

Health Programme Evaluation

Guiding Principles



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

GENEVA

1981

Health Programme Evaluation

*Guiding Principles for its Application in
the Managerial Process for National
Health Development*



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

1981

"HEALTH FOR ALL" SERIES, No. 6

ISBN 92 4 180006 2

© World Health Organization 1981

Publications of the World Health Organization enjoy copyright protection in accordance with the provisions of Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. For rights of reproduction or translation of WHO publications, in part or *in toto*, application should be made to the Office of Publications, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. The World Health Organization welcomes such applications.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

PRINTED IN SWITZERLAND

81/5047 - Schuler - 12 000

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
I. INTRODUCTION	9
II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	11
Purpose of evaluation	11
Constraints of evaluation	11
Place of evaluation in the health development process	12
Framework for evaluation	13
Responsibility for evaluation	15
Components of evaluation process—main features	16
Frequency of evaluation	18
Indicators and criteria for evaluation	18
Information support	24
III. THE PROCESS OF EVALUATING HEALTH POLI- CIES, PROGRAMMES, SERVICES AND INSTITU- TIONS	26
The evaluation process	26
Specify the subject for evaluation	27
Ensure information support	28
Verify relevance	32
Assess adequacy	34
Review progress	37
Assess efficiency	38
Assess effectiveness	41
Assess impact	43
Draw conclusions and formulate proposals for future action	43
IV. THE EVALUATION OF THE MANAGERIAL PRO- CESS FOR NATIONAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT	45

Health Programme Evaluation

*Guiding Principles for its Application in
the Managerial Process for National
Health Development*



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
GENEVA

1981

"HEALTH FOR ALL" SERIES, No. 6

ISBN 92 4 180006 2

© World Health Organization 1981

Publications of the World Health Organization enjoy copyright protection in accordance with the provisions of Protocol 2 of the Universal Copyright Convention. For rights of reproduction or translation of WHO publications, in part or *in toto*, application should be made to the Office of Publications, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland. The World Health Organization welcomes such applications.

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

PRINTED IN SWITZERLAND

81/5047 - Schuler - 12 000

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
I. INTRODUCTION	9
II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	11
Purpose of evaluation	11
Constraints of evaluation	11
Place of evaluation in the health development process	12
Framework for evaluation	13
Responsibility for evaluation	15
Components of evaluation process—main features	16
Frequency of evaluation	18
Indicators and criteria for evaluation	18
Information support	24
III. THE PROCESS OF EVALUATING HEALTH POLI- CIES, PROGRAMMES, SERVICES AND INSTITU- TIONS	26
The evaluation process	26
Specify the subject for evaluation	27
Ensure information support	28
Verify relevance	32
Assess adequacy	34
Review progress	37
Assess efficiency	38
Assess effectiveness	41
Assess impact	43
Draw conclusions and formulate proposals for future action	43
IV. THE EVALUATION OF THE MANAGERIAL PRO- CESS FOR NATIONAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT .	45

Executive Summary

1. *The purpose of evaluation is to improve health programmes and the health infrastructure for delivering them and to guide the allocation of resources in current and future programmes.* Evaluation is a systematic way of learning from experience and using the lessons learned to improve current activities and promote better planning by careful selection of alternatives for future action. It should thus be a continuing process aimed at rendering health activities more relevant, more efficient, and more effective. Its application calls for an open mind capable of constructive criticism in order to lead to sound judgement.

2. *Health programme evaluation is part of a broader managerial process for national health development.* This process consists of an interlinked sequence of events including policy formulation, programme formulation and budgeting, programme delivery through various services and institutions, evaluation, and reprogramming as necessary, with information support throughout. This process is well illustrated in WHO's publication on the managerial process for national health development in support of strategies for health for all by the year 2000.¹ The place of evaluation in the managerial process for national health development is illustrated in Fig. 1 (see page 13 below).

3. *The responsibility for evaluation devolves on the individuals and groups who are responsible for the development and application of the managerial process for national health development in the country concerned.*

¹ *Managerial process for national health development. Guiding principles*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1981 ("Health for All" Series, No. 5).

4. *Indicators* are used in the evaluation process. These are variables which help to measure changes. *Criteria* are also used. These are standards by which actions are measured. Where no suitable indicators or criteria are available, *pertinent questions* should be asked concerning the activity to be evaluated.

5. Evaluation has to be supported by valid, relevant and sensitive *information*.

6. The *evaluation process* is intended for use in a flexible manner and must be adapted to the circumstances in which it is to be used. It consists of the following components:

- Specify particular subject for evaluation
- Ensure information support
- Verify relevance
- Assess adequacy
- Review progress
- Assess efficiency
- Assess effectiveness
- Assess impact
- Draw conclusions and formulate proposals for future action.

7. The table on page 27 illustrates the application of the evaluation process in the course of applying the various components of the managerial process for national health development. (The first two components listed in the previous paragraph—*specify particular subject for evaluation* and *ensure information support*—form a part of all others.)

8. *The frequency* with which the various components mentioned in paragraph 6 above can be applied will vary, ranging

from relatively short intervals for the assessment of progress and efficiency to much longer intervals for the assessment of effectiveness and impact.

9. The more detailed guiding principles that follow are a first step towards better integration of evaluation into the managerial process for national health development.

10. It should be understood that these guiding principles for evaluation are, of necessity, general in nature, since they are meant to meet the requirements of all Member States, in all fields of public health. Yet they endeavour to state principles and to outline practical steps in a manner applicable to diversified national and public health fields.

I. Introduction

1. In 1978, at the request of Member States, WHO prepared provisional guidelines for health programme evaluation for use both by countries for their programmes and activities, and by WHO for its collaborative programmes. These general guidelines, which were endorsed by the Thirty-first World Health Assembly, have been adapted in the text that follows with a view to integrating evaluation into the overall managerial process for national health development.

2. Evaluation, in the context of that managerial process, should be a continuing process aimed mainly at correcting and improving actions in order to render health activities more relevant, more efficient and more effective. In this perspective *evaluation calls for an open mind capable of constructive criticism*. It further requires willingness to communicate freely with professional peers and other persons or groups concerned at various policy and operational levels of health systems as well as other related social and economic systems, whether national or international.

3. Evaluation implies judgement based on careful assessment and critical appraisal of given situations, which should lead to drawing sensible conclusions and making useful *proposals for future action*. It should not be seen as "pronouncing a sentence" in a judicial sense. The judgement has to be based on valid, relevant and sensitive information that is readily and easily available and that is provided to all those who need it.

4. The process outlined in these guiding principles should therefore be regarded as a model to provide a systematic basis for evaluation. The use of such a model should help to *free the mind to concentrate on the judgement required*.

5. It should be noted that the *guiding principles* are—as the words imply—intended *for flexible use*, and should not be considered as a formal manual. The process of evaluation requires adaptation of these guiding principles to each specific situation and would suffer in its usefulness if too rigid a system were proposed. It should also be noted that the guiding principles that follow are a first step towards better integration of the evaluation process into the overall managerial process.

II. General Principles

6. Evaluation is a systematic way of learning from experience and using the lessons learned to improve current activities and promote better planning by careful selection of alternatives for future action. This involves a critical analysis of different aspects of the development and implementation of a programme and the activities that constitute the programme, its relevance, its formulation, its efficiency and effectiveness, its costs and its acceptance by all parties involved.

Purpose of
evaluation

7. Thus, the purpose of evaluation in health development is to improve health programmes and the services for delivering them, and to guide the allocation of human and financial resources in current and future programmes and services. It should be used constructively and not for the justification of past actions or merely to identify their inadequacies. It is essential to perceive evaluation as a decision-oriented tool, and to link the evaluation process closely with decision-making, whether at the operational or the policy level. The very process of carrying out an evaluation can be just as important as the conclusions drawn, since involvement in the process itself often induces a better understanding of the activities being evaluated, and a more constructive approach to their implementation and to any future action required.

8. Evaluation, difficult in any field, presents particular problems in health work owing to the very nature of the activities, which often do not lend themselves easily to the measurement of what has been attained against predetermined, *quantified objectives*. It is therefore often unavoidable to apply *qualitative judgement*, supported, wherever possible, by reliable, *quantified information*. Account has to be taken of the intricate interrelation-

Constraints
of evaluation

ships between the health and other social and economic sectors. Changes in a health situation are often brought about by elements outside the health sector, making evaluation, particularly of effectiveness and impact, even more difficult. This accentuates the need to define reliable and *sensitive indicators* for identifying changes in health status or in the improvement of health care delivery. The problems related to the collection of information for these indicators have repercussions on the feasibility of their use.¹

9. Another constraint that is often encountered is a certain in-built resistance in principle to accepting evaluation and its results as a valid management tool. Self-defence often leads to rejection; it is not difficult to prove that an evaluation process was not "scientific" enough to provide a "sound" basis for making programme decisions, or to discredit the evaluation results by challenging the validity of certain criteria used.

Place of
evaluation in the
health devel-
opment process

10. The purpose of the managerial process for national health development is to build up the health system in a rational and systematic way. Health programme evaluation is part of the managerial process for national health development, as described in the volume already mentioned.² The diagram opposite (see Fig. 1) illustrates the place of evaluation in the overall managerial process.

11. In order to carry out evaluation as part of the managerial process, it has to be planned for when working out that process in each country; for example, evaluation of broad programming

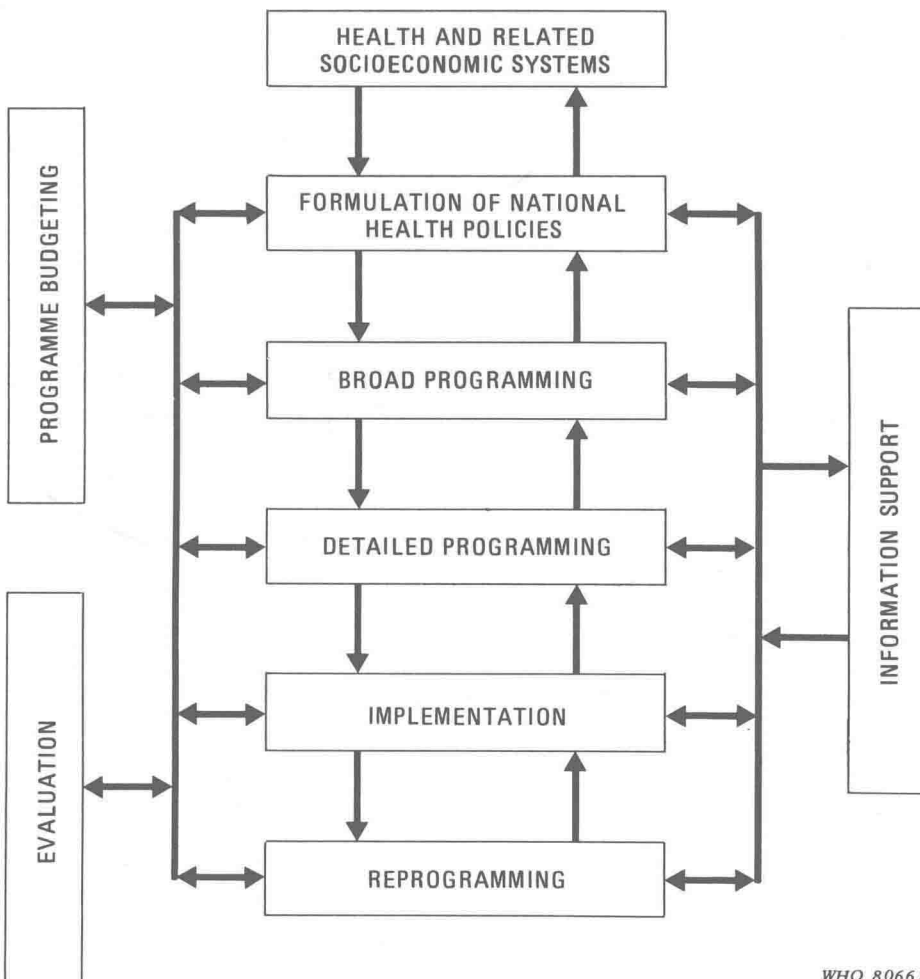
¹ For more details on indicators and the related question of information collection, see: *Development of indicators for monitoring progress towards health for all by the year 2000*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1981 ("Health for All" Series, No. 4).

² *Managerial process for national health development. Guiding principles*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1981 ("Health for All" Series, No. 5).

has to be taken into account before detailed programming is initiated.

12. There is a great variety of national health systems. Thus, national health policies vary according to political, economic and social systems. Most countries have plans to develop their health

FIG. 1
MANAGERIAL PROCESS FOR NATIONAL HEALTH DEVELOPMENT



WHO 80661