

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS*

1. Introduction

Article 71 of the Constitution of the World Health Organization stipulates that WHO may "make suitable arrangements for consultation and co-operation with non-governmental international organizations and, with the consent of the Government concerned, with national organizations, governmental or non-governmental."

Articles 2 and 3 of the Agreement between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) respectively provide that the Pan American Sanitary Conference (1) "through the Directing Council of the Pan American Health Organization . . . shall serve . . . as the Regional Committee . . . of the World Health Organization for the Western Hemisphere" and (2) "may adopt and promote health and sanitary conventions and programs in the Western Hemisphere, provided that such conventions and programs are compatible with the policy and programs of the World Health Organization."

The Pan American Health Organization, within the regional context of the Western Hemisphere, therefore acts in conformity with the relevant policies and programs of WHO in its cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The objectives of this cooperation are to promote the policies, strategies, and programs derived from decisions of the Governing Bodies; to collaborate with regard to various PAHO programs in jointly agreed activities to implement these strategies; and to play an appropriate role in ensuring the harmonization of intersectoral interests among the various sectoral bodies concerned in a country or regional setting.

An NGO can be a technical association or a federation of professionals, educational faculties, or enterprises. Its focus can be: health and human development; assistance, relief, protection, and welfare; provision of service; research and investigation; community development, basic human needs, and appropriate technology; partnership with communities and institutional and organizational strengthening at the local level; or communication and information.

An *international* NGO is understood to be an organization that has relations with WHO and therefore, by definition, has official working relations with PAHO, as WHO

* Principles adopted by Resolution CE126.R15 (2000)

regional office. Upon its own initiative or by invitation, and in close consultation with the particular Member State, an inter-American or national NGO affiliated with an international NGO in official relations with WHO may elaborate and execute a program of collaboration with PAHO (as described in sections 3.3 and 4) to ensure implementation of health strategies at the country level.

An *inter-American* NGO is headquartered in one country of the Western Hemisphere (Americas Region) and carries out operations in more than one country of the Region.

A *national* NGO operates in an individual country of the Region.

2. Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations

The Executive Committee of PAHO will appoint three Members to the Standing Committee on Nongovernmental Organizations, whose terms will expire simultaneously with the expiration of their terms on the Executive Committee. The Standing Committee will review applications received and submit a recommendation for action by the Executive Committee. It will also periodically review collaboration with NGOs and make recommendations to the Executive Committee concerning renewal of such collaboration.

3. Types of Relations at the Inter-American and National Levels

3.1 *Informal Working Relations*

In order that PAHO may promote and support collaboration with NGOs in various fields, the Headquarters technical program or country office concerned may establish informal working relations with an inter-American or national NGO, subject to consultation between the Director of PAHO and the Member State. Such working relations shall be based on a program of activities developed and implemented as described in sections 3.3 and 4.

3.2 *Official Working Relations*

PAHO recognizes only one category of formal relations, known as official working relations, with those NGOs which meet the criteria described in these Principles.

3.3 *Development of Informal and Official Working Relations*

The establishment of relations with an NGO shall be an evolving process proceeding through a number of separate stages, as follows:

First, informal contacts between PAHO and an NGO occur in the form of exchanges of information and/or reciprocal participation in technical meetings. These exchanges are designed to heighten mutual understanding of each institution's mission, purpose, and comparative interests and strengths. This type of informal contact may continue on an ad hoc basis, without time limit and without written agreement. However, the definition of the broad objectives of collaboration and the possibility of enlarging its scope to include specific joint activities in line with the particular expertise of the NGO are also explored at this stage.

When a number of specific joint activities have been identified, collaboration may be taken a stage further by proceeding to the definition of informal working relations entered into by a legally binding agreement. Such an agreement sets out the basis for the collaboration, indicating details of the activities to be undertaken during the period, providing an estimate of the resources to be supplied by PAHO and the NGO, and designating focal points in the NGO and technical officers in PAHO.

Collaborative activities are jointly monitored every two years, thus allowing for necessary adjustments to the original work plan. At the end of the period of informal working relations, a joint assessment of the outcome of the collaboration is undertaken by the parties concerned, including consideration of the future relationship. This may result in:

- the continuation of the existing informal working relations for a further period;
- an application for admission into official working relations with PAHO for examination by the Executive Committee, should there be a number of activities which might form the basis of a long-term and closer relationship;
- a decision that there is no scope for further contacts in the foreseeable future.

4. Admittance of Inter-American and National NGOs into Official Working Relations with PAHO

In order to be eligible for admittance into official working relations with PAHO, the main area of competence of the NGO shall fall within the purview of PAHO. Its aims and activities shall be in conformity with the spirit, purposes, and principles of the Constitution of PAHO, shall center on health or health-related fields, and shall be free from concerns which are primarily of a commercial or profit-making nature. The major part of its activities shall be relevant to and have a bearing on the implementation of the major policy orientations of PAHO.

An NGO shall be eligible for admission based upon the following criteria:

- the NGO shall have successfully completed at least two years of informal working relations (as described in section 3.3) prior to an application for admission into official working relations.
- the NGO has a well-defined mission and there has been continuity in its basic commitments over the years;
- a major part of the NGO's activities and resources is directed towards health and health-related work;
- the NGO has a dependable source of funding for recurrent and fixed administrative costs;
- the NGO has adequate resources to support project and administrative staff, its facilities, and program development;
- the NGO has alternative sources of administrative support, such as income-generating activities and/or consulting;
- the NGO has the internal structures to guarantee adequate reporting, financial accounting, and budgeting;
- the NGO utilizes efficient information-gathering techniques to ensure that information is used by its staff and is fed back to the community, national and local government agencies, and other partners.

4.1 *Eligibility of Inter-American NGOs*

An inter-American NGO, in its structure and/or scope, shall represent a substantial proportion of the persons regionally organized for the purpose of participating in the particular field of interest in which it operates. When there are several inter-American NGOs with similar areas of interest, they may form a joint committee or other body authorized to act for the group as a whole.

The NGO shall be incorporated according to the laws of the country of its established headquarters and shall be endowed with a directing or governing body, an integrated administrative structure at various levels of action, and authority to speak for its members through its authorized representatives. Its members shall exercise voting rights in relation to its policies or action.

Thus, inter-American NGOs eligible for admission into official working relations with PAHO include various types of organizations with a federated structure (made up of national or regional groups or having individual members from different countries),

foundations that raise resources for health development activities in the Region, and similar bodies promoting health.

4.2 *Eligibility of National NGOs*

In exceptional cases, a national NGO, whether or not affiliated with an inter-American NGO, may be considered eligible for admission into official working relations after consultation between the Director of PAHO and the Member State.

4.3 *Procedure for Admittance of Inter-American or National NGOs into Official Working Relations with PAHO*

Applications from NGOs, made voluntarily or by invitation, should reach PAHO headquarters not later than the end of January in order to be considered by the Executive Committee in June of the same year.

Each application will include the following supporting documentation:

- a certified copy of the NGO's charter and by-laws;
- wherever applicable, certified copies of the charters and by-laws of its affiliates in the Hemisphere;
- an authenticated copy of the proceedings in which the directors were elected and of the authorization of the assembly to establish relations with PAHO;
- a copy of the most recent periodic report on its activities;
- a general four-year program for collaborative activities which have been agreed upon by the NGO and PAHO headquarters and/or the respective PAHO/WHO Representative (PWR) Office, accompanied by a more specific biennial work plan that follows these guidelines:
 - a brief review of the health situation in the region, subregion, and/or country where the NGO functions;
 - reference to the specific areas in which PAHO and the NGO may collaborate;
 - a description of how the projects will assist in PAHO's delivery of programs and activities;
 - reference to the expected results of each project;

- an outline of the indicators for each of the expected results;
- a list of the activities to be carried out to achieve the expected results;
- reference to the various types of resources allocated by PAHO and the NGO for each activity;
- names of the focal points in the NGO and the designated technical officers at PAHO headquarters and/or in the PWR office.

During the June session of the Executive Committee, the Standing Committee will consider applications submitted by NGOs and will make recommendations thereon to the Executive Committee. It may invite a representative of the NGO to speak before it in connection with the NGO's application. Should the applicant NGO be considered not to meet the established criteria, and bearing in mind the desirability of ensuring a valuable continuing partnership based on defined objectives and evidenced by a record of successful past collaboration and a framework for future collaborative activities, the Standing Committee may recommend postponement of consideration or rejection of an application.

The Executive Committee, after considering the recommendations of the Standing Committee, shall decide whether an NGO is to be admitted into official working relations with PAHO. A reapplication from an NGO shall not be considered until two years have elapsed since the Executive Committee's decision on the original application. The Director of PAHO shall inform each NGO of the Executive Committee's decision on its application.

The four-year work plan based on mutually agreed objectives, and the outline of specific activities for each two-year period (as described in section 4) shall form the basis of official working relations between PAHO and the NGO. This plan shall also be transmitted to the PWR offices, as appropriate, to encourage closer formal collaboration at the country level.

5. Procedure for Review of Collaboration with Inter-American and National NGOs

The Standing Committee will normally review collaboration with each NGO with which PAHO has official working relations every four years and, based on the results of the biennial work plans and activities undertaken during the period under review and on the proposed work plan for the next four-year period, shall make a recommendation to the Executive Committee on the desirability of maintaining these relations.

The Executive Committee may discontinue official working relations if it considers that such relations are no longer appropriate or necessary in light of changing programs or other circumstances. Similarly, the Executive Committee may suspend or discontinue

official working relations if an NGO no longer meets the criteria that applied at the time of the establishment of such relations, or fails to fulfill its obligations under the agreed program of collaboration.

Official relations may be terminated by either party through a written communication to the other party and with the approval of the Executive Committee, through the Standing Committee.

6. Privileges Conferred on NGOs by their Relationship with PAHO

The privileges conferred by an official working relationship include:

- the right to appoint a representative to participate, without the right to vote, in PAHO meetings or those convened under its authority to which the NGO is invited. Whenever the Pan American Sanitary Conference, Directing Council, or a committee or conference convened under PAHO's aegis discusses an item in which a related NGO is particularly interested, that NGO, at the invitation of the president of the body or at the request of the NGO, may make a statement of an expository nature and, with the consent of the president of the session, it may be invited to make an additional statement for purposes of clarification, in the course of the discussion of the item before the session;
- access to non-confidential documentation and such other documentation as the Director of PAHO may see fit to make available through such channels as PAHO may establish;
- the right to submit a memorandum to the Director of PAHO, who shall determine the nature and scope of its circulation. In the event of a memorandum being submitted which the Director considers might be placed on the agenda of the Pan American Sanitary Conference or Directing Council, such memorandum shall be placed before the Executive Committee for possible inclusion in the agenda of the Pan American Sanitary Conference or Directing Council.

A national NGO which is affiliated with an inter-American NGO covering the same subject on a regional basis shall present its views through that NGO, unless other arrangements are made in view of its particular relationship with PAHO.

7. Responsibilities of NGOs in their Relationship with PAHO

NGOs shall be responsible for implementing the mutually agreed upon program of collaboration and shall inform PAHO as soon as possible if for any reason they are unable to fulfill their obligations under the agreement.

NGOs shall utilize the opportunities available to them through their normal work to disseminate information on PAHO policies and programs.

NGOs shall collaborate individually or collectively in PAHO programs to further their regional and national health goals and to promote the implementation of the major policy documents of PAHO adopted by the Governing Bodies of the Organization.

8. Amendment of the Principles

These Principles may be amended by a resolution of the Executive Committee.