeting of the Regional Scientific Working Group on Diarrhoeal Diseases Research. The World Health Organization is most grateful to the University of Jordan for hosting this meeting and to all the members of the Regional Scientific Working Group for the time and effort spent in preparing for this meeting.

Acute diarrhoeal diseases continue to be a major public health problem in most countries of our Region. They are among the leading causes of mortality and morbidity among infant and young children. Although there is lack of reliable information on the incidence and associated mortality of diarrhoeal diseases in the Region, it is estimated that in 1984 in the EMR about 150 million episodes of diarrhoea occurred among children under five years of age and that about three quarters of a million of these cases resulted in death.

Diarrhoeal Diseases are also a major contributor to malnutrition. As well, diarrhoeal attacks are severe in those who are under-nourished, thus forming a vicious circle in which conditions perpetuate each other. The problem is particularly a complex one, since diarrhoeal diseases are associated with personal hygiene, lack and inadequate use of safe water and sanitation facilities and poor socio-economic conditions. While there has long been a widespread awareness of the problem of diarrhoeal diseases, it is only recently that organized efforts are being made to deal with it and give it the priority it deserves. This has come about to a large extent as a result of a number of important research findings which have made available new knowledge that can be used as a basis to strengthen control efforts against acute diarrhoeal diseases and as a foundation for further research.

Diarrhoeal Diseases control activities have always been an important field of collaboration between WHO and Member States of the Region. WHO collaborates

with national authorities in planning of national CDD programmes, in training and in evaluation. In addition to the services aspects, WHO is supporting research in CDD. The global programme supports the basic or biomedical research while the regional programmes support operational or health services research.

The Eastern Mediterranean Regional Scientific Working Group on Diarrhoeal Diseases Research has been meeting regularly since 1980, studying research proposals and recommending ways and means of promoting research in the Region. EMRO has responded to all your recommendations and has supported, upon your recommendations, up till now twenty-six research projects.

EMRO is actively following up supported research and you will have a chance during the meeting to review the status of the ongoing projects and to review the new proposals which have been reviewed by the external reviewers and make recommendations for their financial support based on their relevance and scientific quality.

As we are still not receiving research proposals in particular priority areas, we have arranged to draft three protocols on some topics of these priority areas. You will have a chance to review these protocols and we look forward to your views before proposing them to research workers in the Region.

A new practice which you have introduced since your last two meetings is to hold discussions on a technical subject. You have chosen the subject of "the role of religious values in the control of diarrhoeal diseases" as the subject for discussion in your present meeting. A background paper has been prepared for your consideration and I am looking forward to your review and relevant recommendations in this respect.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate my thanks to the government of Jordan and especially Jordan University for hosting this meeting, and to wish you success in your deliberations.