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REPORT OF THE SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON WOMEN, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization, at its XXVII Meeting (1980), recommended, in Resolution XVII, the creation of a Special Subcommittee of the Executive Committee on Women, Health and Development to examine the World Plan of Action proposed by the Conference of Copenhagen and to prepare an implementation plan specifically adapted to the health needs of women in this Region.

This Subcommittee elaborated a Regional Five-Year Plan of Action on Women in Health and Development (WHD) and formulated the Regional Strategies for the Future for the Program on Women, Health and Development, which were approved by the XXII Pan American Sanitary Conference in Resolution CSP22.R12 (1986).

The Special Subcommittee of the Executive Committee on WHD meets annually to monitor and evaluate the activities of the Program and to recommend actions in this area.

The present document provides, for the information of the Executive Committee, the Final Report of the Meeting of the Special Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development held in Washington, D.C., from 11 to 13 April 1989. The agenda of the Meeting included, among other items, discussion on the Regulations of the Special Subcommittee on WHD; the report of the WHD Program activities for 1988-1989; the presentation of the Project "Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama and Belize" and two related studies, as well as other projects associated with WHD; the analysis of the revised document on the "Structure and Functions of the National Focal Point of the Program on Women, Health and Development"; and the report of the Subcommittee on Women of the PAHO Staff Association. A proposed resolution is annexed for the consideration of the 103rd Meeting of the Executive Committee.

Annex

FINAL REPORT
OF THE
SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON WOMEN, HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT
TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C.

11-13 April 1989

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FINAL REPORT
OF THE SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON
WOMEN, HEALTH, AND DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Special Subcommittee on Women, Health, and Development met from 11 to 13 April 1989 in Washington, D.C., in order to examine the progress of the Program on Women, Health, and Development (WHD) and to propose orientations for future activities in that Program.

The Subcommittee was composed of representatives from Canada, El Salvador, Uruguay, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela. In addition to the members of the Subcommittee, UNICEF and the Inter-American Commission of Women (ICW) participated as observers.

The meeting opened with words of welcome from the Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, who praised the Special Subcommittee on Women, Health, and Development for its participation and collaboration in furthering the work of WHD in the Member Countries.

The delegates from Canada, Venezuela, and El Salvador were elected President, Vice President, and Rapporteur, respectively. The agenda adopted by the Subcommittee covered, among other topics, the rules of procedure of the Subcommittee, a review of the activities of the Program on Women, Health, and Development, 1988-1989, the presentation of the Subregional Project "Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama, and Belize" and other ongoing PAHO studies, a review of the document "Structure and Functions of the National Focal Point for the Program on Women, Health, and Development," and a report by the PAHO Staff Association's Subcommittee on Women.

A. RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Rules of Procedure of the Special Subcommittee on Women, Health, and Development were discussed and adopted, after some amendments had been introduced (Annex 3).

B. ACTIVITIES OF THE PROGRAM ON WOMEN, HEALTH, AND DEVELOPMENT (WHD), 1988-1989

The Regional Adviser presented the report on: 1) the activities carried out in cooperation with the technical programs and units of PAHO in relation to the Regional Strategies for WHD; and 2) the specific activities of the Program on Women, Health, and Development that were carried out during 1988-1989. (For the complete Report, see Annex 4).

Details are presented below on the studies that were discussed during the sessions of the Subcommittee, as well as on the situation of WHD research at PAHO and on the revision of the document "Structure and Functions of the

National Focal Point." In addition a Draft Resolution is to be presented for the consideration of the Executive Committee. Attached as annexes to the Final Report of the Subcommittee are the Rules of Procedure of the Subcommittee (Annex 3), the Report of the Program on Women, Health, and Development (Annex 4), the reformulated document on the "Structure and Functions of the National Focal Point/Group" (Annex 5), the Draft Resolution (Annex 6), and the Report of the Subcommittee on Women of the PAHO Staff Association (Annex 7).

C. PRESENTATION OF SPECIFIC STUDIES:

C.1 Project on "Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama, and Belize"

This Project, which comes under the Plan for Priority Health Needs in Central America and Panama, constituted the main document analyzed by the Subcommittee, in consideration of the strategic value that it has in helping PAHO cooperation for the countries of Central America to better reflect reality in its understanding of and approach to the situation of women in the subregion.

There was a detailed presentation on the background of the Project, as well as a description of the problem, motives, objectives, strategies, and activities. In addition, reference was made to the Project's institutional framework, coordination with international agencies, and relationship with other projects which will make it possible for the WHD Project as a whole to be made operational.

The more important aspects pointed out during the deliberations included the following:

- . Recognition and support for the efforts and initiative of the Organization in originating an integrated project directed toward facilitating the incorporation of women into the development process in the Central American area, with the precedent that this Project establishes for dealing with the problems of women in other subregions.
- . The fact that the Project has significant potential impact, since it will affect human groups characterized by the extreme poverty that is linked to the political situation across the entire Central American Isthmus.
- . The fact that although the Project could be improved, it is comprehensive thus providing orientation to both PAHO and the governments in the areas of health, education, and employment, and giving a direction to their activities.

- . Recognition that the three sectors included in the Project--health, employment, and education, and their interrelationships in particular--are fundamental to understanding and addressing the problem of women and their relation to development.
- . The fact that the Project is "catalytic" for the purposes of medium- and long-term structural changes, and that women's programs should be viewed as such. The four-year duration of the Project in terms of follow-up and evaluation serves, among other things, to increase levels of awareness as well as to mobilize national institutions, among others, to obtain statistics that are broken down by sex, in such a way that information on Women, Health, and Development can be made available on a permanent basis.
- . Recognition that the entire participatory process of project preparation has helped to create greater awareness and a more critical approach among the countries of the subregion with regard to the situation of women.
- . The fact that PAHO, through its encouragement of meetings as well as the multiagency and multisectoral approach of the Project, has set a precedent in how to conceive of the problems of women in a coordinated fashion.
- . The importance of having this type of project, which initiates medium- and long-term structural changes in the situation of women, focus on and generate activities that have a broad scope.
- . The need to conduct periodic monitoring and evaluation in order to detect any advances achieved by the Project, as well as to measure its impact on the population of women.
- . The importance of determining and/or supplementing indicators that provide precise information on women's health status.
- . The importance of initiating the subregional project with the health component, since, despite the limitations of that sector, it has more readily available indicators on women than the educational and employment sectors.
- . The expectation that preparation of the first phase of this Project--the health component--will increase interest among contributors, thus making the entire project more viable.
- . The importance of keeping the National Focal Points/Groups for the WHD Program and the members of the Special Subcommittee on WHD in particular continuously informed about the evolution of the Project.

C.1.1 Feasibility Study for the Central American Information Network on Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama, and Belize

This study, which comes under the Project "Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama, and Belize" and addresses its Objective 1 in particular (to help increase and improve the availability and quality of information at the subregional, national, and population levels in order to provide knowledge of the employment, education, and health conditions of the population of women, and to make it possible to plan activities, as well as to measure, follow up, and evaluate any changes in those conditions), is the basis for execution of the entire Project. During the meeting of the Subcommittee there was a discussion concerning the importance of this type of study, and it was recognized that knowledge of the status of information supply and demand is key to defining the specific statistical data that will be required in order to carry out the various project activities.

It was proposed in addition that the methodology used in this type of study could, due to its experimental nature, provide a base for finding out about information on WHD in the other subregions.

The Latin American Center for Demography (CELADE) is supporting PAHO, as a part of a biagency cooperation activity, in the accomplishment of this important study.

C.1.2 Study on the Participation of Women in Management of the Health Services Structure in Central America, Panama, Belize, and the Dominican Republic

This study, being carried out in coordination with the Program for Health Services Development, is one of those that respond to the priorities expressed on various occasions by the Subcommittee. Its findings will help to promote women's participation at the decision-making level of the health sector, and at the same time could be useful for implementation of the Project "Women in Health and Development in Central America, Panama, and Belize."

Strengthening of Health Services is one of the priority areas of the Plan for Priority Health Needs in Central America and Panama, and in keeping with the regional policies of UNDP in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1987-1991, the Project on Development of Managerial Capacity in the Health Services in Central America and Panama was created as a response to the objective needs of each country, within the framework of the global and subregional policies currently being implemented for the development of operational capacity in the Health Services.

The study is directed toward determining the position of women at the different managerial levels--policy-making (political), administrative, and operational--as well as their educational and occupational profiles.

The study has shown the lack of participation by women at higher levels, in addition to a lack of access to decision-making levels in the Health Services. An analysis of the situation has revealed that there is a lack of knowledge of the amount of managerial participation by women in the health sector, and that in the countries studied (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic), this lack of participation in high-level management has not been recognized as a problem.

With a view to promoting information about women's participation in management, analyzing that information, and formulating proposals for action in this area, the countries are conducting their own studies. Subsequently, at an event programmed for the month of June 1989 and in conjunction with the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE), the countries will analyze their situation and propose plans of action to increase women's influence in Health Services management.

The Subcommittee recommended that:

- . The Governments of the Member States take measures to facilitate women's access to high-level positions within the structure of the Health Services.
- . The legality of women's rights in the health sector be established so as to ensure implementation of the mechanisms necessary for their equitable participation in that sector.
- . The importance and objectives of the Project be duly appreciated, and that it be used to seek out suitable mechanisms for increasing the political will to place women in positions of leadership.

C.2 Use of Technology in the Integral Health of Women

This study Project, undertaken in cooperation with the Program for Health Policies Development, with the support of other related programs within PAHO, was presented for the information of the Subcommittee in view of the interest that body expressed in Resolution VI of the XXXIII Meeting of the PAHO Directing Council. There was a detailed analysis of the first phase of the Project and of the activities to be carried out in the immediate future.

Various proposals were made which should be useful for the continuation of the Project.

The Subcommittee recommended that, in addition to those technologies directed toward the physical health of women, attention should be directed to the study of technologies related to their overall well-being and living conditions, (such as their environment--i.e., sanitation, solid waste treatment, services to dwellings, etc.) and that access to such technologies should be examined among groups of women having limited socioeconomic resources. It was also recommended that a study be carried out on the specific technologies that pertain to Women, Health, and Development.

C.3 Documentation System on Basic Legislation in the Health Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean

This documentation system provides a mechanism for the collection, classification, and dissemination of health legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean, and its objective is to promote analysis of that legislation, to determine advances and gaps, and to encourage, as far as possible, establishment of the standards necessary to improve, among other objectives, the health and living conditions of women.

In view of the importance that a legislative strategy has in improving the quality of life for women, and in allowing them to be involved in the development process, emphasis was placed on the need, not only to encourage the establishment of legislation directed toward those ends, but also to make its fulfillment a reality.

D. OTHER MATTERS:

D.1 Progress Report on the Situation of Research related to Women, Health, and Development at PAHO

The Unit on Research Coordination presented detailed information on the status of research at PAHO, with particular emphasis on WHD. It

was mentioned that, although a line of research in this area was created in 1988 in order to promote and facilitate the development of comprehensive research proposals for the countries, so far there has not been a satisfactory response in terms of quality and quantity of proposals. However, it was pointed out that it is significant that PAHO is continuing to encourage the countries in their preparation of methodologically sound research proposals that take into account the concept of Women, Health, and Development.

The discussion on this topic led to several recommendations, notably:

- . That PAHO strengthen the countries' capacity to generate, prepare, and conduct research on WHD and be flexible on standards where possible.
- . That terms of reference and comprehensive research guidelines for WHD be developed as a support for the countries in their presentation of proposals.
- . That research groups operating in universities, research centers, and other institutions be identified as a source of support for the countries in their preparation of proposals.
- . That the specific characteristics of research on WHD be identified with regard to research methodologies, characteristics of groups of researchers and institutions devoted to the topic, ways of disseminating and utilizing knowledge, etc., so that mechanisms of promotion and support that are adapted to these characteristics may be established.
- . That research be promoted as a means of increasing awareness in institutions and the community with regard to implementation of the WHD approach.
- . That national institutions be mobilized to establish and compile data that is broken down by sex.
- . That research be conducted which establishes a balance among the actions carried out by the health sector and the other development sectors in order to facilitate implementation of the WHD approach as a whole.

D.2 Revision of the Document "Structure and Functions of the National Focal Point for the Program on Women, Health, and Development"

The opinion was expressed that the structure of the National Focal Points varies according to each country's modus operandi with regard to the topic of women. The delegates to the Subcommittee agreed in general that operation of the NFPs may have been restricted for the following reasons, among others:

- . The prevailing understanding of women's health thus far in the countries has principally been tied to their reproductive function and/or other very specific health activities. This fact has biased the planning and development of actions aimed at improving the health condition of women, with the result that the importance of comprehensive health care has not been realized. Such a lack of understanding hinders implementation of the objectives and goals of the Program on Women, Health and Development.
- . There are major limitations on the time allotted to carrying out activities in fulfillment of the objectives of the Program on Women, Health and Development, when the NFPs carry out various activities that are directed toward the population as a whole and in which WHD is just one task among many.
- . Changes related to the political and administrative situations in some of the countries noticeably influence the establishment and performance of the National Focal Points, preventing continuity in their activities thus hindering attainment of the Program objectives.
- . Although some countries have an institutional infrastructure which in theory would make it possible to implement the Program's comprehensive approach, in actual practice operations are restricted by the lack of a clear idea among the different sectors, nongovernmental agencies, and international agencies as to how to design a concerted plan of action.
- . In Canada, in contrast to the other countries on the Subcommittee, the National Focal Point operates on a coordinated and interrelated basis with the Social Security social services and Health Services. The Focal Point is situated in the Department of National Health and Welfare and works collaboratively with other federal departments and provincial Departments of Health through interlocking membership on committee.

The Subcommittee recommended:

- . That each country strengthen the National Focal Point/Group by ensuring resources for its leadership role in harmonizing interdisciplinary and multisectoral efforts to achieve the goals of WHD.

- . That the National Focal Point/Group, where it exists, be coordinated by a person who is devoted full-time to promoting, coordinating, and carrying out the activities of the Program on Women, Health and Development.
- . That activities be carried out to sensitize the Ministers of Health and other high national authorities in other sectors and agencies with regard to the Program on Women, Health and Development.
- . That the PAHO/WHO Country Representative Offices facilitate the resources that the WHD Focal Point needs so as to be able to perform the functions and thus become a true resource in support of the National Focal Point/Group and the activities of the Program.

E. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- . That the agenda for the Subcommittee on Planning include an item on Women, Health and Development which will permit the Special Subcommittee on Women, Health and Development to participate in analyzing the topic of women within the Organization and preparing a joint recommendation by both Subcommittees for the consideration of the Executive Committee.
- . That both PAHO and UNICEF, in reviewing the Letter of Intent from both organizations, determine a specific budget with a technical and a financial heading for each activity related to women within the various programs.
- . That there be support for the Organization's decision to hold internal technical discussions to analyze the concept of Women, Health, and Development, and make it operational.

The Subcommittee expressed its recognition of the important role played by Dr. Elsa Moreno as President of the Director's Internal Advisory Committee.