



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Fiscal incidence of social spending in South Africa, 2006

Date Evaluation was completed: 28 February 2009

Name of assessor: Meagan Jooste

Evaluation Number: 63

Date Assessment Completed: 13 February 2013

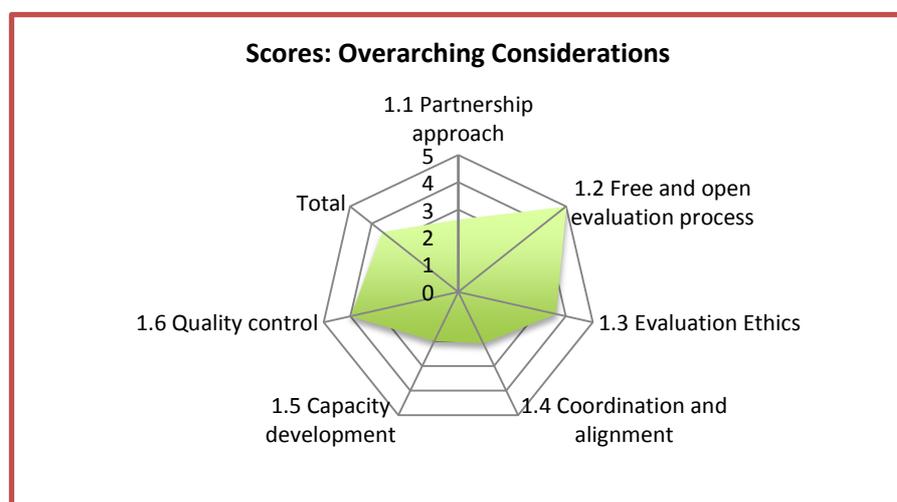
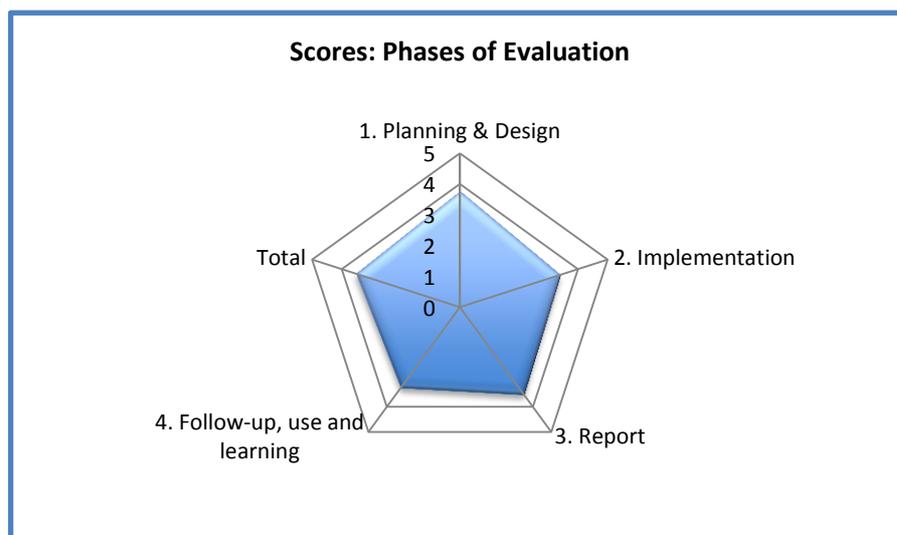
Evaluation Assessment Details

Title of evaluation report	Fiscal incidence of social spending in South Africa, 2006	
Completion Date of Evaluation	28 February 2009	
Name of Assessor	Meagan Jooste	
Evaluation Number	63	
Completion Date of Assessment	13 February 2013	
Initiated by	National Treasury	
Evaluation undertaken by	Servaas van der Berg	
Evaluation area / sector	Social development, social security & assistance	
	Public finance, financial management	<i>Additional</i>
National Outcome	Outcome 5	
	Outcome 12	<i>Additional</i>
Type of Evaluation	Impact	
	Economic	<i>Additional</i>
What is being evaluated	Policy	
		<i>Additional</i>
Geographic Scope	National	
Period of Evaluation	2000 - 2006	
Known Cost of Evaluation	Unknown	

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	3.75
Implementation	3.39
Report	3.50
Follow-up, use and learning	3.23
Total	3.47

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	2.64
Free and open evaluation process	5.00
Evaluation Ethics	3.64
Coordination and alignment	2.08
Capacity Development	2.00
Quality control	4.00



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

Based on the interview for this evaluation, there was no Terms of Reference. As the author had previously done similar work for National Treasury, the scope of work was in line with the previous projects. The only difference being that this study only involved an income incidence analysis but no tax incidence analysis.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Mention was made of the various means of government social expenditure in the country, such as on social grants, public health facilities, housing and education. However, a dedicated discursive section on the policy mix of the current status of the policy framework surrounding such social expenditure would have added value.

Rating 3

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

The authors have good familiarity with the appropriate literature regarding statistical techniques used for an assessment of social expenditure.

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The methodology of the evaluation was thoroughly explained, giving clear indication as to the core objectives of the methodology as well as where the data was sourced from for each component of the methodology. It also aligned well with the purpose of the study and was thereby appropriate for the questions being asked.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The surveys utilized for the evaluation are well-recognized and highly regarded by Statistics South Africa. In addition, the authors applied statistical techniques to combine datasets so as to address the question at hand. The only limitation was that no explicit mention of the sample size is made in the report.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

From the cover page of the evaluation the purpose was outlined to be such that it fed into the 2009 National Treasury Budget Review. However, there is insufficient detail in the report to what exact purpose the evaluation findings would serve afterwards.

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

The data used to complete this evaluation (Income and Expenditure Survey, Labour Force Survey, General Household Survey, as well as National Treasury Budget and Intergovernmental Fiscal Reviews) are publicly available through Statistics South Africa and National Treasury. As such, no ethical clearance was necessary for this evaluation.

Rating N/A

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

It appears that there was no conflict of interest amongst the evaluation team.

Rating 3

2.3. Key stakeholder involvement

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

Comment and Analysis

Due to time constraints, it was difficult to consult with many stakeholders but parties from National Treasury, the Presidency and the Department of Trade and Industry were consulted with throughout the project.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

From the report it is not clear that capacity-building of partners responsible for the evaluation was incorporated into the evaluation process.

Rating 2

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

Data collection was not compromised by fieldwork-level problems. However, there were some challenges with regards to the format in which the data was available i.e. often the data was structured in a manner not suitable to the type of analysis the authors needed to complete. In some instances the authors thereby had to rely on a great deal of data mining by the team of researchers and/or accessing data through channels other than Statistics South Africa's website (such as by requesting data resources from National Treasury).

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The data used for this evaluation were secondary in nature and thus the data gathering approach was appropriate given the scope of the evaluation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The data analysis in the evaluation was very clear and sufficient background detail on the various sectoral analyses were provided in the appendices. The authors also used an appropriate combination of graphical and tabular illustrations to communicate key information.

Rating **5**

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

Comment and Analysis

Due to time constraints, the evaluation could not unfold with many engagements with stakeholders. Relative to the previous studies by this evaluator (and for the same client), this study had much less engagement with stakeholders. This was perhaps a function of time limitations as well as the fact that this study produced outcomes which were not so unfamiliar to stakeholders in terms of the content (thus, stakeholders did not have to be educated on the content as much as with the previous studies).

Rating **3**

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

Comment and Analysis

It is not clear from the report that the methodology included engaging beneficiaries appropriately as a key source of data and information. However, as the evaluation involved determining the status of expenditure incidence across various public good services, consultation with beneficiaries may not necessarily have been required.

Rating **3**

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

There was no Executive Summary provided.

Rating 1

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

Comment and Analysis

The context of this report was the identification of transitions in expenditure incidence across a politically transitional time period. Specifically, it assesses how social (fiscal) spending has changed over the 1995 to 2006 time period and particularly, how pro-poor it has been. The authors make useful comparisons of these trends over this period by comparing social spending in the years 1995, 2000 and 2006.

Rating 4

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

It appeared that there was only one actual evaluation question: How has social spending incidence affected the income distribution in South Africa? The rationale was quite well explained in terms of the need to provide National Treasury with an updated view on the status of fiscal expenditure.

Rating 3

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

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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**

A substantial share of the report was dedicated to detailing the methodological techniques employed to address the evaluation question.

Rating 5

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**

The paper is well written, clearly articulated and where findings may have raised questions on their validity (for example as a result of data constraints or inconsistencies), the authors mention these constraints quite explicitly.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Conclusions and recommendations were clear and succinctly articulated

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions were clear but recommendations were not explicitly mentioned. One useful addition would have been a 'Further Research' section after the Conclusion, to identify some of the serious gaps or constraints to this analysis so as to guide future research in this domain. Particularly in terms of how the data-sets employed in this study could be improved or adapted to answer the types of questions this report needed to.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The authors make clear and detailed mention of the constraints when combining data-sets, and especially when attempting to link the 'income distribution' to 'access to services' in order to determine the distributional impact of services. Thus, acknowledgement of the limitations of all aspects of the methodology and findings were clearly and succinctly articulated.

Rating 4

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 was good as well as presentation. Minor grammatical errors were observed and the reference list was extensive and corresponded to in-text references (with one exception, no reference for the Introductory quotation by De Wulf, 1975, was provided in the reference list).

Rating 4

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

The data employed for the analysis was well-recognized and the statistical techniques in line with those used widely in this area of socio-economic research. Some more detail on the characteristics of the different quintiles/deciles would have added value.

Rating 4

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 authors made sure to explain the logic behind the graphics and tables displayed in the report.

Rating 5

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed

Comment and Analysis

The data analysis in the report is well represented and the authors have made a choice to include only the most vital of their figures and tables in the main body of the report. The rest of the information, such as the detailed sectoral analyses, is presented in the appendices to the report for easy reference of interested readers.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence

Comment and Analysis

The findings comprised in the report reflect those based on the analysis of available data.

Rating 4

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

The data gathered and assessed provided ideal impetus to addressing the question at hand.

Rating **5**

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

The paper does not really indicate any alternative interpretations. On some level this may be fair as the data can only be interpreted in one scientific way. However, alternative explanations to why the data looks the way it does, may have arisen had a stakeholder engagement process been undertaken.

Rating **2**

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

The report appeared to be free of substantial methodological or analytical flaws. It aligns with best practice in this area of socio-economic research using survey data. It also makes clear reference to how assumptions made in the report, relate to international best practice.

Rating **5**

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

The conclusions concisely reflect the key messages derived from the analysis.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Insofar as the conclusions rely on the body of the report (which does make mention of relevant comparable studies and evaluations), they took account of relevant comparable studies.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation speaks to the key question of social expenditure incidence.

Rating 4

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

No explicit recommendations were made in the evaluation.

Rating 1

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

Comment and Analysis

The results of the study were not presented to the client, National Treasury. While the evaluation was submitted to National Treasury, the evaluator never received any feedback on the document submitted and thereby, the recommendations could not be shaped by the inputs of relevant government officials.

Rating 2

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

No explicit recommendations were made in the evaluation.

Rating 1

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

No explicit recommendations were made in the evaluation.

Rating 1

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

Where available data could not support the analyses, the authors explicitly make mention of such constraints/limitations. In addition, a major constraint acknowledged by the authors, was the tight time constraints.

Rating 4

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

As the data used for the evaluation is publicly available, the authors did not need to ensure the confidentiality of study participants as this would have been done by Statistics South Africa prior to the public release of the data.

Rating N/A

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 in disseminating the evaluation.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

There were no risks to institutions in disseminating the evaluation.

Rating 4

4. Follow-up, use and learning

4.1. Presentation to stakeholders

STANDARD: Results were presented to all relevant stakeholders

Comment and Analysis

Unlike with the previous studies in this area, the results of the study were not formally presented to a broad audience of stakeholders. This may have been due to a change in the source of funding for this research. Whereas the previous studies received international funding (with strings attached in terms of formalised reporting systems), the client for this study did not equally require the same kind of reporting. The study was however presented to a small work-group of National Treasury personnel.

Rating 2

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

Not applicable.

Rating N/A

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 evaluation is easily accessible via National Treasury's website as well as on the website of the author's university (Stellenbosch) through a series of working papers.

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

From the report it is not clear that a reflective process was undertaken by staff responsible for the evaluation to reflect on what could be done to strengthen future evaluations.

Rating N/A

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 evaluation findings were well-received by the National Treasury stakeholders, particularly as they seemed to affirm many of the expectations which the National Treasury had. While this study did not add as much value as the previous studies, the study did add value to the research community as it was released in the form of academic working papers.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

While not mentioned in the report, it is expected that the evaluation study was of conceptual value as it tables progress in social expenditure to date and as this is the third in a series of evaluations of its kind, it appears to have made a valuable contribution to shaping policy and practice.

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

The findings of the study were not as instrumental as those of the previous studies, in part perhaps because the previous studies were the first to pinpoint previously unknown facts. In contrast, due to this study being a follow-up to the previous ones, it did not reveal particularly ground-breaking information.

Rating 3

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

While the study did not incorporate the inputs of stakeholders, it was well-received and provided a crucial picture on the status of social spending in the country. To such extent, the evaluation played a positive role in the planning of expenditures by National Treasury.

Rating 3

References

van der Berg, S. 2009. Fiscal incidence of social spending in South Africa. A report to National Treasury. University of Stellenbosch. Available from:

List of Interviewees

Servaas van der Berg, Professor: Stellenbosch University, Telephonic Interview, 11/02/2013.