

## Research Promotion and Development

The Regional Office initiated action to operationalize its research programme in accordance with the strategy endorsed by the Advisory Committee on Health Research (SEA/ACHR) at its nineteenth session held in April 1993. This strategy was also issued as a WHO/SEARO Technical Publication, "Health Research Strategies for the South-East Asia Region", in early 1994.

The twentieth session of the SEA/ACHR, held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, from 11 to 15 April 1994, discussed the subjects of Health Policy Research, Strategies for Research on Behavioural Aspects of Health and Guidelines for the Assessment, Development and Transfer of Appropriate Diagnostic Technology. The SEA/ACHR observed that there is an urgent need to sensitize health policy makers and managers to the changing emphasis in terms of health research priorities as reflected in the recommendations of the global and regional ACHR.

Several recommendations were made on the subjects taken up for technical discussion, including health policy research. It was noted that health policy analysis is urgently needed for making adjustments in health as well as development policies in order to respond to the changing economic, social, political, technological and epidemiological scenario in the Region.

In view of the major public health problem in the SEA Region caused by the rapid evolution and spread of chloroquine-resistant and multidrug-resistant *P.falciparum* malaria, a long-term multicentre collaborative research programme has been initiated with the aim of developing and validating technical and operational guidelines for retarding the further evolution of *P.falciparum* drug resistance and its containment. A multicentre field study has also commenced in India, Sri Lanka and Thailand to validate a newly developed dip-stick method to detect *P.falciparum* malaria.

In Indonesia, together with the National Institute of Health Research and Development (and its affiliated research centres), a joint review was undertaken. A similar review of WHO's collaboration was also initiated in Myanmar. *The purpose of these reviews is to provide national authorities and WHO with information on, among other things, whether the programme has contributed to the overall development of research in the country; the extent to which the programme has served to accomplish the objectives of the national health research policies; the cost-effectiveness of the different components of the programme and its strengths and weaknesses, and the degree to which the RPD programme has contributed to health development in the country through the utilization of research results.*

Technical and financial support for dengue vaccine development at Mahidol University, Thailand, was continued. At the last meeting of the Peer Review group it was concluded that *the formulation of a tetravalent vaccine for children required additional refinements.* A consultation for research on the public/private mix of human resources for health was held in December 1993. The meeting recommended that WHO support the countries in establishing information systems and conducting research to obtain information to formulate policies for establishing a health system providing equity, efficiency and quality through a proper private/public mix.

At the Third Meeting of the SEA Nutrition Research-cum-Action Network, a strategic plan for future activities was developed. The short to medium-term programme up to the year 2000 will lay emphasis on protein-energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Behavioural research will be employed as an approach to solve these nutritional problems.

Direct support to research was provided for projects on HIV infection; treatment of drug-resistant *P.falciparum* malaria; the *influence of reservoirs of malaria infection (both asymptomatic and symptomatic)* in transmission dynamics; tuberculosis; leptospirosis; self-care practices; studies on the elderly; variations in the biochemical, electrophoretic and biological properties of Russell's viper venom; nutrition, and traditional medicine.

Activities pertaining to research capability strengthening included the improvement of national mechanisms for research coordination; support for the development of infrastructure facilities; and provision of Visiting Scientists Grants, Research Training Grants, etc. Currently medical research councils or analogous bodies function in nine out of the eleven countries of the Region, though at varying levels of efficiency. At present there are 77 WHO collaborating centres in the SEA Region representing a wide spectrum of specialities. During the period under review, new collaborating centres were designated in the fields of health economics and health communication.

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## 8 General Health Protection and Promotion

During the year, the Nutrition Research and Development Centre, Bogor, Indonesia, took over as the Secretariat of the South-East Asia Nutrition Research-cum-Action Network from the Institute of Nutrition, Mahidol University (INMU), Thailand. Behavioural research techniques were developed and a draft manual was under preparation. The projects in the four WHO collaborating centres progressed well and the staff supported national projects in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives. The Network Newsletter continued to be published and distributed widely by the Secretariat; feedback indicates that this journal helps in disseminating nutrition information to a group with no previous access to such information.

### **Nutrition**

In collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, a bi-regional meeting was organized in Manila to discuss the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes. Before the meeting, the participating countries reviewed their respective national situations according to a common format. Most countries are, after more than a decade