

# CHAPTER THIRTEEN

## **BUILDING BRIDGES TO PROSPERITY: EVALUATING THE DESIGN OF BUFFALO CITY'S EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME**

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### *INTRODUCTION*

The Eastern Cape Province has the country's worst unemployment rate with the latest quarterly labour force survey showing a further decline of 1% in the unemployment statistics (Stats SA, 2022). It is for this reason that job creation and skills development remain key priorities of the South African Government. According to Ebekoziem, Aigbavboa, Samsurijan, Radin Firdaus, Ayo-Odifiri and Amadi (2024), the third edition Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) guidelines are still in use. The EPWP is the government long term programme to reduce poverty and mitigate joblessness. The programme aims to create productive employment opportunities and bridge the gap between the first and second economies in South Africa. It was adopted by the Department of Public Works (DPW) as economic investment in its infrastructure.

The EPWP has expanded its drive to increase access to economic opportunities although there are challenges. Participation in education or training is important for the youth who wish to find employment and achieve self-sufficiency. The EPWP provides on-the-job training to prepare participants for long-term employment, self-employment or even further education and training.

Zwane (2023) states that the South African government has developed policies and strategies to create new business opportunities for the youth, such as the Youth Employment Accord (YEA) and its National Youth Service Programme (NYSP), which is a government initiative aimed at engaging the youth. The NYSP assists in fostering social cohesion and ensures the youth acquire occupational skills that would promote sustainable livelihood opportunities. According to the DPW (2012), the NYSP was launched in April 2007 to engage young South African in service delivery to:

- strengthen youth participation in service delivery
- promote youth participation in building the environment
- assist the youth to gain work-related skills.

Furthermore, the NYSP aims to link the youth to formal employment opportunities, further education or business opportunities on completion of the training intervention as exit strategies (NYSP, 2021). Ebe-

kozien *et al.* (2024) attest to the fact that labour intensive projects provide job creation opportunities and social security for the youth as emerging local entrepreneurs, which promotes local economic development and reduces rural-city movement. Chauke (2023) adds that for holistic youth development, the NYSP must be supported by integrated youth development. The success of the NYSP (2023) would be enhanced by incorporating mentorship programmes for the unemployed. Mtapuri (2014) and Moeti (2014) agree that the EPWP aims to address the triple challenge of poverty, inequality<sup>2</sup> and unemployment in South Africa with a combination of different programmes that can be divided into six sectors.

The focus of the chapter is on infrastructure development within the Eastern Cape Province. Mtapuri (2014) proposes that the unemployed join the informal sector as in other developing countries; that budget allocation be increased; and project management skills upgraded. However, there is no single intervention that has all the solutions. What is needed is sustainable accelerated and inclusive economic growth and initiatives that encompass improving skills among the youth to improve their employability and that of women and people with disabilities.

To assess the relevance of the design of the EPWP in Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, this chapter probes whether the programme objectives address the social programme and identify the intended or planned programme logic or theory of change underpinning government intervention in response to unemployment. It also explores the assumptions and risks in planned interventions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Ntwasa (2017:24), the infrastructure sector programme includes rehabilitation and maintenance, construction, storm water drainage, water reticulation, basic sanitation, footpaths, sidewalks, bicycle paths, schools, and clinics. The chapter looks into the empirical findings from books, methodologies and the relationship between research studies and identified research gaps. It also outlines the theoretical framework.

Khawula (2022:18) alleges that the “theory of change is a theoretical perspective that explains the implementation and the issues that hamper effectiveness across comprehensive community initiatives”. Maphanga and Mazenda (2019) argue that the theory of change (ToC) is a tailor-made approach for planning, participation in and evaluation of social-change programmes. They refer to Blamey and MacKenzie (2007), who maintain that the theory defines the long-term goals of an intervention and then maps backwards to identify necessary preconditions. The theory focuses on generative causation, examining the process and context, leading to varying intervention outcomes. Khawula (2022) uses the ToC to evaluate the effectiveness of the EPWP through the behaviour of the beneficiaries as a way to appraise the effectiveness of EPWP.

According to Chapter 11 of the National Development Plan (NDP)(2030), the EPWP is positioned to provide jobs to those not covered by the social welfare system (Naidu, 2022a). The Department of Public Works’ (2019:15) Business Plan argues that the EPWP must address the “trilemma” as shown in Figure 1 below.

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2 The author mentions the Gini coefficient of 0,6314 in 2004. According to StatSA, Gini coefficient was 0,67 in 2018. High inequality is perpetuated by legacy of exclusion and nature of economic growth, which is not pro poor and does not generate jobs.