



The Regional Social Economic Programme



CONTEXT OF EVALUATION

In 2012, the Western Cape Government (WCG) began to envisage a trans-disciplinary approach to a programme that addresses the social and economic needs of the Province. At roughly the same time it was decided to pilot the transformation of the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme, which was well-known and had a long history in the City of Cape Town, to a provincial programme. At the end of 2013, it was decided to establish a programme office in the Department of

Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEA&DP) to manage both these programmes. While the VPUU programme received substantial funding from the KfW Bankengruppe, (a German state-owned development bank) and there were strict parameters that regulated the implementation. The RSEP was developed from scratch. One of the major differences was that RSEP was implemented via transfers to the municipalities, who thus had to implement the funding with the support of the Programme office; while

EVIDENCE USE

- RSEP has improved the extent and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement to develop spatially and socially in the province.
- The importance of community oversight and buy-in was highlighted as critical for the success of a project.
- Improvement in general knowledge, sharing mechanisms and exchange of best practices should be enhanced.

The Zwelethemba Commercial corridor project in Worcester was recently officially opened.



The Calendula Street project brought a lot of joy to the communities.



The Zwelethemba Corridor

KEY QUESTIONS

Twenty-three evaluation questions were proposed by the ToR. It centred around the following five themes:

1. Programme Design,
2. Programme Implementation,
3. Programme Impacts,
4. Best Practices and
5. Programme Improvements.

In 2012, the Western Cape Government began to envisage a trans-disciplinary approach to a programme that addresses the social and economic needs of the Province.

in VPUU an intermediary was funded to implement the roll-out; including working with the community and using their own procurement processes to build infrastructure.

Subsequently, as far as the RSEP programme is concerned, and following a Whole-of-Society Approach (WoSA), the first phase of RSEP was initiated in 2014. Its implementation began in 2015 with a large number and variety of projects in Worcester in the Breede Valley Municipality, Vredenburg in the Saldanha Bay Municipality and Malmesbury in the Swartland Municipality.

In the second phase of the RSEP, the Programme was rolled out to 7 new municipalities; and the three Phase 1 RSEP partner municipalities were also offered the opportunity to extend the programme to one additional town in their municipality. The Reconstruction Framework was applied to each of the respective towns in order to guide the optimal location of projects in line with RSEP planning principles. In Phase 2, the RSEP gained momentum in

implementing numerous social upliftment projects; and the Programme Office has built sound relationships with municipal officials in all focus areas. It was within this context that the evaluation was undertaken.

PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION

The evaluation of the RSEP was conducted at the request of the WC DEA&DP and supported by the Department of the Premier and Provincial Treasury. The purpose of the evaluation was to provide information about the status of RSEP implementation and design to ensure accountability; and the delivery of outputs to attain the Programme outcomes. The evaluation aimed to help the Programme Office, in consultation with municipalities, to make midcourse corrections as appropriate, and inform an organisational development investigation at the provincial level.

The purpose of the evaluation of RSEP was multi-faceted and included the following objectives:

The evaluation highlighted that

“We knew from day one if we don’t have the communities buy-in on these projects they will just deteriorate over time’, the community is our partner”.

- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the RSEP design and programme implementation;
- To ascertain the extent to which RSEP is achieving its aims and objectives, and which process methods and practices are working;
- To better understand the relevant issues and challenges impacting on RSEP;
- To benchmark the performance of the Programme in relation to other similar initiatives in the country; and to determine a scope for improvement through a literature review;
- To determine the impact of the RSEP in the community and on the urban environment; and
- To improve the planning, management, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and reporting of the RSEP.

THE SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION

The scope included an evaluation of the overall programme and five RSEP interventions from 2014 to 2017, including national and international case studies; 14 focus group discussions, 67 in-depth interviews and field observations were undertaken. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Development assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were used, along with cross-cutting issues of quality and implementation. The vast volume of data collected provided a rich picture of the RSEP and its operations; which enabled the evaluation to answer the relevant questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evidence and findings presented in the report allowed the evaluation to formulate 25 major recommendations combined in the following eight

thematic groups.

- Ensure that the RSEP is implemented in line with the intentions.
- The RSEP Implementation Framework must be revised to ensure that its development is results-based.
- Improve the extent and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement to address spatial, social and urban integration.
- Institutional capacities of the municipal staff and stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Programme should be strengthened.
- General knowledge sharing mechanisms and exchange of best practices should be enhanced.
- The RSEP should have a greater focus on cross-cutting issues to enhance gender equality, the inclusion of persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- The Programme Office should liaise with Provincial Treasury on expanding the implementation period beyond one financial year
- The RSEP should build on the coordination mechanism in line with WoSA.

CHALLENGES

RSEP is a complex programme that seeks to re-dress spatial and social ills of the apartheid legacy. In many instances, the Programme evolved out of a dire necessity to implement interventions to address an immediate problem in the community. Notwithstanding, there were several limitations regarding the data collected. There was no meaningful monitoring data to support the impact of the Programme hence, the evaluation relied heavily on perceptions. It was not possible to quantify the impact of the programme as there was no baseline data available.

The lack of comprehensive quantitative data about effectiveness at both the Programme and project level was a

Below: Swartland Sport Community Centre Opening
Bottom: Vredenburg Splash Park





**Above: Activity
Recreation Node Ilenge-Lethu
Malmesbury**

“It’s (RSEP) an amazing concept and I must say that I think it has improved a lot of lives and livelihoods; but I think that safety is the main thing that is still the problem.”

severe limitation. In many instances, the ultimate source of data is the beneficiaries or RSEP Project Managers at the municipal and grassroots level, who may not be well placed to consider the provincial and programme contexts.

CONCLUSION

RELEVANCE: RSEP addresses local challenges by conducting a participatory needs assessment and defining local demand for its projects, thus ensuring the buy-in of local communities and sustainability. The study established that RSEP employed a bottom-up approach to development by involving communities in the planning of projects. In consulting communities, RSEP used existing municipal platforms for stakeholder engagements such as IDP processes. Community members therefore informed the design and implementation of the projects.

EFFECTIVENESS: RSEP planned 102 projects in the five studied sites, 73 of them have been completed, and 29 projects are in progress in different towns. One of the accomplished projects which illustrate the effectiveness of the RSEP is the Extension of Calendula Street in Piketberg. The road was constructed for R1 million and provided employment and training to 35 community members. After the construction of the road, the two previously spatially divided communities hosted a long table dinner to celebrate the social cohesion that Calendula Street represented. The major factors that influenced the achievement of the objectives are the close collaboration with the municipality and other organisations and involving communities in the planning of projects. Lacking community oversight, however some facilities have been vandalised.

EFFICIENCY: RSEP has also been cost-efficient as several projects have been completed with great impacts on the community; and at low costs when compared to similar project expenditures outside the Province. Municipalities have also been able to leverage funds.

IMPACT: The impact of social upliftment programmes needs a long time to be realised. Some significant indications of the programme’s impact are however already visible. RSEP has assisted Municipalities in developing capacity to combine reconstructive urban planning with actual implementation. In so doing, the RSEP has improved the quality of life of communities through urban, social and spatial integration; and offered a platform for collaborative planning and investment between the local and provincial government, non-profit organisations and the private sector.

The Programme has had some impact on the population in terms of increased safety in its targeted areas, availability of safer passages with improved street lighting, places for people to gather together and recreation zones. The facilities and equipment provided under the RSEP are intended to benefit all members of the community equally. Also, some have been employed in different projects such as construction projects and the maintenance of infrastructure.

SUSTAINABILITY: The RSEP has contributed towards safe neighbourhoods following a strategy of crime and violence prevention interventions. The sustainability of its interventions should however be reviewed.

The evaluation has provided critical evidence to support such collaborative community initiatives within the Western Cape.

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