

Books

Strengthening Health Management in Districts and Provinces

Handbook for Facilitators. By A. Cassels and K. Janovsky. Pp. vi + 74. Sw.fr.20/US\$18. Geneva: WHO 1995. ISBN 92-4-154483X.

This publication should be sub-titled 'a facilitator's handbook', as it is essentially a set of guidelines for implementing a training programme on health management.

The programme is designed primarily to improve the skills and capacity of district health management teams (DHMTs), and uses a 'problem-solving' approach. This allows participants to go through the cycle of problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation.

The programme is structured around three classroom-based workshops consisting of four days each, followed by three 'implementation periods' during which time the participants put their strategies into action.

The process works with members of a real DHMT, and has the advantage of encouraging team building around real health problems. It does, however, have the disadvantage of depleting districts of the bulk of their managerial staff during the workshop periods. The programme should ideally be run by the Department of Health and requires a good facilitator who has had real experience of district health management. It is not a programme that can stand on its own.

The layout of the book is poor, and it is therefore not very readable. The font is small, and there are no illustrations. The material, designed for participants as handouts, is also poor as it mixes information on health management, which could have been used as reference notes, with instructions about workshop activities.

The WHO have produced a superb book on health management which is called *On Being in Charge*. It seems a pity that this programme does not build on the foundation of that book. The audience for this book in South Africa are the various universities and Health Departments that are offering, or considering to offer, health management courses. Its value may be more in terms of the training structure and process rather than its actual content.

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