

EXPLORING THE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES AND THE SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF EXTENDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME TRAINEES

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the family life and living circumstances of EPWP participants who are based at TLF, their spending drivers, their survival strategies including understanding the social protection measures used by participants and how participants are able to navigate their everyday social experiences in relation to the EPWP. One of the greatest challenges faced by South Africa is the rising youth unemployment and lack of skills development for these young people. In order to address both the problem of low skills level and the rising unemployment level, the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) can be used as a starting point. The EPWP is aimed at reducing unemployment and contributing to ending the skills deficit, and in turn improving development in South Africa. Some scholars argue that even though there are disparities between the popular perception of the EPWP and the actual outcomes, the programme arguably has the potential to offer some response to the unemployment and skills shortage crisis in South Africa. The imminent need to provide for themselves, their dependents and family tends to be on par with learning and developing skill sets that can be beneficial when seeking employment that guarantees survival. Even trainees who had no dependents and solely used the income on themselves, and those coming from middle-income households that are able to provide security, saw the Programme as an opportunity to gain income which they can utilise for personal care and advancement. This article explores the survival strategies and social and economic embeddedness of EPWP trainees, based at Tshwane Leadership Foundation, and how they inform their participation in the Programme. Added to this, there are critical socio-economic nuances that need to be unpacked in order to get an understanding of the EPWP's ability to alter the labour market performance and entry into the labour market of trainees'. The article utilised a qualitative research approach. Data was collected from the 30 EPWP previous trainees through interview technique. The article closes with some recommendations for the EPWP in the future.

Keywords: EPWP, Skills, Social embeddedness, Survival strategies, Unemployment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public Works Programmes (PWP's) have been employed by many countries, both in the developed and developing world, as 'temporary auxiliary mea-

asures' aimed at providing employment and sustenance to the greatest possible number of the unemployed on a temporary basis in times of acute or transient shocks (Aliber, Kirsten, Maharajh,

Nhlapo-Hlope, & Nkoane, 2006; Samson, 2007). In reaction to worsening poverty in the 2000s, lack of job security and adequate safety nets to assist the unemployed, the government began to look towards public works programmes or what is sometimes referred to as special employment programmes in South Africa's policy discourses. At its policy conference in late 2002, the ANC government resolved that there should be a large scale employment and skills development accelerator programme that can address the mass unemployment crisis.

The government became increasingly aware of the great extent of unemployment and poverty that prevailed in South Africa; which subsequently led to the introduction of the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) that is currently administered and managed by the National Department of Public Works (McCord, 2004b:4; Visser, 2004:13). The EPWP was meant to provide poverty and income relief through temporary work for the unemployed, especially youth and women with the hope that this temporary employment would eventually lead to permanent employment. The EPWP is the major government initiative intended to address a range of government policy priorities such as social and economic development challenges (Department of Public Works, 2016).

South Africa's transition from a labour-intensive to a skills-intensive economy meant that there has been a low demand for unskilled labour, in relation to its mass supply. According to

McCord (2004b:3), the consequence of this economic transition meant that the number of labour market entrants exceeds the number of jobs available, resulting in mass unemployment, especially of unskilled labourers.

As the only major skills training policy intervention available to unemployed persons of working age in South Africa, the EPWP is meant to upskill participants to a level where they can meet the needs of the job market (McCord, 2004b: 9). If this is the aim, it is then crucial that participants benefit from this short-term programme in terms of skills development and prospects for further employment.

However, in South Africa, the EPWP has taken on a new phenomenon. The EPWP trainees' interaction with the program is mostly guided by their living circumstances and family life. The direction the programme has taken is in line with the development narrative which, in his book, *Give a man a fish: Reflections on the new politics of distribution*, Ferguson (2015:165) terms "*the rise and rise of social protection as a development policy in a neoliberal world*". Even though the world is in the neoliberal era, social protection (welfare) has become, a policy priority in times where the agenda of transferring economic control to the private sector and global economic adjustment programmes are prominent policy features (Merrien, 2013).

2. EPWP AT TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF)

was launched in 1993 as a faith-based non-profit organisation (NPO) based in the heart of the City of Tshwane's (CoT) Central Business District (CBD). The organisation consists of seven programmes that work towards renewing urban communities and providing services to the marginalised within the CBD. The programmes work in areas that support and provide social services to at-risk women and girls, the homeless, individuals involved in sex work, children in need, patients with chronic mental illness, people living with HIV/AIDS and residents living in the inner city's social housing projects.

EPWP currently creates opportunities for employment in four sectors namely, Infrastructure, Non-state, Environment, and Social and Cultural sectors (Department of Public Works, 2016). TLF operates under the Non-State Sector (NSS) of the EPWP Programme, which was introduced in 2009 and uses wage subsidies to support NPO's with their community development initiatives (Department of Public Works, 2016). The NSS Programme houses NPO's that have a strong social impact component and address social issues such as gender, poverty, skills, and education (Chakwizira, 2010).

According to some scholars, The NSS model has the best opportunity to integrate the socio-economic growth and development needs of the intended EPWP beneficiaries with the EPWP (Chakwizira, 2010; Samson, 2008, 2015). Thus, this model addresses the needs of the marginalised communities that NPO's serve while also providing opportunities for employment and

development to these communities.

TLF started to take part in the EPWP in 2012 and has managed to train around 450 participants thus far. The organisation has an annual intake of between 80 and 85 trainees, who assist and are trained in various activities including social assistance, office administration, fundraising and marketing, early childhood development, arts and culture, primary healthcare and advocacy work. The trainees are divided into the seven projects at TLF according to which project requires the most assistance. In order to understand the survival strategies of trainees 30 past trainees of the EPWP at TLF were interviewed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Family Life and Living Circumstances of Trainees

Part of the analysis undertaken during this study was to find out about the trainees family life and living circumstances. This was to get a better sense of their family background and to discover the difference, in responsibility for trainees who come from different income households, spending drives of EPWP, trainees, caregiving roles and employment activities before joining EPWP.

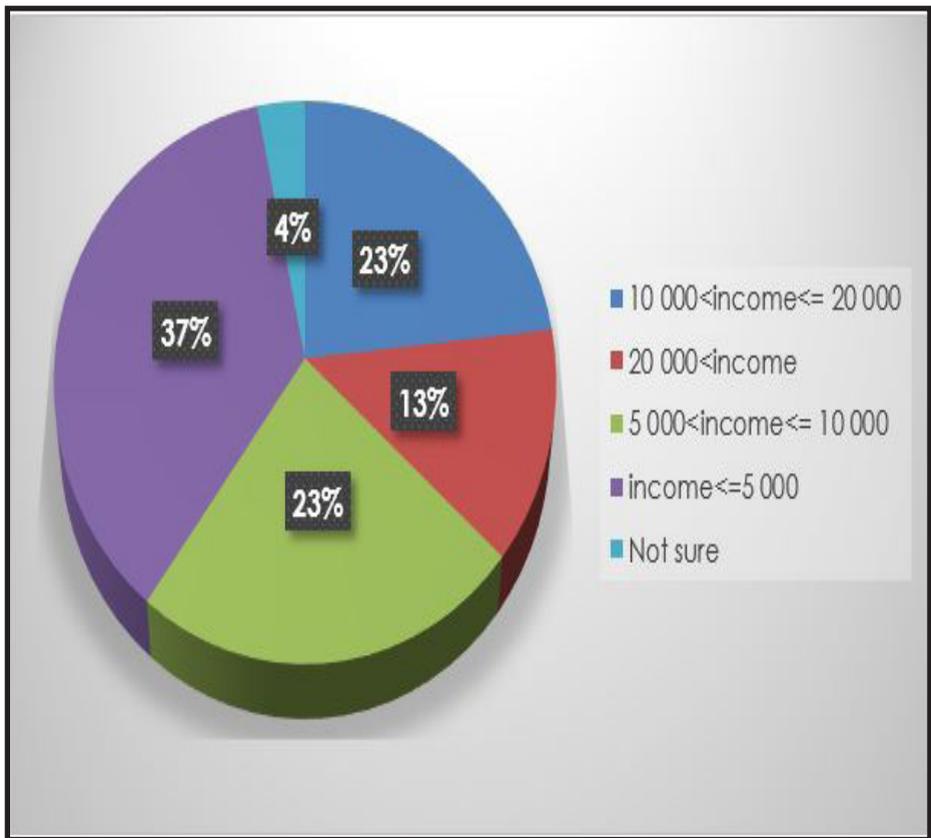
3.2 Family income levels

All the interviewed trainees come from middle to lower income households. According to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA), annual household income can be categorised as middle income if the income coming into a household

is between R19 201 and R307 200 per annum (Census, 2011; Income Dynamics and Poverty Status of Households in South Africa, 2011: 13). Low-income households earn combined income amounts of between R1 and R19 200 per annum (Census 2011: Income Dynamics and Poverty Status of Households in South Africa, 2011: 13). Respondents were asked about their average

family income and were given a scale as an estimate of the monthly income coming into their households. Trainees were asked whether their family income was above R20 000, above R10 000 but below or equals to R 20 000, above R5000 but below or equals to R10 000 or if it was below or equals R5000 per month. Figure 1. below represents the answers received.

Figure 1: Average Family Income per Month (Rands p/m)



These findings reveal that while the programme aims to target the non-working, most indigent population who have limited access to formal

work opportunities, the contrary is occurring. In the case of TLF, there was an equal number of respondents who came from the highest and lowest

earning brackets (11 trainees each).

Individuals, from what's deemed a more comfortable background, are part of the programme and like their counterparts, who are from poorer homes, are in the programme due to lack of access to more formal work opportunities.

Unlike many African countries where socio-economic profiles of people determine the ease of access to employment, in South Africa, unemployment is not confined to particular income levels or spatial localities (Klasen & Woolard, 2009). The need for financial relief through an income stream cuts across different household income lines, especially within the black community.

The EPWP is the governments' attempt at raising peoples standards of living through social policy measures that address the problem of unemployment by issuing cash payments for low skilled labour that would otherwise be jobless. However, the economic development of the country is not growing at a pace fast enough to help curb the many structural issues of poverty and joblessness that exist. This often leaves participants of the programme looking for work to gain cash payments rather than working to gain experience for employment prospects.

Seekings and Natrass (2008:336) note that, overall, inequality has widened in South Africa because of the deepening unemployment crisis, and people from disadvantaged backgrounds were more vulnerable to the shocks of unemployment but were poorly placed to take advantage of

the opportunities that were opening at the top end of the labour market. The sharp decline in the demand for low skilled and manual labour has meant that there is a decreased access to wages for poor people and those with low-skill sets in South Africa (Ferguson, 2015:103).

The country's current labour market climate knows no bounds- meaning that unemployment affects the different income levels, including those that are deemed to be resistant to unemployment and poverty.

3.2 Trainees contribution to family income

When asked if trainees contributed to their family income, around 73% indicated that they do, while approximately 27% said they do not contribute (see Table 1. below). Of the 22 participants who said they do contribute, 19 were female and came from the low-income household bracket.

Budlender (2005: 34) understands this phenomenon to occur because women are more likely than men to live in poverty, raise children alone or head a single parent household. One respondent augmented this by saying: *" I joined EPWP because I needed to help out at home all while taking care of my child. My mother is a single parent and doesn't earn a lot of money, I am also a single parent so I need to play my part and help at home"* (Monareng, 2017). The table depicts a clear picture of overall household income in families of the 30 participants in the study.

Table 1: Do you contribute to the overall Household Income in your family?

	Freq.	Percentage
No	8	26,67%
Yes	22	73,33%
Grand Total	30	100%

The prevalence of young people playing a distributive role in their kinships speaks to Ferguson's assertion of "*distributive labour*" where he suggests that distribution (Distribution can be understood as the way that total output, income or wealth are distributed among individuals), can become an object of labour (Ferguson, 2015: 97). This means that people labour very hard so that they can create opportunities that will allow them and their families to survive and benefit through distributive means such as income from work or the informal economy. That is, understanding the politics of labour and distribution in this way assists in recognising that livelihoods are incremental in determining the survival strategies of the poor and those outside of the formal labour market.

The EPWP is effective in providing short-term financial security for trainees, most of whom, contribute to their family income. This correlates with the

argument that people from lower-income households who receive any sort of income (be it from employment, pensions, disability payments) are likely to encounter strong claims on that income and never get a chance to wholly own their income and what they do with it (Ferguson, 2015). The contribution to the family income by a member who gains employment (temporary or permanent) is common practice for participants in the EPWP; and often times a motivating factor for joining the programme, this is especially true for women (See McCord, 2004a; Samson, 2007).

4. SPENDING DRIVERS OF EPWP TRAINEES

The day-to-day activities and responsibilities that trainees are confronted with play a huge role in how they navigate and negotiate with the training experience. More importantly, the earnings gained from being a part of the pro-

gramme provide some financial assistance towards the trainees' responsibilities. When asked what they mostly used their stipends for, trainees indicated that the stipends received were used mostly for financial relief towards familial obligations and consumption.

Table 2 below breaks down how wages received were used by respondents. As mentioned, respondents (27%) with dependents used their income for childcare; which included groceries, nappies and medication. Second, to this, 27% of respondents used their income for healthcare and household services for themselves and other family members. Items mentioned included medication and clinic visit costs for sickly children and ailing elders, electricity coupons and water-related services.

About 17% used the money to pay their rent, groceries and miscellaneous items (toiletries, transport and so on). The other 17% sent most of

their earnings home to help relieve the financial strain on their family members. These respondents move between households where one is a permanent family homestead in the rural areas while the other is more temporary and in an urban area.

The remaining 13% of the respondents used a significant amount of their earnings on transport to and from work. One condition that the sectoral determination of the EPWP provides is that trainees under the EPWP should be locally based, living in close proximity to the organisation of work. However, due to TLF's already existing pool of volunteers, some trainees who were employed lived further than the sectoral determinations prescribed proximity. Some trainees from this group were disgruntled and felt the programme was not in any way beneficial for their professional or personal development mainly because a lot of their money and time was spent on travel.

Table 2: Wage Usage by EPWP Trainees

	Freq.	Percentage
Childcare	8	26,67%
Healthcare and household services	8	26,67%
Rent and Groceries	5	16,67%
Sending money Home	5	16,67%
Transport	4	13,33%
Grand Total	30	100%

From this, it can be deduced that trainees used their money for everyday financial relief from their lived experiences. This temporary relief experienced by trainees during the time of training imposed the need to earn some consistent income even after the programme. Arguably, the idea and freedom that comes with earning a consistent income, despite how little it may be, creates more of an aspiration for stable formal employment than the skills one could gain from the programme. Being a part of the programme, not only benefits trainees in some way, but also their families and, for some, their extended relatives. Importantly, what they do with this money is crucial. The dynamic of kinship sharing is a huge feature in this experience where the earnings of participants are not just for themselves but are distributed to, often unemployed, family and community members through cash transfers or other resources. Sharing among kins is a crucial survival strategy and depends on what Toit and Neves (2009b as quoted in Ferguson, 2015: 107) termed 'horizontal philanthropy'.

Horizontal philanthropy can be understood as a process in which people who are poor or have limited access to resources mobilise and share resources among themselves where these transactions provide a type of mutual support and act as an investment to improve conditions and future support. (Wilkinson & Fowler, 2015).

Amongst young black South Africans, this phenomena has gained momentum in everyday discourses and has been popularly coined

'Black Tax'. Black Tax refers to the financial obligation that black professionals are obligated to share every month to support and subsidise their less fortunate family members and relatives (Ratlebjane, 2015).

This phenomena also affects individuals from low-income streams who, once securing employment, are subjected to paying 'Black Tax' with the little that they earn. Trainees who participate in the precarious and often insecure, EPWP end up having a hard time navigating the expectations of kinship distribution, their own aspirations, and what they earn. This offers a bleak realisation of the programmes limited ability in helping to better the lives of trainees, and, subsequently, their families. There were periods, during the programme, where trainees would receive their stipends late or not at all in a particular month, thus affecting their obligations to support their families.

In such instances, participants were highly dissatisfied with the programme to the extent where three of the participants ended up quitting the programme. Five trainees' mentioned that they have once resorted to borrowing money from a Machonisa (unregistered micro-lender popularly known as a loan-shark, Machonisa) in order to meet their monthly obligations. The decision to resort to borrowing from the Machonisa's is a coping strategy that costs the trainees dearly. The Machonisa's are notorious for charging exorbitant interest (sometimes as high as 50%) on money borrowed, which leaves trainees in a financial deficit with less money to spend on distribution

and their obligations. This leaves trainees worse off than when they started as they have accumulated more debt against an income that is temporary.

This resonates with James (2014) work which states that in South Africa upward mobility is much aspired to but seldom easily attainable. This leaves households with little choice but to borrow (both from formal and informal institutions) and spend money they have not yet earned. James (2014) asserts that this culture of borrowing puts households under immense pressure; but, in order to fulfil their social requirements, people often acquire intensified obligations which get them "deeper into a hole" of indebtedness.

Respondents also made use of stokvels as income saving mechanisms. Seven of the respondents joined a stokvel that was started by the permanent employees at TLF. Stokvels are clubs formed by a group of people that serve as rotating credit schemes or saving schemes. Members contribute fixed sums of money to a central fund or account on a weekly, bi-monthly or monthly basis. Stokvels can take on different forms. There are stokvels that are funeral schemes, annual savings, monthly or annual grocery collection .

Their decision to save with the stokvel was because they did not want to use the money earned just for immediate expenditure but also wanted to have enough money during times of the year when claims to their incomes increased, for example during Christmas time when dependants want new clothes and groceries have to

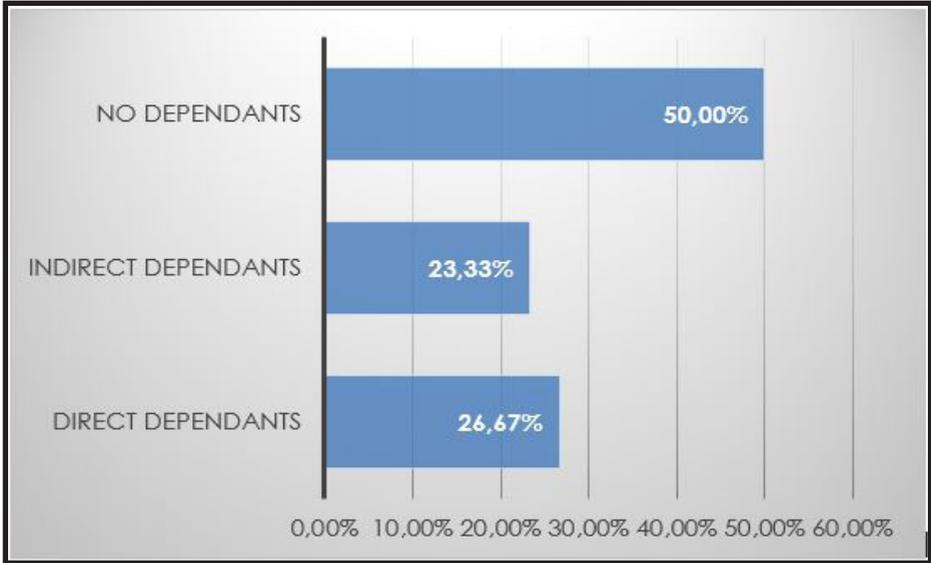
be stocked up, and in January when dependants go back to school and new stationery and uniform is required.

Stokvels have become a popular saving mechanism amongst low-income earners in precarious positions because they enable funds to be detached from an individual and sheltered within a collective group that is less vulnerable to the daily needs and demands that make saving difficult at the individual and household level (Ferguson, 2015:96).

According to Krige (2012), saving clubs such as stokvels have played an important role among the working class communities in mobilizing collective credit and saving, retaining flows of monies within townships and urban areas. These mechanisms open up spaces for the little (or forgotten) to practice solidarity and mutuality in often hostile socio-economic ecologies which they are a part of (Krige, 2012). The interviewed trainees mentioned that with their savings, they were able to not only meet their financial responsibilities but also survive the sudden shock of unemployment once the programme ended and their income dried up.

Of the 30 interviewed participants, only 8 had direct dependants (children) under the age of eighteen. The remaining 22 respondents did not have direct dependants. However, of the 22, seven mentioned that they either had indirect dependants who were their siblings, nephews, nieces, cousins and even mothers and grandmothers whom they cared for and considered to be their dependants (See Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Trainees with dependants (%)



Those trainees with direct and indirect dependants had a huge association and attachment to earnings gained from the programme more than those without dependants. The emphasis on financial provision in kinship relations heavily defines the trainees economic and social existence where having a means of consistent income allows trainees to care and provide for their dependants. Scholars have termed this phenomenon the 'sociality of money' where it is understood that the most important and highly valued forms of sociality, solidarity and care among the poor are those that are facilitated by the use of money and participating in markets (Ferguson, 2015; Neves & Du Toit, 2012).

It can, therefore, be inferred that the economic existence of trainees as caregivers means that they interact with the programme in terms of pro-

viding financial relief for their current circumstances. Receiving cash, in the form of income, has become more than just a desirable consumer good; it has become a need so basic that it dictates a range of crucial forms of social action and social being (Ferguson, 2015:137). In this respect, income for one's daily existence and socialisation negates the programme's stance that its existence is to assist participants to gain work experience and skills that will prepare them for the formal job market. In reality, the programme is taking shape in the opposite form. Participants are a part of social realities that are navigated by one's ability to obtain money for support, caregiving and provision

Predictably, the majority of the trainees whose income goes towards the caregiving of dependants are women. These findings concur with studies

by Budlender (2005: 35) who found that women with dependents under the age of 18 tend to spend far more time and money than anyone else on child care. Another study found that even women without children of their own tend to spend more time on childcare than men who have their own children living with them (Budlender, Chobokoane, & Mpetsheni, 2001).

Money has become increasingly ubiquitous with caregiving and programmes such as the EPWP should be explicit in recognising that when people join the programme they are motivated not just by the potential to enter the labour market, but by various social and redistributive deductions bound to them.

5. CAREGIVING ROLES OF TRAINEES

Trainees with dependents under the age of 18 were further asked who takes care of their dependents while they are working. Of the 8 respondents, 3 had children who went to primary school and 5 had toddlers aged between the ages of 2 - 4 years. The respondents with toddlers said they took their children to daycare. Four of the respondents enrolled their children in the daycare centre at TLF.

According to the respondents, their children attending a daycare centre right where they worked made life easier and less expensive because as staff members of TLF they received a discount on the school fees. Due to unemployment subsequent to the end of programme participation, 3 of the mothers had to deregister their children from daycare and take them

to their parents' home for caregiving. It is important to note that all eight respondents received monthly child support grants from the government. All trainees who receive grants indicated that the monthly R400 is not sufficient to afford basic necessities such as food, nutrition, medication and daycare school fees. Although the South African government intends that social grants be used to substitute or supplement the income of families, the trainee's responses show that they are using the grants for more than subsistence and more for survival.

James (2014) states that money from social grants is used as a means of sustaining multi-generational households by being a substitute for the unemployed income and a resource for income shocks. In this context, social grants, in the form of child support grants, are unable to act as a buffer against poverty. However, the supplement of the EPWP stipend, albeit for a short-term, to grant money earnings had a positive impact on the social participation and inclusion of their dependents. Also interesting to note was that more than 50% of respondents with young children mentioned that they had no emotional or financial support from the children's biological fathers.

Seekings (2008: 15) suggests that men sometimes do not recognise their responsibilities to their own children and may evade claims on their time and income. This tends to leave mothers in economically precarious conditions where they have to use different means of earning an income to provide for their children, including joining the EPWP.

6. Employment activity before joining the EPWP

Africa's fast-growing cities are becoming inhabited by people who lack formal sector employment and have had to find ways to improvise their, often, complex and contingent livelihoods. People have resorted to combining various activities such as informal trade, casual labour, begging, hustling, theft, seeking assistance from relatives and partners and so on (Ferguson, 2015). Tellingly, Table 3 below indicates the activities respondents were engaged in before joining the EPWP. The majority (46.67%) of respondents were studying before joining the EPWP at TLF.

It is interesting to note that from the group that had been studying, about 13% of them conducted their practical work at TLF under the programme and were absorbed into EPWP once it began. Seven respondents were ab-

sorbed into the programme while volunteering at TLF (23.33%). Also, 6 of the trainees who were volunteering before the EPWP were volunteering at TLF.

The participants who mentioned they were unemployed (16.67%) prior to joining the programme all stated that they were actively seeking and applying for employment. When these respondents were asked how they survived financially before the programme, they indicated that they relied on family members and some on the child support grants they received for their dependents or elderly family members. Respondents who indicated that they were employed listed working as a receptionist, administration clerk and cashier prior to joining the programme. The respondent who was involved in casual work mentioned that her main activities included working in a restaurant and selling perfumes and handbags informally.

Table 3: Employment Activity and Survival strategies before joining the Programme

	Freq	Percentage
Casual Work	1	3,33%
Working	3	10,00%
Unemployed	5	16,67%
Volunteering	7	23,33%
Studying	14	46,67%
Grand Total	30	100%

Those respondents who were involved in other economic activities (paid or unpaid) prior to the programme reported giving up or reducing this work in order to participate in the programme. As one trainee mentions: The programme requires more of your time and it pays better than what I was doing before. If you miss work for a day your log book will show and you won't get your full pay. That's why I choose to only focus on the programme (Mkhondo, 2017).

6.1 Duration of activities before the programme

Table 4 below highlights the duration of the respondents' activities

Table 4: Duration of Employment Activity and Survival Strategy Prior to the EPWP

	Freq	Percentage
3-11 Months	5	16,67%
1-3 Years	20	66,67%
4-7 Years	5	16,67%
Grand Total	30	100%

Responses highlight that trainees were engaged, for a significant time, in activities that could help open the proverbial 'employment door'. However, at the time of this study, more than 50% of the respondents were unemployed and 33% went back to volunteering with

ties before participating in the programme. For 20 of the respondents, the duration of activity was between one to three years. Among those, 11 respondents were busy with their post-secondary education studies.

Five other respondents were busy with their stated activity for a shorter period of time (3-11 months) and within this time frame, 2 of the 5 participants finished their studies and were unemployed, but actively seeking employment. The remaining 5 respondents were either studying, involved in casual work or volunteering for four to seven years prior to joining the programme, but have never worked in the formal labour market or had a stable job.

the hope of being employed by the organisation or absorbed in the EPWP once it commences in the new year. Trainees have qualities typically associated with being employable but hardly see any changes to their employment status after completing the programme.

Arguably, the problem with temporary EPWP employment is that it creates a short-term security 'bubble' which eventually 'bursts' leaving them back to being 'unemployed'. This adds to the existing problem of discouraged work-seekers who enter into such programmes with the sole purpose of securing an income for the year and nothing more because of the programmes cyclical nature of taking participants from being unemployed to being employed and back to being unemployed in a short space of time.

6.2 Survival strategies during unemployment and dependency on social grants

When considering Southern Africa's massive unemployment rates, the idea of distribution taking place via access to wages and markets fails to account for how the numbers of unemployed and poor people obtain goods and survive. Most of the African poor are not wage labourers and do not obtain their goods and services through the traditional market of wage labour (Ferguson, 2015: 91). Rather, they find different means and improvise to survive through an array of plural economic activities.

Ferguson (2015: 94, 98, 99) understands this to be a kind of 'improvisation under conditions of adversity'. State and private transfers play a pivotal role as part of the unemployed's 'survivalist improvisations'. They can include state social grants, community or family based transfers such as loans, gifts, and stokvel payouts (Ferguson, 2015; McCord, 2012).

The current social protection measures in South Africa are in the form of social grants that are paid to children and pensioners on a monthly basis. Usually, in low-income communities, the grant income gained, which is often inadequate, is subject to claims from family members, relatives, and sometimes neighbours.

As meagre as this income might be, it should not be discounted as these small dribbles received by the poor and unemployed provide part of the answer to the question of how people with no visible means of earning an income manage to survive their everyday realities (Ferguson, 2015: 96). People with very little income have managed to survive with the little that they receive. The grant system has, however, created a gap in the social system where the young unemployed able-bodied population, including youth, have little to no direct social protection or support.

Some able-bodied unemployed individuals receive financial relief, through social grant money collected by dependants and pensioners in their families. This effectively means that households where everyone is unemployed and are without any children, disabled people or pensioners have no access to state distribution and therefore no social protection.

Given the lack of social protection and the high unemployment rate for able-bodied youth, many young people have turned to skills development programmes, one being, the EPWP with the hope of gain-

ing skills while earning an income. As Table 5 shows, trainees at TLF were asked if either they or a family member are beneficiaries of the

social grant payment system? If yes, they were then asked if they have noticed any significant improvement in their economic reality?

Table 5: Are you or a Family Member a Beneficiary of the State Social Grant System?

	Freq	Percentage
No	17	56,67%
Yes	13	43,33%
Grand Total	30	100%

Approximately 57% of the respondents said they either were or had a family member who was a beneficiary. Of this group, all of the respondents said that the social grant had somewhat improved their economic reality and activity. However, they all mentioned that, on its own, the grant money is not enough, and they oftentimes find themselves supplementing with other income streams.

In this instance, the supplementary salary was from being part of the EPWP. The social grant system is supported by many scholars who maintain that the government's approach of pursuing development initiatives to address the plight of the poor and unemployed who otherwise have limited access to the formal job market is a step in the right direction (Samson, 2015; Triegaardt, 2006, 2014).

Social grants, however, do not just en-

able their direct recipients to use the small amounts of cash on their own needs. Instead, those who access resources are dependents of the state, and themselves the source of income for others whom Ferguson defines as sub-dependents' (Ferguson, 2015: 104).

Sub-dependence has created strenuous situations for indigent families who already survive on so little, but are forced to stretch this for the survival of other family members. Having to share the small grant amount with able-bodied individuals who cannot find employment, or provide for themselves is sometimes a point on contention in families. One respondent supported: I sometimes have to ask my mother, who earns a pension grant, for money to do my own personal things.

We sometimes fight before she can help me. It's frustrating and I know that sometimes she cannot afford

to help me but where else can I go? (Anonymous, 2017). Not being able to find employment is in most instances no fault on the part of the trainees (job seekers). It is more so a fault on the system of the labour market that cannot absorb young unemployed youth eager to work and grow.

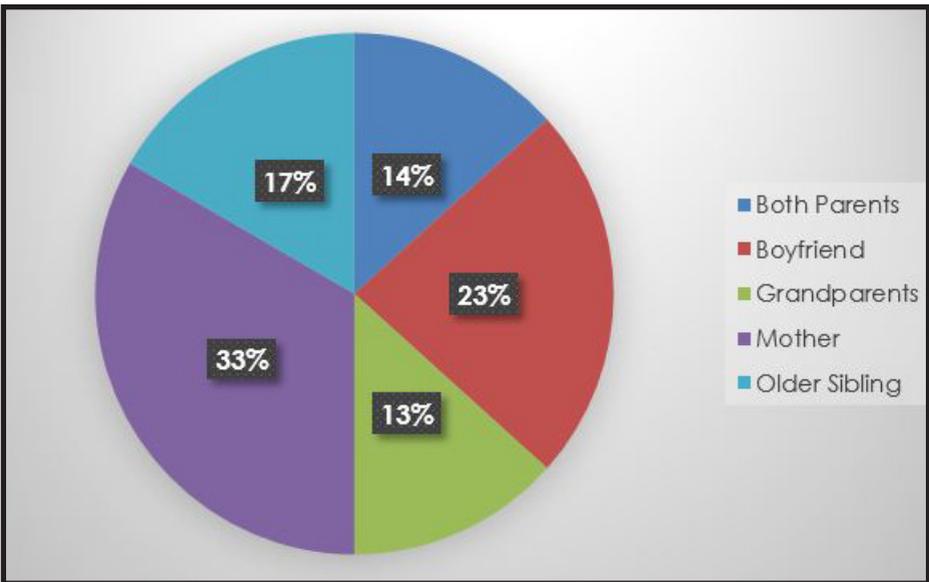
This can be attributed to a slow growth affected by economic policies that are out of touch with the situation on the ground and have become antagonistic towards the social realities many of these participants are facing. Other supplementary means of income

Trainees were asked if they have received or still receive any other financial assistance before or during their participation in the EPWP.

Figure 3 shows that all the interviewed respondents mentioned that they mainly depend on financial relief from a parent, relative or partner in times of financial difficulties when employed or unemployed.

The majority of the trainees were receiving this assistance in the form of a monthly stipend, while others mentioned that they only received upon asking.

Figure 3: Financial Assistance while Unemployed



The politics of distribution and dependence have changed where in the past mass access to unskilled labour (needed by the mining and manufacturing industries) meant that young men would be the breadwinners who earn an income which was

made claim to by their families (parents, partners and siblings) often by a female figure who would then distribute accordingly (Seekings, 2008).

This is no longer the case due to the sharp decline in labour-intensive in-

dustries where men were the preferred candidates for jobs. The resizing and shutting down of factories and mines, and turning to modern solutions, such as technology, for business saw the mass exodus of jobs that once employed masses of unskilled black labour.

Today relations of distribution have reversed where new streams of income, through social grants and informal trading, mean that women, children and the disabled are the ones with the distributive duty and power. Through their income, they have become the breadwinners and are now holding down homes and assisting the unemployed able-bodied figures who would usually be the ones providing the financial assistance.

What is also notable is the dynamics between intimate relationships and economic transfers. Seven women mentioned that they rely on their partners for financial assistance even while receiving EPWP income or a child support grant. As a form of survivalist improvisation respondents navigate their political economy through social relations and sexual relationships which help them guarantee enough income to meet their financial obligations and claims made to their income. Ferguson (2015) states that reciprocities of the economic and the sexual are linked with the deeply conflicted gender relations that are entrenched in the fibre of society.

Gender relations are still dominated by patriarchal ideology and relations of power where, ethnographically, the man is the head of the household and

the decision maker. Additionally, the growing *blesser/blesee* phenomenon where sexual relations between older men and younger girls (stereotypically schoolgirls) take place in exchange for money to buy the girls desired consumer goods (Ferguson, 2015).

Paradoxically, with the rise of improvised livelihoods, more women have started to enjoy possibilities of being independent of men and supporting themselves through improvised livelihoods; social grants provision and informal trade are more open to women than to men (Ferguson, 2015: 112). Also, the EPWP has quotas where women and youth constitute the majority of programme participants. Under these transformed conditions, women are able to earn independent sources of income. Despite this, it is still very clear that sexual relations and love continue to be tightly bound up by distributive flows, where more frequently the source of the resources is expected to be a man (Swinder & Watkins, 2007 as cited in Ferguson, 2015: 112).

7. CONCLUSION

The social and embeddedness of trainees, as unemployed, able-bodied individuals, who are caregivers and breadwinners; coupled with the unfavourable economic climate in South Africa has meant that trainees have had to improvise to survive. The family structure is pivotal in the respondents' everyday economic politics and in most cases, acts as a determining factor for economic activities that trainees take part in. Many black South Africans' have long

secured their livelihoods by accessing a multitude of channels through which distributive 'flows' water the social field. This can be seen through the various networks of income .

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