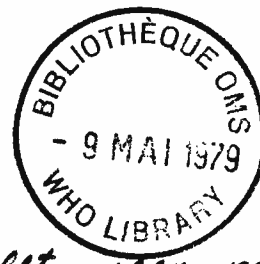




THIRTY-SECOND WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY

Provisional agenda item 2.3



INDEXED

WHO - Budget 1980-1981

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE FINANCIAL PERIOD 1980-1981

SMALLPOX ERADICATION PROGRAMME

Report by the Director-General

Worldwide eradication of smallpox is expected to be confirmed in December 1979 by the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication. The findings of the Global Commission will then be presented to the Thirty-third World Health Assembly (1980) for review. At its first meeting in December 1978, the Global Commission drew up recommendations for procedures leading to global certification. It also recommended measures to be taken by the Organization following certification in order to maintain the confidence of Member States that smallpox has been permanently eradicated.

The progress towards implementing these recommendations, as endorsed by the Executive Board in resolution EB63.R5, is reported below.

Paragraph 13 contains a draft resolution for consideration by the Health Assembly.

1. Current activities related to the certification of smallpox eradication are summarized in the Weekly epidemiological record published on 4 May 1979 (attached).¹

Eighteen months of freedom from endemic smallpox

2. The world has now experienced 18 months of freedom from endemic smallpox since the last case occurred in Somalia in October 1977.
3. Extensive surveillance throughout the world has not detected any cases in this period except for the laboratory associated incident in the United Kingdom in 1978. This was quickly contained by the health authorities. The Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication, which held its first meeting in December 1978, concluded that this outbreak would not affect the scheduled programme for certification of global smallpox eradication.

Laboratories retaining variola virus

4. The number of laboratories retaining variola virus has been reduced from 76 laboratories in 1976 to 14 in June 1978, and to 8 in April 1979. In April 1979, WHO convened a meeting in Geneva of officials of laboratories retaining variola virus and national control authorities concerned with a view to ensuring safety. All participating laboratories stated that virus stocks were kept under strict security and would only be handled in a maximum containment laboratory.

¹ Weekly epidemiological record, 54: No. 18 (1979). (Note: frontiers of Lesotho and Swaziland are not reproduced in Fig. 1 through a technical error.)

Certification of global smallpox eradication towards the end of 1979

5. At its December 1978 meeting, the Global Commission identified 79 of 200 countries and areas in the world as requiring special certification procedures in view of the past endemicity of smallpox, the one-time risk of importation which might establish endemicity, or limited data available to indicate the sensitivity of smallpox surveillance. The remaining 121 countries and areas were requested to submit a statement of smallpox eradication. By the end of April 1979, of the 79 countries and areas requiring special procedures, 70 had been certified and the remaining nine are expected to be certified by the end of 1979. Of 121 countries and areas requested to submit a statement of eradication, 76 have already complied.

Recommendations of the Global Commission endorsed by the Executive Board at its sixty-third session

6. The recommendations made by the Global Commission at its first meeting in December 1978 were endorsed by the Executive Board at its sixty-third session in January 1979 and annexed to resolution EB63.R5.¹ The recommendations include several measures to ensure that smallpox has been permanently eradicated. These are the establishment of a WHO vaccine reserve for emergency use, promotion of orthopoxvirus research to further confirm that there is no animal reservoir of smallpox, maintenance of diagnostic laboratories to examine specimens coming from the field, and continuing surveillance, in which WHO will coordinate and facilitate investigations in countries where smallpox rumours occur. Laboratories retaining variola virus stocks are to be visited regularly by a WHO inspection team to ensure that safe procedures are being maintained.

Vaccination policy

7. It is anticipated that routine smallpox vaccination can be terminated in all countries when global eradication is certified. As of 15 April 1979, routine smallpox vaccination was no longer obligatory in 46 countries; vaccination certificates for travellers were no longer required in 145 countries.

Contributions to eradication activities

8. Cash contributions received or pledged to date should be adequate to maintain activities in 1980 and 1981. However, further donations of freeze-dried smallpox vaccine are still required to establish the WHO vaccine reserve.

Documentation

9. The minimum requirement for documentation of the smallpox eradication programme is expected to be evidence to support global certification and archival material of historical interest.

10. It is anticipated that the final report of the Global Commission will summarize its findings, its reasons for confirming eradication, and its recommendations to WHO for ensuring that smallpox has been permanently eradicated. This report would refer to country reports on smallpox eradication campaigns, previous reports of International Commissions, and declarations of smallpox-free status.

11. It is planned to begin the preparation of a monograph on smallpox in 1980.

12. Archival material of historical interest will be assembled for permanent storage. This will consist of project reports, relevant published and unpublished papers, and correspondence.

¹ Executive Board, sixty-third session: Resolutions and decisions (document EB63/48), pp. 7-10.

Draft resolution

13. The Health Assembly may wish to adopt a resolution along the following lines:

The Thirty-second World Health Assembly,

Having examined the report of the Director-General on the smallpox eradication programme;

Stressing that the achievement of global smallpox eradication is the result of the commitment of all nations involved in this programme;

1. ENDORSES resolution EB63.R5, including the recommendations of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication annexed thereto;¹

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to consider how best to give full recognition, during the Thirty-third World Health Assembly, to the achievement of global eradication of smallpox, including a review of the lessons learned from the programme;

(2) to present a plan to that Health Assembly for the implementation of measures to ensure the permanence of smallpox eradication in the post-eradication era.

¹ Executive Board, sixty-third session: Resolutions and decisions (document EB63/48), pp. 7-10.