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Programme Committee

SYRIA

Recommendation by the Executive Director for an
Apportionment to Syria for the Continuation and
Expansion of a Malaria Control Programme

1. In this paper the Administration recommends, subject to the availability of funds, an apportionment to Syria of \$143,000 from the Eastern Mediterranean Area allocation for the provision of supplies and equipment to allow the continuation and expansion through 1956 of the malaria control campaign already in operation for which UNICEF has previously provided \$79,000. (E/ICEF/198, paras. 380-390; E/ICEF/260 Rev. 1, para. 132. See also E/ICEF/R.458.)

Malaria Control Work in Syria

2. The problem of malaria in Syria was described in the previous two recommendations (E/ICEF/R.325 and L.532), the latter in March 1954. Accurate epidemiological data and information was previously available only for the southern and central districts of the country, namely the Damascus/Hauran and the Homs districts, where a population of respectively 220,000 and 40,000 persons are being protected in 1954. During 1954, in accordance with the plan of action outlined in the last recommendation, the country's western, northern and north-eastern district (Lattakia, Aleppo and Djezireh/Deir-el-Zor) were thoroughly surveyed by the WHO Demonstration and Training Team which has been working in the country since December 1952. These surveys revealed that the problem of malaria is more serious than was previously estimated.

3. It was established, in fact, that a meso-endemic malaria prevailed throughout the western district (Lattakia) with certain spots (South Safita, Nhr-el-Senne, etc.) where the spleen index stands between 40% and 64% and sometimes reaches 80%. This district, where 200,000 persons need to be protected, is characterized by the wide dispersion of its inhabited localities, a feature which entails greater costs of protection mainly in terms of time and manpower.

/4. The problem is still

4. The problem is still more severe in the northern district (Aleppo) especially along the Turkish frontier and in the region of the "Ghab" and "Roujj" swamps where the spleen index varies between 40% and 74% with a parasite index attaining 50% in certain villages. For this particular district, it is feared that the disease might be increasing since preliminary studies carried out some years ago in the area seemed to indicate that malaria was non-existent there. The population to be protected in this district is estimated at 250,000.

5. In the North-East region (Djezireh/Deir-el-Zor), the picture is one of scattered endemicity with the spleen index attaining a record of 100% in certain villages where both malaria and bilharzia infections prevail. Beginning 1955 full scale malaria control operations in this region, to cover 100,000 persons in the first year, will be undertaken in conjunction with the Bilharzia/Malaria programme initiated there by the Government in 1954 with the co-operation of WHO.

6. The protection operations during 1954 had two phases:

- a) a "consolidation" phase in which the DDT sprayings undertaken during previous years in the southern and central districts were repeated, and
- b) an "expansion" phase in zones where no organized malaria control work had been carried out previously (mainly in the western district).

These operations were conducted from three main centres with laboratory facilities located respectively in Damascus, Homs, and Lattakia. Smaller sub-centres in the field were created in accordance with the requirements of the work.

7. Particular attention will be given in 1955 to the spraying of the inhabited localities around the "Ghab" and "Roujj" marshy lands in the Aleppo district. Projects of drainage and land reclamation are being carried out there and it is expected that the works undertaken, including deepening of the bed of the Orontes river, creation of model villages, farms, fisheries, etc., will provide particularly favourable conditions for mosquito larvae. Protection measures seem thus to be imperative for the safety of the population and of the personnel engaged in the projects.

8. Similar reclamation work is also going on at the other end of the country on the Syrian/Jordanian boundaries. This five-year project has been undertaken by the Jordanian Government and UNRWA for the development of the Yarmuk/Jordan Valley. A concurrent malaria control programme has been undertaken by UNRWA and /provision made for the co-ordination

provision made for the co-ordination of protection work on both sides of the border through the permanent Syro/Jordanian Committee established by the 1953 treaty governing the utilization by the two countries of the waters of the Yarmuk. 10,000 persons will have to be protected in the Syrian part of the area.

9. The above work will be integrated with the malaria control operations undertaken by the Syrian Government in the Damascus oasis and the Hauran plateau since 1949, which have protected 200,000 persons. In addition to this 20,000 persons have been protected by UNRWA every year since 1949 in villages where the inhabitants include Palestinian Refugees. It is to be noted that for these southern districts, sprayings are planned to be reduced progressively during the course of the next 2 - 3 years.

10. In conjunction with the malaria control programme, the Government is carrying out, in the Damascus oasis and the Hauran plateau, sprayings with DDT, gamexane, etc. as environmental sanitation operations aiming mainly at the control of insect-borne diseases (typhus, recurrent fever, acute conjunctivitis, etc.) of which epidemics have broken out in the past in Syria. UNICEF's aid has not been requested in this work.

Co-ordination Committee

11. The "Co-ordination Committee for the Malaria Control Campaign in Syria" which includes representatives from the Government, UNICEF and WHO, has been convening once every month since its creation in October 1953, setting guiding principles for the campaign, dealing with its operational, administrative and supply problems and generally securing a harmonious basis for the implementation of the programme and co-operation between the various agencies concerned.

Personnel, Equipment and Supplies

12. Some difficulty has been encountered during the past two years in the provision of national medical personnel to match the WHO Demonstration and Training Team mainly because of the scarcity of medical officers in the country and the fact that the Government's financial regulations did not afford salaries adequate to ensure the full-time services of medical officers. However, for the Bilharzia/Malaria programme, which is carried out under particularly difficult conditions, the Government has enacted a special law whereby medical officers assigned to this work would be granted a double salary. On the recommendation of

/the Co-ordination Committee, the

the Co-ordination Committee, the Government has recently decided to expand this law so that it may cover the malaria control programme as well and it was thus possible to assign to the programme a new medical officer on a full-time basis.

13. The Government also plans to select the most capable of the auxiliary malariologists, entomologists and sanitarians trained by the WHO Demonstration and Training Team and entrust them with more responsibilities in the conduct of the work, especially in areas where operations have so far been carried out under the supervision of the international advisers.

14. On the occasion of the visit of UNICEF's Deputy Executive Director (Programmes) in May 1954 to the Eastern Mediterranean Area, the question of the matching personnel was extensively discussed and it was considered that the provision by UNICEF of one or two fellowships for Syrian medical officers, to be chosen by the Government would greatly advance the programme.

15. The question of matching in terms of equipment and supplies was also examined and it was agreed that the Government would supply the requirements for the continuation of the work in the southern districts and that the Administration would recommend to the Board the provision of the requirements for the campaign in the other districts.

16. As a result of careful study and intensive field experiments over the past year, the area of surface to be sprayed per person protected has been reduced to an average of 60 square metres, as compared with 85 square metres quoted in the previous recommendation.

Government Request

17. A Government request for continued assistance from UNICEF in the Malaria Control campaign was received in June of this year. At the same time the Government announced the establishment of an autonomous budget for the programme and the appointment of a new medical officer on a whole-time basis to match the WHO international adviser.

Plan of Operations

18. In this paper it is proposed that aid from UNICEF should be extended through a further two years of the campaign, the position to be reviewed before the conclusion of the period with a view to determining the extent to which a
/further prolongation

further prolongation of UNICEF assistance might be desirable.

19. Malaria control operations for 1955/6 in Syria are planned to cover 750/900,000 persons distributed as follows:

		<u>1955</u>	<u>1956</u>	
SOUTH	: Damascus/Hauran districts (including Yarmuk and UNRWA operations)	230,000	230,000	persons
CENTRE	: Homs district (including "check" zone)	70,000	70,000	"
WEST	: Lattakia district	150,000	200,000	"
NORTH	: Aleppo district	200,000	250,000	"
NORTH-EAST	: Djezireh/Deir-el-Zor districts	100,000	150,000	"
	Total:	<u>750,000</u>	<u>900,000</u>	

Regarding the Central region in particular, no provision is made for sprayings in the Hama district as epidemiological investigations proved that malaria does not constitute a problem there. On the other hand 30,000 persons will be protected in 1955 in the "check" zone which was left unsprayed in 1953 and 1954 for the sake of comparison with neighbouring areas.

20. The protection figures will remain unchanged for not less than three additional years beyond 1956 for all the regions except the Damascus/Hauran districts where sprayings will be progressively reduced during the course of the next two to three years in localities where it will be proved that permanent control has been achieved. Adequate means of protection in this region will, however, be maintained so that immediate intervention may be possible in case any danger of re-infection should appear in the future.

21. Operations in 1955 will comprise:

(a) consolidation sprayings benefiting 360,000 persons for whom protection in 1954 is scheduled as follows:

Damascus/Hauran	220,000
Homs	40,000
Lattakia	100,000

/(b) expansion sprayings

- (b) expansion sprayings covering 390,000 persons for whom protection will be afforded for the first time. These persons will be distributed as follows:

Damascus/Hauran (Yarmuk)	10,000
Homs ("check" zone)	30,000
Lattakia	50,000
Aleppo	200,000
Djezireh/Dair-el-Zor	100,000

These operations will start in the last week of April 1955 throughout the various regions except for Homs where, because of the late transmission, sprayings will start in July.

22. Should it be found possible during operations in 1955 to expand at a quicker rate than foreseen in the above figures, the 1956 targets will be brought forward correspondingly, in part or whole. Operations for 1956 will nevertheless be based on the targets indicated in para. 19 subject to appropriate modifications which may be called for on the basis of experience and developments during 1955.

23. For the conduct of these operations, two new centres with laboratory facilities, similar to those already operating in Homs, Lattakia and Damascus, will be established in Aleppo and Latakia. The latter will operate in conjunction with the Bilharzia/Malaria programme. Sub-centres for operations in the field will be established as the need for them may arise.

24. The international team will continue to be responsible for technical direction, supervision and evaluation of the programme and for training of auxiliary personnel. Closest co-operation will be maintained with the Syrian medical officer recently assigned to the programme on a full-time basis and responsibilities will be progressively transferred to the trained national personnel with a view to their eventual assumption of entire conduct of the work.

25. The Co-ordination Committee will maintain its regular review of the campaign and its co-ordination of the work internally as regards the Government, WHO, UNICEF and other agencies, and externally as far as connexion with malaria control work in neighbouring countries is concerned.

UNICEF Commitments

26. If this recommendation is approved, UNICEF will provide the following for the continued and expanded malaria control programme in 1955 and 1956 in the /districts of Homs, Lattakia,

districts of Homs, Lattakia, Aleppo and Djezireh/Deir-el-Zor:

(a) Supplies and Equipment:	260 Sprayers with spares	\$6,000
(b) Transport (including spare parts)	: 2 trucks (3 tons capacity)	\$6,000
	6 pick-ups	\$10,600 16,600
(c) DDT	: 190 tons 75% water dispers. powder	100,500
		<u>123,100</u>
Contingencies		2,900
		<u>126,000</u>
(d) Two fellowships in advanced malaria control studies:		<u>4,000</u>
		\$130,000
<u>Freight</u>		<u>13,000</u>
	Total	<u>\$143,000</u>

Government Commitments

27. In addition to the premises, personnel, transport, etc. previously assigned to the programme, the Government will provide the following:

Premises: for the Aleppo and Kamishly centres with laboratory facilities, and for subsidiary centres in the field as may be required.

Personnel: 1 additional medical officer to act as counterpart to the international/senior adviser on a full-time basis.
260 labourers and supervisors to work in the programme for a period of 4 months each year.

Transport: 2 trucks
6 pick-ups.

Furthermore, the Government will provide all the requirements of the campaign in the southern districts of Damascus and Hauran.

28. For the continuation of the programme the following provisions have been made in the 1955 budget of the Ministry of Health:

L.S. 250,000 for salaries (\$69,444)
L.S. 250,000 for equipment and supplies (\$69,444)

The Government has given assurance that budgetary provisions will be continued for 1956 as for 1955.

WHO Technical Approval and Participation

29. WHO has technically approved this programme and has budgeted the necessary funds to continue through 1955 the advisory services of a malariologist and a /sanitarian. The requirements

sanitarian. The requirements of international personnel for 1956 will be reviewed in the light of developments during 1955.

UNICEF Representation

30. Syrian projects are served by visits from the neighbouring UNICEF Office in Beirut.

Recommendation:

31. The Administration recommends, subject to the availability of funds:
- a) an apportionment of \$143,000 to Syria out of the Eastern Mediterranean Area allocation, to provide insecticides, equipment, and transport for the continuation and expansion of the anti-malaria campaign; and
 - b) that the Administration be authorized to approve the extension of the plan of operations as outlined above.