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SIXTH GENERAL PROGRAMME OF WORK COVERING A SPECIFIC PERIOD (1978-1983)

GLOBAL MEDIUM-TERM PROGRAMME

FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

SECTION I
HEALTH INFORMATION

CHAPTER VI
WHO PUBLICATIONS AND DOCUMENTS



This document outlines the global medium-term programme for WHO publications and documents. The programme has been elaborated on the basis of the relevant principles of the Sixth General Programme of Work and policy guidance given by the Health Assembly and Regional Committee resolutions. The document represents a consolidation of the regional and HQ programmes.

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1. Introduction

The publications and documentation programme of the Organization is concerned mainly with

- (1) the translation, publication and distribution of periodicals and technical publications directly related to the Organization's goal of achieving health for all by the year 2000, and to primary health care;
- (2) the documentation of the Organization's governing bodies, its translation into the official languages of headquarters and the regional offices and, where publication is involved, its distribution to Member States and other interested parties;
- (3) the control of unpublished technical documentation; and
- (4) the elaboration of improved methods for the international transfer of health and biomedical information.

2. Policy basis

The publications programme has operated since the founding of the Organization, and the policy basis consists of a large number of resolutions, some dating from the Organization's earliest days. The policy on regional publications programmes is governed by the relevant resolutions of regional committees. Further information on the policy basis of the publications programme can be found in the programme profile.

3. Situation analysis

In the past, the programme has always emphasized the dissemination of texts on biomedical topics, but following the Health Assembly's resolutions on technical cooperation and health for all by the year 2000, and the Declaration of Alma-Ata, the programme is increasingly concentrating on texts dealing with subjects related to primary health care and health development.

If WHO is to transfer information that has practical value for countries in the solution of their health problems, it must - at the global, regional and national levels - have as clear an idea as possible of what the health and related information needs of countries actually are, and how these are evolving. But in view of the large number of Member States with widely varying conditions, investigating these needs is an immense task. Nevertheless, a start has been made, and considerable further progress is expected during the period covered by the medium-term programme.

4. Objectives and activities*

4.1 To provide the necessary documentation and records for the governing bodies

Documentation prepared for, and records of, the World Health Assembly, the Executive Board, and the regional committees

Basic Documents

Handbook of Resolutions and Decisions

* IARC also has an extensive publications programme. See WHO Catalogue of Publications.

4.2 To inform Member Governments, organizations within the United Nations system, nongovernmental organizations, and the public health professions about the work of WHO

Biennial Report of the Director-General
Reports of the regional directors
WHO Chronicle
PAHO Reports

4.3 To keep public health administrators and other health professionals aware of advances in the fields of public health and international health

Public Health Papers series
World Health Forum
Reports on the World Health Situation
WHO nonserial publications (see also 4.5)
WHO Offset Publications series (see also 4.5)
WHO technical documents, including regional documents (see also 4.5)
AFRO Technical Papers series (see also 4.4)
AFRO Health Developments
WHO Regional Publications (South-East Asia series; European series)
PAHO/AMRO Scientific Publications series (see also 4.5)
PAHO/AMRO Informes sobre Enfermería series
PAHO/AMRO Desarrollo de Recursos Humanos series
PAHO/AMRO Educación Médica y Salud
Public Health in Europe series

4.4 To publicize the findings of international groups of experts convened by WHO to provide the latest scientific and technical advice on biomedical and public health subjects

Technical Report Series
Environmental Health Criteria series
International Histological Classification of Tumours series
AFRO Technical Papers series (see also 4.3)
EURO Reports and Studies series
EMRO Technical Publications series

4.5 To keep scientists working in the biomedical field aware of advances in the scientific domain related to public health

Bulletin of the World Health Organization
WHO Offset Publications series (see also 4.3)
WHO Monograph series
WHO nonserial publications (see also 4.3)
WHO technical documents, including regional documents (see also 4.3)
Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana
Bulletin of the Pan American Health Organization
PAHO/AMRO Scientific Publications series (see also 4.3)
PAHO/AMRO Serie Técnica de Ingeniería y Ciencias del Ambiente

4.6 To keep public health administrators and health statisticians informed about epidemiological and health statistical data gathered by WHO

Weekly Epidemiological Record¹
PAHO Epidemiological Bulletin (bimonthly)
World Health Statistics Quarterly²
World Health Statistics Annual²
Digest of European Health Statistics

¹ For further details, see programme 4.1.1 (Epidemiological Surveillance).

² For further details, see programme 7.1.1 (Health Statistics).

4.7 To assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health

World Health¹
Salud Panamericana

4.8 To give the most relevant information the widest possible dissemination. To this end, WHO issues publications in its working languages and encourages publication in other languages. Use is also made of outside publishers, resulting in the improved distribution of specialized works or a substantial reduction in the cost of production.

5. Approaches

Efforts are being made to examine the impact of the whole range of WHO publications and documentation at the headquarters and regional levels through such methods as surveys and contacts at the national, regional and global levels. On the basis of the results of these enquiries, appropriate changes and measures will be carried out, and workable methods will be devised to ensure a continuous feedback on the usefulness of publications and documents and how to improve them.

The feasibility study on the production of a new international journal of public health has been completed, and such a journal has been launched - World Health Forum: An international journal of health development. It has attempted to fill the demonstrated need for a vehicle providing reliable, up-to-date and practical information on problems confronting health planners and policy-makers, health administrators and educators, and public health workers in general, especially those in developing countries. It will also attempt to stimulate new thinking by providing a platform for the exchange of ideas.

To ensure that books and journals produced by WHO correspond to the technical cooperation and information transfer requirements of Member States, manuscripts and articles will be increasingly selected in accordance with the strict criteria of relevance to the needs of developing countries, the promotion of primary health care, and the attainment of health for all by the year 2000. Accordingly, more manuscripts and articles will be reviewed by outside experts, especially those in developing countries, and careful editing and translating will ensure that the content is clear to readers, including those whose mother tongue is not one of the languages in which publication is proposed.

The publications listed above are all published by WHO itself. In order to share the costs of production or improve the commercial distribution of specific books, texts are also published on behalf of WHO, or copublished with WHO, by government publishers, nongovernmental organizations, WHO collaborating centres, and academic or commercial publishers. The distribution of such books is usually the responsibility of the publisher, but may be shared between the publisher and WHO. A number of programmes use such arrangements, including programmes 3.2.3 (Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction), 4.1.6 (Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases), and 6.1.3 (Education Development and Support).

The starting or expansion of regional publications programmes will be encouraged. Regional offices will in general publish material especially applicable to their own region and will fund their programmes from the regular and extrabudgetary sources available to them.

At present, publications are issued by WHO in all six working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) together with Portuguese in AMRO and AFRO and German in EURO. The WHO/PAHO Publications and Documentation Center (SEPU) in Mexico City is now

¹ For further details, see programme 7.1.5 (Health Information of the Public).

responsible for the bulk of WHO and PAHO technical publications in Spanish. Plans are well advanced for the establishment of an Arab Centre for Health Documentation and Publications in one of the Arab States under the auspices of the Council of Arab Ministers of Health. It is expected that inter alia this Centre will assume in the field of Arabic publications responsibilities similar to those of SEPU for Spanish in close cooperation with WHO. In addition, a programme of technical publications in Chinese will be instituted.

In order to widen further the readership of WHO publications, Member States and appropriate organizations and institutions will be encouraged to undertake the translation and publication of WHO texts in languages other than those in which WHO is publishing them, e.g., Malay, Swahili, Tamil, etc.

Efforts will be continued to make the distribution methods for WHO publications as efficient and economical as possible: by computerization of certain aspects of the work; by decentralization to regional offices as far as possible; by improving the distribution network; and by further adjusting the price of publications to the purchasing power in individual countries.