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Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

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Evaluation and Evidence-Based Policy Making

HSRC seminar

26 January 2012

Summary

➢ Background on evidence-based policy-making – drawing from work of the PSPPD
➢ Attitudes in SA to EBPM
➢ How evaluation fits in the picture
➢ Where we are going with the evaluation policy

What Is Evidence-Based Policy?

- Helping policy makers to make better decisions and achieve better outcomes
- Providing better services (public and private)

By using:
- Existing evidence more effectively
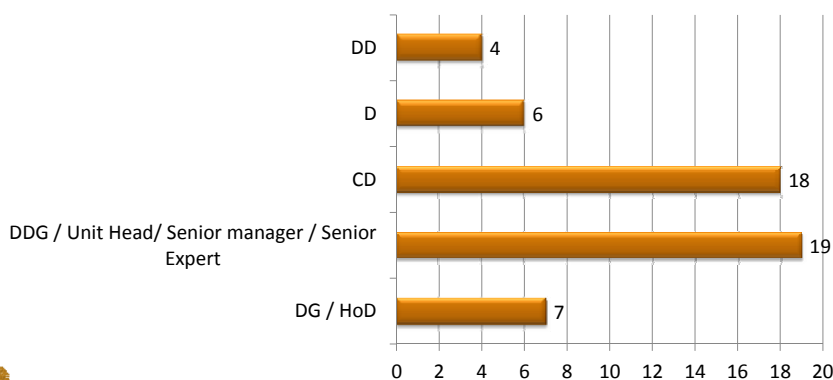- New research/evaluation to fill the gaps in the evidence base

And:
- Integrating sound evidence with decision makers' knowledge, skills, experience, expertise and judgement

Source: Oxford Evidentia

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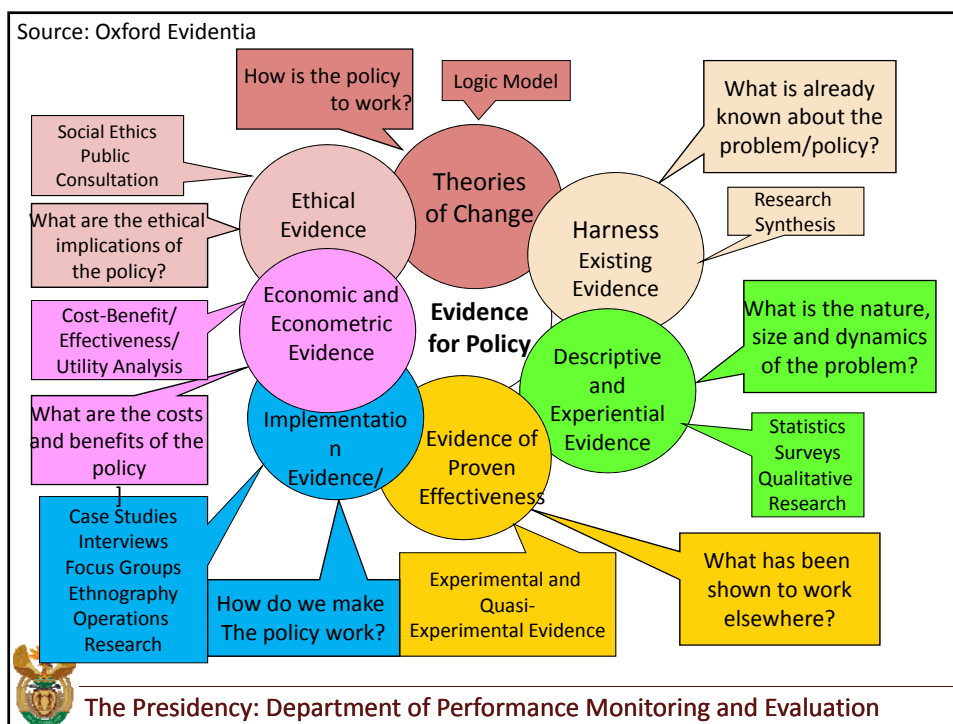
How do SA policy-makers see EBPM?

➢ Study of 55 senior managers from Deputy Director to DG funded by Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy development (PSPPD)

Role	Value
DD	4
D	6
CD	18
DDG / Unit Head/ Senior manager / Senior Expert	19
DG / HoD	7

0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20

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3 groups of views

➢ **Scientific and objective**, enabling reliable predication based on facts that speak for themselves, collected by objective and independent specialists, derived through replicable methods and constituting objectively verifiable proof; or

➢ **Probabilistic, emergent and contested**, an iterative search for explanations and understanding of how to achieve politically derived values in which the choice of facts and sources is influenced by existing ideas, ideology, mind-set, values and interests and subject to specific and changing contextual factors.

➢ **A third group straddled these views**, indicating that the choice should be dictated by the type of policy to be developed and the type of research methodology appropriate to that type of policy decision.

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Use of evidence in the policy cycle

Application in policy cycle

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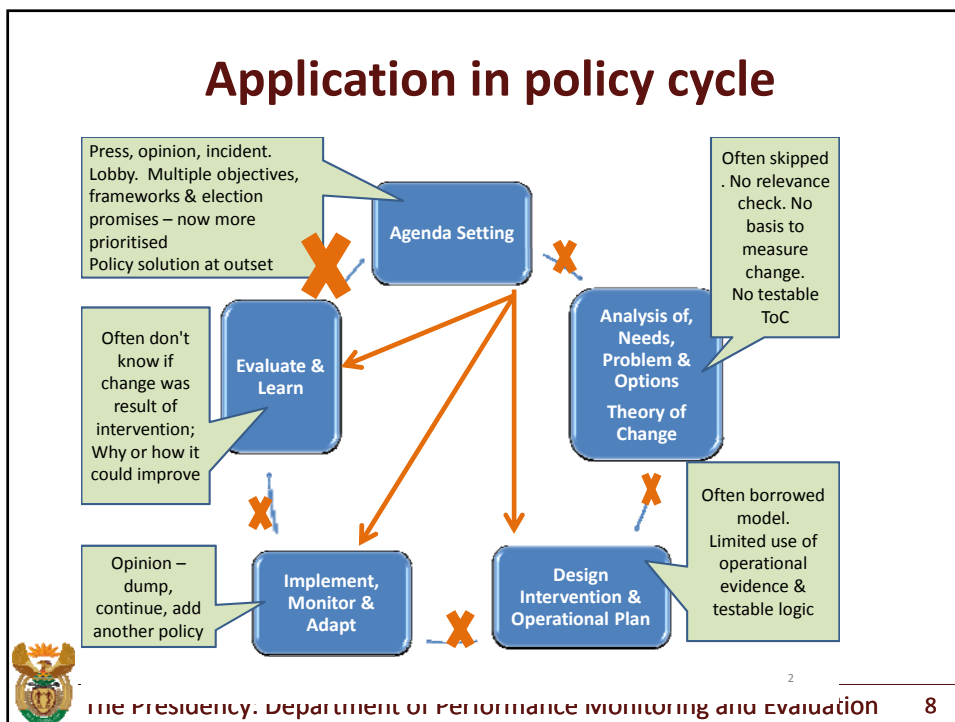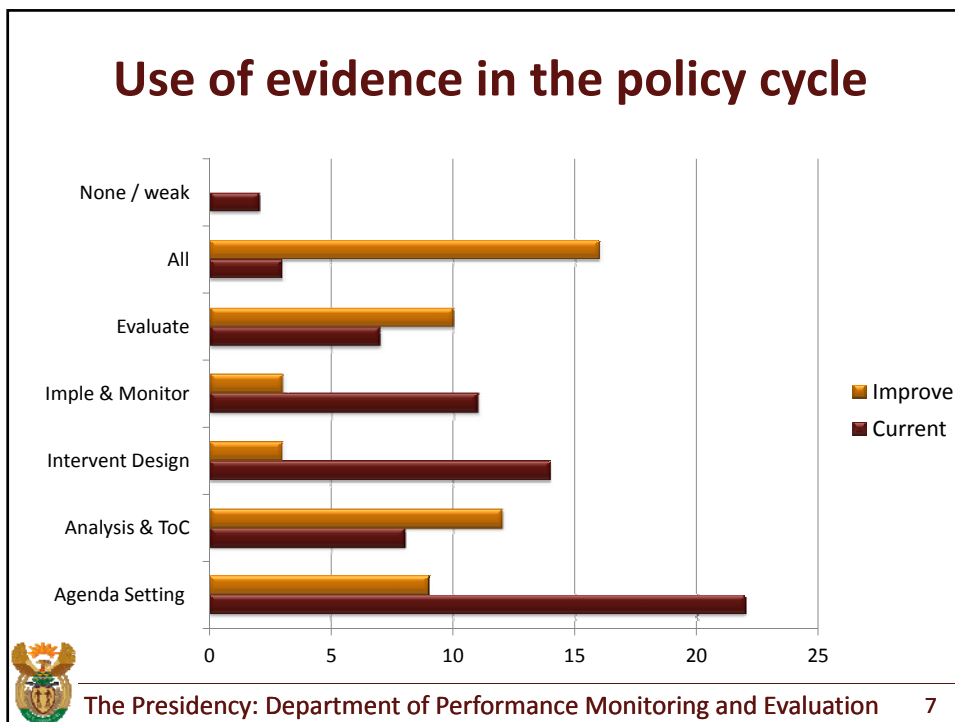
Type of knowledge

- **Simple** – the recipe and ingredients for achieving the result are known (like baking a cake)
- **Complicated** – knowledge on how to achieve the results exists but spans a range of disciplines and / or requires coordination of multiple role-players across spheres or sectors (like sending a rocket into space)
- **Complex** – knowledge and experience are inadequate to ensure predictable results, knowledge base is limited, knowledge and experience is useful but not fully transferrable to other contexts, and/or situation is unstable and unpredictable (like raising a child)

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Type of knowledge needed

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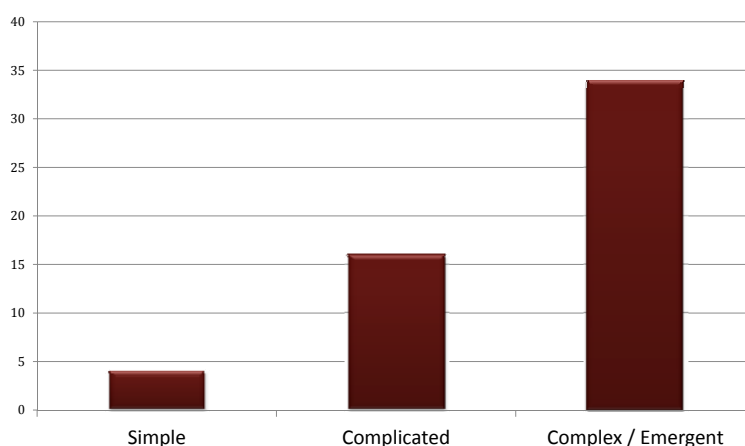
Continuum of types and sources of evidence

None	Opinion	Informal	Substantive	Formal Research	Scientific Research	Review & assessment of available evidence
No explicit basis for policy decisions	Of the policy makers; or broadly accepted public opinion; lobby groups; others	Anecdotal, stories, uncritical use of information to hand, partial & limited	Careful truth seeking, developmental evaluation, data mining of survey & admin data	Empirical, appropriate design & methodology	Statistical, comparative, causal	Testing, analysing & synthesising available evidence. Rapid reviews; systematic enquiry; meta-analysis

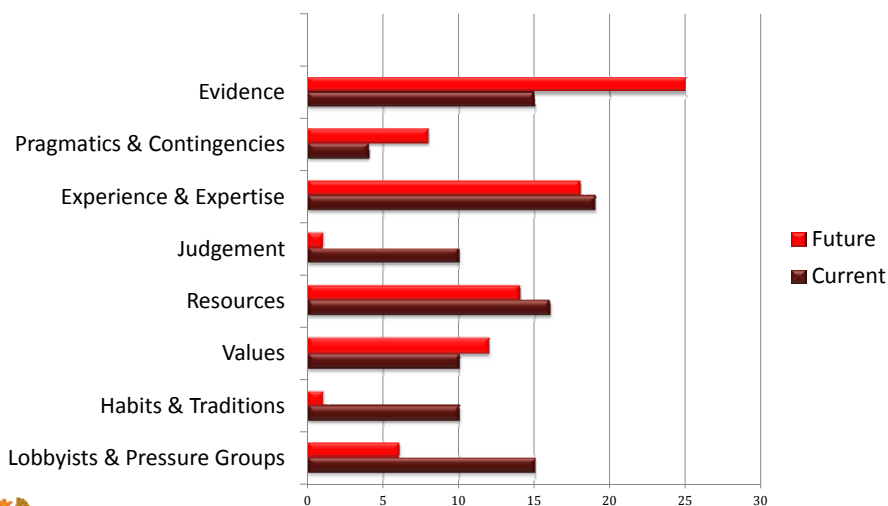*Adapted from: Hayes, W, 2002, The Policy Cycle*

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Type of evidence most often used for policy decision-making
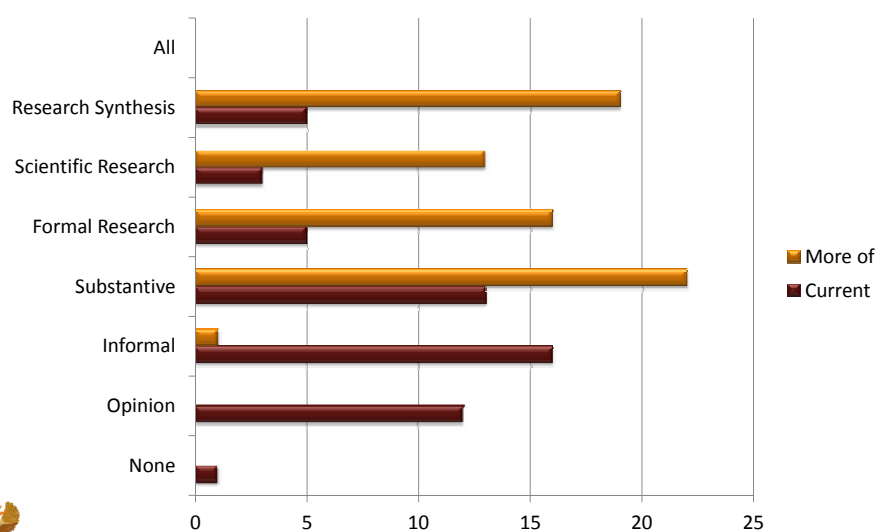
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The main factors that influence policy

Evidence
Pragmatics & Contingencies
Experience & Expertise
Judgement
Resources
Values
Habits & Traditions
Lobbyists & Pressure Groups

0 5 10 15 20 25 30

Future
Current

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Barriers to effective policy-making

➤ "Running to stay still": **Time pressure** from 'above' (passed on often without explaining the implications & risks) based on urgency & scale of problems & issues – almost unanimous from DG onwards.

➤ **Mistrust** between political leadership, officials and experts (largely white)

➤ **Politicisation**: officials "playing politics", "I am a pragmatist, providing the 2nd best policy option when the best option will not be welcome"

➤ **Lack of clear requirements** for policy development & review linked to effective planning, M&E systems that build evidence & better understanding

➤ **Policy silos** – focus us on 'deliverables', not outcomes & impact

➤ Policy decisions not based on analysis of **needs / based on objective facts**

➤ **Exclusion**: Too little input from & building shared understanding & common cause with beneficiaries, the target group, the implementation system

➤ **Capacity:** Research literacy & policy analysis not required competencies

➤ **Inadequate institutionalised respect** for expertise, open peer review

➤ **Hierarchy** makes it difficult to engage robustly & prevents access for middle management, service providers and implementers

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What should be done

- Officials overwhelmingly felt that **strengthening the use of evidence** should be prioritised
- Differences related to the 'predictive' or 'formative' view that influenced thinking about **what forms of evidence should be prioritised**.
- Overwhelming support for improving evidence derived from more formal and scientific methods, including research syntheses of the systematic review type.
- But the majority feeling was that these have limited applicability given the complexity and dynamism of the majority of policy contexts in South Africa. For this reason, many officials stressed the need to improve **substantive evidence derived from monitoring and evaluation** so that this can be used formatively, over time to adapt and improve policy.
- There was an almost unanimous view that the **whole policy cycle** needs to be strengthened, including the links between stages and the capacity to identify, acquire and use the information required for effective decision-making at each stage. 'Evidence' from evaluation should particularly be improved by building an evaluation framework at the formulation and design phases

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What should be done (2)

- Most, but particularly the formative group, stressed the need to **improve the inclusion of a range of key stakeholders** as a condition for ensuring improved relevance of policy decisions to needs and to the operational context,
- The 'predictively' orientated group felt that there needed to be more **formally enforced requirements** for use of evidence as well as more consistent **consequences** for poor policy decisions and/or poor performance. Expertise tended to be emphasised, somewhat at the expense of a recognition of political or value driven decisions. A major concern was to put in place mechanisms that would avoid policy failure as far as possible from the outset so as to avoid a waste of resources.

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So how does evaluation policy fit in the picture?

- Evaluation is one of three pillars of the Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System approved by Cabinet in 2005
- National Treasury developed Framework for Programme Performance Information, Stats SA SASQAF – evaluation framework remained
- To date, DPME has put in in place policy frameworks for monitoring of outcomes, institutional performance monitoring and front-line service delivery monitoring
- Also needed a policy framework for evaluation
- June/July 2011 study tour to Mexico/Colombia/US focusing on this (with DBE/DSD/OPSC/GCIS)
- Draft framework developed together with these depts – submitted to all depts and Offices of Premier 31 August
- Cabinet approved 23 November

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The problem

- Evaluation is applied sporadically and not informing planning, policy-making and budgeting sufficiently, so we are missing the opportunity to improve Government's effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

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Purpose of the Policy Framework

- ➤ **Purpose of this policy framework**
  - ▪ Foreground importance of evaluation
  - ▪ An institutionalised system across Government linking to planning and budget;
  - ▪ A common language and conceptual base for evaluation in Government;
  - ▪ Clear roles and responsibilities;
  - ▪ Improved quality of evaluations;
  - ▪ Utilisation of evaluation findings to improve performance.
- ➤ **Applicable to:**
  - ▪ Political principals and senior managers in the public sector who must improve their performance and incorporate evaluation into what they do
  - ▪ Other actors who need to be involved in the evaluation process, such as potential evaluators (including academics and other service providers)
  - ▪ Training institutions, who will have to ensure that public servants understand evaluation and we have a wider cadre of potential evaluators with the required skills and competences.

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Scope

- ➤ Government wide – departments not public entities
- ➤ Obligatory only for evaluations in the national evaluation plan (10 for 2012/13), then widen
- ➤ Focus on policies, plans, implementation programmes, projects (not organisations at this stage as MPAT dealing with this)
- ➤ Partnership between departments and DPME

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Why evaluate?

- ➢ Improving policy or programme **performance** (evaluation for learning):
  - ▪ this aims to provide feedback to programme managers.
- ➢ Evaluation for improving **accountability:**
  - ▪ where is public spending going? Is this spending making a difference?
- ➢ **Improving decision-making**:
  - ▪ Was the programme successful? Was it effective? Did the intended beneficiaries receive the intervention? Did it impact on their lives?
- ➢ Evaluation for **generating knowledge** (for research):
  - ▪ increasing knowledge about what works and what does not with regards to a public policy, programme, function or organization.

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Approach to evaluation

- ➢ Monitoring is necessary but not sufficient - it only asks whether we are doing what we planned to do
- ➢ In order to assess whether or not our plans are resulting in their intended outcomes and impacts, and the reasons for this, we need to carry out evaluations
- ➢ Evaluations involve deep analysis of issues such as causality, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, value for money and sustainability
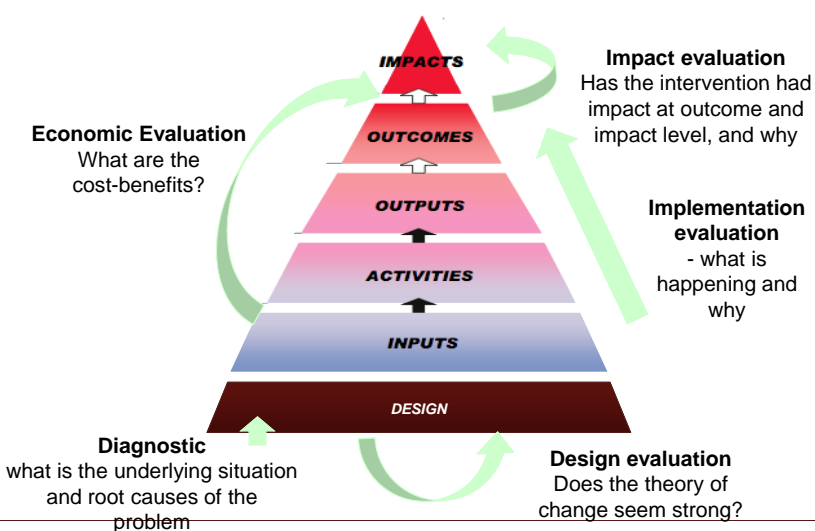
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Types of evaluation

➢ Consider object (policy/plan/programme/project)

➢ Methodology

➢ Key is the question you want to ask?

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Different types of evaluations related to questions around the outcome model

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Priority interventions to evaluate

Figure to be confirmed

- **Large** (eg over R500 million)
  - or covering a large proportion of the population, and have not had a major evaluation for 5 years. This figure can diminish with time;
- Linked to 12 **outcomes (particularly top 5)**
- Of **strategic importance**, and for which it is important that they succeed.
- **Innovative**, from which learnings are needed – in which case an implementation evaluation should be conducted;
- Of significant **public interest** – eg key front-line services;
- Any programme for which there are real **concerns** about its design should have a design evaluation conducted.

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Institutionalising evaluation

- ➢ **Legal framework** (address later)
- ➢ **Evaluation plan**
  - 3 year and annual evaluation plan developed by DPME with partners starting with a one year plan for 2012/13.
  - Specifies from a national perspective what needs to be done.
  - Call for submissions goes out 30 January 2012
  - Government institutions can choose to do additional evaluations.
- ➢ **Departments** to incorporate evaluation into their management functions as a way to continuously improve their performance. They need to:
  - Ensure there is an evaluation **budget** in all delivery programmes. Should be able to use savings to cover.
  - Ensure **specific structures** are entrusted with the evaluation role. Could be a M&E Unit, research unit, or policy unit – ideally linked to planning.
  - Ensure the results of evaluations are used to **inform planning and budget** decisions, as well as decision-making, so the results of evaluations must be discussed in management forums.

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Current stage

➤ Main focus now on evaluation – later bring in research role

➤ 1 evaluation underway (ECD), several in discussion with DHS, developing concept with DoH on child health and maternal health

➤ Staff arriving – 3 Directors between Nov 2011 and May 2012

➤ Taking forward project on competencies, standards for evaluators and evaluation course for government staff

➤ Developing National Evaluation Plan

➤ 10 evaluations next year and R5m to cofund

➤ DFID support from January 2012 for 3 years (700k)

➤ Develop practice notes for key elements including TORs, design evaluations

➤ Challenge to get the system underway and in such a way that it is seen to add significant value

➤ Watch this space!

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