

4. EVALUATION DESIGN

4.1 Approach

There are essentially three different types of program evaluation. The first of these, a conceptual evaluation, requires a program to meet the least stringent conditions. It is not necessary to be able to articulate the objectives in a form amenable to measurement, to establish concrete links between activities and their effects, or to have the program effects insulated against influences by events outside the control of the program manager.

An evaluation of this type normally includes an examination of the program mandate, its activities, outputs and effects, and the questioning of the implicit links between these. It is likely to emphasize the identification and study of basic alternatives, and of major issues related to the program. Such an evaluation relies primarily on subjective determinations.

On the other hand, a process evaluation can be carried out when the activities are coherent, the process is reasonably well defined and stable over time, and both the process and the outputs are amenable to measurement. A process evaluation is undertaken with a view to improving the operational processes of the organization with possible resource savings. In many respects, it may be similar to a broad operational audit, but the emphasis is on alternative ways and resource levels for carrying out the process with greater efficiency or economy, rather than on the adequacy of the particular existing systems, procedures and controls.

Finally, an effectiveness evaluation is principally concerned with the program effects or impacts and the extent to which they achieve program objectives. In order to perform such a study, both objectives and effects must be clear and a causal link between activities (or outputs) and effects must be discernible. An effectiveness evaluation can be used to find improvements leading to greater future effectiveness or to a reassessment of the resources devoted to the program (i.e., changing its priority) in the light of its current effectiveness. This type of evaluation is generally founded on methodological rigour and large amounts of empirical data.