



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
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OPERATIONS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING

In 1979 the Executive Committee of PAHO created the Subcommittee on Long-term Planning and Programming. In June 1984, the Executive Committee changed the name of this body to the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming (SPP) and defined its functions. In 1996, the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the SPP were modified and updated.

The purpose of the present document is to determine whether the current operations of the SPP are consistent with the demands of the global and regional environment, PAHO cooperation efforts, and the objective of strengthening planning and evaluation. The document also includes a series of critical topics for the consideration of the SPP and outlines the historical trends in the composition of the Subcommittee, the distribution of delegates by country, the topics dealt with up to now, and its operations with respect to the Executive Committee and the Pan American Sanitary Bureau.

The Members of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming are requested to consider this document and to make recommendations to improve the performance and usefulness of the Subcommittee.

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1. Background

In June 1979, the 82nd Session of the Executive Committee of the Pan American Health Organization, through Resolution CE82.R13, established the Subcommittee on Long-term Planning and Programming in order to collaborate with the Headquarters Program Committee.

During its 92nd Session in June 1984, through Resolution CE92.R12, the Executive Committee changed the name of this body to the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming (SPP) and defined its functions. More recently, at the 118th Session in June 1996, the terms of reference and rules of procedure of the SPP were updated.

In 1995 the Pan American Sanitary Bureau instituted a gradual process of change aimed at fine-tuning its structure and operations. This process included the adoption of a Mission and the Strategic and Programmatic Orientations for the period 1995-1998.

In early 1999, in a message to the staff of the Organization, the Director of PASB stated his intention to continue to strengthen the strategic planning process through anticipatory approaches and to maximize the capacity of the system to program and evaluate cooperation. The periodic adjustment of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming to the current circumstances is therefore part of the proper maintenance of the planning, evaluation, and management mechanisms. The suggestion by the Government of Canada in September 1999 to review the operations of the SPP coincides with these internal processes.

2. Objective

The purpose of this document is to determine whether the current operations of the SPP are consistent with the demands of the global and regional environment, the work of PAHO, and the objective of strengthening the planning and evaluation of cooperation.

3. Historical Development

Since its inception, the Subcommittee has worked as an arm of the Executive Committee to study, analyze, discuss, and suggest recommendations for adoption by the Committee on pertinent topics for achieving the goal of Health in the Americas. From 1980 to 1984 the Subcommittee met annually, and since 1985 it has met twice a year. At its fourth meeting in 1984, the Subcommittee assumed the task of drafting a proposal for its operations and rules of procedure, presenting it to the Executive Committee, which approved it that same year.

4. Functions of the Subcommittee on Planning and Programming

The functions assigned to the Subcommittee by the Executive Committee in 1984 were:

- (a) Analysis of the process and methodology of planning, programming, and budgeting;
- (b) Analysis of the information processes and systems for the conduct of technical cooperation with the countries, including evaluation and monitoring of the regional Plan of Action for health for all by the year 2000;
- (c) Analysis of economic and social factors and their impact on health conditions and the health sector;
- (d) Analysis of the policy and functioning of PAHO's administrative systems, including manpower planning and development;
- (e) Analysis of special programs, with special emphasis on their formulation and evaluation;
- (f) Other functions to be determined by the Executive Committee.

The current functions of the Subcommittee, adopted by the Executive Committee in 1996, are to advise the Executive Committee on matters referred to it by this body, or on its own initiative, related to:

- The proposed general and specific orientations of PAHO and the corresponding monitoring and evaluation reports;
- The process and methodology of planning, programming, and budgeting, including the planning and development of PAHO administrative systems;
- The process of technical cooperation with the countries, including monitoring and evaluation of the achievement of the goal of health for all;
- The reports from the monitoring of health conditions in the Americas and the economic and social factors that affect health conditions and the health sector;
- Special programs, with special emphasis on their formulation and evaluation;
- To discharge any other functions assigned to it by the Executive Committee.

5. Composition of the Subcommittee

5.1 *Participation of the Member States*

Seven Member States participate in the SPP, four of them members of the Executive Committee and elected by this body. The other three are invited by the Director, in consultation with the President of the Executive Committee, based on the specific topics to be discussed at each meeting. The period of office of the SPP Members named by the Executive Committee depends on when they are elected to the SPP during their three-year mandate on the Executive Committee. This period of office guarantees the continuity of knowledge of interest to the Organization. Furthermore, the invitation mechanism lends flexibility to the composition of the SPP, ensuring that it has relevant experience in the areas dealt with. However, under the current rules only country representatives may be invited to participate, while personal invitations to experts in specific fields are not permitted.

Although the composition of the SPP changes over time, some Member States have never been represented on it, while others have been represented rather frequently. During the 32 sessions of the Subcommittee, 225 delegations have attended, representing almost all the countries in the Region. Four countries have attended more than half of the meetings, two have attended nearly all of them, and seven have participated only once. Nine countries have never participated in the sessions of the Subcommittee (Annex).

5.2 *Delegates*

The delegations that represent the Member States on the Subcommittee have included ministers of health, technical staff of the ministries of health, and ambassadors or staff of the missions of Member States to the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C. Of the 225 delegations that have attended the sessions of the SPP, only 38 of them have included ministers of health. In professional terms, the members of the delegations are generally experts in areas of public health, although they may come from other disciplines or fields of knowledge.

6. Topics Addressed by the Subcommittee

The SPP reviews and analyzes matters related to the policies of the Organization; strategies of action and progress reports on regional and national technical cooperation programs; and the structure, operations, and operating standards of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau. In addition to the aforementioned tasks, the Subcommittee's agenda includes topics of an informational nature.

Since its creation the SPP has examined 157 topics, 68 of which have been referred to the Executive Committee. In this regard, two periods can be distinguished: 1979 to 1994, in which only 31 topics were referred to the Committee, and 1994 to the present, in which 37 topics were referred.

During its initial years, the activities of the SPP centered on topics related to the organization and operation of the Secretariat and the adoption of general, specific, and strategic policies for the technical cooperation activities of the Bureau. In time, the functions were implicitly expanded to include areas related to technical cooperation in the regional or national sphere, proposals for regional plans of action, and proposals for cooperation programs of the Secretariat. This would seem to suggest that the SPP is gradually becoming a type of "petit" Executive Committee--a fairly well-founded conclusion, since in the past six years, practically the majority of the topics discussed in the SPP have been referred to the Executive Committee. Furthermore, despite recent attempts to change this situation, the nature of the documents considered by the two bodies tends to be almost identical, which limits the Subcommittee's role as a true working group for the discussion of documents in progress.

7. The Subcommittee in the Current Context

The Strategic and Programmatic Orientations (SPO) 1999-2002 note that life for the Region's inhabitants unfolds against a backdrop of growing globalization linked to transnational factors. This process is not only economic but social and political as well, and has led to a redistribution of power among the State, civil society, and the market.¹

This context is increasingly complex, varied, multifaceted, and uncertain, challenging PAHO and the Secretariat to anticipate events and to adapt to the circumstances created by the impact of economic, social, and technology trends. The Director of PAHO has encouraged innovative thinking about future scenarios for the Organization and a strengthening of the strategic planning and evaluation processes necessary for managing technical cooperation.

Given the magnitude and speed of global and regional change and its impact on the work of the Organization, the functions of evaluation, analysis, participation, and periodic response are critical for the successful performance of the Organization in general and the Secretariat in particular. In this context, institutional development becomes especially important to ensure that the structure and skills of the staff at all levels respond to the challenges, both old and new.

¹ Pan American Health Organization, Strategic and Programmatic Orientations, 1999-2002; *Official Document No. 29I*, 1999.

7.1 *Planning Process of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau*

Technical cooperation activities are programmed using the American Region Planning, Programming, and Evaluation System for Technical Cooperation (AMPES), which has been refined over the years and has received a favorable evaluation from outside experts. However, despite its proven usefulness, this tool has limitations with respect to facilitating the long-term planning and evaluation of programs. PAHO has made considerable efforts to ensure that the desired planning process contributes to the achievement of a proactive attitude by the Organization and the Secretariat. This would be secured through the application of the anticipatory approaches characteristic of true strategic planning, which include the construction and use of scenarios. Moreover, these products would translate into the programming of technical cooperation activities. At present, evaluation processes and the utilization of their results in institutional decision-making are becoming increasingly important for achieving quality, effectiveness, and efficiency in the Organization's action. Thus, fine-tuning the planning and programming processes will strengthen the evaluation component.

Concerning the role of the SPP in the evaluation processes, the Subcommittee considered the results of the joint country evaluations conducted every three or four years as activities not necessarily linked with programming. These evaluations are currently part of the biennial programming and evaluation process in each country. Whether the SPP or some other body at a similar level should be the one to evaluate the results of PAHO cooperation with the countries remains open to question.

The SPP should play a more systematic part in the selection of topics, which would facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of regional and national programs. There is an opportunity to enrich the process and the products by articulating the perspectives of the Member States and the Secretariat.

To the extent that the Member States are involved in the collective generation of new ideas, in addition to producing critical analyses of the topics and using the budget as a strategic instrument, the Subcommittee will be able to fulfill its purpose.

7.2 *Technical Contribution to the Work of the Subcommittee*

The technical experience of the countries in the Region—whether through the delegates to the sessions of the Governing Bodies or the participation of experts in these sessions—is necessary for nurturing ideas and developing useful concepts and strategies for the Organization in general and the Bureau in particular.

In addition, the regional technical programs as well as the PAHO Representative Offices in the countries have expanded their links, working with a variety of partners who are collaborating to achieve the countries' health objectives. The SPP can also help to ensure that PAHO's links with other actors in the field of international cooperation in health, through its programs and Representative Offices, remain consistent with the mission and values of the Organization.

7.3 *Compatibility of SPP (PAHO) Decisions with Those of the Governing Bodies of WHO*

It is common for the delegates of the Member States to the Governing Bodies of PAHO to be the delegates to the Governing Bodies of WHO as well, and they frequently debate or decide the same or related matters. Inasmuch as regional and global public health are closely linked, consistency between the decisions of the Organizations is not only desirable but essential for the development of policies, plans, and programs. The decisions of PAHO should be compatible with those of WHO, which means that communication in this regard is absolutely necessary.

8. Critical Matters

Some of the aspects considered critical for analyzing and discussing the composition and operations of the Subcommittee are:

- (a) Participation of the SPP in the discussion of important PAHO topics in the area of strategic planning and the evaluation of regional cooperation.
- (b) The work modality during SPP meetings and the type of document that supports the desired style.
- (c) The continuity of the Subcommittee's work between formal sessions of the Governing Bodies.
- (d) Given the desirability of increasing the participation of technical staff and experts in the SPP and engaging in critical thinking during the discussions, the current composition does not appear to be optimal, since virtually the same body that serves in an advisory capacity (SPP) is the one that considers the recommendations (EC).
- (e) Definition of the authority and role of the SPP in evaluating technical cooperation at the country level (biennial joint evaluation).

- (f) Concentration on topics related to the general and specific policies of the Organization, the method of work of the Bureau, the analysis and surveillance of aspects that affect the health of the population and the quality of the environment, and the structure and the performance of health systems and services.
- (g) Frequency of the Subcommittee sessions and its impact on the quality of the documents and discussions, and on other PAHO responsibilities.
- (h) The same documents are considered several times by the same delegates to the Governing Bodies, which lowers the level of interest and undermines the creativity and quality of the discussions.

Annex

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING: PARTICIPATION BY
COUNTRY AND DELEGATE¹**

COUNTRY	SPP MEMBER	INVITED TO SPP	TOTAL ATTENDANCE	% ATTENDANCE	ATTENDANCE BY MINISTER OF HEALTH
Antigua and Barbuda		2	2	6.3	
Argentina	4	11	15	46.9	4
Bahamas	5	4	9	28.1	
Barbados	6	2	8	25.0	8
Belize	6		6	18.8	5
Bolivia	6	1	7	21.9	5
Brazil	4	13	17	53.1	
Canada	18	13	31	96.9	
Chile	2	3	5	15.6	1
Colombia	9	2	11	34.4	
Costa Rica			0	0	
Cuba	10	1	11	34.4	
Dominica			0	0	
Dominican Republic			0	0	
Ecuador	4		4	12.5	1
El Salvador	2	1	3	9.4	3
France			0	0	
Grenada			0	0	
Guatemala	2		2	6.3	
Guyana		1	1	3.1	1
Haiti			0	0	
Honduras		1	1	3.1	
Jamaica		1	1	3.1	
Mexico	13	9	22	68.8	1
Nicaragua		2	2	6.3	1
Netherlands			0	0	
Panama	7	1	8	25.0	3
Paraguay		1	1	3.1	1
Peru		5	5	15.6	
Puerto Rico ²			0	0	
Saint Kitts and Nevis			0	0	
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines			0	0	
Saint Lucia			0	0	
Suriname			0	0	
Trinidad and Tobago		1	1	3.1	
United Kingdom			0	0	
United States	14	17	31	96.9	
Uruguay	8	2	10	31.3	3
Venezuela	5	6	11	34.3	1
TOTAL	125	100	225		38

¹ Information on the 32 Sessions of the Subcommittee since its inception until March 1999

² Associate Member State