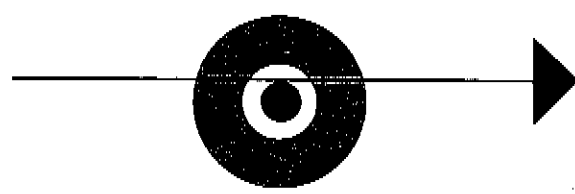


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special programme for research and training in tropical diseases

Tropical Diseases

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UNDP/WORLD BANK/WHO SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN TROPICAL DISEASES

TDR/STAC-7/COMP/RCS/85.1 ENGLISH ONLY

RESEARCH CAPABILITY STRENGTHENING REVIEW FILE - 1985

This file contains excerpts from the TRG-1, -2 and -3 reports, the STAC-1, -2, -3, -4, -5, and -6 reports, the STRC report (1981), and the statements on policies and plans excerpted from the Sixth Programme Report and the RSG-7, -8 and -9 reports.

Not included in the excerpts from the TRG and STAC reports are the frequent recommendations that TDR components work closely and in collaboration with the RSG component.

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1. CURRENT WORKPLANS

1. REPORT OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE RESEARCH STRENGTHENING GROUP (RSG-8) - AUGUST 1983

6. Comprehensive Plan for Research Capability Strengthening (TDR/RSG(8)/83.3)

6.3 Six-Year Plan

The five-year plan of activities laid down in 1979 closes in December 1983. All of the five defined strategies have been implemented. As stated by STRC (1981), STAC (1983) and JCB (1982), significant progress was made during the period 1979 to 1983. RSG feels that for judging progress with the proposed six-year plan, a valid set of indicators should be developed.

6.3.1 Objectives

During the next six years, RSG work will proceed towards the following targets to be realized by 1990. These targets have been developed in the context of the general objectives of the strategic plan:

a) Those institutions that have received support since the early period of the Programme would, in addition to the laboratory-based research activities, have good field-based research activities in association with national disease control programmes. These field activities should be of a standard adequate for trials of disease control tools that will be produced by SWGs and for multidisciplinary training of researchers.

b) Approximately 20 new institutions would have been added to the network of strengthened institutions.

c) A sufficient number of research training programmes, especially those related to field research to cater to the increasing demand for research training in tropical diseases.

d) A viable global network of approximately 50 institutions in communication with one another concerning common research and training interests.

e) Relevant new technology needed for research in tropical diseases would have been shared with the disease-endemic countries. In addition, some supported institutions would have made significant contributions to developing new technologies and to applying them in their own countries.

f) A significant improvement in the managerial and evaluation practices as related to research and training in RSG-supported institutions.

6.4 Third Two-Year Programme of Activities - 1984-85

The two-year programme of activities as listed below comprises RSG instructions to the secretariat which are to be implemented during the 1984-85 biennium:

a) Encourage institutions which have a sufficient number of returned research trainees, but have not yet embarked on a formal institution strengthening programme, to formulate such a programme.

b) Promote collaboration between those institutions that have received support from RSG and the relevant national diseases control programmes.

c) Involve institutions in monitoring of their staff being trained through RSG support in other institutions.

d) Carry out, in association with the local authorities and Regional Offices, a detailed analysis of those institutions that have been strengthened by five years of RSG support, for the purpose of appraising the RSG on future needs of these institutions and possible approaches for maintaining their strength.

e) Document the process of institutional development that has occurred in the mature institutions.

f) Respond to requests from Regional Offices and national authorities for support to organize and implement meetings aimed at improving research management at country, regional or international levels.

g) Prepare, jointly with the SWGs, a detailed strategy for transferring laboratory techniques required for research in the endemic regions to the RSG-supported institutions.

h) Further promote the establishment of more Masters and Ph.D. level training programmes, particularly in entomology, epidemiology and social sciences in the context of the six diseases.

i) Strengthen health research councils or equivalent bodies in their efforts at policy formulation with regard to tropical diseases.

j) Promote the establishment of mechanisms for communicating research results and information on new developments to and amongst supported institutions.

k) Continue the practice of supporting internal evaluation mechanisms in supported institutions.

l) Prepare for RSG an analysis of the concepts and process involved in institution strengthening, including the indicators for judging institutional development.

m) Improve collaboration with other relevant programmes involved in strengthening of research capabilities of developing countries.

n) Bring the RSG Comprehensive Plan to the attention of appropriate national authorities, emphasizing sections that require their collaboration. Suggestions for improving this Plan should be sought from those authorities as well as from other knowledgeable persons.

2. TECHNICAL REVIEW GROUP I - SEPTEMBER 1976

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

Its (the TRG's) major conclusions were as follows:

b) The proposed balance between research development of new tools on the one hand, and institution strengthening and training on the other, was realistic and took account of future developments; both of these facets are essential to the Special Programme and both should be supported.

g) The Group reiterated the importance of the objective of increasing research capability in the tropical countries; in the long-term, it is in this way that the Special Programme will make its greatest impact on disease control. Specifically, the Group recommended that the proposed research training committee be strengthened to become a committee for institution strengthening and training and that this committee be closely associated with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee.

3. TECHNICAL REVIEW GROUP II - SEPTEMBER 1977

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Group:

1.3 Recommended increased emphasis on the research capability strengthening area of the Programme to a total level of 20% of the available funds.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Policy

4.1.1 Programme balance

a) The Balance between Research and Development and Research Capability Strengthening

The Group noted the inadequate facilities and the great shortage of trained personnel in many endemic countries. The few available scientists frequently carry many concurrent responsibilities including services with respect to disease control and teaching and administration, in addition to research. Career structures in research are not always attractive and conditions of work are sometimes unsatisfactory. The Group considered it imperative that national governments define essential research activities and make commitments to the strengthening of relevant scientific institutions.

It has already become apparent that the lack of research capability in some endemic countries can be a significant constraint on the Programme's research and development activities. For example, field trials with new chemotherapeutic agents cannot take place unless experienced clinicians and clinical pharmacologists are available in countries where the diseases are endemic. The Group noted the strong recommendation of TRG I that emphasis be placed on the development of research capability in the endemic countries. In keeping with that recommendation and the policy that when possible, research should be conducted in endemic areas, the Group recommended that the balance of the Programme be shifted in 1978 to provide a higher proportion of available funds for research capability strengthening. It was noted that 15% of the total budget for 1977 was allocated to research capability strengthening; this should be increased to approximately 20% in 1978 and

continue to be held at least at that level in subsequent years.

In making this reapportionment, the Group was aware that it might cause some delay in the achievement of short-term goals in research and development. Nonetheless, the new apportionment was justified, since the development of capability in endemic countries is a sine qua non for improvement of disease control and will facilitate the transfer and application of relevant technology.

4.4 Operational Recommendations on Research Capability Strengthening

4.4.1 The fundamental importance of this programme area is indicated in section 4.1.1 on programme balance. Thus, funding during 1978 for research capability strengthening should be expanded to approximately 20% of the total budget. The Group endorsed action to support the four network centres for research and training and recommended that others be identified and designated as rapidly as possible.

4.4.2 Consideration should be given to the interaction which must occur between the activities of the RCSWG and other Programme components.

4.4.3 Consideration should be given to the interaction which must occur between the activities of the RCSWG and those of national authorities and governments.

4.4.4 The Group commended the system of "re-entry" grants to scientists returning to affected areas following a period of training to assist them in beginning their research activities, and small grants to scientists and laboratories in endemic countries for rapid provision of items essential to their research.

4.4.5 Membership of the RCSWG should include the Chairman and one other member of the TRG or STAC; members of the ACMR and Regional ACMRs should be involved as relevant.

4.4.6 The secretariat was requested to find a shorter name for the research capability strengthening working group (RCSWG)

4. TECHNICAL REVIEW GROUP III - AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1978

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Group:

b) recommended that the Programme place increased emphasis on strengthening research capabilities in affected countries, and that activities under Research Capability Strengthening receive a total level of 21% of available funds in 1979;

g) noted the evaluation procedures now being developed by the Research Strengthening Group and recommended that RSG report to the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) on this matter in 1979.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Programme Balance and Priorities

a) The Balance Between Research and Development and Research Capability Strengthening

The Group reiterated the concern of TRG I and TRG II for the need to expand the capabilities of scientists and institutions in affected countries to conduct research in the six diseases covered by the Programme. The continued high percentage of research funds allocated to scientists in developed countries was noted. The Group recommended that vigorous action be taken in 1979 to secure the maximum effective involvement of scientists from the affected countries.

The Group noted the recommendation of TRG II that the percentage of funds devoted to Research Capability Strengthening should be increased to approximately 20% and should not drop below that level in subsequent years. It recommended that the percentage of the budget for Research Capability Strengthening be increased from 18.2% assigned in 1978 to 20.9% in 1979, with a total funding in 1979 of US\$ 5 350 000.

4.5 Operational Recommendations on Research Capability Strengthening (RCS)

The crucial importance of this Programme Area was reaffirmed by the Group. The Group recommended that the shift of Programme funds to place increased emphasis on Research Capability Strengthening must proceed at a faster pace. This recommendation is reflected in the proposed budget for 1979.

In view of the critical shortage of scientists in the field of tropical diseases, the funds available for training grants should be increased. Close attention should continue to be paid to the coordination of the activities of the RSG, the SWGs, and national authorities and governments.

The Group noted the value of long-term international collaboration between scientists in the development and maintenance of high quality research and the special importance of promoting close relationships between scientists in endemic countries. There are advantages in building teams of scientists with diverse skills and talents, rather than training and supporting for scientists on an individual basis.

The Group commended the plan to assist national councils of medical research to develop additional expertise in the organization and management of medical research related to tropical diseases. Close attention should be paid by national authorities to the need for appropriate career structures.

The Group recommended that the 1979 budget for this Programme Area should be set at US\$ 5 350 000, of which US\$ 800 000 should be given for Training Grants; US\$ 150 000 for Re-entry Grants; US\$ 3 730,000 for Short- and Long-Term Support, including Capital Grants; US\$ 500 000 for training courses, seminars and workshops; and US\$ 100 000 for Small Grants.

6. Programme Budget

6.2 Proposed Budget for 1979

As indicated previously (4.1 above), the Group recommended a significant increase in funding of the research capability strengthening component of the

Programme and of the socioeconomic research component.

5. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-1)
AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1979

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Committee:

b) commended the substantial progress made in strengthening research capabilities and increasing the participation in the Programme of scientists from affected countries, and stressed the need for continuous emphasis on this objective of the Special Programme;

c) considered that, over time and subject to periodic assessment, there should be a progressive increase in the percentage of funds allocated for strengthening of research capabilities in affected countries: taking into account present development of the Programme, the funds allocated for this purpose for 1980 should be set at approximately 21% of the total;

j) recommended that the Programme secretariat, in conjunction with the RSG, stimulate the collection of information on funding the research capability strengthening in affected countries by national and multinational sources;

4. Recommendations

4.1 Programme Balance and Priorities

4.1.1 The Balance Between Research and Development and Research Capability Strengthening

The Committee noted with satisfaction efforts made during 1979 to increase the involvement in the Programme of scientists from affected countries. Noting recommendations of the third Technical Review Group (TRG III) relative to funding of the RCS component of the Programme, and keeping in mind financial constraints on the Programme, the Committee considered that the percentage of the total budget allocated for Research Capability Strengthening should be maintained at its present level of slightly over 21% for 1980. The strategic plan for the RCS component, which is now under review, should be examined in detail by STAC next year. Recognizing the fundamental long-term importance of the RCS component of the Special Programme, and subject to careful periodic assessment of it, the Committee considered there should be a progressive increase, over time, in the percentage of funds allocated to strengthening research capabilities in affected countries. In making this recommendation, the Committee had firmly in mind the needs for maintaining effective research and development programmes.

4.1.3 Increasing the Involvement of Scientists from Affected Countries

Additional efforts must be made to increase the awareness of scientists in affected countries of the aims and objectives of the Programme, and the opportunities provided by it for improving disease control and increasing

research capabilities.

4.3 Recommendations on Research Capability Strengthening for 1980

The Committee reconfirmed the vital importance of strengthening research capabilities in affected countries. It recognized that disease control is a dynamic task of long duration, which may change in form and substance over time but must be seen in a historical perspective as essentially a never-ending requirement, conditioned by social and economic realities as well as by biological considerations. New tools and procedures are desperately needed to permit affected countries to gain the upper hand on the diseases in question. Many of these will, no doubt, result from research efforts in developed countries. However, there can be no question that, in the longer term, control and associated research must be achieved and maintained at local levels.

The Committee also reaffirmed the wisdom of the procedures established within the TDR programme which involve a central role by the RSG in the selection of projects for approval. Utilization of a group of experts who can bring a world-wide perspective to the selection process, and who are familiar with other disease control projects outside the Special Programme, permits growth of the RCS component in a logical and objective manner. The Committee noted that a subcommittee of the RSG is considering procedures for evaluating the RCS component, and concluded that a representative of STAC should continue to participate in this work and serve on evaluation teams.

The Committee noted with approval that a strategic plan for long-term development of the RCS component has been prepared and is under review. Based on a long-term perspective of 15-20 years, the plan places major emphasis in the first five years on support of the best developed existing centres in the affected countries to serve as resources for neighbouring countries.

The Committee recognized the need for flexibility in selecting projects, in the light of varying conditions and needs in affected countries. This component of the Special Programme must be attuned to what countries are prepared to do as well as to the objectives of the Special Programme itself. Close coordination between the RSG, appropriate SWGs and national authorities is, therefore, essential. The Committee noted that most SWGs interact closely with the RSG, and recommended intensification of this process.

The Committee viewed with satisfaction the programme of training grants, and placed special emphasis on the need to train epidemiologists for work in tropical diseases. There are special problems associated with training epidemiologists and the cooperation of international scientific societies should be sought. The RSG should actively support the training to doctorate level of young investigators from developing countries within their own countries.

In relation to the continuing employment of such individuals, the Committee recognized the problems faced by national governments, but emphasized that it is their responsibility to provide career conditions which ensure adequate tenure of service and incentives for laboratory, field and clinical research workers, including technicians. It was noted that this long-term problem is under consideration by the RSG and will be examined in detail by the World Health Assembly in 1980. The Committee recommended that the Programme secretariat increase efforts to acquaint senior health officials and other national policy makers at the highest levels with the need for increasing research efforts on the six diseases of the Special Programme. The

opportunities provided by the Programme to improve national research capabilities in disease control must be stressed.

The Committee recommended that the Programme secretariat, in conjunction with the RSG, stimulate the collection of information on funding of research capability strengthening efforts in affected countries by various national and multinational sources. Such action could improve the coordination of funding on a world-wide basis, and assist in avoiding duplication or overlap in funding activities. The Committee also recommended that the RSG support appropriate small meetings of scientists from affected countries to exchange experience and information.

5. Proposed Programme Budget for Area II and III, 1980-81

The Committee was unable to provide meaningful detailed budget projections for 1981. Furthermore, substantial increases will be needed in the Research Capability Strengthening component of the Programme if the basic strategy of encouraging development in affected countries is to be followed.

6. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-2) - SEPTEMBER 1980

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Committee:

- commended the important progress which the Special Programme had made towards its goals during the past year, both in the research and development required to produce new tools for disease control, and towards strengthening the research capability of affected countries.

- approved the strategies and plans proposed by the RSG for the strengthening of research capability in affected countries.

- agreed to mechanisms for the review of the RSG, leading to a report to STAC-4 in 1982.

2. Recommendations

2.2 Research Capability Strengthening

The strategic plan and policies established by the Research Strengthening Group were endorsed. The evaluation mechanisms proposed by the RSG should be accepted. The External Review Group should be disbanded. Additional secretariat resources are required to take care of the expanding work load.

2.6 Budget

STAC recommended a budget for Special Programme activities in 1981 totalling US\$ 27 042 million; of this US\$ 20 142 million is for research and development, and US\$ 6 900 million for strengthening research capability of affected countries.

5. STAC Review and Conclusions

5.1 Scientific and Technical Review Committee (STRC) Reports

5.1.4 Field research in relation to the Special Programme

STAC recommended a review of field research in the Special Programme. A subcommittee should be set up, consisting of at least two members of STAC and one member of the Research Strengthening Group (RSG).

In preparing for this review, the Director should produce a working document on the interaction of the SWGs concerned with field research, and the inter-relationship of these SWGs with the RSG.

5.3 Review of Research Capability Strengthening

5.3.1 Strategic Plan - The strategic plan of the Research Strengthening Group (RSG) sets out principles, recognizes determinants and establishes objectives and strategies. Since objectives are inevitably long-term and goals can be achieved only after a period of 10-20 years, the strategic plan includes objectives expressed in a five-year plan and a two-year programme of activities.

On the basis of this plan, the RSG has developed a set of policies to govern its decisions. Essentially these are as follows:

- a) The patterns of institutional support are phased so that initial support goes to those institutions which are already fairly well developed. Subsequently these institutions should assist in the development of others which are less developed.
- b) Collaboration is necessary with other agencies which operate programmes relevant to institutional development.
- c) Support for training research workers is a component of the strategy of planned institutional development.
- d) Institutions which are supported should develop both their capacity for research and research training, and their managerial capacity to allow for continued growth through a planned continuous system of self-evaluation.
- e) Institutional support should also include support for the creation of effective management systems for research and research training so that resources can be used efficiently.
- f) Promotion of collaboration between affected countries is essential.
- g) There will be a continuous dialogue between RSG, SWGs and other relevant programmes at Headquarters and at the Regional level for developing strategies for institutional development.
- h) Institutional support will be given within the framework of a planned commitment by the country or institution to take over the responsibility for further development of the institution.

STAC agrees that the strategic plan and the policies which are being followed should solve some of the difficulties which have impeded the progress of the Special Programme in this area.

STAC recommended the adoption of the strategic plan and policies of the RSC.

5.3.3 RSG evaluation process

STAC agreed to disbanding the External Review Group and accepted the evaluation mechanism which consists of continuing and developing processes of internal evaluation assisted by external evaluation as appropriate.

6. RSG - SWG Interaction

Guidelines on this subject were adopted by RSG III in 1979, after a draft version had been circulated to all SWGs. STAC accepted these guidelines, which recognized that:

1) support of research projects falls exclusively under the budgets of SWGs, and support of institutional grants exclusively under the budget of the RSC.

2) training is a shared responsibility. RSG is responsible for training grants to scientists from affected countries to promote institutional strengthening; SWGs are responsible for the training required to achieve their strategic plans, and for on-the-job training within individual research projects.

3) both the RSG and SWGs are responsible for the identification of research workers and institutions in affected countries with potential for involvement in Special Programme activities.

4) coordination of RSG and SWG activities is essential.

9. Programme Activities Over the Next Five-Year Period, 1981-85

9.1 Priorities

STAC noted with satisfaction that a percentage of funds allocated to scientists from affected countries has shown a steady increase since the Programme started. The Committee concluded that continued emphasis and high priority must be placed on strengthening research capabilities within affected countries. Over time, and commensurate with the capacity to effectively utilize additional resources, the percentage of funds allocated for Research Capability Strengthening should progressively increase.

10. Programme Budget

10.2 If the Special Programme is to respond quickly and effectively to new and important research opportunities and demands for strengthening research capabilities, it must have the capacity for "real" growth (i.e., above inflation and associated costs) in necessary components and subcomponents. This will become particularly critical towards the end of the next quinquennium, when large-scale field activities are anticipated. STAC strongly recommends that the overall level of funds allocated to Programme Areas II and III must expand at least commensurate with inflation.

PROPOSED BUDGET

2.1. The 1982-83 Biennium

Funds allocated to Programme Area III (Research Capability

Strengthening) should permit 2% "real" growth (i.e., over and above inflation and associated cost figures) in each year of the biennium. STAC-3 will need to re-examine all aspects of the budget in detail and make adjustments as required.

2.2 The 1984-85 Biennium

Funds for Programme Area III should provide for "real" growth during the biennium over and above inflation and associated factors, in order to continue to strengthen research capabilities in affected countries.

7. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-3) - SEPTEMBER 1981

2. Recommendations

2.2 Research Capability Strengthening (Programme Area III)

a) Continued emphasis must be placed on research capability strengthening and institution strengthening in endemic countries.

b) Towards the end of the four-year period, the strategic plan of the Research Strengthening Group (RSG) should be reviewed to ensure its continued relevance.

2.3 Applied Field Research

d) Linkages between institutions in developing and developed countries should be encouraged in accordance with the criteria used by the RSG.

4. Progress in 1980-81 and Recommendations for the 1982-83 Biennium

4.3 Research Capability Strengthening (RCS)

Recommendations

a) Continued emphasis must be placed on research capability and institution strengthening in endemic countries; and

b) Towards the end of the four-year period, the strategic plan of the RSG should be reviewed to ensure its continued relevance.

5. Report of the STAC Subcommittee on Applied Field Research

Recommendations

STAC endorsed the main conclusions of the Committee and recommended that:

b) In accordance with its strategic plan for institutional strengthening approved by STAC-2, the RSG emphasize support for field research in institutions meeting the following criteria: a strong national commitment; a critical mass of competent people; appropriate administrative support and physical facilities; adequate links between field research activities, academic and national research institutes, and national disease control services; and national support for core field research activities;

d) Linkages between institutions in developing and developed countries should be encouraged in accordance with the criteria used by the RSG;

7. Programme Activities Over the Next Four-Year Period, 1982-85

Priorities

STAC noted with satisfaction that funds budgeted for Research Capability Strengthening in 1981 represent 23.3% of the total and 25.7% of operational funds. Of equal importance, the percentage of funds obligated up to 30 June 1981 to scientists from endemic countries is 56%. Over time, and commensurate with a growing capacity to utilize effectively additional resources, the percentage of funds allocated to Programme Area III should increase further. This will require STAC to monitor progress closely and to maintain a high priority for strengthening research capabilities in endemic countries. Towards the end of the four-year period, it will be advisable to review the strategic plan of the RSG, to ensure its continued relevance.

Field research must continue to be given high priority by SWGs and the RSG, and continuing attempts must be made to reduce identified impediments to its successful prosecution. Failure to do so would jeopardize the success of many aspects of the Special Programme.

8. Programme Budget

8.2 The overall level of funds allocated to Programme Area II and III must expand at least commensurate with inflation. Provisions must be made for ready adjustments within the Programme in order to exploit promising leads.

8.3 An additional professional staff member is required for Programme Area III.

8. STRC REPORT, RESEARCH CAPABILITY STRENGTHENING, 1981

1. Summary and General Recommendations

3. Implementation of Programme Activities

3.1 Institution Strengthening

During the second half of the first five-year plan, greater emphasis should be given to elicit proposals from endemic areas not yet receiving institutional support, to support institutions dealing with the major endemic disease in each area and, in general, to strengthen field research capabilities, especially epidemiology.

3.2 Research Training

Research training activities, being one of the main objectives of the Special Programme, should continue to be further developed.

3.3 Research Management and Evaluation

The STRC endorses the decision of STAC to review the activities of Programme Area III every five years and also endorses the RSG decision to review the Strategic Plan every two years.

3.4 Interaction Between Programme Areas II and III

This collaboration, however, requires further strengthening taking into consideration the distribution of RSG and SWG projects.

3.6 Financing

It is recommended that future Special Programme budgets allot an adequate percentage to Programme Area III.

9. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-4) - MARCH-APRIL 1982

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Committee:

- noted that, in accord with the policy adopted early in the life of TDR, the strengthening of research institutions has progressed as a phased operation beginning in Africa, which remains a high priority area, and progressively extending to other areas. This pattern of development should continue as planned under the RSG strategic plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Research and Development (Programme Area II)

STAC agreed in principle with the STRC reports on African Trypanosomiasis, Chagas' Disease, Biomedical Sciences and Research Capability Strengthening, but postponed decisions on budgetary forecasts until the meeting of STAC-5 in 1983. STAC made the following recommendations:

2.2 Research Capability Strengthening (Programme Area III)

a) Institutional strengthening and research training should continue to expand as planned, commensurate with national priorities and commitments, opportunities for research and the burden of the six diseases.

b) RSG should consider the need for continuation of long-term support to some institutions beyond an initial five-year period.

c) SWGs, in collaboration with the RSG, should identify more institutions in endemic countries with potential for research and training, with emphasis on field research.

d) Initiatives to improve managerial skills in supported institutions and to stimulate institutional collaboration should continue to be developed.

e) RSC should continue to monitor progress made in supported institutions and adjust monitoring techniques as necessary.

10. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-5) - MARCH 1983

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Committee:

- concluded that, in accordance with plans, continued progress had been made in strengthening research capabilities in developing endemic countries since the detailed review of this aspect of the Programme in 1981, and noted with satisfaction the growing interaction between Programme Areas II and III;

- reaffirmed its commitment to basic research as the foundation stone upon which scientific progress towards achievement of Programme objectives must be based, and recommended that by the end of the 1984-85 biennium, support for strengthening of institutions in tropical countries in relation to interdisciplinary basic biomedical research should be assumed by the Research Strengthening Group;

- made projections for Programme activities for the 1984-85 biennium, and proposed a detailed budget for that period of US\$ 60 546 million for the Research and Development and Research Capability Strengthening Programme Areas;

2. Recommendations

2.1 Research and Development (Programme Area II)

h) Biomedical Sciences

- the institution strengthening programme now being developed by the SWG on Biomedical Sciences should be incorporated into the activities of the Research Strengthening Group by the end of 1985;

2.2 Research Capability Strengthening (Programme Area III)

High priority should be given to further increasing the percentage of funds allocated to Programme Area III, commensurate with the identification of activity worthy of support.

10. Programme Activities Over the Next Four-Year Period, 1984-87

10.1.2 STAC noted the continued expansion of research activities in developing countries. The interaction between Programme Area II and Programme Area III has continued to strengthen. STAC accorded high priority to further increasing the percentage of funds allocated to Programme Area III, commensurate with the identification of activities worthy of support. In previous meetings (e.g., STAC-4), STAC and the STRC had examined mechanisms developed by the RSG for evaluating its activities. An update of progress in this area should be presented by the Director to STAC-6 for review and evaluation.

10.1.10 STAC concluded that by the end of the 1984-85 biennium, the support of laboratories in developing countries under the BIOS component should be assumed by the RSG.

11. Programme Budget

11.1 The budget reflects priorities outlined in Section 9. In short, these call for allocation of a somewhat higher absolute amount and percentage of available funds to Programme Area III.

11. SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (STAC-6) - APRIL 1984

1. Summary and Major Conclusions

The Committee made the following recommendations:

1.6 Research Capability Strengthening

STAC recommended the continuation of evaluation procedures currently utilized by the Research Strengthening Group (RSG). STAC also recommended certain changes in the operation of the RSG.

1.9 Programme Budget

For the remaining part of the 1984-85 biennium, Programme activities with the greatest disparity between allocated funds and opportunities for effective expenditure are:

- immunology of malaria;
- leprosy vaccine development; and
- training.

Approximately US\$ 500 000 could be effectively utilized in each of these activities in addition to the available or projected funds.

4.4 Scientific Working Group on Biomedical Sciences

The Committee concluded that given the current deep involvement of disease-specific SWGs in basic biomedical sciences, the SWG on Biomedical Sciences should be disestablished by the end of 1985. By that time the institutional strengthening and information exchange components of the BIOS programme should have been incorporated into the activities of the RSG.

4.5 Evaluation of Research Capability Strengthening

STAC examined evaluation procedures currently utilized by the RSG, considered them to be acceptable and recommended that they continue to be used.

4.6 Proposed Changes in the Operation of the Research Strengthening Group

STAC noted the recommendations by the RSG regarding its structure and functions and, in agreement with them, recommended:

- a) abolition of the Executive Sub-Group;

- b) reduction of the membership of the RSG from eighteen to twelve, while keeping its broad regional basis of representation;
- c) annual RSG meetings, with the possibility of additional meetings, if required; and
- d) co-option, as necessary, of members with specific experience for RSG meetings, especially for broad policy reviews.

12. REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE RESEARCH STRENGTHENING GROUP (RSG-9) - SEPTEMBER 1984 (DRAFT FORM)

2.4 Progress of Activities

2.4.2 It was decided that RSG evaluation of the institutions receiving long-term institutional strengthening grants would be carried out in the seventh year from the beginning of the grant period, which would give the institution one full year to assess the impact of the RSG grant on their development and time to prepare a comprehensive report.

3. In-depth Review of RSG Activities by the Scientific and Technical Review Committee (STRC)

All activities of the Special Programme are subject to periodic independent review by a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) which establishes a Scientific and Technical Review Committee (STRC) once every four years to conduct a thorough examination of each Programme component. The first such review of Research Capability Strengthening activities was held in early 1983, for the period 1977 to 1981. The next review for the period 1982 to 1984, will be held in 1985.*

* - Subsequent to the meeting it was decided, with the approval of the Chairman of the RSG, to postpone the STRC to 1986.

The group accepted the proposed outline of the report to STRC, and suggested that in that report an analysis be made of each institution's environment in which it was currently operating, including constraints. Special attention should be paid to the role of the institution in the national health development plan and its effectiveness in helping to strengthen less developed institutions in accordance with Phase 2 of RSG's Comprehensive Plan.

4. Relevance of Research Capability Strengthening Activities to the National Health Development Plans

As a matter of policy, it is clearly stated in the RSG Strategic Plan that research as carried out under institutional strengthening should assist disease control efforts and should be in consonance with the national health development process.

The RSG is keen on ensuring that this policy is followed and made the following recommendations:

- 1) The objectives of the Special Programme and its administrative and

managerial processes especially in the area of institutional strengthening as embodied in the Memorandum of Understanding should be explained to the Member States, research institutions and individuals in authority at every opportunity such as meetings of the Regional Committees, Regional ACMRs and Regional Meetings of WHO Programme Coordinators.

ii) All evaluations and review of RSG-supported activities should pay special attention to their relevance and actual integration or potential for integration into the national health development process. This recommendation should be brought to the attention of the next STRC for RSG activities. All proposals for institutional support should be carefully examined for relevance to national health plans as a precondition for support by the RSG.

5. Biomedical Sciences SWG (BIOS) and RSG Activities

The RSG realises the important role played by the recent developments in basic biological sciences in the performance of tropical diseases research in developing countries for the achievement of TDR's goals. Hence, in accordance with STAC's directive to transfer to the Research Strengthening Group (RSG) the responsibility for information exchange and institutional strengthening activities previously carried out by the Scientific Working Group on Biomedical Sciences (BIOS), the RSG will make every effort to promote in developing countries the utilization of the new techniques in basic biological sciences for the investigation of problems related to tropical diseases. In order to carry out this task, the RSG will adopt the following specific strategies:

5.1 Having noted that BIOS has already started the selection of a few centres in developing countries which have the potential for carrying out good basic science research, the RSG will look into the possibility of building such institutions further in order to have them play the role of key centres for the dissemination of the new technology.

5.2 The RSG will further assist in the transfer of these new technologies to the developing countries by following-up the activities initiated by BIOS and by providing appropriate support where necessary. It would also support selected basic science research within the developing countries being conducted by an individual or by the institution through its prevailing institution strengthening mechanisms.

5.3 The RSG notes that in 1986, at which time it will assume this added responsibility, there will be a need for additional financial allocation in order to continue the follow-up of projects previously initiated and funded by BIOS and for any new projects that may be initiated by RSG at that time.

5.4 The RSG welcomes the incorporation into its group of one or two members with specific expertise in the basic biological sciences.

6. Budgetary Matters and Priority Considerations for 1984-85

6.1 The RSG analyzed the budgetary situation and discussed a plan of action to be followed, based on priority considerations that were discussed. The RSG was informed that of the balance of US\$ 2 718 700 renewals for courses and institutional grants will amount to US\$ 1 839 500. This leaves a balance of US\$ 879 200. Of this amount US\$ 300 000 has to be set aside as forward commitments to the end of 1984 for training grants thus leaving an actual balance of US\$ 579 200 to be expended by RSG on possible new grants.

6.2 The RSG was informed that there are 32 training grants that have been approved but not funded in 1984. RSG recommended that two Visiting Scientists Grants and six Re-entry Grants be funded from the balance of US\$ 579 200. This brings the balance available in 1984 to US\$ 449 200.

6.3 In reviewing new project proposals for institutional grants, RSG shortlisted nine projects in two sets of priority. Project numbers 1 to 5 (Priority 1) should be considered for funding from 1984 funds and project numbers 6 to 9 (Priority 2) from 1985 funds. Thus with the remaining 1984 balance of US\$ 449 200, RSG agreed to recommend funding the first five of the priority projects to the amount of US\$ 407 700.

6.4 The RSG was informed that the estimated budget for 1985 is about the same as that which was approved for 1984.

6.5 In reviewing the 1985 budget and forward commitments, RSG recommended that four institutional grant proposals be funded as from July 1985 with uncommitted funds available for institutional strengthening in 1985. This amounts to US\$ 247 400. The RSG felt that postponement of funding the new institutional grants until July 1985 would ease the budgetary situation and at the same time assist the consideration of new projects. Additional forward commitments from these newly-approved grants would be about US\$ 500 000. This would mean that for RSG-10, which meets in August 1985, would have approximately US\$ 1 million available for consideration of new projects.

6.6 The seven new proposals that were deferred at RSG-9 will compete at RSG-10 with other new proposals that may be received during the forthcoming year.

6.7 Over the past few years the RSG has been conscious of its inability to fund several good proposals due to its limited annual budget. For example, during 1984, twenty-four research training grant proposals and seven institutional grant proposals were approved using strict criteria and high standards but could not be funded due to fiscal constraints. The RSG also drew attention to the serious retardation of progress of its strategic plan and to the stagnation in the development of institutional networks and consequent deleterious effects on disease control. In order to ease the prevailing pressure on RSG's limited funds, RSG-10 should make a careful examination of its proposal selection procedures and criteria for grant implementation procedures. In addition, during the forthcoming year the secretariat should exercise great care in selecting new institutions for research capability strengthening promotional activities.

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