

The WHO/UNDP Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases

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The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases has for its objective the improvement of methods to combat diseases in tropical countries. The Programme may involve any country in the world that can contribute to its activities in research and development.

Initially, the Programme is concerned with six diseases, or groups of diseases, namely, malaria, schistosomiasis, filariasis, trypanosomiasis (both African and American), leprosy, and leishmaniasis. It will attack these diseases on a broad front with emphasis on: research and development to obtain new and improved tools for control; operational research to find out how best to use the tools; and research on the epidemiological and socioeconomic aspects of the diseases, and their control in tropical communities. The Special Programme will link this

attack on the six diseases with measures to improve the ability of the tropical countries themselves to tackle their disease problems.

Research in the Special Programme is guided by leading scientists formed into scientific working groups. These groups are also responsible for ensuring that the research is carried out, and for evaluating progress towards their research goals.

Two scientific working groups have been formed for malaria: the one on chemotherapy is concerned with drug development, and the other on immunology is concerned chiefly with the development of vaccines and of improved diagnostic tests.

Fundamental to the work of both of these groups is knowledge of the biology of the parasite. The purpose of the present meeting is to review present knowledge and to define lines of progress that are relevant to the objectives of the Special Programme, so that these may be brought before the scientific working groups for action.

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