



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DU PACIFIQUE OCCIDENTAL

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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAMMES

Report by the Regional Director

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Committee at its twenty-second session considered a report submitted by the Regional Director on occupational health programmes. The Committee in its resolution WPR/RC22.R3 adopted on 22 September 1971 recognized "the growing need for adequate health services for the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of occupational diseases and injuries" and "in particular the responsibility of health administrations for the provision of occupational health services to small-scale industries." The Committee further expressed the belief that "occupational health services should be designed in the form of country programmes to be phased according to national priorities and to include the development of the necessary educational and training facilities" and requested the Regional Director "to study this subject further, including the possibility of establishing training programmes of regional interest."

The Twenty-fifth World Health Assembly, having considered a report submitted by the Director-General on occupational health programmes (document A25/11), adopted resolution WHA25.63 on 26 May 1972. The Assembly recognized that "workers are affected by the health problems of the community as well as those of their occupation" and stressed "the importance of comprehensive occupational health programmes within the framework of national health services, and the increasing need for such programmes as developing countries become more industrialized." A copy of this resolution is attached.

2. ACTION TAKEN AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

2.1 National seminars on the organization of industrial health services for small industries

Preparations have been made for five-day national seminars to be held in the latter part of 1972 in the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

/The objectives ...

The objectives of these seminars are:

- (1) To consider the occupational health problems and hazards that occur in small industries and to review the existing occupational health services including available facilities and resources.
- (2) To study ways to improve occupational health services for small industries including the services to be provided by governments and by the private sector, legislation and regulations, and the co-ordination of available services.
- (3) To discuss training in and the promotion of occupational health.
- (4) To consider the role of international agencies in this field.

Governments were consulted on the agenda, and one of the items included is a review of the prevailing problems and of the possible approaches to those problems in the light of the conditions existing in individual countries.

WHO consultants will support national staff in the conduct of the individual country seminars, and the Organization will provide honoraria and a limited amount for supplies.

2.2 Regional training programmes in occupational health

The number of national staff specialized in occupational health in the Region is limited at present while there is a rising demand for this category of personnel to meet the needs of national industrialization programmes. Within the Region, two courses providing training in occupational health are available in both Australia and New Zealand for WHO fellows.

In response to a query sent to governments on 27 December 1971, 14 countries and territories¹ expressed their interest in a proposal to organize a regional training course in occupational health for public health administrators. It is generally health service staff of this kind that have, as part of their routine duties, to provide occupational health services for small-scale industries. In view of the need to strengthen such staff in connexion with their occupational health duties, provision has been made for the first regional course on occupational health to be included as an inter-country project in the 1974 programme and budget proposals.

/3. PROPOSED ...

¹American Samoa, British Solomon Islands Protectorate, Cook Islands, Guam, Hong Kong, Japan, Khmer Republic, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Republic of Viet-Nam, Singapore and Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

3. PROPOSED FURTHER ACTION WITHIN THE REGION

3.1 Advisory services

The occupational health services at present existing in the Region are at widely different stages of development. The assistance to be provided by WHO to governments on request will therefore be adapted to meet the special needs or deal with the problem areas arising in each individual country or territory.

A consultant was provided to the Philippines in 1971-72 and another will be assigned in 1974 to assist in the development of industrial health services on a nationwide scale with particular emphasis on the establishment of regional industrial health units attached to the regional health offices.

Consultant services and fellowships will be provided to the Republic of Korea in 1974 to assist in establishing a technical unit on occupational health in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and in developing a training programme for health personnel. As requested by the Governments of Malaysia and Singapore, consultant services will be made available in 1974 in connexion with the development of the national industrial health services.

Further assistance in this field can be provided as from 1972 to countries requesting it from the inter-regional project for assistance to national occupational health programmes.

3.2 Education and training

Education and training must continue to be given priority in view of the evident scarcity of trained personnel engaged in occupational health. Fellowships for key national personnel will be awarded to provide the nucleus in each country for the development of occupational health services and for the teaching in occupational health.

In addition to the three national seminars to be held in the latter part of 1972, a national seminar on the organization of industrial health services for small industries will take place in Malaysia in 1974 and another will be held for countries and territories in the South Pacific in the same year.

In view of the interest expressed by 14 countries and territories in participating in the first regional training courses in occupational health to be organized in 1974, consideration will be given to the periodical examination of such courses in the future.