



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Report on the assessment of the effectiveness of Thusong Service Centres in Integrated Service Delivery

Date Evaluation was completed: 01 March 2010

Name of assessor: Mike Leslie

Evaluation Number: 43

Date Assessment Completed: 11 December 2012

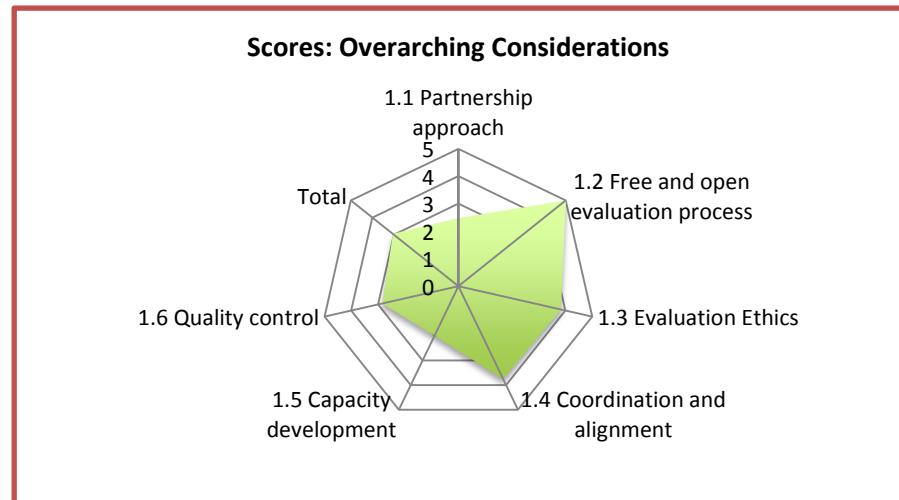
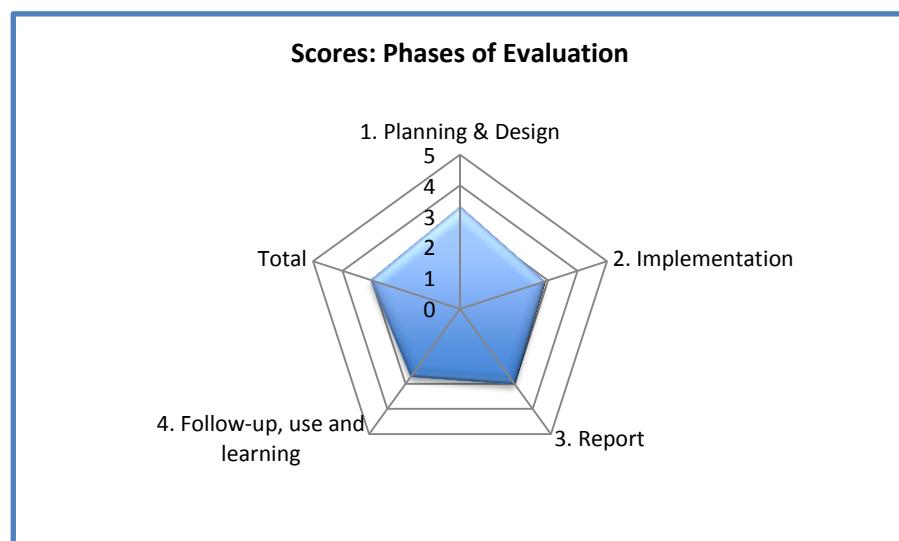
Evaluation Assessment Details

Title of evaluation report	Report on the assessment of the effectiveness of Thusong Service Centres in Integrated Service Delivery
Completion Date of Evaluation	01 March 2010
Name of Assessor	Mike Leslie
Evaluation Number	43
Completion Date of Assessment	11 December 2012
Initiated by	Public Service Commission
Evaluation undertaken by	Public Service Commission
Evaluation area / sector	Public service, governance, M&E
	Additional
National Outcome	Outcome 12
	Outcome 7 Additional
Type of Evaluation	Implementation
	Impact Additional
What is being evaluated	Programme
	Additional
Geographic Scope	National
Period of Evaluation	2009
Known Cost of Evaluation	Unknown

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.33
Implementation	2.89
Report	3.00
Follow-up, use and learning	2.71
Total	2.97

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	2.48
Free and open evaluation process	5.00
Evaluation Ethics	3.83
Coordination and alignment	3.75
Capacity Development	2.00
Quality control	2.84



1. Planning & Design

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 an evaluation proposal designed by the PSC and submitted to the Commission for feedback and input prior to being approved. It included considerations of purpose, design and methodology, resources and products.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

On page 2 of the report the overall aim of the evaluation was stated: "To assess the effectiveness of TSCs in integrated service delivery. The specific objectives of the project were, therefore to: -Determine the extent to which the establishment of TSCs has increased access to government services and products by the poor and previously disadvantaged. -Assess the extent to which the Thusong Service Centres Programme has achieved its objectives in terms of integrated service delivery. However, integrated service delivery appeared not to be defined prior to undertaking the evaluation, and assessing the achievement of objectives in this regard were not clear, but the purpose

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation questions were not clearly stated in reference to the stated purpose. The purpose statement was referred to as "these questions" rather than posing specific questions to be answered as part of the evaluation. Thus, any evaluation questions were implied based on the stated aim of the evaluation, and could have been more explicitly and clearly stated.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

The purpose and type of the evaluation was consistent with that of the evaluation proposal, but there are bigger design questions here that were not sufficiently addressed. For instance, how can the evaluation measure the effectiveness of integrated service delivery objectives that were never defined? How can you provide evidence of achieving 'integrated service delivery' if there is not a common understanding of what that means? Furthermore, in measuring the extent to which services are accessible to citizens (a high-level output), is it appropriate to talk of impact if there is no comparative quantifiable basis for showing access before and after the TSSs? How will we know objectively know if access has improved?

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

Not enough information available.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders in the Public Service Commission were involved in this process.

Rating 3

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

Based on the interview, it was communicated that the evaluation was conducted within the timeframe of about 9 weeks, which was tight but manageable.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Overall, the evaluation was adequately resourced but it was noted that staff capacity to conduct data analysis is something that needs to be further developed.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

A detailed history of the Thusong Service Centres (TSCs) evolution from MPCCs was provided in Chapter 2, along with the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved. The Chapter could have explored with more detail the legislative mandates and the policy environment. For instance, what did the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act say and were there any implications for the TSS?

Rating 4

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

Chapter 2 provided an overview of previous research and evaluations conducted on the MPCCs and TSCs that would make up the bulk of appropriate literature and research. However, there was no review of external literature or benchmarking of related experience, particularly with regards to "integrated service delivery".

Rating 4

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

A reference to a business plan for the TSS was made but there was not enough information to be clear as to whether the business plan provided enough information or the logical chain of events to be called a theory of change.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders in the Public Service Commission were involved in this process.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The variety of methods employed in the course of the study appear to sufficiently cover the implicit questions asked, although this should have been better informed by specific evaluation questions. At the planning stage, greater differentiation could have been made in the methods employed for data collection with regards to the type of information sought from beneficiaries, particularly with regards to access.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

A purposive sampling method was employed with the stated rationale that "such a sampling procedure identifies the elements in the research population that would render the most useful data in terms of the objectives of the study". It is unclear as to whether this method extended to all the individuals sampled, or just the selection of the TSS, of which there was a clear rationale to sample urban and rural centres in poor and marginal communities.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

There was not sufficient evidence of a planned process for utilising the findings of the evaluation. However, the provision of a best practice Thusong Service Centre Manager Job Description did provide some proof that consideration was given to how stakeholders might implement some recommendations, but this was not sufficiently developed or explained upon in the report and planning for follow-up and use of the information was acknowledged as a shortcoming.

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

2. Implementation

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

There was not particularly sensitive information obtain requiring extra ethical considerations outside of the norm.

Rating 3

2.2. Evaluator independence

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was conducted by the Public Service Commission as part of its core mandate. Although not addressed explicitly, it would appear the team conducting the assessment was impartial and there was no evidence of a conflict of interest.

Rating 4

2.3. Key stakeholder involvement

STANDARD: Key stakeholders were consulted through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement during the evaluation

Comment and Analysis

Although Key Stakeholders were involved in the evaluation as data sources, there appears to be no evidence of consultation through a formalised institutional arrangement during the evaluation process.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

No evidence provided in the report and the interview indicated that due to time constraints it was not considered viable.

Rating 2

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

The methods employed in the process were said to be consistent with those outlined in the evaluation proposal submitted prior to conducting the evaluation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

There was not any indication that data collection was compromised by field-work level problems or deviations from the original plans.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Forms of data gathering were not entirely appropriate as the use of semi-structured interview questionnaires for a number of data sources did not yield the same kind of comparable quantitative data across the various TSCs, particularly with regards to beneficiary access, one of the main purposes of the evaluation. How can the extent of access be known, if there is no comparable quantifiable basis in this regard? Nevertheless, the variety of data methods employed and triangulation limited the negative effects of relying on open-ended questions from all respondents.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The data analysis approach and methods could have been improved as more quantifiable data could have been collected from service users in particular. The frequency of use of TSCs, range of services used on visit, previous distance/time/costs incurred to travel to services prior to TSCs, etc are all relevant questions related to access to integrated services that were not answered.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

Key Stakeholders were well engaged as part of the evaluation methodology, including in Focus Groups and through Semi-Structured Interviews.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The methodology did include engaging beneficiaries as sources of data and information, but more useful data with regards to access to services could have been obtained. Furthermore, if the purpose was to determine the extent of improved access and the realisation of integrated service delivery objectives, a more differentiated approach to data collection from the beneficiaries could have been employed.

Rating 2

2.5. Project management

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

3. Report

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

Yes, the Executive Summary captured all 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 the TSCs was clear and the historical evolution of the TSCs, with recognition of the significance of previous reports, was made clear and relevant to the evaluation.

Rating 5

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

The 'areas' that were assessed in the course of the evaluation were not made explicit until the findings section of the report, and to an extent, they logically follow from the aim of the evaluation. However, these areas should have been made explicit from the outset of the evaluation report.

Rating 3

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

The scope of the evaluation was clear from the report. The 19 of the 139 TSCs included were made explicit and

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 methodologies applied for the purpose of the evaluation were clearly acknowledged, although they could have been expanded on and the rationale for their selection made clear. For instance, the approach to analysis of the qualitative data collected during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups could have been explained.

Rating 3

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 presented clearly, although the lack of clarity on how the interview data was analysed makes it difficult to determine to what extent the findings may have been speculative or uncertain.

Rating 3

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

Conclusions and recommendations were clearly and succinctly articulated.

Rating 4

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

The only acknowledgement of limitations was due to the absence of users during some in loco observations. There were more limitations to the study than this, including the purposive sampling, issues arising from the semi-structured interviews and a lack of explanation of the data analysis process.

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

Quality of writing and presentation were both of a good quality with consistent formatting.

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

Conventions not entirely appropriate. For instance, findings speaking to frequency and intervals of access relied almost entirely on qualitative data, rather than any measurable assessment of frequency of use of the centres or a comparable breakdown of hours of operation, range of services used per visit, etc.

Rating 2

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

The use of figures and tables was limited and could have been better utilised to communicate and comprehend the results.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed**Comment and Analysis**

The data analysis appeared to be of average execution given the extent of qualitative data obtained and the absence of an explanation as to how it was analysed.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence**Comment and Analysis**

Some findings were supported by available evidence, although a lack of direct referencing and quoting from sources (anonymously) undermined the extent to which data obtained supported the findings.

Rating 2

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

The evidence gathered appeared to be sufficiently analysed, although this was difficult to determine because the analysis was not addressed in the methodology.

Rating 3

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

There was no recognition of the possibility of alternative interpretations.

Rating 1

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

There did appear to be a methodological flaw in choosing to undertake semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions rather than obtain comparable quantitative data across the various TSCs and Provinces. When considering that the purpose of the evaluation was to determine the extent to which access was improved, this reliance on qualitative data appeared to be a methodological shortcoming of the evaluation.

Rating 2

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions were derived from available evidence, but the extent to which individual data sources may have influenced the findings is unclear due to the ambiguity of the data analysis undertaken.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions did not take into account any other relevant empirical or analytic work.

Rating 2

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

The conclusion does address the original evaluation purpose and questions, albeit briefly.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

3.5. Recommendations

STANDARD: Recommendations were made in consultation with appropriate sectoral partners or experts

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Recommendations seem clearly informed by the various stakeholders that were data sources for the evaluation. However, the extent to which they helped shape the final recommendations is unclear.

Rating 3

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

Recommendations were relevant to the policy context and informed by the various roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, as set out in legislation and government policy.

Rating 4

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

Recommendations appear targetted specifically to politicians and civil servants directly responsible for TSCs, although this is not explicitly recognised.

Rating 3

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

A limitation of the methodology is noted, but no limitations of the evaluation on the whole are noted.

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

The report appeared to have been conducted with informed consent but this was not explicitly acknowledged as per best practice.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

There were no risks to participants and the report is available on the public website.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

There were no unfair risks to institutions involved and the report has been disseminated on the PSC website.

Rating 5

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

The findings were not directly presented to all relevant stakeholders as would have been desirable. Only copies of the report were made available.

Rating 2

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was completed within the available timeframes which were tight given the scope of the evaluation.

Rating 4

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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 report is publicly available on the PSC 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

There was limited evidence of any reflective process undertaken there seemed little to suggest that lessons were learnt to strengthen future evaluations.

Rating 2

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

The extent to which the evaluation was of symbolic value to the programme was limited.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

The study was of a clear conceptual value in terms of understanding what has happened at TSCs and where policy and practice can have further influence in this regard. The evaluation also begins the process of unpacking the notion of integrated service delivery, but it should have been done prior to the evaluation.

Rating 3

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

There does not appear to be evidence of instrumental use of the evaluation as one of the biggest shortcomings noted in the interview was the lack of follow-up by the PSC in terms of using the reporting and implementing the recommendations where feasible.

Rating 2

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

No evidence of medium-to-long-term influence on the TSC programme was founded although a single interview with the evaluator was an insufficient source of information in this regard.

Rating N/A

References

Public Service Commission. March 2010. Report on the Assessment of the Effectiveness of Thusong Service Centres in Integrated Service Delivery.

List of Interviewees

Marie Fourie: Director- Compliance Evaluations and Organisational Review. Telephonic Interview on 18 December 2012.