Business & Social Science
IJRBS

Research in Business & Social Science

IJRBS VOL 14 NO 5 (2025) ISSN: 2147-4478

Available online at www.ssbfnet.com
Journal homepage: https://www.ssbfnet.com/ojs/index.php/ijrbs

Enhancing the Shambe Sonke programme: addressing communication, implementation, and public-private partnerships for effective poverty alleviation

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 February 2025
Received in rev. form 27 May 2025
Accepted 08 June 2025

Keywords:

Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP), Public-private partnerships (PPPs), poverty alleviation, rural development, stakeholder interaction.

JEL Classification:
O15

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP) in South Africa, a poverty alleviation initiative aimed at generating income and fostering economic independence through infrastructure maintenance and community engagement in rural regions. This paper employs qualitative research methodology to examine communication practices, challenges, and regional implementation disparities within the SSP, concentrating on three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Eastern Cape. Data were collected via interviews with officials from the Department of Transport (DoT) and focus groups involving SSP contractors, predominantly African men and women, utilising content analysis based on Giddens' Structuration Theory. The findings indicate substantial communication deficiencies between the Department of Transportation and SSP contractors, impeding the contractors' comprehension of program objectives, eligibility criteria, and accessible economic opportunities. The absence of communication hinders contractors' capacity to leverage SSP resources for income generation, thereby limiting the program's efficacy in poverty alleviation. The study identifies regional disparities in the impact of SSP, noting that KwaZulu-Natal's Zibambele sub-program demonstrates superior outcomes attributed to proactive support systems and robust public-private partnerships (PPPs), which furnish contractors with resources for small-scale farming and business initiatives. Delayed payments and insufficient training in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape hinder contractors' economic mobility. The study advocates for the enhancement of communication channels, the development of localised implementation strategies, and the improvement of public-private partnerships across provinces to achieve more consistent outcomes in the SSP. The findings highlight the necessity for flexible, community-focused strategies in public programs and collaborative partnerships as essential avenues for effective poverty alleviation.

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Introduction

In April of 2011, the government of South Africa, under the leadership of Transport Minister Sbu Ndebele, initiated the S'hambe Sonke Programme (SSP), which is a program that literally translates to "moving together together." The creation of infrastructure was the primary means by which this project intended to accomplish its goal of accelerating growth by enhancing accessibility and mobility.

The priority was placed on the creation of employment possibilities and the alleviation of the effects of poverty that were brought about by apartheid. The SSP was designed to empower communities and stakeholders by drawing them into the process and building relationships between the government, corporations, and contractors. This was accomplished through the engagement of these groups. It was the responsibility of these contractors, who were often the heads of households, to do maintenance on particular portions of roadways on a part-time basis. It was the intention to provide workers with various sources of income in order to assist them in establishing businesses such as cooperatives or small firms. By means of the SSP, it was envisioned that people living in rural areas

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https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v14i5.3871

who were experiencing comparable socio-economic challenges would come together and work together to develop strategies to collectively overcome poverty.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the ways in which communication methods, implementation tactics, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) impact the efficiency of the SSP in terms of accomplishing poverty reduction. The specific objectives are to investigate the role that communication between the Department of Transport (DoT) and SSP contractors plays in determining the effectiveness of the program; to evaluate the impact that regional disparities in the implementation of the SSP have on the economic independence of contractors; to assess the influence that public-private partnerships (PPPs) have on the success of the SSP; and to identify challenges and propose strategies for improving communication, implementation, and stakeholder collaboration in the SSP.

Literature Review

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have served as a model for delivering public services and infrastructure since their inception in the United Kingdom in 1992. Initially used to improve service delivery, PPPs gained traction following the global financial crisis of 2007, as governments sought new approaches to meeting the demand for public services within financial constraints. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) underscored service delivery as a tool for poverty reduction, paving the way for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. The SDGs broadened the scope to include inclusive development, raising questions about how PPPs can integrate social aspects to enhance their role in alleviating poverty (Marx, 2019).

PPPs are essentially agreements involving public entities and private parties, such as households, for providing services and infrastructure traditionally funded and managed by the public sector (Emek, 2015; Roumboutsos, 2015). These partnerships entail the sharing of project risks, investment responsibilities, and benefits among the partners (Medhekar, 2014). While the legal, economic, and operational aspects of PPPs are extensively discussed in the literature, there is often insufficient attention given to the social dynamics within these collaborations. For instance, Cheng et al. (2021) point out that governments may use PPPs to address financial gaps in large-scale poverty alleviation projects, yet they overlook the social aspects crucial for the success of such efforts.

The advantages of PPPs are well acknowledged, especially in terms of enhancing project quality and efficiency, bringing in management skills, and fostering innovation from the private sector (Macario, Ribeiro, & Costa, 2015). Furthermore, PPPs can harness the resources and expertise of both public and private sectors to carry out poverty alleviation initiatives at large scales (Aljembayeva, Imankulova, Nogoibayeva, & Aknazarova, 2024). Nonetheless, along with these advantages come several challenges. For example, Tsamboulas, Verma, and Moraiti (2013) point out issues like the lack of risk transfer, accountability, and transparency, which can impact the success of PPPs. Aljembayeva et al. (2024) highlights the risk of prioritizing the interests of more powerful partners over those of the poor due to trust issues between the poor and other partners in PPPs.

The current discourse on PPPs underscores the importance of examining the social and qualitative elements of these partnerships. Nisar (2012), Tsamboulas et al. (2013), and Mota and Moreira (2015) stress the need for deeper insights into the dynamics within PPPs, especially in the context of poverty alleviation initiatives. This sentiment is echoed by Cheng et al. (2021), who push for an approach that goes beyond the conventional cost-benefit analysis to incorporate social dimensions.

Recognized as a global development trend, PPPs have shown potential to create economic activities that impact both household levels and long-term growth at national scales. As noted by Momodu and Okoye (2010), PPP ventures have the power to enhance community welfare and productivity, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation efforts. Nevertheless, the success of PPPs hinges not just on contractual obligations. Medda, Carbonaro, and Davis (2013) propose that factors like trust, collaboration, and commitment among the partners are vital for the success of these initiatives. Moreover, Siddiquee (2011) emphasizes the importance of capacity building and the fair sharing of opportunities within PPP projects as mechanisms to manage uncertainties that may arise in such alliances.

The significance of inclusive and participatory governance in PPPs is a key theme in the literature. Rizwan, Naveed, and Ata (2023) advocate for the engagement of stakeholders, including development organizations, private sector entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, and individuals in the decision-making, planning, and execution stages of PPP projects. This collaborative strategy is viewed as a means of sharing responsibilities and engaging in cooperative problem-solving, both of which are essential for fostering the sustainability of programs.

Despite the rising interest in PPPs, there remains a research gap, particularly in the context of developing nations. Osei-Kyei and Chan (2015) highlight that studies focusing on PPPs in developing countries are limited in number, suggesting the need for future exploration to enhance our understanding of PPPs through innovative approaches. Similarly, Mota and Moreira (2015) advocate for a multi-sectorial outlook towards PPP projects, placing emphasis on the social aspects of understanding the dynamics within these partnerships. Devkar, Mahalingam, and Kalidini (2013) call for research efforts aimed at establishing a comprehensive framework for understanding PPPs beyond conventional models. Aligning with this perspective, Nisar (2012) and Medda et al. (2013) support holistic perspectives on PPPs that strengthen communication and collaboration within these initiatives to drive social change.

Methodology

To enhance the Shambe Sonke program for alleviating poverty through partnerships, a research method was chosen to collect data on the experiences of managers and contractors. Qualitative research, as mentioned by Patton (2015), is effective for studying how groups and organizations function in real-life settings. The underlying philosophy of this method is based on interpretation, emphasizing that human behavior, thoughts, and emotions are shaped by their environments. Gaining insight into these aspects involves immersing oneself in the world of the participants, as highlighted by Bryman (2015). Mota and Moreira (2015) also emphasize the value of using qualitative research to examine how factors are incorporated within PPP projects.

A case study design was selected to match the qualitative aspect of the study. This approach enabled the researchers to pose "what is happening" questions, laying the groundwork for a theoretical exploration of the connection between the Department of Transport (DoT) and stakeholders in the SSP. Yin (2013) highlights the importance of case studies for investigating contemporary phenomena in real-world contexts.

The SSP was chosen as a study example because of its involvement in both building and maintaining South Africa's provincial road network, while also aiming to address poverty through creating jobs and developing skills in coordination with household contractors (NDoT, 2012). The provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Eastern Cape were singled out within the SSP due to their substantial budget allocations, which indicate a heightened demand for road works, maintenance, and job opportunities, all aimed at poverty reduction (NDoT, 2012). To customize the program for each province, the sub-programs were given new names: Zibambele in KwaZulu-Natal, Siyatendela in Mpumalanga, and Amathole in the Eastern Cape. Each name was chosen to demonstrate the community's dedication to upliftment.

Sampling

The selection of participants in the study involved using purposive sampling, which allows for selecting individuals who can offer valuable information (Stake, 2005). The focus was on household contractors engaged in the SSP project, who could share their experiences with the program's communication practices and how participating in SSP initiatives had contributed to easing their financial difficulties. The participants were identified from the SSP records kept by the Department of Transportation, specifically targeting African women and men heading households aged 18 to 55 years. In addition, key individuals such as the National Director and Provincial Managers from the Department of Transportation were included in the study to gain insights into how the SSP is run.

Data Collection

Information gathering involved focus groups and interviews. Focus groups were selected for fostering discussions and encouraging participants to elaborate on their ideas in relation to others' feedback (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). A total of six focus group sessions took place, with two sessions held in each of the three provinces. Each session hosted 10 participants and coincided with the monthly meetings arranged by the Provincial DoTs and SSP contractors.

Four key informants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews. These informants included the SSP National Director and three Provincial Managers. This method of interviewing allowed for asking probing questions and seeking clarification, which helped in gaining insight into how participants create and interpret meanings within the SSP program (Babbie, 2013). Galletta (2013) also highlights the benefits of using semi-structured interviews, as they offer flexibility and the ability to gather diverse yet consistent data.

Analysis

The study used content analysis to examine the data gathered. This approach was helpful in illustrating connections among conceptual categories within a theoretical framework (Henning, 2004). This research employs content analysis, grounded in Giddens' Structuration Theory (ST), which posits that "human experience constitutes reality, and reality constitutes human experience" (Levers, 2013). ST facilitated an analysis that extended beyond official SSP declarations to explore how the program influences workers' actions in alleviating poverty, recognizing social structures as both enablers and constraints on individual actions (Giddens, 1984).

To maintain the consistency of the data analyzed, we verified the responsibilities and roles within the SSP. We interviewed only managers who oversaw the program and household contractors engaged in the SSP to gain insights. Although adapting the data collection process across the country poses challenges, the approach used offers a solid framework for comprehending the aspects of the SSP.

Results

Communication Gaps in the SSP

The research discovered communication barriers between the Department of Transport (DoT) and household contractors participating in the Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP). These barriers were especially visible in how information about the objectives and contractor roles within the program was shared. Focus group sessions highlighted that many contractors were not fully informed about the SSP's

overall aims, such as its focus on tackling poverty through creating income-generating activities beyond just road upkeep. This lack of understanding was attributed to inadequate communication from DoT personnel, who did not consistently offer guidance or updates on training opportunities and economic prospects.

Numerous contractors expressed frustration with vague guidelines and unclear job selection criteria within the program, leading to confusion regarding eligibility for benefits. This lack of clarity resulted in missed opportunities for skill enhancement, as some contractors were not informed about training sessions or were unsure about the enrollment process. The research also pointed out cases where contractors were confused about the financial aspects of the program, including payment timelines and the utilization of funds for tools and resources. These misconceptions contributed to the instability of the contractors' finances, working against the program's objective of promoting economic self-sufficiency among rural communities.

Impact on Economic Independence

Even with communication challenges, the SSP made a difference in the economic independence of some contractors, though the impact varied greatly from region to region. Contractors who received guidance from DoT officials were more inclined to use their SSP earnings to kickstart businesses or become members of cooperatives. For example, in KwaZulu-Natal, many contractors shared how they used their income from the SSP to venture into farming, such as buying seeds and tools for their business. These farming activities not only brought in extra income but also decreased contractors' dependence on part-time road maintenance jobs provided by the SSP.

However, the benefits of the program were not evenly shared among contractors in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, who encountered more challenges in attaining financial independence. In these regions, payment delays were a prevalent problem, resulting in financial difficulties and constraining contractors from venturing into other revenue-generating activities. Additionally, the absence of training opportunities in these areas meant that contractors lacked the necessary skills to broaden their sources of income. The disparities in results among provinces indicate that the program's impact on enhancing financial independence is dependent on the support and resources allocated at the community level.

Variation in Provincial Implementation

The research revealed differences in how the SSP was carried out in the three provinces. In KwaZulu-Natal, the Zibambele sub-program stood out for its effectiveness in involving contractors and offering support. Contractors in this region mentioned that they were kept informed by DoT officials about updates on training sessions, project timelines, and opportunities for additional work. This proactive communication was acknowledged for enabling contractors to manage their finances effectively and make the most of the economic prospects provided by the SSP.

However, the rollout of the SSP in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape faced challenges such as administrative delays and resource constraints. Contractors in these provinces mentioned receiving updates inefficiently from DoT personnel, affecting their engagement in the program. For instance, some contractors in Mpumalanga highlighted that they were not notified about alterations to the payment timetable, resulting in financial difficulties. Similarly, in the Eastern Cape, contractors were frustrated by the lack of opportunities for training, which they believed hindered their skill development and economic advancement. These observations emphasize the importance of adopting a consistent and fair strategy for implementing the SSP in diverse areas.

Role of Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) have been identified as key contributors to the success of the SSP, especially in KwaZulu-Natal. The research revealed that collaboration with local businesses, NGOs, and educational organizations has greatly strengthened the impact of the program. Within the region, partnerships formed with agricultural cooperatives have provided contractors with access to farm equipment and expertise, crucial elements for their small-scale farming projects. Furthermore, teaming up with NGOs has facilitated the process of conducting financial literacy sessions, empowering contractors to effectively manage their income and establish plans for financial security.

However, the absence of strong PPPs in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape affected the effectiveness of the SSP in these areas. Without the backing of businesses and NGOs, contractors in these provinces had limited opportunities to access the resources and training required to excel beyond their responsibilities in road maintenance. The research proposes that enhancing PPPs in all provinces may be key to reducing disparities in how the SSP is carried out and its results, ensuring that contractors have fair opportunities to receive the assistance needed for attaining financial independence.

Discussion

Addressing Communication Gaps in the SSP

The disconnect between the Department of Transport (DoT) and household contractors in the Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP) highlights a common issue in public projects involving rural communities. These gaps hamper the program's effectiveness and underscore the challenge of bridging the divide between government and marginalized groups. Effective communication plays a vital role in public-private partnerships (PPPs), helping align stakeholders' objectives (Medhekar, 2014; Tsamboulas et al., 2013). In the

context of the SSP, inconsistent communication from DoT personnel has weakened the program's impact, encroaching on the contractors' ability to access knowledge and resources.

The challenge worsens due to the lack of communication channels in rural areas, where contractors may not have easy access to the internet or other forms of digital communication. The results of the study indicate that the DoT's dependence on conventional communication approaches, such as top-down methods, did not effectively engage contractors. This outcome aligns with earlier studies underscoring the importance of inclusive communication strategies in keeping all stakeholders, notably those in marginalized communities, well-informed and empowered to engage in development initiatives (Cheng et al., 2021).

The impacts of these gaps became clear when contractors were uncertain about the program's goals, criteria for job selection, and training possibilities, resulting in missed opportunities for enhancing skills and progressing economically, which are crucial to the SSP's aim of reducing poverty. To tackle this issue, it is important for the DoT to embrace communication strategies that are inclusive and engaging while also being sensitive to the specific needs and situations of contractors in rural areas. This may involve utilizing local leaders or community groups as intermediaries to enhance communication and keep contractors well-informed about the program.

Variability in Economic Impact and Provincial Implementation

The diverse impact of the SSP on different regions underscores the need for tailored implementation strategies that consider the socio-economic conditions of each area. The success of the SSP in KwaZulu-Natal, were contractors experienced improvements in financial independence, can be credited to various factors. Firstly, the Zibambele sub-program played a crucial role in offering support and resources to help contractors engage in income-generating activities. This is in line with research emphasizing the significance of providing support such as training, materials, and guidance to enhance the effectiveness of PPPs in addressing poverty (Macario et al., 2015; Aljembayeva et al., 2024).

On the flip side, the obstacles encountered by contractors in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape showcase how inconsistent rollout of projects and lack of adequate support can have negative effects. The payment delays and absence of training opportunities in these regions not only restricted contractors from expanding their sources of income but also reinforced their reliance on part-time road maintenance work offered by the SSP. These observations align with the findings of Osei-Kyei and Chan (2015), underscoring how crucial government backing is in the smooth execution of PPP initiatives, especially in rural and less developed regions.

Differences in the way provinces have implemented the program indicate that a uniform strategy for addressing poverty through the SSP may not be the best approach. Instead, there is a call for a more adaptable way of implementing the program that can be adjusted to fit the unique circumstances of each province. One way to do this could be by carrying out comprehensive assessments in all regions before launching the program and by setting up support teams in each location. These teams would be tasked with ensuring that contractors have access to the support and guidance they need to be successful.

Challenges and Opportunities in Underperforming Regions

The underperformance of the SSP in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape reveals systemic and structural challenges that constrain the program's transformative potential. In these provinces, irregular payment cycles, limited access to training, and inadequate institutional support weakened contractors' ability to pursue sustainable income-generating activities. These challenges reflect broader issues of administrative inefficiency, weak interdepartmental coordination, and a lack of provincial ownership over SSP implementation. However, these constraints also present opportunities for institutional reform and innovation. For example, decentralizing certain administrative functions, such as contractor payment processing and training coordination, to district-level offices could improve responsiveness and reduce bottlenecks. Additionally, investing in provincial implementation capacity through targeted skills development for local DoT staff and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration with local agricultural and skills development agencies could enhance program delivery. Community-based monitoring mechanisms may also empower contractors to hold implementers accountable and ensure greater transparency in program execution. By addressing these localized governance deficits and leveraging provincial strengths, the SSP can be repositioned as a more adaptable and equitable poverty alleviation strategy in these underperforming areas.

The Critical Role of Public-Private Partnerships in SSP Success

The significance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the success of the SSP, especially in KwaZulu-Natal, is crucial. Involving local businesses, NGOs, and educational institutions gave contractors the resources and support they needed to achieve autonomy. This aligns with the study by Medda, Carbonaro, and Davis (2013), which emphasizes the importance of leveraging partners' strengths to meet the community's financial and social requirements.

In KwaZulu-Natal, partnerships with agricultural cooperatives and NGOs played a significant role in empowering contractors by equipping them with tools, expertise, and financial management skills essential for successful small-scale farming projects. These collaborations not only improved the contractors' capacity to earn income but also bolstered the sustainability of the SSP by helping contractors develop the skills and resources required to sustain their economic independence.

Nevertheless, in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, the limited presence of PPPs significantly impacted the success of the SSP. The lack of support from local businesses and non-governmental organizations meant that contractors in these provinces had fewer opportunities to access resources and training to expand their income sources beyond road maintenance services. This observation aligns with existing research, which underscores the role of strong, well-coordinated PPPs in driving sustainable development outcomes (Mota & Moreira, 2015; Rizwan, Naveed, & Ata, 2023).

To improve the effectiveness of the SSP in all provinces, it is important to enhance PPPs, especially in areas where they may be lacking. This could involve proactively identifying and building relationships with businesses, NGOs, and schools that can offer support to contractors. Furthermore, setting up channels for consistent communication and cooperation between the DoT and its partners could ensure that the assistance and resources provided are tailored to the evolving requirements of the contractors.

Implications for Future Poverty Alleviation Programs

The results of this research carry many implications for shaping future programs aimed at reducing poverty. The effectiveness of the SSP in some areas underscores the opportunities that well-planned and executed projects offer in combating poverty and empowering disadvantaged groups toward economic independence. Nonetheless, the difficulties faced in other areas emphasize the importance of adopting a finely tuned and context-specific approach to program design and implementation.

It is essential for upcoming initiatives to focus on creating effective communication plans that meet the specific requirements of the communities. This involves ensuring that everyone involved understands the goals, roles, and ways to participate in the program. Moreover, there is a call for adaptable approaches that consider the socio-economic factors of different areas, ensuring that all participants have equal opportunities to access the necessary resources and assistance for success.

The importance of PPPs in successful poverty reduction initiatives cannot be overstated. It is essential for future programs to focus on creating and enhancing these partnerships, especially in areas where there may be a lack of local government support and resources. By capitalizing on the expertise of each partner, PPPs can create a support network that caters to the financial and social requirements of the community. This ultimately improves the efficiency and longevity of poverty alleviation endeavors. To broaden the context and reinforce the study's findings, comparable programmes from India and Ethiopia offer useful insights into implementation and sustainability.

India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), launched in 2005, provides a useful comparative framework for understanding the potential and challenges of public works programmes like the SSP. MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of wage employment annually to rural households and has become one of the world's largest employment initiatives. Like the SSP, MGNREGA emphasizes community engagement, decentralized implementation, and the empowerment of rural workers, particularly women. However, MGNREGA's success has been uneven, with implementation challenges such as delayed payments, poor record-keeping, and regional disparities, like the SSP's struggles in Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape. Notably, India has made significant strides in addressing these issues through digital job cards, biometric verification, and local grievance redress systems. These interventions have improved transparency, worker protection, and payment efficiency. South Africa could draw valuable lessons from MGNREGA's scalable model, especially regarding real-time monitoring systems and the integration of social audits, to enhance SSP accountability and responsiveness.

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), initiated in 2005, is another instructive example of a large-scale poverty alleviation initiative targeting vulnerable rural populations. The PSNP provides food or cash transfers to chronically food-insecure households in exchange for participation in public works, such as land rehabilitation and infrastructure maintenance. Much like the SSP, the PSNP links employment with developmental outcomes, but it is distinguished by its strong focus on resilience-building and predictable transfers. One of its key strengths lies in the integration of livelihood support services, such as microcredit, skills training, and access to agricultural inputs, tailored to local socio-economic contexts. The program's use of community-based targeting and decentralized implementation has also enhanced legitimacy and effectiveness at the grassroots level. Drawing from the PSNP experience, the SSP could benefit from coupling infrastructure-based employment with broader livelihood support strategies, ensuring that contractors transition from short-term relief to long-term economic sustainability.

Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study contribute meaningfully to both theoretical and practical understandings of the PPPs and poverty alleviation in rural South Africa. Theoretically, the results reinforce Giddens's Structuration Theory by demonstrating how social structures, such as state institutions and communication systems, simultaneously enable and constrain agencies among SSP contractors. The interplay between institutional procedures and individual capacity highlights the recursive nature of study and agency in rural development interventions. Practically, the study provides critical insights into how programme effectiveness is undermined when structural mechanisms, such as communication challenges, implementation frameworks, and partnerships, are not sufficiently localized or inclusive. By showcasing the success of the Zibmabele sub-programme in KZN, the study highlights the potential of adaptive, context-sensitive governance and robust PPPs to facilitate poverty alleviation. This underlines the importance of designing interventions that are both theoretically grounded and empirically responsive to community-level dynamics. Overall, the research offers a blueprint for policymakers and practitioners to reform poverty alleviation programmes by strengthening feedback loops, decentralizing decision-making, and embedding participatory strategies in programme design and delivery.

While this study provides valuable insights into the communication challenges, regional disparities, and the role of public-private partnerships in the SSP, it is not without limitations. The research focused on three provinces and relied primarily on qualitative data from interviews and focus groups, which, while rich in depth, may limit the generalizability of the findings. The absence of longitudinal data also restricts the ability to assess the long-term economic outcomes for contractors beyond their participation in the SSP. Additionally, the study did not include the perspectives of local government actors outside the DoT or private sector partners, whose involvement may have provided a fuller picture of PPP dynamics. Future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach, incorporating quantitative measures such as contractor income levels, business formation rates, or savings growth over time. Longitudinal studies could track the sustainability of SSP-related income-generating activities. Moreover, comparative studies across all nine provinces, or even internationally, would help test the applicability of the SSP model in varying socio-economic and governance contexts. Including the voices of local municipalities, NGOs, and community beneficiaries could also deepen the analysis of stakeholder collaboration and governance capacity within decentralized poverty alleviation frameworks.

Conclusion

The Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP) is a program that is carried out by the Department of Transport (DoT) as part of efforts to reduce poverty in rural areas through the development of infrastructure and the creation of possibilities to generate revenue. The findings of this study shed light on important aspects of the Social Security Program (SSP), including the difficulties associated with communication, the variations in the manner in which the program is administered in different provinces, and the significance of public-private partnerships (PPPs) in assuring the program's efficiency. One of the most important discoveries was that there was a lack of effective communication between the Department of Transportation and residential contractors, which had a substantial impact on the effectiveness of the program. The inability of contractors to fully use the SSP was a direct result of the imprecise and inconsistent communication that occurred between them. This uncertainty led to confusion among contractors over their responsibilities, work requirements, and training opportunities. The need of implementing communication techniques that are inclusive and take into consideration the challenges that rural contractors experience is highlighted by these findings for the first time.

The study also found that the SSP had a variety of effects on the economies of different provinces, each of which stood out from the others. For instance, the Zibambele sub-program in KwaZulu-Natal was successful in fostering a sense of financial autonomy among independent contractors. Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, on the other hand, experienced difficulties with assistance and administration, which resulted in a less major impact of the organisation. The existence of this variety underscores the necessity of developing individualised solutions that are capable of effectively addressing the socio-economic conditions of each region.One of the most important factors that contributed to the success of the SSP in KwaZulu-Natal was the formation of partnerships between the public and private sectors. Contractors were able to broaden their income streams and achieve financial stability as a result of these relationships, which provided them with access to resources, opportunities for training, and financial education. However, the program's influence was impeded by the absence of substantial public-private partnerships (PPPs) in other regions, which highlights the need of having a cohesive strategy when it comes to partnership formation.

Recommendations

Policymakers and stakeholders should implement a series of targeted, actionable measures to improve the effectiveness of the Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP). Provincial Departments of Transportation should appoint dedicated SSP liaison officers in each district to ensure consistent in-person communication with contractors. Officers must receive training in participatory development methodologies and be responsible for organising monthly feedback forums to allow contractors to express concerns and obtain updates. Second, Departments of Transportation should create and distribute simplified SSP guideline booklets in local languages, incorporating visual aids for enhanced clarity, especially for low-literacy populations. Third, intersectoral task teams should be established at the provincial level, comprising representatives from local municipalities, NGOs, agricultural cooperatives, and training institutions, to identify and coordinate support for contractors. Fourth, an incentive mechanism should be established to pilot context-specific sub-programs based on the Zibambele model, incorporating monitoring indicators associated with economic outcomes such as business formation or savings growth among contractors. National-level stakeholders, such as the Department of Public Works and the National Treasury, must collaborate to optimise payment systems and secure budget allocations specifically for training, equipment, and support for small enterprises. Collectively, these actions can promote a more equitable, efficient, and empowering implementation of the SSP in various rural contexts.

i. Enhancing Communication Strategies

The Department of Transport (DoT) should address communication challenges by developing and implementing enhanced strategies based on the research findings. The Department of Transportation seeks to improve information dissemination among stakeholders. The existing communication strategies have proven inadequate, leading to miscommunication and insufficient contractor engagement. To address this issue, the Department of Transportation should collaborate with local community leaders and organisations that possess the trust of contractors. Intermediaries facilitate communication, ensuring that contractors comprehend program goals, their responsibilities, job expectations, and available training opportunities. The Department of Transportation aims to disseminate information effectively to individuals lacking access to digital channels through community radio broadcasts, local

gatherings, and informal networks. Additionally, in regions with internet access, the Department of Telecommunications intends to create an online portal or mobile application for contractors. This platform would facilitate access to updates, training resources, and additional materials. Contractors may utilise this platform to offer feedback and communicate their requirements and concerns directly to the Department of Transportation. To facilitate efficient communication, particularly in areas with restricted internet access yet significant mobile phone utilisation, the Department of Telecommunications might explore the option of dispatching regular SMS updates or establishing a WhatsApp group. The Department of Transportation seeks to enhance the effectiveness of the SSP by implementing strategies that foster a well-informed and engaged contractor community.

ii. Localized Implementation Strategies

The discrepancies in program performance across provinces indicate that a standardised strategy may not produce optimal outcomes. The Department of Transport must evaluate the distinct needs of each province prior to implementing the Shambe Sonke Programme (SSP). This process will allow for the customisation of the program in accordance with the socio-economic dynamics of each region.In regions such as KwaZulu-Natal, where the Zibambele project demonstrates effective outcomes, the support requirements may vary compared to areas like Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, which encounter challenges related to management and resource allocation that impede the program's success. Comprehensive evaluations across all provinces enable the DoT to identify specific challenges and opportunities in each region. The Department of Transportation should establish support groups in each region to offer customised guidance and resources for contractors. These groups can collaborate with community members to ensure effective program implementation and adaptation to the evolving needs of residents. This focused approach enables the DoT to provide necessary support to contractors for their success, regardless of their location.

iii. Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships

To replicate the successful model established in KwaZulu-Natal in other regions, the Department of Transport should prioritise the development of strong partnerships between the public and private sectors. Collaborations have been essential in equipping contractors with the guidance, resources, and skills required to diversify income streams and attain autonomy. The SSP seeks to enable contractors to attain self-sufficiency by equipping them with skills, resources, and support through partnerships with non-profit business organisations and educational institutions across various regions. The Department of Transportation facilitates collaborations that meet the specific needs of contractors across various regions. In communities where agriculture serves as a source of income, collaboration with cooperatives and vendors may facilitate the provision of tools, seeds, and guidance to contractors.

iv. Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular assessment of the SSP's impact is essential, along with the implementation of necessary modifications. The Department of Transportation must develop a monitoring and evaluation framework incorporating both quantitative and qualitative metrics. This framework should focus on monitoring key performance indicators such as contractor earnings, job retention rates, and the effectiveness of contractors in utilising training and resources. The DoT should prioritise collecting input from contractors to identify areas for improvement in conjunction with these measures. Feedback may be collected via surveys, group discussions, or individual conversations. Implementing this systematic approach will customise the SSP to address the requirements of beneficiaries and advance its objective of poverty alleviation. The monitoring and evaluation process must incorporate the dissemination of regular reports to stakeholders to ensure transparency and accountability.

Future research

Further research is necessary to elucidate the enduring effects of the SSP on contractors' financial stability and the sustainability of income-generating projects. This investigation may provide important insights into contractors' well-being following SSP participation and their capacity to maintain or improve their income sources. Furthermore, investigating the potential application of the SSP model in other regions or countries facing similar challenges may highlight the significance of PPPs in improving program effectiveness. Future research may investigate the scalability and customisation of the SSP model across diverse socio-economic contexts. Assessing the impact of communication approaches and implementation methods is essential for gathering insights to refine the SSP further. The research seeks to improve global poverty alleviation initiatives by deepening the understanding of the SSP and analogous programs.

Acknowledgement

The author has read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.
Author Contributions: Conceptualization, D.N.; methodology, D.N.; validation, D.N.; formal analysis, D.N.; investigation, D.N.; resources, D.N.; writing—original draft preparation, D.N.; writing—review and editing, D.N.
Funding: This research was funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF), South Africa.
Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.
Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data is not publicly available due to restrictions.
Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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