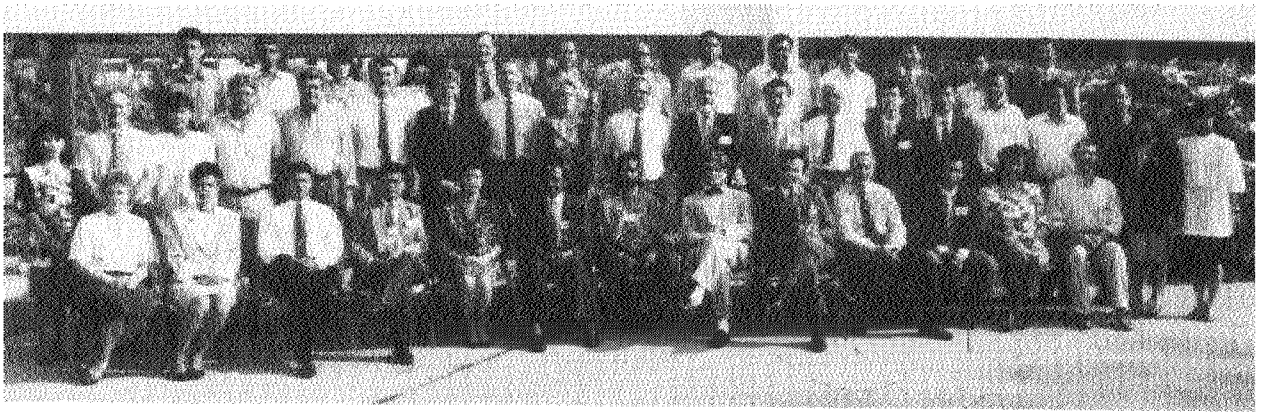

Bangkok, Thailand. Participants at the Asia-Pacific Workshop for National Health Emergency Managers, 22-26 February 1993. (WHO)

Institute for Technology from 22 to 26 February, in Bangkok, Thailand, was organized by EPP, in collaboration with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre. Participants from 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region were joined by leading emergency management specialists from universities and scientific institutions around the world, as well as WHO emergency preparedness and response experts based in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Middle East.

Discussions reflected the broad range of concerns of emergency health managers in the region. Among the topics explored were disaster epidemiology, the medical chain of care, hospital management, nutrition, environmental health, medical supply management, health issues for displaced groups, and health aspects of technological disasters. Management issues were examined in sessions on logistical management, health sector planning, multisectoral planning, and coordination with international organizations.

It is estimated that the frequency of natural disasters has nearly quadrupled in the last 30 years. In 1991 the main share of recorded disasters, deaths and economic losses took place in the Asia-Pacific region. Most dramatic was the loss of lives in 1991: of the over 162 000 people around the world killed that year by natural disasters, over 159 000 were estimated to have been killed in the Asia-Pacific region. The Bangladesh cyclone alone killed 140 000 people, and summer floods in China killed nearly 3 100 people and caused $15 000 million in economic losses.

Emergency Preparedness and Planning Workshop for French-speaking African Countries

(17-21 May 1993, Tangier, Morocco)

EPP, in collaboration with the Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response and the Ministry of Public Health, Morocco, organized a regional workshop for emergency managers in francophone African countries, which was held in Tangier, Morocco from 17 to 21 May 1993.

The major objectives of the workshop were to sensitize these countries on the magnitude and extent of emergencies in Africa, as well as the importance of developing national emergency preparedness plans. The workshop was attended by national Emergency and Humanitarian Action (EHA) focal points from 17 different African countries.

Among the workshop's recommendations were that each Member State should strengthen or revise its national emergency plan, that the WHO regional offices for Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean Region should each reserve a budget line for EPP programmes and projects in Member States on the African continent; that each Member State should have a national budget line reserved for emergency situations, and that each should evaluate regularly national International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) activities.

Meeting of the Interagency Task Force on the Continuum from Relief to Development

(16-17 November 1993, Villars, Switzerland)

The second meeting of the Working Group of the Interagency Task Force on the Continuum from Relief to Development was held in Villars, Switzerland from 16 to 17 November 1993. Thirty-six representatives of UN agencies attended the session, as well as representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and from the Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies in Geneva. The meeting was chaired by the Director of the Humanitarian Programme of the United Nations Develop-

Tangier, Morocco. Participants at the Emergency Preparedness and Planning Workshop for Francophone African Countries, 17-21 May 1993. (WHO)

ment Programme (UNDP), while members of his staff acted as facilitators.

In July 1993 the Secretary General's Report to the 48th General Assembly highlighted the need for a coordinated approach to emergencies by the United Nations system. An Interagency Task Force on the Continuum from Relief to Development was thus set up under the chairmanship of the UNDP. The Task Force is expected to produce its report for the General Assembly in the spring of 1994. The first meeting of the working group was held in New York in October 1993. The second meeting was held in Villars, Switzerland in November 1993.

The plenary recognized that more needs to be known about how to measure vulnerability, and that efforts need to be made to address this issue scientifically. To address the problem, EPP proposed that the 1995 theme of the UNDP's *Human Development Report* be devoted to the issue of "emergencies and vulnerability", and that a new table be added to the existing list of indicators that would rank nations according to their vulnerability status. This suggestion was generally supported.

Delegates agreed that the principle objective of preparedness programmes was to reduce vulnerability of a country to disasters, and therefore all development projects should include a component of vulnerability reduction in their activities. It was recognized that there was no mechanism for the United Nations and other development agencies to relate all development projects to each other to assess their overall impact of vulnerability to disasters.

The importance of capacity building was stressed with a cautionary note that capacity should be matched to what a country can afford to sustain. Delegates noted that the United Nations should also build up the capacity of indigenous NGOs where they existed, and that in newly emerging democracies, building up capacity and competence in official opposition parties was also needed.

Delegates agreed that the UN system, as it was currently constituted, was not responding adequately to emergencies and disasters. It was agreed that: (a) whatever the forum decided, unless the whole UN system could be reformed to meet the political, economic and social realities of the present day, nothing would come of their efforts; (b) to properly address the problems of complex emergencies, the issue of national sovereignty needed to be re-addressed by the Security Council; and (c) to better cope with emergencies, a mechanism needed to be established that would allow field staff from UN agencies to divert funds from their regular budgets so that they could provide immediate relief. Mechanisms were also needed to allow the UN system to deal quickly and efficiently with NGOs in both emergency preparedness and response

Other meetings and workshops in 1993

EPP served as a facilitator to the International Workshop on Emergency Preparedness and Response for Southern African Countries, which was held in Banet, Zimbabwe in October 1993. It also convened a meeting with representatives from the Disaster and Emergency Reference Centre (DERC) of Delft University, the Netherlands, to explore cooperation, especially as regards training and applied research. It was agreed that after further consultation with the University, DERC should apply for status as a WHO collaborating centre.

EPP attended a meeting with the Director of the Pan-African Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, in Addis Ababa in October 1993. This meeting was to review the work of the Centre and to discuss the African Emergency Management project, which was initiated by the Centre and coordinated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

In November 1993, together with PAHO/WHO, EPP attended, on behalf of WHO, an International Conference on IDNDR in Nagoya, Japan (30 October – 5 November 1993) and participated in many of the conference's sessions. EPP also visited JICA in Tokyo to discuss ways and means of obtaining more support for WHO's emergency preparedness activities.

EPP also visited in November the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) in Manila, Philippines as well as Bangkok, Thailand and Cairo, Egypt. At WPRO, EPP conducted a briefing on disaster management for WHO representatives (WRs) in the region. The mission also gave the opportunity to review cooperation between WHO headquarters and WPRO and to discuss with WRs their country activities. As a result of the discussions, it was proposed to initiate emergency preparedness and response (EPR) programmes, possibly in late 1994, in four countries of the region (China, the Philippines, Samoa and Viet Nam).

In Cairo, EPP served as a facilitator to a national multisectoral Conference on Emergency Management in Egypt, which was jointly sponsored by WHO and ICDO.

Consultations were held in New York in December with the WHO-UN Office (WUN), UNDP and DHA. At WUN, ongoing activities related to EHA were reviewed, including ways to strengthen the position of WUN in regard to emergency preparedness and response. It was suggested that the exchange of information between headquarters and WUN on these issues should be intensified. WUN should be invited to attend important working sessions at headquarters

At the UNDP, EPP's participation in the Paris meeting in December 1993 on the "continuum from relief to development" and EPP's position on this issue, were discussed with UNDP's Humanitarian Division. The UNDP's Disaster Management Training Programme (DMTP) was also discussed, and it is foreseen that EPP will participate more actively in this exercise The planned training diploma course in Emergency Planning and Management, to be held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1995, was brought up and it was suggested that the course could be considered as a continuation of DMTP at sectoral level.

Discussions were also held with the UNDP African Regional Office on the Pan-African Centre's new initiative with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in emergency management in Africa. It was agreed that whenever necessary, the UNDP Regional Office in Africa should be involved and kept informed on this issue.

Also in December, in Washington, D.C., EPP discussions with the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Relief Coordination Programme (PED) of PAHO/WHO dwelt on the collaboration between EPP and PED on the SUMA project. It was agreed that EPP would develop SUMA to become an instrument for logistic management at country level. This would be initially implemented within the context of the Bangladesh EPR programme, and a consultant would go to Bangladesh for two to three months to develop the project.

EPP missions undertaken

Among the many missions that EPP undertook in 1993 was a mission to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India from 2 to 25 October 1993, as well as one to Burundi from 3 to 14 November 1993.

Bangladesh

The first version of Bangladesh's 1994 plan of action (POA) for emergencies was drawn up in consultation with WHO's implementing partners, the Emergency Cell in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. New guidelines on how to construct POAs were given. The plan will cover two years of activities by the Cell. Some of those activities will be funded by the balance of the $544 000, which is an Italian contribution to WHO for EPR activities in Bangladesh.

A short-term consultant began work in late September on a three-month consultancy to develop a

national logistics network for the Ministry of Health. He will evaluate the usefulness of the software program mentioned earlier that was developed by PAHO/WHO called SUMA. If he finds it useful in Bangladesh, WHO/EHA/EPP and PAHO/WHO/PED will collaborate in sending an expert to travel from PAHO to Bangladesh to install the software program and train local staff.

Efforts will be made to involve WHO in the joint UNICEF/UNDP project for developing high-level coordination bodies for emergencies and disasters.

Myanmar

WHO funded a short survey to develop a profile of the smallest unit in the country's administrative framework, namely, the township. This profile will be used as a model for developing a comprehensive country profile of Myanmar for emergency services, including national planners. The cost of this survey was $2 000 and is being funded from the Italian contribution.

India

EHA's focal point left the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO) in September to return to Sweden, and there is an acting focal point in her place until a new person can be appointed.

Burundi

A joint WHO/DHA mission to Burundi was undertaken from 3 to 14 November 1993. An assessment was done on the health needs and a consolidated appeal was formulated. The appeal was presented to the local donor community in Bujumbura, the capital, and at a later stage in Geneva. A mission report was written and approved by the WHO Assistant Director-General concerned.

Training

Among a number of training exercises conducted or assisted by EPP in 1993 was one that stemmed from an invitation received from the University of Monastir in Tunisia, to attend that country's first national course in Disaster Medicine organized by the University. During the course, EPP gave a presentation on the role of WHO in disaster management, as well as conducted a series of conferences on counter-disaster planning at all levels.

Interdivisional and interagency collaboration

In 1993 EPP continued to collaborate with a number of WHO programmes and divisions (e.g., Global Task Force on Cholera Control, the Action Programme on Essential Drugs (DAP), Diarrhoeal Disease Control (CDD), Family Planning and Population (FPP), Nutrition (NUT), Division of Environmental Health (EHE), as well as other agencies (e.g., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), DHA, ICDO, IFRC, UNDP and UNICEF) in collaborative activities, including co-authoring a number of publications and manuals (see below).

Publications and documents

The following publications, written or co-authored by WHO, are expected to be published in 1994 or early 1995:

- ***Community emergency preparedness manual.*** This manual is in the process of being revised and is expected to be finalized by late 1994 or early 1995. It is a WHO/ICDO/IFRC joint publication. Its target audience is frontline health workers and civil defense rescue workers, and its main objective is to standardize and better coordinate relief and rescue efforts, when seconds are vital in a rescue effort. It will also serve as a guide to communities that must plan and manage emergency medical services and oversee public health issues in disaster-vulnerable areas.
- ***Management of nutritional emergencies in large populations.*** WHO coordinated the revision of this manual, which is a joint WHO/UNHCR/IFRC publication, expected to be printed in mid to late 1994.
- ***Environmental health manual for emergencies.*** This is also a joint publication of WHO's Environmental Health Division (now the Office of Global and Integrated Environmental Health), WHO/EPP, IFRC and UNHCR. The manual is expected to be published in late 1994.
- ***Rapid assessment protocols.*** These nine booklets were developed in close consultation with several WHO collaborating centres, and the publication serves as a tool to rapidly assess the immediate and potential impact of a broad range of emergencies. Their subject matter ranges from: (i) a general introduction to rapid