



## **Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation**

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# **Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations**

## **Diagnostic Review of Early Childhood Development**

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**Date Evaluation was completed:** 30 May 2012

**Name of assessor:** Nana Gadegaard Davies

**Evaluation Number:** 134

**Date Assessment Completed:** 01 February 2013

## Evaluation Assessment Details

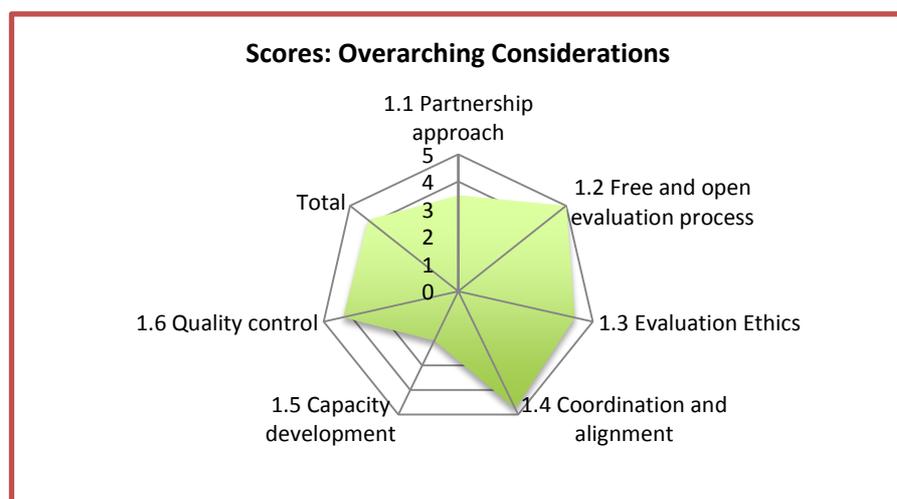
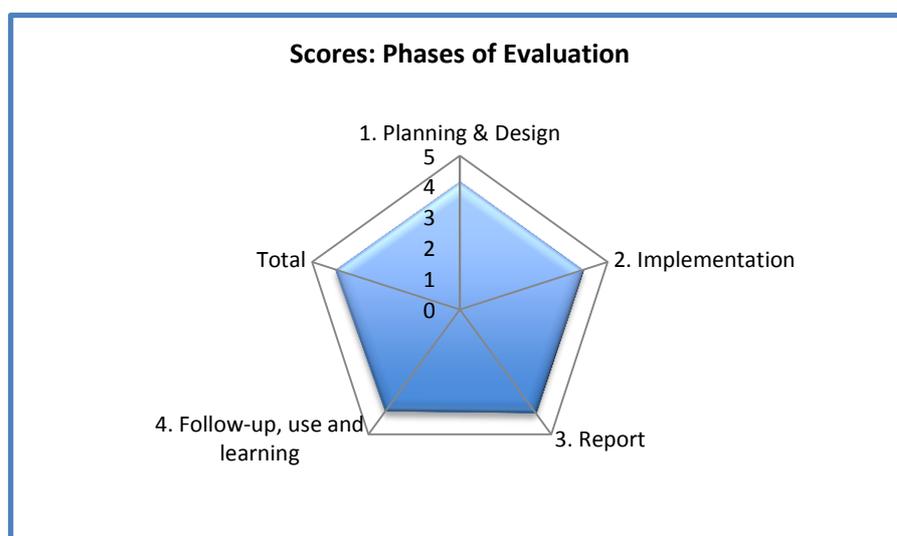
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|-------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Title of evaluation report    | Diagnostic Review of Early Childhood Development   |                   |
| Completion Date of Evaluation | 30 May 2012  |                   |
| Name of Assessor              | Nana Gadegaard Davies  |                   |
| Evaluation Number             | 134  |                   |
| Completion Date of Assessment | 01 February 2013   |                   |
| Initiated by                  | Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation , the Inter-departmental Committee on Early Childhood Development and UNICEF   |                   |
| Evaluation undertaken by      | Professor Linda Richter, Linda Biersteker, Professor Justine Burns, Dr Chris Desmond, Dr Nosisi Feza, Dr David Harrison, Patricia Martin, Professor Haroon Saloojee and wiedaad Slemming |                   |
| Evaluation area / sector      | Social development, social security & assistance   |                   |
|                               | Poverty, socio-economic dev, access to credit  | <i>Additional</i> |
| National Outcome              | Outcome 1  |                   |
|                               |  | <i>Additional</i> |
| Type of Evaluation            | Diagnostic   |                   |
|                               |  | <i>Additional</i> |
| What is being evaluated       | Sector   |                   |
|                               |  | <i>Additional</i> |
| Geographic Scope              | National   |                   |
| Period of Evaluation          | November 2011 - May 2012   |                   |
| Known Cost of Evaluation      | R600,000   |                   |

### Quality Assessment Scores

| Phase of Evaluation         | Score       |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Planning & Design           | 4.18        |
| Implementation              | 4.16        |
| Report                      | 4.14        |
| Follow-up, use and learning | 4.08        |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>4.14</b> |

| Overarching Consideration        | Score |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| Partnership approach             | 3.50  |
| Free and open evaluation process | 5.00  |
| Evaluation Ethics                | 4.33  |
| Coordination and alignment       | 4.75  |
| Capacity Development             | 2.00  |
| Quality control                  | 4.28  |



## 1. Planning & Design

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### 1.1. Clarity of Purpose and Scope in TOR

**STANDARD:** *The evaluation was guided by a TOR with at least the following sections explicit: purpose, scope and objectives; expectations regarding design and methodology; resources and time allocated; reporting requirements; expectations regarding evaluation process and products.*

#### Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was guided by a TOR, which explicitly included sections on purpose, scope of work, expectations regarding methodology, resources and time allocated, reporting requirements, and expected evaluation deliverables. The TOR contains only limited reference to expectations regarding the evaluation process.

**Rating** 4

**STANDARD:** *The purpose of the evaluation was clear and explicit in the TOR*

#### Comment and Analysis

The purpose of the evaluation was clear and explicit in the TOR.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD:** *The evaluation questions were clearly stated in the TOR and appropriate to addressing the evaluation purpose*

#### Comment and Analysis

The evaluation questions were elaborated and clearly stated in the TOR. The evaluation questions were appropriate to addressing the evaluation purpose.

**Rating** 5

***STANDARD: The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR***

**Comment and Analysis**

The ToR specified that a secondary analysis of documents and existing data sets should take place along with consultation with key players in government and civil society and close cooperation with the review team of the National Integrated Plan (NIP) for Early Childhood Development (ECD). This was suited for the purpose and scope of the review. Likewise, a diagnostic review of ECD was well suited as a type of evaluation particularly as a diagnostic review of the ECD sector had never taken place before.

**Rating** **5**

***STANDARD: Intended users and their information needs were identified in the TOR***

**Comment and Analysis**

The intended users were not explicitly identified in the TOR. However, the TOR mentioned that the review will be used for policy change and improvement of ECD services and therefore implied that the users will be policy makers and decision makers on ECD service delivery.

**Rating** **4**

***STANDARD: Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and determining the purpose of the evaluation***

**Comment and Analysis**

The TOR was developed in a participatory manner by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), Treasury and the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on ECD departments which consist of the key ECD departments including the Department of Social Development, the Department of Health and the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DPWCPD). UNICEF furthermore provided technical expertise in the development of the TOR.

**Rating** **5**

## 1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

**STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time allocated**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The time allocated for the review was considered unrealistic as it took place over the festive season. Also the number of documents to review were large and provincial consultations took time. Finally, the Diagnostic Review of the ECD Sector was depending on the finalisation of the NIP review, which took longer than anticipated.

**Rating** 2

**STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The evaluation team consisted of nine experts who were commissioned for a long duration. As a consequence, the team was not honoured for all the time spent on this review. Also, the expenses like travel costs for provincial and national consultation were high as well as the number of presentations conducted. It was raised by one of the interviewees that a double amount (i.e. R1,200,000) would have been a more adequate budget.

**Rating** 2

**STANDARD: The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The evaluation team consisted of nine members who were experts in the relevant fields of i.e. policy and legislative analysis, economic analysis, and indepth understanding and experience in conducting researches and evaluations in the ECD sector.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Where appropriate, the evaluation planned to incorporate an element of capacity building of partners/staff responsible for the evaluand**

**Comment and Analysis**

This diagnostic review did not explicitly incorporate capacity building for partners or staff responsible for the evaluation. However the evaluation team conducted presentations of the review at various fora like the ECD conference.

**Rating** 2

### 1.3. Alignment to Policy Context and Background Literature

**STANDARD: There was evidence that a review of the relevant policy and programme environments had been conducted and used in the planning of the evaluation by the evaluators**

**Comment and Analysis**

The TOR required explicitly a review of the relevant policy and programme environments regarding the ECD sector. This was in fact the core subject of the review. 12 background papers were produced by the members of the evaluation team detailing the ECD policy framework and various angles of the programme environments in order to provide a holistic diagnostic review of the ECD sector. Relevant policy and programme reviews had been conducted and used in the planning of this evaluation by the researchers.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: There was evidence of a review of appropriate literature having been conducted and used in the planning of the evaluation by the evaluators**

**Comment and Analysis**

This diagnostic review was predominantly based on secondary data analysis and an extensive literature review was conducted. There are references to other literature throughout the report and the background papers. The review of appropriate literature had been conducted and used in the planning of the evaluation by the research team.

**Rating** 5

**1.4. The evaluation methods planned were appropriate to the project**

**STANDARD: There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the planning of the evaluation**

**Comment and Analysis**

There is no reference to the intervention logic or theory of change in the report nor did it inform the planning of the study. However, this evaluation was diagnostic and hence an intervention logic or theory of change could not be expected.

**Rating** N/A

**STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation**

**Comment and Analysis**

Key government stakeholders were consulted on the design and methodology of the review. These included the DSD, DoH, DBE, and DWCPD specifically through their participation in the Inter-Departmental Steering Committee on ECD as well as the DPME and Treasury. UNICEF provided technical assistance on the development of TOR. However key stakeholders from the civil society or academia were not consulted on the design and methodology of the evaluation.

**Rating** 3

**STANDARD: The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked**

**Comment and Analysis**

The planned methodology applied, which was predominantly desk review, was appropriate to the research questions being addressed in the review. The methodology did not apply any primary data gathering although consultation with key players in the ECD sector took place.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Planned sampling was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation**

**Comment and Analysis**

The review did not apply primary data gathering and therefore no sampling took place.

**Rating** N/A

**STANDARD: There was a planned process for using the findings of the evaluation prior to undertaking the evaluation**

**Comment and Analysis**

There is no evidence of a planned process for using the findings. The TOR stipulated that findings would be tabled at a national workshop in May. The interviewees indicated that the evaluation team had conducted a number of presentations of the findings.

**Rating** 2

### **1.5. Inception phase**

**STANDARD: The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented**

**Comment and Analysis**

The inception phase was used to clarify timeframes, methodology and deliverables.

**Rating** 4

## 2. Implementation

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### 2.1. Ethical Review and Considerations

**STANDARD:** *Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was obtained through an ethics review board; e.g. in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance, and situations where assurances of confidentiality was offered to participants*

#### **Comment and Analysis**

Ethical considerations are not mentioned in the diagnostic process section of the report. One of the interviewees revealed that ethical clearance for this diagnostic review was obtained by the Ethic Committee of the Human Science Research Council.

**Rating** 5

### 2.2. Evaluator independence

**STANDARD:** *Where external, evaluation team was able to work freely without significant interference*

#### **Comment and Analysis**

The evaluation team was able to work freely without significant inference by government officials or other stakeholders. The various members of the Inter-Departmental Steering Committee on ECD provided comments to the draft report which were incorporated in the final report but this did not influence the independence of the evaluators.

**Rating** 5

***STANDARD: The evaluation team was impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest******Comment and Analysis***

Interviewees reported that the evaluation team was external and impartial and there was no evidence of conflict of interest.

**Rating** 5

**2.3. Key stakeholder involvement*****STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement during the evaluation******Comment and Analysis***

The Inter-departmental steering committee was consulted throughout the review process. Also, the evaluation team consulted with approximately 130 key stakeholders from government, civil society and academia during the review. four panels with provincial stakeholders were conducted in 4 provinces. This was formalised in the methodology applied by the team. One interviewee however indicated that consultation with national government officials was insufficient. This was mentioned when the first draft of the report was presented and additional consultation of national government officials subsequently took place. It should be noted that neither the TOR nor the inception meeting had clarified the extend of consultation with national government officials.

**Rating** 3

***STANDARD: Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand was incorporated into the evaluation******Comment and Analysis***

This diagnostic review did not explicitly incorporate capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluation. However the evaluation team conducted presentations of the review at various fora like the ECD conference.

**Rating** 2

## 2.4. Methodology

**STANDARD: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned**

### **Comment and Analysis**

Secondary analysis of documents and existing data sets was conducted together with consultation with key stakeholder and panel discussions. This was consistent with the planned method.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Data collection was not compromised by fieldwork-level problems or unplanned diversions from original intentions**

### **Comment and Analysis**

As this diagnostic review was based on secondary data analysis there was no real fieldwork conducted.

**Rating** N/A

**STANDARD: Forms of data gathering were appropriate given the scope of evaluation**

### **Comment and Analysis**

Primary data gathering consisted only of consultation with key stakeholders. This was appropriate given the scope of the diagnostic review.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: The data analysis approach and methods were appropriate and sufficient given the purposes of the evaluation**

**Comment and Analysis**

Although not stipulated in the report, the review team seemed to have applied a thematic analysis approach. This is appropriate given the purpose of the review.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Key stakeholders were significantly engaged as part of the methodology**

**Comment and Analysis**

There were extensive external engagements with 130 key stakeholders from provincial government, the civil society organisations and academic institutions. The Inter-Departmental Steering Committee was consulted regularly (6 times) throughout the process. Originally, there was less internal engagement with national government stakeholders, which however was rectified later in the process.

**Rating** 3

**STANDARD: The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information**

**Comment and Analysis**

The methodology did not include engaging beneficiaries as a key source of data and information. This was not the purpose of the diagnostic review.

**Rating** N/A

## 2.5. Project management

**STANDARD: The evaluation was conducted without shifts to scheduled project milestones and timeframes**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The review was conducted with limited shifts to scheduled milestones and timeframes. The report was submitted one week after agreed deadline.

**Rating** 4

## 3. Report

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**3.1. Report was well-structured and presentation was clear and complete in each of these areas**

**STANDARD: Executive summary captured key components of the report appropriately**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The executive summary was lengthy (6 pages) and covered introduction, main findings and main recommendations. It was well structured and captured the key components of the report appropriately.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: The context of the development intervention was explicit and presented as relevant to the evaluation**

### **Comment and Analysis**

The context of ECD sector was explicitly described and presented as relevant to the review as part of the introduction and overview of the diagnosis in the report.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: There was a clear rationale for the evaluation questions****Comment and Analysis**

The rationale of conducting the diagnostic review is briefly mentioned in the background section of the report.

**Rating** 4

**STANDARD: The scope or focus of the evaluation was apparent in the report****Comment and Analysis**

The scope and focus of the review is briefly stated in the background section of the report. The headings of the sub-chapters of the findings are equivalent to the scope of the evaluation.

**Rating** 4

**STANDARD: A detailed methodology was outlined in the relevant section of a report (full report or 1/3/25) to the point that a reader could understand the data collection, analysis and interpretation****Comment and Analysis**

The methodology section is called 'diagnostic process' and does not provide enough details on the applied methodology. The analysis and interpretation approaches used are not clearly outlined nor are the limitations to the methodology described.

**Rating** 2

**STANDARD: Key findings were presented in a clear way; they were made distinct from uncertain or speculative findings; and unused data was not presented in the body of the report**

**Comment and Analysis**

Key findings were well presented in the report. Each area of focus for the review contained an 'assessment' sub-section followed by a sub-section on 'Moving forward'. The findings (called Diagnosis) are substantiated by 12 annexed background papers. Hence the main report contains only key findings.

**Rating** **5**

**STANDARD: Conclusions and recommendations were clear and succinctly articulated**

**Comment and Analysis**

There is no separate chapter on conclusions. The conclusions are embedded in the 'assessment' and 'moving forward' sub-sections of the chapter on findings. The recommendations are clear and succinctly articulated in the recommendation chapter.

**Rating** **4**

**STANDARD: Acknowledgement of limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings were clearly and succinctly articulated**

**Comment and Analysis**

There is no clear section in the report, which presents overall limitations of the methodology. Except for the acknowledged limitation on the estimates on allocations and expenditure on ECD, there are no limitation mentioned of the findings.

**Rating** **2**

### 3.2. Writing and presentation

**STANDARD:** *Quality of writing and presentation was adequate for publication including: adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions (e.g. tense, perspective (first person, third person); levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc)*

#### Comment and Analysis

The quality of writing is excellent and the presentation is good. There are 2 small reference mistakes in the report, otherwise, the report is well written.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD:** *Appropriate conventions were used in presentation of data (e.g. use of appropriate statistical language; reporting of p-values where appropriate; not reporting statistically insignificant findings as significant; clarifying disaggregation categories in constructing percentages; not using quantitative language in reporting qualitative data, etc.)*

#### Comment and Analysis

Appropriate conventions were used in presentation of both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Rating** 5

### 3.3. Presentation of findings

**STANDARD:** *The use of figures and tables was such that it supported communication and comprehension of results; and data reported in figures and tables was readily discernible and useful to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions*

**Comment and Analysis**

In total there are two tables and four figures in the main 32 page report. These tables and figures communicate the results well and are easy to read. Headings and labeling of tables and figures are applied. More tables and figures could have benefited this main report.

**Rating** 4

**STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed**

**Comment and Analysis**

Data analysis is descriptive and appear to have been well executed.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence**

**Comment and Analysis**

The main report is condensed. Although the findings are based on analysis, it was correctly raised by one interviewee that the main report is stonger on giving findings than providing evidence. However the background papers do provide supportive evidence.

**Rating** 4

***STANDARD: The evidence gathered was sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument***

**Comment and Analysis**

The evidence was sufficiently and appropriately analysed.

**Rating** 5

***STANDARD: There was appropriate recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations***

**Comment and Analysis**

Since the report is based on secondary data analysis, it does not offer the opportunity for alternative interpretations.

**Rating** N/A

***STANDARD: The report appeared free of significant methodological and analytic flaws***

**Comment and Analysis**

The report appeared free of significant methodological and analytical flaws.

**Rating** 5

### 3.4. Conclusions

**STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence**

**Comment and Analysis**

The conclusions are based on the findings of the study and are embedded in the 'assessment' and 'moving forward' sub-sections.

**Rating** 4

**STANDARD: Conclusions took into account relevant empirical and/or analytic work from related research studies and evaluations**

**Comment and Analysis**

The conclusions derived from the findings of the extensive review of relevant literature, researches, evaluations, surveys and analysis of secondary datasets.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions**

**Comment and Analysis**

Conclusions addressed the original review purpose and questions, with one small exception of 'highlight the theories of change assumed by various policy instruments'. It was raised by one interviewee that they had hoped for more findings, conclusion and recommendations on financing the ECD. It could have benefitted the report to have a separate chapter on conclusions.

**Rating** 4

***STANDARD: Conclusions were drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change*****Comment and Analysis**

There is no reference to the intervention logic or theory of change in the conclusions. However, as this evaluation is diagnostic a theory of change to an intervention could not be expected.

**Rating** **N/A**

**3.5. Recommendations*****STANDARD: Recommendations were made in consultation with appropriate sectoral partners or experts*****Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations were drafted and presented to the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on ECD and comments were included in the final report. Consultation with key stakeholders took place throughout the process. However it is uncertain whether the recommendations were made with civil society and academic partners.

**Rating** **4**

***STANDARD: Recommendations were shaped following input or review by relevant government officials and other relevant stakeholders*****Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations were shaped following input from the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on ECD. However other relevant stakeholders do not seem to have provided input to the shaping of the recommendations.

**Rating** **4**

**STANDARD: Recommendations were relevant to the policy context****Comment and Analysis**

Recommendations were relevant and aligned to the policy context. In fact, a 1.5 page policy summary was provided that outlined the key policy findings and recommendations.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: Recommendations were targetted to a specific audience sufficiently - were specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable****Comment and Analysis**

The recommendations are specific, feasible and acceptable and are addressed to the ministers and government officials in the relevant ECD involved departments. The recommendations could be more explicit as to the specific department it is addressed to.

**Rating** 4

**3.6. Relevant limitations of the evaluation have been noted****STANDARD: Relevant limitations of the evaluation were noted****Comment and Analysis**

There is no clear section in the report, which presents overall limitations of the methodology. Except for the acknowledged limitation on the estimates on allocations and expenditure on ECD, there are no limitation mentioned of the findings.

**Rating** 2

### 3.7 Protection of participants and risk considerations

**STANDARD: The full report documented procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where this was needed (in some cases this is not needed - e.g. evaluation synthesis - in which case N/A should be recorded)**

#### Comment and Analysis

There is no mention of ethical issues in the report.

**Rating** 1

**STANDARD: There were no risks to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website**

#### Comment and Analysis

As this diagnostic review was based on secondary data analysis and consultation with key stakeholders, there were no risks for participants in disseminating the original report on a public website.

**Rating** 5

**STANDARD: There were no unfair risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website**

#### Comment and Analysis

As this diagnostic review was based on secondary data analysis and consultation with key stakeholders, there were no risks to institutions in disseminating the original report on a public website.

**Rating** 5

## **4. Follow-up, use and learning**

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### **4.1. Presentation to stakeholders**

**STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders**

#### **Comment and Analysis**

The results were presented to the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on ECD and comments were included in the final report. Presentations were furthermore made at the ECD conference and at various other fora.

**Rating** **5**

### **4.2. Resource utilisation**

**STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes**

#### **Comment and Analysis**

The review was conducted within limited timeframes. The report was submitted one week after agreed deadline.

**Rating** **4**

**STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget**

#### **Comment and Analysis**

The review was completed within the agreed budget. However it should be noted the members of the evaluation team spent additional unpaid time on the review.

**Rating** **5**

### 4.3. Transparency

**STANDARD: The report was publicly available (website or otherwise published document), except where there were legitimate security concerns**

#### Comment and Analysis

The main report is publicly available on government website.

**Rating** 5

### 4.4. Lessons learnt

**STANDARD: After completion of the evaluation, a reflective process was undertaken by staff responsible for the evaluand to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations**

#### Comment and Analysis

Although discussions have taken place in the Inter-departmental Steering Committee on ECD subsequent to the review, no formal reflective process has been conducted.

**Rating** 1

### 4.5. Symbolic and conceptual value

**STANDARD: The evaluation study was seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (eg raised its profile)**

#### Comment and Analysis

An improvement plan has been drafted based on the findings and recommendations of the review. However, the interviewees found it was too early to say if the review has added value to the policy or ECD sector programmes. The review was approved in June 2012.

**Rating** 3

**STANDARD: The evaluation study was of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping policy and practice**

**Comment and Analysis**

Interviewees raised that the review is credible and of good value. It provides an excellent diagnostic review of all aspects of the ECD sector. The review addressed current challenges of legislations like the Children's Act and can therefore be used to shape policy. Likewise, recommendations can be used for changing practices.

**Rating** 4

**4.6. Utilisation of findings and recommendations**

**STANDARD: There was clear evidence of instrumental use - that the recommendations of the evaluation were implemented to a significant extent**

**Comment and Analysis**

An improvement plan has been drafted based on the findings and recommendations of the review. However, it is premature to expect implementation of recommendations. The review was approved in June 2012.

**Rating** N/A

**STANDARD: There was clear evidence that the evaluation has had a positive influence on the evaluand, its stakeholders and beneficiaries over the medium to long term**

**Comment and Analysis**

An improvement plan has been drafted based on the findings and recommendations of the review. Also, all three interviewees indicated that they had learned a lot in the process which they could apply in other review processes. However, it is premature to expect positive influence on other stakeholders including the beneficiaries.

**Rating** N/A

## **References**

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Richter, L et al., 2012. Diagnostic Review of Early Childhood Development.

Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation and the Interdepartmental Committee on Early Childhood Development, 2011. Terms of Reference for Early

## **List of Interviewees**

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Professor Linda Richter, Evaluator: HSRC, Telephonic Interview, 29/1/2013.

Ms Margot Davies, Programme Manager: Department of Social Development, Telephonic Interview, 22/1/2013.

Dr Ian Goldman, DDG Evaluation and Research: Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, Telephonic Interview, 22/1/2013.