



REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DU PACIFIQUE OCCIDENTAL

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Twenty-fifth session
Kuala Lumpur
2-10 September 1974

WPR/RC25/9
15 August 1974

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Provisional agenda item 15

PROJECT SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

Its development and the need to establish the capability
of the Regional Office to provide assistance in this field

Proposed by the Government of Malaysia

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1969 WHO undertook a series of internal studies with the objective of determining the impact of WHO's programme of assistance. These studies revealed that much of the technical assistance being provided by WHO was not being channelled to the priority areas of national socio-economic development plans. There was concern at this lack of consonance between assistance being provided by the Organization and the priority areas of development of the countries' health sector plans. It was felt desirable that the Organization should develop a method by which its assistance would have a greater impact on the immediate and pressing problems as defined by individual Member countries.

The search for a method which would enable Member countries to develop soundly conceived projects based on national priorities and where the requirements for external technical assistance could be more clearly specified led to the development of Project Systems Analysis (PSA).

PSA began its development in 1970 at WHO Headquarters as a field-based research effort, and over a period of two years, seven Member countries committed a large amount of resources in applying it to their particular problem areas. Malaysia has had intimate association with the development of this methodology since its inception.

After each exercise, modifications were introduced based on the experience gained.

In the Western Pacific Region, three countries participated in the PSA effort during the period 1971 - 1972.

October/December 1971 - Philippines

January/March 1972 - Republic of Singapore

March/April 1972 - Malaysia

It was generally felt amongst all the participating countries that there was a great potential in the PSA method but the rapid succession of trials did not provide sufficient time for participating national planners to absorb the method and observe its actual or potential impact on their country situations.

2. EVALUATION OF PSA

There was a general concensus among the participating countries that it would be very useful to undertake an assessment of the PSA method and WHO Headquarters together with the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific jointly sponsored a workshop on the subject. The meeting hosted by the Malaysian Government was held in Kuala Lumpur during the period 12-18 December 1973. Six of the seven Member countries who had undertaken the PSA Project formulation process attended it (Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand).

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FINDINGS OF THE WORKSHOP WERE

3.1 The PSA concept and methodology offer a tremendous potential as a tool for health planning. At this stage of its evolution each country's experience points to the need for modification of the methodology before its successful application. It is felt that more experience is needed in the project management and implementation phase, for further development or modification of that part of the methodology.

3.2 In closing the workshop discussion and following the review of the draft report put up by country participants, Professor Morris Schaefer made an eloquent summary which captured both the spirit and the substance of the meeting.

The highlights of his summary are as follows:

- There was evidence that PSA has generated amongst the participants a feeling of identity with a movement and a method directed to country needs.

- PSA is viewed as a true method with an interconnected set of managerial tools. It is therefore, a system in itself which has appeared to some as being rigid.
- Certain aspects of the PSA methodology and its methods of transfer require further development and improvement.
- The concept of a project as defined by PSA is acceptable when it fits the country situation.
- It is imperative that the capabilities of the regional offices and field staff be increased to meet the needs of countries engaging in PSA - by project formulation and management.
- PSA has influenced and is compatible with a broader set of improvements which WHO is presently developing, namely country health programming procedures and the draft manual for project management.

The WHO Regional Office of the Western Pacific, and some of its Member countries have been actively involved in the development and application of PSA as a health planning tool over the past four years. To date, the resources made available to the various participating countries have come mainly from WHO Headquarters. This has placed a serious limitation on the further development of the methodology in the Region as the resources at Headquarters are necessarily limited. Countries from other regions have also been making request for the services of PSA personnel from WHO Headquarters.

In view of the fact that PSA is seen to have tremendous potential in assisting Member countries to develop sound "project proposals", it is felt desirable that PSA capability should be developed at regional level and be made available to Member countries wishing to use this method. The recent development of a "project management manual" is likely to prove very useful to countries who may wish to strengthen their capabilities in project implementation. It is also felt that the successful transfer of PSA as a planning tool for use by Member countries will greatly depend on the further modification of the method to suit local country needs. This requires the development of a PSA capability at regional level which has a much closer link with Member countries and a better understanding of their problems and resources.

4. RECOMMENDATION

In view of the great potential of the PSA methodology and the interest shown by Member countries in the Region and because of the fact that the Regional Office for the Western Pacific has pioneered in setting up a PSA unit, it is recommended that the Regional Office strengthen this unit and develop its capability further so that it can provide assistance in this direction to many more Member countries in the Region. The refinement and survival of the PSA methodology depend on its practical application and local experience and the Western Pacific Region can usefully contribute towards this by increasing its capability in this field. It is Malaysia's hope that Member countries in the Region will support this resolution which will strengthen the hand of the Regional Director to set up a strong PSA unit which will be capable of assisting Member countries in the application of the methodology and in the transference of the methodology to national planners.