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Evaluation Report

Evaluation of the Pan American Health Organization results-based management framework implementation

Results-Based Management (RBM) is an approach in which programs are formulated around a set of defined objectives and expected results, using measurable indicators to track progress toward their achievement. The first Evaluation of PAHO's RBM framework implementation (ERBM) since PAHO adopted the RBM approach in 2008 was conducted in 2023. The external evaluation aimed to provide an independent assessment of how the RBM framework was implemented, understand its added value to PAHO's work, and identify opportunities for improvement.

The ERBM covered the period from 2008 to December 2022 and the four components of the framework: strategic and operational planning; implementation, performance monitoring, and assessment; independent evaluation and learning; and accountability.

The recommendations will help PAHO identify the strategic steps for moving forward more effectively and efficiently in implementing the RBM framework and inform the development of the forthcoming Strategic Plan 2026-2031.

Key Findings and Conclusions

1. PAHO has developed a relevant, results-oriented planning and programmatic framework, which provides an important foundation for RBM implementation.
2. The lack of a comprehensive and explanatory Theory of Change (ToC) hampers the full integration and implementation of the RBM framework, and the identification of PAHO's contribution to high-level results in the Region.
3. PAHO's planning and programmatic framework contain some weaknesses, such as the Strategic Plan's (SP) lack of strategic focus and rigidity induced by the Program Budget (PB).
4. Country Cooperation Strategies (CCS) are relevant tools to align country-level work with the SP. Still, some asynchronism of CCS and PAHO's planning cycle, and the limited implementation of CCS undermine their full potential.
5. The budgeting framework and PB process aim to link various levels of planning. The Hanlon prioritization process has contributed to the efficient allocation of the PB. However, additional resources such as procurement and special funds are not included in the programming framework, hindering coordination among PAHO sources of revenue and their efficient use.
6. There is alignment between PAHO's and WHO's RBM framework at planning and strategic levels. However, further streamlining of reporting, particularly at country level is needed for RBM to be more effective and for both organizations to gain efficiency.
7. The design of PAHO's Performance and Monitoring Assessment (PMA) fulfills an important monitoring function. It allows for tracking the implementation of the Biennial Work Plan (BWP), and the reporting of budgetary expenditures against SP outcomes.
8. The PMA processes have weaknesses, such as the focus on the rate of budget utilization rather than performance, and inadequate feedback loops to strategic planning, which prevent it from fulfilling all its potential.
9. There is not enough data to fully assess the efficiency of the monitoring processes and the use of technological resources for RBM. Lengthy administrative processes and staff turnover in country offices also hinder the efficiency of RBM.
10. Projects funded through Voluntary Contributions (VC) are not sufficiently integrated into PAHO's monitoring and reporting framework and processes.
11. An Evaluation Policy was only recently (2021) adopted by PAHO. Systematic evaluation has not been sufficiently integrated within PAHO as a key tool of the RBM framework.
12. A culture of learning from results and implementation needs to be deepened and improved across the Organization.
13. There have been clear efforts and some successes in advancing accountability within RBM. However, reporting mechanisms are limited. PAHO's accountability/reporting framework to Member States does not sufficiently aggregate PASB contributions to SP outcomes.
14. There are diverse levels of understanding of what RBM is across the Organization. This limits the opportunities to build an RBM culture and to increase the effectiveness of PAHO's operations, especially at the subregional and country levels. The lack of a comprehensive training program has contributed to this uneven understanding.
15. PAHO's RBM framework responds to the expectations of the majority of MS.
16. Limited capacities in some MS prevent them from meaningfully participating in RBM-related processes.
17. PAHO demonstrated some commitment to RBM in key policies and in some implementation practices. However, inadequate financial and human resources affected sustainability.
18. PAHO's cross-cutting themes (gender, equity, ethnicity, and human rights) have been included in most of the planning instruments, such as the Strategic Plan and its ToC, and most of the recent CCS. However, there is limited evidence on how they have been mainstreamed throughout other RBM activities and processes.

Recommendations

PAHO'S RBM Framework

1. PAHO is to enhance the conceptual underpinning of PAHO's RBM framework and document recent or new changes (i.e. Develop a ToC, or at minimum detail a Plan of Action; revisit the latest definitions adopted for products and services, outputs, and outcomes; and update the RBM conceptual framework to reflect more than changes in terminology).

Planning

2. PAHO is to ensure that the strategic planning, monitoring, and reporting frameworks are more coherent and provide a better foundation for tracking the work of the PASB and its contribution to development results in the Region, as well as the measurement of its performance in delivering its program of work.
3. PAHO is to ensure that the outcome of the strategic planning process is fully relevant to address the needs and priorities of MS and remains relevant throughout the SP period (i.e.: Introduce a formal process for the adaptive management of SP or PB for emerging priorities; maximize the potential of the CCS process; revisit the rationale and the role of the next SP vis-à-vis the SHAA 2030 document).

Implementation, performance monitoring, and assessment

4. PAHO is to ensure that PAHO's monitoring and reporting frameworks are useful for measuring and reporting on the work of the PASB, its contribution to development results in the Region, and its overall efficiency in delivering its program of work.
5. PAHO should ensure that budgeting and monitoring moves towards being more focused on results (i.e. the Budget unit of PBE should further explore processes and systems that would support a transition to results-based budgeting and monitoring and have decision-making processes be based on progress made towards expected P/S (outputs) targets and not just on disbursement/budget utilization aspects).
6. PAHO should enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of PAHO's monitoring processes and ensure that PAHO can more adequately measure its contribution to development results.
7. PAHO is to ensure the proper measurement and monitoring of organizational performance and efficiency.
8. PAHO is to harness opportunities for improved coordination and coherence with WHO.

Independent Evaluation and Learning

9. PAHO is to ensure the utilization of evaluation findings in decision-making and ensure that future initiatives are informed by evidence and good practices.
10. PAHO is to incorporate learning into the planning process and enhance learning within the Organization.
11. PAHO is to further the strengthening and utilization of systematic evaluation as a key tool to support RBM.
12. PAHO is to develop and implement an RBM training program, a series of courses designed for different roles and responsibilities in the RBM process.

Other areas

PAHO is to:

13. Improve coordination and foster more common understanding on RBM across PAHO.
14. Continue and deepen RBM's prioritization across the Organization, via stronger leadership:
 - Signal the commitment to a results culture and managing for results as the consistent PAHO management philosophy in developing the new Strategic Plan.
 - Communicating on PAHO's RBM implementation, including the use of RBM champions, needs to be supported by the corresponding training, orientation, and resourcing across all levels of the Organization.

The evaluation was conducted from April to December 2023 by an external independent team of experts. The evaluation used mixed methods to collect and triangulate data from multiple sources. It used extensive desk reviews, conducted 44 key informant interviews, two online surveys of PAHO personnel and Member States representatives, and three field visits to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Countries, Colombia, and Guatemala, reaching around 50 stakeholders interviewed in person. Overall, nearly a thousand people were engaged. The data was analyzed against the evaluation criteria and international standards. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations were presented along the lines of the four components of PAHO's RBM framework.

Contact

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