



Government Employment Creation Programmes

Increasing Access to Employment Through Government Programmes: Experience with Expanded Public Works Programme and Community Development Workers

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**INCREASING ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT
THROUGH GOVERNMENT
PROGRAMMES:
EXPERIENCE WITH EXTENDED PUBLIC
WORKS PROGRAMME AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

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1. Introduction

South Africa is characterised by two economies, one which is developed (1st economy) and the other underdeveloped (2nd economy). The first economy is modern, integrated with the global economy and produces the bulk of the country's wealth while the second economy is underdeveloped, isolated from the first and global economies, with a large percentage of people who are poor in the urban and rural areas, and which contributes little to the country's wealth. Poverty and unemployment are rife in the second economy. According to Statistics South Africa, in 2003 unemployment stood at 30.5% using the official definition and at 42.5% when the broad definition of poverty is used. This is due to the drastic fall of the demand for unskilled labour in the formal sector caused by structural changes in the economy as a result of a decline in the importance of the primary sector (McCord, 2004a quoted in Development Report, 2005).

As a country, South Africa has committed itself towards the achievement of the Copenhagen Commitments declared at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. Commitment 3 requires countries that signed the declaration to promote the goal of full employment as a basic priority of their economic and social policies in order to ensure that all men and women attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work by 2014. However, Lewis, 2001 (quoted in the Development Report, 2005) maintains that South Africa's growth path is such that high levels of unemployment among the unskilled may continue to rise despite the 4% GDP growth per annum in the medium term. For South Africa to halve unemployment by 2014, the economy will have to create between 350,000 and 750,000 additional jobs per annum. Jobs delivered over a 5-year period (1997-2003) were between 150,000 and 180,000 which presents a shortfall in the region of 200,000 full-time jobs (Meth, 2004 quoted in the Development Report, 2005).

Cabinet Lekgotla agreed in July 2002, that a 'massively expanded' public work's programme would form a key component of a comprehensive employment strategy, together with a range of complementary supply-side interventions which will focus primarily on training through SETA-based training programmes. This agreement gave birth to the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). It was also noted that a critical element in assisting those in the Second Economy is provision of information, particularly regarding how they can access social and economic opportunities. In this regard, the targeted communication campaign on social and economic opportunities occupies a central place. This critical need gave birth to another job creating programme – the Community Development Worker Programme.

2. The Expanded Public Works Programme

The Expanded Public Works Programme is a nation-wide programme that aims to draw significant numbers of the unemployed into productive employment. The aim of the programme is to develop skills of workers while on the job so as to increase their employment capacity when they exit from the programme. The programme is therefore targeting mainly those employed and unemployed people who are marginalized from the mainstream of our economy. In order to broaden the scope of the EPWP, it was launched in four sectors, namely, the Economic, Environment and Culture, Infrastructure and the Social Sector. An important element of this programme is a large-scale expansion of the use of labour-intensive construction methods to build, upgrade and maintain the social and economic infrastructure in all the underdeveloped rural and urban areas of our country that do not have such infrastructure. It is expected of the EPWP to employ local people to ensure that as they work, they simultaneously acquire basic training and skills. In his State of the Nation Address, the President clearly articulated that what the EPWP seeks to achieve is to give those without a skill an opportunity to acquire one while simultaneously earning an income (Mbeki, 2005).

The objectives of the EPWP are threefold:

- Creating work opportunities for the unemployed.
- Capacity building through learnerships to create the opportunity for participants to learn and receive accredited training that will lead to a qualification.
- Creating exit opportunities for candidates to enter into gainful employment or take up entrepreneurial opportunities on completion.

2.1 Implementation of EPWP

A target of 130,000 work opportunities has been set for the 1st year of the EPWP (the period 1 April 2004 - 31 March 2005). The GDS report indicates that this target has been exceeded. According to this report, up to the 3rd quarter (1 April 2004 - 31 December 2004), a total number of 144,056 gross work opportunities were created – this total exclude jobs that were created during the 4th quarter of the financial year. The creation of these job opportunities abode well for increased economic activity and business confidence. It is estimated, that if all spheres of Government and State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) utilise the EPWP Tender and Design Guidelines, the overall EPWP target of 1 million job opportunities, by the year 2008/09, will be exceeded by far.

Cabinet approved a conceptual framework for four sectors in November 2003. Plans have been developed for the social, environmental and infrastructure sectors, outlining focus areas and targets for the next five years, with enabling frameworks.

In response to the 2005 Programme of Action item regarding the expansion of the social sector of the EPWP, an inter-departmental social sector task team has been established to develop an EPWP social sector expansion plan and associated guidelines. The purpose of the expansion plan is to assist provinces to accelerate the expansion of ECD and HCBC and secure funding for this expansion. The plan outlines the following:

- National and provincial targets.
- Budgets and funding mechanisms.
- Implementation model for expanding ECD and HCBC.
- Programme management guidelines.

The Departments of Social Development, Education and Housing worked together to align the social sector plan to the new targets. The new action plan aims to create:

- 167,073 new work opportunities in HCBC/CHW of which 24,000 will be long-term CHW posts.
- 106,000 ECD work opportunities of which 48 000 will be long-term post.

2.2 Critique of the EPWP

The Development Report (2005) presents a critical review of the potential contribution of the EPWP to overcome underdevelopment and link the second and first economies. A conclusion drawn in this review is that the limited scale of employment opportunities and the short-term duration of employment for each worker offered by the EPWP makes it unlikely to have a significant impact on unemployment and poverty at household or national level. This is attributed to what the authors perceive to be a disjuncture between the objectives of the EPWP and its realities in terms of scale and impact, which poses a risk of distorting the social protection debate in South Africa.

3. Community Development Workers’ Programme

In his State of the Nation Address of the 14th February 2003, President Mbeki made an announcement of the Community Development Workers (CDWs) Programme. He stated that:

“Government will create a public service echelon of multi-skilled community development workers (CDWs) who will maintain direct contact with the people where these masses live. We are determined to ensure that government goes to the people so that we sharply improve the quality of the outcomes of public expenditures intended to raise the standards of living of our people. It is wrong that government should oblige people to come to government even in circumstances in which people do not know what services the government offers and have no means to pay for the transport to reach government offices”.

Community Development Workers (CDWs) are community-based resource persons who collaborate with other community activists to help fellow community members to obtain information and resources from service providers with the aim of learning how to progressively meet their needs, achieve goals, realize their aspirations and maintain their well-being.

They are cadres of a special type, participatory change agents who work within communities from where they are selected, where they live, and to whom they are answerable for their activities. A range of government spheres and departments, particularly local government supports them financially and functionally. Although specifically trained and certificated for their role, they have a shorter training than professional development workers who receive tertiary education. CDWs, unlike professional development workers, are resident in the communities in which they work.

3.1 What is community development

Community development is a philosophy that puts communities first and that fosters the individual within his or her community. It is a philosophy that says that communities are best placed to identify their own problems and formulate their own solutions and make their own opportunities. It is a philosophy that says that political and business elites at the national level do not know what is best for communities.

Community development is also perceived as a skilled process with part of its belief being that communities cannot be helped unless they themselves agree to this process; and that the focus is not only at how the community is working at the grass roots, but also at how key institutions are responsive to the needs of local communities.

3.2 Principles central to community development

- Empowering and enabling those who are traditionally deprived of power and control over their common affairs.
- Promote active and representative citizen participation so that community members can meaningfully influence decisions that affect their lives.
- Engage community members in problem diagnosis so that those affected may adequately understand the causes of their situations.
- Help community leaders understand the economic, social, political, environmental, and psychological impact associated with alternative solutions to the problem.
- Assist community members in designing and implementing a plan to solve agreed-upon problems by emphasizing shared leadership and active citizen participation in that process.
- Disengage from any effort that is likely to adversely affect the disadvantaged segments of a community.
- Actively work to increase leadership capacity (skills, confidence, and aspirations) in the community.

3.3 Rationale for Community Development Workers

Government realized that there were service delivery challenges at the local level. Gaps were identified between government service delivery efforts and the ability of communities to benefit from the delivery of services. Services were either not appropriate or relevant to the needs of communities and therefore did not make meaningful impact or services were not effectively delivered. Reasons cited for poor service delivery were, amongst others:

- Shortage of appropriate skills and expertise at the local level.
- Lack of adequate coordination and integration of services.
- Inadequate information dissemination: information about government services not reaching people adequately; language.
- Human resource and management challenges: poor education; workers not multi-skilled.
- Lack of an organised voice for the poor between elections: a challenge for the community to communicate effectively with their elected representatives and government officials.

3.4 The nature and scope of the work of CDWs

Community Development Workers work with and assist communities by collaborating with all government departments who are responsible for the implementation of projects and programmes at local level. This includes among others the departments of:

- Public Works (Expanded Public Works Programme).
- Transport (road infrastructure programmes).
- Social Development (poverty alleviation programmes).
- Provincial and Local Government (LED programmes, MIG, FBS, ISRDP and URDP).
- Agricultural and Land Affairs (agricultural and land reform programmes).
- Housing (provision of houses and subsidies).
- Health (primary health care facilities, Community Health Workers and HIV and Aids programmes).
- Water Affairs and Forestry (water and sanitation).
- Trade and Industry (SMME support programmes).

4. Implementation of the CDW programme

All three spheres of government coordinate the implementation of the CDW Programme i.e. the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) which is responsible for the coordination, inception and incubation period of CDWs; the Department of Provincial and Local Government which facilitates the relationships between the three spheres of government and Provincial Administrations which are the employers of CDWs. CDWs operate at the local level and are responsible to the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and local government.

4.1 Achievements of the CDW programme

Although National envisaged the total of 2,840 community development workers, Provinces requested additional numbers at their own cost, which increased the total number to 3,044. By increasing numbers, Provinces would ensure that CDWs are deployed in all wards and also to accommodate the National Youth Service approach which aims at ensuring that government departments have youth-focussed programmes, or they include the youth component in their programmes.

Table 1 presents the CDW profiles by province as at 30th August 2005 (DPSA):

Table 1 – CDW profiles by province (30 August 2005)

Province	No of CDW completed	No of CDW to complete Aug 2005	Outstanding recruitment	Newly recruited & in learnership	Total
Eastern Cape	174	-	50	120	344 *
Free State	-	96	204	-	300
Kwa Zulu Natal	107	-	-	293	400 *
Gauteng	198	-	315	-	513 *
Limpopo	-	82	218	-	300
Mpumalanga	48	-	-	252	300
North West	-	56	-	244	300
Northern Cape	192	-	8	-	200
Western Cape	-	387	-	-	387 *
Subtotal	719	621	795	909	3,044 *

* Denotes deviation from the national totals. Provinces requested the additional numbers at their own costs. National envisaged the total number of 2840. With additions, the new total is now 3044.

5. Challenges

Challenges registered with the EPWP programme are that not all recruits into the HCBC and ECD social sector programmes are able to get a full time job after training. Those who were already employed by NGOs or CBOs will be trained on the job and therefore do not reduce the unemployment numbers but only increase the number of skilled workers. This leaves the country with a pool of skills that cannot be absorbed in the workplace regardless of the growing economy. Other sectors are also experiencing similar challenges, where skilled workers cannot access tenders or penetrate the already over-saturated market place.

Similarly, not all learner CDWs will automatically be appointed to permanent positions in the Public Service. This will depend on the number of vacancies which departments have been able to secure for CDWs. Learner CDWs will have to go through the normal process of interviews in the Public Service to stand in line for appointment.

The CDW Programme is fairly new and very little if any research has been done to assess its impact. However, challenges raised were mainly around the differential roles of this new cadre and those that have been in the field employed by various departments. There are also a number of forums at community level that have been carrying out almost similar functions within the framework of the specific departmental mandate, e.g. Community Police Forum; Community Health Workers; Ward Councillors etc. One of the critical questions often asked is the extent to which politicians may or may not influence activities/services delivered by the new CDW cadre. Provincial departments also have Community Development Practitioners working in the same Districts with Local Government CDWs and the challenge of synchronizing their roles and functions is critical to avoid conflict and duplication. Lack of alignment between Provincial and Local Social Development/Service Structures also presents a number of challenges including poor coordination, waste of limited resources and duplication of efforts. A need to assess the impact of the CDW Programme cannot be over-emphasized to establish other critical challenges experienced during the implementation of the programme and implement curative measures.

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