



## **WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health**

The Director-General has the honour to bring to the attention of the Executive Board a summary (Part I of the document) of the recommendations made by the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy (JCHP) at its thirty-first session (WHO headquarters, Geneva, 19 to 20 May 1997).<sup>1</sup> The Committee discussed two areas crucial for reaching and sustaining primary health care goals: district health system development and the implementation of a UNICEF/WHO joint strategy for water supply and sanitation. The Committee also reviewed WHO resolutions and UNICEF decisions that had been adopted since the special session of JCHP in May 1996, and that are relevant to the improvement of the health status of women and children.

The thirty-first session brought the long and successful history of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee to a close. It also marked the beginning of work with a broader constituency, responding to new challenges, with UNFPA becoming part of an expanded Committee to be called the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health (CCH).

As requested in resolution EB100.R2, Part II of the document provides a progress report on the Committee.

<sup>1</sup> The full report of the session is available in English, French and Spanish (document JCHP31/97.6).

**PART I**  
**UNICEF/WHO JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH POLICY:**  
**REPORT ON THE THIRTY-FIRST SESSION**

1. The session was attended by the respective Executive Board members, the executive heads of both organizations and other members of the secretariats. Dr Pulido de Briceño, President of the UNICEF Executive Board, was unanimously elected Chairman, and the rapporteurs were Dr Ali Jaffer Bin Mohammed Suleiman (Oman), and Dr R. Daniel, representing Dr J. Williams (Cook Islands), who are members of the UNICEF and WHO Executive Boards, respectively.

**HEALTH SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT IN DECENTRALIZING SITUATIONS: OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING DISTRICT HEALTH SYSTEMS<sup>1</sup>**

2. In 1995 JCHP had called on WHO and UNICEF to analyse progress in district health systems and to propose a two-year joint work plan envisaging complementary roles for WHO and UNICEF in strengthening district health systems, enhancing their development, monitoring their impact, disseminating information and advocating that they be given their place in health sector reform; the “new vision” for district health systems should be projected beyond the year 2000 and include appropriate training to ensure an intersectoral approach. Activities would include more detailed analysis of the present situation in countries, as well as further collaboration between WHO and UNICEF to provide support to selected districts as they initiate and implement innovative activities in such areas as malaria control and safe motherhood. Reduction in maternal mortality, for example, might be used as a sensitive indicator for improvement in the performance of district health systems.

3. JCHP emphasized that activities should be sustainable, particularly with respect to financing. The importance of community participation and the mobilization of resources from both private and public sectors was underlined. JCHP recommended that work should continue according to the proposed two-year work plan, bearing in mind the need to focus on practical activities with ascertainable results. Finally, JCHP stressed that equity in health and health care should be the main goal of district health systems, and appropriate monitoring mechanisms should be established.

**UNICEF/WHO JOINT WATER SUPPLY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION STRATEGY<sup>2</sup>**

4. In January 1995 JCHP noted that, while access to drinking-water had improved in the first half of the decade, rapid population growth had cancelled out any gains in sanitation. On this basis, JCHP had recommended that the two organizations should strengthen their collaboration and develop a mutually agreed strategy for the attainment of universal access to safe drinking-water and sanitation.

5. The three main elements of the strategy were: consistent information concerning integrated approaches to water supply and sanitation development; support for the design and implementation of sustainable water supply and sanitation programmes at country level on the basis of a common approach; and maintenance of the emphasis in related sectors, among other United Nations organizations and external support agencies, and at various international forums, on the health and social benefits of water supply and sanitation development within country programmes.

6. JCHP agreed that collaboration would be strengthened by the strategy that clearly identified areas of cooperation. The strategy should show a closer relation of water supply and sanitation services to district health

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<sup>1</sup> Document JCHP31/97.2.

<sup>2</sup> Document JCHP31/97.3.

systems. Moreover, the strategy should indicate how it would relate to comprehensive development approaches at all levels, especially the global and regional initiatives that WHO and UNICEF support. WHO and UNICEF should emphasize sanitation and hygiene as essential elements of human development, the basis for health and nutrition, and ensure that the health and development component is not forgotten in development dialogues conducted in various United Nations forums. Similarly, the two organizations should give special attention to the study of various methods of financing and sustainable models. JCHP recommended implementation of the joint water supply and environmental sanitation strategy, a joint work plan being drawn up accordingly.

## **REVIEW OF WHO RESOLUTIONS AND UNICEF DECISIONS<sup>1</sup>**

7. JCHP reviewed the following resolutions relevant to improvement of the health status of women and children that had been adopted by the Health Assembly in May 1996 and May 1997 and by the WHO Executive Board in January 1997, and the decisions of the UNICEF Executive Board taken since June 1996.

### **WHO resolutions**

#### **Control of infectious diseases affecting children and women:**

New, emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases: special programme on malaria (WHA49.11); Malaria prevention and control (WHA50.34); Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (WHA49.27); Elimination of lymphatic filariasis as a public health problem (WHA50.29); Eradication of dracunculiasis (WHA50.35); African trypanosomiasis (WHA50.36).

#### **Nutrition:**

Prevention and control of iodine deficiency disorders (WHA49.13); Infant and young child nutrition (WHA49.15).

#### **Global partnerships:**

Strengthening nursing and midwifery (WHA49.1); Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations: WHO policy on collaboration with partners for health development (WHA49.19); Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations: orientation of WHO policy in support of African recovery and development (WHA49.20); Renewing the health-for-all strategy (EB99.R16).

#### **Emergency and humanitarian action:**

Supply of controlled drugs for emergency care (WHA49.18); International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident (WHA49.22); Prevention of violence: a public health priority (WHA49.25); Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations: health assistance to specific countries (WHA49.28); Prevention of violence (WHA50.19).

### **UNICEF Executive Board decisions**

Report of the UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy on its special session (1996/24); Outline of an implementation plan for the health strategy (1996/31); Coordination in health policy and programmes (1997/8); Implementation of the health strategy for UNICEF (1997/9).

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<sup>1</sup> Document JCHP31/97.4 and Add.

## **CLOSING CEREMONY FOR FINAL SESSION OF JCHP**

8. Dr Hiroshi Nakajima, Director-General, and Ms Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, noted the successful history of JCHP and the firm foundation it provided for future cooperation. His Excellency Mr François-Xavier Ngoubeyou, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Cameroon and doyen of the permanent representatives in Geneva, said that the present ceremony marked the end of an historic chapter of collaboration, and stressed that such a model could guide current trends in the United Nations system.

9. Professor J. Leowski, member of the WHO Executive Board, noted, *inter alia*, that JCHP's guidance had enhanced the implementation of the health-for-all strategy, and Dr Pulido de Briceño, Chairman of JCHP and President of the UNICEF Executive Board, stressed the importance of focusing on mothers and children in order to make progress in health and human development. Full and sustainable progress required that communities be enabled to take responsibility for their own health and development, with the necessary support of their governments and the international community. She concluded that JCHP had provided a sounding board which had enabled WHO and UNICEF to discuss major problems and work together for the good of the people of the world.

## **PART II PROGRESS REPORT ON ESTABLISHMENT OF WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH**

10. In resolution EB99.R23, the WHO Executive Board at its ninety-ninth session in January 1997 (1) approved the proposal that the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) be invited to join an expanded UNICEF/WHO Joint Committee on Health Policy to be named the "WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health" (CCH); and (2) requested the Director-General to prepare draft terms of reference for the Committee in continuance of WHO's role as secretariat of the Committee and in consultation with the Secretariats of UNICEF and UNFPA, to be presented to the 100th session of the WHO Executive Board in May 1997.

11. WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA subsequently designated persons as focal points for the drafting of the terms of reference. The current terms of reference of JCHP, as endorsed by the WHO Executive Board at its twenty-fifth session in January 1960 (resolution EB25.R30) and subsequently by the UNDP and UNICEF Executive Boards in May 1960, were reviewed.

12. In resolution EB100.R2, the Executive Board at its 100th session, 15-16 May 1997, approved the draft terms of reference (submitted in document EB100/9 Add.1), and requested the Director-General to transmit the resolution to the Executive Boards of UNICEF and UNFPA, and to report on progress to the 101st session of the Executive Board.

13. The UNICEF Executive Board, at its third regular session, 8-12 September 1997, proposed a number of changes to the terms of reference, and submitted this decision (1997/27 of 12 September 1997) to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board meeting, 14-19 September 1997, and the Chairman of the WHO Executive Board.

14. At its third regular session, the UNFPA Executive Board in its decision 97/28 recommended: (1) that CCH should meet as soon as possible to discuss its functioning and proposed amendments to the draft terms of reference, as well as substantive issues common to the mandates of WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA; and (2) that the secretariats of the three organizations should facilitate the convening of such a meeting.

15. In view of the guidance of the WHO, UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA Executive Boards referred to above, representatives of the secretariats are to meet in the last quarter of 1997 to discuss follow-up, which will be reported to the Executive Board at its 101st session.

#### **ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

16. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the report of JCHP on its thirty-first and final session, and the situation relating to the establishment of the WHO/UNICEF/UNFPA Coordinating Committee on Health (CCH).

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