



09 September 2024

NATIONAL RURAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NARYSEC) PROGRAMME: BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The triple challenge of high unemployment, inequality and deepen poverty were accurately experienced in rural areas. Rural communities face various challenges, which include:¹

- High levels of unemployment, particularly among the youth;
- Lack of vocational skills, against the backdrop of limited job opportunities, which exorbitated the situation; and
- Lack of economic and social development, including limited access to government services as well as basic services.

The National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) was launched by the Department in September 2010 to address the challenge of high employment rate among young people in rural areas. It is part of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) job creation model. Through NARYSEC, young people in rural areas are equipped with theoretical and practical knowledge to create employment for themselves and other people in their communities. The Thaba Nchu College, which is known as NARYSEC College was officially opened in March 2015 as the headquarters of the NARYSEC.

2. OVERVIEW OF NARYSEC

At first, NARYSEC was designed as a two-year programme and later was extended to 4 years, but it has now been reversed to two years. The first group of participants started in 2010 and were getting a stipend of R1 320 per month.

Criteria for selection:

- Youth aged 18 – 35 years of age;
- Minimum entry level qualification is Grade 9 except under extenuating circumstances youth without grade 9 will be considered;
- Mainly rural areas and/or targeted Metros with rural pockets;
- Youth must be unemployed;
- 50 per cent of targeted youth must be female;
- Youth living with disabilities to be considered; and
- Former NARYSEC participants who are still unemployed may be targeted for upskilling towards economic opportunities.

The first intake in 2010 attracted close to 8 000 youth in nine provinces, of which 6 000 graduated in April 2014 from the four-year programme.

¹ Information below is sourced from DALRRD (2022).



At the time NARYSEC recorded the following achievements:²

- The training provided by the Department of Defence instils discipline, patriotism, life skills, communication skills, leadership skills etc.
- The young people enrolled in NARYSEC helped to profile rural households, which is used to identify urgent needs and interventions required in those areas.
- Through the Programme youth who left the schooling system early is provided with SAQA/NQF accredited qualifications. The programme has encouraged entrepreneurship among young people as some have started their businesses after they graduated.
- NARYSEC has a direct economic impact on unemployed youth through the stipend.
- The young people have helped the Restitution Programme by distributing the Citizens Manual for Land Claims and collecting oral history.

Notwithstanding the above achievements, the Programme has sustained the following Challenges:³

- Deployment of NARYSEC recruits. During the oversight visits to Northern Cape the then Portfolio Committee on Rural Development and Land Reform learnt from recruits themselves that they were not placed anywhere and had no clear job description and as a result they just claimed their stipends at the end of the month. It also became clear during Committee deliberations on NARYSEC that there is no proper supervision of the programme by the then Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, as it could not provide details of what the beneficiaries were doing and whether the programme had increased their chances to enter the labour market after the training. The former DRDLR promised to address this problem by diligently monitoring the implementation of NARYSEC in all provinces.
- There have been complaints from some students that they were given certificates of courses they did not compete while other graduates did not get their certificates.
- Although many young people have been recruited, the challenge is that there was no comprehensive exit strategy in place to ensure that recruits can use skills attained to be self-employed or be placed with existing enterprises.
- Learnerships and other skills programs require that after 30 per cent of training, a learner must undergo practical work training to get experience. However, it has been a challenge to persuade relevant host employers to provide the practical training needed. For example, in terms of the review, 20 per cent of the construction recruits were unable to find job placements.

Since then, there have been interventions to improve the situation. For example, through development of working relationships with relevant SETA's and training providers as well as constant monitoring of learning programmes, there has been a marked improvement in the throughput rate of learners who started training, as well as the number of certificates issued to learners who have completed the skills development portion of the Programme.⁴ Also, through the repurposing/refocussing of the NARYSEC policy, it is expected that all these challenges will be addressed.

² DALRRD (2019).

³ Van Staden (2013).

⁴ DRDLR (2016).



3. REPURPOSING/REFOCUSING OF THE NARYSEC PROGRAMME

During the Department's briefing on NARYSEC in 2019, the Committee, called for a review of the NARYSEC Programme, as part of the reconfiguration of the Department of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Reform underway. It stated that there is a need to review the NARYSEC programme to assess if the programme has achieved, the intended outcomes over the last five years, highlight the challenges encountered, and the implications for future programme implementation. As a result, the revised NARYSEC Policy was adopted by the Department in March 2022.

The primary objectives of the refocussed NARYSEC Programme are:⁵

- Recruit unemployed rural youth as part of the rural economy transformation strategy,
- Building the capacity of rural youth through various skills development interventions,
- Facilitating the transition of recruited youth to participate in economic activities,
- Encouraged the recruited youth to be involved in the upliftment of their communities, and
- Provide post programme support to youth that exited Programme. This would be covered under a separate strategy dealing with youth that have exited the Programme and are still unemployed or not involved in entrepreneurship.

4. PROGRESS

It is indicated in slide six (6) of the presentation that since 2010, a total of 21 089 young people has been recruited through NARYSEC in different fields. Most of the recruits are in construction and engineering (26.3 per cent per cent) followed by agriculture, forestry and fisheries (18.6 per cent per cent), which both make 44.9 per cent of the total recruits. Slide ten (10) of the presentation shows that from 2019/20 to 2022/23, of the total 9 778 young people recruited, 5 496 (56.2 per cent) were females and 4 282 (43.8 per cent) were males.

5. BUDGET ALLOCATION

Budget appropriation to the NARYSEC sub-programme has been declining from 2019/20 (R388.17 million) to 2024/25 (R168.67 million) except for 2023/24. The decrease in the budget have influenced the decrease in the number of young people recruited through NARYSEC. For example, in terms of the Annual Performance Plan of the Department, the plan is to train 1 751 young people through NARYSEC, which is a decrease compared to the estimated performance of 2 842 in 2023/24. The target is expected to decrease further in the outer years to 1 500.⁶

⁵ Information below is sourced from DALRRD (2020)

⁶ DALRRD (2024).



6. ISSUES OF CONSIDERATION

- The Department should indicate whether the Programme has achieved the intended outcomes, highlight the challenges encountered, and the implications for future programme implementation. It should be noted that the Department has developed results-based monitoring and evaluation to measure the outcomes of NARYSEC Programme.⁷
- In the presentation, it is indicated that 21 089 young people that have been recruited through NARYSEC since its inception but does not indicate how many of those have graduated and got job and/business opportunities. The Department should indicate the number of NARYSEC recruits that have graduated, dropped out and received job or business opportunities since inception. This is important considering that in the past there was no comprehensive exit strategy and poor monitoring of the Programme. As a result, some did not get job or business opportunities. It should also indicate whether any engagements were made with private sector, other government departments or entities for them to partner with the Department in assisting NARYSEC graduates to get employment.
- Currently, how much is the stipend and are all the students getting their allowance? If, not what measures have been in place to address that.
- It is appreciated that most of the recruits are in the fields of construction and engineering and agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which is in line with the recommendation made by the Committee during the 6th administration that skills development and jobs opportunities created through NARYSEC should be directly aligned to the mandate of the Department. The Department should indicate how many of the NARYSEC graduates have been employed or received internship from the Department, indicating gender and the type of areas they got employment or internship in the Department.
- It is appreciated that the target on the number of young people trained and supported with business opportunities have been met in 2023/24. It would be interesting to get details on the type of business opportunities created and the number of people involved per province.
- It is a concern that the target on the number of young people linked to job opportunities was not met in 2023/24. The Department should provide an explanation why this target was not met and measures it has put in place to ensure that the stumbling blocs are addressed to be able to meet this target in future.
- The Department should indicate the measures that is exploring to make cost for the Programme sustainable.

⁷ DALRRD (2022).



REFERENCES

- Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD, 2024). *Annual Performance Plan 2024-2025*.
- Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (2022). *Revised National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) Policy 2022*.
- Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2019). *Responses to questions asked by Portfolio Committee Members on 14 November 2019, during the NARYSEC presentation. 12 December*.
- Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2016). *Brief Report to the Portfolio Committee on the National Rural Youth Service Corps. 31 March*.
- Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2010). *NARYSEC Booklet*.
- Department of Rural Development and Land Reform (2016). *Brief Report to the Portfolio Committee on the National Rural Youth Service Corps. 31 March*.
- Van Staden, A. (2013). *Power Point presentation: Modalities and successes of the National Rural Youth Services Corps (NARYSEC)*. Department of Science and Technology Government Cluster Policy Workshop.