



planning, monitoring and evaluation

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Evaluation Title:	Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme
Evaluation Number:	519
Evaluation Completion Date:	31 March 2016
Period of Evaluation:	October 2014 to March 2016
Submitted:	01 August 2016 by Cara Hartley
Approved:	02 August 2016 by Mike Leslie

Evaluation Details

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Assessors

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Assessment Documents

Document Name:	Document Type:	Added By:	Added On:
SH Evaluation_Full Report_Final_4 Mar 2016_clean.pdf	Evaluation report	Mike Leslie	10 June 2016
SH Evaluation Summary Report Final_4 Mar 2016.docx	Evaluation report	Mike Leslie	10 June 2016
Social Housing Evaluation ToR_14 10 01.pdf	Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation	Cara Hartley	05 July 2016
RGSA_DPME_SH Evaluation_Inception Report_Draft v2 1_12 Dec 2014.pdf	An inception report	Cara Hartley	21 July 2016
Assessment Report at Moderation.pdf	Assessment Report at Moderation	Mike Leslie	21 July 2016
RGSA_DPME_SH Evaluation_Literature Review_Revised 15 04 13.doc	Any other relevant documentation pertaining to the evaluation process	Cara Hartley	26 July 2016
RGSA_Proposal_Impact & Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme.pdf	The proposal selected to conduct the evaluation	Cara Hartley	26 July 2016

Quality Assessment Summary

This evaluation of the Social Housing programme scores 3,33 out of 5, indicating an evaluation of more than adequate quality. The particular strengths of this evaluation are that it draws on a variety of valuable data sources and that the evaluation process featured active participation from a broad range of the most important Social Housing role players on the evaluation steering committee. Role players involved included the National Department of Human Settlements (NDHS) and Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA), the National Association of Social Housing Organisations (NASHO), National Treasury, National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC) and others. The evaluation also benefited from inputs from housing experts as well as two peer reviewers.

The evaluation scored between 3 (adequate) and 4 (good) on each phase of the evaluation. The Planning and Design phase scored 3,35. The evaluation benefited from a good quality TOR and thorough Inception Report that ensured common agreement on a broadly appropriate methodology for the evaluation. In terms of evaluating the impact of the programme, a contribution analysis approach was agreed on, which was appropriate given that there were several valuable data sources available but not data that would lend itself to a rigorous experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation design. In scoping the evaluation time frame the commissioners underestimated the time required for the participation and consultation of such a broad range of stakeholders and the peer reviewers, particularly given that a Theory of Change did not yet exist and would need to be developed and agreed on to form the basis of the methodology.

The Implementation Phase scored 3,05. In the implementation of the evaluation there was good cooperation between the steering committee, technical working group and service provider, with lively and constructive debate on the programme's intent and the emerging findings. There was appropriate regard for the independence of the evaluation team and confidentiality of respondents. Evaluators were not obstructed in their efforts to obtain and analyse data, but nevertheless struggled to obtain it because of poor knowledge management and organisational challenges in DHS and SHRA. The evaluation deviated somewhat from the planned methodology, adding an online survey and identification of "counterfactual" housing situations (which were only compared with social housing at a broad aggregate level). The contribution analysis methodology could have been stronger in its consideration of alternative explanations for findings, and there was sometimes heavy reliance on only one data source to make a point. Nevertheless most of the analysis was consistent with the plan and seemed to be appropriately analysed, leading to credible overall findings. Data collection from key sector stakeholders was exhaustive (36 interviews as well as an online survey of 60 individuals, both methods covering the most important categories of role players). The use of tenant surveys helped to make up for the lack of direct data collection with tenants (the beneficiaries of social housing).

The reporting phase scored 3,45 reflecting that the evaluation was strongest in this phase in terms of the assessment standards. The final report is quite complete and accessible. The findings are based on adequate data analysis and integration, with clear statements of limitations. There is evidence of steps taken to ensure quality, such as peer review and multiple rounds of inputs from the steering committee. The conclusions are strong and clearly show the judgment in relation to the main evaluation questions. The recommendations are considered relevant and acceptable, benefiting from extensive consultation.

In terms of follow-up, use and learning the evaluation scored 3,33. The evaluation process went well over the initially projected time frames (17 months instead of 8) and the service provider incurred unanticipated costs because of the consultative process and multiple rounds of revisions to deliverables. Although costly, this process ensured that the evaluation provided insight and built clarity and consensus among the participating stakeholders regarding the programme's intent, current performance, and its importance as part of the broader housing market in South Africa. This makes it more likely that the recommendations will be supported by those who participated.

The overall strong participation of diverse stakeholders throughout the evaluation is reflected in the score of 3,68 for its Partnership Approach. The combination of credible evaluation findings and the active participation of SHRA (which is responsible for the programme's implementation), Treasury and others was deemed valuable for shaping policy and practice going forward. However, interviewed stakeholders believe that DHS, as custodian of the Social Housing programme and owner of the policy, could have benefited more from the considerable conceptual and symbolic value of the evaluation if appropriate DHS officials were consistently and actively involved throughout. The evaluation findings are scheduled to be presented to the DHS Exco in August 2016 and hopefully this will support take-up of the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations in DHS.

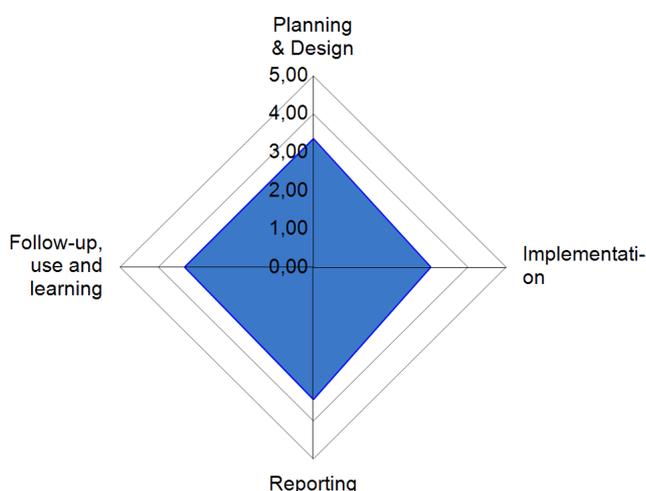
Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3,35
Implementation	3,05
Reporting	3,45
Follow-up, use and learning	3,33

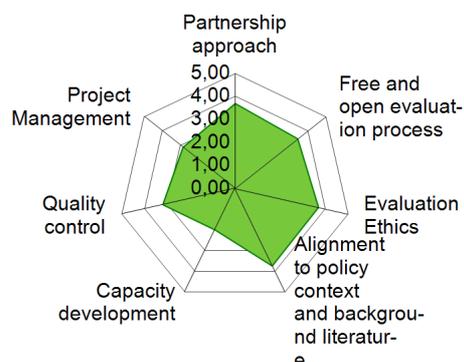
Total	3,33
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Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3,68
Free and open evaluation process	3,44
Evaluation Ethics	3,70
Alignment to policy context and background literature	3,73
Capacity development	2,00
Quality control	3,20
Project Management	2,86
Total	3,33

Scores: Phases of Evaluation



Scores: Overarching Considerations



Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	Quality of the TOR	3,56
Planning & Design	Adequacy of resourcing	3,14
Planning & Design	Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology	3,00
Planning & Design	Project management (Planning phase)	4,00
Implementation	Evaluation ethics and independence	3,50
Implementation	Participation and M&E skills development	3,14
Implementation	Methodological integrity	2,68
Implementation	Project management (Implementation phase)	3,50
Reporting	Completeness of the evaluation report	3,50
Reporting	Accessibility of content	3,50
Reporting	Robustness of findings	3,20
Reporting	Strength of conclusions	3,67
Reporting	Suitability of recommendations	3,50
Reporting	Acknowledgement of ethical considerations	3,57
Follow-up, use and learning	Resource utilisation	2,00

Phase of Evaluation	Area of Evaluation	Score
Follow-up, use and learning	Evaluation use	3,67
Total	Total	3,33

Planning & Design

Quality of the TOR

Standard:	The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or a well-structured and complete internal evaluation proposal (e.g. Background, Purpose, Evaluation Questions, Design & Methodology, Deliverables & Timeframes, Resource requirements, Intended Audience & Utilisation, etc).
Comment and Analysis:	The TOR was detailed, including all the components listed above. It showed evidence of detailed understanding of the Social Housing (SH) programme including policy intent, implementation issues faced, documents and data that could be used for evaluation, and key stakeholders.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was guided by a well-structured and complete TOR or internal evaluation proposal of a good standard

Standard:	The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The TOR proposed a mixed-methods evaluation seeking to answer both implementation and impact related questions.</p> <p>In terms of implementation, the TOR provided detailed evaluation questions and identified primary data that could be collected that could serve as a basis for triangulation of findings through several methods.</p> <p>In terms of impact ("To what extent have the social housing projects that have been implemented contributed to the achievement of spatial, economic and social restructuring policy goals?"), the TOR proposed studying 6 projects in 6 different municipalities, essentially an in-depth case study methodology. The TOR proposed focusing on these projects and evaluating impact using a combination of non-experimental methods, using quantitative and qualitative data, with a thrust toward pre- and post-assessment. This is appropriate as long as sufficient relevant data (including baseline data) can be provided on which to base this methodology. The TOR goes into some detail in proposing what data may be used, although it clearly remains up to the service provider to look for more detailed data to enable rigorous analysis and triangulation.</p>
Rating:	3: The approach and type of evaluation was suited to the purpose and scope of the evaluation TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal)

Standard:	The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The TOR identifies the intended users of the evaluation, listing those with mandates for policy, implementation, funding and regulation of social housing. It also distinguishes between their intended uses in a way that reflects their respective mandates. For instance the intended use for the NASHO (National Association of Social Housing Organisations) is to "identify the support that SHIs require and use the results of the evaluation to lobby for necessary reforms". This also helps to give an indication of the type of information that the evaluation user would need.</p> <p>Although the section does not go into much detail it gives an adequate indication of these different stakeholders' considerations, which helps to lay the groundwork for an evaluation that engages them.</p>
Rating:	3: The TOR (or an internal evaluation proposal) identified the intended users of the evaluation and their information needs

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The National Department of Human Settlements (DHS) and Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) were closely involved in scoping the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation. In the case of DHS it should be noted that the person who was involved in this process is not a permanent staff member of DHS but had been involved with Social Housing with DHS for a number of years.</p> <p>Some other members of the evaluation steercom (including the National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC) and South African Local Government Association (SALGA)) also discussed and gave inputs on drafts of the TOR before it was finalised.</p>
Rating:	4: A wider range of stakeholders (i.e. beyond government stakeholders) were meaningfully involved in the scoping of the TOR and choosing the purpose of the evaluation

Adequacy of resourcing

Standard:	The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of time and budget allocated
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The evaluation was not adequately resourced in terms of time with only 8 months allocated to the project from inception to finalised evaluation reports. Two strengths of the evaluation, i.e. (1) involvement of a broad and diverse stakeholder group on the steering committee and (2) involvement of peer reviewers, while enhancing the value of the evaluation, were likely to increase the time needed for various role players to review, discuss and give feedback on deliverables and for the service provider to respond adequately to these. Particularly given that the evaluation scope involved producing a Theory of Change and then directly applying it to assess both implementation and impact, the likelihood of considerable consultation could have been better scoped and provided for from the outset.</p> <p>The budget for the evaluation was sufficient for data collection, particularly because there was the anticipation that the evaluation would benefit from some recent and concurrent studies that also generated relevant data. However the underestimation of the time required, also meant an underestimation of the consulting hours/budget required from the service provider.</p>
Rating:	2: The evaluation was resourced with tight timeframes and budget which were challenging from the outset
Standard:	The team conducting the evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets
Comment and Analysis:	The service provider team had extensive experience and a thorough understanding of the Social Housing sector in South Africa. They also had the qualifications, analytical skills and experience to analyse spatial, economic and financial dimensions of the programme's implementation and impact. The team members doing the bulk of the work did not have formal training in M&E specifically; having someone with formal training in M&E more closely involved throughout the process could have benefited the evaluation in terms of careful attention to evaluation methodology and evaluative reasoning. However, they did involve an international team member with a PhD in economics who has evaluated a broad range of interventions internationally. He supported the development of the Theory of Change and other aspects of the methodology.
Rating:	4: The evaluation was well resourced in terms of staffing and skills sets

Appropriateness of the evaluation design and methodology

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:	<p>The inception report discusses the Theory of Change that would be developed in the early stages of the project. It explains how this will be developed, what particular checks and considerations will apply, the intention to present it and obtain inputs on it at a client workshop, and how it will be used to guide the development of the evaluation matrix, analysis and detailed methodology. No draft visual representation was developed in the inception stage as the Theory of Change would be developed in the the stage thereafter.</p> <p>The rating of "adequate" is given because the inception report did begin to unpack the rationale for the programme and factors influencing it, and clearly planned to base the evaluation on an agreed Theory of Change. Previous evaluation quality assessments have rated such a treatment as "adequate" at the planning stage. However it should be noted that the Theory of Change was only drafted and agreed upon after the commissioning of an impact evaluation, drafting of evaluation questions, and agreement during the inception phase on a methodology; and this is not ideal as it can lead to an evaluation that gives only partial or superficial judgment of whether the intervention achieved its intended impact.</p>
Rating:	3: There was explicit reference to the intervention logic or the theory of change of the evaluand in the TOR or the Inception Report
Standard:	The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The report presents an evaluation matrix that lists the evaluation questions and sets out methodological approaches for each of them.</p> <p>It shows that the service provider recognised the challenge of attribution within an non-experimental evaluation design. It indicates that the planned methodology for the impact evaluation component was contribution analysis based on a logical framework that makes the intended causal links explicit. The report further shows what data is believed to be available to support contribution analysis on each of the impact-related evaluation questions. The selected methodology is potentially appropriate, but it is not clear in the inception report how the service provider hopes to weigh alternative explanations of the observed outcomes, other than being able to base arguments on established literature.</p> <p>It briefly indicates the planned approach for assessing the programme's value for money to different stakeholders (a cost-benefit analysis using existing data); and implementation-related evaluation questions (comparison of implementation to policy intent). Triangulation of different data sources and comparison to the programme theory / logic model appears to be the main methodology here. It begins to list anticipated data sources.</p> <p>Overall the selected methodologies were broadly appropriate for the different types of questions. They were at a fairly high level, leaving the possibility that challenges would still be encountered in applying the methodology. Still they seemed to have the potential to provide credible findings and compare them to an explicit statement of programme intent.</p>
Rating:	3: The planned methodology was appropriate to the questions being asked
Standard:	The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given the focus and purpose of evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	The only type of planned sampling was to select 6 projects out of 59 to be studied in-depth as case studies. The sampling appears to have been appropriate given that it took into account key variables such as the city locations and proclaimed restructuring zones; variations in SHI size, history and methodologies; project sizes and locations; and timelines of SHI stock development. Within each of these all the main institutional role players would be interviewed.
Rating:	3: The sampling planned was appropriate and adequate given focus and purpose of evaluation

Project management (Planning phase)

Standard:	The inception phase was used to develop a common agreement on how the evaluation would be implemented
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The inception phase was effective in ensuring clarity as to the expectations of the steering committee and the approach and methodology to be followed by the evaluators. Given the diversity of stakeholders this was an important prerequisite for a constructive evaluation process, and all the reviewed evidence and interviewed stakeholders suggest that it was achieved.</p> <p>It is noted below that DHS was represented at different times by different individuals, and that the Social Housing Regulatory Authority (SHRA) was facing internal organisational challenges that resulted in less constant engagement in the evaluation. These are the only noted limits to a full, shared understanding among stakeholders.</p>
Rating:	4: The inception phase was used to good effect to achieve a common agreement and understanding of how the evaluation would be implemented

Implementation

Evaluation ethics and independence

Standard: Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, informed consent, assurances of confidentiality and appropriate clearance were achieved; e.g. through an ethics review board, in evaluation involving minors, institutions where access usually requires ethical or bureaucratic clearance

Comment and Analysis: Since the evaluation relied mostly on secondary data and did not include interviewing programme beneficiaries or working with personal information, ethical sensitivity was not very high. For interviews with government officials and the representatives of stakeholder institutions, evaluators gave the option of confidentiality and only attributed to quotes to those who had given permission that this may be done. The summary report discusses this (it is unclear why it is not stated in the full report but it was confirmed by two of the interviewed stakeholders).

Rating: 4: There was clear evidence that ethical protocols were observed for most data collection instances including: informed consent agreements; confidentiality; documenting and storing data notes, recordings or transcripts; Where data was gathered in contexts where ethical sensitivity is high, appropriate clearance was achieved 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

Standard: Where external, the evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and given access to existing data and information sources

Comment and Analysis: According to interviewed stakeholders, there was never any evidence of deliberate withholding of relevant information or any significant interference with the evaluation team's work. It was nevertheless at times very challenging for the evaluation team to obtain the needed data just because of poor knowledge management and organisational challenges.

Rating: 3: The evaluation team was able to work without significant interference and was given access to existing data and information sources

Participation and M&E skills development

Standard:	Key stakeholders were involved in the evaluation through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement
Comment and Analysis:	<p>A steering committee as well as technical reference group were in place. Between these two structures the following stakeholders were represented: DPME, DHS, National Treasury, SHRA, NASHO (National Association of Social Housing Organisations), National Housing Finance Corporation (NHFC), SALGA, African Resource Centre for Housing (ARCH) and the South African Cities Network (SACN). Interviewed stakeholders indicated, and minutes of meetings reflected, that most of these stakeholders remained involved throughout the evaluation. The ability to bring diverse stakeholders together in and facilitate constructive evaluative discussion of the programme was a key strength of the evaluation.</p> <p>However, interviewed stakeholders considered the DHS's participation unsatisfactory. The involvement of DHS permanent staff was described by all the interviewed stakeholders as "ad hoc". It could have been improved by the regular, active participation of at least one designated, appropriate official.</p> <p>The SHRA, which is responsible for the implementation of the Social Housing Programme, was represented but was facing internal organisational challenges (particularly vacancy of the CEO position) which was not ideal for such an important role player, but SHRA was nevertheless represented throughout.</p> <p>The only key stakeholder group not directly represented on the Steering Committee was the beneficiaries/tenants who are renting social housing. These stakeholders were to some extent, indirectly represented through NASHO, but not directly through a tenants' representative structure or something similar. It would have been practically challenging to address this omission, as no such structure currently exists in South Africa.</p>
Rating:	4: Key stakeholders were regularly, actively involved in the evaluation and contributed through a formalised mechanism or institutional arrangement (e.g. a steering committee or reference group)

Standard:	Where appropriate, an element of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand and evaluators was incorporated into the evaluation process
Comment and Analysis:	Provision was made for a DPME official to be nominated to be part of the evaluation team and thereby gain experience. The person was nominated, but interviewed stakeholders felt the capacity building effort had not been successful as the official's schedule had been too full with other work to meaningfully participate in the evaluation.
Rating:	2: There was some evidence of capacity building of partners responsible for the evaluand or evaluators but this was either unstructured or incomplete

Methodological integrity

Standard:	A literature review was developed which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	There were some differences of opinion between interviewed stakeholders about whether the literature review covered the right content at the right level of detail; peer reviewer comments also question its coverage. Nevertheless the final revised Literature Review is extensive (188 pages) and there is clear evidence of how it was integrated into the evaluation methodology. It was used to inform the Theory of Change (which formed the analytical basis for the evaluation) and in some places it is referred back to as part of analysing the findings.
Rating:	3: An adequate literature review was developed in terms of coverage and analysis which informed the analytical framework and findings of the evaluation

Standard:	The methods employed in the process of the evaluation were consistent with those planned and implemented adequately
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The planned methods were implemented as planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The comparison of the programme with the logical framework was done explicitly and to good effect to frame each set of findings. - The triangulation methodology (analysis and integration of qualitative and quantitative secondary data; qualitative interviews and an online survey) was adequate - The contribution analysis methodology was pursued as far as triangulation of data sources allowed the evaluators to study the envisioned causal pathways to impact. In this regard the report noted several problems at implementation level that significantly limit the programme's potential for impact (e.g. limiting its scale and rate of expansion). <p>Two further notable methods were added which were not originally planned - an online survey of Social Housing stakeholders; and the construction of "counterfactuals" to social housing for the three key areas in which the six case studies were located. (An interim deliverable such as an evaluation plan, not reviewed for this assessment, may have elaborated on why these two methods were added only after the inception phase.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The online study provided a further data source to reflect the opinions of sector stakeholders. This was valuable to supplement the interpretation of qualitative data with "the composite viewpoints of key players in the SH sector". There was sometimes a heavy reliance on this, where triangulation or elaboration would have made points stronger. - Some general comparisons of Social Housing programmes with "counterfactual" housing arrangements are made in the report. This may have been added to support the weighing up of alternative explanations for observed outcomes, as required in a contribution analysis impact evaluation methodology. However this rationale is not made explicit. The appendix documents how the "counterfactuals" were identified but there is no section showing the systematic comparison of their outcomes of interest with the outcomes of social housing. In this way the comparison remains somewhat opaque. A few statements in the report draw on this comparison, and seem to do so appropriately to argue that the benefits from social housing would not have been achieved in the absence of the programme (e.g. "SH are deemed to offer larger and better-specified units [to the target population] than counterfactuals"). But it is hard to render a judgement with the limited detail provided.
Rating:	2: The methods employed in the process of the evaluation deviated somewhat from those planned or implementation was inadequate
Standard:	A pilot of basic data collection instrumentation occurred prior to undertaking data collection and it was used to inform the research process
Comment and Analysis:	There is no evidence that the qualitative interview guides or the online survey were piloted.
Rating:	1: No pilot of any data collection instrumentation took place prior to data collection
Standard:	Data was collected from key stakeholders (e.g. implementers, governance structures, indirectly affected stakeholders) as data sources
Comment and Analysis:	<p>Data was collected from a broad range of key stakeholders: government departments of all three spheres, Social Housing agencies, institutions and organisations, private sector actors in Social Housing consulting and finance and development, international support agencies.</p> <p>Data was collected through qualitative interviews (38 interviews had been planned in the inception report, spread across various institutions; 36 face to face interviews were held in the end with several follow-up interviews and other engagements) as well as an online survey to a broader group (60 out of 126 respondents spread across the same institutions).</p>
Rating:	5: Data was collected from all of the key stakeholder groupings identified in the research plan and the intended sample was well achieved (approx. 90-100% of those intended)

Standard:	The methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information
Comment and Analysis:	Social Housing Institutions were interviewed and provided data, including results of tenant exit interviews and annual surveys of existing tenants. This provided credible data on beneficiary experiences of social housing. However, beneficiaries were not directly engaged as sources of data for this specific evaluation.
Rating:	3: The methodology included engaging beneficiaries as a source of data and information (or if based on secondary data, includes data from beneficiaries)

Project management (Implementation phase)

Standard:	The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together adequately to facilitate achievement of the objectives of the evaluation
Comment and Analysis:	According to all those interviewed, the involvement of diverse stakeholders in the evaluation was a benefit to the process, sparking debate in a constructive way. While sometimes this engagement slowed down the completion of milestones (e.g. repeated iterations of revisions to the theory of change), it was seen as ultimately beneficial to the content and utility of the evaluation deliverables. It also promoted an important process objective of government evaluations i.e. deepening stakeholders' conceptual understanding of the policy context and of the programme.
Rating:	4: The steering committee, technical working group and service provider worked together in a flexible and constructive manner facilitating achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Standard:	Support provided by the evaluation secretariat (e.g. the administrators responsible for the evaluation) facilitated achievement of the objectives of the evaluation (eg turnaround times, addressing problems, preparation for meetings etc)
Comment and Analysis:	For the most part the secretariat support was perceived as good, e.g. scheduling of meetings, organising of workshops, etc., even though those providing the support were perceived as stretched. Some delays in turnaround times were noted on the evaluators' side as well as the secretariat's side, resulting in exceeding of timeframes and one peer reviewer noting that they were not kept informed of changes to schedules. However interviewed stakeholders do not believe that this significantly affected the quality of the end result.
Rating:	3: Support provided by the evaluation secretariat facilitated achievement of the objectives of the evaluation

Reporting

Completeness of the evaluation report

Standard:	The first draft evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes
Comment and Analysis:	The first draft was of sufficient quality to be shared with the steering committee without major changes. It did however undergo several more revisions before being accepted as final.
Rating:	3: A first draft of the evaluation report was of a sufficient quality to go to stakeholders and did not require major changes prior to sharing

Standard:	The final evaluation report is well-structured and complete in terms of the following: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations
Comment and Analysis:	The final report presents these components well, resulting in a report that is clear and easy to follow. Appendices are also used appropriately, although further detail on the analysis of datasets would have deepened the reader's understanding.
Rating:	4: The final evaluation report is well-structured, complete and presents the following report components well: executive summary; context of the development evaluation; evaluation purpose, questions and scope; methodology; findings and analysis; conclusions and recommendations

Accessibility of content

Standard:	The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for publication (e.g. adequate layout and consistent formatting; complete sentences and no widespread grammatical or typographical errors; consistency of style and writing conventions; levels of formality; references complete and consistent with cited references in reference list and vice versa; etc.)
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The evaluation is well laid out with consistent formatting and style and only minimal grammatical and typographical errors. The quality of images is inconsistent and some of the maps are not optimally legible, but comprehension is aided by discussion in the text.</p> <p>One of the interviewed stakeholders suggested that the tone of the report relies on a pre-existing basic understanding to the social housing policy context. This may aid the reader but the evaluation report makes effective use of the first few chapters (introduction; literature review and theory of change) to provide some of this background.</p>
Rating:	3: The final evaluation report is user-friendly, written in accessible language and adequate for sharing (e.g. some spelling, grammar or formatting mistakes but these do not seriously detract from the report)

Standard:	Figures, tables and appropriate conventions are 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.) and are readily discernible to a reader familiar with data presentation conventions
Comment and Analysis:	Figures and tables are clearly labeled and explanatory notes are provided underneath some of the figures. Appropriate conventions are used in the presentation of data. As noted some maps are not entirely clear, but they are not inappropriately presented in terms of conventions such as legends and notes. Overall the presentation of data is understandable and well used to support the discussions in the report.
Rating:	4: Figures, tables and conventions are well used for a variety of types of data presentations and supporting explanations make them accessible to readers

Robustness of findings

Standard:	Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation incorporates the analysis of several sources of data and most of them appear to have been analysed to an adequate standard. The quantitative datasets (SHI tenants' survey, Census data on income and housing arrangements, SHRA accreditation dataset, financing arrangements) appear to be well executed for all datasets, and findings appropriately integrated. In terms of qualitative data from interviews, it is hard to gauge the quality of data analysis as there is no elaboration on how it was done (no reference to e.g. coding or thematic analysis of interview transcripts); references to interviews are merely added in brackets to support statements. The online survey appears adequately analysed (a basic analysis of the distribution of responses).
Rating:	3: Data analysis appears to have been executed to an adequate standard for most datasets

Standard:	Findings are supported by evidence which is sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument, integrating sources of data
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The evaluators know the sector well, and this poses a risk of presenting some statements as if they are common sense. Care has been taken in the final report, to present evidence in relation to each statement and so most of the main findings are supported by several sources of evidence which are integrated to provide a convincing picture. In this sense the evaluation draws on a good evidence base. This impression is supported by the interviewed stakeholders, all of whom deemed the findings credible.</p> <p>Just one caveat should be noted in this regard. There are instances where the views of online survey respondents to long (possibly leading) statements is the only evidence supporting a point, and no further evidence is provided. In these cases there is a risk that it could be interpreted as objective, even though the evaluation states up front that the online survey results are not in themselves a statistically valid basis for supporting the conclusions drawn in the report. In such cases the evaluation could have benefited from integration of explanatory quotes from interviews, or other evidence.</p>
Rating:	3: The evidence gathered is analysed to support the argument to an adequate standard and integrates sources of data

Standard:	There is appropriate recognition and exploration of the possibility of alternative interpretations
Comment and Analysis:	As mentioned earlier, the report does not go into detail in considering alternative interpretations of the findings. Considering that the findings reportedly sparked lively debate among stakeholders, it seems likely that alternative views were raised, and one might have expected some of this to be reflected more explicitly in the report. However many of the findings are descriptive in nature, and therefore in most cases the evidence is not so subject to interpretation as to call the credibility of the conclusions into question. With regard to the impact-related evaluation questions, the evaluators emphasise the paucity of evidence and avoid making definitive statements.
Rating:	2: There is an implicit or indirect recognition of alternative interpretations
Standard:	The report appears free of significant methodological and analytic flaws
Comment and Analysis:	The report documents the main methodological and analytical processes, although more detail in appendices would have been valuable. It also notes several external checks and reviews, i.e. the methodology, key deliverables and draft and final reports were reviewed by the steering committee, some experts convened by the evaluators (an evaluation expert and two housing sector experts), as well as two peer reviewers.
Rating:	4: The report documents some of the methodological and analytical processes used to ensure that it is free of methodological and analytic flaws
Standard:	Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated (e.g. limitations of scope or evaluation design, recommendation for additional research, data collection challenges, etc)
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluation notes limitations of the scope, evaluation design and data collection challenges. The presentation of findings is also done with regard for limitations e.g. noting where there is limited evidence for a particular statement and introducing the online survey with a caveat about its validity.
Rating:	4: Limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings are clearly articulated and distinguish between different kinds of limitations

Strength of conclusions

Standard:	Conclusions are derived from evidence
Comment and Analysis:	The one evaluation finding which is unsupported in the report and then repeated in the conclusion is that social housing breaks the cycle of deprivation amongst occupants and has intergenerational benefits. Although this does seem to be the potential impact of social housing and may even be the case on the ground, no supporting argument is provided. Other than the above, the conclusions are derived from the evaluation findings, with no new arguments presented, and is useful in providing a summary of the findings and showing how they relate to each other.
Rating:	3: Conclusions are derived from evidence

Standard:	Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The findings are structured according to the seven main evaluation questions presented in the introduction. Each section ends with an "evaluation conclusion" that answers the main evaluation question, drawing on the preceding findings.</p> <p>A final overall concluding section reflects the two main purposes of the evaluation as set out in the TOR, namely evaluating the impact and implementation of the programme. This conclusion touches on each of the main Impact Areas and Implementation Areas under which the evaluation questions were grouped, thereby giving a summary overview of the findings in relation to these questions.</p> <p>By presenting conclusions on each of the evaluation questions and overall, it is made apparent to the reader what the evaluatory judgments are and what they are based on.</p>
Rating:	4: Conclusions address the original evaluation purpose and questions well

Standard:	Conclusions are drawn with explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change
Comment and Analysis:	The overall concluding section starts with an introductory passage reflecting on the Theory of Change, affirming it as valid and plausible, and arguing that the programme's effectiveness is primarily limited by challenges in interpreting the policy intent and implementing it, as opposed to inappropriate design. This argument is then supported by the concluding points that follow.
Rating:	4: Conclusions are drawn with an explicit reference to, and provide a clear judgement on, the intervention logic or theory of change

Suitability of recommendations

Standard:	Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts
Comment and Analysis:	The evaluators' draft recommendations were workshopped and circulated as part of the draft report, receiving inputs from a consultant to DHS, DPME, the experts commissioned by RebelGroup, the government officials of all three spheres who attended the stakeholder workshop, as well as NASHO and external peer reviewers. This appears to have built broad support for and acceptance of the final recommendations, at least among those listed here. While DHS and SHRA were represented in most of the discussions, the concerns already noted about their participation may also impact later on the uptake of the recommendations. If direct representatives of beneficiaries were also consulted the evaluation could have scored "4" on this indicator, but as already mentioned this was not feasible.
Rating:	3: Recommendations are made in consultation with relevant government officials, stakeholders and sectoral experts

Standard:	Recommendations are useful- they are relevant, specific, feasible, affordable and acceptable
Comment and Analysis:	<p>From a reading of the report, the recommendations are clear and their link to the findings and conclusions is evident.</p> <p>All interviewed stakeholders agreed wholeheartedly with the relevance of the recommendations. They also tended to feel they are sufficiently specific and acceptable. Some raised some concerns about the "how" - the feasibility and affordability of some recommendations, but pointed out that since the recommendations were thoroughly workshopped and deemed acceptable by stakeholders, they have some likelihood of being supported.</p>
Rating:	4: Recommendations are well-formulated for use- they begin to differentiate by user and are relevant to the current policy context, specifically targetted, feasible to implement, affordable and acceptable to key stakeholders

Acknowledgement of ethical considerations

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

Comment and Analysis: The final summary report notes arrangements around confidentiality of the interview respondents.

Rating: 3: The full report documents some procedures intended to ensure confidentiality and to secure informed consent where necessary

Standard: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the evaluation report on a public website

Comment and Analysis: None of the interviewed stakeholders identified any risks, nor did a reading of the final full evaluation report suggest any. The report notes that those who are quoted by name have given express permission for this.

Rating: 4: There are no risks to participants or institutions in disseminating the original full evaluation report on a public website

Follow-up, use and learning

Resource utilisation

Standard:	The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes and budget
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The evaluation was completed well outside of the intended time frames. It spanned the period November 2014 to March 2016 (approx. 17 months) instead of being concluded by July 2015 (which would have constituted an 8 months period).</p> <p>The commissioning department spent only the budgeted amount, but the Service Provider noted that considerable extra resources (consulting time) were spent on revisions and feedback meetings with members of the Steering Committee. Two likely reasons for this are that (1) it was the first time the Service Provider conducted a National Evaluation Plan evaluation, with its particular requirements, and (2) as previously mentioned, the evaluation brought together various stakeholders as well as two peer reviewers and therefore it is to be expected that the process would take longer. In the end it took numerous unanticipated revisions of the interim deliverables, as well as the report, until the steering committee approved them.</p>
Rating:	2: The evaluation was completed outside of the planned timeframes and over budget, but with approval of the commissioning organisation

Evaluation use

Standard:	Results of the evaluation have been presented to relevant stakeholders
Comment and Analysis:	<p>The draft findings were presented to a wide range of stakeholders including those on the steering committee as well as to the National Rental Task Team and at an evaluation stakeholder workshop attended by relevant provincial and local government, social housing institutions and others. The final report was presented to the steering committee which includes key stakeholders in and outside of government, and will be presented to the NDHS Exco in August 2016.</p>
Rating:	4: Results of the evaluation have been presented to all relevant stakeholders, inside and outside of government
Standard:	A reflective process has been undertaken by the steering committee with the service provider (if no steering committee exists then by the evaluation management team or the involved department officials) to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations
Comment and Analysis:	<p>There was no formal reflective process between the steering committee and service provider. Some members of the steering committee did however reflect on the process informally and highlighted some lessons both on content and evaluation project management.</p>
Rating:	2: The steering committee undertook a meeting in which some form of reflection occurred, but not in a clear, reflective process

Standard:	The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as having added significant symbolic value to the policy or programme (e.g. raised its profile)
Comment and Analysis:	Interviewed stakeholders point out that the programme is relatively small in terms of the number of housing units, but occupies an important "niche" by contributing to spatial and economic integration. This is sometimes misunderstood when the number of units is merely compared to government expenditure on the programme without understanding the programme's intent. The evaluation effectively reaffirmed the design of the programme, pointed to valuable emerging outcomes, and showed why it is important in the overall housing policy. Particularly by giving Treasury and DPME the opportunity to engage with it more closely, the evaluation has raised the profile of the programme and increased the awareness of the programme's potential.
Rating:	4: The evaluation study is seen by interviewed stakeholders as being of substantial symbolic value to the policy or programme and has noticeably raised its profile amongst stakeholders

Standard:	The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and possibly in shaping future policy and practice
Comment and Analysis:	<p>According to interviewed stakeholders, the evaluation was perceived as having had "a valuable impact in a short pace of time" because of the participatory evaluation process that involved a broad set of stakeholders. Through considerable discussion and debate on the theory of change, intended outcomes of the programme, and the emerging findings, the evaluation enabled stakeholders to gain a clear understanding of the findings and their relevance, and to "build a level of consensus on what are the critical issues" in the field of social housing. This is seen to have influenced the decisions of stakeholders, for instance some recent changes made to the grant framework for social housing.</p> <p>One interviewed stakeholder stressed that, although the evaluation has already proven of benefit in shaping practice, its value could have been even greater if NDHS officials (particularly those with influence over DHS policy) had been more consistently involved. Presenting the findings to the NDHS Exco in August 2016 may help to address this shortcoming.</p>
Rating:	4: The evaluation study is of conceptual value in understanding what has happened and some interviewed stakeholders indicated the likelihood of it constructively shaping policy and practice

References

RebelGroup Advisory Southern Africa (RGSA), 2014, Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme, Second Draft Inception Report, 11 December 2014.

RGSA, 2016, Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme, Summary Evaluation Report: Final, 22 February 2016.

RGSA, 2015, Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme, Powerpoint Presentation of Findings and Conclusions, 3 December 2015.

RGSA, 2016, Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme, Full Evaluation Report: Final, 4 March 2016.

RGSA, 2014, Impact and Implementation Evaluation of the Social Housing Programme, Proposal, 24 October.

DPME and DHS, 2014, Terms of Reference for the impact and implementation evaluation of the social housing programme. 1 October 2014.

Attendance registers and minutes of various steering committee meetings, 2015 and 2016.

List of Interviewees

Matodzi Amisi, Evaluation Manager, DPME. Telephonic interview, 18 July 2016.

Arie Diephout, Consultant to National Department of Human Settlements. Telephonic interview, 20 July 2016.

Andreas Bertoldi, Evaluation Team Lead, RebelGroup Advisory Southern Africa. Telephonic Interview, 3 July 2016.

Correspondence with other DHS officials (those nominated declined to participate in the quality assessment).