

# Effecting change: evaluation and programme reform

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Dialogue on Evaluation of Poverty Reduction  
Programmes and Strategies  
PSC Presentation, 6 August 2009

HSRC RESEARCH OUTPUT

5944

# Key questions

- What is the state of monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction programmes?
- Are credible evaluations being undertaken and, if not, what are the gaps and how can these be filled?
- Is external evaluation leading to improved internal evaluation programmes through structured recommendations based on outcomes of research
- Are government's objectives in poverty reduction being achieved?
- Draw on experience in a few projects and attempt to illustrate key aspects of strategy implicit in the process of evaluation.

# Outline

- Some points on the state of the art
- Reflections on Frames of Reference
- Strategy in evaluation and redesign
- Issues in method
- Dealing with data
- Data constraints to credibility
- Post-evaluation impact
- Some illustrations from EPWP
- Some conclusions on poverty alleviation
- Identified gaps

# State of the art

- Appear fairly well researched evaluations of poverty reduction programmes;
- Questions at times about *access* and *dissemination*;
- Also of the use of evaluations: what relationships exist between evaluation, recommendations and reform;
- Between monitoring and evaluation;
- Between external and internal evaluation;
- Questions in methodology, linking effectiveness of programmes and efficiency;
- And whether evaluations are valued: leading to necessary extensive comment and public debate.

## Issues in method

- Often influenced by the resources available;
- This has an effect on the assessment of beneficiary views;
- Administrative data – problems in access, reliability and approaches to analysis;
- Qualitative assessments – what weight to give to considered views from Key Informant Interviews?
- Challenge is measuring and comparing poverty reduced by different interventions.

# Voice and democratic methods

- Argument that beneficiaries should make judge success of programmes:
- “They are the ones who have to live with the consequences of a particular intervention and they are the ones who know their needs.”
- *Alternative view of enabling environment for poverty reduction programmes: Predictability, made up of credibility, programme stability and formal entitlement (Joshi and Moore)*
- *Credibility: bureaucrats being good partners of the poor;*
- *Programme stability: stable over time / procedures;*
- *Entitlement: legal and normative status, possibly a legal right.*
- Should social participation be integral to programme?

# Conflict paradigm

- Argument that vested interests exist: “owners” of the intervention and do not necessarily encourage participation or rigorous evaluation;
- Managers have good reason to contest adverse conclusions and are often the client;
- Bureaucrats apply own criteria for success “in order to fit their comprehension of what the intervention ought to achieve or is able to achieve” (Oyen).

# Frames of reference 1

- Appraisal against expectations of the people and of politicians and more concrete/limited objectives of agencies;
- Two contradictory aspects: programme objectives (e.g. “one of many”) and the broader objectives of government;
- State of the Nation Addresses and MDG establish high level objectives e.g. halving those in poverty; halving unemployed;
- What relationship between these Goals and Programme objectives in foundation documents which are more restricted and narrowly defined.



## Frames of reference 2

- Goals appear disarticulated: relationship between high level and programme objectives often contested (e.g. work opportunities and halving unemployment);
- Difficulties at times in relating programme *outputs* (e.g. opportunities) to expected *outcomes* (e.g. sustained work);
- Poverty reduction programmes are of small scale: Is it possible to go beyond terms of reference to broader frames of reference?
- What implications for design and institutional changes?

## What strategy implicit in evaluation?

- Straight line approach: data collection, analysis, write up and conclusion – acceptance and change;
- Are there prospects for complex strategic learning: interaction between researchers and client – and with beneficiaries?
- Who is the audience who will reflect and take action; client, “government”, beneficiaries or wider public? Or combinations?

## Engagement: advantages and dangers

- Process of evaluation: *perpetuum mobile* of peer-monitoring which can involve continuous learning by both evaluation team and managers.
- Advantages: could lead to better internal processes of information management and improvement, correct misunderstandings / errors;
- Dangers: potential defensiveness on feed-back can blunt primary recommendations;
- Key conclusions and recommendations could have major effect on programme reform.

# Monitoring

- Monitoring essential but often provide unreliable data foundations for evaluation;
- Good Administrative data has at least two purposes:
- Necessary for the management to manage effectively: to know what is being achieved and where to give attention and add resources;
- To provide the basis for monitoring and evaluation of trends and achievements.
- Unfortunately not often realised.

## Data: what approach to take?

- Data is essential to evaluation; to know the *proportion* of inclusion and change.
- Inaccurate or incomplete data is a common factor in a number of departments and agencies and firstly indicates the problems of effective management.
- It complicates the work of evaluation by making a scientific weighing up difficult.

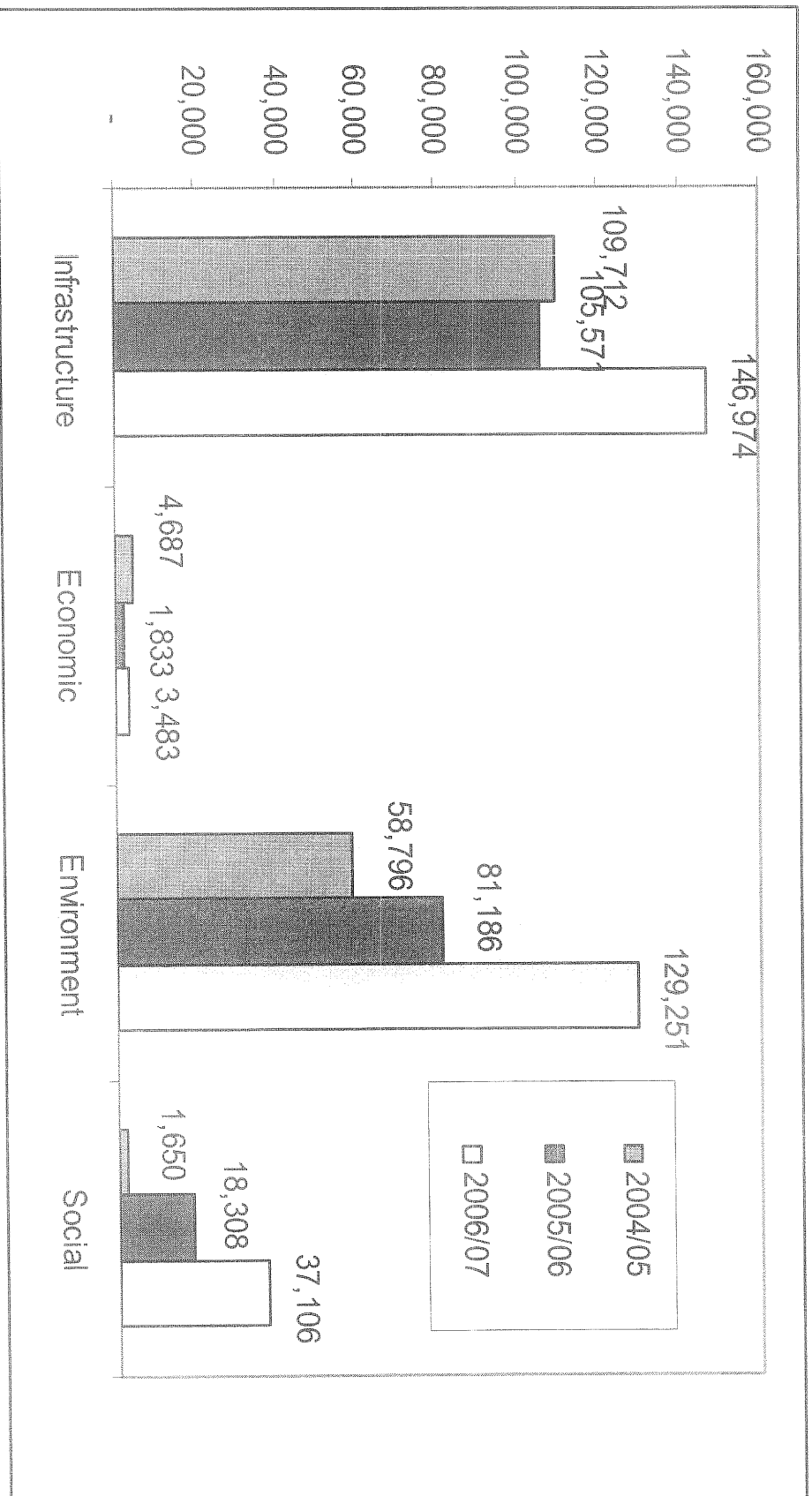
# Taking administrative data seriously

- There are ways in which poor data can be improved through better management.
- The EPWP Unit has, for instance, devised a data capturing system which excludes the possibility of entering unauthorized or clearly wrong data.
- Not proof against data problems, but greater attention being paid to accuracy and improvement of the data.
- Data has been used in analysis and establishment of key relationships at a basic level of assessment;
- Example: EPWP performance by province and sectors;
- Very broad indicators and create leverage with client;
- Establishes ranking in effectiveness, equity and efficiency;
- Use sharpens the commitment to improve data.

# Assessment: bigger frame of reference

Province	EPWP work opportunities	No. unemployed "official" definition	Proportion of EPWP work opportunities as proportion to the no. of unemployed
KwaZulu-Natal	115,628	882,000	13%
Western Cape	44,080	326,000	14%
Gauteng	27,637	1,085,000	3%
Eastern Cape	52,136	638,000	8%
Mpumalanga	16,739	352,000	5%
Free State	17,172	281,000	6%
Limpopo	20,133	365,000	6%
North West	13,891	339,000	4%
Northern Cape	9,399	123,000	8%
	316,815	4,391,000	7%

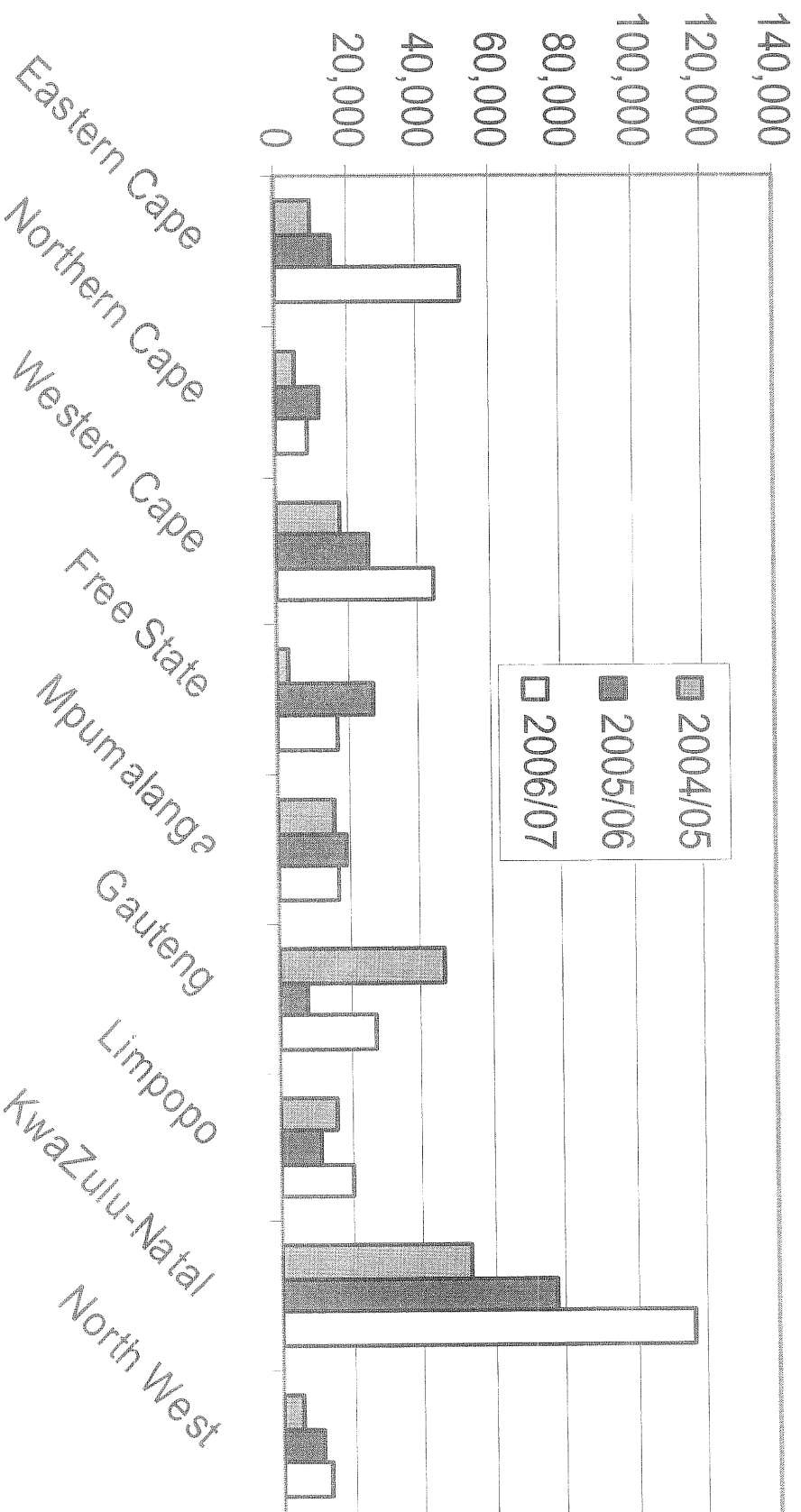
# Assessment: across Sectors





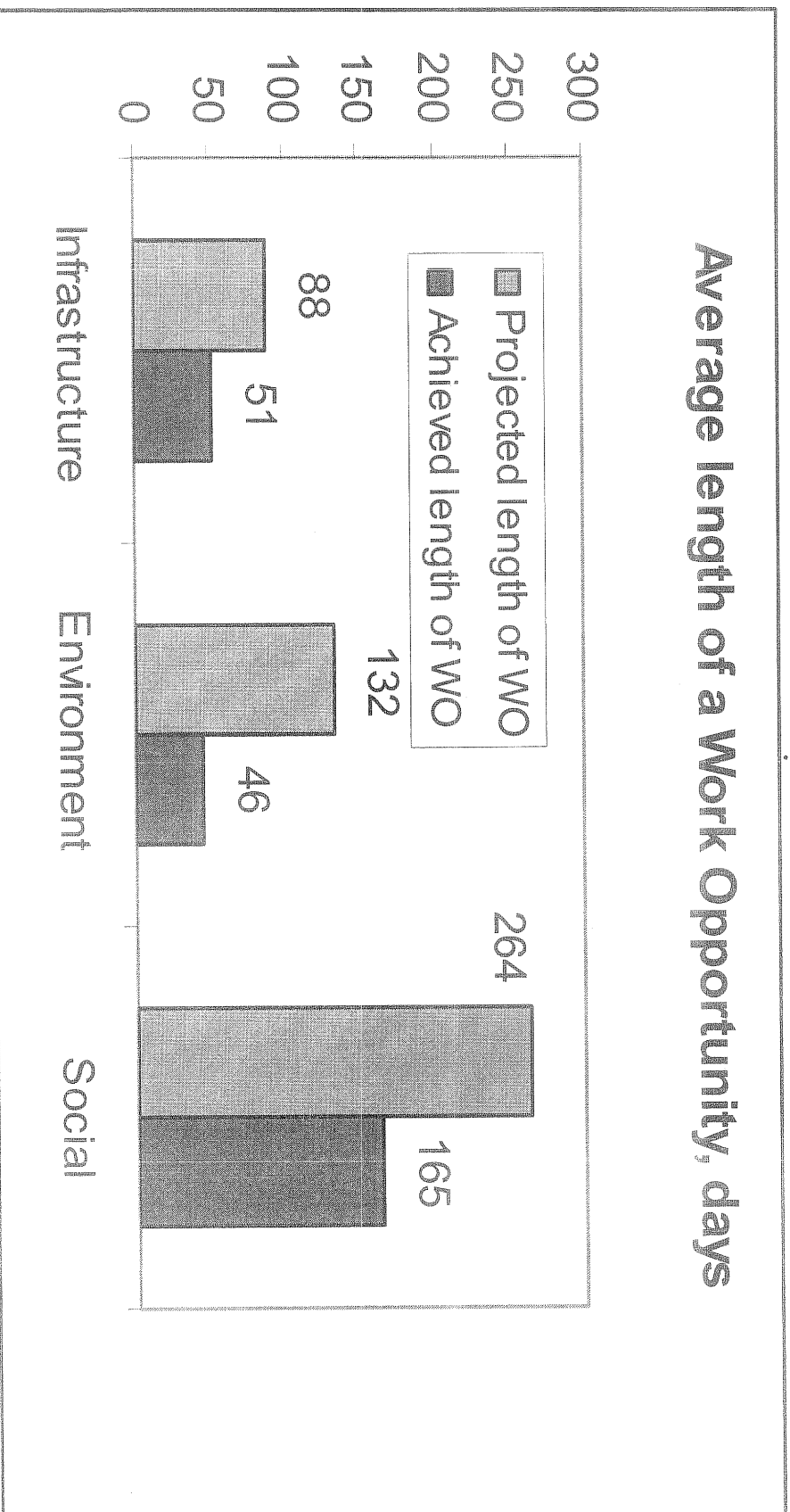
# Assessment: across Provinces

## Work opportunities, 2004/05-2006/07



# Assessment against planned length of contract

Average length of a Work Opportunity, days



Source: Quarterly Reports of the EPWP 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007, AR DPW 2005/06.

## Is evaluation credible?

- In evaluation the scientific method “lies in a meticulous description of the observations so others can judge their validity and relevance.”
- Evaluations show evidence of considerable work, reasonable and scientific methods undertaken;
- Volumes of work possibly not well appreciated;
- Debate begins when results start coming through: What are the reasons for these trends?
- Relationship between evaluation, dissemination and programme reform or redesign often unclear.

# Poverty reduction achieved?

- Work in Progress: Short answer no final answer as broad impact too small to measure, “no robust data”;
- Specific Poverty Reduction Programmes often not reaching their agency targets;
- Often too small to make a difference – improved project design plus scaling up required;
- Performance often “poor relative to their business plans” and “lacklustre”;
- But beneficiaries often regard them as important.
- Is there consistent progress away from deprivation and poverty, reduction of poverty and better prospects?

# Gaps identified

1. Between monitoring (good data) and evaluation (which relies on good data);
2. One-off evaluations and regular assessment of robust data;
3. Internal and external evaluation learning;
4. Short-fall between poverty reduction programme objectives and overarching SONA and MDG Goals;
5. Institutional design (top-down) and realisation of entitlements (bottom-up) approaches;
6. Redesign and programme predictability.

