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Unlocking Enterprise and Supplier Development Opportunities for South African Small Businesses in Rural and Township Areas

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Abstract

South African small businesses in rural and township areas face persistent barriers to growth, including limited access to finance, infrastructure deficits, and market entry challenges. Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) initiatives provide a powerful vehicle for addressing these issues. This paper explores strategies for leveraging ESD programmes to enhance small business capacity, aligning with South Africa's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) framework. Key interventions include fostering corporate-small business partnerships, streamlining access to funding, and offering tailored capacity-building programmes. Additionally, technology and digital platforms are highlighted as enablers for bridging market access gaps.The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with small business owners and policymakers with quantitative analysis of existing ESD programme outcomes. This methodology provides a comprehensive understanding of ESD's effectiveness in driving economic inclusion and sustainability. Findings emphasize collaborative efforts among government, corporates, and civil society to build resilient small business ecosystems in South Africa's underserved areas.

Keywords: capability; competitiveness; employment; outcomes; poverty