



Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

Report on the Assessment of Government Evaluations

Review of the Child Support Grant: Uses, Implementation and Obstacles

Date Evaluation was completed: 01 March 2008

Name of assessor: Cathy Chames

Evaluation Number: 89

Date Assessment Completed: 27 January 2013

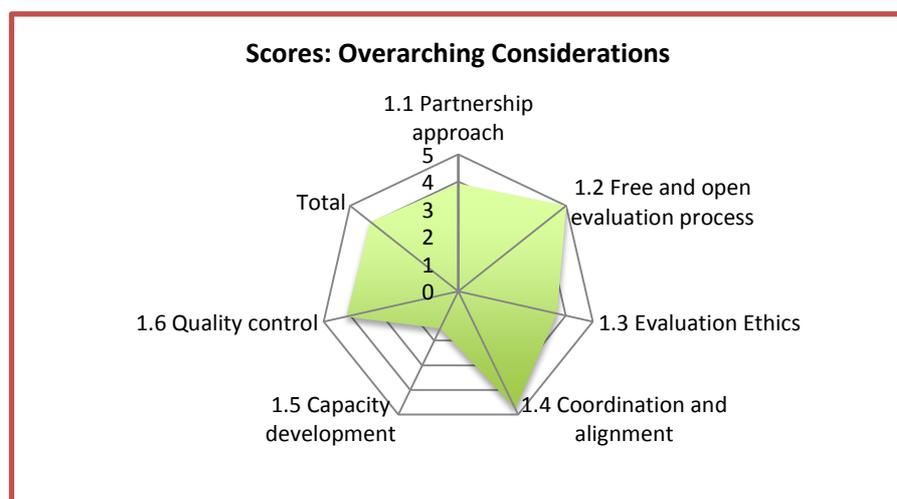
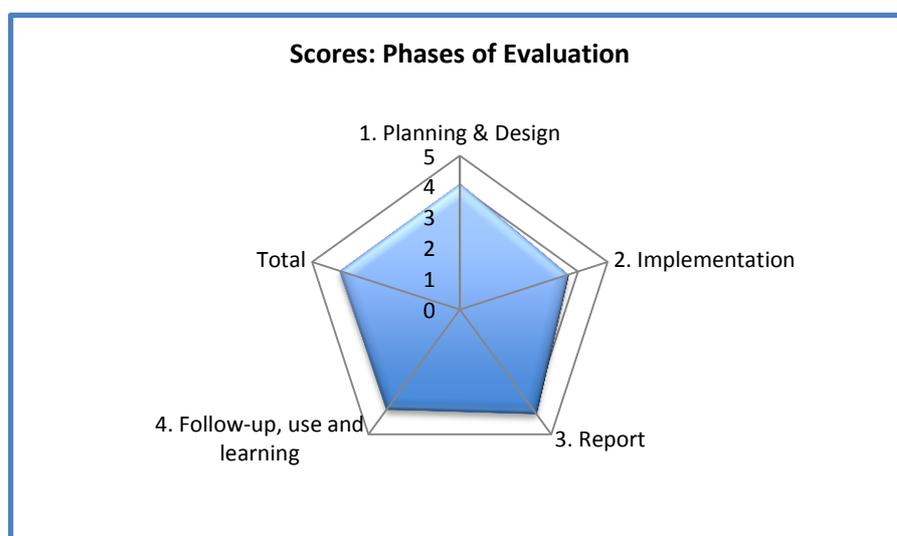
Evaluation Assessment Details

Title of evaluation report	Review of the Child Support Grant: Uses, Implementation and Obstacles
Completion Date of Evaluation	01 March 2008
Name of Assessor	Cathy Chames
Evaluation Number	89
Completion Date of Assessment	27 January 2013
Initiated by	Department of Social Development, South African Social Security Agency, UNICEF South Africa
Evaluation undertaken by	Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE)
Evaluation area / sector	Social development, social security & assistance
	<i>Additional</i>
National Outcome	Outcome 3
	Outcome 12 <i>Additional</i>
Type of Evaluation	Implementation
	Impact <i>Additional</i>
What is being evaluated	Programme
	<i>Additional</i>
Geographic Scope	National
Period of Evaluation	2007
Known Cost of Evaluation	Unknown

Quality Assessment Scores

Phase of Evaluation	Score
Planning & Design	4.10
Implementation	3.67
Report	4.17
Follow-up, use and learning	4.00
Total	4.00

Overarching Consideration	Score
Partnership approach	3.93
Free and open evaluation process	5.00
Evaluation Ethics	3.67
Coordination and alignment	4.75
Capacity Development	1.50
Quality control	4.16



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

On the whole the TOR guided the evaluation although the scope of work was extended once the evaluation process began, for example, the emphasis on 0-2 year olds was not contained in the original TOR. The TOR contains details on the purpose and objectives; specific outputs required; reporting requirements; timing and duration; and competencies required. There is limited detail on the required methodology in the TOR.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

The purpose and objectives were clearly stated in the TOR.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Although not posed as questions, the relevant issues to be explored are clearly stated in the TOR. They are appropriate to addressing the evaluation question.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The TOR specified that a "qualitative household survey" be undertaken with recipients of the Child Support Grant (CSG). Whilst this description is unclear, the study did undertake a mixed method approach using qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. This is suited to the purpose and scope of the study which is a hybrid of implementation and impact evaluations in terms of typology.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Although not explicitly stated, it is clear from the TOR that the intended users for the study would be DSD and SASSA as the main purpose was about improving the implementation of the CSG.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Not clear in the report and unable to establish this from the service provider interviewee.

Rating N/A

1.2. Evaluation was adequately resourced

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

Comment and Analysis

The time-frame for the study was described as being fairly short but realistic since it was finalised on time.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was adequately resourced in terms of original budget.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was lead by CASE which had a good understanding of the context around the CSG. They had also conducted previous studies on the CSG and therefore had the necessary skills to undertake a study of this kind.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Besides training of fieldworkers, formal capacity building of staff was not undertaken. It was not a requirement of the task.

Rating 3

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

There is evidence that evaluators have good knowledge of the policy environment and implementation of the CSG including criteria for accessing the grant, means test requirements, and already existing operational issues which hinder access.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

A review of existing research relevant to the implementation of the CSG was conducted and ran concurrently with the preparation of the implementation of the survey.

Rating 5

1.4. The evaluation methods planned were appropriate to the project

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change although it is noted that the focus of this study was on the implementation of the CSG and to identify ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The study also explores the impact the CSG makes on vulnerable families. Interviewees noted that it was primarily a descriptive study and therefore a theory of change was not necessary.

Rating 2

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

Comment and Analysis

A Technical Steering Committee made up of representatives of UNICEF, SASSA and DSD and they gave input into the design and methodology of the study. Although there was limited detail on the methodology in the TOR interviewees confirmed that this was decided on jointly at the inception phase of the project.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation sought to review the implementation, use and obstacles to accessing the CSG and so the mixed methods used which included a document review, national survey (quantitative), interviews, and focus groups (qualitative) were appropriate. Furthermore, the mix of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the sample was useful as it helped to explain the findings. It was also appropriate given that the study was probing for barriers to accessing grants therefore it was important to include non-beneficiaries in the survey.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The inclusion of grant recipients and non-recipients in the sample was appropriate since the sought to understand implementation of the grant from the point of view of those applying for and receiving it. Stakeholders who could provide insight into operational issues were also included in the sample.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The report states that the conclusions of this study should inform decisions regarding the improvement of service delivery and efficacy of the CSG. However, there is not detail on whether a planned process was in place for use of findings prior to the evaluation. Interviews confirmed that the intention was to share the findings of the study with the public - it was meant to be a public document.

Rating 2

1.5. Inception phase

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

Comment and Analysis

The inception phase was used to clarify, in particular, the methodology to be undertaken for the study. Interviewees confirmed that this was decided on jointly at the inception phase of the project. Another aspect clarified was the need to interview both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries where the service provider had to provide much input in this regard.

Rating 5

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

Ethical considerations are not discussed in the report. Interviews found that, although an ethical review was not undertaken for the study, standard ethical practices were followed such as right to confidentiality, right of refusal to participate and right to anonymity.

Rating 2

2.2. Evaluator independence

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

Comment and Analysis

There was a lot of discussion and input from DSD and UNICEF into the design of questionnaires and analysis of data, however, interviewees confirm that the evaluation team was able to work freely without significant interference. Also, it was noted that in the household survey respondents would have been free to say what they felt - this was not controlled or interfered in by anyone.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation team was external and there is no evidence of conflict of interest.

Rating 5

2.3. Key stakeholder involvement

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

Comment and Analysis

A Technical Steering Committee made up of representatives of UNICEF, SASSA and DSD provided support throughout the study.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

No formal capacity building of partners was undertaken during the evaluation process.

Rating 1

2.4. Methodology

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

Comment and Analysis

The methods employed were consistent with those planned.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The report notes that challenges were experienced in obtaining information on all children under the age of two. This impacted on the results for this age group. Furthermore, the strategy for accessing respondents for the survey was complicated as the make up of households was not always what was expected. For example, there may be a child receiving the CSG but the adult was not living in the household or an adult receiving a CSG in the household but the child was not living there, according to the service provider.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used which included a mix of survey, focus groups and interviews. The focus groups with beneficiaries were conducted after the survey in order to obtain more nuanced and detailed information that could be used to explain some of the survey findings. This mix of methods were appropriate given the scope of evaluation.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The quantitative data was weighted to reflect the distribution of the population and then analysed using survey analysis routines in stata 9. Confidence intervals were calculated and differences that were significant at 95% confidence level were reported. There are no details of qualitative data analysis provided in the report.

Rating 3

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

Comment and Analysis

Key stakeholders were engaged including CSG beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; NGO stakeholders; and government officials.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

The data was gathered from primary caregivers who are recipients and non-recipients of the CSG. They were significantly engaged through both a survey and focus group discussions.

Rating 5

2.5. Project management

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

Comment and Analysis

None of the project milestones and timeframes were shifted for this evaluation.

Rating 5

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

The executive summary is appropriate in length (4.5 pages) and covers background; methodology; findings of the document review; key findings of the study based on main headings in the report; and recommendations.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

A literature review was conducted as part of the study which provides a relevant and thorough background and context to the study which includes the context of child poverty and social security for children in South Africa; implementation of the CSG; and policy challenges.

Rating 5

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

The rationale for the evaluation is stated but it is not clearly identified as such. The evaluation questions are stated as 'themes' to be covered and not as questions.

Rating 3

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

The focus and scope of the evaluation is discussed in the report in limited detail. Some of the findings presented in the report appear to go beyond the stated scope of the study.

Rating 3

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

The methodology section provides clear details of the methodology for the household survey including the sampling strategy, sample size, data collection and analysis. Details of the sample and data collection for the stakeholder interviews and focus groups was provided but there were no details on the sample size and the approach used for qualitative data analysis.

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**

The qualitative and quantitative findings are well intergrated, presented in a clear way and are written tentatively. They are presented in separate chapters of the report which includes issues of targeting, eligibility and demographic profile; role of the CSG in the household; access to services; implementation of the CSG; and barriers for non-recipients.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Conclusions and recommendations were clear and succintly articulated

Comment and Analysis

Conclusions and recommendations are clear and succinct.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no clear section in the report which presents overall limitations of the methdology. A brief section on 'interpretation of findings' acknowledges limitations of some of the findings. Weaknesses related to some of the survey questions is acknowledged at certain points in the presentation of findings.

Rating 3

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 report is both well written and well presented.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Appropriate conventions are used in the presentation of qualitative data which is well presented. The use of direct quotations for the qualitative data is appropriate - they provide evaluation participants with a voice and illustrate themes.

Rating 5

3.3. Presentation of findings

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

Comment and Analysis

Tables are used throughout the report to communicate results. Consistency in labelling and headings of tables is useful and assists with interpretation of data. No figures are used to report data.

Rating 4

STANDARD: Data analysis appeared to have been well executed

Comment and Analysis

Data analysis was intended to be descriptive so it is straightforward and presents statistics with narrative. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis appears to be well executed although there are no details in the methodology section on how the qualitative data was analysed.

Rating 3

STANDARD: Findings were supported by available evidence

Comment and Analysis

All findings are supported by the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The qualitative data is used to triangulate the quantitative findings.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Evidence was sufficiently and appropriately analysed to support the argument. The qualitative data and findings from the literature review on implementation of the CSG is drawn on to strengthen support for the argument.

Rating **5**

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

Comment and Analysis

Alternative interpretations of data are provided throughout. Where gaps in data regarding a particular issue are identified, a call for further research is noted.

Rating **4**

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

Comment and Analysis

The report appears free of significant methodological flaws. It is difficult to assess analysis of qualitative data as this was not covered in the report.

Rating **3**

3.4. Conclusions

STANDARD: Conclusions were derived from evidence

Comment and Analysis

All conclusions are based on the findings of the study.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Good interpretative conclusions were made drawing on relevant literature and research findings from similar studies.

Rating 5

STANDARD: Conclusions addressed the original evaluation purpose and questions

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation purpose and themes are revisited in the conclusions.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

Since there is no explicit reference to the intervention logic or theory of change at the outset of the study, conclusions could not be drawn from this. However, the focus of this study was on the implementation of the CSG and to identify ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness and explicit reference to this is made in the conclusion.

Rating 2

3.5. Recommendations

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

Comment and Analysis

Recommendations were drafted and then presented to DSD and UNICEF for input before finalising. The consultation did not go further than with DSD and UNICEF.

Rating 4

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

Comment and Analysis

Recommendations were shaped following input from DSD and UNICEF, however, the consultation did not go further than with DSD and UNICEF.

Rating 4

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

Recommendations are relevant and well aligned to the policy context.

Rating 5

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

The recommendations are sufficient and are targetted to the DSD and SASSA. Their focus is on strategic level changes rather than operational level changes. On the whole they are specific and feasible.

Rating 4

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

There is no clear section in the report which presents limitations of the evaluation although they were indicated in the body of the report.

Rating 3

3.7 Protection of participants and risk considerations

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no discussion of ethical issues in the report.

Rating 1

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no risk to participants in disseminating the original report on a public website since the anonymity of participants is maintained throughout the report.

Rating 5

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

Comment and Analysis

There is no unfair risk to the institutions involved (DSD and SASSA) in disseminating the original report on a public 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 results were presented to a broader group of stakeholders within DSD. There was also a public launch of the report since it was meant to be a public document from the outset.

Rating 4

4.2. Resource utilisation

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the planned timeframes

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was completed within the required timeframes.

Rating 5

STANDARD: The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget

Comment and Analysis

The evaluation was completed within the agreed budget.

Rating 5

4.3. Transparency

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

Comment and Analysis

The report is publicly available as a published document and on both DSD and UNICEF websites.

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

The evaluation team at CASE had an internal reflection of the evaluation process. Whilst there was discussion by DSD and UNICEF on the findings there was no formal reflection on the method and implementation of the evaluation.

Rating 1

4.5. Symbolic and conceptual value

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

Comment and Analysis

At the time of the study the CSG had not been extended to all children and there was much discussion, advocacy and research into this issue. It is felt that this study added to the body of evidence used to advocate for extending the grant.

Rating 5

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 provided insight into the implementation of the CSG, and in particular it documented people's experiences of barriers to accessing grants. The purpose was to assist DSD in identifying ways to address barriers and thus improve efficiency and effectiveness of the grant system. The interviews were unable to establish if this process was undertaken.

Rating 4

4.6. Utilisation of findings and recommendations

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

Comment and Analysis

It is uncertain whether the recommendations were implemented to a significant extent. This would need to be determined with further interviews.

Rating N/A

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

Comment and Analysis

The study allowed for CSG recipients to express their frustrations related to barriers in accessing grants. Although the findings were not surprising, it did provide evidence of scale with regards to the barriers. There was a lot of advocacy and research into this issue at the time of the study and it is felt that this study added to the body of evidence which was required to advocate for the eventual extension of the CSG programme to all children under 18 years.

Rating 3

References

Delany, A; Ismail, Z; Graham, L; Ramkissoon, Y; (2008). "Review of the Child Support Grant: Uses, Implementation and Obstacles", Department of Social Development,

List of Interviewees

Aislinn Delany, Project manager: CASE, Telephonic interview, 24/1/2013.