

The role of the West African Epidemiological Surveillance Centre in yellow fever control

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The twenty-third session of the World Health Assembly, by its Resolution WHA23.34 of 19 May 1970, recommended that WHO should immediately establish in West Africa a Centre which, in collaboration with the authorities in the countries concerned, would ensure the collection and rapid dissemination of epidemiological information, would undertake the assessment of the probable nature and extent of the risk of spread of yellow fever when cases first occur, would act as a centre of information or bilateral assistance and would ensure that areas where the need is greatest at any particular time should be able to obtain the resources they require.

To carry out these recommendations, the West African Epidemiological Surveillance Centre in Abidjan, which was established in September 1970, has to carry out the following functions :

1) To establish for each country a simple scheme for obtaining information on the occurrence of suspected cases ;

2) To distribute the information through the Regional Office for Africa to WHO/HQ, Geneva, Pasteur Institute Dakar, Rockefeller Laboratory Ibadan,

O.R.S.T.O.M. Centre Muraz and O.C.C.G.E. Bobo-Dioulasso, O.C.E.A.C. Yaoundé, U.S.A.I.D. and the neighbouring countries of the country concerned ;

3) On request of the country concerned, to examine the nature and the extent of the risk by personal visits to the area in question.

Or by organizing a visit by the WHO-Emergency Assistance *ad hoc* teams (Dakar, Ibadan, Yaoundé, Bangui, Entebbe, Geneva and Atlanta) ;

4) To ensure that supplies of vaccine and insecticides which will become available are distributed by a system of priorities based on need and capacity of the health authorities to employ them adequately.

The Centre has started to collect all available information regarding vectors, serological data, animal reservoir and other ecological data. A data storage and retrieval system has been put to use ; it is expected that it will be fully functional at the end of 1971. The Centre commands a limited supply of malathion and Swing-fog machines, some viscerotomes and vacutainer tubes which could be made available to any interested country if need be.