Pursuant to Resolution XIV of the VIII Meeting of the Health Sector of Central America, which dealt with the strengthening of epidemiology (see *Epidemiological Bulletin* Vol. 13, No. 3, 1992), a working group comprising representatives of the Central American countries was formed in Tegucigalpa, Honduras from 8 to 14 November 1992, in order to prepare a detailed program indicating the concrete activities to be carried out in the short term in each country and at the subregional level.

It was proposed that the following activities be carried out under each of the objectives established for the subregional level:

- To conduct an ongoing health situation analysis (HSA) at the various levels of the health services.
- Establishment of uniform criteria for the presentation of information from the HSA.
- Preparation of data bases at the Central American level.
- Presentation and dissemination of the HSAs carried out.
- Convening of a Central American Congress on Epidemiology for presentation of the HSA results and epidemiological research.
- To carry out epidemiological research.
  - Inventory of the institutions that conduct research and the studies published in each country.
  - Exchange of publications and technical cooperation.
  - Preparation of collaborative research proposals in the Subregion in response to national needs.
- To review and update the epidemiological surveillance system.
  - Establishment of criteria and qualitative and quantitative indicators for the evaluation of the epidemiological surveillance system.
  - Dissemination of bulletins, reports and other technical documents in response to needs.
  - Establishment of mechanisms to ensure timely dissemination of epidemiological information through appropriate technology.
  - Incorporation of available technologies into epidemiological surveillance systems.
  - Training of personnel in the use and maintenance of technological equipment.
- To improve the network for communicating epidemiological information within and between countries.

Subregional workshops on epidemiology for the development of data bases, the standardization and updating of systems, and the creation of mechanisms of dissemination and exchange of information.

Meeting with those responsible for control programs and border health authorities to incorporate the subject of surveillance into border technical meetings.

- To implement a plan for development of the network of public health laboratories to support epidemiological surveillance.
- Assessment of the current situation of the public health laboratory network, with the necessary technical advisory services.
- Establishment of a network of reference laboratories, taking into account accessibility and ability to respond in a timely fashion.
- To achieve continuing education of human resources in order to provide support for the development of epidemiology.
- Exchange and promotion of analyses and experiences in human resource development in epidemiology.

As an initial step toward strengthening epidemiological surveillance, it was agreed that during the first four-month period of 1993 a formal evaluation of the current systems of surveillance in each country will be carried out. For this purpose criteria will be developed at the subregional level on the methodology and the indicators to be utilized in order to then establish national groups who will carry out the evaluation at all levels.

There was consensus with regard to the advisability of incorporating analysis of the health situation as an epidemiological practice in the health services, especially at the local levels of the services system. In addition, it was felt that the best way to enhance this practice is through its constant use and review.

Finally, the group noted that the proposed program would be a process that would be carried out over several years and pointed out the need to organize core groups at the national level to accomplish the work with participation by the social security institutions, universities, research centers, and other appropriate institutions.

(Source: Health Situation and Trend Assessment Program, PAHO.)