

Economic Evaluation in Primary Health Care: The Case of Western Kenya Community Based Health Care Project

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Date: 1984

Abstract:

This paper describes the methodology and presents preliminary results of an economic appraisal of a community based health care project in Kenya. Community health workers, trained for 12 weeks and deployed in two locations in Kenya's Western Province, act as first contact providers of basic health care and promoters of selected health, sanitation and nutrition practices. A Cost Benefit Analysis has been undertaken using the Willingness to Pay approach to compare the costs of the project and its benefits. The benefits are in the form of more easily accessible basic health care and are measured as consumer surplus accruing to the community. Gain in consumer surplus is consequent on the fall of average user costs and rise in utilization of the project established points of first contact with primary health care. The argument for the economic viability of the project is validated by the large Net Present Value and Benefit Cost Ratio obtained for the whole of the project area and for the two locations separately. Although the evaluation technique used faces the problem of valuation of community time, aggregation of health care services at all points of first contact and the partial nature of cost benefit analysis evaluations, the results are strongly in favor of decentralization of primary health care on similar lines in the rest of the country.