

South Africans pin job creation hopes on 2010

South Africans are very confident that the 2010 Soccer World Cup will bring increased job opportunities and improved economic growth to the country. They also believe that it will consolidate South Africa's position in the international arena, reports UDESH PILLAY.

OPTIMISTIC RESPONSES AROUND job creation, economic growth and our international standing were given by almost 85% of respondents in the national longitudinal survey conducted by the HSRC to measure attitudes towards the 2010 Soccer World Cup. However, respondents were almost equally divided over whether these expected benefits would be of a 'lasting' or 'short-term' nature. Some 47% believed the benefits of hosting the event would be long-term, while 44% said the benefits would be short-term only.

In a representative sample, some 2 884 respondents across the country were polled during the latter half of last year for their views and opinions on the World Cup and a wide range of other public policy issues.

The survey probed the expectations of respondents for the country as a whole, the city or area in which they lived, their neighbourhood and, finally, for them personally. While respondents consistently cited job creation and work opportunities as their predicted primary benefit of hosting the 2010 World Cup, they did so at different rates across the different domains.

Job creation was an expected benefit at national level for 34% of respondents, at city level for 28% and at neighbourhood level for only 15%. Interestingly, while 33% of the respondents expected to gain personally from the World Cup, an equal number of respondents said they did not expect to receive any personal job creation benefits.

Only a quarter of black African respondents said they did not expect personal benefits, rising to 69% for white respondents. White and Indian/Asian respondents also tended to point to the short-term benefits of the event,

while black African respondents believed the event would bring more longer-term benefits.

Perhaps surprisingly, there are few differences in attitudes among men and women in their perception of the benefits and disadvantages of hosting the World Cup, except that women respondents expect to benefit more from job creation than men do.

The data reveal that public knowledge of the event is high, especially in urban areas. Three quarters of respondents knew South Africa had been chosen by FIFA to host the Cup, of whom 93% correctly said it would be held in 2010.

But knowledge drops rapidly when respondents live in former homeland areas, rural towns or commercial farms. Only 44% of respondents in the latter areas said they knew that South Africa would be hosting the event. But even then the overwhelming majority of these particular respondents could correctly name 2010 as the year in which the event would be held.

The survey also probed public attitudes towards seven statements drawn from the public debate generated by the prospect of hosting the 2010 World Cup. They ranged from the readiness of the country to host the event to the impact that it would have on regenerating run-down areas in South African cities. The results, in summary form, are as follows:

- ▶ 82% of respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statement that South Africa would be ready to host the World Cup;
- ▶ 52% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that local government in the area in which they lived would be able to meet

the needs of the FIFA World Cup;

- ▶ 47% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposition that the World Cup would delay the provision of basic services to poor areas in the country;
- ▶ 81% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the proposition that small businesses would benefit;
- ▶ 78% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that hosting the World Cup would improve black economic empowerment;
- ▶ 75% 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that hosting the event would help upgrade run-down parts of the locality in which they lived;
- ▶ 85% of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the view that hosting the event would make South African cities more competitive internationally.

Respondents were also asked for their views on which areas they expected to benefit most from hosting the event. The majority of respondents (61%) believed that the benefits would accrue either to Gauteng or to the two major urban areas in the province, namely, Johannesburg and Tshwane.

Similarly, 39% of respondents said benefits would accrue to businesses, 29% said they would accrue to wealthy or rich persons and 17% said they would go to persons living in towns and cities in South Africa. Only 8% believed benefits would go to the 'poor and disadvantaged' or to persons living in rural areas.

The survey provides benchmark indicators on public attitudes towards the international showpiece. The HSRC intends to undertake an annual poll of public attitudes towards the World Cup – to be hosted by an African country for the first time – in order to conduct a longitudinal analysis. This will allow

changing attitudes to be analysed, providing policy-makers and practitioners alike with decisive planning information in the run-up to the event. The HSRC's World Cup project extends beyond the annual survey, with a bi-annual digest assessing the state of development interventions ahead of the event, a special journal issue and a 'flagship' book in 2008, among the anticipated outputs.

As a result of the interest generated from the first wave of the public attitude survey, the HSRC has been invited by government, through its Communication Services (GCIS), to sit on the National Communication Team for 2010. Meeting recently at the invitation

of the GCIS, the HSRC's programme of 2010 research activities was strongly supported and endorsed, with particular emphasis placed on the amount of public-purpose research already conducted by the HSRC since the announcement of South Africa as the host country.

Partnerships with the South African Cities Network (SACN) and the Centre for Urban and Built Environment Studies (CUBES) at the University of the Witwatersrand have also been forged. A two-day international symposium will be held with CUBES and the Witwatersrand Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) in September

2006 as part of an ongoing dialogue on the meaning of hosting 2010. •

Dr Udesch Pillay is the executive director of the Urban, Rural and Economic Development research programme.

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