

Chapter Four

Health Planning

Objectives

At the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

- Define planning and health planning
- Describe the benefits of health planning
- Explain the types of planning
- Understand the steps of planning

A planner decide on:

- The objective
- Approach/strategy to reach objective
- Activities
- Possible obstacles
- Resources
- Cost of activities
- Schedule of implementation

Planning is the process of determining exactly what the organization will do to accomplish its objectives. It is the combination of analyzing and compiling of information, dreaming up ideas using logical imagination and judgment in order to arrive at a decision on what to do in the future. It is also deciding in advance what to do, how to do, when to do, where and who will do activities. Planning bridges the gap between where we are now and where we want to go/be. It is the process that lays the base for future action.

Generally Health planning is the application of planning concepts to the health sector

and health programs. Health planning is the process of defining community health problems, identifying needs and resources, establishing **priority objectives**, and setting out the administrative actions needed to achieve those objectives.

Elements in planning

1. Goals, aims, objectives and targets

All goals, aims, objectives and targets are ways of describing the desired future direction of a service though they differ in terms of breadth and details. These aspects are end states/outcomes of a program

Goal

Is a broad statement and generally there is one goal for a health system/ Health Service Organization (HSO). It is often referred as the ultimate objective of the desired state and hence formulated at higher level.

E.g. Health for All (HFA) by the year 2015

Aim

There are a number aims related to a goal. Aims are specific to a particular health problem

E.g. decrease Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in a community

Objectives

For each program aim there may be a number of objectives which are specified in measurable terms. Objective is planned or intended end result of a program or an

activity. It is basically related to output and it is precise.

E.g. decrease IMR in a community by 10%

Target

Establishes a measured amount of output to be achieved in relation to a health objective through a specific program activity.

Note: Whereas objectives are set with respect to needs in the client population, targets are set with respect to service providers.

Policy

Policy is a general guideline for decision making and individual actions

Procedures

Procedures are detailed method for carrying out a policy

Methods

Methods are more specific and detailed ways for carrying out a policy.

Budget

Budget is numerical expression of the anticipated results in monetary terms. It is plan for monetary expenditure required to achieve the objectives.

Plan of action

Plan of action is formulation of programs, strategies to be followed and lines of action to be taken by different subjects.

Unique features health planning

- Emotional dimension because health services providers often dealing with life-and-death situations
- Elasticity in the level of demand is a challenge to health planners
- Wide variety in customers and their nature
- End-user may not make the consumption decision or pay for the service provided
- The diversity of functions that often characterize healthcare providers

Rationale for planning

Planning substitutes integrated effort for random activity, controlled flow of work for uneven flow, and thoughtful decisions for snap judgments. Planning do have the following core benefits:

- Focus attention on predetermined objectives
- Coping with future uncertainty and changes
- Provides performance standards and facilitates controlling
- Helps foreseeing and identifying potential risks
- Helps efficient utilization of resources while achieving objectives

Decisions related to planning

Planning is making implementation and evaluation decisions before implementation. There are three main planning decisions:

1. Decision on objectives

- describing or identifying the problems
- target population and their locations
- How much of the problem can be reduced

2. Decision on activities

- Which type of activities?
- Whom? Target population addressed by the activity
- How much? The amount of each activity
- How, which and where? The approach, the time, the frequency and the location each activity to be delivered
- By whom? Who does what?

3. Decision on resources

Identification, specification and quantification of resources to be utilized based on contribution of the health sector, the community and other sectors

Types of planning

A. Based on time dimension (duration)

According to planning horizon i.e. the time elapsed between the formulation and execution of a planned activity, there are three types of planning

- Short term plans** (1-2 years) tactical planning
E.g. annual plans of immunization
- Intermediate plans** (3-5years)
E.g. replacing old medical equipments with new ones
- Long term plans** (>5years) or strategic plans

E.g. the 20 years HSDP

2. Based on the scope or breadth of activities

i. Strategic Plan

Process of setting agreed priorities and directions for health sectors in the light of given resource constraints. It is comprehensive in scope and reflects long-term needs and directions of the organization. Strategic plan is a top management plan and focuses on overall organizational goal. This plan also referred as **allocative** planning

ii. Operational/Tactical plans

Operational/Tactical plans are plans used to implement strategic plans. These kinds of plans are short range plans that emphasize on current operations of various parts of the organization

- are more limited in scope and address those activities and resources required to implement strategic plans
- deal more with the implementation and scheduling of actual work activities than with the selection strategies
- contains substantial amount of details
- also referred as activity plans

Planning Tools

Planning tools are techniques that help in planning process

SWOT analysis

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool that matches internal organizational strength and weakness with external opportunities and threats

E.g. In a health service organization:

- ✚ **Strength:** availability of resources and trained human power
- ✚ **Weakness:** lack of managerial talent and obsolete facilities
- ✚ **Opportunities:** clear and supportive government policies. Presence of a functional health committee in the communities can be good example.
- ✚ **Threats:** adverse cultural believes towards modern medicine and growing cost of essential drugs

SWOT Matrix is a frame work for the process of SWOT analysis (selecting strategies). It is used to list strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats of an organization for a certain program.

	Internal	External
Positive	Strength	Opportunities
Negative	Weakness	Threat

The Delphi method

Steps:

- Various experts are asked to answer independently, in writing a series of

questions about the future of whatever area the planner is interested

- A summary of all answers is then prepared. None of the experts know how any other expert answered the questions
- Copies of the summary are given to the individual experts with request that they may modify their original answers if they think they should
- Another summary of these modifications will be redistributed to the experts. Expert opinions that deviate from the norms must be justified in writing.
- A third summary is made of opinions and justifications, and copies are distributed to the experts. Justification for all answers is now required in writing.
- Conclusions are drawn from the opinions and justifications that arise from the previous step

Nominal group Technique

Steps:

1. Silent generation of ideas by a group of persons
 - Independently list specific answers to questions on cards
2. Assembly of ideas
 - list items on to a flip chart (from all cards)
 - each member is asked to present an item from his card and it will be written from his chart
 - the process continues till all issues of interest are addressed
3. Discussion for clarification and editing

- clarification of meaning, combining of related items and elimination of duplication

4. Priority setting

- Participants independently review the final list of items and identify a certain number of items which they considered the most important and establish scores in a descending order.
- Then the votes are tallied to determine the items with the highest total score.
- Discussion to assure group consensus.

Steps in Planning

1. Situational Analysis

Situational analysis gives improved understanding of the current situation from various perspectives. It answers the question “**where are we now?**” The current situation is described with identification of health and health related needs and available resources.

Contents

1. Population characteristics

Study the size, composition and distribution of the population.

- Identify the target groups
- Determine population size by category
- Estimate overall population growth
- Determine religious, educational and cultural characteristics

2. Area characteristics and infrastructures

- Geographical and topographical situations
- Infrastructures - transport modes and routes, means of communication, water supply and sanitary facilities, electric supplies etc
- Socioeconomic situations - distribution of family income
- Public and private sector structure

3. Policy and political environment

- The national programs should be used as a guide
- relate actual situation in the area of concern with these guidelines

4. Health need analysis

- analyzing the health needs and the magnitude of health problems is a basic prerequisite for planning

5. Analysis of health services

- Analyze organizational structure and functions of health services
- Service facilities
- Service utilization
- Service gaps
- Identify limitations/ bottle necks in organizational structure

6. Analysis of resources

- Financial resources
- Personnel
- Material/equipment
- Space/building
- Time
- Information

7. Review of past implementation experience

- Finding out information or experience from activities implemented in the past
- Success
- Short comings

2. Priority setting

Priority setting is identifying main concern health problems and ranking them. It is setting priorities for health services organization in the light of competing needs and limited resources

There are always discrepancies between problems that need to be solved and the available resources. Planners are obliged to solve certain problems before others. That is why problem prioritization has a paramount importance in the planning process.

A **problem** is a difficulty or an obstacle seen to exist between the present situation and a desired future situation

Grouping of problems

Grouping helps seek common solutions to groups of problems.

- **Environmental problems**

Example: poor sanitary conditions, poor housing conditions, inadequate and unsafe water supply, air pollution and so on

- **Diseases/health problems**

Example: Malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, respiratory diseases, etc

- **Socio-economic problems**

Example: Low per capital income, low literacy rate, inadequate distribution of health services, cultural and religious beliefs and values

- **Health services problems**

Example: poor quality and quantity of drugs, old medical equipment, lack of qualified personnel, difficulty in visiting out-reach areas etc

Priority problems are often selected by setting selection criteria and giving scores for each problem according to the criteria.

Criteria for problem prioritization

- ✚ Magnitude of the problem: the public health burden imposed by the problem
- ✚ Degree of severity: consequent suffering, death and disability
- ✚ Feasibility: in terms of cost effectiveness, social acceptability and local sustainability
- ✚ Government concern: political acceptability with consideration of equity, multi-sectoral approach, consistency with government plan and budgetary system
- ✚ Community concern: how much does it relate to community perceived health needs?

3. Setting Objectives and Targets

It is a step of describing the desired direction of a service definition in terms of measurable parameters. It answers the question “where do we want to go?”

Clear statement of objectives enables:

- ✚ to decide how to achieve them
- ✚ to evaluate how effective one is in achieving and reaching objectives

Objectives of a program must be '**SMART**'

- ✚ **Specific:** an observable action, behavior or achievement which is described and also linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency.
- ✚ **Measurable:** A system, method or procedure has to exist which allows the tracking and recording of the behavior or action upon which the objective is focused. It allows monitoring and evaluation
- ✚ **Achievable:** capable of being reached. There is a likelihood of success but that does not mean easy or simple. The objectives need to be stretching and agreed by the parties involved.
- ✚ **Relevant:** its agreement with the general health policy or relates to the problem to be solved or reduced; its real importance to the organization and the society.
- ✚ **Time bound (time specific):** has specified period of time
E.g. By the year 2005, 50% of eligible pregnant mothers will receive antiretroviral therapy in Jimma town.

4. Identifying Potential Obstacles and Limitations

There will be possible situations that may prevent the achievement of each objectives and targets.

The limitations may be:

- (i) **Resources:** like human, equipment, money, time, information etc
- (ii) **Environmental obstacles:** like geographical features, climate, technical difficulties, social factors

Three groups of Obstacles

- Obstacles that can be removed
- Obstacles that can be reduced or modified
- Obstacles that can't be changed

5. Designing Strategies and activities (Option appraisal)

Strategies are the tactics or techniques that should be devised or adopted and utilized to facilitate the achievement of objectives and targets. Strategies are ways of achieving objectives and targets.

Potential strategies often include

- Technology to be applied
- Procedures to be used and
- Defining the role of communities and other sectors

For each chosen strategy, the corresponding **activities** to be undertaken and the **resources** needed should be detailed.

6. Writing up the Plan (Programming and Budgeting)

The purposes of writing a plan are

- ✚ To request funds or resources from the government or funding agencies
- ✚ For monitoring and evaluating the implementation process by all concerned