

## PREFACE

From 30 November to 5 December 1970, a Seminar on Surveillance and Assessment in Smallpox Eradication was convened in New Delhi, India, under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization.

At the time of the Conference, the intensified global programme of smallpox eradication was completing its fourth year of operation. Despite an estimated four-fold improvement in the completeness of notification, smallpox incidence had at the same time declined from 131 000 cases in 1967 to 54 000 cases in 1969, and it was estimated that only 30 000 cases would be recorded in 1970. This represented the lowest number of cases ever recorded by the World Health Organization. During this period of four years, smallpox transmission had been totally interrupted in the 20 countries of western and central Africa, comprising a population of more than 120 million persons. In the remaining areas of Africa, it appeared probable that within a matter of months, all countries except Sudan and Ethiopia would also be free of the disease. In the Americas, smallpox incidence had declined dramatically and it appeared that here, too, transmission would be interrupted within months. In Asia, only five countries remained endemic for smallpox and substantial progress was being made. However, in 1970 the countries of Asia continued to constitute the principal reservoir of smallpox, reporting fully 85% of the world total of cases.

Considerable experience had been acquired during the first few years of the eradication programme which indicated clearly the importance of the shift in the strategy of the programme from one which originally emphasized mass vaccination to one in which surveillance was the dominant element. In fact, it had been noted that to date, in every country where a concerted effort had been made to improve reporting and where every suspect case had been promptly investigated, its source traced and containment action taken, smallpox transmission had been interrupted within two years or less. This change in strategy, perhaps more than any other single factor, was felt to have played the principal role in the unexpectedly rapid progress in the programme to date.

The New Delhi Seminar was intended to permit key persons responsible for smallpox eradication activities in Asia to discuss and compare their experiences in implementing surveillance programmes and at the same time, to learn various approaches employed in surveillance operations in the countries of Africa and the Americas. Participating in the Conference were: official participants and observers from Afghanistan, Burma, India, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan; WHO Headquarters, regional and country staff; and consultants from Ghana, India, Sierra Leone, USA and USSR.

Papers presented at the Conference, appropriately edited for brevity and clarity, are included in this document. The teaching problem and syllabus, illustrating methods for outbreak investigation, as well as the document on techniques of assessment, both of which were discussed at the Seminar, will be distributed separately.

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