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Presented
24/12/69

MINISTRY PAPER NO. 48.

NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

In view of the increasing demands being made on the services of this Ministry by an enlightened public - and the results of a manpower survey undertaken at the end of the Government's first Five(5) Year Plan, which revealed a steady increase in the shortage of trained personnel, this Ministry decided that a thorough diagnosis of the present and future needs of the population and re-distribution of the available resources (personnel and material) was necessary if the level of Health was to continue to improve.

With the help and advice of consultants and officials of the PAHO/WHO, a short Planning Workshop was held for senior officials of the Ministry of Health in December, and it was decided that the methodology for Health Planning recommended by the PAHO/WHO, which is now being used successfully by other Governments in the area, should be adopted. This Planning process operates in four stages:—

- 1. Assessment or diagnosis of the situation
- 2. Formulation)
- 3. Implementation) of the Plan
- 4. Periodic evaluation)

The aim of this method is to organize more effectively than hitherto, a conscious and continued process based on a definite approach towards problem-solving and decision-making attitudes, in an attempt to select the best available alternatives to achieve specific goals.

One of the main characteristics of the method is the emphasis it places on the early involvement in the process, of the Health Staff who will eventually implement the plan. To that end, a National Health Planning Advisory Committee was set up with eleven members, including representatives from the University Hospital of the West Indies Department of Social and Preventive Medicine and the Administration; from the private medical sector, the Central Planning Unit and the Ministry of Health. In addition, in order to have a balanced committee, including people who might see our problems from other angles than those of the persons involved in Health activities, three other personalities in the community were asked to participate. These included a personality from the Sugar sector because of the wide representational coverage of that sector.

The Committee...../

The Committee will eventually require an executive arm (Planning Unit). In the interim the ideal approach to the diagnostic phase of the plan whereby detailed, comprehensive information is collected on a country-wide basis, has, been modified with the approval of the PAHO/WHO and a sample survey is now being undertaken by the staff in three parishes (St. Thomas, Portland and St. Elizabeth) to assess the existing situation based on the following variables:-

1. The level of health: mortality, morbidity, demand and productivity
2. The conditioning factors: population, environmental and socio-economic factors
3. The health policy or the managerial and administrative competence of the existing services.

Within the next three months, the information from these parishes will be available and can then be tested in other parishes to establish broad indices for commonly occurring conditions.

With this information, we will be able to identify actual needs and to set priorities and to estimate with greater accuracy, our resources in personnel and facilities and we then expect to "produce health" on a sound socio-economic basis.

The above is submitted for the information of Parliament.

H. W. ELDEMIRE
MINISTER OF HEALTH

20th MAY, 1969