



EVALUATION OF
THE SCHOOL
NUTRITION
PROGRAMME

*Provincial Report:
North West*

May 2008



education

Department:
Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings of the evaluation of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in the North West Province. The evaluation period runs from 2004/05 to 2006/07. KPMG was awarded the tender to evaluate the implementation of the NSNP in all nine provinces. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide the National Department of Education and UNICEF with a comprehensive national evaluation of the programme. The core requirements of the evaluation are to determine the extent to which the programme is meeting its objectives and to assess whether allocated resources are utilised effectively and efficiently. The programme was evaluated at provincial, district and school levels.

2 BACKGROUND

The Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP) was introduced in 1994 as one of the Presidential lead projects under the Reconstruction and Development Programme. Its aim was to enhance the educational experience of needy primary school learners through promoting punctual school attendance, alleviating short-term hunger, improving concentration and contributing to general health development. In its first ten years, the PSNP was jointly managed at the national level by the Department of Health and the Department of Education. The Department of Health was responsible for the nutritional and health aspects and the Department of Education for the school and educational elements.

In September 2002, Cabinet resolved that school nutrition should be transferred from the Department of Health to the Department of Education, which should assume full responsibility by April 2004. The decision was based on the consideration that school feeding should be housed in the Department of Education given the important educational outcomes of the intervention as well as the fact that it is implemented in schools, which are the functional responsibility of the Department of Education. An additional consideration was that it would facilitate the inclusion of school feeding into the broader context of education development, a prerequisite for successful and sustainable school-based programmes.

The NSNP completed a cycle of three years under the management of Department of Education in the North West Province. The national guidelines (*NSNP Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting Manual, January 2004*) were adopted by the province as the official provincial guidelines for the implementation of the NSNP and provided to all stakeholders. Key elements of the guidelines include:

- Outlining of provincial responsibilities in monitoring and implementing the NSNP.
- Outlining minimum requirements regarding feeding days (156 days) and time (before 10h00).
- Establishing standard menu options including cooked and non-cooked options.
- Providing the necessary utensils to schools for food preparation.
- Implementing effective procurement strategies.
- Establishing proper business planning and financial management systems.
- Giving preference to women's community-based organisations as service providers.
- Facilitating the development of food gardens.
- Supporting nutrition education through the curricular activities in life orientation.
- Implementing a monitoring system to ensure regular feeding, food quality and safety, as well as an appropriate information system.

The guidelines also stipulate that:

- Provinces may elect to supplement the NSNP conditional grant with funds from their budgets.
- Provinces must submit an annual business plan in order to access funds and fulfil all financial management requirements of the Public Financial Management Act.

According to the terms of reference for the evaluation, the objectives of the NSNP are:

- To contribute to enhanced learning capacity through school feeding.
- To generate food production and economic activities in school communities in order to improve household food security.
- To strengthen nutrition education for the school community.

The province has managed to feed 300,678 learners in 2004/05, 380,835 learners in 2005/06, and 484,840 learners in 2006/07. In addition, it has created employment for 1,460 women in 2004/05, 1,410 in 2005/06 and 1,395 in 2006/07.

The NSNP is located in Auxiliary Services at provincial level where it is managed by permanent staff, and at district level where the programme is monitored by seconded NSNP coordinators.

In compliance with Section 27(5) of the Division of Revenue Act, the National Department of Education conducted an evaluation of the programme in June 2007. In terms of Section 27(5), the receiving officer must annually evaluate the performance of programmes funded or partially funded by an allocation.

Key challenges highlighted in the section of the report made available to KPMG were:

- There were insufficient funds for the programme.
- A funding shortfall existed that was carried over to 2007/08.
- Delays were experienced in the submission of claims.
- Service providers were not considered to be literate enough to run the programme or to manage funds.
- Lack of support from educators as they see this as an “add-on” responsibility.
- No ownership of the programme by some school governing bodies.

3 METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was made up of three main components and included both qualitative and quantitative elements. First, key stakeholder interviews were carried out at provincial, district and school levels. Second, a school survey was carried out in a nationally representative sample of 271 schools. Third, 30 school visits were made across nine provinces. These components are discussed in more detail below.

Key stakeholder interviews: Semi-structured interviews were carried out at provincial level with the programme manager, at district level with the nutrition coordinators and liaison officers, and at school level with principals and/or nutrition coordinators in schools. The main aim of these interviews was to get a sense of programme achievements and challenges.

School survey: A nationally representative sample of schools was selected to form the basis of the school survey. The sample size of 271 schools is representative at a national level with a 90% confidence interval and 5% margin of error. The table below shows that the sample of 271 schools was distributed to each province according to population size (Stats SA, 2001). The school survey was based on data available in district offices responsible for monitoring the programme in schools.

Table 1: Distribution of sample size

<i>Province</i>	<i>Urban</i>	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Urban (%)</i>	<i>Rural (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>	<i>No of schools in categories</i>		
							<i>Total Schools</i>	<i>Urban Schools</i>	<i>Rural Schools</i>
Eastern Cape Total	2,451,452	3,985,315	6,436,767	38	62	14	39	15	24
Free State Total	2,016,016	690,764	2,706,780	74	26	6	16	12	4
Gauteng Total	8,723,381	456,684	9,180,065	95	5	20	56	53	3
KwaZulu-Natal Total	4,263,415	5,162,602	9,426,017	45	55	21	57	26	31
Mpumalanga Total	1,198,962	2,064,009	3,262,971	37	63	7	20	7	13
Northern Cape Total	689,971	210,239	900,210	77	23	2	5	4	1
Limpopo Total	540,295	4,561,262	5,101,557	11	89	11	31	3	28
North-West Total	1,285,806	1,995,278	3,281,084	39	61	7	20	8	12
Western Cape Total	4,061,229	463,104	4,524,333	90	10	10	27	24	3
Grand Total	25,230,527	19,589,257	44,819,784	56	44	100	271	153	118

As shown in the table above, the provincial sample (highlighted) was divided into rural and urban samples, proportionate to the overall rural and urban population of the province (Stats SA, 1996). Three districts were then selected per province (two in Northern Cape due to the small population) to participate in the evaluation, shown in Table 2.

The rural and urban school samples were then randomly selected from a Department of Education list per province which reflected urban and rural schools, from within the three districts selected. The selection of districts was carried out with consideration given to the rural/urban divide, as well as time and cost constraints associated with school visits discussed below. Project deadlines and budget allowed a one-week period for data collection per province which meant that travelling could not exceed one day per school visit. School lists provided by the Department of Education were used to randomly select the sample of schools from the three districts identified.

School visits: A total of 30 school visits were carried out in the nine provinces. It was decided that eight provinces should receive three school visits each and Northern Cape, two visits. Two additional visits were carried out in the Western Cape and Gauteng because of their ability to accommodate these visits at the end of the school year. Schools to be visited were randomly selected from school lists, one per each of the three districts identified above. Schools selected that required more than a day's travel were replaced using the next school on the list of randomly selected schools.

Table 2: Sample schools

<i>Province</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Area</i>	<i>School visited</i>	<i>Rural/ Urban</i>
Eastern Cape	East London	Duncan Village	Makinana Primary	Urban
	King Williams Town	Pikoli Location; Peddie	Mbanyasza Primary	Rural
	Mthatha	Kwazidenge Village; Stutterheim	Isidenge/Thembelihle Primary	Rural
		Madwaleni; Mqanduli	Madwaleni Primary	Rural
Free State	Motheo	Bloemfontein	Maboloka Primary	Urban
	Lejweleputswa	Welkom	Matshediso Primary	Rural
	Xhariep	Jaegersfontein	Austinspost Primary	Rural
Gauteng	Tshwane North	Soshanguve	Shalom Primary	Urban
		Soshanguve	Entokozweni Primary	Urban
	Jo'burg South	Orange Farm	Rafelletse Primary	Rural
		Orange Farm	Laus Deos Primary	Rural
	Jo'burg North	Vlakfontein	Blair Athol Farm School	Rural
KwaZulu-Natal	Empangeni	KwaMthethwa	Thembalimbe Primary	Rural
	Ilembe	Ndwedwe	Qalimfundo Primary	Rural
	Umlazi	Durban	Avoca Primary	Urban
Mpumalanga	Gert Sibande	Highveld Ridge	Gweda Primary	Rural
	Nkangala	Delmas	Rietkol Primary	Rural
		Witbank	Edward Matyeka Primary	Urban
Northern Cape	Namaqua	Springbok	Carolusberg Primary	Urban
	Francis Baard	Rietrivier	Rietrivier Primary	Rural
Limpopo	Capricorn	Polokwane	Zone 8 Primary	Urban
	Capricorn	Polokwane	Bailafuri Primary	Rural
	Sekhukhune	Pokwane	Mogatladi Primary	Rural
North-West	Klerksdorp	Mafikeng	Abontle	Urban
	Mmabatho	Mmabatho	Lokaleng Primary	Rural
	Lichtenburg	Biesiesvlei	Itekeng Primary	Rural
Western Cape	Metro South	Mitchells Plain	Cornflower Primary	Urban
	Metro South	Old Crossroads	Imbasa Primary	Urban
	Overberg	Stanford	Okkie Smuts	Urban
	West Coast/Winelands	Paarl	Joosteberg Farm School	Rural

The table shows that a total of 18 rural and 12 urban schools were visited.

3.1 LIMITATIONS

The school survey used data available in district offices. Record keeping, particularly for 2004, was generally found to be poor. Many district offices across the country do not keep files on each school in their jurisdiction that is on the Nutrition Programme. This meant that in certain instances, district programme staff familiar with a school had to be interviewed in order to answer the questionnaire. In some instances, schools were contacted directly for information, or they submitted their records to the district office in order for the school survey to be completed. Records kept by food and beverage interns responsible for monitoring schools in certain areas were used in Gauteng.

The randomness of sampling was constrained by time deadlines and budget. As highlighted above, three districts were selected per province first, based on travel time anticipated to reach district offices. To ensure completion of fieldwork within one week per province, this needed to be within one day. The sample of schools was then randomly selected from within the three districts. Furthermore, schools identified for visits were also randomly selected but from within the three districts.

4 OBJECTIVES

4.1 FINDINGS

The objectives of the programme and the extent to which they are being met were discussed with the provincial programme manager, NSNP coordinators at district level (Area Project Offices) and school principals and educators at schools. Interviewees at all three levels understood the objectives of the programme as described above by the Department of Education, although emphasis was placed on the improvement of school attendance through the programme. There was consensus on all three levels (provincial, district and school) that the objectives were, to some extent, being met but that there were serious limitations. The three main challenges reported on all three levels of programme implementation were:

- Lack of funding and resultant reduction in number of feeding days.
- Non-compliance with menu options.
- Late payments of service providers.

Feeding days: Due to a lack of funding, the number of feeding days was reduced from five to three days. Interviewees at district and school levels reported that the impact of the reduction of feeding days could be seen in the decline in school attendance, especially in farm schools where learners had to walk long distances to get to schools. To counter this problem, one coordinator from one Area Project Office (APO) advised schools to alternate the days when food was served so that learners did not have prior knowledge of when feeding would take place. Total funds required to provide food five days a week have not been quantified.

However, it is important to note that despite the reduction in feeding days all schools are, in fact, providing food on more than the minimum number of feeding days, i.e. 165 days per annum as required by the National Department of Education.

Compliance with prescribed menus: Concern about the lack of compliance with menu options was expressed by the provincial programme manager. The lack of compliance was attributed mainly to the fact that the cost per learner per day (R1.50 for rural schools and R1.30 for urban schools) has not been increased since 2004/05 and service providers were unable to serve food items such as fruit and vegetables. However, findings from the school survey presented in the Outcomes section show that 89% of schools with data available at APOs complied with the prescribed menus in 2006. Also, all three schools visited complied with prescribed menu options on the day of the visit and reported that they were able to comply on a regular basis.

Late payment to service providers for services rendered: In some instances this resulted in schools not being able to feed the learners. Some schools made temporary arrangements by using their school funds to pay the service providers. This problem has been addressed by the province. See 5.1 below.

One APO raised concerns regarding the lack of commitment by educators at some schools to implement the programme. They saw the programme as an add-on responsibility and were reluctant to integrate nutrition education in the learning activities.

Two of the three schools visited had active food gardens which were managed by either the learners, parents or service providers. Food produced was used to supplement the food served to learners or

was taken home to improve household food security, specifically in the case of orphans and vulnerable children.

4.2 CONCLUSION

From interviews conducted at provincial, district and school levels, it was clear that the national objectives of the programme were well understood and supported by all parties concerned. Given the limitations stated above and the views expressed, it can be concluded that the lack of funding is impacting on the ability of the province to meet the objectives of the programme optimally.

5 SYSTEMS

5.1 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

5.1.1 Findings

Current system

The Departmental Procurement Committee approves tenders for local service providers to cater at schools. Officials at regional as well as district level are provided with the budgets per individual school, targeted learners and number of feeding days. Claims from service providers and delivery notes are co-signed by principals and educators at school level and submitted to the various APOs. NSNP coordinators at the APOs verify claims against individual school budgets and prepare commitment registers. Once submitted to the regional offices, claims are consolidated and forwarded to the provincial office for approval. The Supply Chain Management (SCM) Unit captures VA2s on the Walker system for order generation, the Internal Control Unit verifies claims, the Accounts Unit captures payments and the Centralised Creditors Payment Unit authorises payments, issues cheques and transfers payments into the various creditors' accounts.

The provincial programme manager reported that although problems were experienced with the processing of service provider claims in the past, the province has now managed to reduce the turnaround time for payments to ten working days through the new improved system described above. All four levels involved in the process, i.e. APOs, regional offices, the provincial NSNP office (also referred to as "corporate"), logistics and finance are each afforded two working days to process the claims. The reduction in the turnaround time for payments has been confirmed by interviewees at district as well as school level.

However, the programme manager noted that when cash flow problems are being experienced due to the shortfall (see 5.3.2 below), payments to suppliers are not always within the targeted turnaround time. The payment system, however, cannot be blamed for inefficiency when there are no funds available to execute payments.

Budget and expenditure

There has been a 10% increase in the spending rate of the budgeted amount allocated for the programme over the three reported financial years. The table below provides the actual expenditure as a percentage of budgeted expenditure on the NSNP for the 2004/05, 2005/06 and 2006/07 financial years.

Table 3: Actual expenditure as percentage of budgeted expenditure

<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Budget allocation</i>	<i>Actual expenditure</i>	<i>Actual expenditure as % of budget allocation</i>
2004/05	R72,401,000	R64,898,344	90%
2005/06	R112,191,000	R107,072,328	95%
2006/07	R101,398,000	R101,398,000	100%

Source: North West NSNP Budget and Expenditure Reports, 2004-2007

In 2005/06, an amount of R15,513,000 was rolled over from 2004/05 which was committed to pay service providers and resources. In 2006/07, an amount of R5,869,000 was rolled over from 2005/06

to pay the previous year's commitments. In 2006/07, the programme experienced an over-expenditure and received a provincial top-up of R18,500,000, and R1,090,456 was committed but could not be paid due to the closure of the Walker/Basic Accounting System. A roll-over of R1,090,456 has been requested from provincial treasury. The number of feeding days for the 2007/08 financial year has been reduced to three days to cover the shortfall of approximately R21m in 2006/07.

Reporting

The province experienced delays in submitting monthly and quarterly reports to the national body on time due to the late submission by regions, the inaccuracy of the information received from regions, non-availability of timeous Walker print-outs and non-availability of signatories. Neither the provincial officials nor the officials at district level have direct access to the Walker system and have to request required reports from the State Accountant. The non-availability of signatories has been, to a large extent, addressed by the delegation of signing powers.

Furthermore, schools either did not submit reports or submitted reports late, which in turn delayed the submission of reports by the APOs to the regions. The late submission of reports is being addressed by involving all senior managers in monitoring reporting at all levels.

Management capacity

The lack of human resource capacity at provincial level has been improved by the appointment of 30 contract workers to assist with the processing of service provider claims at provincial level. Two of the NSNP coordinators interviewed at district level indicated that the NSNP component lacked sufficient staff to effectively monitor the programme. Although interviewees at both provincial and district level felt that they had the necessary skills to execute their duties, they believed that competencies in project and financial management, computer literacy and basic bookkeeping would increase their skills levels.

Staff development programmes, i.e. PFMA and computer courses were implemented in 2007/08 to increase skills levels. It should, however, be noted that staff development programmes fall within the ambit of human resources and the NSNP office has very little control over the implementation of these programmes. Staff, therefore, do not have as much access to skills development as they would like.

5.1.2 Conclusion

It can be concluded that financial systems are basically effective and efficient and that there is financial accountability at all levels. While the appointment of contract workers is alleviating problems in the short term, consideration should be given to the appointment of permanent staff to ensure the work load is managed effectively in the long term.

The improvement in the NSNP spending pattern is considered to be positive and may indicate an improvement in the financial management system. Some continued delays with payments and reporting may be the result of a lack of commitment from NSNP co-coordinators at district level.

While turnaround times for the payment of service provider claims are reported to have been reduced to ten days, this could be further decreased if only one office (either district or regional) is made responsible for approving payments. While managers are reluctant to change this system, there does not appear to be any rationale for the duplication in the approval process.

5.2 SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

5.2.1 Findings

Current system

The procurement model used in the province is the provincial tender system which has a strong focus on community empowerment and involvement. As mentioned above, the provincial Departmental Procurement Committee approves tenders for local service providers to cater at schools. Tender applications are distributed in the communities to allow interested parties to tender. Help desks established in the different regions assist interested parties with the relevant tender documents and remote areas are visited to create awareness in communities and to assist with the formalities.

The criteria for successful applicants are that they should be from the local community, historically disadvantaged individuals and women, with preference given to parents or guardians with children in the schools. Only one service provider can be recommended per school and it can consist of more than one member depending on the number of targeted learners at eligible schools. The ratio of members is one member for every 100 learners in a specific school. Adjudicating is done in collaboration with the Departments of Health and Social Services, churches, teacher unions and municipalities. NSNP coordinators at district level also participate in the adjudicating process. The adjudicating process was reported to be fair and transparent by the provincial office as well as coordinators at district level.

Service providers are responsible for providing utensils for each learner, purchasing and delivery of supplies, preparation and serving of food to learners and lastly, preparation and submission of claims for payment to the various APOs. Service level agreements entered into between service providers and the Department of Education include a cancellation clause addressing non-performance by service providers.

Strengths

According to the PSNP coordinators at district level as well as educators interviewed at school level, the emphasis on using local service providers has contributed substantially to the empowerment and involvement of the community in the programme. Service providers and their members receive a monthly income and as parents with learners in participating schools, they have a direct interest in the wellbeing of the learners. Small quantities of food supplies are bought from local shops at regular intervals, sometimes as often as once a week. Not only do the local shops benefit economically, but the problem with the storage of bulk supplies where there is a lack of sufficient facilities at some schools is also avoided. No problems were reported by any of the schools with regard to the quality of food items or expiry dates and labelling.

The decision to allocate only one school per service provider was seen as positive as the contract amounts were relatively small and therefore reduced the quantitative level of fraud with regard to the adjudicating process.

Weaknesses

The two main challenges with the system reported by interviewees at provincial, district and school levels were the payment of the service providers and the appointment of replacement service providers. Service providers do not have the resources to purchase supplies unless they receive timeous payments. They also lack transport for the submission of claims, and school principals and monitors assist in this regard by submitting their claims to the various APOs for processing. As discussed in 5.1.1, the province embarked on a strategy to reduce the turnaround time for the payment of suppliers.

Concerns were raised at both APO and school level regarding the delays in appointing replacement service providers when contracted service providers could not fulfil their contractual obligations,

whether due to illness, death or other reasons, resulting in affected schools not receiving food for long periods. According to the provincial programme manager, very little can be done to shorten the process of appointing service providers as all relevant procurement processes and procedures must be adhered to. A decision was therefore made to allow those schools affected to take over the duties of the service provider until such time that a replacement service provider is appointed.

5.2.2 Conclusion

It is evident from the findings presented above that the supply chain management system is designed to ensure strong provincial coordination while supporting local economic development. By using this procurement model, the province has succeeded, to a large extent, in steering clear of potential problems such as quality of food, payments of food handlers and the lack of sufficient storage facilities at schools. As the service provider carries out the duties of food handlers, additional payments to food handlers by the province and the administrative burden associated with these payments is avoided. The total contract amount per service provider for one school is negligible, thereby reducing incentives for fraud with regard to the adjudicating process.

5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

5.3.1 Human resources

Findings

Current structure

The provincial Subdirectorate of School Nutrition Feeding Scheme Services is located in the Chief Directorate, Auxiliary Services. It has a staff complement as follows:

Provincial office

- One chief education specialist.
- Two deputy chief education specialists.
- Five senior education specialists.
- Thirty contract workers.

Sustainable food production

- One assistant director seconded from the National Department of Education.

The provincial programme manager (chief education specialist) is on the same post level (L3) as the heads of the regional offices and APOs.

Regional and district levels

There are 12 officials at regional level (three in each of the four regions) and 17 APOs at district level, each with two dedicated NSNP coordinators. The NSNP coordinators are educators seconded to the APOs. They are, therefore, not permanently appointed and not part of the structure. This situation creates uncertainty and a lack of commitment. The coordinators were of the opinion that unless they were part of the structure, they should not have the same working hours and school holidays as the educators at schools. Concerns were also raised that they did not benefit from the school-based systems (integrated quality management system, performance management system and skills development). The issue of including the coordinators in the structure of the various APOs is receiving urgent attention.

The NSNP is not integrated into school programmes, nor is it part of the school organogram at school level. The school principal and one or more teachers are responsible for monitoring the implementation of the programme. This responsibility is in addition to their normal functions at the school.

Roles and functions

The NSNP staff members at provincial level are responsible for the facilitation and coordination of the programme. The assistant director of Food Production oversees the implementation of the sustainable food production programme and the 30 contract workers assist with the processing of claims at provincial level. Staff members at regional level consolidate service provider claims and submit them to the provincial office for payment.

NSNP coordinators at district level are responsible for administration (i.e. processing of service provider claims), monitoring the programme in schools and conducting workshops for teachers and service providers. Two of the three APOs who were visited, indicated that there should be more staff to assist with the monitoring of schools. They do, however, have staff working full time on the NSNP who are able to carry out monitoring visits to all schools in their jurisdiction once quarterly. In addition, all schools visited in the province were familiar with district office staff indicating that visits to schools are taking place effectively.

Training and development

Staff members at provincial as well as district level indicated that they have the appropriate skills to implement the programme. Competencies required at provincial and district levels are project and financial management, presentation skills, computer literacy and basic bookkeeping.

Educators responsible for the programme, as well as service providers, received training through several workshops and sessions.

The province has a training and development programme in place which includes:

- Sustainable food production where school communities are targeted.
- Nutrition education where service providers are trained. (This programme started last year.)
- Computer skills at provincial level.

Conclusion

The provincial office as well as the APOs would currently appear to be adequately capacitated in terms of skills and numbers of staff to implement the programme. As noted above, the appointment of contract workers is assisting in the short term with managing the work load related to processing of service provider claims. A more permanent staffing solution may, however, need to be put in place since service provider claims are unlikely to decrease.

The main challenge with the management of the programme at district level is the permanent appointment of the coordinators. This appears to be a thorny issue which needs to be addressed as the resultant lack of commitment influences the effectiveness and efficiency of the human resource system. The post levels presently being considered for permanent posts may result in coordinators being either under- or over-qualified for the posts.

Finally, current staffing levels in district offices are considered to be sufficient to carry out current roles and responsibilities to an acceptable standard.

5.3.2 Planning

Findings

Current system

The provincial office is responsible for the compilation of the yearly business plans, which include outputs, activities, a monitoring mechanism and cash flows. The provincial programme manager indicated that although the business plan assisted the planning process, no assistance was provided from the national office or the province to address the issue of additional funds requested in the busi-

ness plan in order to implement the programme. The province was requested to indicate additional funds required in the 2006/07 business plan, but due to an omission or misunderstanding, no financial assistance was provided which resulted in over-expenditure in 2006/07 and a continued shortfall. Although the business plan was not effectively used as a management tool, future business plans will include a baseline against which the programme will be effectively monitored.

At district level, coordinators are responsible for weekly activity plans in line with the business plan. These activity plans are monitored on a monthly basis by the regional office. Officials interviewed indicated that the weekly activity plans were helpful in organising their work.

Conclusion

The business plan, as well as the activity plans at district level, seem to be effective as they assist in the planning processes. It should however be noted that the number of learners targeted and the financial implications thereof for the budget are projections, and the actual numbers can only be determined when learners enrol for the new calendar year. Only then can actual budgets be finalised. None of the interviewees at district level expressed any dissatisfaction with the planning process.

5.3.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Findings

Current system

A formal system for monitoring and evaluation of the NSNP in the North West is in place. Standardised reports with performance indicators as per the national quarterly report are used by monitors at district level and schools to record progress of the programme. All schools are visited by the district office at least once a quarter. Records are kept in the district office of each visit and of areas that need improvement. This was confirmed by schools during interviews.

The coordinators interviewed at district level indicated that monthly progress meetings were held with the regional offices. Although regular provincial progress meetings are held with regional offices, no meetings between the province and districts are taking place due to a lack of funds. The provincial programme manager however indicated that provision for regular meetings was included in the budget for the new financial year.

Monthly reports from schools are either not submitted or not submitted timeously in order to be included in the progress report of the APOs. Reports that were submitted were also not readily available due to a lack of an effective filing system in the APO. Schools generally have difficulty keeping up with the administrative tasks generated by the NSNP.

Educators responsible for the implementation of the programme at school level monitored the key performance indicators on a daily basis. The quality of the food, the number of meals served and the time of feeding are recorded on the daily delivery notes which are signed by them.

School visits

Three sample schools in the province were visited and the implementation of the programme including the storage of food, preparation and serving of food, quality and quantity of food served, and hygiene and garbage disposal practices were observed.

Storage of food

In two of the schools visited, small quantities of food items were securely stored in a designated school room. One school did not have appropriate facilities and the food items were stored in a private home close to the school.

Preparation and serving of food

In all schools visited, food was prepared in the designated classrooms where gas stoves were used for cooking. Utensils used were clean and all service providers wore aprons. All schools indicated that the hygiene status of food preparation facilities was good and observations confirmed this.

Although feeding at one school started before 10h00, the feeding process was only completed later. The other two schools which were visited did not start serving food until after 10h00. The main reason for this was that the break times were scheduled for after 10h00 and feeding takes place during break so as not to interrupt classes. Also, the nutrition coordinators did not seem to appreciate the importance of providing food early in the day in order to improve concentration. There did not seem to be any documentation available that explains why feeding before 10h00 is important.

In two of the schools, plastic basins were made available for learners to wash their hands, and in one school learners used the bathroom facilities for this purpose. Food was served on clean plates and each learner was provided with a spoon.

Quality and quantity

All food items observed had proper labelling and valid expiry dates. No incidences of poor quality were reported by the schools. The following menus were served to the learners on the day of the school visits.

Table 4: Menus served at schools

<i>School</i>	<i>Menu served</i>	<i>Portion size</i>
A	Rice	59g
	Soya and potato	73g
	Pumpkin	49g
B	Rice	154g
	Soya	105g
	Cabbage	42g
C	Rice	101g
	Soya, tomato and onion	115g
	Cabbage	76g

Source: School visits

Portion sizes were measured with a spoon. All three schools complied with the provincial requirements for menu option one. Compliance with the portion size could however not be established, as provincial menu option criteria do not include portion sizes.

Hygiene and garbage disposal

None of the toilet facilities at the schools were in close proximity to food storage or preparation of food. Toilets observed were generally clean. In all three schools visited, garbage was disposed of in a pit and burnt on a regular basis.

Conclusion

Aside from poor compliance of schools with the 10h00 feeding time, the implementation of the programme at school level is effective and efficient. The hygiene status of food preparation facilities is excellent. Educators and service providers received training and the programme is monitored by coordinators on a regular basis. The filing of reports (monitoring tools) should be addressed to ensure that they are accessible. It appears that the actual time of serving is determined by the school's break time and that educators are reluctant to change the timetables.

5.3.4 Targeting

Findings

The province used the current school funding norms resource targeting lists which rank schools according to poverty levels and then divide them into five groups called quintiles. quintile 1 and 2 schools are targeted, as well as all schools previously targeted by the Department of Health, irrespective of the quintile designation of the school. All learners in targeted schools, i.e. grades 0 to 7, are targeted. The provincial targeting policy is followed in the districts (APOs) as well as in the schools.

Interviewees at both the provincial and district levels were of the view that the present targeting system based on the quintile designations was ineffective. Some schools, although qualifying in terms of their quintile designations, were found not to be needy, and some schools clearly in need of the programme were excluded based on incorrect designations.

Interviewees at all three levels voiced very strong opposition to individual targeting in a school as this might lead to stigmatisation and victimisation. All learners in a school should have access to the programme as all learners come from the same disadvantaged communities.

Concerns were also raised where middle schools were located next to primary schools but did not benefit from the programme. Some learners came from the same family but only the learners in the primary schools were targeted.

Conclusion

It is evident from the findings presented above that the targeting system is currently ineffective in ensuring that all needy children are included in the programme. While financial constraints contribute to the challenge of reaching all needy children, it is apparent that the quintile system is ineffective in consistently classifying schools according to level of need. The inclusion of schools that previously benefited from the programme under the Department of Health's management of the programme contributes to the lack of accurate targeting of the poorest schools. Some of these schools fall in quintiles 3 and 4 but continue to participate in the programme. This, together with the disqualification and/or qualification of schools based on incorrect quintile designations, reflects a high degree of targeting imprecision.

The province does however comply with the national targeting requirement that at least quintile 1 and 2 schools are included in the programme.

5.3.5 Institutional arrangements

Findings

The NSNP, on provincial as well as district levels, is located in Auxiliary Services, which apart from the NSNP, provides services to schools including information technology, infrastructure and school safety. Interviewees on both levels were comfortable with the current location of the programme. The reporting lines from province to regions to APOs may impede the effective implementation of policy directives.

Conclusion

The location of the programme at both provincial and district levels appears to enhance the effective implementation of the programme. No recommendations or suggestions were made by interviewees at both levels.

3.3.6 Communications

Findings

Interviewees at both provincial and district levels reported that although regular provincial progress meetings were held with regional offices, no meetings between province and APOs took place during the 2007 calendar year. The provincial programme manager indicated that the lack of regular provincial meetings at district level was due to the cutback on the budget to accommodate the shortfalls experienced in the 2006/07 financial year. Provision has however been made for regular meetings with APOs in the 2008/09 business plan. District officials and educators at school level indicated that they received regular circulars on the implementation of the programme. Officials at district level however reported frustrations with delays in responses from the provincial office when enquiries were made regarding the payments of suppliers. Educators interviewed at school level were satisfied that they received regular circulars keeping them informed of all relevant developments.

Conclusion

From interviews on provincial, district and school levels, it can be concluded that the informal and formal channels of communications used in the province appear to be relatively effective despite frustration expressed by coordinators at district level. The province is aware of these frustrations and has included budget projections for regular meetings with APOs in its 2008/09 business plan.

6 OUTPUTS

For the purposes of this evaluation, outputs of the programme were defined as achievements of the programme that impact indirectly on learning. Outcomes of the programme, discussed in the next section, were regarded to be achievements of the programme that impact more directly on learning, namely the percentage of targeted learners fed and compliance with minimum feeding days. Outputs of the programme were identified as:

- The presence of active food gardens in schools.
- Economic activity related to food gardens.
- Community participation in the running of programmes in schools.

Assessment of all of these achievements was included in the school survey, the findings of which are presented below along with other sources of information.

6.1 FINDINGS

6.1.1 Active food gardens

The table below shows the percentage of schools in the North West Province with food gardens active during the evaluation period.

Table 5: Percentage of schools with active food gardens

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	0.0%	95.0%	5.0%
2005	5.0%	85.0%	10.0%
2006	20.0%	15.0%	65.0%

It is evident from the above table that while most schools do not currently have food gardens, the percentage of schools that do increased annually over the evaluation period. This is likely to be due to the increased emphasis on this programme objective in the province. There is also poor record keeping in district offices in this regard.

The above findings for the 2006 calendar year are supported by the information provided by the provincial assistant director responsible for the sustainable food production programme. He estimated that slightly more, i.e. 26% of schools participating in the NSNP in the North West Province, have active vegetable and/or fruit gardens. In addition, two out of the three schools visited had active vegetable gardens, and the third school had purchased seeds for a new vegetable garden in the 2008 calendar year.

According to information received from the provincial office, the challenges concerning food gardens at schools are the following:

- Lack of basic resources, fencing and garden implements.
- Lack of support and commitments from school governing bodies and parents.
- Lack of water.
- Theft and vandalism.
- Unsustainability of established vegetable gardens.
- Lack of care, technical support and advice to schools.

6.1.2 Schools with economic activity related to food gardens

The table below shows the percentage of schools with economic activity related to food gardens.

Table 6: Percentage of schools with economic activity related to food gardens

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	0.0%	95.0%	5.0%
2005	0.0%	90.0%	10.0%
2006	15.0%	25.0%	60.0%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that very little data is being kept in district offices regarding economic activity related to food gardens. There was, however, a notable increase in economic activity in 2006. This is probably related to the time required to set up food gardens successfully and the coordination necessary to facilitate community involvement in the selling of vegetables.

Interviewees at two of the schools visited indicated that the products produced were used to supplement the food served to learners or were taken home by learners and community members to improve household food security, specifically in the case of orphans and vulnerable children. No one, however, reported selling fruit and vegetables.

6.1.3 Schools where community participates in programme

The table below shows the percentage of schools with community participation.

Table 7: Percentage of schools with community participation

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	95.0%	5.0%	0.0%
2005	95.0%	5.0%	0.0%
2006	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that the vast majority of schools over the whole evaluation period have had some form of community participation. This finding is based on the fact that all service providers are from the local community. According to educators interviewed at two of the three schools, the vegetable gardens were managed by either the learners, parents or service providers. Challenges regarding community participation reported by the aforementioned interviewees are the community's reluctance to provide services unless they are remunerated, and the long distance to the school from where people live. In addition, it was reported that many parents are employed full time on farms.

6.2 CONCLUSION

It is evident from the findings presented above that programme outputs related to the establishment of food gardens, related economic activities and community participation are at an early stage of development. This is considered appropriate, given that programme objectives related directly to the feeding of children have been prioritised over those with indirect impacts on learning. There is, however, positive growth in the number of food gardens as well as the selling of produce, reflecting increased attention being given to these objectives by the province. The finding that most community participation is related to services offered by service providers is not surprising, given the context of poverty, long distances and the need to prioritise full-time, remunerated employment. Objectives related to community participation need to be clarified, so that school staff are able to coordinate these activities with their other responsibilities.

7 OUTCOMES

For the purposes of the evaluation, outcomes were defined as programme achievements that have a direct impact on learning. These include whether the targeted number of learners were reached by the programme in the evaluation period, and whether feeding took place on the minimum required number of days and at the required time. These are key indicators of whether the objectives of the programme are being met and they were central to the school survey. The findings of the survey, along with other sources of information on these indicators, are reported below.

7.1 FINDINGS

7.1.1 Targeted learners fed

The table below shows the percentage of targeted learners that were reached by the programme during the evaluation period.

Table 8: Percentage of targeted learners fed

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>100% and above</i>	<i>No record</i>
2004	30.0%	70.0%
2005	35.0%	65.0%
2006	95.0%	5.0%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that 100% of schools with data available at district level fed all targeted learners in their respective schools during 2004, 2005 and 2006. This finding is supported by observations and interviews with educators during school visits where all targeted learners were fed. Data relating to the number of learners fed could not be accessed in 70% of the sample schools in 2004, 65% in 2005, and 5% in 2006.

7.1.2 Compliance with number of feeding days

The table below presents the percentage of schools that complied with the provincial targets for feeding days for the evaluation period.

Table 9: Percentage of schools complying with feeding days

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>100% and above</i>	<i>No record</i>
2004	5.0%	95.0%
2005	100.0%	0.0%
2006	100.0%	0.0%

Source: School survey

The table above shows that 100% of schools with available data served food on the minimum required feeding days (156 days) during 2004. All sample schools complied with the minimum feeding days in 2005 and 2006. Data relating to schools' compliance with the prescribed number of feeding days could not be accessed in 95% of the sample schools in the 2004 calendar year. All three schools visited during the period of evaluation confirmed compliance with the provincially prescribed number of feeding days, which supports the results of the school survey.

Good compliance with the minimum number of feeding days was also confirmed in interviews at provincial and APO levels.

7.1.3 *Compliance with the required time of feeding*

The table below provides the results of the school survey with regard to the percentage of schools complying with the prescribed time of feeding.

Table 10: Percentage of schools complying with required time of feeding

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	0.0%	95.0%	5.0%
2005	0.0%	90.0%	10.0%
2006	55.0%	5.0%	40.0%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that in 2004 and 2005 no schools complied with the national and provincial requirement that all learners should be fed before 10h00, though records were unavailable for most schools. District offices did not have this information for 95% and 90% of sample schools for 2004 and 2005.

In 2006, there was a substantial increase in compliance with the required time for feeding, with 55% of schools feeding before 10h00. This increase may in part be related to better availability of records for that year, though it does also appear that later in the programme more emphasis was placed on the importance of feeding times. Reasons for schools failing to comply with the prescribed time of feeding were generally related to the fact that the actual time of serving is determined by the school's break time and that educators are reluctant to change the timetables.

7.2 CONCLUSION

Assuming that reaching target learners, compliance with required serving times and menus, and providing food on the minimum target days are accurate indicators that the programme is contributing to enhanced learning (i.e. the primary objective of the programme), it may be concluded that the NSNP in the North West is performing relatively well. It is evident from the above analysis that the main areas of weakness in programme service delivery are compliance with the required feeding time and with required menus, though 2006 shows substantial improvements in this area. A large percentage of schools however are not complying with the provincial prescribed time of feeding which impacts negatively on the effectiveness of the programme. It would appear that NSNP coordinators at district level and educators at school level are not sufficiently aware of the importance of early feeding to ensure optimal impact on learners' active learning capacity.



CONCLUSION

From observations at school level as well as interviews with officials at provincial, district and school level, it can be concluded that the resources allocated for the implementation of the NSNP are, broadly speaking, utilised effectively and efficiently.

Findings of the evaluation show that the programme is, for the most part, meeting its objectives although there are a few serious limitations. The findings regarding compliance with the targeted number of learners fed, the required number of feeding days, the positive growth in the number of food gardens, and the full compliance with nutrition education as part of the curriculum, reflect good performance of the programme. A large percentage of schools however are not complying with the provincial prescribed time of feeding which impacts negatively on the effectiveness of the programme. The lack of sufficient funding, resulting in non-compliance with menu options and the province not reaching all needy learners, is impacting on the ability of the province to optimally meet the objectives of the programme.

Although the province complies with the national targeting policy and uses the current school funding norms resource targeting lists, the inclusion of schools previously benefiting from the programme under the Department of Health's management, together with the disqualification and/or qualification of schools based on incorrect quintile designations, are making targeting ineffective.

The financial systems are as effective and efficient as possible, and there is financial accountability at all appropriate levels. The payments of service providers were a main challenge, but these have been addressed through the appointment of 30 contract workers at provincial level, which has greatly increased the efficiency of the financial system. The continued shortfall on the budget and related cash flow problems are however affecting payments to suppliers.

The procurement model used by the province, with its strong focus on community empowerment, although not without challenges, is central to the success of the programme.

The provincial office, as well as the officials at district level, would appear to be adequately capacitated in terms of skills and number of staff to implement the programme. The main challenge with the management of the programme at district level is the permanent appointment of the coordinators, as the present situation has a negative impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the human resource system.

The monitoring and evaluation is effective, but the permanent appointment of coordinators needs to be addressed, as the lack of commitment and uncertainty may obstruct the effective and efficient delivery of services.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Additional funds need to be allocated for the implementation of the NSNP, whether from national or provincial sources, to ensure all needy learners are reached.
- The cost per learner per day, which has not been increased since the Department of Education took over the management of the NSNP, should be reviewed to ensure that service providers comply with menu options and that correct quantities and quality of food is served to learners.
- The current school funding norms resource targeting lists ,which rank schools according to poverty levels, as well as the decision to include schools previously participating in the programme under the Department of Health’s management, need to be reviewed.
- Access to the Walker system should be made available to the provincial Subdirectorate of School Nutrition Feeding Scheme Services to ensure that there are no delays in the submission of the monthly and quarterly reports.
- A solution regarding the permanent appointment of seconded educators should be addressed as a matter of urgency to ensure the effective delivery of services.
- Efficient record keeping and filing systems need to be developed at district level to ensure that reports are readily available and accessible.
- The importance of early feeding should be communicated to all relevant stakeholders and prioritised in routine monitoring by district offices. Schools should be instructed to change their timetables to ensure that feeding is completed by 10h00, in compliance with national guidelines.
- The policy which excludes middle schools located next to primary schools benefiting from the programme needs to be reviewed.

