



EVALUATION OF
THE SCHOOL
NUTRITION
PROGRAMME

*Provincial Report:
Free State*

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 Free State 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 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 education 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 has been under the management of Department of Education in the Free State Province from the 2004/05 financial year. The province adopted the national guidelines (*NSNP Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting Manual, January 2004*) as the official provincial guidelines for the implementation of the NSNP and provided training on the implementation of the programme to all stakeholders. Key elements of the guidelines include:

- An outline 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 suppliers.
- 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 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 NSNP at provincial level is located in the Learner Support Unit. The location of the programme in the five districts, however, varies. At Fezile Dabi district, the programme is located in the Special Projects Office, at Tahbo Mofutsanyane in the district director's office, and at Motheo, Llejweleputswa and Xhariep it is located in management and governance.

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

Key challenges highlighted in the report are:

- Late submission of invoices by providers at district level.
- Inconsistent delivery times and inconsistent products.
- There are only a few professional coordinators who have work overload.
- Principals do not give the required recognition to administration clerks.
- Some farm owners have problems allowing suppliers to enter their farms for security reasons.
- It is difficult to collect statistical information at schools.
- Districts do not have their own budgets.
- Suppliers supply low quality of food.
- Lack of proper storage for food; in some cases food was left to rot.
- Unavailability of signatories at the expected times.

These findings provide some indication of areas to be assessed in the current evaluation.

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 the table below.

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 with 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
Free State		Madwaleni; Mqanduli	Madwaleni Primary	Rural
	Motheo	Bloemfontein	Maboloka Primary	Urban
	Lejweleputswa	Welkom	Matshediso Primary	Rural
Gauteng	Xhariep	Jaegersfontein	Austinspost Primary	Rural
	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
	Nkangala	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	Mogalatladi 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 above 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 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 identified.

4 OBJECTIVES

4.1 FINDINGS

The objectives of the programme and the extent to which they are being met were discussed with the director of Learner Support, NSNP officials at district level and school principals and educators at school level.

The director of Learner Support indicated that the province would need to undertake an impact study before it could be stated that the objectives of the programme as described by the Department of Education had been met. The province relies on the feedback from schools that the programme improves school attendance and enhances learning capacity. The main challenges reported in meeting the objectives at provincial level were:

- No impact study had been undertaken to measure whether objectives had been met.
- Lack of sufficient staff at provincial level to manage the programme and process claims.
- Poor quality of food delivered to schools due to financial constraints.
- Lack of scales for the weighing of food quantities for preparation at schools.
- Lack of kitchen and storage facilities at schools.

The primary objectives of the programme were well understood at district level, although no interviewee mentioned the generation of food production at schools as an objective. The interviewees confirmed the importance of the programme to ensure that learners attend school and to alleviate temporary hunger. The main challenges highlighted by interviewees at district level were:

- Late transfer of funds for gas and the payment of food handlers.
- Insufficient government vehicles for monitoring.
- Late deliveries of supplies at schools.
- Non-compliance by suppliers with regard to the supply of equipment and cleaning material to schools.
- Incorrect quantities delivered to schools vs. number of learners variation.
- Poor quality of food delivered to schools and non-compliance with the delivering of food items as per the prescribed menus.
- Incorrect measurement of food items by food handlers due to a lack of weighing scales.

All interviewees at school level indicated an increase in learning performance and school attendance when learners receive food through the programme. The main challenges highlighted in meeting the programme's objectives were:

- Poor quality of food.
- Late transfers for gas and payments of food handlers.
- Inconsistent deliveries.
- Lack of equipment and cleaning supplies.

Interviewees at all sample schools indicated that nutrition education was part of the curriculum at schools. One of the three sample schools visited had an active vegetable garden which was managed by the learners. Spinach grown was used to supplement the food served to learners and was taken home to improve household food security.

4.2 CONCLUSION

From interviews conducted at provincial, district and school level, it was clear that the primary objectives of the NSNP were well understood and that there is a strong perception that learners' school attendance and learning capacity had been improved through the programme. It can also be concluded that the three main challenges reported, i.e. non-compliance of contractual obligations by suppliers (food quality and quantity, delivery requirements, supply of equipment and cleaning supplies to schools), lack of sufficient staff at provincial level to ensure timeous payments to food handlers, and a lack of sufficient facilities at schools for food preparation and storage of supplies are impacting negatively 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 Bid Committee approves bids of suppliers, and each supplier is allocated a municipality to supply food to schools within the municipality. Each school completes a delivery note on a daily basis. Suppliers collect the delivery notes and feeding schedules from each school on a monthly basis and submit them together with the invoice to the relevant district offices for verification. District officials are required to submit claims within a period of five days to the provincial office. The claims are then processed at provincial level and authorisation for payment advices and then are completed within five days before submission to the Subdirectorate of Demand and Logistics for capturing and Finance for payment within three days.

The main challenge concerning the current system is the lack of capacity at provincial level (Learner Support Unit) to process claims on time before submission to the Subdirectorate of Demand and Logistics, and to process transfers for gas and food handlers at schools. From interviews with district staff, it appears that the NSNP components at district level don't have their own budgets and copies of claims have to be made at the provincial office. The NSNP components within the districts will however have their own budgets for administrative purposes in the next financial year.

Budget and expenditure

There has been a 6% decrease in the spending rate of the budgeted amount allocated for the programme from 2004/05 to 2005/06 and an increase of 24% from 2005/06 to 2006/07. 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	49,100,000	46,149,000	94%
2005/06	68,515,000	60,627,000	88%
2006/07	64,784,000	72,733,000	112%

Source: Free State Department of Education

Note: The actual expenditure includes amounts rolled over from the previous financial years.

Reporting

The province experienced delays in submitting monthly and quarterly reports to the national body on time due to the late submission by districts, non-availability of timeous Basic Accounting System (BAS) reports and non-availability of signatories. Neither the provincial officials nor the officials at district level have direct access to the BAS or LOGIS systems and they have to request required reports from the finance section. The director of Learner Support indicated that pre-authorisation was required to access the aforementioned systems and that authorisation should be addressed.

Furthermore, schools did not submit reports or submitted reports late which in turn delayed the submission of reports by the districts to the provincial office.

Management capacity

The lack of human resource capacity at provincial level mentioned in previous sections of this report is a huge concern. The current staff complement to deal with the processing of claims is the director of the Learner Support Unit, a deputy director, a deputy chief education specialist and an administrative clerk.

A number of administrative clerks have recently been appointed at district level to ensure claims are processed timeously. Although interviewees at district level felt that they had the necessary skills to execute their duties, they indicated that competencies in LOGIS, BAS and requirements of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) would increase their skills levels.

5.1.2 Conclusion

Besides the serious lack of human resources at provincial level, it can be concluded that the financial systems are basically effective and efficient, and that there is financial accountability at all levels.

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 reporting may be the result of a lack of access to BAS and LOGIS.

5.2 SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

5.2.1 Findings

Current system

The procurement models used in the province are both the bidding system and the quotation system where 5% of the schools participating in the programme are on the quotation system. The quotation system however will be phased out in the 2008/09 financial year. The bidding system is in line with the PFMA, Delegation of Authority and the Supply Chain Management Policy Framework. The bidding system process includes the advertisement of bid specifications, the adjudication of recommended bids against a set of criteria, the approval of bid recommendations by the Bid Committee, the approval of bids by the Departmental Bid Committee, and the appointment of suppliers by means of acceptance letters.

Suppliers' bid contracts in Xhariep, Motheo and Ljejeleputswa will continue until September 31 2009 while suppliers in the other two districts, appointed for the 2007/08 and 2008/09 financial years, will continue until May 2008.

Suppliers are responsible for providing specified food items to schools, utensils, equipment and cleaning material. The number of food handlers per school is determined by the department (1:200) and payments of food handlers (R500 per month) are paid directly into the schools' bank accounts.

Once appointed, suppliers sign letters of appointment, accepting the terms and conditions of the bid specifications. The terms and conditions include penalty clauses for defaulting suppliers.

Strengths

The adjudication process is clearly defined, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the relevant committees. The contract period (two years) allows for timeous appointment of new suppliers to ensure that the implementation of the programme is not interrupted.

As a relative small number of suppliers (on average 12 suppliers) are appointed, the monitoring of services delivered to schools should be manageable by district monitors. Payments are only made to the service providers provided that the delivery notes have been authenticated by the teacher responsible for the NSNP and the principal at the respective schools.

Weaknesses

The following challenges with the main procurement system were identified during interviews conducted at provincial, district and school level:

- Suppliers allegedly are not always from the community and thus do not have a direct interest in the wellbeing of learners.
- Suppliers in general deliver poor services (incorrect quantities, poor quality, inconsistent deliveries, no cleaning materials, not sticking to food items required in terms of the prescribed menus).
- In some instances the same suppliers are appointed year after year.
- Districts allegedly are not involved in the adjudicating process.
- Some suppliers are “fly-by-nights” and not capacitated to deliver an effective service.

5.2.2 Conclusion

It is evident from the findings presented above, that although the adjudicating process and the different roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are clearly defined, the supply chain management system is rendered ineffective by the poor delivery of services by suppliers.

5.3 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS

5.3.1 Human resources

Findings

Current structure

The NSNP is located in the Directorate Learner Support Unit which is headed by a director. It has a staff complement as follows:

Provincial office

- One deputy director, NSNP
- One deputy chief education specialist NSNP
- One administration clerk

Sustainable food production

- One assistant director seconded from the National Department of Education

District level

The five districts have staff complements as follows:

Table 4: Staff complement at district level

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Motheo</i>	<i>Xhariep</i>	<i>Lejwelep</i>	<i>Thabo M</i>	<i>Fezile D</i>
*DCES	1	1	1	1	1
**CAC	1	1	1	1	1
***SAC	4		5	2	3
****AC	4	5	3	6	3

Resource: Free State Department of Education

*Deputy educational specialist

**Chief administration clerk

***Senior administration clerk

****Administration clerk

Roles and functions

The NSNP staff members at provincial level are responsible for the coordination and management of the programme, as well as the processing and authorisation of claims.

The assistant director of Sustainable Food Production oversees the implementation of the Sustainable Food Production Programme.

The director of the Learner Support Unit indicated that the provincial office was severely understaffed resulting in the delays in payments of food handlers, suppliers and gas transfers to schools.

The staff at district level is responsible for the NSNP and the other functions falling under Learner Support, i.e. transport, sustainable food production, orphans, hostels and nutrition education. The deputy educational specialists are responsible for the coordination of the programme, while the chief administration clerks, senior administration clerks and administration clerks are responsible for the administration (processing of claims). In addition, all senior administration clerks and administration clerks are responsible for the monitoring at schools. All interviewees at district level indicated that there was a shortage of staff to execute their duties, as well as a shortage of vehicles for monitoring. Each monitor has between 30 and 40 schools to oversee and vehicles are shared with other sections. In one district, four vehicles are shared by eight monitors.

Training and development

The director of Learner Support indicated that there was a need for training on BAS and LOGIS at the provincial office; however, skills cannot be addressed if there is insufficient staff to execute the duties. The training and development programme for districts and schools which is managed at provincial level includes menu quantities, measuring of quantities, monitoring, food hygiene, nutrition education and food production.

Interviewees at district level indicated that they required the following training and development:

- LOGIS and BAS.
- Public relations.
- Business communication.
- Project management.
- PFMA.

All schools and food handlers received training in the implementation of the programme at school level, although concerns were raised that more training was needed to ensure that food handlers use the correct quantities when preparing the food.

Conclusion

It is evident from the information above that there is a serious lack of capacity at provincial level that negatively impacts on the effective and efficient implementation of the programme. This challenge needs to be addressed as soon as possible. The current staffing levels in district offices are considered to be sufficient to carry out current roles and responsibilities at an acceptable standard. Access to and training on BAS and LOGIS should be seen as a priority and the necessary steps must be taken to address these training needs.

5.3.2 Planning

Findings

Current system

The provincial office is responsible for the compilation of the yearly business plans which include outputs, activities, monitoring mechanism and cash flows. The director of Learner Support indicated that the process of compiling the required business plans is very useful as the status of schools and the

number of learners change every year. Quarterly reports received from districts inform the business plan in terms of the number of learners.

Interviewees at district level indicated that they received annual operational plans and prepare weekly plans, and that feedback is provided to the Deputy Chief Educational Specialists at the end of each week. On average, the weekly plan includes visiting four schools per day per monitor.

Conclusion

The business plans, as well as the weekly plans at district level, seem to be effective as they assist in the planning processes. 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 Free State is in place. The director of Learner Support indicated that districts were visited once a month to monitor progress, and the province intervened on behalf of the districts when problems were experienced with suppliers. Schools are held accountable for the implementation of the programme and steps can be taken against principals through the inspectors. The NSNP database which is maintained at provincial level includes the following:

- Number of learners.
- Number of food handlers.
- Number, name and addresses of schools.
- Details of suppliers.

Weekly plans are used by monitors when monitoring schools at least once a month. The monitoring is done using standardised reports with performance indicators including food quality, time of feeding, number of meals served and expiry dates of food items. Schools are required to submit monthly reports. Records are kept in the district office of each visit and areas that need improvement. Records were however in a poor state and not readily available when district visits took place.

School visits

Three schools (two farm and one township school) were visited as part of the evaluation. The implementation of the programme included 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 farm schools visited, small quantities of food items were securely stored in a class room. Large quantities of food items, accumulated over a period due to inconsistent deliveries in the third school visited (i.e. the township school), were stored in a store-room together with books and equipment. The condition of the store-room was unhygienic and the surface and walls were also not clean. It should be noted that the lack of storage facilities at schools was mentioned as one of the concerns at provincial level.

Preparation and serving of food

In all three sample schools visited, food was prepared in a designated class or other room. Utensils used were clean and all food handlers wore aprons. All schools indicated that the hygiene status of food preparation facilities was good and observations confirmed this.

Two of the schools used gas for the preparation of the food, while the third farm school used a paraffin stove which was placed next to the gas bottle as the gas stove was not working. According to a provincial circular dated 27 November 2006 distributed to all schools, “only gas and wood may be used for cooking, and not paraffin, as paraffin is poisonous and highly flammable.” Apart from the health hazard caused by using a paraffin stove next to the gas stove, which is clearly against provincial instructions, the service provider is in breach of his contract by not providing a proper working gas stove. In another school, a huge gas cylinder was placed next to gas stoves inside a very small room used for the preparation of food with no ventilation at all. These are serious health hazards which could have dire consequences for the school and Department of Education

In all three schools, the feeding process was only completed 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 schools 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 provides an explanation as to why feeding before 10h00 is important.

In two of the schools, learners were observed washing their hands before the food was served. Food was served on clean plates and each learner was provided with utensils. One school complained that the service provider did not provide the school with the necessary cleaning materials.

Quality and quantity

All food items observed had proper labelling and valid expiry dates. Two of the three schools visited complained of poor quality of food items supplied by suppliers. The maize meal was of very poor quality and food handlers found it difficult to cook it. The quality of the beans and soup in one school was also reported to be of very poor quality. In some instances, the food handlers had to remove stones from the beans before they could be prepared.

The following menus were served to the learners on the day of the school visits.

Table 5: Menus served at schools

<i>School</i>	<i>Day of visit</i>	<i>Menu served</i>	<i>Portion size served</i>	<i>Required menu as per provincial guidelines</i>	<i>Portion size required</i>
A	Tuesday	Rice	120 g	Maize meal	306 g
		Breakfast stew beef	130 g	Bean stew	90 g
B	Wednesday	Maize meal	156 g	Samp/rice	1 and ¾ cup
		Soya soup	102 g	Soya relish	90 g
C	Thursday	Maize meal	70 g	Maize meal	1 and ¾ cup
		Soya	115 g	Spinach/cabbage with potato	90 g
		Beans	80 g		

Source: School visits and provincial amended menu options dated 27 November 2006

Portion sizes were measured with a spoon in two of the schools, while the third school measured the soya with a cup. None of the schools complied with the provincially approved menu options. Schools generally served portions that were larger than the provincially required minimum size.

Hygiene and garbage disposal

None of the toilet facilities at the schools were in close proximity to food storage or preparation of food. The two farm schools visited had pit toilets which were clean. The toilet facilities at the third school visited were locked and could not be accessed. The smell however was horrendous. Sewerage and drainage problems were observed when entering the township which may explain the unhygienic status of the toilet facilities. The garbage disposal areas at all three schools were generally clean.

Conclusion

It is evident from the information above that suppliers deliver poor services to schools. They supply schools with substandard quality of food and do not supply schools with the cleaning material and equipment necessary for the preparation of food. Similar concerns were also raised at both provincial and district levels. Schools visited did not comply with the required time of feeding before 10h00. It appears that the actual time of serving is determined by the school's break time and that educators are reluctant to change the time tables. The hygiene status of food preparation facilities, however, were good indicating the effectiveness of the training provided to food handlers.

5.3.4 Targeting

Findings

The NSNP is viewed as an essential service delivery to schools in the province, and the decision was therefore made by the province's executive that all primary schools (excluding former Model C schools) in the province should benefit from the programme. All learners in these schools, i.e. grades 0-7 benefit from the programme. Some combined schools (grades 0-12) identified as needy are also included in the programme.

The director of Learner Support indicated that the system used for targeting was effective. Schools targeted are all needy and feedback from school governing bodies and learners and educators at schools confirm that school attendance improves when feeding takes place.

Coordinators interviewed at district level raised concern that targeting was ineffective as not all schools were needy and that not all learners in targeted schools were needy. Two of the districts stated that some former Model C schools were still participating in the programme. It was also mentioned that no accommodation was made in the budget from one financial year to the other when the number of learners in a school increased leading to dilution of food portions. The current suppliers were appointed for the period August 1 2006 to September 31 2009.

Educators interviewed at school level felt very strongly that individual targeting in schools would not be feasible as this would lead to victimisation and stigmatisation. "If you feed one you feed all or none at all" seems to be the standard answer to the question of individual targeting. One principal, when asked why the school targeted all learners when a relatively large number of learners brought their own lunch boxes to school on the day of the school visit, explained that in a given month parents might be able to provide lunch boxes, but the situation might be completely different when the situation at home changed due to unemployment, death or other circumstances.

Conclusion

It is evident that the province's targeting policy is effective in that the needy schools and learners are reached. The decision to feed all schools, however, comes at a cost to the effectiveness of the programme when suppliers cannot deliver the desired quality and menu options due to the reported insufficient contract amounts, the seriously understaffed provincial office cannot pay suppliers on time, and when transfers of funds for food handlers and gas are delayed for long periods.

The province complies with the national targeting policy requirement that at least quintile 1 and 2 schools should be targeted, and that districts as well as schools comply with the provincial targeting policy.

5.3.5 Institutional arrangements

Findings

Interviewees at both levels were comfortable with the current location of the programme. The programme is well placed under the Learning Support Unit at provincial level and management and governance, district director office and special project office at district level as the other functions in these units all are monitored at school level.

Conclusion

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

5.3.6 Communications

Findings

Interviewees at both provincial and district level reported that regular meetings were held between the provincial and district offices. Officials at district level, however, reported frustrations with delays in responses from the provincial office when enquiries were made regarding the payments to suppliers. Educators interviewed at school level were satisfied that they received regular circulars keeping them informed of all relevant developments.

Conclusion

From interviews at provincial, district and school level, it can be concluded that the informal and formal channels of communications used in the province appear to be relatively effective despite frustrations expressed by district officials regarding slow reaction to enquiries. The slow reaction at provincial level may be the result of the lack of human resources and the provincial office not having access to BAS and LOGIS.

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 school.
- Economic activity related to food gardens.
- Community participation in the running of the programme in the school.

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 Free State Province with food gardens active during the evaluation period.

Table 6: Percentage of schools with active food gardens

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	25.0%	31.3%	43.8%
2005	37.5%	25.0%	37.5%
2006	50.0%	6.3%	43.8%

It is evident from the table above that there is an annual increase over the evaluation period of schools with food gardens. The increase of schools with data available at district level went from 36% to 50% to 53%. This is likely to be due to the increased emphasis on this programme objective in the province. It should be mentioned that there is poor record keeping in district offices in this regard.

Only one of the three sample schools visited had a vegetable garden. The one farm school planted spinach which is used to supplement the food served to the learners and for learners to take home. Seeds are also provided to learners who are encouraged to start vegetable gardens at home. The other farm school visited used to have a vegetable garden, but free roaming pigs made the venture unsuccessful.

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 7: 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%	25.0%	75.0%
2005	0.0%	18.8%	81.3%
2006	6.3%	6.3%	87.5%

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 is, however, a small increase in economic activity in 2006. This is probably related to the time required to successfully set up food gardens and to coordinate community involvement and the selling of vegetables.

6.1.3 Schools where community participates in programme

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

Table 8: Percentage of schools with community participation

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

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that all schools surveyed have had some form of community participation. This finding is based on the fact that all food handlers are from the local community. There is generally not much further community participation over and above this.

6.2 CONCLUSION

It is evident from 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 the over-arching goal of the NSNP is enhancing learning capacity through the alleviation of short-term hunger; this goal, therefore, has priority 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 community participation is related to services offered by food handlers 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 to warrant the amount of coordination from school staff with 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. Given that these are key indicators of whether the objectives of the programme are being met, 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 9: Percentage of targeted learners fed

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>100% and above</i>	<i>Less than 80%</i>	<i>No record</i>
2004	68.8%	0.0%	31.3%
2005	81.3%	0.0%	18.8%
2006	75.0%	6.3%	18.8%

Source: School survey

It is evident that there is a small decline in the number of targeted learners reached from 2005 to 2006. All schools with available data fed 100% of targeted learners in 2004 and 2005, whilst in 2006 only 93% of schools with data available fed all the learners, and a further 7% has been compliant less than 80%. A possible explanation of the 7% decline in compliance can possibly be that although all learners are fed, the actual number of meals served per school does not correspond with the number of learners targeted due to absenteeism.

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 10: Percentage of schools complying with feeding days

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

Source: School survey

The table above shows that 100% of schools complied with the targeted number of feeding days in 2005 and 2006. No data was available in 2004. Two of the three sample 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. One sample school in a township, however, indicated that no feeding took place for a period of four months due to late transfers of payments for food handlers and gas.

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 11: 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	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%
2005	18.8%	37.5%	43.8%
2006	31.3%	18.8%	50.0%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the above table that the majority of schools did not comply with the national and provincial requirement that all learners should be fed before 10h00 for the three years under evaluation. The improved compliance of those schools with data available from 20% in 2004 to 30% in 2005 and 38% in 2006 may in part be related to better availability of records. It has also been reported that more emphasis was placed on the importance of feeding times later in the programme. 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, the educators' reluctance to change the time tables, and a general ignorance of the importance of early feeding.

7.1.4 Compliance with prescribed menu options

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

Table 12: Percentage of schools complying with prescribed menu options

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Complies</i>	<i>No record</i>	<i>Does not comply</i>
2004	81.3%	12.5%	6.3%
2005	81.3%	12.5%	6.3%
2006	93.8%	0.0%	6.3%

Source: School survey

It is evident from the table above, that the majority of schools complied with the prescribed menu options. In 2004 and 2005, according to records 82% of schools with data complied with provincial menu options. In 2006, this increased to 94%. These very good results with regard to menu compliance are not, however, supported by observations and discussions at school, district and provincial level. Schools complained that suppliers blatantly ignored the prescribed menus and delivered food items deemed to be the least expensive. These views were supported by both district and provincial level. A high level provincial meeting was held with suppliers and amended menus were forwarded to all schools and districts to ensure suppliers comply with their contractual obligations. An explanation for the good results with regard to compliance of menu options may be that the information supplied was incorrect.

7.2 CONCLUSION

If the indicators reported above do accurately reflect performance of the programme in contributing to enhanced learning, it can be concluded that the NSNP in the Free State is performing fairly well. The above analysis highlights that the main areas of weakness in programme service delivery are compliance with the required feeding time and compliance with required menus. Although there is a substantial increase of compliance with the prescribed serving time, a large percentage of schools not complying impacts negatively on the effectiveness of the programme. It would appear that NSNP

coordinators at district level and educators at school level are insufficiently aware of the importance of early feeding to ensure optimal impact on learners' active learning capacity. It is worrying, however, that the overall good compliance with menu options is not supported by feedback from schools, districts or the provincial office.

8 CONCLUSION

From interviews and the survey conducted, it can be concluded that the main objective of the programme, i.e. to contribute to enhanced learning capacity through school feeding, is to some extent being met. The lack of human resources at provincial level and the poor compliance by suppliers to their contractual obligations are, however, impacting negatively on the ability of the province to meet the objectives of the programme optimally. The staff at provincial level is highly competent and committed, but they require additional support to ensure effective delivery of the programme.

Besides the serious lack of human resources at provincial level, it can be concluded that the financial systems are basically effective and efficient, and that there is financial accountability at all levels.

The adjudicating process and the different roles and responsibilities of stakeholders are clearly defined, but the supply chain management system is rendered ineffective by the poor delivery of services by suppliers.

The programme outputs related to the establishment of food gardens, related economic activities and community participation are at an early stage of development which is considered appropriate given that the over-arching goal of the NSNP is the enhancement of learning capacity through the alleviation of short-term hunger; therefore, this goal has priority over those with indirect impacts on learning. There is, however, positive growth in the number of food gardens as well as in the selling of produce reflecting increased attention being given to these objectives by the province.

The main area of weakness in programme service delivery, apart from the service delivery of suppliers, is compliance with the required feeding time. It would appear that NSNP coordinators at district level and educators at school level are insufficiently aware of the importance of early feeding to ensure optimal impact on learners' active learning capacity.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The lack of human resources at provincial level requires urgent attention to ensure effective and efficient delivery of the programme. No amount of competence or commitment evident at provincial level can compensate for a lack of basic human resources.
- The cost per learner per day, reported by suppliers to be insufficient to deliver the required quality and quantity of food items to schools, needs to be thoroughly investigated and addressed where necessary.
- Suppliers' bid documentation should be accompanied by their product specifications and a sample of the product to ensure that the quality of food items delivered to schools could be monitored. It is also recommended that current suppliers be requested to submit their current product specifications to ensure adherence to the bid specifications.
- The provincial budget for NSNP should include provision for the testing of food items to ensure that suppliers comply with the bid specifications. It is also recommended that the bid specifications include a clause holding the successful bidder responsible for any costs relating to the testing of food items, should any suspicions be confirmed.
- Service providers' compliance with their contractual obligations with regard to the provisioning of equipment, utensils and cleaning material to schools should be monitored and enforced.
- Access to the BAS and LOGIS system should be made available to the provincial office to ensure that there are no delays with the submission of the monthly and quarterly reports.
- The delegation of signing powers should be addressed to ensure that reports are submitted timeously.
- An efficient filing system needs 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 time tables to ensure that feeding is completed by 10h00 in compliance with national guidelines.

