



An Evaluation of Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's Employment Creation Tool

by

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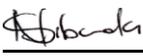
DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Development Studies at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not been submitted previously by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this thesis, has obtained the applicable research ethics approval for the research described in this work.

The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for Researchers and the Policy Guidelines for Responsible Research.

Signature: 

Date: November 2021



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ABSTRACT

South Africa is facing unprecedented levels of structural unemployment, threatening peace and national security. This chronic problem has its foundations in colonial and apartheid-era laws which propagated a separatist development approach, favouring White people over other races, and leading to intergenerational poverty, inequality and unemployment. However, despite the latter being a national challenge, women and youth bear the brunt of South Africa's structural unemployment challenge. The efforts of the government to address the structural unemployment problem through several economic policies and strategies has yielded limited results. One of these strategies is a Public Works Programme (PWP) introduced in 1996 which was later expanded into a Public Employment Programme (PEP), the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), in 2004 to provide temporary employment relief to the vulnerable and unskilled, focusing mainly on women, youth and people living with disabilities.

This thesis analyses the effectiveness of the EPWP in contributing to solving the country's unemployment challenge, especially among women and youth. The study uses a mixed approach to determine the active participation of women and youth in the EPWP and their chances of transitioning into the labour market. It also traces former EPWP participants to establish the extent to which they had integrated into the labour market and the challenges they encountered in accessing full-time employment opportunities. The study also solicited the views of the EPWP officials to get information which is not captured in the programme's official reports. The analytical procedure involved document analysis, focusing on EPWP reports from phases One (1) to Three (3) of the programme, parliamentary, media and general labour market reports.

Primary data was collected from the EPWP participants in townships in the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality (Roodepan, Greenpoint and Veregenoerg townships) and villages in the Joe Morolong Local Municipality (Gamothibi and Glenred). Former EPWP participants from Kimberley townships were also traced from the various provinces they



have relocated to in search of employment opportunities. The EPWP officials in Kimberley and Kuruman at various government spheres also took part in the study to share their views. Issues of relevance at the national level were solicited from the EPWP officials at the EPWP Head Office in Pretoria.

This study demonstrates the magnitude and the uniqueness of South Africa's unemployment crisis that has left women and youth severely marginalised. The analysis shows that, in its current form and size, the EPWP falls far short of providing the much-needed temporary employment relief to women and youth. The employment needs in the country are more than four (4) times what the EPWP can provide. In addition, the EPWP skilling and reskilling interventions are inadequate, resulting in limited transition of the participants to full-time employment or self-employment. The study makes two (2) propositions (1) the need to find a middle ground between Keynesian Model and the Neoliberalism approach to solve the country's unemployment challenge because independent policies for government or markets are inadequate. (2) A new design for the EPWP which separates job seekers from social protection beneficiaries. This will enable streamlining of support and thereby ensure that the programme achieves its goal of building the country's capacity in the post-apartheid era as pronounced during its launch.

However, this thesis acknowledges the size and the complexity of the country's challenges. The injustices of the past that are too structured and deeply rooted, so the responsibility given to the EPWP may be too much for one programme to solve. The country's public sector challenges such as inefficiency, lack of accountability and poor administration all impede the success of government interventions. In mapping the way forward, this thesis urges that government performance challenges be addressed because their continued existence sabotages the targeted objectives of the pro-poor policies. The EPWP needs its own policy response that specifically addresses the structural unemployment challenges of women and youth. Otherwise, in its current form, the programme remains a low tier poverty trap.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ANC	African National Congress
AsGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
CBPWP	Community-Based Public Works Programme
COGTA	Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CWP	Community Work Programme
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DORA	Division of Revenue Act
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPAP	Industrial Policy Action Plan
LIC	Labour Intensive Construction
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NDP	National Development Plan
NEDLAC	National Economic Development Labour Council



NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSF	National Skills Fund
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PEP	Public Employment Programme
PWP	Public Works Programme
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperatives
SACU	Southern African Customs Union
SAMWU	South African Municipal Workers Union
SECP	Special Employment Creation Programme
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SMME	Small Medium and Micro Enterprises
SOE	State-Owned Enterprise
SPWP	Special Public Works Programme
TBVC	Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei



TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The advent of the post-apartheid era in South Africa was highly celebrated by all citizens. As one of the last countries to free itself from the claws of colonial subjugation and oppression, most citizens looked forward to a better life for all (Dugard, 2008; Findley & Ogbu, 2011). However, nearly three decades later, the majority of the population are yet to enjoy the fruits associated with independence and democracy. The celebrated transition to democracy has been marred by numerous challenges that include high unemployment rates, retarded economic growth, deep and entrenched poverty, and wide inequality, especially between races (Terreblanche, 2002). These problems are part of the legacy of the past that the democratic government inherited. All these have tainted the achievement of popular victory over oppressive rule.

These challenges remain pressing national issues that require urgent attention from the democratic government. 'Structural unemployment'¹ tops the list of priority challenges for the post-apartheid government. This type of unemployment in South Africa has been driven by a shift in the structure of the economy and growth in industrial capital. The agriculture and mining sectors, which are the main absorbers of unskilled labour have experienced severe decline while in contrast the sectors that include services, finance, business, wholesale and retail, which require specific skills, have grown significantly (McCord & Borat, 2003; McCord, 2005).

At a global level, the debate on what constitutes employment or '*decent work*'² remains topical, emphasising women and youth employment (ILO, 2017; UN

¹ Structural unemployment results from a mismatch between skills held by employment seekers and the skills required by employers (Alatalo *et al.*, 2015; Mohr *et al.*, 2008).

² This refers productive work which pays people a fair remuneration, provides a secure workplace, social protection for their families, potential for personal development, freedom of expression and participation in decision making, as well as equality between men and women (d' Orey, 2017).

Women, 1995). The growing voices of various structures that promote equality in society and the economy have emphasised looking into the labour market challenges experienced by women and youth. This debate has gained more traction in the developing world, where population growth and its impact on climate, urbanisation and technology, has led to a growth in very high levels of unemployment among young people (Gugelev, 2018). The population is youthful and the unemployment numbers are negatively skewed against the young people. These structural changes have affected many countries with varying impacts on communities according to age, location (rural, urban, township or farms) and gender (Faith *et al.*, 2020; McCord & Borat, 2003). Some studies argue that youth unemployment is worse in Africa, especially among females in rural areas, townships and informal settlements (Graham *et al.*, 2018).

A study by Faith *et al.*, (2020) identified several factors behind the differentiated unemployment patterns. They observed that:

Rural youth lack the skills and qualifications to access better-paying wage work; private sector employers in rural areas struggle to find qualified candidates for job openings. Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) programs often either fail to teach subjects and skills that are relevant to the labour market, or do not teach out-of-school and low-educated youth (Faith *et al.*, 2020: 13).

Back in South Africa, the question of rising structural unemployment has attracted much interest among researchers, policymakers and labour movements in the past two decades. Anxious to create an all-inclusive South Africa, the government initiated several policy interventions, all of which had specific targets for solving the country's unemployment challenge. In their diverse versions, these interventions privilege the need for education and training and labour absorbing growth (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016; McCord, 2003).

It was in this context that the government introduced the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in 2004 as a short to medium-term relief strategy to address the country's unemployment challenge (Altman & Hemson, 2007; Mail and Guardian, 2004; McCord, 2003). The genesis of this programme was in the mid-1990s when it was first implemented as the Community-Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP). The CBPWP utilised labour-intensive approaches to build community assets and local capacity, thereby creating short-term employment to cushion the poor and unemployed (Department of Public Works, 1997, 2009; Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2001; SARPN, 2003).

This strategy has a long pedigree as a crisis-employment policy. It has been employed by both developed and developing countries in response to a number of crises. It dates back to the 19th century, during consecutive drought years in present day India, then British India. The approach was also used in the United States of America (USA) during the Great Depression in 1934, in East Germany during an economic crisis after the fall of the Berlin Wall, in Argentina during the 1998 to 2002 economic crisis, and it has also been employed in Ethiopia to protect food insecure households (Dejardin, 1996; Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Kostzer, 2008; Iturriza, 2008; Nath, 2021; Subbaro *et al.*, 2013; USA Work Program, 1937).

It is in the same vein that South Africa also introduced the EPWP in 2004, targeting the poor and striving to provide temporary employment relief to the unemployed while reskilling the unskilled or semi-skilled (Altman & Hemson, 2007; Mail and Guardian, 2004; Phillip, 2013a). Thus, the programme is central to the government's strategy of addressing the high unemployment challenge in the country. Globally, such programmes are not recognised as active labour market policies because, in their nature, they are designed to provide temporary employment relief. However,

some countries³ have used them to address long-term challenges thus, changing the underlying philosophy (Meth, 2011; Phillip, 2013a).

This innovation in implementation has brought a new dynamic to the employment arena, which deviates from the '*short-term crisis relief*' norm. In South Africa, EPWP has become the next best alternative for the unemployed (Hlatshwayo, 2017; Meth, 2011). This places a significant responsibility on the programme as opposed to it being a complementary employment programme. This study uses an evidence-based approach to investigate how EPWP has contributed to structural unemployment reduction through short-term employment creation and skills transfer. It does this by focusing on groups that are categorised as vulnerable and, therefore, as special targets for policy – the women and youth.

This chapter sets out the introduction to the study. In the previous section it provided a brief overview of South Africa's social landscape and the government policy response to structural unemployment in the country, thereby setting the context for the study. The remainder of this introductory chapter is organised as follows: first, the research problem, objectives of the study, its significance and contribution are elaborated. This is followed by a discussion of post-apartheid South Africa, citing how the legacy of apartheid, namely, poor economic performance, high unemployment levels, racial inequality and deep poverty, has persisted beyond the dawn of democracy. Following this background section, the chapter discusses the South African labour market landscape, outlining the legal framework and key role players. The chapter then concludes with an outline of the thesis.

1.2 Research Problem

Unemployment is a global challenge affecting both developed and developing countries. While unemployment levels vary among countries on the African

³ South Africa, India and Ethiopia

continent, higher unemployment rates have been recorded in north and southern African countries than countries in the central, east and west African regions (Baah-Boateng, 2015). The youth are reported as the population group that is more affected by unemployment than the adult population in almost all countries (Baah-Boateng, 2015, 2016; Betcherman & Khan, 2018). South Africa has battled youth unemployment for a long time.

Despite her comparatively more industrialised status, South Africa faces acute unemployment challenges like other African countries, with unemployment rates high among the youth and other vulnerable groups (Faith *et al.*, 2020; Ismail & Kollamparambi, 2015; Van Aardt, 2012; Yu, 2013). Generally, the country has consistently recorded a growing unemployment trend across gender and age groups. In the first quarter of 2021, 32.6% unemployment, translating to 7.2 million people, was recorded in South Africa, albeit based on a narrow definition of unemployment⁴ (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Despite the various policy initiatives since the country attained democracy, the economy has not been able to absorb the high and growing numbers of unemployed people joining the labour market.

Many reasons account for this problem, including a population that is growing faster than job creation and poor economic growth. More importantly, the economic restructuring has led to a rapid shift towards highly skilled labour, leaving many unskilled people out of the labour market (Altman, 2004; Beall *et al.*, 2013). In other words, there is a challenge of skills calling for a strategic re-alignment of the skills to meet the labour market needs. South Africa's unemployment is negatively skewed towards gender and age. Women are the worst affected by the unemployment challenge. The country experiences high unemployment among women, with estimates showing that the country has the highest women unemployment rates among the SACU⁵ member states. In 2019, women unemployment in South Africa stood at 30.5%, with Lesotho ranking second highest at 28.13%, the Kingdom of

⁴ See Section 2.2.1 for a discussion on the narrow and expanded definitions of unemployment

⁵ The Southern African Customs Union is made up of Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, Kingdom of Eswatini and Namibia.

Eswatini coming third at 23.9%, Botswana fourth at 20.51% and Namibia ranked fifth at 18.53% (The Global Economy, 2019b).

Data shows that women bear a disproportionate burden of unemployment, poverty and inequality in South Africa. Estimates show that in 2021, over half of the country's population (51%) were women (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Despite this, in 2021, only 50.2% of women participated in the labour market compared to 62.6% of all men, with estimates from quarter one of 2021 showing that 34% of women were unemployed compared to 31.4% of all men (Statistics South Africa, 2021). Women's growing interest in the work place and economy has been on the rise. Whereas, labour market participation of women has grown, so has their unemployment (McCord, 2005). At the end of apartheid rule, the country saw a 30% increase in participation of women in the labour market, which was twice the increase registered among men (McCord & Borat, 2003).

On the other hand, the country has taken too long to embrace the changing roles of women in the economy and in society, at large. Attitudes and perceptions have been too slow in shifting away from seeing women as traditional housewives, responsible for household chores, to considering women as productive citizens and actively involved in building the country (Subramanian, 2018). Of late, women have emerged as heads of households in most communities in South Africa. Nwasu and Ndinda (2018), observe that women-headed 38% of households in South Africa. This implies that such households are more likely not to have a source of income or an employed head as women constitute the majority of the unemployed in the country.

In addition, while youth accounted for more than a third of the population in South Africa (35.1%) (Statistics South Africa, 2020), they have not been spared by the scourge of unemployment. Compared to other countries, in 2019, South Africa had the highest youth unemployment rate among the SACU member states at 57.5%, followed by the Kingdom of Eswatini with 46%, Namibia at 37.8%, Botswana 35.6%

and Lesotho had the lowest youth unemployment at 34.4% (The Global Economy, 2019a). Estimates shows that the youth (15-24 age group) unemployment rate stood at 63% during the fourth quarter of 2019, while the unemployment rate among those between 25 and 35 years old was at 41% during the same period (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

As indicated earlier, South Africa's unemployment challenge is mainly structural, that is, it arises from a mismatch between the skills levels of the unemployed and the skills in demand for available jobs. While the South African economy is sophisticated by African standards, the country's education sector is not skilling people adequately for the world of work, thereby creating the dilemma of high unemployment and huge skills shortages (Altman, 2004). The country continues to fail to deliver skills in quantities sufficient to close the skills gap (Triegaardt, 1992). Evidence from around the country shows that the school leaving population does not possess skills that are required by the labour market. The economy requires highly skilled labour, but the education system is not designed to equip learners with the requisite skills (Cassim & Oosthuizen, 2014). Branson *et al.*, (2018) found that about 60% of young people either dropped out of school or failed their matric examinations and consequently had no qualification.

Unemployment has a more significant impact on women and youth. Historically, structural unemployment was experienced differently by diverse social groups, with women, youth and black people being most affected by structural unemployment, compared to men, older and white people, respectively. The racial spread of unemployment has shown that 33.8% of black people were unemployed in in quarter one of 2020 relative to the national average of 30.1%, while white people were the least unemployed at 8.1% (Statistics South Africa, 2020). As Terreblanche (2002) argues, apartheid-era laws stripped bare non-white races of their livelihoods, creating a pool of cheap labour for the farms and mines. This strategy, in effect, left women and youth at a more significant disadvantage than other social groups.

The challenge of structural unemployment and skills shortage in South Africa is amplified by skill requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The 4IR, has significantly altered the way which people live and work, thereby thrusting the young people to the forefront of development (ILO, 2020b). This has sent shock waves to some technology receiving countries, especially in the developing world, where skills shortages are already a challenge. The 4IR has exacerbated the need for a skilled labour force, at the same time forcing employers to abandon traditional skills for technology-aligned skills. New skills such as data science, digital literacy, technology and artificial intelligence, like robotics, are emerging in the labour market thereby taking over some jobs in the world of work (Faith *et al.*, 2020; Pindula News, 2021). Thus, South Africa finds itself in a multi-layered conundrum as it is confronted by the twin challenges of acute unemployment and skills shortages. At the same time, it now faces the urgent need to embrace the 4IR. This calls for a broad policy stance that effectively addresses structural unemployment and lack of skills, particularly among women and youth in the country.

Suffice to note that in South Africa, unemployment, poverty and inequality are gendered and exert an impact differentially by age, with more women and youth enduring the most of these challenges compared to men. This is despite South Africa's commitment⁶ to eradicating these challenges faced by women or youth and being a signatory to many international treaties and conventions addressing the same. The country is also a signatory to International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions that allow equality between men and women and prioritization of youth employment. In addition, the country is a signatory to the African Union Agenda 2063, which binds each member state to ensure equality of men and women by 2030 and promote empowerment of women and youth through implementation of

⁶ United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (December 1995), signed in 29 January 1993, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, signed in September 1995, African Union Heads of States' Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adapted and ratified in August 2004, Optional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (AU Women's Protocol) (December 2004), Commonwealth Plan of Action for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality 2005- 2015, SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2012) (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2019).

relevant, progressive, domestic legislative instruments (South African Government, 2015a).

Domestically, the country has passed some laws and policies to address gender inequalities, including the 'Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000 and the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998' (ibid). The government has committed itself in the Medium Term Strategic Plan of 2015 to 2020 to provide decent work for all, empower women and youth economically and improve access to education for girls (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020). Furthermore, the government through the National Development Plan (NDP)⁷ seeks to continue with addressing the imbalances of the apartheid-era. Through these various international and national commitments, the government has shown its assertion to supporting women and youth emancipation programmes in the country.

Since the advent of democracy and through various policies and programmes, the government has made efforts to address the unemployment and skills shortage in the country. Ferrera and Rossouw (2016) note a range of policies introduced by the government to address unemployment and skills challenges in the country. These include:

- i. the Reconstruction Development Program (RDP) of 1994,
- ii. the National Skills Development Strategy of 2005,
- iii. the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsGISA) of 2006,
- iv. the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) of 2009,
- v. the New Growth Path (NGP) of 2010, and;
- vi. the National Development Plan (NDP) of 2012.

⁷ "it aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030" (National Planning Commission, 2012:24).

Several government efforts such as leaning first towards empowerment of Black people through the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act of 2003 and, more recently, the promotion of the informal economy, of which little has been discussed (Blauw, 2017; Institute for Economic Justice, 2018; Mail and Guardian, 2018a) have, however, not improved the situation. The effect of both on the economy and unemployment is still unproven and undocumented. Despite bold policies, the unemployment and skills shortage challenges have persisted. The country has not figured out a uniquely South African policy to solve the structural unemployment challenge, especially for women and youth.

Another programme established by the government to address the unemployment challenge was the EPWP. It is said that: “(The EPWP) was initiated to address the high levels of unemployment and poverty and recognising the low skills levels of the unemployed people; provide an income to promote economic inclusion; support SMMEs and train EPWP participants” (De Lanaay *et al.*, 2018:24). In essence, the programme was introduced to provide temporary employment relief and reskilling of the unemployed. The then President of South Africa, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, summarized the purpose of the EPWP at its launch by noting that:

South Africa has to overcome the colonial and apartheid legacy of unskilled and jobless workers to create a workforce for the reconstruction and development of the country (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2004).

Such a programme is not unique to South Africa. Many countries in both the developed and the developing world have gone through some form of crisis either due to war, economic instability, drought or famine. In turn, they have responded to these crises by adopting Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) or Public Works Programmes (PWP) as a stopgap measure to bring relief to the unemployed. This was the case in East Germany when the Berlin wall fell in 1989. The merging of East and West Germany, and the requirement for the then command system based East to embrace the market economic system used by the West, destabilized the economy of the East throwing it into a huge crisis (Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Gehrke

& Harwig, 2015). The government had to intervene and cushion the East through a PWP.

In another instance, in 1934, the shock of the Great Depression on the USA economy led to the introduction of a PWP as a cushion. The PWP was used to create employment and bring economic stability, and to create assets and temporary employment (USA Works Program, 1937). When Argentina had its own economic crisis between 1998 and 2002, a PWP was introduced to cushion the country's citizens (Kostzer, 2008). These were short-term interventions, instituted during a crisis and discontinued at the end of the crisis. However, implementation of these programmes in the developing world has been marked by some innovations designed to cushion the vulnerable against long-term challenges.

For example, in India, PWPs were used to protect the poor through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). In this case the government took a broad policy stance and made participation in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of 2005 a right to work (Desai *et al.*, 2015). As a programme that targets the poor, the government of India assumed the responsibility to protect the poor. This lends credibility to programme and raises the importance of the programme's aims and targets. At the end of the apartheid rule, South Africa adopted a PWP or PEP to protect the poor and the unemployed, and reskill the unemployed (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015).

However, the effectiveness of the EPWP in addressing structural unemployment and skills deficits for women and youth remains unclear. Considering that the unemployment challenge in South Africa is systemic and structural, questions abound on whether PWPs or PEPs, which are designed to be short-term crisis relief programmes, can effectively deal with long term structural unemployment and skills

shortage challenges. There is a dearth of credible evidence on the efficacy of these programmes in this regard, especially so for addressing unemployment and skills challenges among women and youth. In essence, these groups suffer complementary and interrelated structural inequalities.

Since the launch of the EPWP in 2004, countless studies have been conducted to assess the programme's potential, implementation, performance, and contribution to employment. Among such studies were those by Altman and Hemson (2007); Antonopoulos and Toay (2009); Baijnath (2012); Beuke *et al.*, (2016); Biyase and Bromberger (2015); Bokolo (2013); Chakwizira (2010); Cloete (2015); De Jardin (1996); and Dyantyi & Fore (2019). There were other similar studies like; Hlatshwayo (2017); Hirschman (2015); Holmes and Jones (2011*b*); Maphanga & Mazenda (2019); Melody & Zanyana (2017); Meth (2010, 2011); McCord and Borat (2003); McCord (2005, 2008, 2013).

Complementing this list were studies by McCutcheon and Parkins (2012); Mishra (2011); Mogagabe (2016); Mubangizi and Mkhize (2013); Mohapi (2013); Mtapuri (2014); Nzimakwe (2008); Oosthuizen *et al.*, (2009); Overseas Development Institute (2004); Parenzee and Bundlender (2016); and Phillip (2013*a*, 2013*b*). Despite this rich literature, fewer scholars have empirically examined the structural unemployment reduction impacts of the EPWP. Perhaps the few exceptions are Altman and Hemson (2007); Baijnath (2012); Hlatshwayo (2017); McCord (2008, 2013); Meth (2010, 2011); Mohapi (2013); Mtapuri (2014); Nzimakwe (2008); Oosthuizen *et al.*, (2009) and McCutcheon and Parkins (2012) who have investigated the role of the EPWP in providing employment.

Missing in most analyses of the EPWP, therefore, is the capacity of the programme to reduce unemployment among women and youth. While the limitations of the EPWP are well recognised, the size of the programme is apparently too small to

make a significant impact on South Africa's unemployment. There is equally a lack of policy with regards alleviating the quandary of unemployment. This is complicated further by poor design; conflicting government priorities; poor government performance; lack of capacity development or non-response to the labour market needs; and PEPs or PWPs not being recognised as an active labour market policies. Indeed, there is little to no indication that these limitations have been considered for their impact on sustainable unemployment reduction among women and youth. The main weaknesses of some of the studies conducted, include the following:

- i. they were conducted too early while the programme was still at infancy stage and there was not much evidence from which to draw a scholarly evaluation of the programme;
- ii. they were based on little empirical evidence or,
- iii. there is little literature on the role of the programme in employment and skills development for women and youth.

This is also the case regarding studies outside South Africa where similar programmes were implemented with the objective of providing relief during a short-term crisis (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). Contemporary perceptions in the government, academic, media spheres and in political debates are that PEPs or PWPs play a crucial role in solving short to medium-term unemployment crises. Despite the popularity of PWPs throughout the world, their impact on wages, skills or economic activity is not well known because existing studies have focused primarily on their direct effects on consumption, savings and investment (ibid).

This study evaluates the programme over a period of 15 years and applies a mixed method approach, with empirical data drawn from views of EPWP officials, active and past EPWP participants. The empirical evidence is based on lived experiences of active and former EPWP participants. This study assesses the effectiveness of the

programme on providing temporary employment relief and skills development for women and youth. It also combines those who are actively participating on the programme to get their lived experiences and tracing experiences of the former EPWP participants to get an understanding of how they have integrated in the labour market as well as their challenges in accessing full-time employment opportunities.

In addition, the study solicits the views of EPWP project implementers to get their undocumented views about the programme. Other studies generalise but this study interrogates the effectiveness of the programme on cushioning women and youth and assisting their transition to full-time employment. However, I argue in this thesis that South Africa's EPWP process should not be considered only from the perspective of addressing short-term employment issues, but as a skills development vehicle outside formal education. People seem not to have any other alternative to employment and to skills development besides this programme as Meth, (2011) defines it as an employer of last resort.

It is evident that in the post-colonial and apartheid era, women and youth still experience systematic discrimination in the labour market. A number of reasons identified include gender stereotypes, young people doubting their own abilities, lack of resources and networks, lack of expertise or employers' reluctance to hire youth (ILO, 2017, 2018; Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021). Neglecting to examine the role of EPWP in providing sustainable employment and enabling skills transfer to vulnerable population groups, and a failure to study the poverty reduction impacts of the programme are critical gaps in the literature on South Africa's EPWP.

Currently, the government has failed to make inroads in addressing unemployment among women and youth in the country. The implementation of policies like AsGiSA has failed on its objective to half unemployment by 2014 while the New Growth Path has failed to reduce poverty and inequality (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016). The

implementation of the National Development Plan is still far off the targets set for the 2030 vision (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016; *Mail and Guardian*, 2020). This thesis aims to unpack this policy maze by contributing both to the literature and to policy debate on the country's structural unemployment and poverty challenges, with a special focus on women and youth. Having said that, we are yet to see the implementation of an appropriate policy response by government to these challenges (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016; McCord, 2005).

1.2.1 Research Questions

This study seeks to interrogate the preceding issues in the South African context by answering one overarching question: to what extent has the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), in its various forms, addressed, reduced, or supported eradication of unemployment challenges among vulnerable population categories, particularly women and youth, in post-apartheid South Africa? This question is explored with a particular focus on employment and skills transfer for poor women and youth.

This overarching question is addressed by answering four specific research questions, with sub-questions that relate to specific lines of enquiry addressed in the thesis, namely:

- i. How was the gender and youth question considered in the planning and implementing of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)?
- ii. How has the programme addressed the country's structural unemployment problem among the women and youth population categories in post-apartheid South Africa?
- iii. To what extent has the EPWP addressed the question of skills shortage among the women and youth population categories? Are the skills acquired through the EPWP relevant in the country's contemporary context?

- iv. What are the challenges that have been faced by the EPWP since its implementation? Related to that, what are the specific challenges confronted by youth and women in accessing opportunities for employment and skills acquisition through the EPWP?

1.2.2 Significance of the Study

South Africa is going through a turbulent phase with high unemployment and poverty levels within the communities. To compound matters, the most affected people are the vulnerable (women and youth). The country falls short of meeting critical targets found in global commitments such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, the Special Youth Schemes Recommendation No. 136 of 1970, Unemployment (Young Persons) Recommendations of 1935, Vocational Training Recommendation of 1962, and the Employment Policy Convention and Recommendation of 1964 (ILO, 1970; UN Women, 1995). In addition, the country also committed itself to the empowerment of women and youth in the economy and the workplace (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020); South African Government, 2015). These commitments and/ or recommendations compel the state to prioritise women and youth skills development, employment and the economy.

The escalating unemployment figures among women and youth in the country demonstrate the realities faced by the government, which has failed on these commitments, due to either lack of proper diagnosis or lack of interest by relevant stakeholders to abide by the resolutions. This thesis assumes the former and seeks to understand the challenges women and youth face in the labour market to inform future policy on skilling or the reskilling, and employment strategies of these groups. Policy seems not to have managed to get to the root of the challenges faced by these groups, hence their continued struggle in accessing employment in the country.

1.2.3 Contributions of the Study

This study aims to make four (4) main contributions. Firstly, it seeks to inform policy on the employment of women and youth. The EPWP has been in existence for over 15 years, but it has lacked a guiding policy framework. Evidence shows that the lack of policy has hindered its success. Therefore, implementers do not have sufficient guidance on how to ensure maximum effectiveness of programmes and the emergence of a clear policy direction will bridge this critical implementation gap in the local context.

Secondly, through analysis of lived experiences of active and former EPWP participants, this thesis aims to contribute literature on how PEPs or PWP can effectively be used by countries to solve long-term challenges. Specifically, in the developing world where challenges are not short-term crisis oriented but have become a part of the daily lives of many ordinary citizens with significant bias towards vulnerable groupings such as women and youth. These programmes were initially designed for short-term crises but the common long-term crises in the developing world where governments have tended to adopt these programmes calls for a shift in the approach in their use. This thesis contributes to literature on how countries are to remodel these programmes to suite the challenges at hand. One contentious issue in the country has been the growing numbers of structural unemployment of women and youth. Despite the implementation of programmes like the EPWP in the country that prioritise their employment, these groupings continue to be affected by high unemployment meaning there is a gap in providing short-term employment. Their skilling and reskilling seem to be falling short because they continue to lack skills.

Thirdly, this thesis contributes to the understanding of employment dynamics. PEPs or PWP, in general, are not viewed as a form of employment, although they meet the ILO's definition of employment. The ILO defines an employed person as any

person over the age of 15 who has been engaged in work for pay or profit (ILO, 2021a). PEPs or PWPs fit into this definition, but people who work in these programmes are excluded when employment is quantified. This is the general trend within countries as observed by Altman and Hemson (2007), Black (2016) and Phillip (2013a) who argue that PEPs work is not treated as employment because only work created by the private sector is included in the labour statistics, which suppresses the potential for long-term employment creation.

Lastly, this study adds to the horizons in theory. In the economics perspective there is a separation in the role of government and that of the private sector. There is little said about the role of both in the form of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) or finding a middle ground in solving some long term country challenges such as unemployment or poverty which only one party may find it difficult to solve alone. However, government has a role to play in creation of employment rather than just providing a conducive as much as private sector investments also create employment. Therefore, collaborations between the two can assist to derive sustainable employment opportunities especially for the semi-skilled and unskilled. The following section provides a background of South Africa, as a former colony, and discusses how the colonial legislation has shaped the country's landscape.

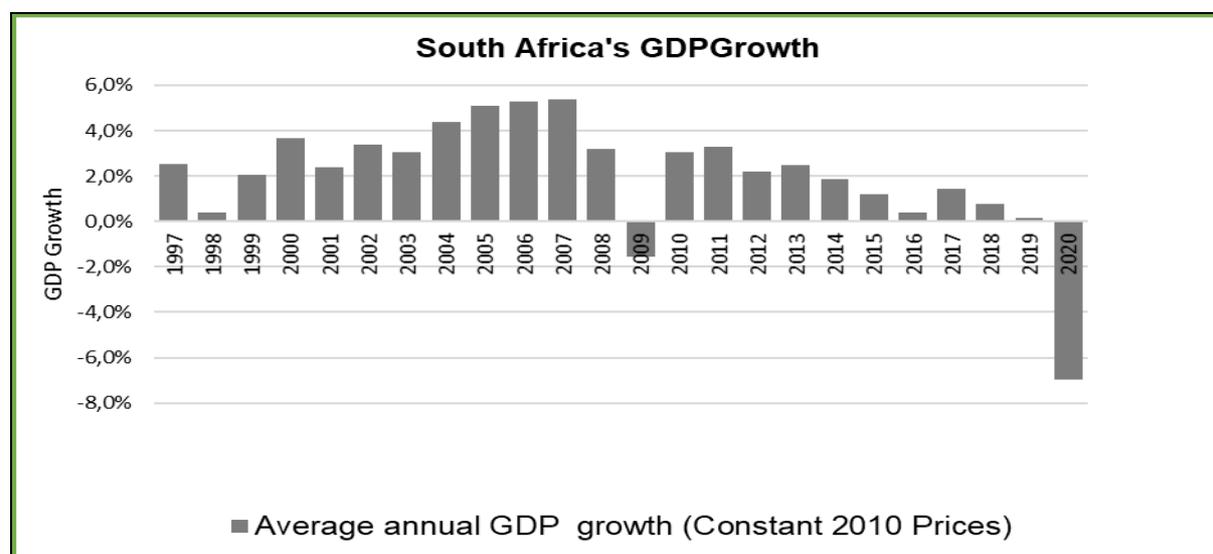
1.3 Background of South Africa: The Apartheid Legacy

This section chronicles how the legacy of apartheid rule lingered on in the post-apartheid era, outlining its impact on employment, economic performance, inequality and poverty in contemporary South Africa. This background forms the foundation upon which the democratic South Africa is built on. The country's current socio-economic sphere has been shaped by what Moon (2017) terms the deeply rooted structure.

1.3.1 Poor economic performance

One of the apartheid-era legacies that the democratic government inherited was a declining economy. Towards the end of apartheid rule in the late 1980s to early 1990s, the country faced several economic challenges. In the early 1990s, GDP per capita dropped by 11%, and the country registered a 7% drop in the labour absorptive capacity, a 9.9% drop in manufacturing output, and the mining and agriculture sectors lost 30% of their workforce (Marais, 2001). The current government inherited these economic challenges at the transition to democratic rule. In the post-apartheid period, the country has still not been able to grow its economy, with several periods of recession in the past decade. Figure 1.1 shows the poor growth of the economy which has persistently remained in the country for over two (2) decades.

Figure 1.1 GDP Growth 1997- 2020



Source: International Monetary Fund, 2021

As shown in the graph above, the growth of the economy has not been smooth from 1997, with the last three years of the first five years of democracy seeing the economy wavering around 2%. There was a slight improvement in year 2000 when the economic growth reached 4% but this trend did not last long since the global economic crisis sent shock waves around the world leaving many countries South

Africa included in a recession. The effects of the global economic meltdown that started in 2008 (De Lanaay *et al.*, 2018) compounded these challenges, leading to high job losses. Beyond 2009 the country's economic growth continued to be unstable having been less than 2.5%. The slow growth of the South African economy has affected employment creation, and further exacerbated poverty and inequality.

1.3.2 Wide racial inequality

Inequality in South Africa is deeply rooted and found both between and within races. During the years of oppressive rule, the apartheid government enacted discriminatory laws which violated the rights of non-white races. Racial discrimination and segregation became the hallmark of the apartheid era. The apartheid government brought into force legislative instruments that included the Population Registration Act, the Group Areas Act⁸, the Black Labour Regulation Act No. 5⁹ and the Bantu Education Act¹⁰, all of which were enacted in the 1950s and were used to further the then government's racial discrimination agenda (Lephakga, 2016; Moon, 2017). These laws divided people racially and they promoted separate development between races thus reducing access to basic services and economic opportunities for non-white races. These laws confined Black South Africans to non-agricultural settlements (*also known as homelands*)¹¹, reserving urban areas for White people (Smith, 2001).

Furthermore, White people had privileges such as job reservations, better salaries, access to housing and better services (Marais, 2001; Smith, 2001). The effects of these separatist laws are still visible in modern-day South Africa. The slow pace

⁸ These laws divided the settlement of people according to races and also controlled the acquisition of immovable assets.

⁹ "Made it an offence for a black worker to breach his contract with one employer, say in a gold mine, and move to a manufacturing company that offered better wages" (Moon, 2017:28).

¹⁰ "Provided for an inferior system of education for Africans" (Moon, 2017:34).

¹¹ the Bantustan areas of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (also known as TBVC) and townships (Lephakga, 2016; Rotich *et al.*, 2015)

towards perfect equality in South Africa has been a bone of contention within the political and academic sphere. Wilson (1996) submits that:

It is ironic that, at the very moment when South Africa has moved so dramatically towards full political equality, the economy should find itself subject to increasing pressures of globalisation which may increase rather than decrease the depth of inequality (Wilson, 1996:24).

The country still suffers from structural or systemic inequality, and the post-apartheid generation feels its impact. There are still salary gaps between races due to the lingering effects of apartheid laws that promoted this practice. Forty percent of the poorest citizens earn 4% of income, while the richest 10% earn 51% of income (Marais, 2001). This has led to the poor becoming poorer and the rich becoming richer, thus further widening the gap on racial lines. The country has failed to shake off the apartheid-era inequality levels. The country's Gini coefficient has remained over 0.6 demonstrating the huge inequality levels (Statistics South Africa, 2019; World Bank, 2014). The country has gained political equality but it is still lagging behind in terms of economic equality.

1.3.3 High poverty levels

Poverty is one of the country's main socioeconomic ills, which also has its origins in colonialism and apartheid rule. The laws that the successive apartheid governments passed to create labour for the agriculture sector drove many people deep into poverty or social death, leading to the growth of shack dwellings in informal settlements (Lephakga, 2016; Marais, 2001; Smith, 2001; Terreblanche 2002). The apartheid system dislocated the sustainable livelihoods of indigenous people by dispossessing them of their assets and forcing them into arid reserves. In these reserves people became poorer as they lost assets, were deprived of income, remained unemployed and saw their social networks become dysfunctional.

Life in the rural areas became unbearable. Lephakga (2016:7) notes that, “the situation in the Bantustans was similar, if not worse than the Fanonian¹² ‘nature town’”. Indigenous people were excluded from housing, essential services provision, and employment opportunities. People lost their dignity and were reduced to beggars¹³ by the apartheid regime. As a result, poverty in South Africa is deeply rooted, and it is structural. The transition to democracy was expected to bring about positive shifts in the social, economic and political strata of the country (Marais, 2001). Policies adopted immediately after the transition in 1994 was aimed mainly at reversing the legacy of colonial and apartheid policies and laws, and extending economic benefits to the majority of South Africans. This meant a total overhaul of systems embedded and institutionalised to control the lives of indigenous South Africans under apartheid.

In the modern day South Africa, though, it is evident that colonial oppression and apartheid rule left the democratic government with even more severe problems than anticipated. The post-democratic era was expected to bring sanity in the economy and society. However, years preceding the democratic era have shown relentless poverty remaining the same as it was in the early years of democracy. In 2015, the majority (64.2%) of Black Africans were regarded as poor, with 41.3% of Coloureds, 5.9% of Indians, and only 1% of Whites, were considered poor (Statistics South Africa, 2017). These huge poverty gaps have their origins in the country’s history, and remain to this day.

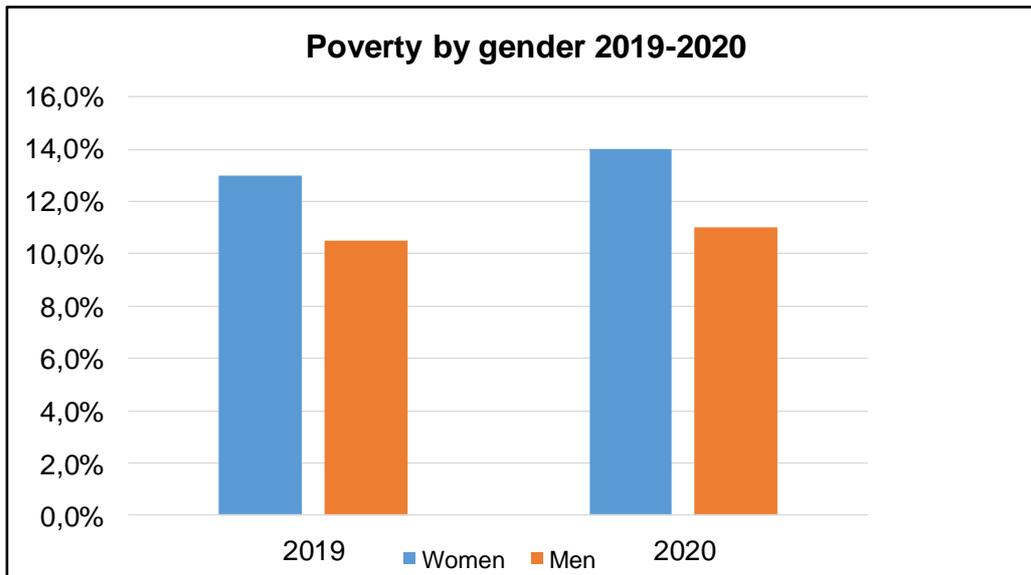
Poverty is highest among female-headed households, Black South Africans, people with less education, and children below the age of 15 (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2018). In addition, like unemployment, poverty is also gendered, with more women affected than men. Figure 1.2 shows that in 2019, 13% of women were living in extreme poverty compared to 10.5% of men. In 2020, this

¹² “World without spaciousness, men live on top of each other and their huts are built one on top of the other. This is a hungry town starving of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light” (Lephakga, 2016:7)

¹³ “...blacks, as per the colonial division of the world occupy the periphery, which is a zone of non-beings” (Lephakga, 2016: 6).

share of women living in poverty had increased by 1% to 14% compare to 0.5% increase in men.

Figure 1.2 Poverty by gender



Source: UN Women 2021 and UNFPA, 2021

As shown by the graph above, as the poverty levels grew in the country, the proportion of women affected grew twice than that of men. The post-apartheid government of 1994 inherited a deeply divided society, frustrated communities, people with broken homes, an illiterate majority, high structural unemployment and inequality, institutionalised poverty, huge debt, poor economic growth, high crime rates and poor service delivery for the majority (Terreblanche, 2002; Rotich, 2015; Moon, 2017). The new government was therefore left with the complex challenge of fixing the economy and a society that had been traumatised for far too long, with deeply entrenched poverty and wide racial inequality.

1.4 South Africa’s Labour Market Landscape

This section discusses the country’s labour market landscape. It commences with a discussion on the legal framework, the composition of the country’s labour force,

employment which covers the key players in the labour market and unemployment in the country. Terms used in this section are defined in detail in section 2.2 in chapter 2 of the study.

1.4.1 Legal framework

South Africa's labour market policies¹⁴ are divided into two: passive policies, and active policies, which are further divided into two categories, namely, demand and supply (Paver *et al.*, 2019) under the Department of Employment and Labour as the custodian. In addition, the Department of Employment and Labour matches work seekers with employers. It has a work-seekers database, which matches job seekers with job opportunities in the country (Department of Employment and Labour, 2019). It has been argued that skills shortages are primarily responsible for the observed unemployment challenges and the country's employment landscape is said to be distorted by the labour market's rigid environment and labour unions (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Employers and labour unions are constantly at loggerheads over working conditions, thus limiting employers' ability to create jobs.

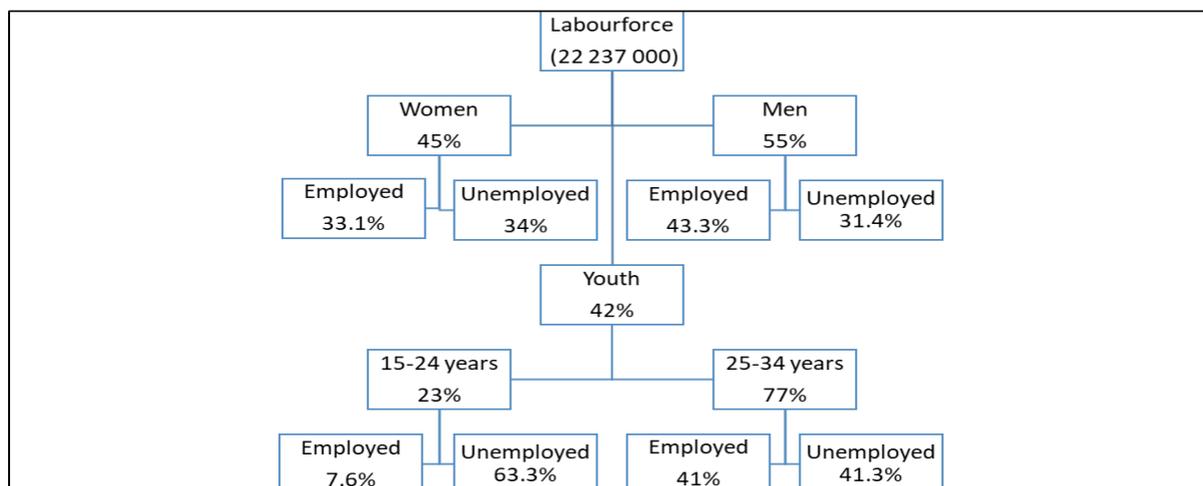
1.4.2 South Africa's labour force

Labour force consists of all employed and unemployed persons (Statistics South Africa, 2021). South Africa has population of 39 455 000 of people aged between 15 and 64 years and of these 22 237 000 are part of the labour force, while 17 218 000 are not economically active (*ibid*). Furthermore, despite having larger population sizes youth and women have lower labour market participation compared to men. Estimates show that 45% women, 55% men and 42% participated in the labour market in quarter one of 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). As shown in Figure 1.3,

¹⁴ Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Labour Relations Act No. 66 of 1995, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and others.

more men than women participate in the labour. However, more women than men are unemployed at 34% and 31.4% respectively.

Figure 1.3 South Africa's labour force Quarter 1 2021



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2021

As shown above, out of the 42% of the labour force which is young people, 23% of those were aged between 15 and 24 years while 77% were aged between 25 and 34 years in quarter one of 2021. Young people aged between 15 and 24 years are within the school going age group so those that are participating on the labour market are new entrants. The majority of youth within the labour force are between 25 to 34 years age group. In addition, labour is categorized into highly skilled (consisting of managers and professionals), skilled (consisting of technicians, clerks, sales workers, skilled agriculture workers, operators and others), and low skilled (consist of elementary and domestic workers) labour (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). Estimates show that in 2014, the country's labour force consisted of 20.1 million people, of these 25% were skilled, 46% semi-skilled and 29% unskilled (Statistics South Africa, 2014). The country has a majority of its people falling within the semi-skilled category. This emphasises the need for skills development in the country.

Full-time or long-term contracts are usually for skilled and highly skilled workers, while most low-skilled workers do seasonal work or hold part-time contracts. On emergence from the apartheid era, the country's labour force was highly segmented with jobs for the highly skilled dominated by White males and a few White females, while Black males and females were left to scramble for scarce low skill jobs (van Klaveren et al., 2009). This trend has continued beyond the apartheid era. Estimates show that in 2014, Whites dominated skilled occupations at 61% compared to 18% of Black Africans, while 48% of Black Africans dominated the semi-skilled occupations compared to 36% Whites and in the unskilled level 34% were Black Africans and only 3% were Whites (Statistics South Africa, 2014). The post-apartheid government has not been able to address this trend.

1.4.3 Employment in South Africa

The South African labour market consists of a range of employers who are usually classified under primary¹⁵, secondary¹⁶, and tertiary¹⁷ sectors (Development Policy Research Unit, 2017). These employers are spread across many stakeholders, including the government, parastatals, and the private sector. Table 1.1 shows absorption of women and men by these sectors.

Table 1.1 Employment per category

Category	Total Employment (000)	Percentage of Women %	Percentage of Men %
Manager	1342	31.2	68.8
Professional	970	50.1	49.9
Technician	1399	58.2	41.8
Clerk	1595	72.2	27.8
Sales and services	2483	44.7	55.3
Skilled agriculture	62	17.7	82.3
Craft	1630	10.6	89.4
Plant and machine operator	1285	12.1	87.9
Elementary	3317	34.6	65.4
Domestic	848	96.1	3.9

Source: Statistics South Africa, 2021

¹⁵ agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining

¹⁶ manufacturing, electricity, construction, water and gas

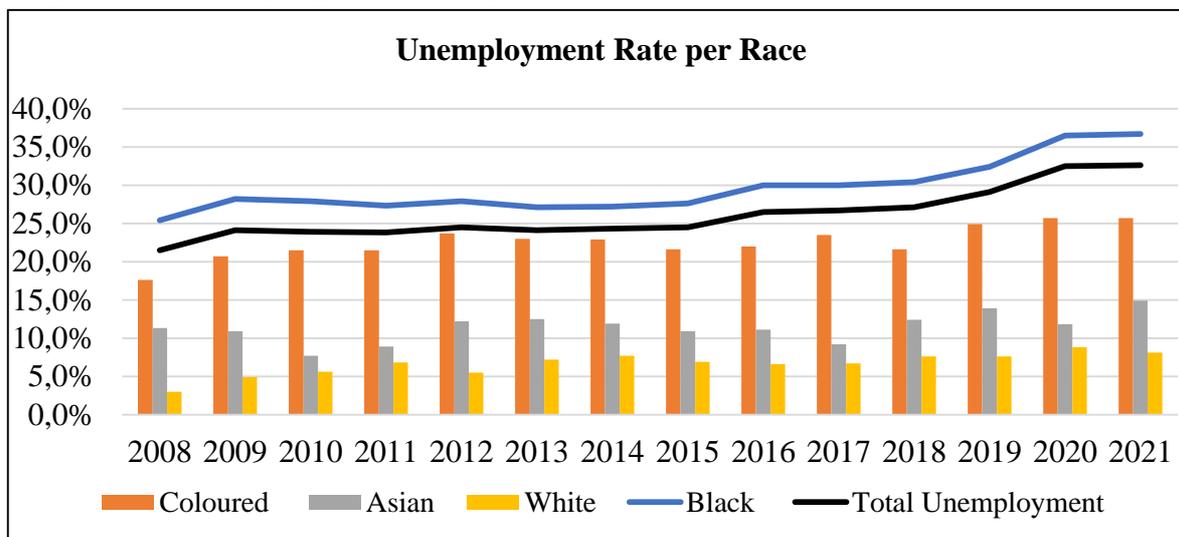
¹⁷ wholesale, retail, transport, financial services, communication, private households and others

The quarter one 2021 estimates in the table above reflects a domination of men in occupations such as managerial at 68.8%, skilled agriculture at 82.3%, craft at 84.9%, plant and machinery operator at 87.9%. While women take occupations such as professional at 50.1% and technical at 58.2% in the highly skilled professions. Women seem to be dominant in semi-skilled professions such as clerical jobs at 72.2%, while men dominate the sales and services occupations at 55.3% and unskilled professions such as domestic work at 96.1%. This proves that men dominate the high skilled occupations while women start appearing more in the semi-skilled and unskilled professions.

1.4.4 Unemployment in South Africa

Unemployment, which was inherited from the apartheid era, continues to be dominating in the country. This challenge is acknowledged by the government and various politicians and remains a widely debated issue in many government and political spheres. Due to apartheid-era laws, unemployment in the country follows racial lines and this is evidently due to skills shortages that are skewed towards Blacks discussed in 1.4.2. Official unemployment rate by race from 2008 to quarter one of 2021 is shown in Figure 1.4.

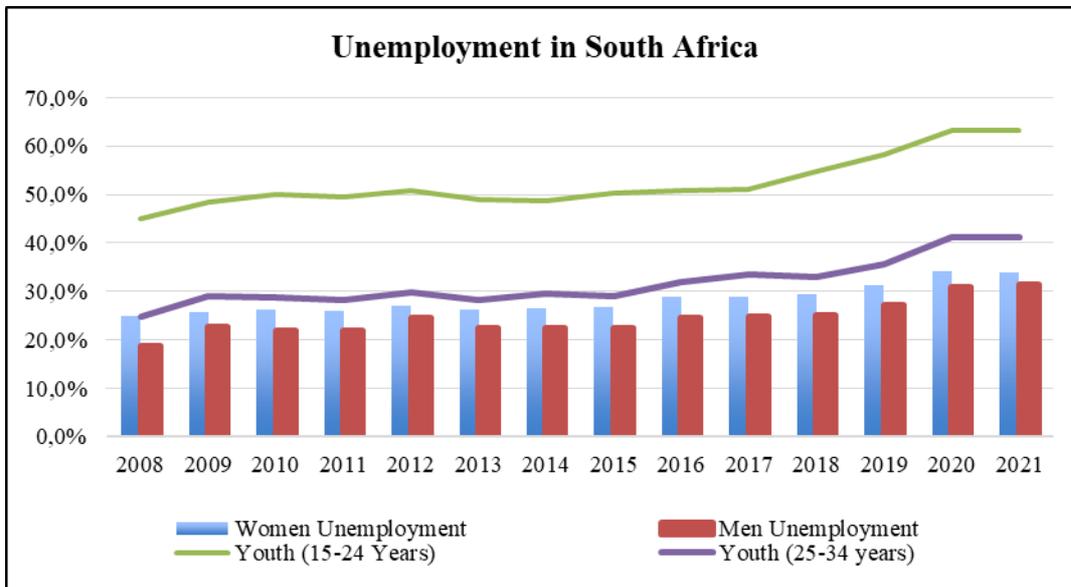
Figure 1.4 Unemployment rate per race



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2021

As shown above, the unemployment rate has been persistently high amongst Black people, rising from 25.4% in 2008 to 36.7% in first quarter of 2021 amounting to 11.3% growth in unemployment. The second highest unemployment rate was among Coloured people, rising from 17.6% to 25.2% during the same period seeing a 7.6% rise in unemployment. For much of the same period, White people enjoyed a single-digit unemployment rate recorded at 3% in 2008 and only rising to 8.1% in quarter one of 2021. Their unemployment grew by 5.1%, while Asians came second in terms of enjoying low unemployment having recorded unemployment rate of 11.3% in 2008 which grew by 3.6% to 14.9% in quarter one of 2021. The racial discrimination that was central to apartheid rule resulted in imbalanced racial access to opportunities, leaving Black people most vulnerable to unemployment in the post-apartheid South Africa. Unemployment rate for Black Africans has been constantly higher than the total unemployment in the country and it has grown faster than that of other races. Unemployment has also shown trends of biasness towards age and gender. Figure 1.5 shows how unemployment has dominated in these groupings over the years.

Figure 1.5 Unemployment in South Africa



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2021

Youth aged between 15 and 24 years are acutely affected by unemployment. Incomplete education has been cited as one of the reasons for this challenge. Attaining a matric certificate is a necessary foundation for tertiary education which, in turn, is important for the development of skills that are in demand for employment. When many pupils fail to attain matric it means they cannot proceed to post-matric education within institutions of higher learning, and as a result, are unable to acquire the skills needed for employment. Figure 1.5 shows that youth unemployment is high in South Africa, with employment prospects quite unfavourable for those aged 15-24, who consist of school drop-outs and new labour market entrants from college who have no work experience. Estimates show an 18.4% growth in unemployment for this group from 44.9 in 2008 to 63.3% in quarter one of 2021.

The second group is the youth aged between 25 and 34 years. This group saw a 16.4% growth in unemployment in the past 14 years. In 2008, the unemployment rate for this group was estimated at 24.9% and in quarter one of 2021 it had grown to 41.3%. Youth unemployment has, thus, become a huge challenge and young people have lost their patience with the government for its failure to address the problem

and improve their lives since the turn to democracy (Cloete, 2015). Whereas, unemployment is a problem in general, it is worse among youth. It is said that:

...there are various reasons for youth unemployment such as population growth, lack of experience, inappropriate ways of searching for a job, and lack of career guidance in schools....” (Cloete, 2015:514).

In addition, youth unemployment is attributed, in part, to early labour market entry by young people before they acquire formal qualifications, in an environment where employers are looking for people with a minimum of a matric certificate and work experience even for unskilled jobs (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). Young people battle hard to find employment in the labour market due to a lack of skills or a skills mismatch, with the most affected being youths in townships, informal settlements and those in rural areas. Given the growing number of young people leaving school without skills and finding themselves jobless, it is important that they receive training to improve their employment prospects. This makes work-based training important for the fast-tracking of skills development to align skills availability with labour market needs (Gugelev, 2018).

In addition, unemployment patterns differ by gender, with more women than men struggling to get employment. As shown in Figure 1.5, for more than 10 years, women unemployment in the country was between 3% and 6% more than that of men. In the first quarter of 2021, women unemployment stood at 34% while 31.4% of men were unemployed. An analysis by Statistics South Africa, (2021) on the labour market participation of men and women found that men had a higher absorption rate at 60.6% compared to 50.2% of women in quarter one of 2021. A difference of 10.4% between the two groups. This means the chances of men getting a job in the country are higher than that of women. This emphasises the need for policy that address challenges faced by this group in accessing employment opportunities.

Furthermore, labour market analysis also found that in 2018, 55.2% of women were involved in non-market activities and more women than men were involved in unpaid

work (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Despite their growth in labour market participation, women still find themselves performing non-remunerative activities a trend which is uncommon for men. This is a concern for policy makers, particularly in a context where many households are female-headed.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The thesis organised as follows:

Chapter 1 - Introduction and Background of the Study: This chapter provided the introduction and background to the study. It commenced by giving a brief background of South Africa, defined the research problem, and clarified its contributions. The chapter also outlined how the apartheid era shaped the modern-day economy and society, conditioning socioeconomic status along racial lines. It also highlighted the dominant employment challenges faced by women and youth, showing how these challenges have worsened over the years.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: Chapter 2 discusses the literature that underpins the study. It outlines a brief history of PEPs or PWPs, identifying where and when they have been implemented, as well as how these programmes have responded to societal challenges. The chapter draws from local and international studies on the role that these programmes have played in creating employment, skills development, creation and maintenance of assets, provided social protection and their effects on the economy. It also highlights some schools of thought on the role of government during a crisis and constructed a conceptual framework to guide the study.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Approach: This chapter outlines the research methodology and approach adopted by the study. It discusses how the analysis of the extent to which EPWP has created employment, reskilled people and facilitated integration of women and youth into the labour market was done. The study Phases One (1) to Three (3) of the programme, implemented from 2004 to 2019. Data collection and analysis followed a mixed approach with primary data collected in the

Northern Cape Province and in Pretoria where respondents provided information on national issues. The findings were divided into four themes discussed in four chapters, namely, the response of EPWP to women and youth unemployment challenges; response of EPWP to structural unemployment; skills development for women and youth; and weaknesses and challenges of the programme.

Chapter 4 - Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): This chapter provides an overview of the EPWP. It elaborates on the programme's evolution, guiding principles, design, objectives, history, and implementation, placing emphasis on how it has responded to the employment and skills needs of women and youth.

Chapter 5 - EPWP and structural unemployment in South Africa: This chapter discusses the EPWP's response to structural unemployment of women and youth in the country. It presents the study's findings on the extent to which the programme has addressed the country's structural unemployment challenge among women and youth facilitating their integration into the labour market. The chapter presents findings on the labour market effects of EPWP and answered questions on the impact of the programme in the labour market. It discusses the contribution the programme towards addressing unemployment of women and youth through creation of temporary employment.

Chapter 6 - Building Capacity through Skills Development and Responding to Labour Market Needs: This chapter presents findings on skills development in the EPWP thus, responding to the research question on the role played by the programme in skilling or re-skilling of its participants. It provides answers on the magnitude and type of skills gained by women and youth. The chapter analyses the extent to which the programme has addressed skills shortages among women and youth in the country thereby contributing to meeting labour market needs.

Chapter 7 - Weaknesses and Challenges Associated with the EPWP: This chapter discusses findings on the weaknesses of the programme and its challenges.

These are not unique to the South African context as evidence shows that several countries have had challenges or weaknesses that include programme design, policy, funding models, high expectations, and lack of sustainable livelihoods strategies, among others. South Africa also experienced these challenges in the implementation of the Special Employment Creation Programme (SECP), which targeted unemployed white people during the apartheid era. To date, the government has not managed to address these challenges, which together with the identified programme weaknesses, have tended to hinder effective implementation of this programme, thus, forestalling the intended benefits for women and youth.

Chapter 8 - Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations: This chapter concludes the thesis. It synthesises findings on implementation of EPWP, and analysed the programme's provision of temporary relief to the unemployed, contribution to skills development and its solutions to structural unemployment among women and youth in South Africa. Preliminary evidence shows that this programme falls short of providing short-term or long-term structural unemployment solutions for women and youth. In response to the study's aim to contribute to policy and literature on unemployment among women and youth in South Africa, the chapter advances arguments and proposals on policy responses that the country can adopt to solve the women and youth unemployment crisis.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The evolution of the socio-economic landscape in both colonial South Africa and the apartheid era has brought about different challenges in society, politics and the economy, with manifest evidence in the country's social stratification. These dynamics call for a close examination of the government's policy responses to the country's social and economic needs. Whereas some sources argue that women and youth have taken centre stage in leadership, the economy and on the labour market (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, 2020; McCord & Borat, 2003), there is hard evidence to the contrary. As argued in Chapter 1, women and young people remain excluded from employment and broad economic participation, thereby raising many questions about the stated policy commitment to their advancement and empowerment (ILO, 2017, 2018).

Chapter 1 amply demonstrated how the political framework of rule under apartheid led to policies that systematically produced unskilled labour en masse, and this reserve has gone jobless till today (Lephakga, 2016; Moon, 2017; Terreblanche, 2002). Typical of the country's unequal social stratification, unemployment in South Africa is gendered and age-related, disproportionately affecting women and youth more than other segments of society. As such, academics and policymakers have turned their attention to the failure of policy to address the exclusion and marginalisation of women and youth in employment and the economy at large. This thesis investigates the role of EPWP in alleviating South Africa's structural unemployment challenges, specifically among women and youth, placing particular emphasis on its provision of temporary employment and skills development. In pursuit of this objective, this chapter reviews both local and international literature on PEPs or PWP. The review pays attention to theoretical assumptions and key arguments behind these programmes and proposes a conceptual framework that guides formulation of the research question.

PEPs or PWPs are complex, and so is South Africa's unemployment conundrum, which is firstly, structural, and secondly, negatively skewed with respect to age and gender. It is therefore necessary to assess the theoretical underpinnings of the EPWP or its theory of change so as to evaluate and estimate its suitability as a tool for addressing the unemployment challenge at hand (Connell & Kubisch, 1998; Maden *et al.*, 2017; Mayne, 2015; Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). The review of the literature is organised into three parts. The review begins by introducing the programmes, providing key definitions and a brief history of their implementation. The discussion answers questions on what these programmes entail, their origins, what triggered their implementation and the key stakeholders involved in their implementation.

The second part of the chapter examines the nature of various programmes implemented by different countries. It focuses on how the programmes have responded to countries' needs and explores the link between theory and the programmes in practice. It also discusses the theoretical framework that is the Keynesian Model and Neoliberal approach immanent in these programmes. Lastly, the review proposes a conceptual framework to guide the research trajectory taken in this study.

2.2 Key Concepts

Drawing from various sources, this section defines the key terms used in the thesis that guide arguments and the analysis in the study.

2.2.1 Unemployment

The World Bank defines unemployment as the percentage of the labour force that does not have work but is willing to and actively looking for work (World Bank, 2021). The ILO defines the unemployment rate as the measure of unused labour, that is, the gap between labour supply and labour demand (ILO, 2019a). It is the difference

between people who are available to work and the labour needed by employers. In South Africa unemployment is classified in two ways: the narrow definition and the expanded definition. Statistics South Africa, 2019:17 says:

The narrow definition refers to the number of people who were not employed during the reference week, but were actively looking for work and had actively looked for work in the past four weeks. The expanded definition says it is the number of people who are officially unemployed, but are available to work, including discouraged work-seekers, and those that have other reasons for not searching for work.

This country considers two categories of unemployed people, some that are actively searching and unable to get employment, and others that are unemployed, but have lost hope in looking for employment. The latter, inactive labour market participants are incorporated in the broad definition of unemployment. However, the narrower definition of unemployment is the conception that is widely used on various platforms in the country where unemployment is discussed. This study adopts the South African definition of unemployment. Though derived from the ILO definition, the South African definition is more nuanced in that it breaks down the different categories of unemployment and considers discouraged work-seekers. This definition therefore more aptly accounts for unemployed women and youth in South Africa.

2.2.2 Employment

Following the ILO guidelines, employment is when a person over the age of 15 years is engaged in work for pay or profit (ILO, 2021a). The ILO prescribes 15 years as the minimum age for engagement in employment activities. People below 15 years and are engaged in work are not regarded as employed, but rather as child labour. This practice is unlawful. Similarly, people who do not receive pay or profit for any work done are not regarded as employed. The World Bank also refers to the ILO definition, emphasising that employment is the engagement of people of working age in the production of goods or provision of services for profit or pay (World Bank, n.d.).

While in South Africa it is understood that “employed persons are those aged 15-64 years who, during the reference week, did any work for at least one hour, or had a job or business but were not at work (i.e. were temporarily absent) (Statistics South Africa, 2021:23), this very definition imposes the minimum and maximum employment age. People who work outside the 15 to 64 year age range are not regarded as employed. In this conception, employment is therefore an activity where a good or service is provided and there is payment attached to such provision. The definition at times excludes people in military service or students who work without pay, as is the case in some countries (World Bank, n.d.).

However, these definitions do not take into consideration whether jobs are decent or not. The ILO criticises these definitions for failing to capture important employment aspects such as quality of employment for those who are employed, the working conditions of the employed, the situation of people who are not actively looking for work, and underemployment (ILO, 2019a). Without accounting for these important aspects, some countries that offer exploitative work may be regarded as countries with better employment opportunities than others. This study adopts the definitions used by the ILO, Statistics South Africa and the World Bank for employment despite the gaps in the definitions identified.

2.2.3 Remuneration

Remuneration is payment for a service rendered. The ILO defines remuneration as cash or in-kind payment of a wage or salary plus the employer’s contribution to the employee’s social insurance (ILO, n.d.). In South Africa, remuneration is accounted as the amount of income received or receivable in the form of a salary, leave gratuity, overtime payment, bonus, commission, pension allowance or stipend, which is either paid in cash or otherwise, for services rendered (South African Revenue Services, 2016). Cash or any other form of payment received for not delivering goods or services of any kind is not considered remuneration. This definition of remuneration therefore excludes payments such as social grants. The ILO and

South African definitions are essentially the same and the study adopts both for its analysis.

2.2.4 Underemployment

This situation represents the underutilisation¹⁸ of labour by the employers. According to the ILO, underemployment is a mismatch in the labour market, which occurs when the time an employee spends at work is inadequate is compared to specified hours (ILO, 2013). In the South African context, underemployment occurs when people work fewer hours than specified or when they do work for which they are overqualified to do (Beukes *et al.*, 2016). It is also said that; “persons in underemployment (time-related) are employed persons who were willing and available to work additional hours, whose total number of hours actually worked during the reference period were below 35 hours per week” (Statistics South Africa, 2021:24). This information is usually not considered when employment statistics are captured (ILO, 2013). This thesis adopts the South African definition of underemployment because, in addition to accounting for time spent at work, it also accounts for underutilisation of skills when people are in jobs that they are overqualified to do.

2.2.5 PEPs or PWP

The ILO defines Public Works Programmes (PWPs) as ventures which are introduced on a short-term basis to respond to a shock or crisis but can also be long term when they take the form of cash for work or food for work programmes which create or maintain community assets (ILO, 2021*b*). The World Bank defines PWPs as social protection instruments used in many situations in low and middle-income countries to create temporary employment and for the creation and maintenance of public infrastructure (Subbarao *et al.*, 2013). A study by Holmes and Jones (2011*a*) defined PWPs as infrastructure creation projects that use labour-intensive

¹⁸ Under-utilised labour comprises three groups that are defined as follows: persons who are underemployed, persons who are unemployed, and persons who are discouraged (Statistics South Africa, 2021:24).

programmes that pay in cash or in food parcels. These are government programmes used by countries to create community assets and at the same time provide employment for people, paying them in cash or food.

On the other hand, the ILO defines Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) as massive government employment programmes, which include PWPs, short term, emergency programmes and employment guarantee programmes for the creation of public infrastructure and provision of services to the community. PEPs create employment and provide social protection together with income security for the poor or unemployed (ILO, 2021*b*). These programmes expand on the scope of PWPs by including other activities and objectives. For example, Phillip (2013*a*), submits that besides infrastructure creation, PEPs have been used in the environmental sector to support climate change initiatives and in the social sector as a social policy. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) defines PEPs as different interventions such as PWPs, cash for work, and temporary emergency response programmes which use labour-intensive methods to respond to a shock such as a drought or economic downturn and which provide cash or in-kind payment to the unskilled or semi-skilled labour (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2020).

What emerges from these definitions is that PWPs and PEPs are not a form of aid or government grant; they pay people for services rendered. Workers should earn a wage or profit to be regarded as employed and these programmes pay in cash or food parcels (Dejardin, 1996). These programmes can be classified into three broad categories: short-term crisis relief, social protection or poverty reduction and employment guarantees (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The scope of these programmes is broad and a single feature cannot determine whether they constitute a form of employment or not. For the purposes of this study, the EPWP is classified as a PEP fitting the ILO definition given above. The features of this programme are covered extensively in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

2.3 The History of PEPs and PWP

Public Works Programmes have a long history as policy instruments. They have been implemented since the 19th century when India (known then as British India) responded to successive droughts in the 1830s, 1870s and 1890s using PWPs to protect victims of famine by using labour-intensive methods to build infrastructure (Nath, 2021; Subbaro *et al.*, 2013). In the 20th century, the economic downturn during the Great Depression led the USA to implement the programme in 1934. The programme was introduced as an ‘emergency relief project’¹⁹ after 13 to 18 million people had lost their jobs due to the Great Depression and \$3.3 billion was allocated for the development of infrastructure, employing 1.5 to 2 million people (Frances Perkins Centre, 2014).

On the African continent, many countries have introduced the programmes for various reasons as identified by Department of Public Works, 2009; Derjadin, 1996; Gehrke and Hartwig, 2015; von Braun *et al.*, 1991 in countries such as;

- i. Burundi and Rwanda introduced the programmes in 1979 and 1980, respectively to reduce the problem of rural unemployment and poverty;
- ii. Botswana, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia used the programmes to ensure food security in the 1980s and 1990s;
- iii. Rwanda in 2008 the programme was introduced with an aim to accelerate eradication of poverty, rural growth and social protection;
- iv. Sierra Leone in 2009 the Youth Employment Support Project (YESP) was introduced with an aim to reduce youth unemployment;
- v. In Senegal, Mauritania and Mali they were implemented as drought relief programmes in the 1960s; and
- vi. South Africa, they were first introduced in 1996 to provide employment to the poor and unskilled.

¹⁹ recommended by a social worker, Mr. Harry Hopkins, through the Secretary of Labour, Ms. Frances Perkins.

PEPs or PWPs do not enjoy universal acclaim and remain uncommon in some countries in Latin America, Asia, Europe and Africa. However, they continue to be a useful ‘*policy instruments*’²⁰ for addressing short-term challenges and have been adopted during times of national crises in countries across. These include the Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest (EGPP) in Bangladesh, Temporary Income Support Programme (PATI) of El Salvador introduced in 2009, as a social protection programme (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). In the case of Argentina in 2001, the government introduced the programme in response to an economic crisis. It is said that;

The demand by the majority of the population for employment recovery spurred the government to introduce massive employment program, the Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados (program for unemployed male and female households). It accounted for less one (1) percent of GDP at the outset, paved the way for a reduction of the contractionary effects that otherwise would have caused a catastrophic devaluation of the currency (Kostzer, 2008:1).

East Germany introduced its own PWP in the 1990s (Alderman, 2014; del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Kraus *et al.*, 1998). The fall of the Berlin Wall disrupted the economy of the East. One study submits that:

East Germany was not prepared for the unification, the sudden switch to a market economy and increasing wages brought huge changes in the labour market with worker displacement and rapidly decreasing labour demand (Lechner & Eichler and Lechner, 2002:6).

In these countries, for instance, the USA and East Germany, PEPs or PWPs have largely been used as short-term economic relief programmes. Indeed, many countries in the developing world have sought to deploy these programmes innovatively to address long-term challenges. South Africa and India²¹, for example, used PEPs or PWPs as interventions for the management of permanent challenges of unemployment and poverty (Dejardin, 1996; Meth, 2011; Phillip, 2013a). In these

²⁰ More examples of PEPs or PWPs are listed in Appendix A with their objectives, targeted population and skills development aims.

²¹ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) introduced in 2005

cases, these programmes were deployed to cushion the poor and unemployed, improve living standards, provide food security, stabilize the economy and build or maintain assets (ISPA, 2017; Meth, 2011). Overall, the foregoing shows that whereas PEPs and PWPs have been commonly implemented as short-term crisis relief responses to disaster, war or economic crisis, they have also been used innovatively in the developing world with a medium to long-term focus, along with employment guarantees. In these instances, EPWPs are deployed as a strategy to cushion people against food insecurity, poverty and unemployment.

What emerges from a review of the various deployments of these programmes is firstly, their ability to provide temporary relief to the chronically or transiently poor (Alderman, 2014); secondly, their contribution to short term employment; thirdly, their ability to provide social services, and lastly, their contribution to the development as well as maintenance of public infrastructure or assets (Bergemann *et al.*, 2016; del Nino *et al.*, 2009; Dejardin, 1996; Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Kostzer, 2008; Koochi-Kamali, 2010; Imbert & Papp, 2012; Ticherneva, 2012; USA Work Program, 1937). What is less clear is their contribution to addressing long-term challenges like poverty, food insecurity and structural unemployment. Thus, while PEPs and PWPs are globally recognised as effective responses for short-term crises, there is a lack of evidence on their relevance in the case of long-term challenges. This thesis, therefore, focuses on the alleviation of long-term challenges through implementation of these programmes in South Africa with specific focus on their ability to cushion the vulnerable (women and youth).

2.3.1 PEPs or PWPs guiding principles

PEPs and PWPs follow their distinctive principles and therefore one of their key features is their non-adherence to the minimum wage. PWPs straddle between decent and indecent work due to the meagre wages they pay, their use of food as payment and their working conditions (Dejardin, 1996; ILO, 2012). Payment is either in cash, which is often below the minimum wage or in food, hence they are at times referred to as food for work programmes. These programmes are established as

massive employment creation programmes during a crisis and they are designed in a manner that avoids crowding out of permanent employment. PWP target certain groups in society, that is, the vulnerable, and they involve not-for-profit activities focusing, rather, on building of community assets and services. PEPs or PWPs therefore complement private sector employment and they are typically used as a cushion to the poor or short-term solution to the problem of unemployment especially during an economic crisis where it tends to stand in for the markets.

2.3.2 Key stakeholders in PEPs or PWPs

PEPs or PWPs are implemented by countries and at times are co-funded or supported by international development partners and organisations. These partners include the World Bank, the ILO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID, the DANIDA Fellowship Centre, the World Food Programme, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and others that support anti-poverty strategies (Dejardin, 1996). After a crisis, countries are left with deteriorating public assets such as roads, railways, irrigation systems, schools, hospitals and others. There are often losses in employment, savings and investments due to economic downturn, as well as increased food insecurity and poverty, leaving people in a dire situation (Dejardin, 1996; Kraus *et al.*, 1998; USA Work Program, 1937). Countries therefore partner with international stakeholders to cushion the vulnerable.

2.3.3 Example of a PEP: MGNREGA of India

India is one of the countries that has been implementing PEPs to cushion the poor for some time. Having started in the 19th century to respond to drought, India's programme has been evolving and the latest is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act²² (MGNREGA) which came about in 2005. Desai *et al* (2015) offer the following perspective:

²² "an act to provide for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household whose adult members are to do unskilled manual work and for matters connected herewith and incidental to" (Government of India, 2017:4).

Prior to the MNGREGA, several programmes/schemes had been initiated by the government of India for raising the productive employment of unemployed and underemployed rural labourers but these programmes could not generate employment for the unemployed and underemployed rural labourers (Desai *et al.*, 2015:9).

Participants are entitled to 100 days guaranteed work within a financial year and this work is split within members of a household who are older than 18 years (ibid). Households choose who amongst them participates in the programme. They have 100 days of work annually guaranteed. This programme gives people the right to work which is something that is beyond just adhering to international practice of addressing a crisis using a PEP (Desai *et al.*, 2015, Ministry of Rural Development, 2018). Poor households have equal opportunity to access to employment thus, eliminating favouritism and corruption which is usually a critique most of these programmes receive. Households who do not get employment 15 days after applying for a job can claim unemployment insurance (Ministry of Rural Development, 2018). This part of the act allows for the provision of income to the people while they are waiting for employment within the programme.

PEPs in many instances exhibit inclinations towards cushioning vulnerable groups such as women, youth and people living with disabilities since these are people mostly affected by instability. In the case of India's MGNREGA, the Act states that 33% of workers on the programme should be women (Desai *et al.*, 2015). PEPs are community based programmes which means projects are identified and implemented within the community. This is the case with MGNREGA since it is a demand driven programme in which community members register their desire to work with local authorities in their villages who then identify projects with them and submit for approval by higher authority before implementation (ibid). The projects are not imposed upon the communities; people get a chance to be consulted and be able to choose projects that address their needs. Being part of the consultation process gives community members a sense of ownership of the project. The project also gets to create jobs with the resources within the local community. People benefit from

within their communities. The benefits are two fold; the opportunity to create an asset for use within the community and earning of income from the programme.

In addition, there are some projects that are focused towards sustainability of livelihoods of the participants. Participants plant oil seeds that enable them to have long-term income thus, creating sustainable livelihoods for the beneficiaries (Ministry of Rural Development, 2018). PEPs are short-term initiatives since they are project based so is income earned, people cannot rely on it for the rest of their lives so it becomes important that some of the activities they do contribute to sustainable livelihoods. This is in preparation for long-term income outside the programme. As much as PEPs are short-term assets created are to address long-term challenges.

The programme has a good system for monitoring its employment and unemployment data for work seekers with all jobless people in a household registered on a job card system that is centrally captured (ibid). Control of information and fair recruitment has been a problem that overshadows the good intentions of PEPs. The MGNREGA makes recruitment transparent and eliminates corruption since the people who apply for a job have all their information properly captured and managed by the system. Authorities are therefore able to track the status of the applicants to see if they have managed to secure employment. This equally assists in monitoring the turnaround time of implementation of projects and enables corrective action to be taken where projects take long to be implemented.

2.4 The role of PEPs or PWPs

Governments, especially in the developing world, are obliged to protect the vulnerable against crises due to unequal access to opportunities, among them women, youth and persons living with disabilities. Women, for instance, constitute 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty worldwide (Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015). Vulnerable groups are more exposed to any crisis due to their exclusion and marginalisation in access to economic opportunities and the barriers they face in

accessing resources and services enjoyed by others. Below is a discussion on the role of PEPs or PWPs identified from around the world. The discussion is presented in five themes, namely, employment creation, skills development, creation of assets, provision of social protection and the multiplier effect on the economy. Many countries have used these programmes for various reasons. However, existing literature focuses more on provision of temporary relief through short-term employment. As a result, there is not much in the literature on the contribution to skilling or reskilling of participants by these programmes.

2.4.1 Employment contribution of PEPs or PWPs

These programmes maximise on employment of large numbers of people. In India the MGNREGA employed 53 million households who worked for a 2862 days between 2009 and 2010 (Mishra, 2011). Furthermore, participants are guaranteed 100 days of work per annum which should be given to them within 15 days of receipt of application (Mishra *et al.*, 2014). These are numbers that are employed through direct employment. In the case of Ethiopia, the PSNP of 2005 provided 7 million people with employment opportunities (Hodinott *et al.*, 2012). It was the case also with South Africa where implementing Public Bodies are expected to create direct job opportunities through LIC. In Phase Three (3) the programme created about 5 million work opportunities (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2019).

A key driver to creation of employment opportunities is infrastructure development which involves the building of social and economic assets (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015), using Labour Intensive Construction (LIC)²³. In the USA, through the PWP, 3,984 construction projects were able to employ 125,000 people between 1935 and 1940 (Abrams, 2003; USA Work Program, 1937). While in South Africa, 6,763 construction projects were able to absorb 296,014 people in the 2018/19 financial year, of whom 43% were youth and 54.5% women (EPWPRS, 2019). However, these are

²³ "Labour Intensive Construction is defined as the economically efficient employment of a great proportion of labour as is technically feasible, ideal throughout the construction process including the production of materials, to produce as high standard of construction as demanded by the specification and allowed by the funding available" (McCutcheon, 2008:4).

temporary jobs that consequently employ very few youths, accounting for less than 50% of participants. Women participation in South Africa is better, accounting for slightly over 50% of participants. The failure to absorb women and youth even into temporary jobs is an indicator of the lack of progress towards set targets and the continuing inequity which privileges men and older people in the labour market.

In addition, such employment is short-term and only cushions people for a limited period. South Africa's unemployment problem is long-term. Existing studies do not elaborate on the long-term employment created by these programmes because their focus is on '*short-term crisis relief*,' supported by the assumption that, in the long-term, the economy would provide needed employment. This assumption does not hold for the South African context because unemployment in the country is structural and there is no way the economy can absorb the numbers of unskilled or semi-skilled labour in the country. What emerges clearly from literature is that these programmes are able to create short-term jobs due to their orientation as short-term crisis relief undertakings. However, countries have failed to turn the short-term employment into sustainable employment which has been a need especially in the developing countries like South Africa where structural unemployment is rife. This is a major drawback which this thesis aims to bring up in its evaluation of the innovative ways countries could adopt to turn temporary employment into sustainable jobs and subsequently address recurrent challenges.

Through creation of employment opportunities, these programmes also transfer income to the poor and unemployed. Income transfer improves consumption in the short-run but because it is below minimum wage. Critically, this means that investment or purchase of assets is impossible. In Ethiopia, the programme improved household consumption with adult meal consumption rising from two to three times a day, and from three to four times per day for children (Katane, 2010). In South Africa the EPWP transferred over R36 billion in wages in Phase Three of implementation of the programme (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2019). However, the impact of income transfer is mainly on consumption. For example, the

PSNP of Ethiopia did not make people better off because it only enabled consumption (Mishra, 2011). These programmes are therefore just a *'life jacket'* that keeps participants floating in poverty and does not necessarily take them out of poverty. These programmes are viewed as social protection and not labour market policies, and they therefore pay wages below the minimum wage.

These programmes are not supposed to crowd-out full-time employment and payment of low wages is one of the ways to reduce movement of labour from full-time to PEP employment. However, what has not been made clear is if this the only way to discourage people from leaving their full-time jobs to work for a PEP or PWP. These are special programmes but people live under similar social and economic conditions which means the cost of living is the same and so are the household needs. This has proven that these programmes do not necessarily take people out of poverty but the difference between those working on these programmes and those who are not is that the former would have been moved to a less chronic poverty level. As a result, countries that desire to protect people from poverty using these programme struggle to take people out of it because the income earned does not take people out of poverty. The poor and vulnerable participate because they have limited choices (Phillip, 2013a). The programmes essentially become the next best alternative.

On one hand, PEPs or PWPs influence the conditions of employment in the labour market by setting of minimum standards. For example, the MGNREGA established labour standards or influenced working conditions in India (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). Labour regulations guide these programmes and they adhere to national and international standards (ILO labour standards). As a result, they have influenced private sector employment conditions in the implementing countries, thus helping rid local markets of abusive labour practices. The application of international labour standards is commendable because it is part of the decent work agenda promoted by the ILO to ensure that workers are in decent jobs.

On the other hand, these programmes are at times criticised for distorting the labour market. For instance, it is argued that they put pressure on private sector employment costs. Evidence from the Indian agricultural sector shows that workers have more bargaining power with respect to their wages, especially for unskilled labour, due to wages offered by PEPs or PWPs (Dev & Ranade, 2001; Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The positive relationship between wages and labour supply affects the movement of labour. When PEPs or PWPs pay better, labour moves from private to public sector employment, forcing the private sector to push wages up to remain attractive, thus raising production costs. This has long-term effects on employment because higher costs mean that the employer has to do with less labour.

A study by Berg *et al.*, 2018, in India on can public works increase equilibrium wages found that PEPs affect wages for unskilled and not for skilled workers. Unskilled labour is the labour that is most affected by unemployment. An increase in their labour costs further disadvantages them in the labour market. These programmes are also blamed for weakening work ethics in countries like the USA and South Africa (Abrams, 2003; Berg *et al.*, 2018; Dev & Ranade, 2001). Workers from these programmes are said to be lazy and are always loitering with nothing to do. This is not a good view especially for people who are still to look for full-time employment.

PEPs or PWPs gives people a comfortable environment that in the end discourages some from participating in the active labour market. Depending on the elasticity of labour supply and demand public works programmes have a crowd-out effect on the private sector employment (Kraus *et al.*, 1998). Private sector ends up having difficulties in attracting labour because people are participating in PEPs or PWPs and are comfortable there. In the case of Argentina and USA, the comfortable environment that the participants got from the programme made them reluctant to look for work in the private sector (Abrams, 2003; Kostzer, 2008; Iturriza, 2008). In some cases, rising PEPs or PWPs employment may re-allocate labour from participating on the private sector to participate in the programme. In India a study by Imbert and Papp, 2012:9 found that:

the introduction of the program is correlated with a 1.6% fall in the fraction of days spent doing any kind of private work (waged, self-employed or domestic work) among low-skilled persons. The program districts statistics show that a much larger fall of 3.7% of private sector work, which is close to the 4% increase in public employment. These results are consistent with one-for-one crowding out of private sector work by the public works program, with no change in unemployment or participation in the labour force.

In the end unemployment remains unchanged instead labour is reallocated between private sector and public sector (PEPs or PWPs) therefore the impact becomes zero.

Work experience gained by participants from these programmes is also questionable. It is unclear whether there is any work experience gained from doing the actual work or people just receive income for showing up at work and doing nothing. For example, in Argentina it was said that skilled labour was found doing menial jobs and there were issues in the design of projects that employed people (Kostzer, 2008). This makes transitioning to the labour market for full-time employment from these programmes difficult for participants if they do not acquire enough experience. In some cases, choice of a project and its design affect the quality of work done by participants. The participants end up with very little or nothing to do and yet they are supposed to gain work experience to use later in life.

Another criticism of these programmes is that they are unable to improve women or youth's chances of entering the labour market. Studies by Eichler and Lechener (2002) and Zepeda *et al.*, (2013) found that men stand a better chance of re-joining the labour market than women. Men from these programmes stand a better chance of getting a full-time job than women. The failure to transition to the labour market even after participating in the programme puts women at a further disadvantage given that they already have limited access to employment compared to men. Experience gained from PEPs or PWPs may not be sufficient for one to qualify to get a permanent job in the labour market and in most cases return to the labour market tends to be gender biased with men having a better chance than women. This

means these programmes alone cannot improve the unemployment plight for women and youth because their labour market rebound is unlike compared to older men. The question this thesis seeks to answer is how these programmes could be modelled to respond to the challenges at hand because as evidenced in literature and 1.2.1 above, countries like South Africa have not been able to come up with strategies to reduce the unemployment challenge especially among women and youth.

Sustainable livelihoods initiatives are very minimal. Countries like Argentina have seen few entrepreneurship activities with 8% of beneficiaries from the Jefes Plan Jefas taking part in macro enterprises, which included cooperatives or private sector projects (Kostzer, 2008). While South Africa has also seen very few participants taking part in entrepreneurship despite it being one of the avenues to earning permanent income. For example, the NPO Programme by Pheko Ka Kopanelo NPO has channelled some people in Qwaqwa, in the Free State Province, to manufacturing activities, creating 33 permanent jobs (Department of Public Works, 2017a). Participants have been able to start businesses in various sectors such tourism and hospitality, agriculture (animal husbandry and crop production), baking, manufacturing (bricks and food stuffs), recycling, construction and textile.

However, the small business environment has its own dynamics that must not be overlooked when participants are encouraged to start their own businesses. There is little success in entrepreneurship development on these programmes as acknowledged by Phillip, (2013a) and Dladla & Mutambara, (2018), who argued that the role of PEPs or PWP in enterprise support could not be equated to that of an enterprise development agency. This means entrepreneurship support is considered outside the scope of these programmes. PEPs or PWPs alone cannot support small business successfully and make them sustainable as their support falls outside the scope of their activities. Available literature does not focus on the opportunities for women and youth in PEPs or PWPs to venture into entrepreneurship. These people are organised and some their activities are already entrepreneurial in nature. As

much as this falls outside the scope of PEPs or PWP, the question remains how the programmes through partnerships could leverage sustainable livelihood opportunities for their participants.

2.4.2 Skills Development

These programmes are primarily used to create temporary employment, serve as income guarantee or provide social protection. Temporary employment is availed to targeted groups through the opportunity to participate while income guarantee and social protection are derived from work experience gained and informal training that is designed to improve the participants' chances of joining the formal labour market (Eichler & Lechner, 2002; ILO, 2020*b*). Some of the programmes reviewed embedded skills development as a part of the programme. Key examples include the Jefes programme in Argentina²⁴, South Africa's EPWP and Bangladesh's²⁵ Rural Maintenance Program (RMP), which had clear skills development objectives (Department of Public Works, 2017*a*; del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Hodinott *et al.*, 2012; Rodrigo, 2013; Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015; Ticherneva, 2012). This approach is in line with skills needs in countries like South Africa, which have very low skills levels that must be realigned with labour market requirements.

Participants usually gain skills such as plumbing, electrical wiring, tiling, carpentry, gardening, motor mechanics, baking, tea production and firefighting, baking and others that are later used to start own businesses or to look for employment in the active labour market (del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Department of Public Works, 2017*a*; Hodinott *et al.*, 2012; Rodrigo, 2013; Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015; Ticherneva, 2012). These skills are on demand in the formal labour market and individuals with such skills have a significantly higher chance of gaining full-time employment or using the same skills to start own businesses. In some cases, PEPs or PWP target technical skills training in preparation for employment outside the programme. In El Salvador

²⁴ participants on the programme to spend 4-6 hours in training or education activities per day

²⁵ requirement that women participating receive income generating skills training and also save part of income earned to start own businesses

skills development initiatives included job interview coaching, writing resumes, aggressive job search and counselling (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The El Salvador programme prepared participants for employment in the active labour market. Skills have a short life span, so skilling and reskilling requires to be redesigned to stay abreast with economic restructuring.

Participants in PEPs or PWP's learn life skills in addition to gaining employment and earning income. For example, in South Africa participants from the Zibambele Rural Development Programme were encouraged to join Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO) where they pay monthly contribution to create capital for other business initiatives such as agriculture or hiring out of tents thus, earning themselves some needful extra income (KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, 2009). Many people do not realise their capabilities until they have been given a chance to work and apply their minds.

However, these skills development interventions are very limited. This has been the case with programmes like EPWP, which trained less than 1% of participants over a three-year period (EPWPRS, 2018). Limited time and resources are spent on skills development despite the fact these skills become the main criteria if participants are to successfully join the labour market. This is especially the case in South Africa, where women and youth are consistently at a disadvantage, as they do not have skills to transition and equally synchronise with the changes in the country's economic landscape. This necessitates thinking beyond ensuring that EPWP's short-term employment sub-programmes or projects can integrate skills development that enable women and youth to transition to full-time employment.

There is little evidence that PEPs or PWP's improve employment chances of participants because there is no link between skills acquired with the labour market needs (Gehrke and Hartwig, 2015). This makes ability of these programme to enable labour market transition questionable. As a result, countries like South Africa that have high structural unemployment challenges that need strategies to improve

employability of the skilled may not benefit for such programmes. However, the need to complement such programmes with other strategies may improve their effectiveness.

Due to their short-term nature, in some cases their impact on poverty and unemployment is insignificant but their skills transfer is expected to have a long-term effect. A study by Zepeda *et al.*, 2013 substantiated that due to short term nature of PEPs, it becomes impossible to expect participants from the programmes to re-enter the labour market with the skills acquired since sustainable jobs can only be created by long-term projects. PEPs or PWPs implement stop and go projects which means given their nature they cannot create sustainable jobs for the participants. Skills development received in most cases is mainly short-term for working on the project. Gehrke and Hartwig, (2015) argue that formal qualifications are long-term and therefore cannot be attained within PEPs or PWPs. In this light, emphasis on long term training may lead to the attraction of people who only want a qualifications. In essence, there is no evidence that skills gained from PEPs or PWPs match the requirements of the labour market. PEPs or PWPs cannot be expected to give people a formal qualification because they are not a training institution. All that they are expected to do is to re-skill people so that the unskilled can participate in the active labour market.

2.4.3 Creation of assets

Assets take the form of social and economic possessions. These include roads, bridges, railway networks, airports, hospitals, schools, irrigation systems, dams and others. PWPs produce social infrastructure (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). Infrastructure built by the programmes address social and structural backlogs. It also enables economic participation. The programme creates quality assets that address the needs of communities. The Labour Intensive Construction (LIC) methods which are used in the creation of assets do not compromise the quality of assets.

The USA through a programme known as the Works Programme Administration or Works Projects Administration (WPA) developed its key assets during the Great Depression. By 1936, the programme had constructed 29 000 miles of new hard surface roads from farms to markets, constructed and repaired 21 000 bridges, 'built and renovated' new and old structures ²⁶, repaired 4 500 miles of sewer, 'laid and repaired' 2 300 miles of water mains and constructed 112 miles of canals and channels (USA Work Program, 1937). This was a huge infrastructure investment and it is the reason why USA is miles ahead of other countries in terms of infrastructure development. The assets created were critical for the country and its economy. The large investment on assets was critical for the rebuilding of the country during the Great Depression.

While South Africa's EPWP has created assets such as dams, roads, schools, hospitals, these assets are critical for the communities for which they are created. For instance, EPWP Phase Three (3) carried out 40 000 km of routine road maintenance and installed 17 644 km of water reticulation (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2019). In EPWP asset creation includes construction of new community and economic assets as well as their maintenance. The allocation of assets is wide spread. In India the programme came up with a foundation for roads that were later surfaced thus lessening the costs of road construction (Mishra, 2011).

Some assets created have a long term impact on the lives of the recipients. For example, in Yemen infrastructure created for the communities with poor access to water resulted in 50% reduction in number of months which they spend without water (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The infrastructure created responded to the needs of the people and addressed a challenge affecting the lives of the people. This was the case in South Africa where Mndwaka Dam was built in the Eastern Cape Province to supply 40 000 people in 63 villages with water. This project was constructed to restore the dignity of the people in the area in as much as it was intended to bring safe drinking water 200m closer to households (ARQ Consulting Engineers, 2015;

²⁶ 8 300 schools, 1000 hospitals, 3 000 sports fields, 112 airports, 156 run ways

Department of Public Works, 2017). The villagers were facing water challenges as they had to walk long distances to fetch unsafe water that was shared with animals. The ADM then allocated R76 million for the construction of a low cost 30 000m³ dam in this area to supply water to local the community. The project used labour intensive construction (LIC) methods to build a dam which is insensitive to flooding. This was done in a remote location to benefit 63 villages and in the process developed skills amongst the local people (ARQ Consulting Engineers, 2015).

There is little evidence of assets and wealth accumulation as key benefits from PEPs or PWP. A study on public works and social protection in Ethiopia found that “income and assets growth (in terms of livestock) over 2006 to 2008 for those receiving wages and food was 59% and 62% respectively” (Koochi-Kamali, 2010:10). This means that households can actually acquire own assets and also accumulate wealth from the programme. However, these benefits are minimal due to the low wages earned which are below minimum wage and also short-term employment which does not give people enough time to save money for the acquisition of their own assets.

Maintenance of the assets created in these programmes is a huge challenge because it is often overlooked during project planning and implementation. Lack of a solid maintenance plan resulted in assets becoming dilapidated (del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Dev & Ranade, 2001; Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015). Implementing countries usually budget for the project costs and do not take into consideration future maintenance. Again, they do not transfer the rights to ownership as well as maintenance to the beneficiaries (de Ninno *et al.*, 2009). In most cases countries build assets without a plan to create long-term employment through maintenance programmes or the use of such assets, and as a result, some assets end up becoming white elephants. This is often a result of the application of blanket approaches to these programmes by countries, where even though the programme is intended to address long-term challenges, it is implemented and managed as a

short-term crisis relief programme. This approach militates against the realisation of what Phillip (2013a) describes as the '*transformative potential*' of these programmes.

In some cases, assets created do not provide long-term solution to the problems experienced by the specific communities and consequently they are abandoned. In the case of Rwanda 20% of assets created were no longer in use or simply non-existent (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). Some assets created do not last. There are equally complicated cases where communities have not been consulted in identifying such assets. These are often abandoned and fall into disuse because they are not a necessity to the communities. There is a need for useful assets that are essentially informed by the needs of the specific recipients. Otherwise, such assets risk being abandoned by the intended recipients and they become white elephants.

Sometimes key assets for the community are not accessed by the intended beneficiaries. For instance, Tanzarn and Gutierezz in 2015, in their assessment of PEPs in 30 countries found that in Madagascar and Uganda the programmes did not assist participants in accessing assets such as land. At times communities get assets that do not add much value to their lives. In a nutshell, these fail to get assets that are key to their livelihoods while those who tend to benefit are people with assets already and those without only gain short-term wages (Mishra, 2011).

These programmes apparently contribute to the creation of assets as evidenced by the literature reviewed from the USA, South Africa, India, Yemen and other countries. There has been a huge benefit for those communities where these social and economic assets were created. Due to destruction by wars or natural disasters as well as service delivery demands, assets need to be created and PEPs or PWPs tend to play an important role in this regard. They tend to be an easier way of rebuilding after a crisis or to close the asset backlog gap. From the evidence above the USA benefited a lot in terms of assets that were created from the programme.

However, there is very little evidence of tangible benefits in the form of individual assets and people without assets tend to remain without even after joining these programmes. Savings and investment get complicated because of the nature of employment which is on an ad hoc basis. This aspect generates uncertainty among participants who find it difficult to save or invest unless the programme is supported by other credit access programmes (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). This study seeks to find innovative ways with which countries implementing PEPs or PWPs could use infrastructure projects to create sustainable employment either through the sheer maintenance of assets or their creation. Infrastructure remains the biggest expenditure by government and its delivery can be remodelled to create sustainable work. The impact of PEPs or PWPs on poverty is doubtful as some countries that have used these programmes to alleviate poverty still have intended beneficiaries living in abject poverty with little or no signs of winning against the scourge (Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015). This thesis seeks to establish how countries with long-term poverty and unemployment could use infrastructure budgets to solve these challenges.

2.4.4 Provision of social protection

Governments in the developing regions are obliged to protect the vulnerable (women, youth and people living with disabilities) in the face of a crisis. PEPs are perceived as a means of transferring income from the urban rich through taxes to the rural poor (Muralidharan, 2018). The poor and vulnerable usually find it difficult to enter the labour market because the governments always try to use PEPs or PWPs to protect them. Women, youth and people living with disabilities are the most vulnerable groups in society as some opportunities tend to exclude them. Multiple reasons such as stigma and employers being reluctant to employ them are advanced as leading causes for this marginalisation. This is the reason why women and other vulnerable groups receive preferential treatment in PEPs or PWPs.

PEPs or PWPs usually set targets for women and youth empowerment. For example, of the participants in the programme in Argentina, 71% were women, of whom 60% were single (Kostzer, 2008). The MGNREGA in India set a target of 33% women participants, who would earn the same wages as men, while in South Africa, the EPWP targets 55% participation by women and youth, with persons living with disabilities expected to constitute 2% of programme participants in Phase Three (3) of implementation (Berg *et al.*, 2018; Department of Public Works, 2019). These targets are set as a proactive measure to protect vulnerable groups from the effects of a crisis.

In South Africa, EPWP have added to work experience, life skills, and self-confidence. In a programme implemented in Madagascar, women gained priority and innovation skills (Imbert & Papp, 2012; Tanzarn & Gutierezz, 2015; Tcherneva, 2012). Vulnerable groups are usually overlooked in community activities and this usually affects their confidence, and they view themselves as people without hope who literally have nothing to offer. By participating in such programmes, they see the potential they have in changing their situation. These programmes allow for the much needed mind-set shifts among the vulnerable. Literature specifically states the following:

work empowers, enhances individual worth, allows one to lead a richer life, gain new knowledge and skill and contribute to self, family, and society thus life-affirming (Ticherneva, 2012:9).

Unemployment is costly to a country since it can lead to social challenges such as crime, alcohol and substance abuse. Therefore, being productive and earning income brings satisfaction to people thus, reducing social problems.

Some studies cast doubt on the effectiveness of the programmes on solving the problems of the poor (Koochi-Kamali, 2010). Disparities are an issue affecting the developed and developing world. Breaking the disparities has always been a challenge for all. This is because systems that promote social inequality are deeply rooted and not easy to break. Consequently, there is a need for other programmes if

good results are to be achieved (Tichenerva, 2012). These programmes require addressing the concomitant challenges for them to be effective because the challenges at hand are complex and cannot be fixed by one programme. It is for these reasons that the vulnerable groups still suffer. As a result, these programmes alone may not achieve the intended results. There might be a need of a total overhaul of the system which would then involve various players in the country to achieve intended results.

These programmes are further criticised for overlooking gender equality requirements, and therefore, despite the vulnerability of women, youth and people living with disabilities, they are still not catered to with the urgency their situation demands. A study by Holmes and Jones, (2011) found that these programmes treat gender equality as a secondary objective despite high levels of women living in poverty especially in rural settings. Evidence shows such practices in Ethiopia, India and East Germany programmes, where vulnerable participants were deprived the opportunity to acquire assets and skills to use later in life (Holmes & Jones, 2011a; Koochi-Kamali, 2010; Kruis *et al.*, 1998; Ticherneva, 2012). The failure to address equity challenges means that the ultimate objective of protecting the vulnerable is not met beyond tick-box approaches. The targeted groups do not benefit, and these programmes fail to meet their objectives. It has proved to be a challenge to address gender disparities because its roots are in the manner in which the economy is structured with which opportunities are not available for women (Ticherneva, 2012). This calls for innovative ways to address women and youth challenges if the goal of their emancipation is to be achieved.

2.4.5 The multiplier effect

Investments either from public or private sector tend to contribute to the economy in general. However, there is very little literature on the economic effects of PEPs or PWP. Positive effects occur in cases where people take care of themselves from wages earned from PEPs or PWP instead of the state taking care of them using

unemployment benefit. The latter is obviously a non-productive expense. This was observed by Kraus *et al.*, 1998 who said that champions of PWPs save unemployment benefits or social grants which are earned with no economic contribution. In this case the poor and unemployed take part in productive work thus, contributing to nation building instead of earning non-productive income.

Multiplier effects on the economy include increase in household income, consumption or purchase of household assets, savings and investments (ISPA, 2017). These programmes provide a capital injection into the economy by government, thereby boosting aggregate spending. This is beneficial to the economy since financing the needs of the poor entails food and clothing through wages earned that consequently boost local economies. In the case of Argentina, the Plan Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados boosted the growth of the economy of the country. Kostzer, (2008:16) observed that the “marginal propensity to consume that is close to one and lower marginal propensity to import thus giving a multiplier effect of 2.53 in the medium run”. This meant a 2.53% increase growth in the gross domestic product in the medium term. There is not much literature to back up the economic contribution of PEPs or PWPs especially in some developing countries on the economy.

PEPs or PWPs have been used to soften the impact of poverty to the majority. In Argentina the programme reduced the level of indigence by 25 percentage points (ibid). Poverty is one of the social ills affecting many countries and when efforts in fighting it are palpable, the country becomes a better place for its citizens. A majority of the population in some developing countries find themselves in deep poverty. However, this benefit does not have much empirical evidence because where these programmes have been used only for short-term benefits that have been realised.

In some cases, assets created can actually boost the local economy. For instance, in India the programme built economic infrastructure such as cereal banks, storage and marketing facilities, assets which have a positive effect on profitability and

employment creation (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). In addition, the MGNREGA provided agricultural assets in communities such as wells and water conservation activities leading to improvement in yield of crops such as wheat as well as a shift from low value to high value crops (Mishra, 2011). These assets improved the farming activities in the area leading to farmers being able to produce high value crops. The MGNREGA is praised for having led to 5-25% reduction in grain wastage due to use of threshing floors built for farmers by the programme (Narayana, 2016). This programme also improved efficiency of farming activities in India.

In South Africa, the National Government, through the Minister of Transport, identified priority road connections to improve linkages within the Southern African region. In 2007, the then Minister of Transport Mr. Jeff Hadebe adopted a plan to improve regional and national integration (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2007). Monontsha Pass in the Free State Province was identified among other roads that link South Africa to the neighbouring countries as one of the roads that needed to be constructed for easy integration. The road runs from Hlatseng in Qwaqwa to Caledon River at the border between Lesotho and South Africa. There are various tourism sites around this area such as mountain hiking, game viewing, waterfalls, cultural, monuments and it is home to Golden Highlands National Park which is one of the biggest national parks in the country. This means residents from areas such as Monontsha and Libono in Lesotho can cross through the border using the road to South Africa for shopping and access to other services on the other side.

The development of Monontsha road network to link the two countries is not only happening on the South African side. The government of Lesotho, through the Ministry of Public Works, budgeted 900 million Maluti for the construction of the 60km tarred road from Monontsha to Marakabi starting in the 2018/19 financial year as well as construction of the border post between South Africa and Lesotho (*Sunday Express Online*, 2019). This shows that Monontsha road link is important to both countries. The initiative by the Free State government to build the road was a

good gesture by the government which led the Lesotho government to further develop the road inwards.

The road is also seen as a quicker route for the South African Police Services (SAPS)'s Stock Theft Unit when pursuing stock theft thieves (Free State Department of Police, Roads and Transport, 2013). This means the reaction time by the Stock Theft Unit members of SAPS would be quicker as they would now use the road with any vehicle and this could improve the fight against stock theft crimes. The provincial plans are aligned to national plans as well as regional plans which then places emphasis on their implementation. The infrastructure development is aligned to the development of the economy for both South Africa and Lesotho. The impact of such assets is not quantified but the expected results will be spinoffs on the economy which are to benefit local business and the unemployed.

Participants also gain basic skills from the programme thus reducing the burden of the state in terms of disease control. Resources that would have been allocated to fight some preventable diseases will be used on other projects that assist the economy. An analysis of a PWP in Argentina found that the programme taught women skills such as food preparation, hygiene, requirements for school enrolment of children and their vaccination programmes (Tcherneva, 2012). These are basic skills that women to run their households failure lack of has long-term effects on the lives of their families. When people gain knowledge they become empowered and are able to take precaution, make proper decisions and also plan for themselves. The programmes improves the way people live and their understanding of things thus, reducing state burden of having to fight communicable diseases which could have been prevented if people had knowledge. In the case of East Germany, a study by Eichler and Lechner, 2002 found that individual benefits did not automatically boost the economy.

Although not a direct economic benefit but these programmes are said to improve relations between government and communities. EPWP is said to be a link between

government and communities (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2015). People get an opportunity to engage government officials on issues that affect them during consultations or monitoring of projects. This is also an opportunity for them to get an understanding of the functioning of government and be able to follow up on their requests as well as avoid strikes which have become common when community requests are not met.

2.5 Theoretical Approach

The study's theoretical approach on the role of government in bringing stability during a crisis is rooted in two schools of thought. One school of thought advances government intervention as propounded by John Maynard Keynes in his 1936 book *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, written during the Great Depression. This perspective emphasises the need for government intervention to bring stability in an economy. It argues that full employment can be achieved through government intervention. As stated by Held (1985:340):

the first basic proposition is that, left on its own devices, capitalism is an unstable economic system in the sense that it alternates between periods of protracted stagnation and unemployment and bursts of booming economic activity and inflation.

According to this school of thought, a country cannot rely on a capitalist market system to autonomously recalibrate and stabilise the economy. In the aftermath of a war, disaster, drought, or economic crisis, the private sector cannot be expected to rebuild national assets, so PEPs or PWP are justified in such instances. This perspective advances the argument that government intervention is key because it stimulates economic activities through large infrastructure investment and increased consumption (Phillip, 2013a). Economic shocks can lead to an economic downturn and government intervention becomes critical to stimulate the economy and bring it out of the slump. Through the multiplier effect, government investment creates employment, boosts consumption, and has a positive effect on the economy in general.

Keynesian Theory has been very popular through the decades. For example, Britain used the Keynesian approach as an economic policy during the Second World War (Held, 1985). The approach was adopted to correct the system after the failure of the 'classical economists' approach. Through Keynes' involvement, a public works programme was introduced to address unemployment in the 1930s. PEPs or PWP are based on Keynesian theory in that huge state investment in assets is used to create employment for the unemployed. Keynes' approach has been considered necessary in countries affected by poverty, food insecurity and structural unemployment because in such instances the private sector is not obligated to address the socioeconomic challenges of society. Thus, governments must provide the necessary means to cushion the masses, as illustrated by cases such as in India and Ethiopia, where government intervention was aimed at addressing widespread poverty and food insecurity, respectively.

In cases of structural unemployment, such as is found in South Africa, employers cannot be expected to accommodate obsolete skills or skills they do not need. Government must intervene by addressing the gaps on the supply side of the labour market through education and training. The private sector requires workers who already have necessary skills or whose skills can be enhanced as needed depending on job requirements. Keynes' approach is therefore necessary in such contexts to rebuild public infrastructure, assist with economic recovery as well as cushion the poor, unemployed and food insecure (Held, 1985; Phillip, 2013a). In a nutshell, it is necessary to close the gap during a crisis by providing goods and services that the market cannot provide – thereby necessitating PEPs or PWPs.

However, the Keynes model is criticised in that government investment crowds out private investment. This has been illustrated in cases where workers have remained in PEPs or PWPs and become reluctant to seek full-time employment in the private sector as well in instances where unskilled workers were able to raise labour costs, thereby distorting the labour market as in the case of India (Dev & Ranade, 2002; Imbert & Papp, 2012; Kraus *et al.*, 1998; Kostzer, 2008; Iturriza, 2008). Keynes'

popularity faded with the rise to prominence of the neoliberalism. However, Keynesian approaches remain relevant despite criticism by those who favour free markets and they continue to be implemented in isolated instances across the world where countries have found themselves in one crisis or another (Phillip, 2013a).

Some scholars have called for a reduction in government intervention as, at times, intervention promotes rent seeking and has economy-wide unintended consequences (Fine & Wall, 2012). In some instances, governments have been criticized of bias and coming up with policies that favour certain social groups at the expense of others. This may not necessarily be undesirable, as in the case of PEPs or PWPs, which are designed to provide employment for the vulnerable, such as women, youth and people living with disabilities. Assumed societal equality has been proven otherwise in reality, hence the need for interventions such as PEPs or PWPs that protect, and do not necessarily *'favour'*, certain groups. If the economy is left to market forces and people compete for resources, the distribution may not be biased, but government intervention remains necessary for the protection of vulnerable groups.

On the other hand, neoliberalism is a *'laissez-faire'* approach to economic policy. It emerged in the late 1970s as a response to calls for independent development in the developing world, and threats from organized labour in the developed world (Siddiqui, 2012). Neoliberalism advocates for fair competition in the market. It disapproves of government intervention in the economy and emphasizes the need for the promotion of markets. Neoliberal thinking argues that markets should be left alone to self-correct. This is due to a belief that states create dependency or distort the economy, and their intervention has caused market failure around the world (Moon, 2017; Siddiqui, 2012). This approach is against the deployment of PEPs or PWPs, which target specific populations through government programmes aimed at solving challenges in the economy.

Proponents of free market capitalism support neoliberalism with the assumption that as the economy grows the poor will also benefit. Critics however argue that this is an assumption from an *'ideal world,'* in reality, it is not possible for a country hit by crisis or a natural or man-made disaster, where there is destruction of public infrastructure, and growth in the number of people living in poverty, food insecurity or those who are unemployed to self-correct. Neoliberalism has not worked well, especially in the developing world where pro-poor policies need to be emphasized to close the wide inequality gap between citizens. Evidence has shown that the economy alone is not able to respond quickly enough to a crisis and requires state involvement in order to yield desired results. Neoliberal policy has been blamed for some crises such as the East Asian crisis of 1996 (Fine & Wall, 2012; Siddiqui, 2012). There is still support for government intervention to bring economic stability.

When markets are left alone, they tend to concentrate on the profit-making motive and exclude interests of the masses who are left to find their own means to cope with economic challenges. This is the reason why Keynesian approaches remain relevant in most countries, especially in the developing world. This study is based on the premise that South Africa's unemployment problem is structural therefore private sector alone cannot solve it. Inadequate education and technological advancement have combined to result in skills shortages and skills mismatch in a reconfigured world of work. As the work environment has shifted employers are moving away from needing traditional skills towards creating job opportunities for the digital-savvy, throwing many out of the labour market and worsening unemployment in the country (Altman, 2004; Phillip, 2013a; Pindula News, 2021; Shankar *et al.*, 2021).

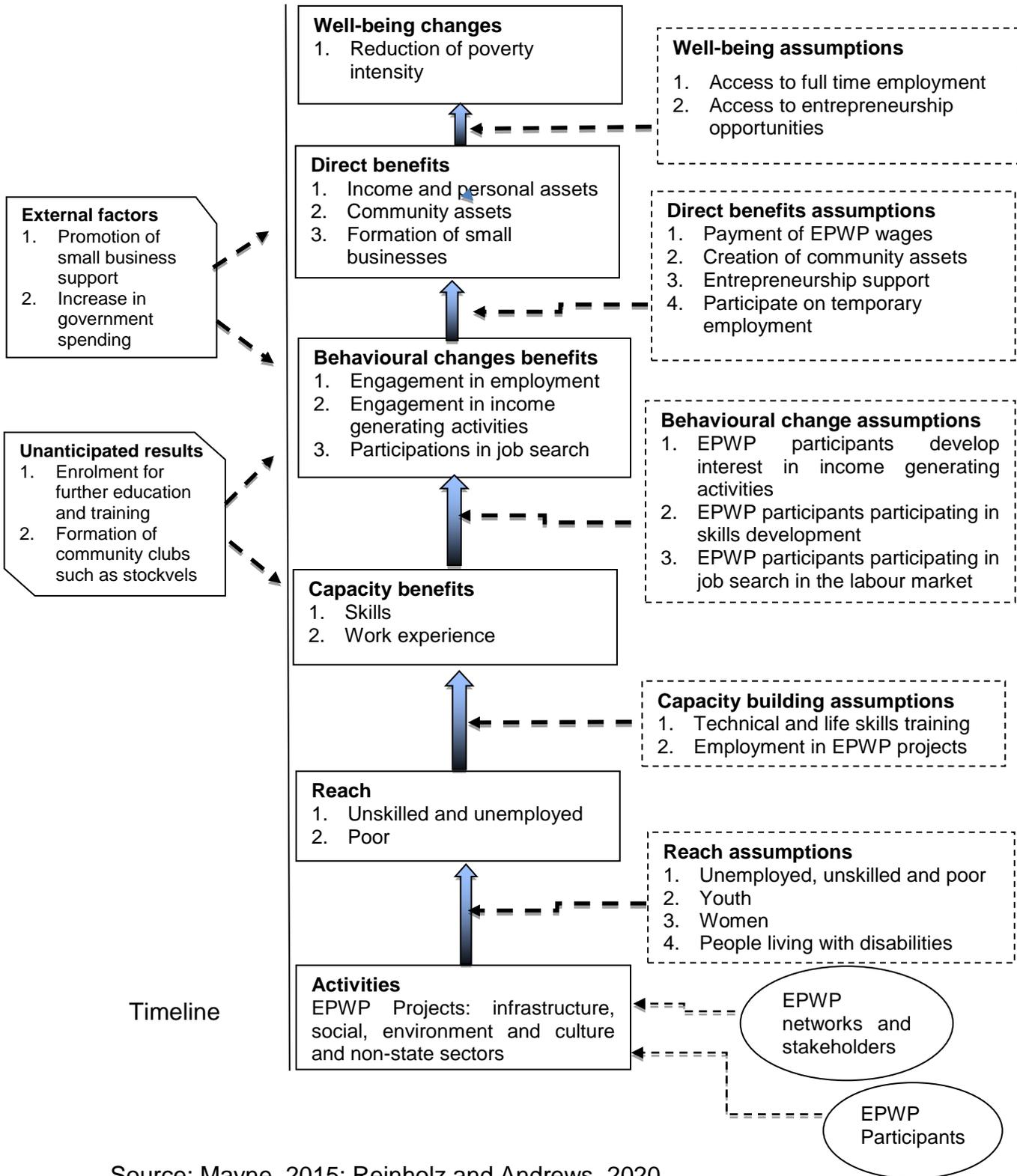
The neoliberal belief that markets should be left alone does not apply in the South African case. "Economic restructuring"²⁷ has left the sources of cheap labour that were utilized by apartheid-era governments out of employment, highlighting a need to reskill people in these areas if they are to participate effectively in the current

²⁷ Gauteng Department of Economic Development, 2009; Gauteng Provincial Treasury, 2015; McCord and Borat, 2003; Moon, 2017; Terreblanche, 2002

economy. This thesis argues for the Keynes approach to economic policy in South Africa because the structure of the country's economy is such that the private sector cannot absorb the unskilled, and employment creation remains one of the most critical needs. As Phillip, 2013a puts it, it is too critical to society to be left in the hands of the private sector alone. However, Keynes model alone is not sufficient so there might be a need to find a middle ground within the two schools of thought. There are some sectors that government can accommodate but on the other hand, private sector has to play a role if people are to be prepared for the absorption by certain sectors of the economy. In this case it's not an absolute Keynes win nor neoliberalism loss but rather bringing together the two schools of thought to come up with long-term sustainable employment creation strategies.

The theory of change below seeks to explain the role players, assumptions and benefits (intended and unintended) expected from the EPWP. Due to the complexity of the programme and the challenge at hand, understanding the underlying assumptions is crucial to explaining how change happens (Mayne, 2015; Reinholz & Andrews, 2020) and also be able to draw linkages within the ecosystem. It remains critical to ask whether the desired outcomes of EPWP were incorporated in its design.

Figure 2.1 Theory of Change



Source: Mayne, 2015; Reinholz and Andrews, 2020

2.6 The Conceptual Framework

As discussed above, the objectives of PEPs/PWPs are not universal. It has been shown that countries have used PWPs to protect citizens from shocks such as drought, short term decline in demand for labour, and economic instability or to create temporary employment and to protect the poor (Del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Dejardin, 1996; Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Kostzer, 2008). From the literature reviewed, it is evident that PEPs or PWPs can create short-term jobs and respond to cyclical unemployment but they cannot provide a solution to long-term challenges such as structural unemployment. It has been suggested that there is a need for countries to do a proper analysis of labour market needs before implementing a PEP or PWP, and then use findings of such analysis to come up with policies that respond to the local labour market needs (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015).

Traditionally, these programmes have been used to create assets and short-term employment (Tanzarn & Gutierrez, 2015). Literature is silent on the suitability of PWPs or PEPs in the creation of permanent employment, which is a key need in countries in the developing world, which continue to grapple with the challenges of poverty, inequality and unemployment. These three challenges are similar in that they disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society, which often leaves them in need of government intervention. The intervention of government alone, as conceived of in the Keynes model, is not sufficient because the market or private sector needs to come into play. PEPs or PWPs are commonly short-term relief programmes that are meant to address a crisis.

However, South Africa has deeply rooted structural unemployment, which, by its nature, falls outside the scope of a short-term policy or programme response. This necessitates bringing together of approaches as informed by both the Keynesian theory and Neoliberalism, to emphasize the role of both government and the private sector in addressing the challenge. If only the Keynesian approach is adopted, the typical short-term EPWP approach would fall short of effectively addressing the

structural unemployment problem, especially among women and youth in South Africa. This thesis rejects the notion that the EPWP could utilise its short-term capabilities drawn from standard PEP or PWP approaches to tackle a long-term challenge.

To address structural unemployment, there is a need for a long-term policy intervention designed to target women and youth, by providing skills development and work experience that is aligned to the needs in the economy. This argument is in line with findings by Altman and Hemson (2007), Meth (2011) and Phillip (2013a) who argued that policy must be designed to address the long-term nature of the problem it seeks to address. PEPs or PWPs are short term interventions, and therefore, do not create permanent jobs; as such, a *'copy and paste'* approach to borrowing approaches from other countries to deal with local unemployment would be insufficient and ill-advised because the South African problem is unique. Two key issues make the South African case unique; firstly, unemployment in the country is structural, making the challenge intractable from neoliberal approaches such as boosting the economy alone and expecting the markets to absorb the unemployed. Secondly, unemployment in South Africa affects women and youth more than it does men, essentially meaning that the approach needs to be unique and oriented towards addressing these two critical aspects.

The literature cited above pointed out three critical issues; to start with, men working on PEPs or PWPs have a better chance of joining the labour market than women; secondly, skills development within the programmes is minimal, and lastly, employment created through PEPs or PWPs is temporary (Eichler & Lechener, 2002; Tanzarn & Gutierrez, 2015). These three aspects mean that if there are no changes in policy, the South African status quo will remain unchanged. Whereas Keynes' approach supports government intervention, it would fall short of addressing South Africa's challenge because there are some functions required that government does not have and these would need the private sector to fulfil. For example, the government does not have places for practical training on skills required for some

economic sectors. This calls for a need for a middle ground theory where government and private sector work together to build capacity.

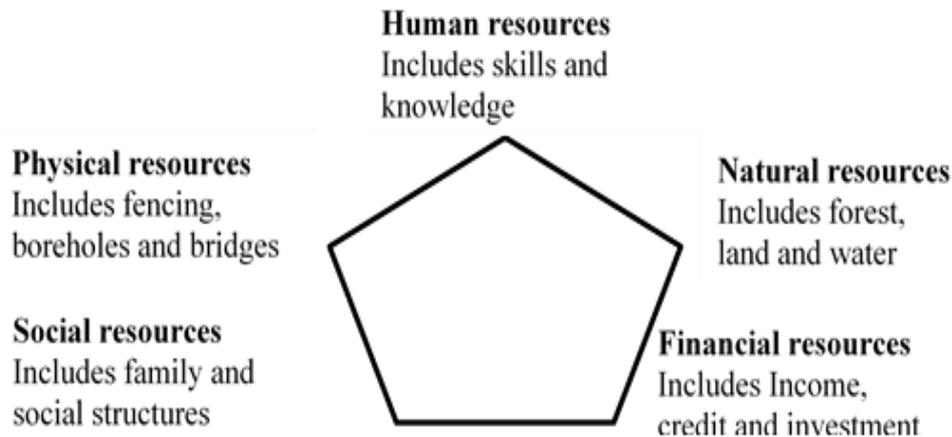
The Great Depression scenario on which PWP or the Keynes model is based, was a totally different case to the status quo in South Africa. Then, companies were closing in countries like the USA and others, shedding jobs, and therefore a short-term crisis relief approach was necessary (USA Work Program, 1937). This was also the case in Argentina where macroeconomic shocks and institutional rigidity led to unemployment (Kostzer, 2008; Iturriza, 2008). These scenarios are different from the South African case in which there is long-term structural unemployment which requires a supply-side response through education and training, which must be aligned with a demand side approach to stimulate labour absorption. The challenges in the developed and developing world have laid bare the weaknesses of these programmes which this thesis aims consolidate and bring up a more practical approach to solving long-term challenges which deviate from the usual norm of short-term government intervention alone.

These programmes are linked to the sustainable livelihoods. The United Nations Development Programme defines sustainable livelihoods as:

the Livelihoods framework which encompasses the skills, assets (both material and social) and the approaches which will be used by individuals and communities in order to survive. The sustainability element implies that these individuals or communities can confront and overcome moments of stress and / or crisis, and that they are able to maintain or even improve current and future skills and assets without exploiting their supply of natural resources (United Nations Development Programme, 2015: 2).

Support towards sustainable livelihoods comes in two forms, which are sustainable economic opportunities in entrepreneurship through enterprise development. These fit well in countries that are affected by unemployment and poverty. However, the extent to which these programmes have managed to maximise on these has not been covered fully by literature.

Figure 2.2 Sustainable Livelihoods Pentagon



Source: United Nations Development Programme, 2017a

These programmes are linked to the sustainable livelihoods pentagon which consists of social, human, natural, physical and financial resources (ibid). These resources are required at community and individual level. These programmes are expected to provide the above resources to be able to take people out of employment or poverty. This thesis will uncover how and to what extent these programmes have used these approaches to take targeted people out of poverty or unemployment.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter surveyed the literature on PEPs or PWP's drawing from experiences of developed and developing countries on the effectiveness of these programmes. It highlighted how these programmes play a role in the labour market and demonstrated how such role has been oversimplified and generalised. Literature reviewed in this chapter identified that these programmes play a role in creation or maintenance of assets or creation of temporary jobs but their role in the domains of social protection or skills development is minimal. The academic debate has tended to focus on short-term employment creation, placing little emphasis on sustainability of employment beyond these programmes. In addition, the plight of the vulnerable, women and youth in particular, has been overlooked. The continuing rise in

structural unemployment among women and youth in South Africa demands that academics and policymakers pay attention to this challenge. Swift action by government and other stakeholders will be central in the efforts designed to address this challenge. The economic benefits are viewed through assets but very little is said about the overall multiplier effects on the economic performance.

Keynesian theory is key to the government response because, firstly, structural unemployment cannot be solved by markets, and secondly, the approach supports the use of PEPs or PWP. However, government alone cannot solve the structural unemployment challenge, and there is urgent need for the integration of some elements of the neoliberal policy. This thesis argues against the one-size-fits-all approach taken by countries in implementing these programmes does not augur well as articulate responses to long-term challenges. It also proposes a balance between the Keynes and the Neoliberal approaches, in which a supply-side and demand-side policy mix is recommended for solving South Africa's structural unemployment problem. This chapter discussed how government interventions could be designed so as to account for the needs of vulnerable groups and incorporate long-term strategies that ameliorate poverty within communities – thereby framing the research problem. The next chapter discusses the research methodology and approach followed by the study in the collection and analysis of data.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

3.1 Introduction

This chapter articulates the research methodology and approach adopted for the study of South Africa's EPWP. The discussion outlines how data was collected and analysed, and the advantages as well disadvantages of each method. As the literature shows, South Africa is experiencing critical skills shortages due to the restructuring of the economy, and more recently, the need to embrace the new digital age, which has brought further impediments to the already frustrated labour force (McCord & Borat, 2003; Pindula News, 2021). This has made the situation in the country more complex, thereby necessitating a more direct and evidence-based strategy to solve the challenge.

The previous chapter discussed PEPs or PWP and contextualised their use in mitigating drought, war, economic downturns, food insecurity, poverty and unemployment (del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; European Commission, 2013; Phillip, 2013a; USA Work Program, 1937). These programmes have been used as short-term crisis relief interventions the world over and literature has emphasised their role in creating short-term employment. However, their impact on long-term challenges such as South Africa's structural unemployment is still debated, especially how it relates to addressing unemployment among women and youth. This thesis examines the role of the EPWP or the PEP model in poverty reduction against the background of a changing socio-economic landscape marked by national challenges that range from short-term crises to long-term structural challenges.

One crucial assumption guiding this thesis is that unemployment is gendered and age-related, with many of the unemployed being women and youth. Chapter 1 illustrated the paucity of knowledge in academic and policy spheres on the

complexities surrounding women and youth unemployment and their lack of skills, which has led to high unemployment rates among these groups in the country. These knowledge gaps have left the country with insufficient policy guidance, depriving the women and youth a chance to escape the unemployment trap. This has further pushed and marginalised these groups deeper into poverty. As such, the main objectives of this thesis are to illuminate policy grey areas which result in overlapping roles for the state and private sector in efforts to solve the unemployment crisis. The ultimate objective is to provide recommendations for effective policy responses to the challenge of unemployment among women and youth in South Africa.

This thesis adopted a mixed methods approach, but with a bias towards the qualitative analysis approach used by Altman and Hemson (2007), Hlatshwayo (2017) and Mohapi (2013). In their studies of EPWP, these researchers adopted a combination of research techniques by using extensive document analysis and quantitative data analysis, with the latter complemented by informant interviews. Choosing these approaches was guided by the study's aims, which were to investigate the role of EPWP in addressing (i) women and youth unemployment challenge, (ii) structural unemployment, (iii) the skilling or reskilling of people to align their skills to labour market or 4IR skills needs, and (iv) challenges encountered by women and youth in accessing employment or skills development, as well as to investigate programme challenges or weaknesses. Such objectives required both a broad understanding of the situation and an in-depth analysis of dynamics within the programme. The mixed methods approach was consequently adopted as discussed below.

The research procedure consisted of semi-structured and structured interviews through which data was generated from key informants consisting of EPWP participants (youth and women currently participating or who had participated in the

EPWP) and EPWP officials. The second part of the research process drew data from existing literature, including EPWP reports, labour market reports, parliamentary debates on EPWP, media reports and literature from other EPWP studies. The chapter is divided into three parts: the first part discusses the research design and approach adopted; the second part discusses data collection methods used; and the chapter concludes with an elaboration of data analysis methods and procedures.

3.2 Research Design and Approach

The research design and approach guide the researcher's investigation. Both provide a framework for the analysis. The research design is the strategy followed in collecting and analysing data, while the approach refers to how data was collected and analysed (Grove, 2015; Saunders *et al.*, 2009). This study followed a mixed methods approach. Such an approach is common in research and draws its strengths from the use of several research methods. Unemployment in South Africa is complex in that it is structural and biased by gender and age. The study identifies the philosophy of the research which determined the approach followed. Appropriate strategies were selected from the list at researcher's disposal, choosing an appropriate method, time lines and appropriate techniques and procedures. The research philosophy in this study chose follows interpretivism²⁸.

A combination of quantitative and qualitative research supports the interpretivist approach compared to ethnography or radical approaches (Nicholls, 2009). This decision is anchored on the need to conduct an in-depth analysis of the research problem where neither a qualitative nor a quantitative study alone is sufficient to provide a robust analysis of the research problem. Unemployment in South Africa is a complex matter so is EPWP which in certain platforms is always identified the strategy to reduce the growing unemployment challenge in a country. Despite the large numbers of people participating on the programme, the unemployment problem

²⁸ "Interpretive methodologies focus primarily on understanding and accounting for the meaning of human experiences and actions" (Fossey *et al.*, 2002:720).

still persists, leaving some unanswered questions on the role that the programme plays on the labour market. This role defies numerical interpretation, hence the decision to avoid a reductive, descriptive and inferential statistics interpretation. There was a need to get the views, experiences and opinions of the key role players on the programme. This justifies the combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis adopted in this study as this offered a variety of angles on the subject matter.

The study follows the interpretivism research philosophy which takes into consideration the complexities of reality in a society. Based on this philosophy, the study adopted mixed research techniques to utilise both inductive and deductive research techniques. Social issues are complex and more so is unemployment in South Africa. This therefore calls for a need for a more detailed analysis in order to get a deeper understanding of the matter. In defence of such an approach, Thomas and Magilvy (2011: 152) argues:

Researchers may use both quantitative and qualitative methods within a single study to discover something that would have been missed if only a quantitative approach had been used, to use findings from one method to inform the other method, or to expand the breadth and depth of a single study.

The choice of a research approach depends on the assumptions and research design (Groove, 2015). The study adopted a robust approach for a complete understanding of the programme. A single method does not allow for sufficient investigative depth and breadth on the critical drivers of unemployment among women and youth in SA. In order to elicit sufficient understanding on how EPWP has responded to these challenges, the study strove to deploy these investigative constructs in the field (Mayne, 2015; McCord & Bhorat, 2003; McCord, 2005).

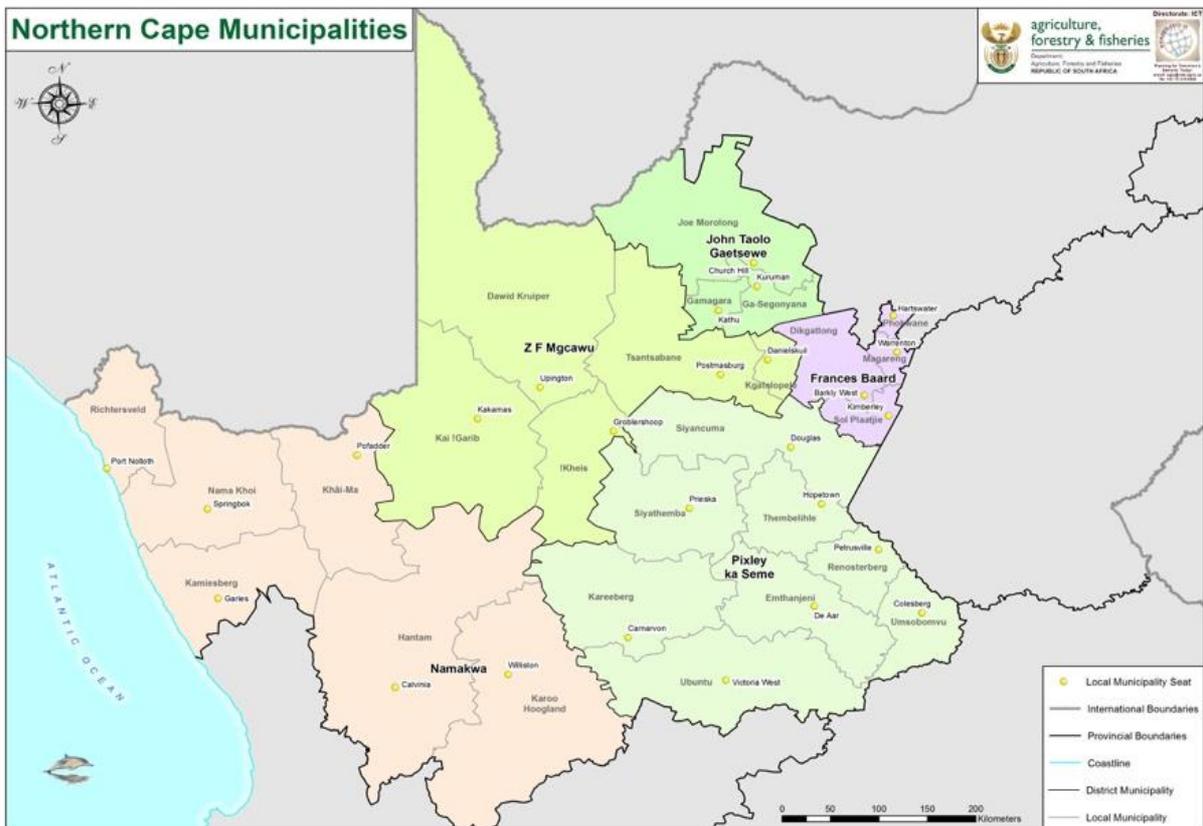
The study employed both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. The two approaches complement one another in how data is generated and analysed. Quantitative data was first collected from the field through surveys

using structured questionnaires. Some qualitative data was collected from secondary sources such as EPWP, labour market and media reports. From this data, key issues were identified. Semi-structured interviews were held with a small sample of participants or former participants and EPWP officials clarify issues identified as requiring follow up.

3.2.1 Research location

The area of study which is the Northern Cape Province consists of five (5) districts which are Frances Baard, John Taolo Gaetsewe, Pixley Ka Seme, Z.F. Mgcawu and Namakhwa with a total of 31 municipalities as shown in Figure 3.1. The Northern Cape, the largest and most sparsely populated province in the country, like the rest of the country, is beset with unemployment challenges.

Figure 3.1 Northern Cape: Map



Source: Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, 2019

Northern Cape is the most extensive in terms of land size in the country. The province has some few economic sectors spread across the districts. For instance, mining contributes 23.4% of its GDP, followed by general government services at 15.4%, and agriculture and forestry at 6.6% in 2015 (Northern Cape Office of the Premier, 2015). There are new opportunities in the province, for example, the growth of renewable energy sector in the province. This sector resulted from the New Zone Act, 2014 (Act No16 of 2014) which led to the establishment of the Northern Cape Solar Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Upington (Northern Cape Office of the Premier, 2015). This means that there is a need to develop skills in line with the provincial strategy. The province emphasises the need to:

Capitalise on the renewable energy and the mining procurement initiatives already within the province with the aim of expanding and utilising these opportunities for job creation and establishment of beneficiation industries (Northern Cape Office of the Premier, 2015: 39).

Skills are necessary for the province to benefit from such initiatives particularly among youth and women who are most affected by unemployment. There is certainly a dire need to align their skills and work experience with the labour market needs in the province. The province has high unemployment levels, estimated at 27% in the first quarter of 2020, while youth unemployment is even higher, estimated at 42.6% in the third quarter of 2017 (Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2018; Statistics South Africa, 2020). Like the other parts of the country, the province requires skills development, especially for youth and women for them to be able to take up employment opportunities in the province.

The study was conducted in the two (2) districts which are Frances Baard (Sol Plaatje Local Municipality) and the John Taolo Gaetsewe District (Joe Morolong Local Municipality). Primary data was collected from townships in Kimberley and villages in the Joe Morolong Local Municipality. Study sites included Greenpoint, Veregenoerg and Roodepan townships in the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality and in the Gamothibi and Glenred villages in the Joe Morolong Local Municipality.

Gamothibi and Glenred Villages are villages outside Kuruman, the administrative town of the John Taolo Gaetsewe District Municipality. EPWP targets these areas which are the most affected most by poverty and unemployment. EPWP officials who took part in the surveys from the provincial, national and local government are based in Kimberley. Some of the EPWP officials from local and provincial government who participated in the study are based in Kuruman. Officials interviewed from provincial government in the provincial offices and district offices in Kimberley and Kuruman respectively were from different EPWP public bodies.

3.2.2 Interview respondents

The participants for this study consisted of two groups of people who participated in the structured and semi-structured interviews as follows:

Table 3.1 Survey Participants

Participants	Structured interviews	Semi-structured interviews
Active and former EPWP Participants	224	23
EPWP Officials	30	14

EPWP participants

These are people working on EPWP projects and who earn a stipend determined by the 'Ministerial Determination'²⁹ from the Department of Employment and Labour. The participants were selected from four EPWP Phase 3 projects, namely the Northern Cape Department of Roads and Public Works' infrastructure paving project; the Sol Plaatje Local Municipality cleaning project and the NPO projects in Kimberley and Joe Morolong Local Municipality (Gamothibi and Glenred Villages).

²⁹ Ministerial Determination specifies what a special public works programme is, nature of employment (temporary), duration of employment and it also stipulates the conditions of payment of the wage and the minimum rate" (Department of Public Works, 2009:2).

Former EPWP participants

This group consisted of former EPWP participants who took part in an artisan training project between 2011 and 2014 in the Northern Cape Province. They were trained on various trades as follows: welding - 20, fitting and machining - 20, tuning - 20, electricians - 20, and 20 boilermakers, making a total of 100 young people. Of these former EPWP participants, 23 were traced to find out where they are now and how or whether the skills acquired from the EPWP had assisted them in joining the labour market.

EPWP coordinators and implementing public bodies

The EPWP is coordinated by infrastructure departments in all provinces. Northern Cape Province EPWP coordinators consisted of the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure in the Kimberley Regional Office and the EPWP Head Office officials in Pretoria who served as key informants on national issues. Data was also collected from officials from the public bodies implementing EPWP in Kimberley and John Taolo Gaetsewe District.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The study drew data from both primary and secondary sources. Data sources included both written materials and fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in Kimberley, Joe Morolong Local Municipality and in Pretoria. It involved generating quantitative data using structured interviews, and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The data generation method employed was influenced by the complexity of social issues and country-specific dynamics. Before data was collected the researcher sought permission from the Head of EPWP in Pretoria (*see approval from the Department attached in Appendix B*) to use data from EPWP published reports and to interview EPWP officials and participants. Further permission was granted by the University of Pretoria (*see ethics approval*

reference number: HUM04/0620 attached in Appendix C). Primary data was collected over four months between August and November 2020.

3.3.1 Primary data collection

This consisted of two approaches as follows:

3.3.1.1 Quantitative data

Quantitative methods extracted statistical data to establish relationships or patterns within the data. This culminated in broader perspectives on the issues. Primary data was collected through surveys administered to participants in projects in the Northern Cape Province (Joe Morolong Local Municipality and Kimberley) and in Pretoria (EPWP Head Office). This primary data was collected using surveys from participants on-site in projects that started in Phase 3 of the programme.

Surveys involved collecting data from the respondents either through a questionnaire or interviews. A survey collects data from a sample of individuals who respond to specific questions (Ponto, 2015). This data collection method targeted project implementers and EPWP participants. The study used '*purposive sampling*'³⁰ to select participants, targeting mainly youth and women participants in projects that commenced in Phase 3. This was deliberately targeted at EPWP participants who have been working on the programme for a long time who could share their lived experiences. The sample consisted of participants in selected projects spread across three spheres of government, namely, national, provincial and local.

Data was collected from the EPWP participants with the help of the programme's supervisors who administered the questionnaires at project sites. A total of six (6) EPWP supervisors were selected to administer the questionnaires, one for each site in Kimberley (Roodepan, Greenfields and Veregenoerg Townships), one for

³⁰ "...primarily used in qualitative studies and may be defined as selecting units (e.g., individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions" (Teddlie and Yu, 2007:77)

Gamothibi Village and two for Glenred village. The EPWP supervisors were trained on how to explain the consent form, the rights of survey participants and how to facilitate the completion of the questionnaires. Questionnaires for EPWP officials were emailed to them to complete and email back. The survey focused on evidence on the creation of employment opportunities, development of skills and whether the programme had assisted women and youth to secure permanent employment or how far it had gone to prepare people for the world of work.

This method has its disadvantages. Criticisms are that it imposes high data collection costs, and because the instruments are structured, they provide limited data (Burnham *et al.*, 2008). Surveys are primarily quantitative; they tend to capture statistical aspects of the research problem, thus leaving out information such as the participants' opinions and views. For this reason, qualitative data collection methods are preferred to quantitative techniques (Mack *et al.*, 2005). Predetermined structured questions that follow a specific order do not provide room for spontaneous follow-up questions and probing, thereby limiting the data generated. The study used the survey as the initial data collection method to identify main issues within the programme and narrow down to main issues, which were explored through semi-structured interviews, which are more rigorous.

Structure of the questionnaire

As explained above, the survey participants were divided into two. The first group, which was the majority of the respondents, comprised former and current EPWP participants (*see questionnaire in Appendix E*). The second group comprised EPWP implementers (*see questionnaire in Appendix H*). The questionnaire collated information on the demography, location, qualifications and general employment history. It also covered EPWP work experience, conditions of employment, skills acquired from EPWP, and participants' plans at the end of the project. This questionnaire allowed participants to choose their responses from two to six pre-filled options, with a few spaces to fill in where they were required to elaborate. This

minimised errors and facilitated easy capturing and the subsequent quantitative analysis of data.

The second questionnaire distributed to stakeholders covered issues on the role of stakeholders in the EPWP, their sphere of government, types of projects implemented, challenges encountered in implementation, recruitment and placement strategies, employment conditions and exit strategies for participants. This questionnaire had a mixture of structured and open-ended questions to allow stakeholders to elaborate where necessary. The structured part of the questionnaire required the interview participants to select from given responses with some areas requiring them to elaborate. The semi-structured option allowed respondents to fill in their responses.

The pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in Calvinia in the Northern Cape Province, where 25 youth working on an EPWP project completed the questionnaire in November 2018. This was done to check whether the study would be feasible, identify questionnaire ambiguity, eliminate questionnaire errors, and ascertain that the questionnaire was reliable and valid. This was a critical step before the questionnaire was administered in the main study as it enabled identification of any problems or errors for rectification ahead of the study. The respondents found the questionnaire easy to understand, not time consuming and were able to complete all the questions. The stakeholder questionnaire was tested on EPWP officials in Kimberley.

3.3.1.2 Qualitative data

This method involved generating primary data through semi-structured interviews. According to Fossey *et al.*, (2002: 723):

Qualitative research questions focus chiefly on three areas: language as a means to explore processes of communication and patterns of interaction within particular social groups; description and interpretation of subjective meanings attributed to situations and actions; theory-building through discovering patterns and connection in qualitative data.

This data collection method interrogated the same issues explored through the quantitative data collection, namely, the creation of employment opportunities, skills development and labour market reintegration of the unemployed.

Semi-structured interviews

The EPWP is a broad and complex programme and so is South Africa's structural unemployment challenge. The researcher therefore had to follow up initial data collection so as to complete data and cover information gaps. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on a smaller sample to follow up and get more clarity on the dominant issues uncovered in the structured questionnaire. The follow-up interviews were done telephonically to allow respondents to elaborate on the matters raised in the structured questionnaires. Each interview lasted 45 minutes. The EPWP participants elaborated on the benefits drawn from EPWP wages, work experience, and the skills they had received from the programme. They were also asked to elaborate on their readiness for permanent employment.

At the same time, the former EPWP participants expounded on various issues such as their experience in the EPWP skills development, how the course had benefited them and what they were currently doing (*see questionnaire in Appendix F*). On the other hand, the EPWP officials were asked to elaborate on key issues such as poor programme performance, lack of capacity in government and preparation of EPWP workers for permanent employment (*see questionnaire in Appendix I*).

3.3.2 Secondary data collection

This was also split into qualitative and quantitative data collection as follows:

3.3.2.1 Document analysis

The primary data collected as described above was supplemented with secondary data from document analysis of reports on EPWP from government, media and other sources, as well as antecedent studies. Document analysis involves evaluating documents in libraries, books, films, newspaper archives, historical society offices, and organisational files to identify themes, patterns, trends and bias (Bowen, 2009; Williams, 2007). This thesis drew data from identified relevant literature as follows:

EPWP or government Reports

- Parliamentary Monitoring Group Report on EPWP for 2011.
- Parliament of the Republic of South Africa EPWP Debate for 2019.
- South African Cities Network Report on EPWP for 2014 and 2017.
- Auditor-General South Africa 2019 Report.
- Financial Fiscal Commission Report 2014

Labour market data

- COSATU 2019 and 2020
- SAMWU 2015
- Marxist Workers Party 2019
- ILO 2013 and 2019
- Reports by the SETAs: AgriSETA (2018); CETA (2017); EWSETA (2018); FP&MSETA (2018); TETA (2018); W&RSETA (2018); FoodBev SETA (2018) and Red Flank (2018).

Studies on EPWP and employment

Literature was particularly significant in shaping the argument in this thesis. Data which provided insights into different aspects of PEPs or the EPWP and employment from international and local reflections (*see list of studies in Appendix J*) on the efficacy of these programmes as channels for alleviating structural and systemic unemployment from 2004 up to 2019 was extracted. This literature provided both the theoretical approaches and systematic procedures and methods used to arrive at specific conclusions. This was then adapted to anchor this study in terms of relevance in evaluating the programme.

Media reports on EPWP

- Africa Newswire 2015;
- Mail and Guardian 2004 and 2019;
- Groundup 2014;
- HRPulse2015;

This literature covered a wide range of aspects such as data on EPWP employment, skills development and employment of women and youth, policies, strategic plans, parliamentary presentations, debates, and media reports on EPWP. The purpose of this data was to determine how the programme shapes the understanding of women and youth unemployment challenges and equally translates this into policy responses. The study garnered insight into how projects are designed to eliminate these challenges, and to measure the programme's performance in skills development and employment of women and youth. The study sampled documents from the completed phases of the programme for analysis, which was critical for collecting relevant secondary data.

The document analysis incorporated a review of skills required by the labour market, minimum entry requirements for employment and current challenges in filling the

skills needs. This data was drawn from reports by the SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) and the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL), focusing on labour market needs. Of the 21 SETAs, 10 were selected for analysis to establish how the programme links with employment opportunities within various sectors of the economy. The analysis sought to establish how EPWP projects respond to the skills needs as identified by the sectors in preparing people for employment. The SETAs selected were CathSSeta, a Seta responsible for skills development in culture, arts, tourism, hospitality and sport; CETA, a Seta responsible for skills development in construction. Some data was collected from HWSETA, responsible for skills development in health and welfare; AgriSETA, responsible for skills development in agriculture.

In addition, data was collected from the FoodBev SETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in the area of food and beverages; and FP&M SETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in fibre processing and manufacturing. The other SETAs deemed relevant were MerSETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in manufacturing and engineering; EW SETA, a SETA responsible for the energy and water sector and W&R SETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in wholesale and retail. While data from CHIETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in the chemicals sector; and TETA, a SETA responsible for skills development in the transport sector was also deemed relevant and collected in the study. This method is often affected by the incompleteness and quality of data (Bowen, 2009). However, the purpose of the data collected through document analysis in the present study was to complement the primary data.

3.3.2.2 Quantitative data

This data consisted of labour market statistics on unemployment of women and youth as well as employment of these groups in EPWP. It also included financial expenditure on EPWP projects. This data was drawn from the following sources:

- Department of Public Works and Infrastructure EPWP reports for 2006, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- EPWP reporting system 2004 to 2019 data
- Statistics South Africa, 2020
- Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2018

3.4 Data Analysis Methods

This section outlines the qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods applied in the study. Collected data is analysed because, in its raw form, it does not mean much to the researcher on the challenge at hand. Data analysis was also carried out quantitatively and qualitatively to enable more credible analysis (Bowen, 2009). Secondary data accounted for some issues that could not be addressed by primary data, such as employment and training, and skills shortages in the country. Primary data collected using structured questionnaires and secondary data from published statistics was analysed quantitatively, while qualitative data from documents and semi-structured interviews was analysed qualitatively.

3.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative analysis procedure provided more nuanced meanings and filled the gaps in the findings from quantitative analysis. The qualitative analysis procedure summarises collected data, creates labels (codes), and explores behaviour, perspectives, feelings and experiences of people at the core of their lives (Blair, 2015; Hancock *et al.*, 2007; Mohajan, 2018). It identifies common words or behaviours and uses them to clarify the research problem.

The study adopted Hlatshwayo (2017)'s approach, which the author describes as '*the perspectives of direct beneficiaries*'. Hlatshwayo (2017) used the EPWP participants' views from primary data to analyse the research problem, in so doing, giving them a voice. In this study, the EPWP officials' perspectives were also

explored to obtain views that are not captured in the EPWP reports. The qualitative data analysis procedure identified themes that respond to (i) EPWP's women and youth unemployment challenges; (ii) EPWP response to structural unemployment; (iii) skills development for women and youth; and (iv) EPWP challenges or weaknesses.

Qualitative data analysis is performed on two levels; at the basic level, descriptions are given of what was observed or documented, and at the meta level, interpretation of the responses establishes the rich meanings and implications (Hancock *et al.*, 2007). This study interrogated the implications of the data by assessing the multi-layered meanings of employment creation by EPWP. This was compared to unemployment in the country, skills development for women or youth in relation to the labour market skills needs. Furthermore, the analysis of the implications on government policy in a country which has a challenge of structural unemployment, especially affecting women and youth were incorporated.

3.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis makes use of mathematical models to analyse data (Williams, 2007) and to explain variables in a research problem. Using this data analysis method, the study analysed two types of data. The first one was data from surveys. The variables identified in the research problem were available skills, temporary employment creation, skills development and participants' future plans or areas of interest. The second sets of data which were sourced from secondary sources consisted of labour market (unemployment statistics) and EPWP statistics (EPWP employment and programme expenditure).

An analysis of the quantitative data provided a basis for framing of the labour market challenges faced by women and youth in South Africa, thus problematising these challenges to provide a foundation for crafting of applicable solutions. The findings

were presented using '*descriptive statistics*'³¹ in the form of charts and tables. Descriptive statistics have two uses (i) to show relationships between variables and (ii) to provide basic information about variables (Sharma, 2019). In this study the descriptive statistics were used for the latter because this data was only used to support qualitative data.

Quantitative research was essential for this study because it brings in independence, thus eliminating personal bias in qualitative research. One of the challenges experienced with this data analysis in this method was cases of questionnaires which had missing data. Treatment of missing data involves either list wise deletion, which is, dropping the whole observation, which may reduce sample size or imputation (Bhattarchejee, 2012). In this case, the study adopted the list wise deletion approach. Incomplete questionnaires were eliminated and treated as non-responsive, a key factor for the reduced response rate.

The two methods complemented each other therefore lessening the effects of the disadvantages that arise from individual use. When quantitative data analysis is used in isolation, it falls short of providing enough depth in the analysis. Views and opinions of the respondents are essential in a study of this nature. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods provided more realistic findings as this allowed for the expansion of the ground covered by the research and also ensured that the weaknesses of either method are ameliorated (Driscoll *et al.*, 2007).

3.4.3 Response rate

The response rate for the EPWP stakeholders' survey was fifty-six percent (56%) because some of the study participants did not return the questionnaires, and on follow-up, there were no responses. A total of 17 out of 30 EPWP officials returned

³¹ "represent measure of variability or measure of central tendency to help understanding the meaning of analysed data to people through means of tables, general discussion and graphs" (Sharma, 2019:3).

their responses. In all, 128 questionnaires were processed out of 224 that were distributed which makes it fifty-seven percent (57%). The low response rate was because several EPWP participants' questionnaires had missing data; therefore, they were treated as non-responses and according to the list wise deletion approach, they were excluded. As a result of missing data, 96 questionnaires were treated as non-responsive due to missing data and were excluded from the survey.

3.4.4 The research findings

The study made use of quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse data. For the former, two critical aspects that are emphasised in testing the data are reliability and validity of the findings, which explain the ability to generalise findings and replicate the study in different settings (Fossey *et al.*, 2002; Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The quantitative data collection technique used, which in this case was a structured questionnaire, is reliable. The identification and use of similar variables in qualitative and quantitative techniques strengthened the data collected since the two approaches complemented each other. Reliability can be affected by several factors, such as biasness of the participants or researcher. It is therefore crucial that the likelihood of such errors is identified beforehand and minimised. On the other hand, validity confirms the study's legitimacy (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The findings in this study bring to the fore people's real-life issues that can be verified. This was done by getting people to complete their questionnaires and using their own statements or real-life stories to present findings.

As guided by the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a study needs to be trustworthy³², which refers to the study's reproducibility by any researcher (Nicholls, 2009). Factors such as credibility seek to confirm whether the report is drawn from the data provided by the participants. For this reason, the researcher spent time with interviewees and generated a report using their words (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). IPA emphasises the use of actual words of the respondents.

³² Credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability proves the trustworthiness of the study.

Transferability refers to whether the study can be transferred to other areas (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the current study, transferability entails the applicability of the study to other sites in the Northern Cape or in any other province, with similar findings.

Dependability is also another method to assess the robustness of a study and requires that the study should provide enough detail for it to be repeated in another area or produce the same results (Shenton, 2004). Conformability is a measure that endorses that findings are not the researcher's imagination (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It tests whether the study did not follow a thumb sucking approach to present findings that are abstracted from reality. Data used in a study should be empirically comparable to reality on the ground, and in the present study, the use of interview participants' words which can be verified in the field, assured the conformability of the study.

3.4.5 Presentation of findings

This study's findings are presented in themes, with the main emerging themes discussed in turn in the chapters that follow. The first theme, which was the programme's response to women and youth challenges is discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter sheds light on how the EPWP as a PEP was used as a policy to respond to women and youths' challenges. The second theme was the programme's response to structural employment among women and youth, and this is elaborated in Chapter 5 below. This chapter specifies and scrutinises the subthemes such as the provision of short employment for women and youth, and facilitation of their labour market rebound.

The third theme was capacity building through skills development and labour market response and this constitutes Chapter 6. This chapter presents findings on the nature of skills development by the programme and the extent to which women and youth have benefited from skills development. It also discusses findings on the

extent to which these skills respond to labour market needs. The last major theme from the analysis is discussed in Chapter 7 and relates to the programme's weaknesses and challenges. Such government programmes are initiated with good intentions, but efforts to realise these objectives tend to be hamstrung by programme weaknesses and challenges. This chapter presents findings on the weaknesses and challenges that have shaped the programmes' current form in the form of graphs, charts, statistics and text from direct statements by respondents.

3.4.6 Challenges experienced in data collection

This study experienced some challenges related to respondents', especially EPWP participants' reluctance to take part in the surveys because they had personal grievances with the programme. These EPWP participants did not want to cooperate with any programme-related activity other than their work. The researcher had to speak to such individual participants to explain how their views would benefit the programme and themselves. Collection and analysis of secondary data, especially the EPWP reports, was problematic because some of it was incomplete. Some officials indicated that this data had to be used with caution because not all reports were captured correctly. It is for these reasons that this data was used together with primary data in order to verify some facts.

3.5 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The first limitation is that primary data was collected from the Northern Cape, the least populated province in the country, with the least projects implemented, and EPWP targets. The sample selected may have limitations in terms of bias due to the limited variety of activities. However, this study used a mixed method approach with quantitative data drawn from national EPWP reports to derive data on the programme nationally and used this to supplement primary data from the Northern Cape. The researcher also interviewed EPWP officials in Pretoria to clarify national

patterns that may not have been accounted for effectively by respondents in the province.

The second limitation is the size of the sample. The study sampled participants from townships in Kimberley and villages in Joe Morolong Local Municipality to cover the areas where specific EPWP projects are implemented. However, due to the size of the province these areas may not represent dynamics in other areas. As a result, the study traced some EPWP participants who had moved outside the province of the Northern Cape to assess whether they had managed to integrate into the labour market or not. This enabled the study to account for limitations emanating from the small size of the Northern Cape Province population.

Lastly, data was collected after Phase Three (3) of the programme had ended. This meant that data could not be collected from participants on short-term projects or Phase Three (3) projects that had been completed. This eliminated the chances of other EPWP participants who worked on short term projects from participating in the survey because they had exited at the end of the financial year in March (National and Provincial government) and June (local government).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study took into account the following ethical considerations:

Respect for people - This study involved interviewing human beings who should be respected regardless of gender, race, or ethnic group. The researcher respected society beliefs and conducted the study in a professional manner that did not undermine the research participants.

Honesty - Research ought to be factual and accurate. Participants should not be misled, and also there should not be any material benefit for the participants.

Confidentiality - Information collected was treated with confidentiality as guided by Departmental and University policy.

Fairness - Selection of participants was a fair process that did not exclude certain people within the targeted group. There was no favouritism in the selection of participants.

Privacy and anonymity - Participants remained anonymous and protected. The identity of people who provided information is anonymised to avoid victimisation. Information is conveyed through pseudonyms to reflect the vignettes in the direct quotes.

Consent - Consent from both the participants and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure was obtained. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure gave written consent to do the study, including visits to the projects and interviewing participants. Participants who took part in the study also gave informed consent.

Data Analysis - The data analysis method did not misrepresent the findings of the study. It was not manipulated to get the desired outcome but provides accurate reports of what transpired on the ground.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The main objective of this study was to provide empirical evidence on how the EPWP has responded to the unemployment challenge among women and youth in South Africa. The study paid special attention to the way policy has been instrumental or not in providing the much-needed relief necessary to provide a cushion to these groups. Towards this end, the study adopted a mixed method approach with the aim of contributing to policy and literature on the role of the government in solving persistent unemployment and skills problems. PEPs or PWPs

are conceptualised as short-term relief programmes. Their role on permanent unemployment is not clear, literature has concentrated on their short-term crisis relief role leaving policymakers with limited guidance on options for designing policies and long-term strategies that target strengthening of sustainable livelihoods especially for the vulnerable groups.

This chapter justified the research design and the mixed method approach adopted for the study, with primary data collected from the Northern Cape Province (Kimberley and Kuruman) and supplemented with secondary data from government, media and other reports. The method and approach was deemed effective in explaining ‘*why*’ and ‘*how*’ women and youth unemployment has remained a persistent challenge in the country despite government’s strategies such as EPWP that are designed to target these groups. The next chapter discusses how the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) has responded to women and youth unemployment challenges in the country.

CHAPTER 4 THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME (EPWP)

4.1 Introduction

The review of literature conducted in Chapter 2 understanding of PEPs or PWPs, and outlined key contextual issues surrounding their implementation globally. The review showed that these programmes have a long pedigree and have been implemented in both developed and developing countries. For a long time, these programmes have been viewed as short-term programmes designed to address crisis situations as evidenced by the experience of the USA, East Germany, Argentina, El Salvador, Ethiopia, India and South Africa discussed in the introduction of this study. Crisis situations in which such programmes have been deployed include short-term economic shocks, rebuilding after a war or natural disaster. Of late there is a growing trend in using these programmes as a stopgap for long-term challenges such as 'unemployment and poverty'³³.

Traditionally, PEPs or PWPs are not considered a solution to poverty or unemployment in the long-term, but they are tools within the broader policy arsenal for solving these challenges (Department of Public Works, 1997). This chapter sheds light on the EPWP's policy department on employment and skills development for women and youth. It accounts for the characteristics of EPWP as a PEP, its design, objectives and how it has been implemented in pursuit of its policy aims. In so doing, the chapter proffers an understanding of the programme and how it relates to the country's structural unemployment challenge.

It is divided into four sections. The first section discusses the background to the programme, that is, its history, policy framework and institutional arrangements. The second section discusses the objectives of the programme, and outlines its different phases, and their targets and achievements. The third section discusses

³³ Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Gerhke & Hartwig, 2015; Kostzer, 2008; Kraus *et al.*, 1999; Levine, 2010 Meth, 2011; Phillip, 2013a

implementation of the EPWP, focusing on the target population, stakeholders and projects or sub-programmes, that is, the activities carried out by the participants. The last section discusses how the programme has responded to the employment or skills needs among women and youth in the country.

4.2 Background to the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa

The programme was first introduced by the democratic government post-1994 as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme of 1996 (RDP) to provide employment and assets for the poor and unemployed. The RDP was a massive government construction programme designed as a vehicle to address service delivery challenges and create employment for the unskilled. A feasibility study conducted in 1994 on Public Employment Programmes led to the inclusion of the PWP (current EPWP) in the RDP as a critical tool for employment creation by the National Department of Public Works (current National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure) with the aim of contributing 25% of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)-targeted job opportunities (Department of Public Works, 1997, 2009).

The post-1994 skills gap presented a major challenge for the government, particularly in relation to the infrastructure problems and high unemployment levels it contributed as discussed in Chapter 1. Apartheid era laws that systematically excluded non-white citizens of South Africa from access to basic services, employment opportunities and education (Moon, 2017; Terreblanche, 2002) left the post-apartheid government with huge socio-economic challenges characterised by high poverty levels, deep racial inequality and high unemployment. In addition to the racial differences in unemployment entrenched by apartheid laws, unemployment trends were also deeply defined by gender and age. Estimates from Statistics South Africa show that in 1997, 34.6% of Black women in South Africa were unemployed compared to 24.6% of Black men, while 35% of young people between the ages of 15 and 30 years were unemployed compared to 19% of those aged 31 to 45 years,

and 10% of those aged 46 to 65 years (Statistics South Africa, 1997). Men had a 62% absorption rate compared to only 46% for women, including where women held a matric qualification or higher (ibid). In response, the government came up with the PWP as an RDP-led programme to create jobs, develop skills and provide infrastructure (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2001).

4.2.1 History of South Africa's PWP

PWPs have been around in South Africa for over 30 years, dating back to the apartheid government's introduction of a Special Employment Creation Programme (SECP) in 1983. Given the several problems inherited from apartheid rule, the democratic government crafted solutions to cushion the previously marginalised through a massive employment programme. In the mid-1990s, the democratic government introduced a PWP in response to the high unemployment and widespread poverty in the country (Department of Public Works, 1997). The implementation of this programme was piloted between 1994 and 1996, and then realigned to the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBWP) in mid-1998 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2001).

According to the Department of Public Works in 1997, the National Public Works Programmes had two strategic thrusts, namely, the CBPWP which was aimed at cushioning the poor and building community capacities, and the Labour Intensive Construction Programme (LIC) which sought to create public assets. The LIC was guided by a temporary Framework Agreement for Labour-Intensive Construction signed between the construction industry and government (Department of Public Works, 2009). As a special programme, the principles guiding the Framework Agreement for Labour-Intensive Construction were later written into a Code of Good Practice³⁴ for Special Public Works Programmes (SPWPs). Further discussions at the National Economic Development Labour Council (NEDLAC) led to the

³⁴ Provides guidelines for the protection of workers engaged in Special Public Works Programmes, taking into account the need for workers to have basic rights, the objectives of the programmes and the resource implications for government (Government Gazette, 2002).

development of the Ministerial Determination³⁵ gazetted by the Department of Labour in 2002 (ibid).

Recognising the vulnerability of women, youth, and people with disabilities the government set targets for their protection through employment. In 2001, the programme targeted creating 400,000 temporary employment opportunities, 3,000 sustainable jobs – of which 50% of those employed were to be women –, a minimum 15% to be youth, between 1% and 3% minimum employment of people living with disabilities, and the creation of 400 sustainable community assets (Department of Public Works, 1997). The programme was praised by the Parliament of South Africa for targeting the rural poor, and training of women and youth. There was, however, at the same time, criticism for poor spending and low funding leading to calls for partnerships with the private sector and NGOs. About R374 million was set aside for the programme in the 2001/2 financial year budget and the portfolio committee felt it was too little given the socio-economic challenges in the country, thus, called for more funds and public-private partnerships (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2001).

4.2.2 The EPWP policy framework

The EPWP programme is housed within the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. The Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure is the custodian of the programme responsible for policy, programme design, frameworks and coordination (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2020a). The programme's administrative offices are in Pretoria where there is an EPWP Branch headed by a Deputy Director General (DDG). In addition to the DDG, the political and senior administrative section of the programme encompasses the Members of the Executive Council (MECs) for Public Works Departments in the provinces, with the former providing policy directive and being the custodian of the programme, while the latter responsible for leadership and programme implementation direction

³⁵ Established the conditions of employment for people in the Public Employment Programmes

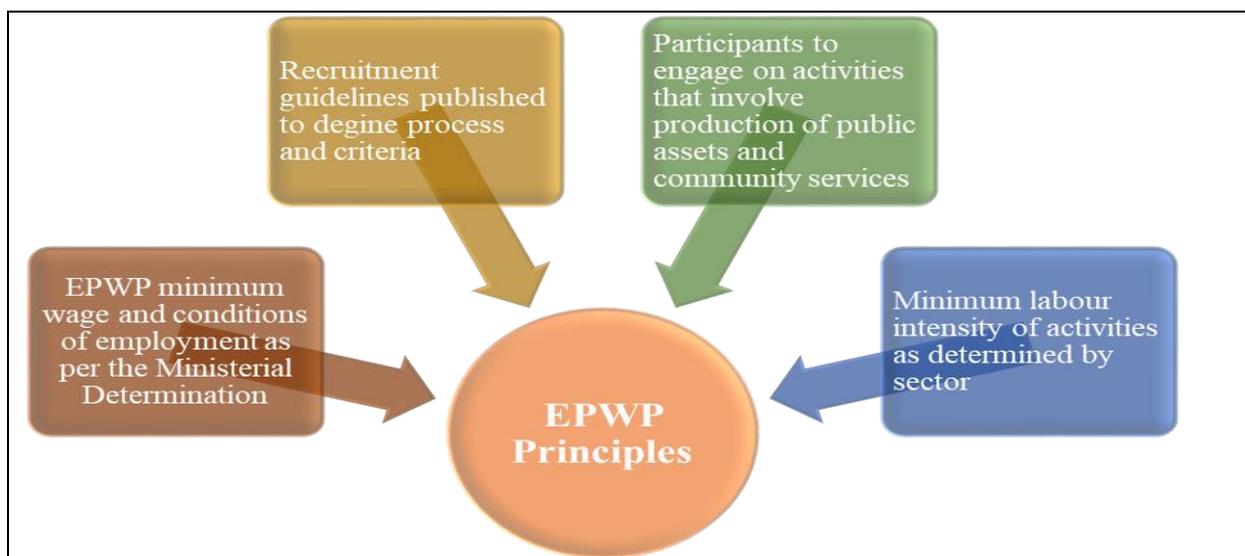
at provincial level (ibid). The programme does not have its own specific regulatory framework and principles act as a guide to its implementation.

4.2.3 EPWP principles

The programme is guided by principles that cut across all spheres of government. They serve as sector and government guidelines. Since the programme does not have its own specific regulations, it is guided by four principles in Figure 4.1, namely:

- the need to follow established recruitment guidelines;
- ensuring that participants are involved in community projects;
- minimum labour intensity as determined by the implementing EPWP sector; and
- EPWP minimum wage as well as conditions of employment that follow Ministerial Determination guidelines.

Figure 4.1 EPWP Principles



Source: Department of Public Works, 2016

The above principles of the programme include determination of minimum wage which is published through the Ministerial Determination every November of each year. The EPWP minimum wage is set below the national minimum wage so that the programme does not crowd-out formal employment. The second principle is recruitment guidelines. The National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, in consultation with implementing public bodies, publishes recruitment guidelines for EPWP participants. The guidelines set out the procedures and processes followed in the recruitment of participants across all spheres of government in order to ensure equal opportunity to access employment by the targeted community members.

The third principle is the activities which participants undertake and these include creation and maintenance of public assets as well as provision of community services. As a PEP, the EPWP participants are expected to work on activities that create public goods and services. Essentially, a project becomes a part of the programme when it is dedicated to providing a public good or service. Lastly, the emphasis on the use of labour intensive methods which depend on projects is also critical for the maximization of work opportunities. Labour intensity is sector specific therefore the minimum requirements for labour intensity are determined by the sector. These principles separate EPWP projects from any other form of work in the country.

In addition, the Code of Good Practice sets out the minimum employment targets for women, youth and people living with disabilities, and emphasizes that EPWP participants are entitled to training (Department of Public Works, 2019). Thus, the programme has no specific policy yet, save for the Ministerial Determination and the Code of Good Practice. The implementation of projects is guided by these two pieces of legislation. The legislative guidance supersedes some of the labour market laws such as the minimum wage. In addition to the two legislative instruments, the programme is also guided by the following pieces of legislation:

- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996);

- Division of Revenue Act (DORA) (changes annually);
- Skills Development Act (Act 37 of 2008);
- National Development Plan (2011);
- Public Financial Management Act (PFMA) (1999);
- Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) (Act 56 of 2003); and
- Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) (Act 75 of 1997).

In addition, the resolutions by government guide programme implementation in accordance with Cabinet approvals that determine five-year employment targets which bind implementing public bodies (Department of Public Works, 2009). Such implementation guidance, however, ignores the fact that a lot can happen in five years. For instance, economic changes, natural disasters or any other challenges that may destabilise the country or lead to re-allocation of resources thereby affecting project implementation and the creation of employment opportunities.

In addition to the national policies guiding implementation, there are policies that are specific to respective spheres of government. For example, local government institutions sign five-year protocol agreements which outline the implementation of the programme with the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. Terms of implementation are specified in protocol agreements which are signed by Municipalities, the Department of Public Works (current Department of Public Works and Infrastructure) and the Premiers of the respective provinces (Department of Public Works, 2016). The protocol agreements are commitments by the local government sphere to employment opportunities targets they are expected to achieve. By signing these agreements, the local government sphere also agrees to adhere to EPWP guidelines and principles in implementing their projects. Local governments define their own implementation policies which change annually. These policies are derived from the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure EPWP logical framework. Municipal policies emanating from the EPWP summit held in 2010 provide a framework for implementation of the programme within the municipality and an environment that supports expansion of EPWP initiatives (ibid).

Skilling or re-skilling of EPWP participants is guided by the country's legislation and existing institutional framework, incorporating the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III and the SETAs. According to the NSDS III, the SETAs oversee skills development in their sectors. The NSDS III commits to addressing skills shortage in the country through skills planning, promotion of the public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) learning system, improvement of language and literacy skills, promotion of workplace-based training, small business support, career building, and capacity building to improve delivery of services (TETA, 2016). The strategy puts emphasis on workplace-based training which the EPWP offers. A lot of emphasis is put on learnerships and on-the-job training to skill or reskill people who could not obtain post-secondary school qualification (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). On-the-job training fast tracks skilling or re-skilling and is seen as quicker way to address structural unemployment.

4.3 The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

When this programme was initially introduced in South Africa by the democratic government, the country was just emerging from apartheid oppression and the focus was to address the general challenges of poverty and unemployment facing the majority (Department of Public Works, 1997). The EPWP was a necessary strategy to get rid of the 'apartheid-era labour reservoirs'³⁶ that were built for the farms and mines. Since its initiation, the programme has been run in phases with each phase running for five (5) years. The Expanded Public Works Programme adopted by the Growth and Development Summit in 2003, and launched in 2004, was an expansion of the construction sector PWP of the 1990s (Department of Public Works, 1997; Mail and Guardian, 2004; SARP, 2003). The EPWP is implemented in successive five-year phases, of which, the first phase was built on an existing PWP which started in 1996. It aimed to reduce unemployment, develop skills, empower communities through creation of employment, assets and skills transfer, build and

³⁶ Moon, 2017; Terreblanche, 2002

strengthen provincial and local government spheres as well as other local institutions, and strengthen livelihoods through construction projects (SARPN, 2003).

At its adoption, programme determined to:

provide short term jobs in the communities with a greater emphasis on providing or improving basic and essential infrastructure in the communities... school cleaning and renovations, community gardens, erosion control, land rehabilitation, removal of alien vegetation, community irrigation schemes, integrated community home-based care for people living with HIV or AIDS, school feeding, food voucher and feeding at the clinics (ibid: 5-6).

Phase One (1), which ran through the 2004/05 to 2008/09 financial years, was aimed at training participants to join the labour market, creating 1 million jobs and providing opportunities for self-employment on projects funded through the Division of Revenue Act (DORA) 2004, which included EPWP provisions (Department of Public Works, 2009). Of the targeted one million jobs, 40% were aimed at women, 30% at youth and 2% for people living with disabilities. Over one million jobs were created using R15 billion of the total R45 billion set aside for EPWP from DORA funds (ibid). The programme was implemented across four sectors, namely, Economic, Environment and Culture, Infrastructure and Social, to capacitate individuals and communities (Department of Public Works, 1997, 2009; South African Cities Network, 2016).

In the last year of this initial phase, the programme spent about R23 billion of the allocated R52 billion, implemented 16,869 projects, and employed 570,815 people among whom 45% were youth, 42% women and 1.1% people living with disabilities, transferring R2 billion as income to the participants (Department of Public Works, 2009). The programme failed to spend its allocated budget, spending only 44% of its allocated resources. Nonetheless, it managed to absorb more women and youth beyond the 40% and 30% targets, respectively. It also failed to reach the 2% employment quota for people living with disabilities. The programme introduced training projects, which included a learnership of 1,000 participants in artisan related

trades, construction management and administration, and Early Childhood Development learnership for 28 participants (ibid).

Special programmes, like the Zibambebe Programme, employed 32,000 contractors of the targeted 40,000, and created 939 community savings clubs which managed to save a combined R7.9 million (Department of Public Works, 2009). On the one hand, this phase was celebrated for having achieved its targets a year before it was scheduled to end, but on the other hand, it was criticised for failing to provide skills development and for its limited contribution to employment as joblessness remained high, though it was noted that the 2008 global economic crisis exacerbated the unemployment³⁷ challenge (South African Cities Network, 2016). In total, the programme aimed to contribute 2.8 million jobs to complement private sector employment for the GEAR policy to achieve its goal of halving unemployment by 2014 (Altman & Hemson, 2007).

Phase 2 of the programme came into effect following a Cabinet resolution in 2009. This phase ran through the 2009/10 to 2013/14 financial years, with a target to create 4.5 million jobs. This phase introduced the NPO programme replacing the Phase One (1)'s Economic sector projects, and changed the Economic sector into a cross cutting function (Enterprises Development) together with skills development streamlining training from generic to specific (Department of Public Works, 2009, 2014; South African Cities Network, 2016). The debate on the first and second economy was eliminated and unemployment was defined as a challenge, thus clarifying its programme objectives as the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, skills development and provision of assets as well as community services (South African Cities Network, 2016). During this phase the programme introduced the minimum EPWP wage together with the adherence to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 and the Code of Good Practice. This phase achieved about 4 million work opportunities being off target by about 9% with skilling of participants very low at less

³⁷ In the fourth quarter of 2009, unemployment stood at about 4.4 million people, of which about 3 million unemployed job seekers were youth and 2.1 million were women (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

than 1% of the employed participants, a key failure given the importance of skilling if participants are to join the formal labour market (Department of Public Works, 2014).

Skills development is funded through a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed between the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2011, saw the transfer of R369.5 million to EPWP for the training of 41,100 EPWP participants (Department of Public Works, 2019). The programme, through the EPWP Training Unit, receives funding for the skilling and reskilling of participants from the Department of Higher Education and Training through the National Skills Fund (NSF) which disburses the funds in line with the implementation phases. Funds released for skills development were insufficient. This was below what was required given that the programme had a target of creating 4.5 million employment opportunities in Phase 2 (Department of Public Works, 2015b). Thus available resources could only cover the skills or re-skilling of less than 1% of the targeted participants.

Skills development is a core aspect of the EPWP as emphasised by the then President Mr. Thabo Mbeki at the launch of the programme. This has been the bane, further highlighted on numerous occasions by implementing public bodies (Department of Infrastructure Development, 2018; KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport Community Safety and Liaison, 2018; *Mail and Guardian*, 2004). EPWP is not a training institution, but participants on the programme are expected to receive some form of training during their participation on the programme. Interviews with EPWP officials showed that they too were aware of this mandate, with one of the respondents saying:

the programme needs to ensure that all projects contain the training of beneficiaries so that they can be left with skills (Mrs Greyling, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

The majority of EPWP participants do not have post school training while some did not complete formal schooling at all. Thus, the skills development function of the

programme ensures improved qualifications or skills among the EPWP participants. At the end of Phase 2, policy emphasis was still on decreasing unemployment and poverty, both of which were considered possible through labour market rebound and entrepreneurship (South African Cities Network, 2016).

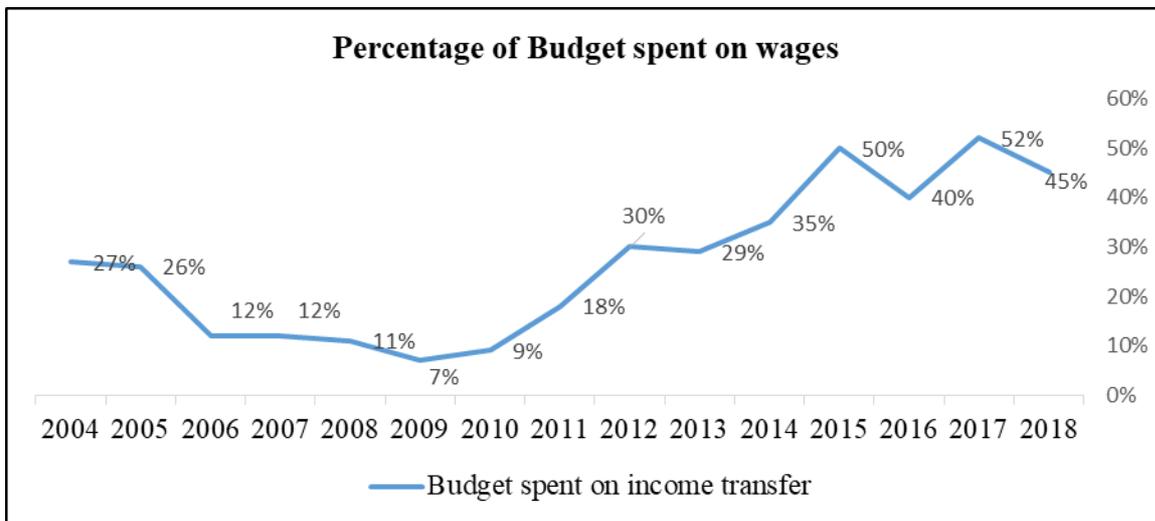
Phase 3 of the programme came after another cabinet resolution in 2014 and it was aligned to the National Development Plan (NDP). This phase ran through the 2014/15 to 2018/19 financial years with a target of creating six million work opportunities. The phase emphasised the attainment of sustainable livelihoods for its participants through skills and enterprise development (Department of Public Works, 2019; South African Cities Network, 2016). The programme increased the quota for employment of women and youth to 55% but maintained the quota for people living with disabilities at 2% (Department of Public Works, 2019). Rising unemployment of women and youth was met with resolutions taken at various global platforms committing countries to focus on the plight of vulnerable groups through programmes and activities aimed at achieving Goals 5³⁸ and 8³⁹ of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (ILO, 2017). During this phase, the programme missed its target by 25% thus, employed 4.5 million participants across 73,667 projects and spent 45% of its allocated budget on wages (Department of Public Works, 2019).

One of the important features of this programme is the transfer of income to people. Phase 3 is celebrated for having increased income transferred to participants. The programme recorded a significant jump of up to 45% increase in expenditure on wages towards the end of the phase as shown in Figure 4.2.

³⁸ Gender equality

³⁹ Decent work and economic growth

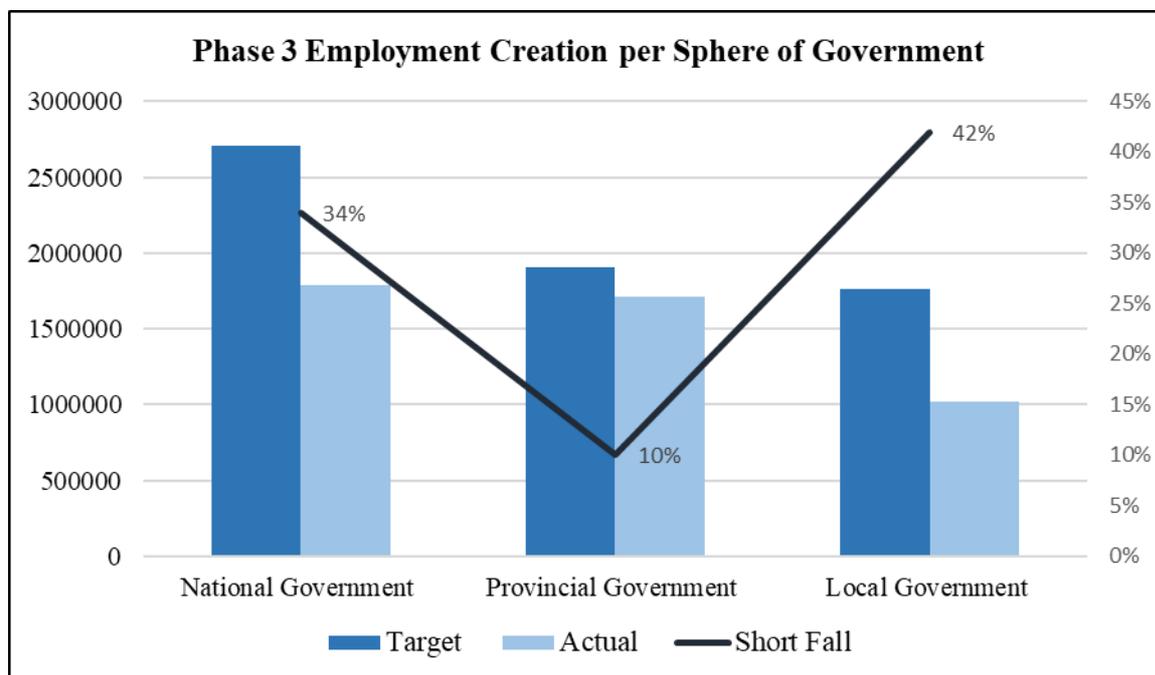
Figure 4.2 Proportion of EPWP budget spent on income transfers



Source: Department of Public Works, 2018

This phase has been roundly criticised for poor performance. For example, infrastructure sector spending and the number of work opportunities created by the Department of Public works and Infrastructure, who are the custodian of infrastructure development and the EPWP itself, have been very low. This is the sector that had the highest target of employment opportunities to be created. Of the 2.4 million work opportunities expected to be created in the infrastructure sector, only 60% were realised, with this being the lowest achievement rate across sectors (EPWPRS, 2019). In comparison, smaller sectors like the Environment and Culture sector created 1.1 million work opportunities, translating to the highest achievement at 84% of the set target (ibid). In general, provincial government departments have done better in meeting set targets for creation of employment opportunities, followed by national government and local government lagging further behind as shown in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 EPWP employment creation per sphere of government



Source: EPWPRS, 2019

As illustrated above, the five-year performance in Phase 3 shows that provincial government was able to achieve 90% of its employment creation targets for the full duration of the Phase, followed by national government at 66% and lastly, local government at 58%. Local government institutions have a poor expenditure record on government resources. They struggle to create employment opportunities and spending is aligned to employment opportunities created, hence their poor employment creation record. Local government institutions consist of district, metropolitan and local municipalities, most of which participate in the infrastructure sector. Thus, their dismal performance has been one of the main challenges for the programme overall.

Expectations are often that all spheres of government will perform evenly, with local government having favourable prospects due to its proximity to the people and mandate. However, throughout the country this sphere of government continues to lag behind others in terms of its contribution to the success of the EPWP. Phase 3 has also been criticised for failing to attract youth in its projects. Of the 55% quota

set for youth employment only 46% youth employment was realised (Department of Public Works, 2015*b*, 2019). In addition, public bodies observed that their experience shows that it is erroneous to believe that the programme is a means to integrate the unemployed into the labour market or enable them to transition into self-employment (South African Cities Network, 2016).

4.3.1 Objectives of the EPWP

The EPWP has always been linked to the broad government policy. Whereas in the early 1990s it was linked to the RDP of 1994, it is now aligned to the current government development blueprint, the NDP adopted in 2012 (Department of Public Works, 1997, 2013). The programme aims are now focused on social protection, creation of assets and employment opportunities (South African Cities Network, 2016). The EPWP objectives endeavour to address the critical challenges in South Africa since the dawn of democracy. The section below elaborates on these objectives.

Creation of assets

The programme aims to create social and economic assets for communities through support from EPWP budgets, various grants and an equitable share of funds received by various organs of the state. As emphasised during the launch in May 2004, this programme is expected to create new assets, upgrade or maintain existing ones through large scale use of LIC. The programme is expected to provide basic services and infrastructure such as water, electricity, sewerage, storm water drainage, roads, electricity, waste disposal, dams and others as a response to service delivery backlogs in the country (McCutcheon, 2008). The national, provincial and local governments as well as other public entities/agencies such as the South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited (SANRAL) that participate in the EPWP have their own mandate to create assets for the communities. These entities use their own allocated service delivery budgets to implement projects that provide

employment opportunities along EPWP guidelines (Department of Public Works, 2009).

The labour and material used per project is properly quantified to meet specific local and international guidelines and standards. The substitution of capital for labour does not mean the quality of the asset should be compromised (McCutcheon, 2008). Labour intensity varies from project to project and this is guided by Department of Public Works and Infrastructure guidelines. For example, bulk water supply projects are expected to spend between 10% and 25% on labour intensity, while buildings construction spends 10% to 30%, maintenance 20% to 70% and landscaping 40% to 70%, and roads or storm water construction or upgrading spends 15% to 35%, routine maintenance 70% to 90%, and periodic maintenance 20% to 50% on labour intensity (Department of Public Works, 2015a).

Projects implementers are expected to follow these guidelines to determine the possible work opportunities in projects. The more labour intensive the project is, the greater the number of people employed. For example, through infrastructure projects such as Zivuseni Reloaded of Gauteng Province which is implemented by the Department of Infrastructure Development, employment opportunities are created while constructing or maintaining public assets. In the 2018/19 financial year the Department allocated a total of R119 477 000 to create 4 413 direct work opportunities in EPWP of which 2991 were women and 2127 were youth (EPWPRS, 2018). The participants were placed in various infrastructure development projects within the province where they provided manual labour in the construction or renovation of infrastructure.

As emphasised by the Provincial Government, this is one employment creation strategy in a province faced with large numbers of poor and unemployed people. High poverty levels in the province indicate the need for poverty alleviation and job creation strategies (Department of Infrastructure Development, 2018). This is one of the reasons why the EPWP is a programme meant to cushion the poor against the

high levels of unemployment and poverty by absorbing large numbers of people in its projects.

Creation of employment opportunities

This is the objective used as the core measure of the EPWP performance in the country. The programme is expected to maximize employment opportunities through recruitment of large numbers of people to work on EPWP projects. The aim is to provide an income to participants and support them to transition into the formal labour market for gainfully employment using skills and experience gained from the programme. At the launch of the programme in 2004 President Thabo Mbeki stated that the aim of this programme was to draw large numbers of people from the unemployment pool into productive work (Department of Public Works, 1997, 2009; *Mail and Guardian*, 2004). This meant that EPWP was not another form of government grant or aid, but people were to be remunerated for work done. In a country with high levels of structural unemployment with the majority lacking qualifications for gainful employment, the programme is used as a vehicle to create employment opportunities for the natural exclusions from the labour market. It bridges the gap between the unemployable and the employable by giving people who have never participated in the labour market a chance to work and gain skills as well as experience.

Employment is created through initiatives such as LIC, which encourages use of manual labour instead of machinery, National Youth Service, which entails employment and training of youth in various artisan trades, working on fire which involves employment and training of fire fighters, and working on coast and many other programmes on a temporary basis (Department of Public Works, 2019). The EPWP is a temporary relief which is linked to projects. The participants have no employment benefits such as a pension fund or medical aid, but they are entitled to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), Skills Development Fund (SDF), sick leave, and Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases (COID) as

determined by the Department of Employment and Labour (Department of Labour, 2012).

However, the programme, overall, has failed to meet its employment creation objective. During Phase Three (3) of implementation, it failed to meet its target of 6 million employment opportunities, having only achieved 75% of the target, while employment of youth at the end of this phase was low, recorded at 46% despite the set target of 55% and women employment achievement was better, at 67% (Department of Public Works, 2019). The failure to achieve the programme objective of creation of employment opportunities and prioritisation of youth shows the gap between policy intention and implementation outcomes.

Social protection

The last objective of the programme is to provide social protection, meaning protection of the vulnerable, usually identified as women, youth and people living with disabilities, from poverty. Essentially, it is a safety net. This is viewed as an important poverty reduction strategy in the NDP and it seeks to stabilise consumption by cushioning people during a natural or man-made shock (Department of Public Works, 2013; ILO, 2012). PEPs or PWP's normally set targets for the percentage composition of vulnerable groups working on projects. In Phase 3, the EPWP targeted employment of 55% women, 2% people living with disabilities and 55% youth (Department of Public Works, 2014). These are the most vulnerable groups in the South African society who must be cushioned from the effects of poverty and high unemployment levels.

Women's roles have changed in the society, with growing emphasis on their emancipation. They have responded with a growing interest in leadership, and economic or labour market participation (Department of Women and People with Disabilities, 2019; ILO, 2018; UN Women, 1995). South African women are the most affected by unemployment across the SACU member states, ranking highest in

2019, whereas unemployment among women was 4% higher than that among men in South Africa in 2018 (The Global Economy, 2019*b*; Statistics South Africa, 2018). South Africa has a young population and the youth face the biggest barriers in entering the labour market compared to other age groups (Faith *et al.*, 2020; McCord & Bhorat, 2003). The rising unemployment levels among women and youth indicate that they continue to struggle to make a breakthrough in the economy.

“Chapter 11 of the NDP states that the vast majority of the unemployed currently have no access to social protection and that EPWP as a Public Employment Programme (PEP) can play an important part in reducing this gap, especially if it is able to increase its safety further” (Department of Public Works, 2013:2). It is due to these reasons that programmes like Zibambele Rural Development Programme of the KwaZulu-Natal Province maximise the employment of rural women. The programme prioritises employment of poor women thus giving them an opportunity to earn income. In KZN, the programme employed 90% women in the project in the 2018/19 financial year (EPWPRS, 2018). The EPWP objectives are an undertaking by government to address the critical problems that have bedevilled South Africa since the dawn of democracy.

4.3.2 Cross-cutting functions

In addition to the above objectives, the programme introduced sustainable livelihoods with the aim of weaning its participants from the programme. The unemployed have a chance to redeem themselves through on-the-job training and entrepreneurship activities through the programme. The programme provides some of these resources for example, fencing and water sources which are provided by the Environment and Culture sector, while the Infrastructure sector provides bridges. In turn, the Training and Enterprise Development sector provides further support to ensure maintenance of sustainable livelihoods through skills development, sourcing of financing and general business support services. Employment beyond the EPWP

is either full-time in the labour market or self-employment by starting own businesses.

Skills development in EPWP

Skills development comes in many forms, which include short skills programmes, learnerships and artisan programmes. The training programmes aim to impart skills to the unskilled in addition to work experience gained from doing EPWP work so that participants are equipped to look for employment outside the programme. This is function is funded through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). One of the EPWP officials said:

The agreement with DHET is very critical because the training programme is an unfunded mandate in the programme. This means we need such relationships to fund skills development (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

However, despite this, skills development is not sufficient having been criticised by policy makers, implementers and the EPWP participants themselves. In one of the parliamentary discussions on the EPWP, the programme was indicted to incorporate a tracking system that monitors training of participants to ensure transition to full time employment (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015). This would ensure that skills development is not a tick-box exercise, but instead, an effective means to direct participants to opportunities in the labour market.

Unemployment in South Africa is structural, and this has led to the emphasis on skills development. The country needs to produce a skilled labour force that is suitable for the job opportunities in the market (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019). On the one hand, employers look for skills that the labour market does not have, and on the other hand, education institutions produce skills that are not required by the labour market, leading to persistent unemployment in the country. The impact is mostly felt by young people who often go for years without employment. Graham and Mlatsheni (2015), in their study on youth unemployment in South Africa, state that youth struggle to get employment because the labour market

requires highly skilled labour. There has been a shift also towards high productivity or high technology methods, and the agriculture sector has become highly mechanised. As a result, the skills that many young people have do not respond to labour market needs. This emphasises the need for skilling or re-skilling of the EPWP participants.

Entrepreneurship support in EPWP

The EPWP participants are expected to engage in entrepreneurship activities as another option to exit from the programme. Enterprise development is a cross cutting function within the programme. Participants form cooperatives, private and other forms of business, while working for the programme and through these they can access SMME support from institutions such as National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the Department of Small Business Development, the National Development Agency and others. The participants who form businesses can also access economic sector specific technical training as well as soft skills business training packages to enable them to graduate into self-employment beyond the EPWP (Department of Public Works, 2019). However, the small business support environment is very diverse and over the years there has been growth in the variety of stakeholders participating in this sphere. It now consists of government, private sector, international organisations and some civic organisations who offer funding or skills development, including through academic institutions such as the University of Cape Town and the Gordon Institute of Business Science (First National Bank, 2020).

Collaborations are encouraged within the SMME support sphere since stakeholders play different roles and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has made use of these collaborative relationships to provide support. It is for this reason that collaborations between the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA) and the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) were

strengthened to ensure a concerted effort in the provision of support to SMMEs or cooperative development (Department of Public Works, 2019). These relations have managed to establish SMMEs and cooperative support initiatives. These networks within the ecosystem have been emphasised at policy level. For example, in one of the National Assembly meetings on the EPWP it was recommended that the programme needs to link participants to the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) for SMME or cooperative support (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2015). This recommendation culminated in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish relations between the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and the Department of Small Business Development for the provision of SMME or cooperative support.

This function, however, remains an unfunded mandate even though records show that the programme had supported about 300 SMMEs during Phase Three (3) of implementation (Department of Public Works, 2019). An EPWP official who took part in the interviews claimed that the programme has failed to make inroads in soliciting support for its entrepreneurship activities. The EPWP official who elaborated on this said:

the Department signed an MoU with the Department of Small Business Development in 2018 but it is only on paper there is nothing happening on the ground...I have never seen the signed document myself and one would have expected an implementation plan to follow but to this date nothing has happened (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

To date only one agreement has been signed with the Department of Small Business Development on recommendation of Parliament. The EPWP officials feel that this agreement is not clear and it was signed and filed in Pretoria. It may seem this was only done for compliance purposes. This affects entrepreneurship support in the EPWP given that the programme has no resources allocated for this mandate. This is despite its importance as one of the ways to exit participants responsibly from the programme (Department of Public Works, 2016). This casts doubt on the commitment by government to supporting EPWP participants to form businesses as an outcome of their participation in the programme. Entrepreneurship support forms

an important part of the sustainable livelihoods approach and lack of proper support stifles entrepreneurial ability among EPWP participants, therefore exacerbating dependency on the programme.

However, success of the SMME sector in the country is not a given. The EPWP is venturing into an already struggling sector, so chances of creating successful businesses are limited. A study conducted by Brand South Africa in 2017 found that 45% of entrepreneurs who participated in their surveys had businesses that have once failed. A number of challenges have been identified in this sector which include poor market access, poor or lack of capital, lack of proper guidance, poor sales, late payments by customers and business owners doing everything in the business (Bizcommunity, 2019). Already, the country has a challenge of failing entrepreneurship ideas especially at infancy stage, which makes it important for the programme to ensure full support to the enterprises formed by the participants if they are to succeed and become sustainable.

4.4 Implementation of the EPWP

Policy buy-in within public bodies is one critical part in implementing this programme. For example, the Gauteng provincial government committed itself to the creation of employment through use of the Labour-Intensive Construction (LIC) model in its CAPEX⁴⁰ projects (Department of Infrastructure Development, 2018). On the same breadth, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport also committed itself to a 5-year training plan and capacity building programme, while the Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development committed itself to establishing a training academy for contractors (Gauteng Department of Infrastructure Development, 2018; KwaZulu-Natal Department of Transport, 2009). The following section discusses implementation of the EPWP.

⁴⁰ Large capital expenditure projects

4.4.1 The EPWP target population

The EPWP is implemented in areas where there are service delivery backlogs, high poverty, wide inequality and unemployment. For example, in the Northern Cape Province, in 2016, it was estimated that 32,754 households were using pit toilets, 11,831 using the bucket system, 19,924 had no access to toilets, while 12,737 had no access to piped water and 31,652 had no electricity connection (Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2018). This was supported by interview respondent Kealagile, a 31-year-old male from Glenred village who is a supervisor on an EPWP project, who said that they had water challenges in his village, where out of a total of seven (7) installed water taps, only three (3) were working. Access to community assets is a challenge. At individual or household level people have access to household assets in the townships (Veregenoen, Green Point and Roodepan) and in rural areas (Glenred and Gamothibi) the majority have cattle and small livestock such as sheep, goats and pigs. In the villages households are allocated land by *kgosi* (chief) which they use to build their houses or for farming activities.

Employment is scarce, especially for the unskilled or semi-skilled. In both townships and rural areas, people survive on 'skrops' (piece jobs) in construction for men, and domestic work, for women. Women in the rural areas cannot find work within the village. They have to look for domestic work in Kuruman which is 15km from Gamothibi Village and 77km from Glenred Village, which means they have to leave their villages and migrate to Kuruman. Unemployment statistics are higher than national averages, estimated at 29.5% for Northern Cape in 2017 against the then national average of 27.5% (Statistics South Africa, 2020). There is high dependency on government grants. It was estimated that, in 2017, a total of 307,026 individuals benefitted from child support grants, while 48.4% were estimated to be living in poverty by 2016 (Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2018).

This is the case with other parts of the country where the programme is implemented. Even bigger provinces like Gauteng still experience social and

economic challenges, despite being the economic hub of the country and home to up to 20% of the country's population (Gauteng Department of Economic Development, 2009), the province has its own fair share of problems. One of the most important features is that this province contributes about 35.7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa and about 10% of the continent (Gauteng Provincial Treasury, 2015). However, despite its status of a commercial hub in the country it is also struggling with social ills. The Provincial Government acknowledges this in the following acclamation: "we also remain concerned that despite the significant contribution Gauteng makes to the GDP, our economy still has major structural problems including the exclusion of a large number of the black population from meaningful economic participation and ownership" (Gauteng Provincial Treasury, 2015:44). The province's economy benefits a few and the majority are still not yet economically emancipated. The province is prohibited from reaching its full potential by structural unemployment (Gauteng Department of Economic Development, 2009).

A third of the province's population possesses little or no skills with more than a million with no schooling or with primary schooling only (Gauteng Department of Economic Development, 2009). This group of people is unemployable, thus making it difficult for the province to successfully fight unemployment. This causes uneasiness for the provincial leadership since it hinders efforts to achieve a better life for all. The province, like the rest of the country, contends with high unemployment levels and efforts to fight the problem are not making much of a difference. The previously disadvantaged being the most affected. The 2019 quarter one estimates for Gauteng's unemployment stands at 28.9% for the narrow definition higher than 27.6% national level and 33.6% for the expanded definition (Statistics South Africa, 2019).

Despite positive growth, the economy has not created jobs for at least a third of the province's population. This leaves many in a dire situation of having to live without any source of income. In the post-apartheid era, its provincial leadership has always focused on growing the economy, development and creation of jobs (Gauteng

Department of Economic Development, 2009). The Northern Cape Province challenges can be mapped to other provinces with bigger provinces in terms of size of the economy, budget and population also experiencing similar challenges. The programme therefore targets people affected by these challenges.

4.4.2 Composition of the EPWP participants

Primary data was collected from 128 EPWP participants of whom 43% were from Gamothibi and Glenred Villages in Kuruman, and 57% were from Kimberley townships (Green Point, Roodepan and Veregenoenrg). Of these, 45% were youth and 55% were women. The youngest among the respondents was 19 years old, and the oldest was 69 years old. This shows that people start working on EPWP projects soon after school or after dropping out before completion of school. The most frequent age for youth participants was 24 years, and 46 years for adults. Of the women participants, 40% were between the ages of 40 and 50 years, while 50% of youth were between the ages of 20 and 30 years. This shows that there are more women of middle age in EPWP projects, while youth between 20 and 30 years also take part in EPWP projects more than other age groups.

Indications are that women between the ages of 40 and 50 years in the formal labour market prefer to be settled in their current jobs till retirement, with most people preferring to settle at the age of 40 so that they build up their pensions. Due to the structural unemployment challenge, some middle-aged women find themselves working for the EPWP. Youth in their early 20s are new entrants into the labour market, either from high school or college, and they typically do not have much work experience. Unemployment is high in this age group with statistics at national level showing that about 59% of youth between the ages of 15 and 24 were unemployed in quarter one of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Young people critically feel the effects of lack of employment opportunities because they go for years without employment. Primary data from surveys indicated that there are more female than male youth in EPWP projects, with 37% male youth participation against 63% female

youth participation in the survey. This confirms the unemployment statistics which indicate that there are more unemployed women than men.

The EPWP employs the unskilled and those with low educational levels. In the Northern Cape Province, 9.1% of the population have no schooling, 58.3% have some primary or incomplete high school education, 24% have matric level education and 8.5% have a post matric qualification (Northern Cape Provincial Treasury, 2018). This was confirmed by respondents involved in the primary data collection from among whom 16.4% indicated that they had some primary education, 16.4% had Grade 9, and only 25% had matric certificates, while 41.4% went to high school but did not sit for matric examinations. Regarding work experience prior to joining EPWP, 51% of respondents indicated that they had enrolled without any work experience, while 49% said they had previous work experience. However, previous work experience included domestic work, packing and till operation at retail shops, hair dressing, waitressing in the restaurant and fast foods industry, cleaning and general labour in the construction sector.

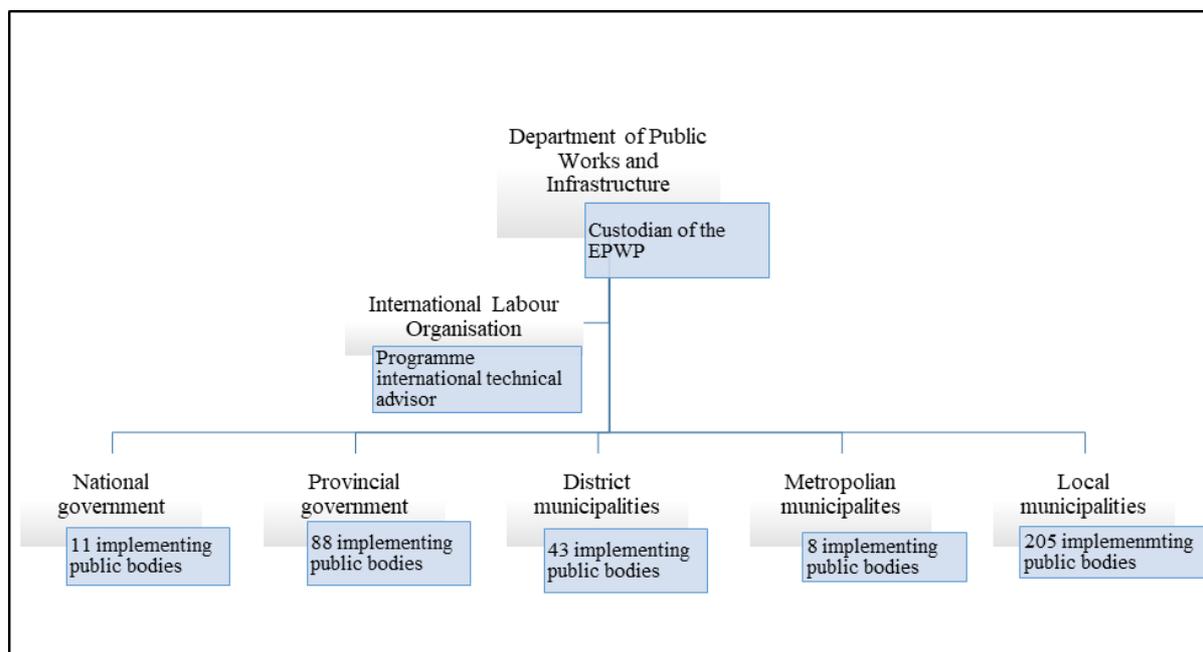
When asked about activities before joining the EPWP, 92% of the survey respondents indicated that they were unemployed. This means people do not leave their jobs to join the EPWP but the programme draws from the unemployment pool. About 4% were in unskilled employment and had lost their jobs and another 4% of the respondents having joined the EPWP either after completing matric or dropping out of school. Of the unemployed, 79% had lost their previous jobs due to contracts ending, 10.5% had been retrenched and company closures accounted for the remaining 10.5%. Many high school leaving youth do not join the EPWP immediately. Survey participants indicated different reasons for joining the EPWP, with 38.5% of respondents indicating that they were unemployed and they needed work, while 3.7% said they needed work experience and 57.8% said they need to earn income.

4.4.3 The EPWP stakeholders

As the custodian of the programme the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure implements the EPWP together with many other government institutions. This is not a one organ of state programme because its nature requires coordination and cooperation between organs of state for its successful implementation (Altman & Hemson, 2007). Beyond collaborative implementation by government departments, the programme has support from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which provides technical support. Public bodies that implement projects include various national, provincial and local government institutions, as well as parastatals which have different mandates as guided by the Constitution of the country. Public bodies are expected to make use of their allocated budgets for own projects as per their mandate to implement the EPWP projects.

The National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure also allocates grant funding to EPWP implementing public bodies to supplement own budgets (Department of Public Works, 2019). These institutions identify projects for implementation using EPWP principles, particularly those that require the employment of large numbers of people which they then report as EPWP projects (ibid). These projects are implemented along programme principles and guidelines which outline processes for recruitment, implementation, monitoring and reporting of activities. Figure 4.4 shows the stakeholders of the EPWP programme.

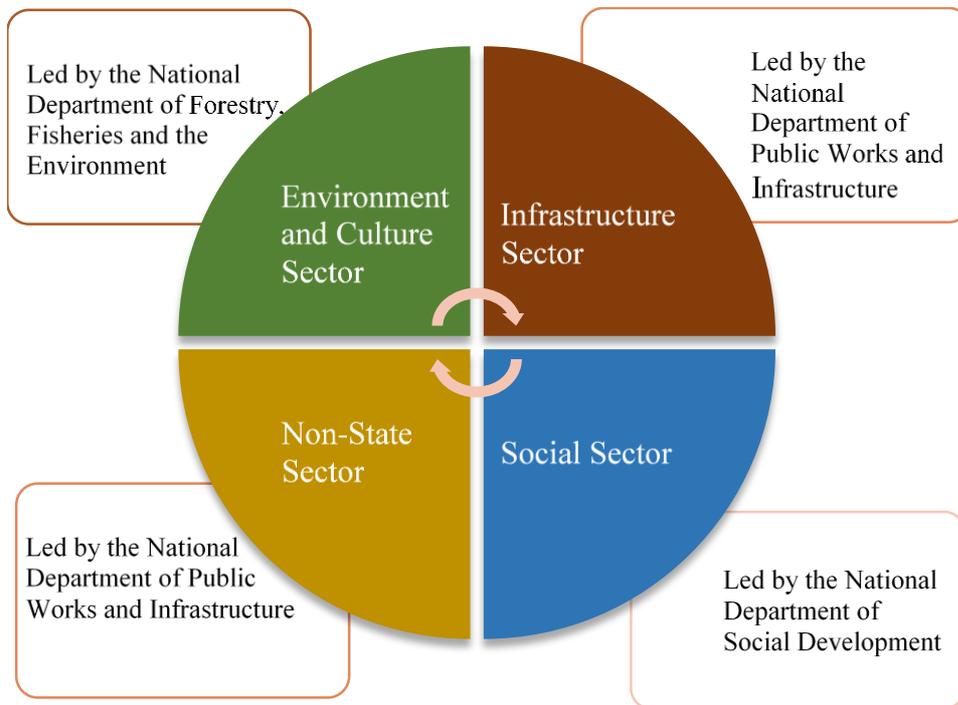
Figure 4.4 The EPWP stakeholders



Source: EPWPRS, 2018 and Department of Public Works various reports

As shown in Figure 4.4, during Phase 3 of implementation of the programme about 355 public bodies were involved in EPWP projects. These consisted of 11 national government departments, 88 provincial government departments, 43 district municipalities, eight metropolitan municipalities and 205 local municipalities across the country. These public bodies implemented projects in the four EPWP sectors and employment opportunities created depended on the targets as well as labour intensity of the project or sub-programme. Across sectors, EPWP implementation is done by public bodies who are at various spheres of government as per their constitutional mandate. Implementation takes place within villages, farms, townships and urban areas across the country. The EPWP consists of project interventions across four sectors namely, Environment and Culture, Social, Infrastructure and Non-State as shown in Figure 4.5 below.

Figure 4.5 The EPWP Sectors



Source: Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2020a

Environment and Culture sector

Led by the National Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environmental Affairs (DFFE), The Environment and Culture sector runs environmental protection and conservation programmes as well as promotion of tourism and heritage (Department of Public Works, n.d.). These programmes are run by national, provincial and local government spheres in all provinces. The sub-programmes include sustainable land-based livelihoods, waste management, tourism and creative industries, parks and beautification, coastal management and sustainable energy (ibid).

These sub-programmes create jobs for the poor and the unemployable, and in some cases, they are designed to enable the participants to gain sustainable income through future permanent employment by taking them through a training programme combined with the building of work experience from the EPWP. It is through these

initiatives that the environment is protected and sustainable livelihoods are supported through activities such as agriculture. The participating public bodies includes national departments such as Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment and Tourism, and provincial departments such as Economic Affairs and Tourism, Agriculture, Sports and Arts, as well as some municipalities.

Infrastructure sector

This sector comprises infrastructure providing entities at national and provincial levels such as Transport, Education, Public Works, Health, as well as municipalities and State-Owned Enterprises. It is led by the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. It makes use of LIC methods in the construction and maintenance of assets (Department of Public Works, n.d.). This sector takes the largest share of resources from the EPWP, infrastructure grants and also from the equitable share. It provides social and economic infrastructure as per the service delivery mandates of the various entities involved. The infrastructure created or maintained includes roads (gravel, paving, pothole maintenance and upgrading of roads), government assets (prisons, army bases, some government offices and police stations), schools, clinics, hospitals, dams and others. This sector is the main contributor in terms of work opportunities.

Non-State sector

The non-state sector is a service provision sector led by the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. Introduced in Phase 2, the sector provides a wage subsidy to community development initiatives through Non-Profit Organisations and it comprises the Community Work Programme (CWP) by the national COGTA and the non-profit organisation (NPO) Programme implemented by the Independent Development Trust (IDT) (ibid). IDT implements the programme on behalf of the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure. In addition, the CWP, a programme implemented by the Department of Cooperative Governance and

Traditional Affairs, forms part on the NPO programme. The CWP is also run by NPOs and it implements community-based projects that are identified by the beneficiary communities (South African Government, 2010). The programme is run by the NPOs on behalf of the implementing institutions wherein EPWP participants sign contracts with the NPOs. In CWP implementation is longer and guided by 1-year renewable contracts. The NPO or CWP activities performed by different working groups include Early Childhood Development (ECD), community gardens, cleaning and beautification, recycling, home based care and others.

Social sector

The social sector is also a service provision sector led by the national Department of Social Development. The social sector creates employment for the unskilled who gain work experience by running community development and protection programmes (Department of Public Works, n.d.). It consists of departments such as Social Development, Health, Education and some municipalities. Some of the social sector programmes by the public bodies such as the Department of Social Development and Health are implemented through NPOs who recruit the EPWP workers. This sector provides services that include community safety, school patrols, home based care, ECD and others.

4.4.4 The EPWP Projects and sub-programmes

The discussion above demonstrated that EPWP like other PEPs or PWP is implemented through government service delivery model. Spheres of government choose projects according to sectors as shown in Table 4.1. Implementing public bodies are involved in a variety of activities chosen per sector as shown below.

Table 4.1 The EPWP sector sub-programmes

Environment and Culture Sector	Infrastructure Sector	Social Sector	Non-State Sector
Coastal Management	Provincial Roads	Social Services	Community Work Programme
Sustainable Land Based Livelihoods	Provincial Infrastructure (Non-Roads)	National Nutrition	Non-Profit Organisation Programme
Sustainable Energy	National Youth Service (NYS)	Mass Participation	
Parks and Beautification	National Departments and SOE	Home Community Based Care	
Tourism	Municipal Infrastructure	Extra School Support	
Waste Management	Large Projects (Exceeding R30million)	Early Childhood Development (ECD)	
	Contractor Development	Community Safety	

EPWPRS, 2018

As depicted above, sub-programmes like waste management are normally implemented by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environmental or local municipalities in the Environment and Culture sector since these fall directly in their mandate. Construction departments like the Department of Public Works and

Infrastructure or local government entities are involved in construction as their activities, which include resurfacing assets like roads and bridges, fall under the Infrastructure sector. The Department of Social Development, a social services department, is involved in activities such as early childhood development and national nutrition under the Social sector. The Department of Education also falls under the Social sector and is involved in activities such as extra school support. In the Non-state sector, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs is involved in the Community Work Programme, while IDT implements the NPO programme on behalf of the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure.

EPWP projects vary across sectors and within public bodies. They are influenced firstly by the constitutional mandate of a public body and are project⁴¹ based. There are several definitions of a project but what is common is that it is a unique time-based activity aiming to fulfil certain objectives. A project has a start and an end date, and so are the EPWP activities, which makes them fit into the category of projects. The design of a project is very critical in determining the number of jobs that it can create. A project that is labour-intensive in its design will maximise the number of job opportunities to be created but a capital biased project is highly mechanised and so it will create fewer jobs. Defining characteristics of a project include its flexibility and amenability to the substitution of capital for labour. Inflexible projects provide limited options and force implementers to use more capital than labour (Hirschman, 2015).

Employment creation in the EPWP depends on projects. EPWP projects are expected to allow the substitution of capital for labour, in so doing becoming labour intensive and allowing for maximisation of job creation. The EPWP guidelines clearly sets out the number of jobs that Public Bodies are expected to create for every R1 million spent. In Phase Three (3) of the programme, public bodies were expected to

⁴¹ "The term 'project' conjures up the notion of a set of blueprints, prepared by consulting engineers, which upon being handed to a contractor, will be transformed into a three-dimensional reality within a reasonable time bound" (Hirschman, 2015:32)

create seven full-time equivalent jobs by municipalities and 14 full-time equivalents jobs by departments for every R1 million spent on a project in 230 days (Department of Public Works, 2018). It is therefore critical that project designs account for the job creation targets set out. However, critics have observed that very little effort is applied by project implementers in adapting labour intensive technology to maximize creation of employment (Hirschman, 2015).

Use of LIC methods is promoted by both governments of PEP or PWP implementing nations as well as their partners such as the ILO. In line with labour intensive construction, a dam construction engineer has to combine use of shovels, dumpers, compressors, air hoses, hoists, mixing plants and human labour (Department of Public Works, 2018). Human labour must be maximised, which means there will be minimal use of machinery in order to create jobs. However, the quality of the assets should not be compromised. Failure to do so means the project becomes capital intensive. Thus, the combination of labour and machinery has to be aligned to labour intensive construction guidelines from the ILO. The duration of employment of participants varies depending on the activities. There are projects that last only a few days to others that last more than 12 months.

4.5 The EPWP's Response to Women and Youth Employment Needs

The EPWP is expected to provide employment, skills development and transfer income to the poor as well as the unskilled people in a country where unemployment or poverty is biased towards women and youth compared to men (Altman & Hemson, 2007; Department of Public Works, 1997; Department of Women and People with Disabilities, 2019; McCord, 2005). This has led to an emphasis on employment of these groups from Phase One (1) during which the programme targeted employment of 30% youth and 40% women in its projects and 55% for both in Phase 3 (Department of Public Works, 2009, 2015*b*; 2019).

4.5.1 Transfer of income

Although EPWP income is not much, it helps meet core household needs since it is used to acquire basics and essential services such as food, electricity and other family needs (Hlatshwayo, 2017). Evidence towards this end was given by some EPWP workers, for example, Hilda a 26-year-old woman from Greenpoint who is third born in a family of 11. Of her two older siblings, one works at the municipality and the other on the farms. She has three children of her own, all of whom are of school-going age. Hilda said EPWP income lessens the burden for her family. She joined the EPWP in 2013 and works on a sewing project. When asked about whether income received from the programme had assisted her, she responded with excitement saying:

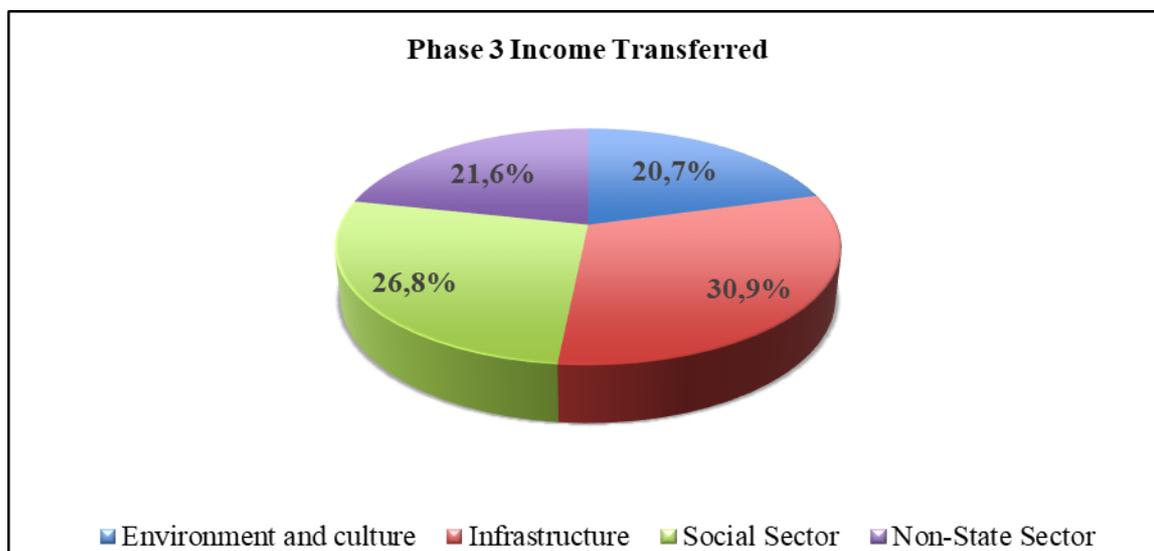
yes...yes...yes, I bought my whole bedroom furniture and a lot other stuff, pay my accounts as well as my children's school fees (Hilda, Interview, Kimberley, 10 October 2020).

These are some of the cases that show the need for the programme in the country. Despite being small, the recipients find it useful in meeting some household basics. This was supported by an EPWP official who said:

to us we see it as just an EPWP stipend (EPWP wage) but to them (EPWP participants) it is a means to an end (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

A total of 45% transferred as wages in 2018 amounted to R41.1 billion. The infrastructure sector transferred most income over the five years of Phase 3 of the programme having managed to transfer about R12.6 billion, followed by the Social sector at about R11.1 billion, while the Environment and Culture sector transferred the least at R8.5 billion (EPWPRS, 2019).

Figure 4.6 The EPWP Phase 3 income transferred



Source: EPWPRS, 2019

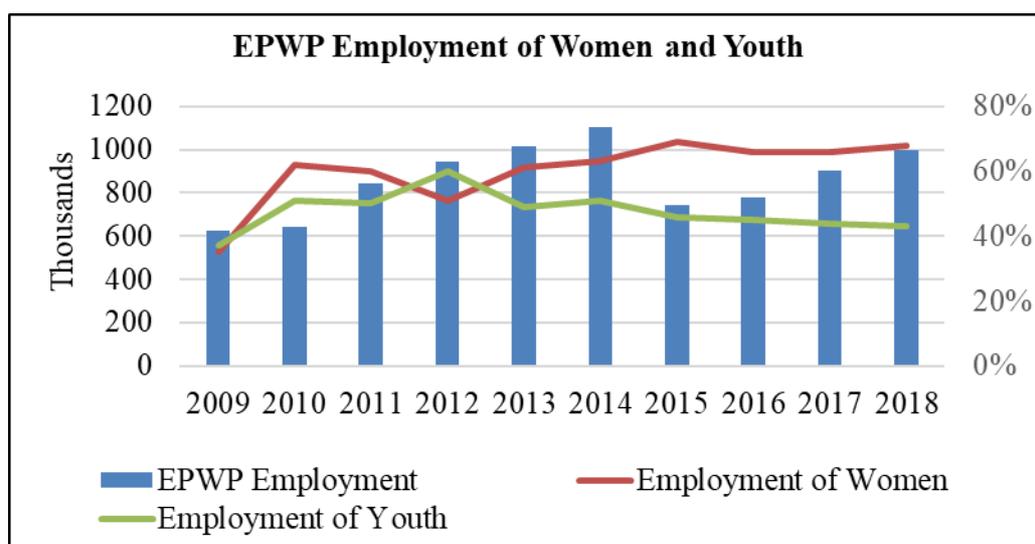
As shown in Figure 4.6, the Infrastructure sector is the biggest contributor to employment in the programme and has also transferred the most income to EPWP participants, having contributed about 30,9% of total income paid to the EPWP participants. The Social sector comes second, having transferred about 26.8% of total income, the Non-State sector came third at about 21.6% and last was the Environment and Culture sector which contributed about 20.7% of total transferred income.

4.5.2 The EPWP employment

Women and youth are most affected by poverty and unemployment in South Africa and some view the programme as the only option available to them. The programme is expected to employ a minimum of 55% of women and youth in its projects. Woman and youth appreciate EPWP work because of limited options. However, analysis of the data on creation of employment opportunities shows that, overall, the programme has experienced a decline in the creation of employment opportunities. Growth in work opportunities was slower even in Phase 3 despite an increase in the number of stakeholders participating in the programme and its activities. The

programme started with a lot of enthusiasm in 2004 as evidenced by over 100% achievement in targeted work opportunities in Phase One (1). The programme started focusing on compliance and quality reporting in Phase Two (2). Growth in employment opportunities fell from 10% in 2009 to 3% in 2010 as depicted in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 Creation of employment opportunities in EPWP 2009-2018



Source: EPWPRS various reports

In 2013, the last year of Phase 2, performance was at its lowest in the phase at 68%. In Phase 3, the performance of the programme continued to decline to as low as 58% in 2016, finally finishing the phase at 69% of the jobs target achieved. This was despite the new phase starting with a 28% increase in budget from R118.5 billion in 2013. The programme also increased the number of projects from 5,008 in 2013 to 15,836 in 2014. New sub-programmes or projects were introduced in this phase. This meant that more sites were created for employing the intended beneficiaries. However, creation of employment opportunities started declining in 2015 when there was a 40% fall from 106% achievement in 2014 to 66% achievement. As shown above youth uptake has been very low in the programme having ranged between 43% and 51% over the 10-year period. One EPWP official said the programme is neglected at implementation level. He said:

EPWP is not a mandate of implementing public bodies so other government institutions feel like they are doing Department of Public Works and Infrastructure a favour and yet this is a government programme meant to benefit people. As a result, they do not follow guidelines, neglect monitoring and reporting and always make excuses for poor performance (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

The programme is supposed to be doing better than it is now but due to the challenges identified by Mr Pietersen, performance is not as expected. Even if budgets are increased as in the third phase, women and youth continue to be disadvantaged because the EPWP offers limited employment opportunities and within these limited opportunities, they consisted of only 68% and 43% of participants, respectively. By the end of Phase 3 of the programme (EPWPRS, 2019), the programme had failed to reach the 55% quota for youth. This means that even after 15 years of programme implementation, government has not figured out substantive ways to promote employment creation for women and youth.

Some young people feel that their unemployment plight has become a political game in which councillors and other politicians use to campaign for office. They are accused of using the EPWP to appease the electorate. For example, Donovan, aged 28 years, from Veregenog Township, who graduated with a National Certificate in Business Practice Level 4 from a college in Kimberley and has been unemployed for two years he said:

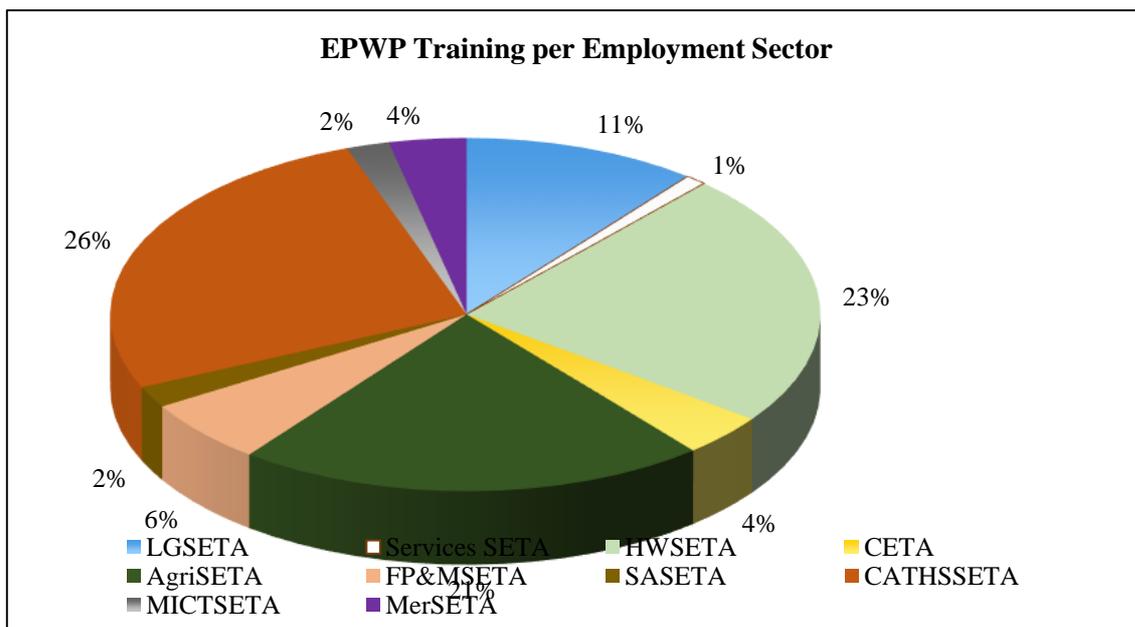
our councillor only comes to us when he is campaigning, and they help us join EPWP. That is the only time he talks to us about our problem of unemployment once elections are over, we do not see him ever again (Donovan, Interview, Kimberley, 26 September 2020).

Donovan said those who bother politicians about work are always pushed to EPWP employment. He thinks they do not have any other alternative. Donovan has a matric certificate and was able to go to college but has not been able to get employment since completing his qualification. He ended up joining the EPWP where he works on a construction project. The EPWP was the only opportunity available for him, so he had to take it.

4.5.3 Skills development in EPWP

The programme is expected to skill or re-skill its participants but there is no prioritisation of women and youth in skills development as one would have expected. The skills development initiatives offer accredited and non-accredited training. Accredited training is rolled out across all EPWP sectors and it is expected to link to the economic sectors. As shown in Figure 4.7 the programme has skilled people in different economic sectors. Of the participants trained, 23% received training in HWSETA qualifications, 21% AgriSETA, 26% CathSSETA while Services SETA and SASETA contributed the least at 1% and 2% of skills development interventions respectively.

Figure 4.8 EPWP skills development per employment sector



Source: EPWPRS, 2018

The scope of EPWP skills development according to economic sectors is very wide. As shown above, the EPWP participants received training from about 10 employment sectors. Sector training was in skills that included welding, electricity, boiler making, motor mechanics, plant production, broadcast engineering, general

forestry, culture site guide, construction road works, Thogomelo Psychosocial Support Community Caregivers, building and civil patrol security, landscaping, pharmacist assistants, cook convenience, community house building and others (EPWPRS, 2018). This means there is flexibility in skills development because it covers several employment sectors and therefore offering the participants a range of options.

Funded through the National Skills Fund (NSF), skills development is also about quantity and not quality of training. There is a bias towards short training programmes consisting of a few credits instead of offering full qualifications. One EPWP official criticised this saying:

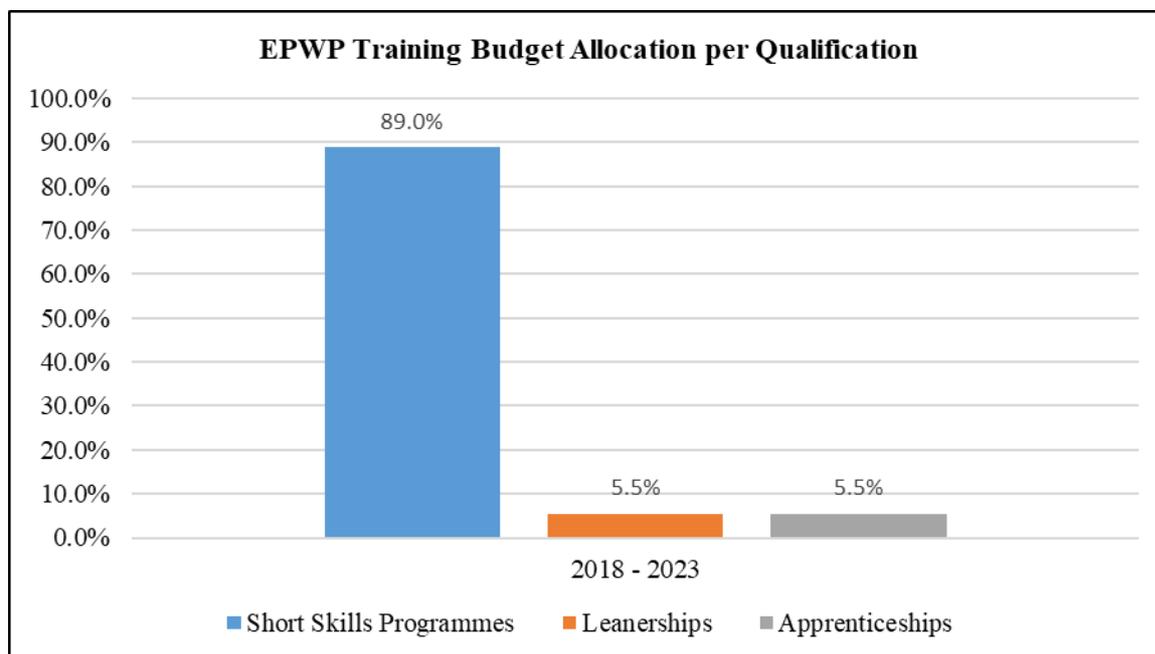
the NSF resources limit the programme because the MoA already comes with pre-determined qualifications binding the programme for a period of five (5) years. There is no innovativeness in the implementation of skills we have to work with what is available (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

This was supported by another EPWP official who said:

it is difficult to rely on another department to fund such an important part of the programme. Department of Public Works and Infrastructure should request own funding from National Treasury so that the skills development component is intensified we no longer want to keep on recycling same participants in EPWP projects, people should exit to full time work (Mr Mdunge, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

Figure 4.9 shows the 2018-2023 allocation of resources per qualification for the programme. As shown below, 89% of NSF budget was allocated to short skills programmes and the remainder was split between learnerships and artisan programmes.

Figure 4.9 Allocation of EPWP training budget per qualification



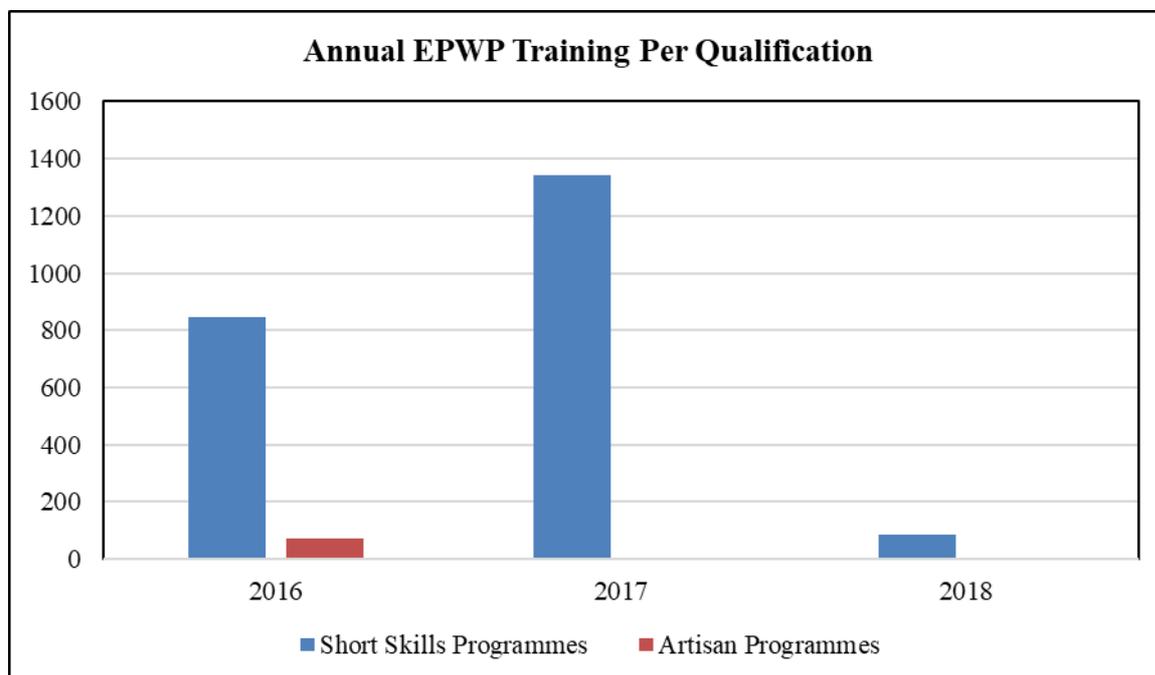
Source: EPWPRS, 2018

This was confirmed by EPWP participants who took part in the surveys, with 46.1% of the respondents indicating that they had gone through unaccredited training in the form of a few hours' or days' workshop. Meanwhile, 50.8% said that they had received a short skills programme training and 3.1% said they have been able to attend a learnership. Training resources are limited, and the programme tends to focus on short skills programmes in order to maximise reach among participants.

Employment in industry requires full qualifications and experience, yet the EPWP has continued to offer mainly part qualifications. Skills development mainly focuses on skilling people so that they can perform their duties on the programme. This was supported by one EPWP official who said:

We spend more resources on short skills programmes because full qualifications are expensive, so we train people to be able to perform their duties as required by the project (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

Figure 4.10 Annual EPWP skills development per qualification



Source: EPWPRS, 2018

As shown Figure 4.10, between 2016 and 2018, mainly skills programme training sessions were offered, with only 72 people benefiting from the artisan programmes in 2016. A total of 2,274 EPWP participants were trained in short skills programmes. There were no learnerships in the three-year period. Full qualifications are rarely offered by the programme despite skills mismatch in the country.

Public bodies rely on the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to provide resources for skills development, thus, neglecting their duty to implement skills development programmes. One of the reasons given for this is scarcity of resources, essentially making the skills development neglected, with some project implementers completely overlooking it. One of the project officials alluded to budget challenges, stating that:

there is little or no training that we provide ...we have never budgeted for it because resources are not sufficient. This forces us to concentrate on the implementation of projects, which takes priority over everything else (Mrs Tims, Interview, Kuruman, 12 October 2020).

Skills development in EPWP was pegged at less than 1% of the targeted employment opportunities throughout the five years of Phase 3 of the EPWP (EPWPRS, 2018). This is very little training achieved compared to the skills needs in the country. The programme is expected to enhance skills development, so that at the end of the project, participants can get full-time employment (*Mail and Guardian*, 2019). The programme acknowledges that it is not possible to train all the EPWP participants due to limited funding and therefore, the EPWP should look into strengthening relations with private sector in order to solicit funding as well as training support (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2019; South African Cities Network, 2016). Without training, the unskilled or semi-skilled are unable to successfully join the active labour market.

4.6 Chapter Summary

South Africa, like other countries that have gone through a crisis, adopted the EPWP to complement economic policies in responding to the country's structural unemployment challenge. The chapter outlined that the key strategies of supporting economic policies in the creation of employment are (1) creation of government assets and provision of services, in the process creating temporary employment through four different sectors; (2) skills development which includes technical and soft skills; and (3) entrepreneurship support. This chapter argued that firstly, EPWP was introduced in South Africa as a strategy to rebuild (human capacity and infrastructure) at the end of the country's repressive laws.

Secondly, the country's crisis is gendered and age-related, calling then for a complex response strategy. The discussion in this chapter presented three key issues, namely, that the EPWP is a phased programme that is expected to provide temporary relief to the unemployment pool deliberately created by apartheid-era laws with special focus on women and youth. The programme sought to do this through provision of income, skills and employment, with the aim to exit some participants into full-time employment or the labour market. However, the numbers of women and

youth benefiting from the programme are very low due to lack of policy compliance by implementing public bodies. Thirdly, the programme has not responded adequately to the skilling or re-skilling of women and youth because (i) there is lack of policy guidance in targeting these groupings so implementation is left at the discretion of the public body (ii) skills development is very low on the programme due to budget constraints and greater emphasis is placed on short skills. The next chapter analyses how the EPWP has responded to the structural unemployment challenge among women and youth in the country.

CHAPTER 5 EPWP AND SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUCTURAL UNEMPLOYMENT

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the manner in which the EPWP has responded to the structural unemployment challenges faced by women and youth in South Africa. In quarter one (1) of 2020, statistics showed that unemployment of these groups stood at a staggering 32% for women and over 50% youth compared to 28% older men (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The surge in unemployment among women and youth lays bare the policy failures that have unintentionally promoted systematic exclusion of vulnerable groups from the labour market (ILO, 2017, 2018). Economic growth has long been identified in macroeconomic thinking as a driver for employment, and has also been considered as a silver bullet for responding to cyclical unemployment (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016; McCord & Borat, 2003). When periods of cyclical unemployment persist, unemployment becomes more structural in nature, such as was the case in Western Europe after the mid-1970s and in Finland since 2009, (Alatalo *et al.*, 2015; Lindbeck, 1999). In such circumstances countries are left in a policy dilemma and a more direct or interventionist approach is needed to solve the scourge of unemployment.

Experience from countries that have dealt with structural unemployment recommends active labour market policies such as tax benefits, transfer programmes, legislation that protects jobs, education and training, and curbing the spectre of unionised power (Gersing, 1997; Lindbeck, 1999; Meth 2011). As discussed in Chapter 1, democratic South Africa has responded to growing structural unemployment with a number of policy⁴² prescripts, which have focused on growing the economy as a key response (Ferreira & Rossouw, 2016). Evidence, however,

⁴² Reconstruction Development Program (RDP) of 1994, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsGISA) of 2006, Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) of 2009, New Growth Path (NGP) of 2010, the National Skills Development Strategy of 2005 and the National Development Plan (NDP) of 2012.

shows that growing the economy is more effective in instances where a country seeks to address cyclical unemployment. In the South African case, an intervention which focuses on the economy alone is not sufficient to address the conundrum because unemployment is structural. The EPWP was introduced as a short to medium-term measure, initially as a PWP in 1996, and later expanded to a PEP in 2004, to cushion the poor and unskilled but it has never been defined as an active labour market policy (Department of Public Works, 1997; Mail and Guardian, 2004; Meth, 2011; Phillip, 2013a; South African Cities Network, 2016).

The EPWP is part of the government's broader policy interventions to cushion the poor and unemployed against the growing structural unemployment challenge. It is a strategic intervention necessitated by the need to address the injustices of the past, with a focus on women, youth and people living with disabilities (Department of Public Works, 2009). Linked to the NDP⁴³, during Phase Three (3) of implementation the programme aimed to provide social protection, create assets and employment opportunities (Department of Public Works, 2013). This has resulted in growth of the programme financially, in the number of targeted employment opportunities and in its scope.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 highlighted the prevalence of these programmes throughout the world, including in countries such as East Germany, USA, Argentina and others, where they have been used on a short-term basis as crisis relief programmes. Literature also suggests that these programmes have been commonly implemented in countries like India, Ethiopia and South Africa where they have been used to tackle long term challenges like poverty, food insecurity and unemployment (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). The common element in these programmes is the emphasis on government intervention through policy during a crisis. According to the literature, the design behind the divergent programmes differs in the role that the programme is expected to play in the labour market. These programmes have been

⁴³ Where its employment creation and social protection roles were incorporated in Chapters 3 and 11, respectively of this strategic government document (National Planning Commission, 2012).

classified as having either an ‘active or passive element’⁴⁴ (European Commission, 2013).

Through an analysis of experiences lived by current or former EPWP participants, this chapter continues to explore the relationship between what is pronounced by programme policy and what obtains in practice within the EPWP. In pursuing this, the discussion below is divided into three sections. It commences with a review of the contribution of the EPWP to employment creation. This section interrogates how the programme has contributed to easing the unemployment challenge through creation of temporary employment opportunities. The subsequent section discusses the contribution made by the EPWP to the labour market through labour supply. The chapter then concludes with a discussion on the labour market rebound of EPWP participants.

5.2 Employment in EPWP

Gehrke and Hartwig (2015), affirm that PEPs or PWP are programmes used to provide temporary employment when there is a crisis. This has been observed in India where the MGNREA provided work for 53 million households between 2009 and 2010, and in Ethiopia where the PSNP employed 7 million people (Hodinott *et al.*, 2012; Mishra, 2011). South Africa can be considered to be in crisis, with an estimated 32.6% unemployment rate in quarter one (1) of 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). This section therefore reviews the extent to which the programme has responded to the unemployment puzzle in the country through much-needed relief. Joblessness, especially among women and youth, complicates the unemployment crisis in the country. The EPWP has responded by setting a quota of 55% for women and youth employment in its projects (Department of Public Works, 2019).

⁴⁴ “In some cases, the emphasis is on the active element in that there is a clear aim for work experience to provide a springboard to regular employment, whilst in others the focus is more on the passive element and the work experience is largely symbolic and is used as a means of maintaining eligibility to income support (workfare)” (European Commission, 2013:6).

5.2.1 The EPWP work environment

Participation in employment happens in a particular environment, which determines the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of those involved. As one of the participants noted,

one spends most of the time at work and the work environment is a significant factor in how we view and do our work (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020).

The EPWP complies with the country's labour laws. This was confirmed by 94.5% of EPWP participants who responded to the surveys, while 5.5% said they found the environment not conducive. Some participants had access to the protective clothing required to do their work as prescribed by the labour laws in the country. This was confirmed by 75% of the EPWP participants who responded to the survey questionnaire, while 25% said they had no access to protective clothing. Various economic sectors have different requirements that employers and employees must abide by. Such requirements are set out in legislation such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act Number 85 of 1993⁴⁵, Compensation for Injuries and Diseases Act Number 130 of 1993⁴⁶ and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act Number 75 of 1997⁴⁷ (Government Gazette, 2002; Tshoose, 2011).

The programme also complies with the employment requirement that workers should enter into an employment contract with their employers, with 100% of the EPWP participants who took part in the surveys indicating that they had an employment contract signed with their employers.

⁴⁵ "to provide for health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of person in connection with the use of plant and machinery; the protection of persons other than persons at work against hazards to health and safety arising out of or in connection with the activities of persons at work; to establish an advisory council for occupational health and safety; and to provide for matters connected therewith" (Government Gazette, 1993a:2).

⁴⁶ "To provide compensation for disablement caused by occupational injuries or diseases sustained or contracted by employees in the course of their employment, or for death resulting from injuries or diseases; and to provide for matters connected therewith" (Government Gazette, 1993b)

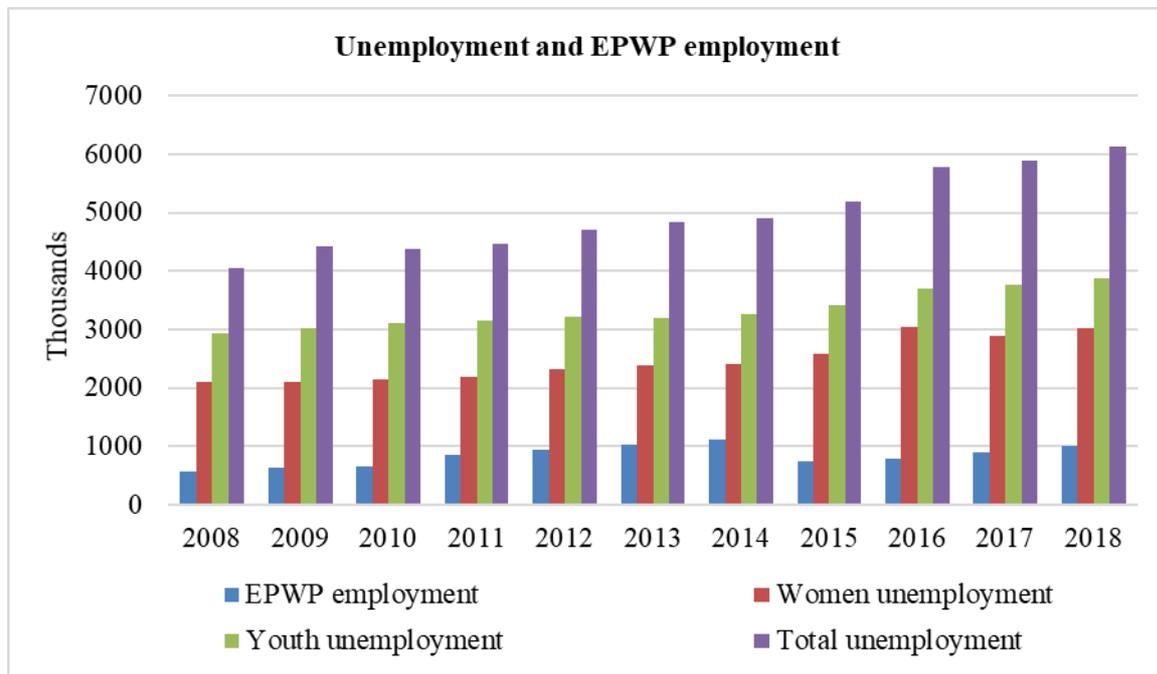
⁴⁷ Stipulates the rights to fair labour practices (Government Gazette, 2002).

5.2.2 The EPWP employment and unemployment in South Africa

As explained in Chapter 1, South Africa suffers from structural unemployment, which means those without skills need employment alternatives. There are not many employment opportunities so the EPWP has become what Meth, (2011) termed '*an employer of last resort*'. The unskilled or semi-skilled have two options: either take up EPWP work or remain unemployed. Efforts to rein in structural unemployment in South Africa have yielded discouraging results. Government continues to emphasise creation of EPWP employment as a complement to efforts by labour absorption institutions and job creation by the private sector (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019). The programme is perceived and understood as a temporary relief to the unemployment challenge. Questions abound on the extent to which the programme has managed to provide this relief. The emphasis on creation of temporary jobs should automatically mean that women and youth get employment.

However, reports on programme performance show that the number of EPWP employment opportunities is very low compared to employment required by the unemployed in the country. As shown in Figure 5.1, unemployment is very high in South Africa.

Figure 5.1 EPWP employment and unemployment



Source: Statistics South Africa, 2020 and EPWPRS various reports

Figure 5.1 shows that in 2008, the country had over 4 million unemployed people, and in just over 10 years, unemployment shot up by 50% to 6.1 million people in 2018. These numbers reflect the official definition of unemployment, meaning that in the broad definition, the number of unemployed people is substantially much more than what is reflected. Employment opportunities created by the EPWP are insignificant compared to the unemployment levels in the country. The EPWP created 570,019 jobs in 2008 compared to over 4 million people who required employment in the same year. The programme was able to employ about 14% of unemployed people in 2008; therefore, 86% of the unemployed remained without jobs either on the active labour market or within the ambit of the EPWP.

The gap between the number of jobs created by the EPWP and the levels of unemployment is too wide; hence, there have been calls to expand the programme in order to absorb more jobless people (Altman & Hemson, 2007; Meth, 2011). The need to expand the programme was also echoed from within the programme. An EPWP official emphasised the need to:

table a policy framework in parliament that makes it compulsory for public sector projects to have EPWP component (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020).

The call for significantly expanding of the programme to absorb more people has also attracted political attention and was tabled for debate in Parliament on 14 February 2019. It was suggested, during the debate, that the programme should roll out large infrastructure projects that could then absorb the unemployed (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019). This comes as no surprise as the unemployment question has become a major policy issue, and the government is hard pressed to create more jobs. The programme has not been able to solve the country's unemployment question, even though employment creation was a central objective for its launch. As shown in Figure 5.1, the EPWP has not been able to absorb even a quarter of the unemployed. The EPWP employment levels have ranged between 14% and 22% throughout its implementation. The 4.5 million jobs target for Phase Two (2) or 6 million jobs target for Phase Three (3), which are for the full five-year period of each phase (Department of Public Works, 2019) is equivalent to all the jobs required in the country annually.

Even then, the programme has provided some relief and become an employment avenue for many in society. However, opportunities in the programme are limited and the programme does not have the capacity to absorb most people in need of such employment. The study showed that EPWP participants felt the pressure to remain working on the programme because unemployment is very high, especially for the unskilled who find it difficult to get work elsewhere. For example, Nolwazi, a 31-year-old woman from Gamothibi village, who has never had a permanent job in her life and is currently working in a community garden with eight other people from her village sees the EPWP as a welcome relief from her unemployment plight. She said that she has an incomplete matric certificate and the EPWP is the only employer in her village. She, however, complains that EPWP opportunities are limited as only a few people can work on the programme at each specific time.

When other people apply through the NPO office that is responsible for implementing the programme in her village in Kuruman, they are usually told that there is not enough budget to take on new participants. They are advised to wait for the following year as the budget would be increased. She said there are two women who joined her group in 2018 after waiting for three years to be included among EPWP participants. While they were waiting for the purported budget increase, they had no work to do since there are no 'skrops' (part time jobs) in the village. She said people are frustrated in her village because there is nothing else to do besides the EPWP, but space in the programme is limited.

This case illustrates the importance of expanding the programme and the significance of the Parliamentary debate on it. Like many developing country governments, the Government of South Africa is a major employer. Ordinary citizens recognise the importance of government as an employer and, thus, EPWP:

Programmes like the EPWP are key to fulfilling the government's promise to create employment, and this can be done through increased budgetary support to the programme to facilitate expansion (Mr Adams, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

The EPWP employment levels remain very low, despite the programme being touted on various platforms as a programme that will bring temporary relief to the unemployed in the country. This programme is too small to provide the requisite relief to the unemployed in the country. The projected job opportunities are hardly sufficient to employ 1.2 million of the unemployed in the Eastern Cape province alone or absorb the over 2 million women or 2.9 million youth who were unemployed according to estimates from the fourth quarter of 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). This implies that government has not succeeded in providing the much need relief to youth and women through the programme.

The views shared by EPWP officials Mr Pietersen and Mr Adams puts two (2) issues on the table. The first one is making it compulsory for all government projects to be implemented through the programme for the former and increasing budgets by the

latter. Mr Pietersen feels that the number of jobs could be maximised within the budget resources available, that is, create more work than the programme is targeting now. In Mr Pietersen's view government can create more employment opportunities for the unemployed using the resources available. The government cannot afford to allocate more resources given the current financial constraints in the country with debt projected to rise to 71.6% of GDP in 2022/23 financial year and the urgent need for government to reign in this situation (National Treasury, 2020). Mr Adams' view is not possible so the programme can only afford to expand within the current budget.

5.3 Employment in EPWP

Unlike PEPs in other countries, the EPWP has been able to bring a variety in the mixture of activities that the participants can do. This was supported by one EPWP official who said:

This programme is actually seen as the best for being able to bring together different sectors to expand on activities unlike other programmes throughout the world. However, it has failed to maximize creation of employment. To make matters worse, it has not been able to create activities that are attractive to youth (Mr Mdunge, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

As a result, it is the best programme in the perceptions of this official. However, it is criticised for its failure to attract young people who are the most affected by unemployment.

5.3.1 Employment of Youth in EPWP

Young people who have failed to make it in the labour market resort to the programme for employment. For example, Kealagile, a 31-year-old male from Glenred Village who matriculated in 2008 but failed to get the required subjects to proceed to tertiary education and then went to the farms in the Western Cape Province to find work, is grateful for working on the programme. Since remuneration is very low on the farms and the work is seasonal, he reports that he found life

unbearable and therefore decided to go back home. Unfortunately, in his village there is no employment opportunities save for the EPWP projects. He said:

in 2012 I decided to go back home and I was employed as a supervisor on an EPWP project where I earn R2,500 per month (Kealagile, Interview, Glenred Village, 19 September 2020).

Within the programme he is responsible for supervising two groups of participants, one with nine (9) and the other with 10 people. His EPWP teams are allocated to various activities, with some working at two schools, a primary and a middle school in the village, where they assist with cleaning and clerical work. Some in the team are teaching in a local pre-school, while others are doing gardening, cleaning of community halls as well as providing support to the traditional council. According to Kealagile, unemployment is a challenge in his village and the unskilled rely on EPWP work. The only job opportunities in his village are government jobs in teaching, agricultural extension services, nursing or within the police force in Bothitong Village which is about 15 km away. The fortunate ones get work in Kuruman, about 70km from his home. The EPWP employment is necessary in these areas to cushion the poor and unemployed from the adversity of joblessness.

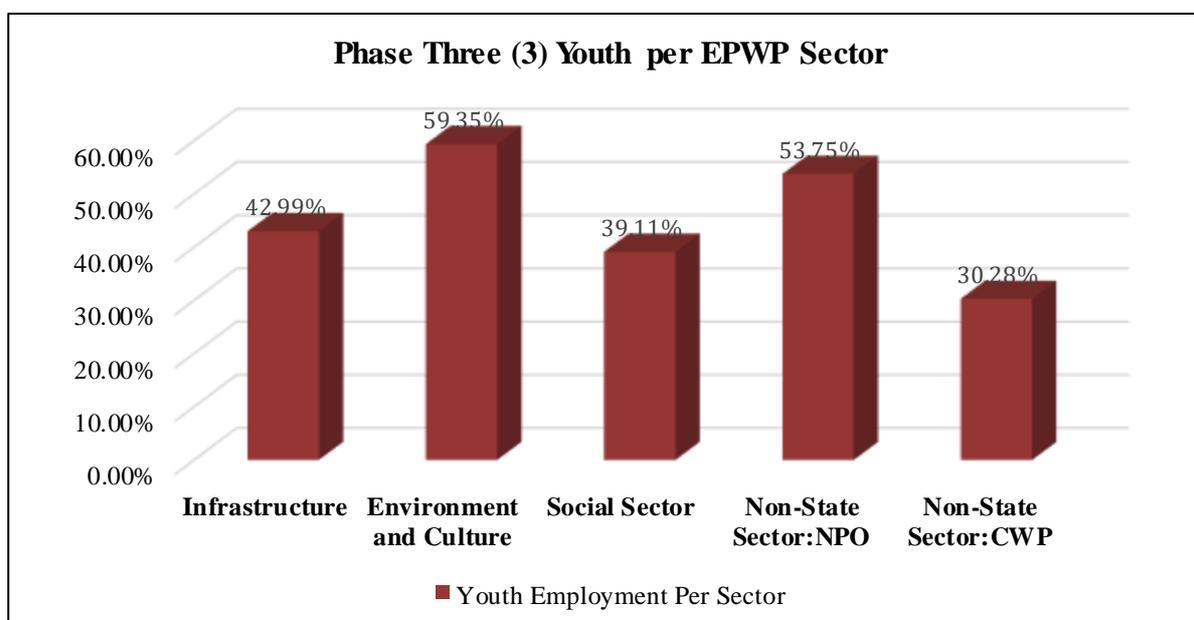
Despite this, the programme has failed to create activities that are attractive to young people. Young people view EPWP work as degrading according to Mercy's observation. Mercy is a 34-year-old woman who is a supervisor on an EPWP project in Veregenoenrg Township. She has 12 EPWP workers who report directly to her. They are responsible for cleaning of a local school and community hall. She works five days per week, but her teams work for two days a week each. When she started in the EPWP in 2012 there were some young people in her group, but they have since dropped out because they want something better. Mercy said:

they (referring to youth) take it as old people's job...the ones we started with resigned and looked for other jobs (Mercy, Interview, Kimberley, 24 October 2020).

The EPWP provides employment but some young people feel that the work done on the programme is not decent enough for them.

An analysis of the 2018 reports show that, within sectors, certain implementing public bodies or sub-programmes struggled to meet the 55% quota for employment of youth in their projects. The local government sphere is the largest contributor to this failure. For example, some public bodies were the worst with municipalities such as Danhauser at 15.9%, Mafube at 21%, uMzimkhulu at 36.9%, Blouberg at 31.9%, Greater Tzaneen at 36.7%, Moses Kotane at 29.4% and Madibeng at 36.4% in 2018 (EPWPRS, 2019). Some EPWP sectors are able to absorb young people better than others. As shown in Figure 5.2, the CWP in the non-state sector was the lowest employer of youth in 2018 at 30.28%, followed by the social sector at 39.11%.

Figure 5.2 Youth absorption per EPWP sector



Source: EPWPRS, 2019

However, the environment and culture sector seems to be doing better than other sectors in absorbing youths, but not all its sub-programmes were able to employ both women and youth. For example, the waste management sub-programme only managed to employ 49.3% youth, while the tourism and creative industries were very attractive to young people, employing 90% youth in 2018 (EPWPRS, 2019). The programme needs sub-programmes such as tourism and creative industries that are

able to absorb the youth in large numbers for the country to fully address their unemployment plight.

The infrastructure sector is not doing well too at 42.99% as shown in Figure 5.2. This is the sector where artisans, who hold skills which are in demand in the country, come from. Artisanal skills hold the greatest potential for transitioning young people to full-time employment with the period 2014 – 2024 declared the decade of artisans by the Department of Higher Education and Training (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014). This remains the biggest sector in the programme having had a target of 2,451,003 work opportunities in Phase Three (3) and allocated over R166 billion on projects (Department of Public Works 2019; EPWPRS, 2019).

Evidence, however, suggests that most of the jobs created would have been accessed by middle aged men because the sector has not figured out how to create activities for young people, despite their high levels of unemployment. However, one of the reasons given by EPWP officials who took part in the interviews is that in some cases, young people do not meet the minimum requirements for certain sub-programmes. The EPWP officials said: *“it’s not easy to get learners with Maths and Science”* (Mr Nzama, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020). This is one of the minimum requirements for participating in the NYS sub-programme, and without such credentials, then the NYS sub-programme cannot assist.

5.3.2 Employment of Women in EPWP

In spite of the critique raised here, the EPWP needs to be applauded for being able to increase employment of women in some of its sub-programmes. Women also appreciate EPWP work due to limited options. For example, Keneilwe, a 38-year-old woman from Greenpoint Township in Kimberley who currently lives in an RDP house with her three children, parents and four siblings feels the impact of high unemployment levels in the country. She appreciated working for the programme because there is no other option for her. She said:

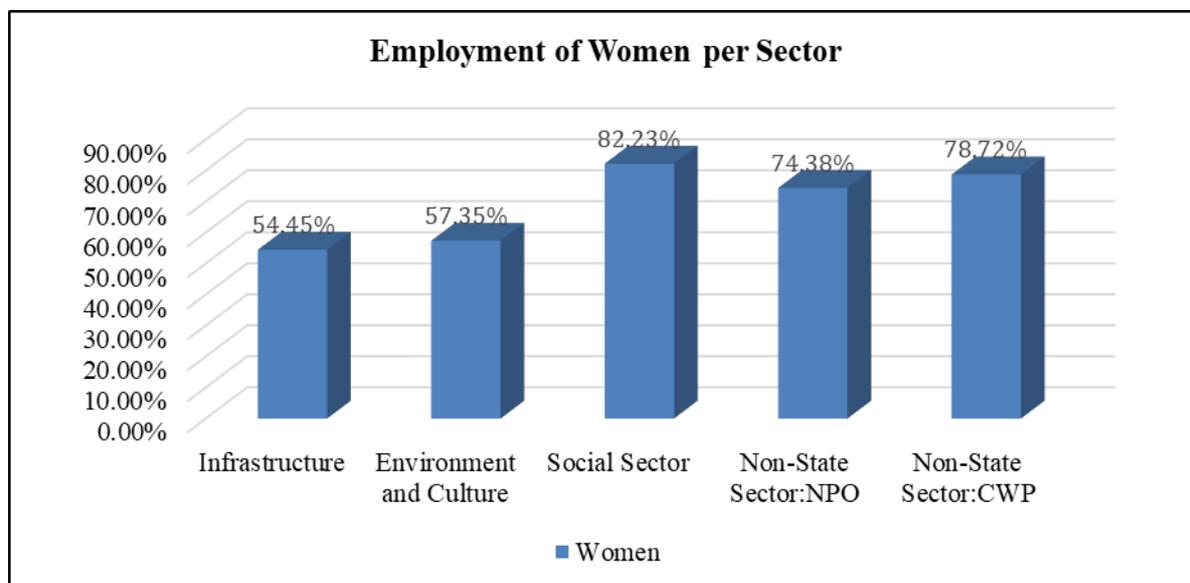
it is difficult to find work especially here in Kimberley...when they built the Diamond Pavilion Mall we were hoping we are going to get work there as shop assistants but some of us failed. Most girls in my area who dropped out of school have two or more children and end up doing this 'vat en sit' thing (meaning unmarried couples living together). Life is not normal here. We really need work (Keneilwe, Interview, Kimberley, 26 September 2020).

Keneilwe does not have any formal skill and the only work experience she had was working as a housekeeper at a hotel in Kimberley on a short-term contract. She had never had a permanent job in her life and was in need of permanent work. She had joined the EPWP about five years prior and worked on a street paving project in Greenpoint Township. She said:

I was happy when the Deputy President (meaning Mr. Ramaphosa who is now President of the country) visited our project in 2015, I thought we were going to get permanent jobs after seeing the good work we had done. That did not happen because we are still relying on EPWP for work (Keneilwe, Interview, Kimberley, 26 September 2020).

At the time of the interview, Keneilwe was now working on a street cleaning project in Kimberley. The programme has managed to create sub-programmes that are able to absorb women, with the Social sector employing women at 82%, the Non-state sector employing 78% women within the CWP, and NPO employing 74% women as shown in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 Employment of women per EPWP sector



Source: EPWPRS, 2019

One EPWP official supported this saying:

the introduction of the non-state sector in 2009 saw a rise in the employment of women on the programme. The general rise in the sub-programmes favouring women such as school nutrition, home based care and some sub-programmes from the NPO and CWP have promoted this growth (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

Some projects or sub-programmes have been able to absorb women better than others across sectors. For example, during Phase Three (3) of implementation, in the Infrastructure sector women employment was highest within the NYS at national government at 42% and lowest in the provincial roads programme at 3.3%, while in sub-programmes such the municipal infrastructure projects it was also low at 6.8% (EPWPRS, 2019). It is worrying that the infrastructure sector, the biggest sector on the programme, is still highly masculine. This sector is neither able to employ youth nor is it able to employ women, so construction work is still dominated by middle aged men.

Local government is also not doing well in the employment of women. Statistics from the EPWP reporting system show that in 2018, municipalities like Tokologo, Dannhauser, Kamiesburg, Mandeni and Msinga employed less than 20% of women in their projects (ibid). Other municipalities such as Mafube employed 21%, Blue Crane 26%, Kouga 26%, Steve Shwete 23%, Umsobomvu 20%, Magareng 21%, Umsobomvu 20%, Bergrivier 29.8%, Prince Albert 27.9%, Hessequa 28.7% and others employed between 20% and 30% (EPWPRS, 2019). One EPWP official from the municipality who took part in the interviews said:

we try to look for women but there is very little interest. Most of our projects are infrastructure projects so women find it difficult to do such kind work (Mrs Bhala, Interview, Kuruman, 3 October 2020).

Another EPWP official confirmed Mrs Bhala's view by saying:

Councillors try to recruit in the wards, but we do not get women so it's difficult to get to the required quota we may get 20% if we are lucky (Mr Mbana, Interview, Kuruman, 12 October 2020).

Mrs Bhala and Mr Mbana said lack of interested women explains their poor attraction, especially in the infrastructure sector or local government sphere. The programme has not been able to diversify enough in some of its spheres to attract women. This curtails its potential for absorbing more women, therefore depriving this group their fair share of employment as targeted.

5.4 Income transfer in the EPWP

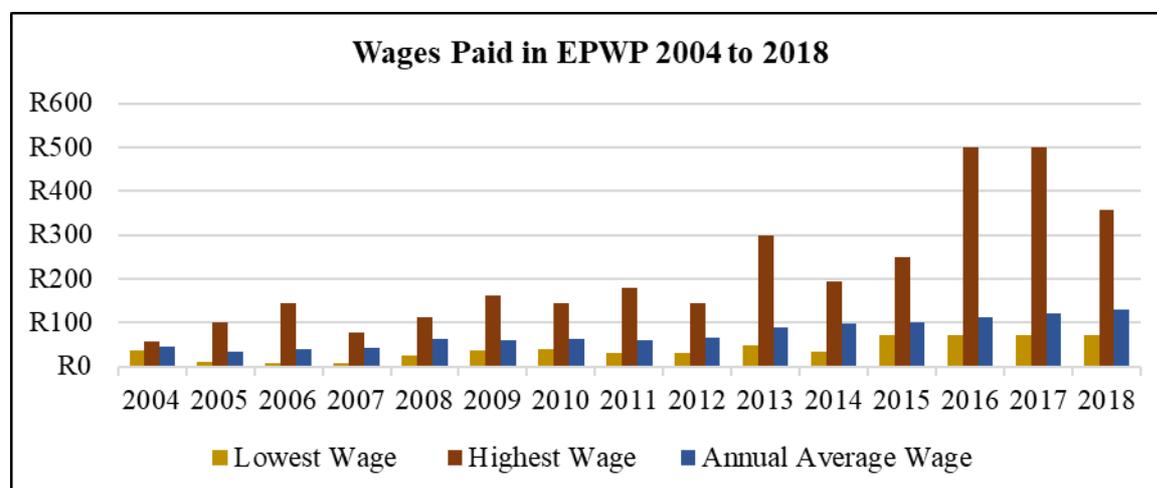
As discussed in Chapter 4, the EPWP aims to create employment opportunities for the poor and unemployed. Income transfer through payment of wages is one of the key aspects of the programme. Evidence from literature shows that these programmes pay people for work done, either in the form of food⁴⁸ or wages⁴⁹ (Dejardin, 1996; Mishra, 2011; Rodrigo, 2013). However, remuneration is below the

⁴⁸ Ethiopia

⁴⁹ East Germany, India and South Africa

national minimum wage, which itself is already criticised for being too low in South Africa. The most resilient criticism is that minimum wage earners struggle to survive. The situation for EPWP participants who all find themselves earning even below is the minimum wage is therefore a huge concern. In complicating matters, the annual average wage on the programme has increased over the years, with the lowest annual average wage pegged at R33 per day in 2005 and the highest was R131 per day in 2018, as shown in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4 Wages paid in EPWP



Source: Department of Public Works, 2018

As shown above having been initially pegged at R46 per day in 2004, phase one (1) saw a decline in the annual average wage to around R40 per day for four years until 2008 when it was increased by 45%. As phase two (2) began, the wage was maintained at 2008 levels and remained around R60 per day. In the last year of Phase 2 an increase of up to 22% was recorded, followed by a slight improvement into Phase 3.

The Infrastructure sector has consistently paid the most amongst the four sectors since the beginning of the programme. The Social sector was the lowest paying of the four sectors until 2009 when the newly introduced Non-state sector, which replaced the Economic sector, became the lowest paying of all sectors and remained

so until the end of phase three (3). Wages also varied according to activities undertaken by the participants. For example, in 2010, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs paid the infrastructure sector participants an average of R146 per day, while the Non-state sector participants earned R41.47 on average per day (Department of Public Works, 2010a). The wages in this case were determined by the sectors or activities performed by the EPWP participants. As the scope of the EPWP grew to include some projects that required specialised skills, the wage gap also widened as determined by the skills required.

Lihle, a 21-year-old woman from a family of five (3) in Glenred village, wrote her matric final exams in 2018 and failed to get a college entry pass. She then joined an EPWP project in 2019 where she works on an Environment and Culture Sector project. Lihle wishes she had the skills required to earn more. Her group is responsible for cutting trees considered bad for the environment. She works for five days in a week and her contract is only for six months. She earns R120 per day, which is equivalent to about R15 per hour. The wages are paid according to the tasks allocated within the project and so participants do not earn the same. Lihle says because she does not have any skills her wage is very little. People with skills in her group, such as chain saw operators, who are on the same project, earn R130 per day, while supervisors get R150 per day. She would like to earn a better wage one day and be able to support her family better.

Wages also differed across provinces, with Limpopo and the North West provinces being the lowest paying provinces in terms of average wages in rand value. Gauteng and the Western Cape Province were the highest paying provinces throughout the three phases. There are cases where some projects pay above the national average wage and others far below this. For example, in 2007, Limpopo province paid a daily average of R31.23 per person while the Western Cape had a daily average wage of R63.63 against a national average of R44 per day (Department of Public Works, 2007). Wage levels depend on individual countries. The payment of workers below minimum wage is prevalent in countries like Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Chile,

Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while countries like Botswana, India, the Philippines and Tanzania pay above minimum wage (Zimmermann, 2014). South Africa is one of the countries that pays below minimum wage as the programme is not supposed to displace permanent jobs but provide a cushion.

However, government has always faced scathing criticism due to this decision, with unions calling for a living wage. In 2017, COSATU led in the criticism of the government for the minimum wage set for EPWP participants and for the formal labour market. At the time, the national minimum hourly wage for farm workers was set at R18, R15 for domestic workers and R11 for EPWP workers while labour unions were advocating for a 12.5% increase in the national minimum wage (COSATU, 2020). There was a 27% difference between the EPWP minimum wage and the national minimum wage for domestic workers, the least paid of all workers in the country.

The Ministerial Determination determines the wages, but they fall short of EPWP participants' expectations. One of the EPWP participants, Thabo, a 32-year-old male from Gamothibi village, who joined EPWP in 2019 after he lost his job as a packer at a retail store in Kuruman and has not been able to find another job since then, said the EPWP does not pay enough. After several unsuccessful job applications to the mines in Khathu, Thabo gave up the job search and went back to his village to join the EPWP project where he works as a cleaner at a local community hall. As a married man, and father of three young children, he finds it hard to survive on the little money that he earns from the programme. Thabo said young people expect a living wage. He insisted that they cannot put so much effort for so little compensation. This is discouraging especially to young people who would rather stay at home than settle for this paltry remuneration.

In the evaluation of the EPWP, Hlatshwayo (2017) found that EPWP wages were too low and participants had to use this income for survival in a country where the cost of living is very high. The youth's argument for a living wage is that they live in the

same economy as other people who earn the minimum wage. The EPWP or PEPs are not supposed to displace full-time employment but to offer temporary employment, so payment below minimum wage is one of the distinguishing factors.

Some EPWP participants in the interviews said they supplement their EPWP income with other income generating activities because it cannot sustain them as a single stream. For example, Gadifele a 46-year-old mother of four (4) minor children, from Roodepan Township, who is also a breadwinner was not happy with the wages paid by the programme. She said:

I do appreciate it because the money is covering some spaces. We do not have work here but it's not enough. I have a big family that depends on me (Gadifele, Interview, Kimberley, 24 October 2020).

A study by Hlatshwayo (2017) acknowledged that the EPWP wages enable people to survive because they supplement other government grants that they receive. He argues that while families may not be living above the poverty line from EPWP wages, when the two incomes are combined, they are better able to meet some of their needs even if they remain in poverty. This was supported by Gadifele who went on to say that she joined the EPWP after losing her husband who worked as a security guard at the North Cape Mall in Kimberley. She had had to move and live in with her mother who is a pensioner and two siblings who also work on an EPWP project. When asked about how she survives on her income, she said:

go thata (meaning it is hard) there is no money. I supplement my salary by selling Avon (cosmetics) and Tupperware (household containers) products. I have clients even in town, I visit their offices to sell my products (Gadifele, Interview, Kimberley, 24 October 2020).

Teachers in the local schools are her main clients. They usually buy on credit and pay when they get their salaries. She, however, complains that she has a lot of bad debtors as some clients take her products and do not pay her as agreed. She uses the money to supplement the EPWP wages. There are 11 people in her household, and she says that a lot of money is spent on groceries and electricity. Her children

help her to market her products, especially at school, by taking monthly catalogues to teachers. The extra income helps her to make ends meet.

5.5 EPWP's Labour Market Contribution: Reality or Rhetoric?

People employed on EPWP projects are expected to find their way into the formal labour market. A distinguishing factor of EPWP employment is that it is project-based and most projects are of short-term duration. The level of effort required across different projects varies, with some people having much heavier workloads compared to others (Hlatshwayo, 2017). Some studies have found that PEPs or PWP's impact the labour market in various ways. For instance, they impact wages but have no discernible impact on unemployment. These programmes also affect conditions of employment or labour standards, and crowd-out private sector employment (Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015; Ituriza, 2008; Kostzer, 2008). Evidence also shows that programme effects vary in the different countries implementing these programmes. The next section analyses the effects of the programme on the labour market in the country by discussing the quality of labour and the displacement effect of EPWP participants.

5.5.1 Quality of labour

The unemployment landscape in South Africa can be analysed according to age, race, gender and location, leading to classification in six categories identified by McCord & Bhorat, (2003) as follows:

- i. unemployed youth, which is the largest group;
- ii. unemployed people located in the rural areas who were deprived of proper education;
- iii. unemployed people located in the urban areas who were also deprived education;

- iv. unemployed people with experience and education;
- v. unemployed people who have never worked;
- vi. highly educated unemployed people.

This study proposes a seventh category, namely, unemployed women. Women unemployment is a widely debated issue in politics, media and the academic arena, with growing voices of women's rights organizations and activists calling for the inclusion of women in employment and economic participation (Department of Women and People with Disabilities, 2019; UN Women, 1995). Of the different categories of unemployed people listed above, the EPWP responds to the challenges of categories i, ii, iii, v and vii. The structural unemployment challenge in South Africa, characterised by skills mismatch from demand side by employers and education supply side necessitates a policy response that focuses on addressing the needs of the different categories and alignment with labour market needs (McCord & Bhorat, 2003). The quality of labour is determined by time spent at work, work experience gained from projects, EPWP activities and mobility within projects.

Time spent at work

Some EPWP participants work for more days than others. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews supported this practice, saying:

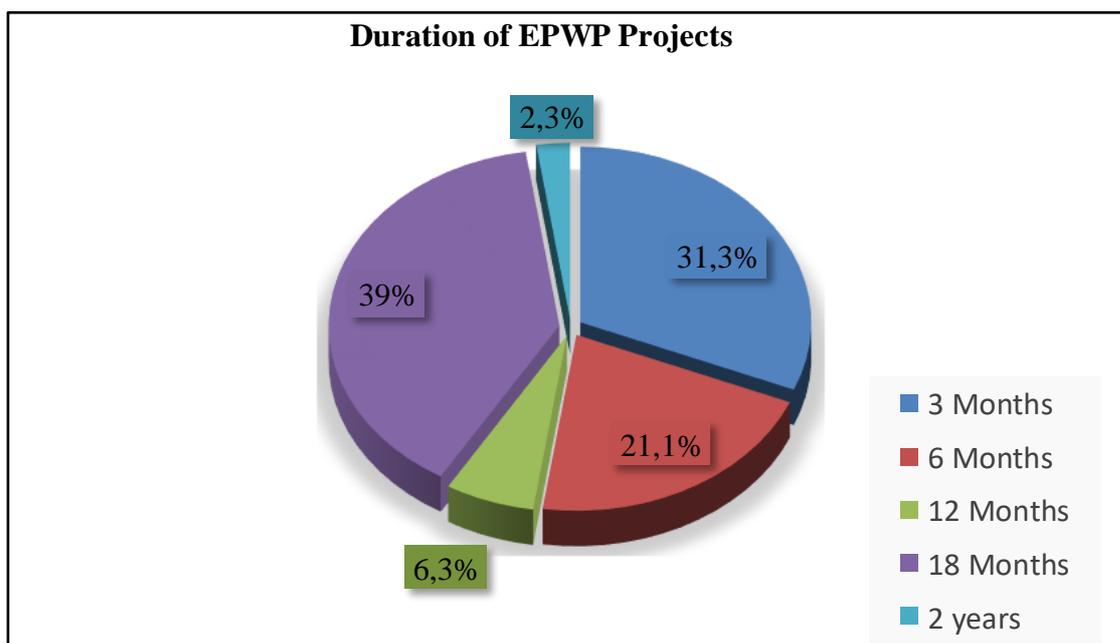
our work is project based so we can only engage people for the duration of a particular project. This is short-term and cannot be expected to improve people's lives or employment prospects (Mrs Bhala, Interview, Kuruman, 3 October 2020).

Evidence shows that the programme has been primarily concerned with maximising the number of people employed, which is currently very low, with quality of labour considered a secondary issue. There is a disjuncture between long-term strategy of the programme and its implementation. Another EPWP official supported Mrs Bhala's view saying:

we rotate participants in one financial year in our cleaning projects in order to maximize the number of people employed to meet the EPWP set target (Mr Adams, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

This was confirmed by EPWP participants from the field who indicated that duration of work varied from two days per week for 28% of the respondents to five days per week for 72% of the participants. There is no standard number of days spent on the EPWP projects. The EPWP sector and the nature of activities undertaken determine the number of days spent at work. The EPWP contracts are not standard due to the diverse nature of work. Some EPWP participants sign longer contracts than others, which means they spend more time at work than others. Data from surveys indicate varying contract durations as shown in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 Duration of EPWP projects



As shown above, the duration of contracts also varied, with over 31% of survey respondents indicating that they were on a 3-month project, about 21,1% on a 6-month project, 6.3% on a year-long project, while about 39% were engaged in 18-month long projects and only 2.3% were working on projects that were over two

years long. As shown in the diagram above, 8.6% of survey respondents work on longer term projects. Survey data shows that a very small percentage of EPWP participants are in medium-term projects and for those in short-term projects it may be difficult for an individual to learn the way things are done in that particular work environment within the short span of engagement. Figure 5.5 shows that a majority of EPWP projects have a duration of between three to six months as indicated by 52.4% of the respondents.

A total of 47% of respondents indicated that they were on a 12 month contract or longer. The number of days spent on employment also varied between two (2) and five (5) days per week. Despite being on a 12-month or longer contract, time spent at work may not be sufficient to ensure the transfer of skills that culminates in the confidence to pursue a career in a certain field. This is very short-term employment when compared with the fact that probation in formal employment lasts between one month and one year, depending on the sector. Internship is also usually more than a year. Formal jobs usually require more than one year of employment as experience for entry level jobs so somebody with three months or less work experience would either be on probation in some sectors or would be deemed to have just completed probation. As a result, participants struggle extremely hard to find jobs because they would not have gained enough working experience that is required by the labour market. When employed, such participants would require further training by the employer and employers do not have time no resources to do so.

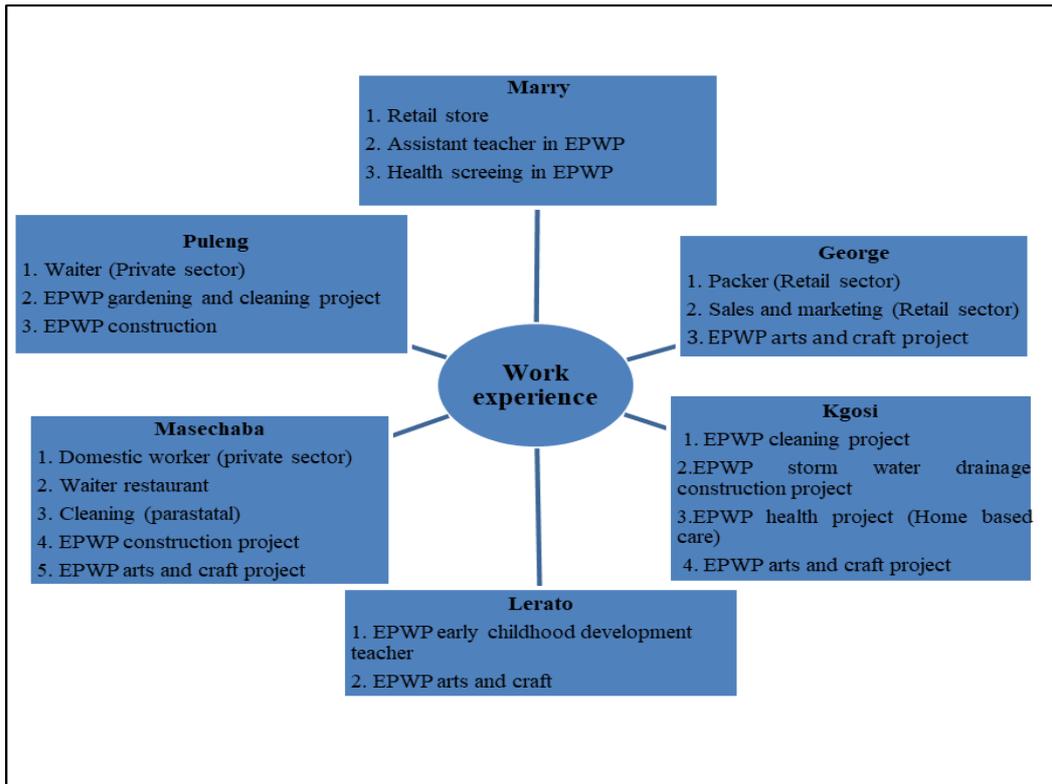
Work experience

Quality of labour takes into consideration the type of work experience that EPWP participants gain from the programme, which is also critical if they are to be gainfully employed. The EPWP participants are trained as general labour across all trades. One EPWP official said:

our EPWP participants do everything. We give them any task that is available, all they want is to get a stipend (Mr Adams, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020).

Data from the EPWP participants indicate a certain trend in the work experience of EPWP workers as shown in Figure 5.6. They tend to have work experience that is so diverse that there is no discernible growth in the skills each of the components contribute to the participant.

Figure 5.6 EPWP participants work experience



The respondents cited in Figure 5.6 have work experience from either the EPWP and private sector or the EPWP only. Most EPWP participants have work experience from more than one sector of the EPWP. It is difficult to draw a career path, for example, for Kgosi from Greenpoint Township, who has more than three years' work experience from the EPWP only. In the three years that Kgosi has spent on the EPWP, he has worked in all four sectors of the programme. When he started working on the programme he was in an Environment and Culture Sector project responsible for street cleaning. In the same year, he dropped out of the cleaning project to join the Infrastructure sector, where he was involved in the construction of storm water drainages as a general labourer. This was a short-term, 6-month

contract. When this contract ended, he joined the home-based care project in the Social sector where he worked for a year. He again dropped out to join an arts and craft project in the Non-State sector.

Kgosi, therefore, has had short stints of work experience in unrelated activities. Cleaning could, as a foundation, be related to construction or home-based care work. This depends on the type of cleaning, but in Kgosi's case, he was picking litter from the street, which is not much of cleaning experience. From a cleaning project one could proceed to construction and continue to build a career as a general labourer. The options that Kgosi could then have would include learnerships or joining an artisan programme within the construction sector, depending on his high school grades. However, he added home-based care, as well as arts and craft, to his curriculum vitae, therefore leaving him with no clear career path. Kgosi's work history seriously impairs his chances of convincing a potential employer who is looking at his profile that he can do a particular job as he has not had extended experience in any particular sector or industry.

Another similar case is that of Masechaba from Roodepan Township who has more than five (5) years of work experience having worked in the private sector and on EPWP projects. She has worked as a domestic worker in the private sector, cleaner in a parastatal, waiter in a restaurant, involved in construction in the EPWP, and was now working for an arts and craft project in the EPWP. The first three (3) jobs are related, but she found herself in a construction project as well as an arts and craft project when she joined the programme, taking a totally different career direction altogether. This puts Masechaba in the same dilemma as Kgosi. These are typical cases of most EPWP participants, with some having worked in almost all sectors of the programme and therefore making it difficult to place them in any one sector of the economy.

The EPWP activities

Some sub-programmes in the EPWP are criticised for not adding value in the lives of the participants, for example, cleaning and greening projects by the Environment and Culture sector. Large numbers of participants are usually employed in sub-programmes such as litter picking, graveyard cleaning and other waste related activities. In the 2018/19 financial year, there was a total of 174 parks and beautification projects implemented at provincial and national levels, spending R1.3 billion and employing 7,855 people (62.8% youth and 54.5% women) and 3,951 (56.1% youth and 48.6% women), respectively (EPWPRS, 2019). This is unfortunate given that women and youth are the most affected by unemployment levels in the country and most in need of full-time employment.

When large numbers of women and youth are employed in such projects it means their employment challenge remains unresolved. One EPWP participant criticised the programme for this anomaly because it only creates short-term employment opportunities at the expense of the future prospects of participants, the majority of whom are unemployed women and youth. She said: *“I would like people to stop cleaning and greening and do useful work such as needlework”* (Hilda, Interview, Kimberley, 10 October 2020).

Hilda, works in a needlework project under an NPO with 10 other women from her location. They pick plastic bags from the streets and clean this waste to make handbags, sun hats and mats. Her project also makes wool products. She is happy with the kind of work she is doing. Their products were once taken to an exhibition in Midrand for showcasing in February 2020, where some people attending the exhibition had a lot of interest in what they were making. She and other women from her group and from Club 2000 Township in Kimberley have enrolled for Clothing Manufacturing Level Two (2) training, a 45 credit course funded by the FP&MSETA through the Discretionary Grant Fund. Hilda said the training is meant to improve their stitching skills for the bags they make and for them to expand into other

products. She sees value in the kind of work that she does unlike when people are only picking litter.

Some EPWP sub-programmes fail to come up with activities that keep people engaged. This is according to one EPWP official who responded to the interviews who said:

at times they (referring to project implementers) do not know how to keep people busy, costing a project or calculation of labour intensity is not done properly. Some implementers also fail to come up with activities that are aligned to the Ministerial Determination that is, allowing people to work for the prescribed eight hours (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

There is underemployment in the EPWP because in some cases participants find themselves with nothing to do in the eight (8) hours allocated to do work. As a result, they have come to be known as people who go to the sites to loiter around. This perception also leads participants to doubt their capacity to progress to full-time employment because there is not much they would have gained as work experience. Another EPWP participant, Kealagile, a 31-year-old male from Glenred village, who is a supervisor in an EPWP project supported this view, saying:

people go there just to keep busy but they gain nothing. They sometimes got for months without farming inputs so end up going to the garden just to sign the register. Some gardens do not even have proper infrastructure and after planting goats and sheep destroys their plants (Kealagile, Interview, Glenred Village, 19 September 2020).

Kealagile supervises a group of eight (8) people who work in a school garden project where they plant vegetables that they give to the community. He says, simply because there are no employment opportunities in the community, participants joined the programme to keep themselves busy, but he is fully aware that there is nothing to gain with respect to finding work. He said that this group consists of three young people and five women in total. These are the people most affected by unemployment, but the projects they are involved in do not offer them an opportunity to enhance their chances of gaining full-time employment. Some projects do not provide the necessary tools for the participants to work as a result people end up

with nothing to do and only go to the sites to sign the attendance register so that they are paid.

This was supported by another EPWP official who said that at times they end up not doing work they would have done because of lack of resources to finish the task. An EPWP participant, Gadifele, who works on a waste picking project in the municipality in Roodepan Township said:

we sometimes run out of refuse bags to collect waste and when we get there we find that we have nothing to do because the bags to put waste we would have picked up are not there. At times the waste we would have collected is not picked up by the trucks during the weekend when children play, they throw it around and then we will have to pick up the same waste again the following week. This is really a waste of time (Gadifele, Interview, Kimberley, 24 October 2020).

According to Gadifele, Kimberley is very dirty despite having cleaners who are permanently employed by the municipality and those from the EPWP. She said management of waste collection is very poor, as a result even if litter is picked it lies in plastic bags in the streets and the municipal trucks take their time to pick it up. The synergy between the refuse management and work done by EPWP participants is therefore complicated by such travesty in coordination. People working on sites would not want to do work they would have done. This becomes a waste of resources and of people's time when they have to do tasks that they once did and completed more than once.

Mobility of EPWP participants

There is high mobility of EPWP participants between projects or sectors. One of the EPWP stakeholders said it was worrying that there is not enough stability in the programme for people to build proper working experience. He said, "*EPWP workers migrate from one EPWP project to the next looking for a better stipend*" (Mr Adams, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020). The case of Kgosi and other EPWP participants who have been able to work in different EPWP sectors within a short

space of time amply demonstrates that there is also a lot of movement between projects by EPWP participants. One person can spend a few months in construction then move to a home-based care project in a single year.

People drop out when they hear about another EPWP project which pays more because there is no standard salary in the EPWP, and people are predisposed to get better income. There is no system to monitor and control movement of people within projects or sub-programmes. This happens even within one financial year, with some EPWP workers moving to the next project before the end of their contracts. In the end, one participant can be reported by different projects or public bodies within one financial year. This movement prevents people from building systematic employment profiles in preparation to join the labour market.

5.5.2 The displacement or substitution effect

The EPWP workers have become low cost workers in government institutions, in the process displacing or substituting full-time workers. Programme implementers are criticised by labour unions and other stakeholders for using EPWP workers as permanent casual labour, in the process displacing full time jobs. For example, Annelia, a 33-year-old female from Glenred Village, who works on an EPWP project assisting at a local school as a receptionist and is also responsible for cleaning of staff rooms as well as the principal's office, expressed concern about this. She said she had been doing work that was supposed to be done by full-time staff for about two years. She works with three other people, two women and one male, who are all youth. Annelia earns R780 per month working two days a week.

Some EPWP participants in other parts of the country have turned to industrial action demanding that they be employed permanently in such positions. About 62% of EPWP participants from the field data indicated that they were working on a short-term project while 38% indicated that they were doing work that is supposed to be done by permanent staff. Some labour representatives have expressed their

disapproval of the practice on various media platforms. For example, one of the stakeholders said:

We understand that the Department of Infrastructure Development cannot hire every one of the 5,400 workers themselves. But you find EPWP workers at schools doing administration and cleaning the school yards. You find them under the Department of Health for example, doing maintenance and administration work, and even filling higher positions. This tells us there is a need for the workers. So why don't the departments take them on a permanent basis. Whoever is using the EPWP workers must take the responsibility for hiring them – this is the workers demand (Marxist Workers Party, 2019).

This position has been reiterated by many labour unions, among them SAMWU and COSATU. Labour unions have raised their disapproval of EPWP participants taking over some service delivery functions in government which are supposed to be undertaken by full-time staff. They have therefore called for a stop in this exploitative practice of using EPWP participants in key service delivery functions of government (Africa Newswire, 2015; COSATU, 2019). The political leadership has also called for an end to this practice by government institutions, with the National Assembly having reiterated this towards the end of Phase Three (3) during parliamentary debate on the EPWP (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2019). EPWP workers have staged protest action on several occasions demanding full-time employment. For example, EPWP participants who had been working on the same project for 12 years also called for none use of EPWP participants as permanent casuals. In one of the protests, the *Mail and Guardian Online* (2019b) reported:

for the past 12 years, about 150 people have swept the streets and cleared blocked drains in Uitenhage and Motherwell...But despite their long service, they are still casual workers on temporary contracts taking home R744 a month.

In one of its press briefings in 2015, SAMWU, also backed the call for permanent employment, denouncing the tendency by municipalities to employ EPWP participants in key service delivery functions (HRPulse, 2015). The practice of employing EPWP participants in jobs that are supposed to be manned by permanent staff members, yet on lower wages and without benefits, leads to the displacement

of permanent jobs by EPWP participants. This has been the case in some townships where cleaning, administration and other work that is supposed to be performed by permanent staff is actually executed by EPWP participants as a way by implementing public bodies to save financial resources.

5.6 Transition to Full-time Employment

The EPWP is seen as a preliminary step towards permanent employment, and by design, a lot of emphasis was placed on its contribution to the labour market in response to high levels of structural unemployment in the country (Department of Public Works, 1997; McCord, 2005; South African Cities Network, 2016). Due to the overwhelming structural unemployment in the country, the EPWP has been seen as a necessary strategy to bridge the gap between unemployment and employment. This general perception about the programme has served as a major attraction for the unemployed. The unemployed seeking full-time employment view the EPWP projects as a stepping stone or a temporary fulfilment in their desire to join the active labour market.

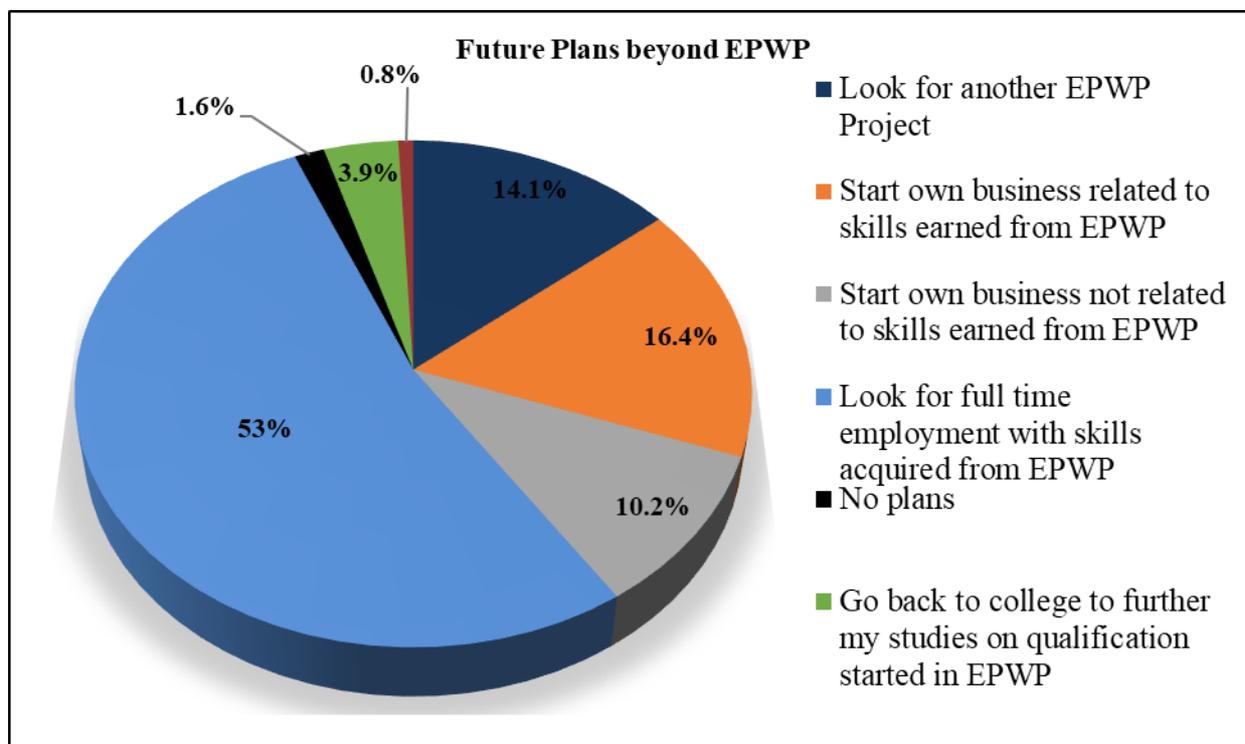
The unemployed view the programme as a platform where they could garner some skills and experience which they need to look for permanent employment (McCord, 2005). They wait for their chance for full-time employment while gaining experience and learning new skills on the programme. However, there have been mixed views about this assertion because it has proven not to be a clear cut solution. In some countries where PEPs or PWP have been implemented, participating in these programmes does not guarantee full-time employment rebound while other studies suggest that men, more than women, have a better chance of transitioning to full time employment on exit (del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Eichler & Lechner, 2002; Gerhke & Hartwig, 2015; Zepeda *et al.*, 2013). The question whether the same conclusion could be made about South Africa's EPWP since the country's challenge is not a short-term crisis but a permanent structural unemployment challenge which has dogged the state for quite a while. In essence, the South African case is a special

one because the crisis at hand is long-term, and it affects women and youth more than middle-aged men. This section discusses whether EPWP participants have been able to move from the unemployment pool to full-time employment.

5.6.1 Desire for full time employment

The EPWP participants expressed a strong desire of full-time employment. Nolwazi from Gamothibi village emphasised this saying: *“I really need a job. Whenever I travel to Kuruman I take all my certificates with me in case something comes up”*. She has not been able to find work or get a job interview since she finished school in 2008. The EPWP is the only work she has managed to get in the past five (5) years. She emphasised her need for a full-time job, and in her desperation to find work she carried her certificates around so that she does not miss out on any opportunity that may arise. The EPWP participants who responded to surveys indicated that they needed full-time employment. Of late, women have shown a strong desire for participating on the labour market, a shift from the old norm. Post-1994 the country has seen a 30% growth in women participation in the labour market, a rate almost twice that of men (McCord, 2003). This strong desire for full-time employment or a permanent source of income was expressed by 53% of women and youth who took part in the survey as shown below in Figure 5.7.

Figure 5.7 Future plans of EPWP participants



In addition, 26.6% of respondents said they wanted to start own businesses as self-employment. This means about 79% of women and youth working for the EPWP want full-time employment, either through full-time employment in the active labour market or self-employment. The EPWP participants are aware that their employment in EPWP projects is temporary, hence their desire for full-time jobs. The programme is a transitory intervention that is expected to help people gain skills and experience to move into full-time employment (Department of Public Works, 1997; Hlatshwayo, 2017; *Mail and Guardian Online*, 2004; McCord, 2005). The call for full-time jobs has been emphasised by EPWP participants on various platforms, including through marches across the country in cities like Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg, Pretoria and other areas, during which they have demanded permanent employment. Several memoranda have been handed to government at Union Buildings and other government institutions by EPWP participants demanding permanent jobs.

There have been some suggestions to promote full-time employment or permanent income in the programme. For example, there is a call to strengthen entrepreneurship activities which are viewed as another avenue of creating permanent income. One EPWP official said:

contractor or SMME development engagement of other Departments such as National Treasury to ensure there is appropriate prescripts or policy or regulation to support implementation of developmental programme (Mr Mdunge, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

The EPWP officials see the need to bring more resources to the EPWP participants so that they can benefit and get sustainable income. Participants meanwhile want permanent jobs, either through direct employment in the labour market or self-employment through entrepreneurship. In addition, the KwaZulu-Natal Province has called for a review of the funding model, saying:

a revision of the EPWP and of the funding sources that has been called for by the HSRC⁵⁰ which needs attention to be paid to monitoring the scheme as the impact varies across sub-sectors to ensure that public funds are (efficiently turned into jobs) (KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Planning Commission, 2018:46).

This has been emphasised also by other studies on EPWP. Essentially, the EPWP needs to get a permanent budget so that permanent jobs are created and government needs to play a role in this aspect because of its importance to society that cannot be a responsibility of the private sector (Hlatshwayo, 2017 Phillip, 2013a). People are in need of permanent or full-time employment therefore there are calls that government should not only wait for the private sector to play this role but to also make a contribution to it.

5.6.2 Access to full-time employment

Despite their huge desire for full-time employment, EPWP participants often do not qualify for full-time employment positions including those offered by the public bodies

⁵⁰ Human Science Research Council

that employ them in the programme. This was emphasised by one of the EPWP officials in the interviews who said: *“skills acquired and work experience by the EPWP participants is not what industry needs”* (Mr Nzama, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020). A critical issue dominating the present day South African labour market is the restructuring of the economy which brought growth in capital intensive industries with high mechanisation, rendering traditional skills held by the majority in the country redundant (McCord & Borat, 2003). The restructured economy rendered some skills that used to prop up the apartheid-era economy redundant, meaning that the labour pools that were created for the mines and farms could no longer be used in the post-apartheid era (Terreblanche, 2002).

At the dawn of democracy, the country had a skills deficit emanating from oppressive apartheid laws, the growth of labour market participation and the shift in women’s roles that saw a rise in their presence in the labour market (McCord, 2005; Terreblanche, 2002). However, the EPWP has not been able to make a significant contribution towards bridging this gap. The EPWP participants themselves are also aware that they have not earned competencies, skills or experience that could enable them to get full-time employment. For example, one EPWP participant in Port Elizabeth who has worked on a project for 12 years said that they do not qualify for jobs advertised by government (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2019).

EPWP participants also say they do not learn much from the duties allocated to them. As a result, they may have many years of work experience but with nothing of substance to show that was gained from those years. For example, Miranda, a 31-year-old woman from Glenred village who is a supervisor in one of the EPWP sites in her village, and had been responsible for 20 people in her group since 2012, said that she felt she had not learnt much from her work. Miranda’s team of participants clean at a local school and some work on a vegetable garden project. She monitors their activities and spends five days per week at work. She said:

I do not know how to do admin work. I am a manager (meaning EPWP supervisor) by name, I do not know how to do most of the things.... I am wasting my time I do not have

any experience here. I do not have a future if I leave I will start from the bottom.... It's like I am putting my effort for nothing (Miranda, Interview, Glenred Village, 19 September 2020)

Miranda feels that she has not learnt anything of substance in the eight years she had spent on the programme. She also felt the programme should give them an opportunity to grow in whatever they are doing. She said:

I would like to move to another position in the programme.... if one is a supervisor from 2012 till now then there is no growth (Miranda, Interview, Glenred Village, 19 September 2020).

EPWP workers see very little to no experience gained from the programme. Miranda did not find her work challenging enough to prepare her for work outside the programme. She was not confident with what she has learnt so far from the programme and felt the work experience she has gained would not help her get a job beyond the programme. Miranda felt like a person who has never worked and that when she eventually joins the labour market she would be like a new entrant. She felt the tasks that she was performing did not help her much and she sounded very frustrated. She saw herself as somebody without a future because all that she has been doing, according to her, was just a waste of time. As a woman and still in her youth, her situation is worrying because she falls within the two groups that are most affected by unemployment.

However, very few former EPWP participants who have gained relevant skills and experience from the EPWP have been fully integrated by the labour market. Some EPWP skills enable people to find work. For example, the programme once trained about 100 youth from the Northern Cape on artisan trades. One EPWP official who spoke about this training said:

In 2011, through the National Youth Service sub-programme the EPWP trained 100 young people together with the NECSA⁵¹ as a host employer for Northern Cape youth where funds were allocated for skills development. The programme developed skills in the following trades: boiler making 20, electricians 20, mechanical fitter 20, tuner 20 and

⁵¹ South African Nuclear Energy Corporation

welding 20 from different districts in the province of which 67 were male and 33 were female (Mr Nzama, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020).

In tracing these former EPWP participants, out of those who responded 47% said they are employed, 1.3% said they have started own business, 2% said they could not complete their qualifications and were unemployed. Of these 30% said they qualified but are still looking for permanent work. All along they have been getting short-term contracts. Of the employed artisans, some were working in the private sector, including at mines or with private contractors and parastatals in the Western Cape, Northern Cape, Gauteng and Mpumalanga provinces. The programme evidently trained people on skills that are required by the country. In sharing their labour market experiences these former EPWP participants indicated that it is possible to successfully earn permanent income if one acquires a required skill and work experience. One of the beneficiaries of this project, Thabiso who is now 38 years old from Galeshewe in Kimberley is a very grateful beneficiary from this training. He was able to get an electrical trade test certificate and is now working for a parastatal as an electrician in the Western Cape.

Some former participants have been able to venture into entrepreneurship after exiting from the programme. For example, one former participant, Okuhle, a 36-year-old male from Kimberley, who is now running his own company, said that the programme assisted him to get his electrical trade certificate. Okuhle now has a registered business which has been active since 2018. His business operates in the Northern Cape and North West where he does electrical work. The business is involved in government tendering and private work, and he said he is now able to wire a building from start to finish and issue a certificate of compliance. He owns a *bakkie*, some working tools and employs two people. Okuhle has managed to create employment for himself and for other people in the community. His case has proven that with the right skill one can successfully start own business after EPWP.

Another former EPWP participant who shared her labour market experience emphasised the need for work experience. Innocentia, a 31-year-old woman from

Veregenoerg Township in Kimberley, qualified as a fitter and machining artisan from the programme. She moved to Gauteng province after completing her artisan training in 2014 to look for greener pastures but has been struggling to get a job. The only work exposure she has is the time she spent on practical training as an artisan, but employers generally demand at least two (2) years' work experience at a minimum beyond training, which she does not have. She has been applying for work for the past three years and has not been able to get a full-time job. She relies on short-term contracts of a few months at a time, working under an employment agent. She feels that if she had spent more time on an EPWP project on completion of her training she would have been able to secure full-time employment. She believes that while she is being exploited by employment agents because she does not have an alternative, she needs to gain work experience for her to gain full-time employment.

Another former EPWP participants emphasised that the labour market does not absorb people with no skills. This was the case with James, a 36-year-old man from Roodepan, who was also enrolled to train as a boilermaker in the EPWP youth artisan programme in 2011, but could not qualify because he failed one subject which requires about R9,000 to redo. He wishes to get another opportunity to complete the course. James cannot afford to continue with the course on his own due to financial constraints. He wanted to be a boilermaker but now he is currently unemployed. A contract he had with a manufacturing company in Johannesburg ended in 2018, and now he is out of employment. What makes his situation worse is that he did not get his trade certificate for the EPWP artisan programme that he joined. James does not see any other way out of his unemployment quandary besides completing his qualification and attaining a red seal certificate. Without a job, he is back in Kimberley living with his parents. He realizes that he missed the opportunity to get his qualification while he had financial assistance and cannot afford it on his own. If James does not look for other means to complete the outstanding course it means the programme would have wasted resources.

There is emphasis that the programme needs to expand on the quantity of employment opportunities. However, there are also views on the quality of work because at the core, the programme has to help people to transition to full-time work. The programme is in a dilemma because the country has (1) high levels of unemployment which means there is a need to maximise temporary job creation to absorb a significant number of the unemployed people. (2) The country has structural unemployment meaning that for people to move to the active labour market, there is a need for the programme to improve the quality of labour. EPWP officials are at crossroads with regard to the matter because some are calling for the maximisation of recruitment of people through the programme at the same time others questioning the quality of jobs created due to their short duration, unclear job description and high mobility of participants between projects.

In addition, others are proposing improvement in quality through enhancing some supporting functions to ensure that people can transition to full-time employment. This means the EPWP has two (2) options of either concentrating on improving the quality of labour or maximising employment of the unemployed. The country needs the former in order to successfully fight the scourge of unemployment. Temporary employment alone keeps people in their current situation therefore cannot solve the country's long-term structural unemployment challenge. If the programme is to have an effect on structural unemployment focus needs to be on the quality of employment.

5.7 Chapter Summary

Drawing from the experiences of the impact of PEPs or PWP on crises, this chapter discussed the response of the EPWP to structural unemployment and its disproportionate impact on women and youth in South Africa. In so doing, it presented two key findings. Firstly, the study verified the programme's inability to provide relief to women and youth through temporary employment. The programme is too small to provide the much-needed relief to the unemployed, but there has been

an improvement in income transfer. Secondly, the study illustrated the shortcomings of the EPWP in contributing to the labour market. The chapter showed how the programme only adds poor quality labour and displaces full-time employment. The structural unemployment in South Africa is now entrenched and therefore cannot be addressed without taking into consideration the deep rootedness of the challenge and government's operational model. Responses to the unemployment challenge must necessarily account for the social dynamics of the country that accord women, men and youth different levels of access to opportunities.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrated that public bodies implementing EPWP in South Africa exert very little effort in directing this programme towards achieving temporary relief and labour market rebound by EPWP participants, thereby sabotaging pronouncements made at its launch in 2004. The approach by programme implementers is at a tangent from the undertaking by government that this programme would contribute to solving structural unemployment in the country. South Africa still lags behind the commitments it has made to emancipate women and youth. The EPWP participants, with the support of labour unions, have expressed their dissatisfaction with the broken promises on various platforms. The programme has settled in a comfort zone of *'the nature of PEPs'* which are short-term crisis relief programmes, notwithstanding that this is a conception not applicable in the local context because the country's challenges are long-term and require a different approach. The next chapter discusses findings on skills development for women and youth in the EPWP.

CHAPTER 6 BUILDING CAPACITY THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONDING TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS

“It’s cool to be a 21st century artisan” - Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014.

6.1 Introduction

The restructured economy in the post-apartheid era has left many citizens with traditional skills jobless in South Africa (McCord & Bhorat, 2003; Terreblanche, 2002). The shortage of skilled personnel is a subject of national concern, and the government has made it a policy priority. It is an area in which government tried to address the crises through an amendment to the Immigration Act⁵² in 2014. The aim in the amendment was designed to promote economic growth through employment of foreign labour, allowing entry of exceptional and scarce skills, increasing skilled labour and allowing exchange programmes within the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Government Gazette, 2014a). Net migration has also been beneficial in countries like Norway where migrants from Poland and Lithuania were allowed in after these countries joined the European Union in 2004. This move led to an increase in labour supply and enabled the growth of the country’s economy (Alatalo *et al.*, 2015).

South Africa’s challenge is similar to that in Estonia and Finland. In the former, skills mismatch resulting from the restructuring of the economy left many unemployed while in Finland, long term cyclical unemployment interfaced with structural economic changes that ultimately led to structural unemployment (ibid). Some countries that have been affected by structural unemployment have adopted policy measures that directly responded to the challenge through skills development. For

⁵² Immigration Amendment Act 3 of 2007-Government Notice 656 in Government Gazette 30599 dated 18 July 2007. Commencement date: 26 May 2014 and the Immigration Amendment Act 13 of 2011-Government Notice 690 in Government Gazette 34561 dated 26 August 2011. Commencement date: 26 May 2014 [Proc. Nos. R32, Gazette No. 37679].

example, Denmark introduced mandatory training and education, which was accompanied by strengthening of the education system and targeted at people who had been unemployed for two years, while Germany emphasised accessible apprenticeship training for the lowly educated (Alatalo *et al.*, 2015; Gersing, 1997).

On emergence from apartheid oppression, South Africa also introduced skills development through the EPWP, targeting those previously excluded by apartheid laws, as a strategy for creating a labour force for the country (Mail and Guardian, 2004). To drive this skills development, the government released a 'White Paper'⁵³ on post-school skills development, outlining strategies on how to develop skills in the country. In extension to this undertaking, the years 2014 to 2024 were declared the decade for artisan development, in line with the NDP (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014; Government Gazette, 2014b). This further emphasised the importance of the call for skills development by government and other key stakeholders.

This chapter presents findings from the analysis of skills development in the EPWP. It presents an analysis of the programme from a 'supply side' perspective, and discusses the provision of labour for employers. The literature cautions against expectations of these programmes to achieve multiple objectives (Phillip, 2013a). Key to the discussions in this chapter is whether the EPWP is involved in skills development, and if so, what kind of skills and to what extent does the programme enable skills development. This chapter is divided into four (4) fundamental parts. It commences by analysing the implementation of skills development in the EPWP, in general, to shed light on the depth and breadth of skills development in the programme. The second part presents findings on skills development for women and youth on the programme, focusing mainly on technical skills. The third part of the chapter discusses findings on the empowerment of women and youth through soft

⁵³ Under the theme "Building an expanded, effective and integrated post-school education system"

skills development. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the relevance of these skills to the country's labour market needs.

6.2 Skills Development in EPWP

The EPWP targets people with little or no skills. As one EPWP official who took part in the interviews said, “*we draw unskilled and poor people from the communities. We get some of the names from the indigent list from the municipalities*” (Mr Nzama, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020). The EPWP participants' information and submissions from the field verifies this view as evidenced by profiles of EPWP participants who took part in the surveys of which 66.4% indicated that they had skills while 33.6% indicated that they did not have any skill. However, examples of skills given were mainly non-advanced, including gardening, knitting, domestic work, cleaning, recycling – primarily picking of waste –computer operation, till operation, home-based care, and waitressing. This makes skills development a critical supply side policy response (McCord, 2003). It is understood as a way for participants to access post-high school education or vocational training where they would acquire qualifications and knowledge to gain employment or start own businesses (Department of Public Works, 2019).

Globally, PEPs have been touted as improving the quality of labour through skills development, and there has been a lot of emphasis on their use to build skills and to respond to the labour market needs (European Commission, 2013; Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015). Skills development is, however, limited in the EPWP and some participants end up exiting the programme before they receive any form of training. One of the EPWP officials who participated in the interviews said:

the EPWP is project based and we allocate resources only for the duration of the project, so training has to kick in as soon as people start working so that they do not exit from the programme before they receive training, but it is not always the case with this programme (Mrs Nagel, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

Skills development requires time to prepare and the number of days that EPWP participants spend at work vary by sector, and between projects in a sector, and so does the duration of skills development. Based on information from the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure (2019), some projects are very short, with over 53% of participants working for less than 70 days in a year, 38% working between 70 and 199 days, and only 9% working for over 200 days per annum. In some cases, participants work for as little as just a few days to perform a short-term task, while others work for a few days in a week for the whole year. Aligning duration of project and skills development is a challenge as some people working on short-term projects end up exiting from the programme before they can undergo any form of training.

Government's operational model is characterised by red tape and this significantly affects implementation of skills development on the programme. Training applications take too long to be approved for implementation and, at the same time, the short duration of projects worsens the situation. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews elaborated on this saying:

training takes time to be approved and implemented. I do not understand why training applications have to go to Pretoria for approval where they take forever to get a response. Every year there is a call for applications for training and we do submit applications for our participants, but they get stuck in Pretoria (Mrs Nagel, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

Since skills development is an important aspect in the life of an EPWP participant. The officials expressed the need for it to be prioritised as soon as EPWP participants start working so that they do not exit the programme before receiving the full training.

6.3 Skills Development for Women and Youth in EPWP

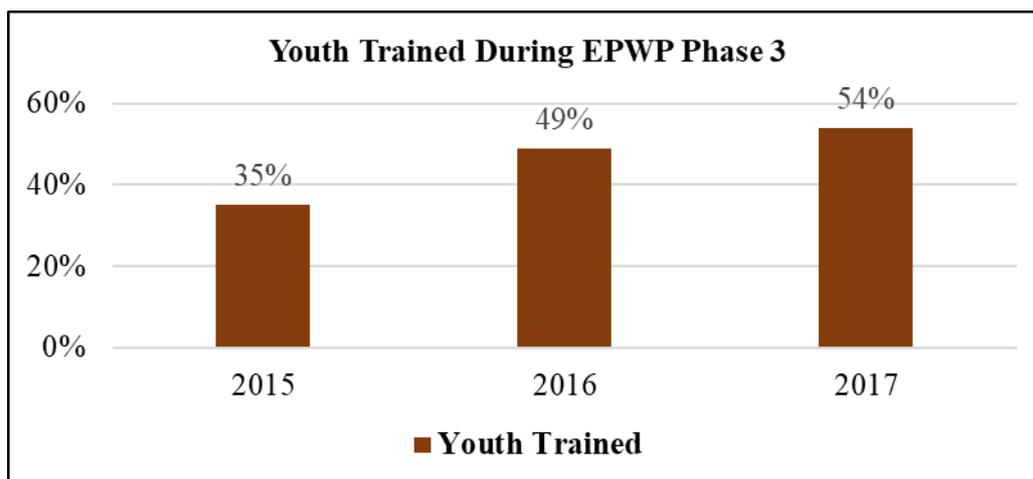
One of the reasons why women and youth bear the burden of poverty and unemployment is due to lack of skills. It is for this reason that special programmes such as the EPWP prioritise the economically excluded and vulnerable groups in the skills development initiative. The gap between men and women in the labour market

is exacerbated by gaps in educational attainment levels. Skills acquired by men and women at tertiary education level differ widely, with men acquiring those skills that are more aligned to labour market needs than women. An assessment of university enrolment in 2012 showed that 79.3% of graduates with a services sector qualification and 73.7% of those with a health and welfare qualification were women with only 28.5% of them graduating in high labour demand sectors such as engineering, manufacturing and construction (Department of Women, 2015). This already puts women at a disadvantage on the labour market, in comparison with 71.5% of male graduates emerging with qualifications in construction, engineering and manufacturing, where there is much higher absorption (ibid).

6.3.1 Skills development for youth in EPWP

Data from EPWP reports show that very few young people were trained throughout Phase Three (3) of the programme. The programme targeted 55% youth and women in this phase, but as shown in Figure 6.1, EPWP training consisted of 35% youth in 2015, 49% in 2016, rising to 54% in 2017.

Figure 6.1 Skills development for Youth during Phase 3



Source: EPWPRS, 2018

A majority of these courses were short skills programmes that gain only partial qualifications. Yet, the chances of a person with a partial qualification joining the labour market are very slim because most formal jobs require a complete national certificate, not a few credits in the qualification. The low levels of training of youth is evidenced also in sub-programmes offered by Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, like the NYS. The majority of NYS learners are recruited in the infrastructure sector where they are trained for months on a short skills programme in the construction industry, and rarely on artisan programmes. Between 2009 and 2018, about 0.4% of EPWP workers from the infrastructure sector NYS programme were trained on short skills programmes (EPWPRS, 2018).

Through the NYS, the programme recruits learners who are trained on basic construction skills such as tiling, painting, carpentry, and others. This programme offers young people a few credits from the National Certificate in Building and Construction at NQF Level 3. On completion, these learners are expected to use the skills and qualification to look for employment in the formal labour market or go into self-employment through entrepreneurship. This is despite the need for construction sector trades in the country. In addition, the CETA requires trades such as engineers, site agent/manager, quantity surveyor, foreman/ supervisor and project managers (CETA, 2017). These young people are compelled to figure out how to get these hard-to-fill skills on their own. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, as the custodian of both the EPWP and the construction sector in the country, is expected to do better in skills development. The lead department is not expected to be neglecting its mandate for leading skills development within its sector and expect other public bodies to do this on its behalf.

Low skills development levels on the programme are attributed to high costs of skilling or re-skilling. Skills development is considered expensive and unaffordable. One of EPWP officials who took part in the interviews expounded on this saying:

Artisan development is very expensive with limited resources EPWP is making a lot of compromises. For example, EPWP artisan wages is we pay about R 3 000 far lower than

what industry requires while private employers for example mines pay their artisans between R13 000 and R 30 000 per month because we cannot afford it (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

Due to limited resources, the programme cannot afford to train more young people. The programme continues to miss out on the contribution to artisan development as declared by government. Artisan development was launched in February 2014 in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality by the then Deputy Minister of the Department of Higher Education and Training and CETA with the aim of doubling artisan development to 30,000 per annum by 2024 (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014). This is one laudable method geared at developing capacity in the country.

Young people continue to emphasise their frustration at the lack of skills. Mpho a 26-year-old single mother of two from Roodepan Township said she joined the EPWP in 2017 as a street cleaner with the hope of gaining skills because she could not complete high school. She said:

things are not going well for us young people we look like we are 'deurmekaar' (meaning disorganized) and yet we are trying very hard, but things are just not working out for us. I personally was hoping I would get a skill in EPWP, have always dreamt of becoming a traffic officer, but it does not look like it is ever going to happen (Mpho, Interview, Kimberley, 24 October 2020).

Mpho is the eldest child in a family of five. Her father works as a security officer in Kimberley, and her mother works part-time as a domestic worker in the low-density suburbs of Kimberley. Her brother, who is second child in the family, also dropped out of school and is a drug user. He often goes for days out in the streets without his family knowing his whereabouts. At such times, he is often looking for money to buy drugs. Mpho indicated that she has realised how difficult it is to get any work without a post-matric qualification. She said this is the case with most of the young people in her township in Roodepan, and because youth have nothing to do, some end up involved in prostitution or doing drugs as a way to make a living or relieve stress.

Mpho is extremely frustrated because she sees no future for herself and her siblings. She realises that the standard of living continues to deteriorate in her township because of social problems resulting from unemployment. Unemployment has significant psychological effects on human beings, which often lead to social problems (Cloete, 2015). Mpho said that she has never received any training since joining the programme. She is slowly losing hope of getting any full-time job because she does not have a qualification in any field of specialisation. Mpho's plight is the same as that of many other young people in the country who are eager to get skills but have no opportunity to do so. What makes it worse is that labour cannot be saved for the future because being economically active is time bound. People reach a certain age group where they can no longer participate in the labour market and once that time comes they are unable to recoup the time lost to work anywhere else.

Young people are in need of technical skills. Some young people, especially males, expressed interest in being trained for technical skills like plumbing and electrical wiring. This was supported by some young people who indicated that they needed different skills, which they saw as necessary for survival in South Africa's harsh economic environment. The main reason provided for skills acquisition was that they were a tool kit that could be used in the future, and thus, enhanced their chances of a better life. There were some respondents that said acquiring skills would allow them to set up their own individual businesses and not spend time searching for jobs. One of the EPWP participants, Itepeng, a 28-year-old male from Roodepan, who dropped out of school in Grade eight (8) due to drug addiction, and was now living a life that he says is partly clean having gone through drug rehabilitation, emphasised the need for skills development. He said:

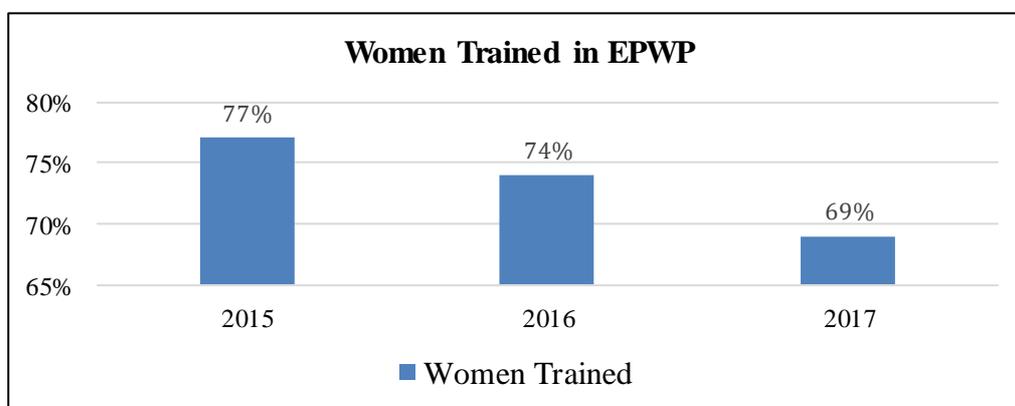
I want to start my own business as an electrician but I need a certificate for it which I cannot afford to do it on my own. I want to employ other young people in my location. I have been searching for a job for the past five (5) years with no luck...Many young people are stout (meaning naughty) here they are using tik (methamphetamine) and gafifi (rock cocaine). Some are involved in petty crime am tired of this kind of life (Itepeng, Interview, Kimberley, 25 September 2020).

Itepeng said he is known for associating with drug addicts because he still uses a little, so they always get into trouble with the police or Operation Wanya Tsotsi (Kimberley civilian crime busters) because of their known mischievous behaviour. He wants a better life now and that is why he joined the EPWP storm water drainage programme. He is hoping to get training in his preferred construction trade.

6.3.2 Skills development for women in EPWP

Training of women in the EPWP has been higher than that of youth. As shown in Figure 6.2, between 2015 and 2017, the EPWP skills development programme comprised between 69% and 77% women. However, even if large numbers of women received training, it was mainly on short skills programmes which do not assist them to participate in the highly competitive labour market.

Figure 6.2 Skills development for women during Phase 3



Source: EPWPRS, 2018

Some of the EPWP participants expressed their frustration with the programme due to unfulfilled promises for training. For example, Zinhle a 47-year-old woman and mother of two from Greenpoint, who joined EPWP in 2016 on a cleaning project, said she and other participants in her group were promised training in 2017 but it has not materialised. In 2017, the programme promised to train them towards a National Certificate in Environment Practice Level 3. She said a total of 20 participants,

including herself working on her project, were promised training. She is worried that she will never get any training because each year they have been following up on their request but EPWP officials who come to monitor the sites keep on telling them that it will probably come the following year. The waiting continues to frustrate her and other EPWP participants who hope in vain to get skilled. An official who has been waiting for a skills programme training for over two years for her participants concurred with her saying:

My participants have been waiting for training since 2018 they end up exiting before receiving any training...This is embarrassing I keep on promising them (EPWP participants) but the Department of Public Works (referring to the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure) does not deliver...Each year there is a story about training applications being stuck in Pretoria (Mrs Bhala, Interview, Kimberley, 03 October 2020).

In one of the EPWP protests, participants also expressed their frustration over the lack of skills development on the programme. Participants who were frustrated that they had not received any form of training since joining the programme emphasised that the programme's role is to train them so that they stop doing casual work and get full- time employment (GroundUp, 2014). Otherwise, the only option they have left is to look for another EPWP project because the competitive labour market cannot absorb them without skills.

Skills development cannot be generalised in EPWP given the complexity and the minimum requirements of certain skills. The programme can successfully train artisans in certain trades, pharmacist assistants, chefs and others. These are professional skills that young South Africans without post-tertiary education can successfully complete. However, in delivering skills development, the programme is not expected to train certain professionals like teachers that require enrolment for formal education for one to complete the qualification. Given the barest minimum requirements for such courses and skills, it is apparent that EPWP participants cannot qualify to enrol for such courses.

6.4 Soft Skills Development

Literature on PEPs or PWP says that participants on these programmes gain life skills such as how to save money, investments and entrepreneurship skills, in addition to technical skills (Department of Public Works, 2017a; del Ninno *et al.*, 2009; Gehrke & Hartwig, 2015; Hodinott *et al.*, 2012). This section examines soft skills that the EPWP participants learn from the programme, focusing on life skills and entrepreneurship training for women and youth.

6.4.1 Financial literacy training

The programme is doing fairly well in the training of women than of youth on this course. In 2017, the participants trained consisted of 41% youth and 66% women, and in 2018, there was a slight improvement, with 51% youth and 72% women trained (EPWPRS, 2018). These are vulnerable groups who require life skills. Some EPWP participants interviewed about the difference the course made in their lives exhibited a lot of appreciation for it. They listed it as one of the short courses they had attended. One of the interview respondents said; *“it taught me how to plan and budget, so I no longer just spend my money”* (Dintlhe, Interview, Kimberley, 25 September 2020). Dintlhe was on an EPWP NPO project in Veregenoerg Township since 2014 and she depended on the EPWP income to support her family. She appreciated the planning and budgeting skills she learnt from the workshop because she obtained knowledge that will also help her later in life.

However, some EPWP participants said the course was not relevant to them and it was a waste of their time. For example, Arnold a 26-year-old male from Greenpoint Township, found this course irrelevant because he did not require budgeting skills. He said his income was very low for him to budget or save. He felt this workshop was a waste of time. He emphasised this saying:

the course is not relevant to me. I earn about R 2000 per month, how am I expected to budget or save such little money? I have a lot of expenses such as groceries, electricity and baby food (Arnold, Interview, Kimberley, 25 September 2020).

Arnold did not consider the training useful to him because his income and reality does not allow him to use the knowledge taught in the course. As beneficial as the course may seem, it reaches very few young people who are the people who need financial skills in the world of work and society.

6.4.2 Entrepreneurship training

Entrepreneurship is one of the key initiatives promoted in PEPs or PWP. This has been observed in countries like Argentina where citizens were supported to form cooperatives as well as private companies (Kostzer, 2008). In South Africa, individuals working under NPOs have been able to form businesses in coffin and nappy manufacturing (Department of Public Works, 2017a). SMMEs play an important role in the creation of employment. At a global level, SMMEs make up 95% of the enterprises that employ between 60% and 70% of the working age group, but in South Africa they contribute only 28% of the country's jobs (Mail and Guardian, 2019a). In a country faced with severe unemployment, support for the EPWP participants becomes an important aspect of the programme in promotion of sustainable livelihoods.

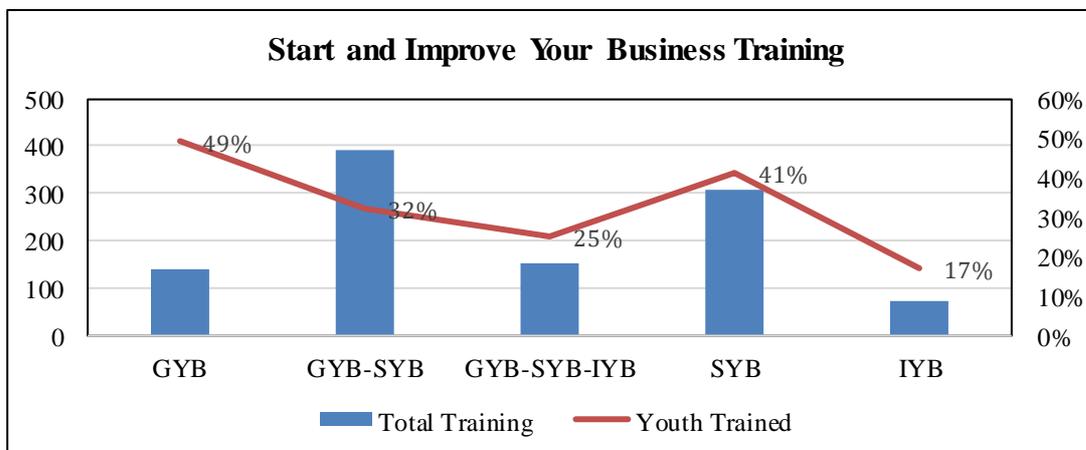
Data from the surveys shows that EPWP participants have a strong desire to venture into entrepreneurship. Of the survey respondents, 26.6% indicated that they would like to start a business at the end of their contracts with the EPWP. This makes the development of entrepreneurship skills relevant to such participants. However, despite this desire for entrepreneurship, there is very little support in this skill that is provided through training on the programme. Some young people expressed the need for entrepreneurship training because their projects have the potential to be sustainable. One of the EPWP participants, Nolwazi, from Gamothibi village, who works in a vegetable garden with eight other people from her village, said that

business skills are necessary to sustain their activities. She and her group produce vegetables that they sell to the local community and they have managed to secure government market through the Community Nutrition Development Centre formerly known as the Soup Kitchen in Kuruman run by the Department of Social Development.

Nolwazi and her group registered a cooperative in 2015 and they have infrastructure for farming that is funded by government. They have access to water and use communal land. They have resources to run their project successfully, but they lack the business acumen to do so. She says there were 12 participants in the cooperative, but they started fighting because some were impatient with the time it was taking for the cooperative to be sustainable. The in-fighting arose because when they started, they thought they would generate income quickly. When this did not materialise in the anticipated time, some of the participants pulled out of the project. She still hopes the EPWP shall assist them with training that could empower them to contribute to food security in their district. She said they registered the cooperative on the database for government entities that offer SMME support. The last business training they had was on cooperative governance in 2015 when they got registered. They need more business training to boost the performance of the project. Nolwazi raised genuine concerns given their situation and the success of entrepreneurship in the country. These are matters that need the programme's attention.

There is very little training of women and youth entrepreneurs happening on the programme as shown by data from Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), the main training package which is offered by the programme in partnership with the ILO. The training began in 2016 and an analysis of the training packages between 2016 and 2019 shows that this offering was mediocre to the extent that most businesses in the EPWP are still at start-up stage (see in *Figure 6.3*).

Figure 6.3 Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training



Source: ILO, 2019b

Training in business skills packages which automatically categorises entrepreneurs and allocates aspiring entrepreneurs to the Generate Your Business Idea (GYBI) training, start-ups to the Start Your Business (SYB) training, and established businesses to the Improve Your Business (IYB) training shows that there are a few established businesses on the programme. There is low participation from young people in the Start and Improve Your Business training, with less than 50% of them per package in the three years analysed. As shown in Figure 6.3, the youth tend to participate in the Generate Your Business Idea training in which 49% of participants were trained between 2016 and 2019. The pre-start-up training accommodates more young people because most of them do not have business ideas or are not sure of the businesses they intend to start. This is supported by survey responses in which 24% of the EPWP participants said they did not know how to start a business.

Most young people who may be interested in entrepreneurship take some time developing their ideas and waiting for support, which is why most of them participate in the pre-start-up package. Figure 6.3 also shows that 41% of youth participated in the start-ups business training within the Start Your Business (SYB) package. Of the survey respondents, 73% indicated that they were still looking for support. This is the group of people that is normally targeted by the SYB package. The country at large

is also not doing well in terms of numbers of youth in entrepreneurship. A decline was recorded in the number of youth entrepreneurs, with 2015/16 reports showing a 6% drop in youth entrepreneurship activities from 63% in the previous year (Brand South Africa, 2017).

As shown in Figure 6.3, very few young people and women with established businesses have been reached and trained. Entrepreneurship activities in the EPWP are dominated by start-ups or businesses struggling to survive. About 1.6% of the EPWP participants in the survey indicated that they had started their businesses, received funding and their businesses were operating while they were still working on the programme. The Improve Your Business (IYB) package which normally targets people with established businesses who want to put management systems in place had only 17% youth participation. Very few people were trained in this package, in general. Many young people are still trying to establish businesses, as a result, very few have accessed IYB support. The number of trainees in the ILO business skills development training is very low and so is entrepreneurship activity on the programme.

The limited support provided by the EPWP has been cited as a hindrance to the full growth of some entities owned by EPWP participants, resulting in some losing interest in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship success is not a given, as Phillip (2013a) noted, PEPs or PWP are not SMME development agencies. Nolwazi, from Gamothibi Village, said that what frustrates her, and the other cooperative members, is their lack of business acumen, and therefore, even if they do have resources to work with, they do not know how to run a viable enterprise. She said entrepreneurship skills are very relevant to her because she is a member of a cooperative where the executive duties are shared on a rotational basis. She may find herself being appointed as the chairperson of the cooperative, and without training she would not know how to lead the affairs of the enterprise.

A lot of resources have been spent on her group for technical training with the ultimate objective of nurturing the group into entrepreneurship, but participants are no longer interested because they face a lot of challenges that continue to take too long to be resolved. Some EPWP officials expressed concern about limited support to participants stating that it limits the programme's potential of providing SMME or cooperative support. One of the EPWP officials took part in the interviews and said:

SMME support is just a drop in the ocean...our structures are not capacitated in the provinces and there are no resources to provide support. We are just scratching on the surface (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

The entrepreneurship function is under-resourced therefore supports very few people with the barest minimum of resources. The programme has not prioritised entrepreneurship support. It does not have its own financial resources to support businesses. Unlike skills development, there is no source of funds to support this function on the programme. The success of entrepreneurship initiatives is therefore not evident. The programme may need to rethink this function. Critical to its success is the support model with in-house (within EPWP) or extending the support function to a department which is mandated to provide SMME support. In-house support will require putting systems in place which will require extra funding which may not be immediately available. The second option is more feasible because already institutions like the Department of Economic Development and Tourism which carry this mandate are part of EPWP. This will not mean going back to the '*Economic Sector*' which the programme phased out during phase two (2) of implementation. This department can provide the lead in this cross-cutting function.

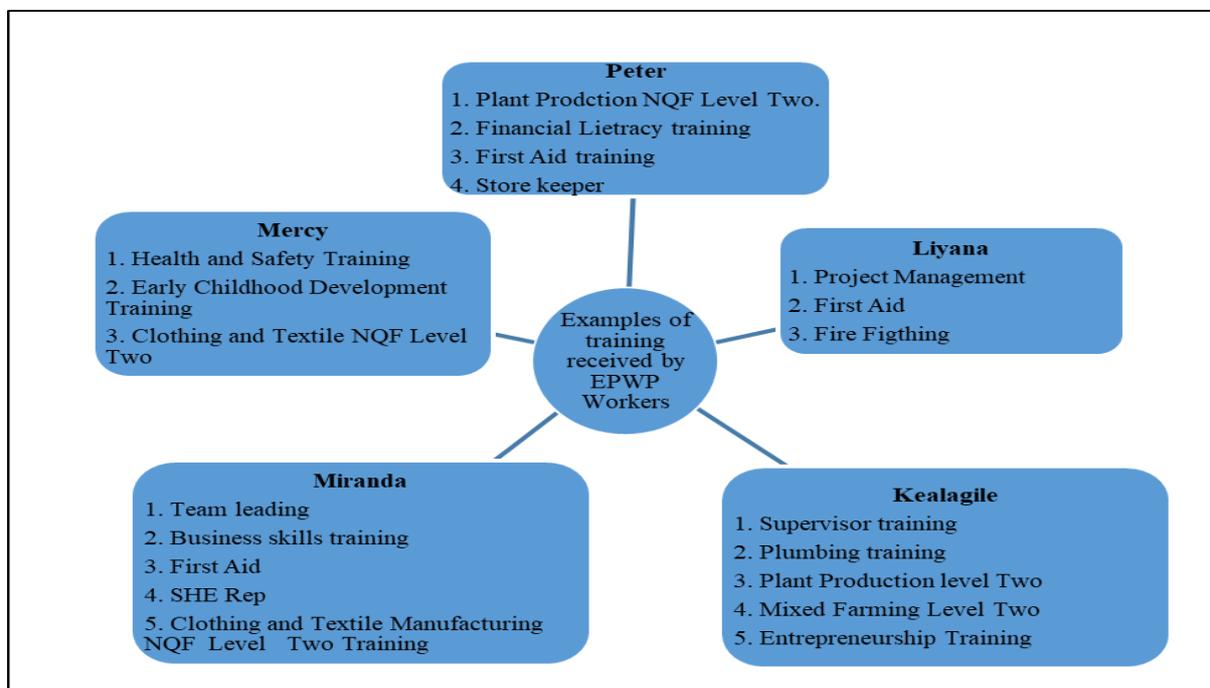
Despite already existing challenges within the entrepreneurship space, the EPWP model has the potential of creating successful entrepreneurs. The programme has existing markets in construction for small scale contractors where there is a lot of resources that are spent on protective clothing such as overalls and boots that can be made by textile cooperatives. Instead of buying protective clothing from established manufacturers, the programme could make use of protective clothing

made by its own participants. By so doing, some participants could then slowly exit from the programme.

6.5 The EPWP's Response to Labour Market Needs

The employers represented by various SETAs are able to identify and specify skills they need. Some of these skills have been identified by the SETAs, including the Food and Beverages SETA, TETA and MerSETA, as hard-to-fill skills in the economy (Foodbev SETA, 2017; Red Flank, 2018; TETA, 2018). The EPWP provides skills development, but this is done in a haphazard manner. In a way, skills development does not assist the intended recipients to acquire qualifications specifically tailored for the labour market. Figure 6.4. shows examples of skills acquired by the EPWP participants in which people receive training in more than one short skills qualification.

Figure 6.4 Skills development in EPWP



As shown in Figure 6.4, Miranda and Kealagile attended training for five qualifications or part qualifications since they joined the programme in 2012. Miranda, a 31-year-old woman from Glenred Village, joined the programme in 2012 after dropping out of college in Kuruman due to lack of funding. She aspired to be a Grade R teacher. While working on the programme she attended five unrelated courses which included First Aid (unaccredited), Clothing and Textile manufacturing (accredited), SHE Rep (unaccredited), Team Leader (unaccredited) and Business Skills (accredited). The training she received on the programme has not helped Miranda to achieve her dream of being a Grade R teacher. She was considering dropping out of the programme, try to obtain sponsorship from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and go back to college. She feels she is now stagnant and regrets dropping out of college, even if it was not of her own doing. She envies her former classmates who passed matric like her and were able to do post-high school training, many of whom are now police officers and teachers. Miranda feels she needs to change the course of her life and has applied for police officer jobs in vain. She is the breadwinner in her family and says the income from the EPWP is not enough to support her family. Therefore, she needs effective skills training so that she can get a better job and be able to provide for her family.

Peter, Liyana and Mercy, who have spent about five years on the programme, have received between three (3) or four (4) qualifications or part qualifications each. For example, Mercy has three part qualifications. She was first trained as an Early Childhood Development teacher, which is an unaccredited short course. She also took an unrelated 45-credit short course in clothing and textile manufacturing. She currently stands in between two unrelated professions, of which in one, she has an incomplete qualification, and in the other she attended a workshop. She indicated that she found the Early Childhood Development training interesting and wanted to pursue it further, but there was no opportunity for her to do so. In all these unrelated qualifications, one perceives the much frayed orientation of the EPWP structures.

Mercy was not interested in the 45-credit clothing and textile manufacturing course, but attended it because the opportunity presented itself, and all other EPWP participants in her group were attending it. If she were to continue with the Early Childhood Development teacher training, she could build a career as an Early Childhood Development teacher. She has no interest in becoming a seamstress, and so does not intend continuing with the training in clothing and textile manufacturing. The training was a waste of resources. Had the programme been implementing skills development in a coherently structured manner, Mercy would be in possession of a qualification in a career she desires to pursue, but as things stand, she can only work for the EPWP.

The approach to skills development within the programme is apparently a waste of government resources and people's time by some EPWP officials. The programme offers mainly short skills courses or part qualifications in unrelated courses. This hinders the progressive development of EPWP participants from temporary EPWP work to full-time employment in the active labour market. One EPWP official who participated in the interviews said:

if we are to do an impact assessment on this short skills development, we will realise that it is just wasteful expenditure. It does not add any value to the people's lives (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

Some skills developed through the EPWP do not respond to labour market needs and to the diverse characteristics of labour, therefore skills scarcity remains a challenge in the country (McCord, 2005). When EPWP participants are empowered with skills that the labour market requires, then they can successfully transition into full-time employment. This was emphasised by one EPWP official who said:

we have a priority course list which is not updated. We need inputs from relevant stakeholders, the EPWP sectors do not take training seriously therefore do not respond to the request to update the list we may need to contact to the Department of Employment and Labour on the up-to-date information on priority skills the labour market needs (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria 12 October 2020).

The labour market is not static. Some skills that were required by the labour market previously are no longer useful under the current 4IR. Technology has brought new skills needs in the labour market, with a rise in the demand for digital or capital-intensive skills and a corollary decline in the demand for traditional and manual skills. This has been the case in South Africa since the 1990s, and the employment prospects for workers with traditional skills have been worsened by the 4IR (McCord, 2005; Pindula News, 2021). The EPWP has not responded to these changes. The programme needs to evolve with labour market needs to be able to successfully transition people into full-time employment.

Participants need skills that will make them employable. Mubangizi and Mkhize (2013) argued said that skills development should be prioritised, and the programme must ensure each participant receives technical training as well as life skills, such as writing of curriculum vitae, literacy, and basic financial management skills. This was supported by one EPWP participant who took part in the interviews, Hilda from Greenpoint Township, who said: *“we need driving licenses because it is required in the CV when job seeking. Lots of jobs require people who can drive”* (Hilda, Interview, Kimberley, 10 October 2020). Some people struggle to get employment even if they have relevant qualifications because they do not have a driver’s license. Such skills would put EPWP participants at an advantage when they look for permanent work. Despite such recommendations, there are some arguments that the country should not consider the EPWP a strategy to address the structural unemployment challenges (Meth, 2011; South African Cities Network, 2016).

The quality of graduates from these programmes is also questioned by the employers. Employers are dissatisfied by the learners that report for workplace training, as, at times learners’ own estimation of the skills they have acquired through practical training do not satisfy the expectations of the employer (Red Flank, 2018). In such cases, the skills problem persists because even if there is a worker in the role, their ability and skills competency do not meet the demands of the job. The SETAs have identified this as one of the reasons for unfilled positions in various

economic sectors. This study identified hard-to-fill vacancies as listed in Table 6.1 and the type of qualifications required to fill these. Most of the positions identified require a minimum of a learnership or artisan training which EPWP participants can obtain from the programme.

Table 6.1 Employment opportunities per economic sector

SETA	Sector	Scarce Skills	Requirements	Reasons for failure to fill vacancies
AgriSETA	Agriculture	Veterinarian, agricultural scientists, inspectors and technicians, farm manager, engineers, mixed crop and livestock farm worker, assistant sales and marketing manager	Formal qualifications through tertiary education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Technological change which lead to a demand for new skills 2. Ageing workforce, manufacturing occupations are perceived less lucrative than retail occupations, less attractive salaries, rapidly changing industry trends creating further productive pressures, 3. Poor or inadequate training deficiencies and inadequate training contributes to the skills mismatch crisis and affects increase in unemployment levels
CATHSSETA	Culture, arts, tourism, hospitality and sports	Sound technicians, veterinary nurses, zoologists, park rangers, health and safety officers, bio kineticist and customer contact centre salesperson	Learnerships, Formal qualification through tertiary education	
CETA	Construction	Record of about 78% vacant posts in the following: engineers, site agent/manager, quantity surveyor, foreman/ supervisor and project managers.	Formal qualifications through tertiary education	
EWSETA	Energy and water	Plant managers, business development professionals, solar field operators, power block operators, control room operators, health and safety officers and engineers	Learnerships, Formal qualification through tertiary education	
HWSETA	Health and welfare	Nursing professionals, childcare workers, ambulance workers, social workers and pharmacists.	Learnerships, Formal qualification through tertiary education	
W&R SETA	Wholesale and retail	Customer service manager, cook, confectionary baker, pharmacy sales assistant, retail supervisor and manager and chefs.	Learnerships, artisan programme and formal programmes through institutions of higher learning	
FP&MSETA	Fibre processing & manufacturing	Pattern makers, cutters, machinists, plant and machine operators, machine mechanics technologies, translation and designing.		
Foodbev SETA	Food and Beverages	Food and beverage technicians, engineer, fitter and tuner, electrical trades assistant, SHE&Q practitioner.		
TETA	Transport	Truck driver, mechanical engineer, freight handler, diesel fitter, millwright, diesel mechanic and bus driver		
MerSETA	Manufacturing and engineering	Tyre fitters, engineering, production, plastic production machine operator, artisans, quality managers, technologists		

Source: AgriSETA, 2018; CETA 2017; CathSSeta, 2017*b*, EWSETA, 2018; Foodbev SETA, 2017; FP&M SETA, 2018; HWSETA, 2017; Red Flank, 2018; TETA, 2018; W&R SETA, 2018

Scarce skills identified by AgriSETA, CETA and EWSETA require formal tertiary qualifications, and the skills for the other SETAs can be obtained through a learnership or artisan programme. The programme has trained participants in some of the above sectors, but the majority mainly receive training in short skills programmes and, without a full qualification, one cannot get full-time employment. The EPWP participants and other stakeholders have therefore continued to call for the programme to respond to labour market needs. However, the programme is apparently unable to respond to current and evolving labour market needs.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter argued that the proclamation at the launch of EPWP that this programme shall build state capacity has not materialised. The programme has failed to champion skills development for the poor and unemployed, hence the worsening the unemployment matrix, especially for women and youth in the country. The rhetoric that government was expected to build the labour force for the country by tapping from a pool of unemployed and unskilled people through its service delivery projects has starkly failed. The failure is attributed to many reasons. Firstly, skills development is very limited and only focuses on short skills programmes. Its implementation is funded by another government institution, the Department of Higher Education and Training through a five (5) yearly MoA between the two departments. Secondly, participants are trained mainly in short skills courses with some ending up as holders of several unrelated short qualifications in a context where employers are looking for workers with full qualifications. Lastly, entrepreneurship and life skills training are limited and, most importantly, skills development for women and youth is ignored despite the high structural unemployment levels for these groups.

These findings are not surprising because they resonate with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which showed that, due to their nature, the contribution of PEPs or PWP to skills development is minimal. However, it cannot be *'business as usual'*

with the EPWP because the challenges at hand are not the same as the challenges similar programmes were deployed to address in the USA, former East Germany or Argentina, which were short-term with the economy expected to rebound quickly. In the South Africa case, the economy is not expected to miraculously rebound, so the programme has to come up with a uniquely South African model to address the country's unemployment crisis. The next chapter discusses the weaknesses and challenges of the EPWP.

CHAPTER 7 WEAKNESSES AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE EPWP

7.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the preceding presentation of findings on the effectiveness of the EPWP in responding to structural unemployment in South Africa, particularly as it relates to unemployment among women and youth in the country. Despite the programmes' good intentions aimed at protecting the vulnerable, globally, PWPs or PEPs have had their fair share of weaknesses and challenges. These include trying to achieve 'multiple objectives'⁵⁴, poor policy choices, design errors, unrealistic expectations, limited resources⁵⁵, uniform conceptualisation that defies the specific contexts of the implementation, corruption, mismanagement and designs that overlook cultural norms⁵⁶ (Holmes & Jones, 2011a; McCord, 2008; Zimmerman, 2014).

However, some PWPs or PEPs such as the MGNREGA, have been commended for some design strengths, such as treating poverty reduction as a right rather than an opportunity, incorporating implementation by Gram Panchayat (village assembly) rather than contractors, and delivering work on demand (Holmes & Jones, 2011a). The design of the MGNREGA puts government and the intended beneficiaries at the centre of its implementation. Indeed, whereas these programmes are always well-intentioned, at times these objectives are trumped by the programme's weaknesses and challenges. The previous chapter demonstrated that the intended participant skilling and reskilling expectations and mandates of the programme have not been realised because, firstly, the programme has no budget for skills development, and secondly, where it is implemented, this has been done haphazardly. Thirdly, the emphasis of the programme is on short course skills development while the labour market requires full skills-based qualifications.

⁵⁴ striking a balance between creation of quality infrastructure and achieving poverty reduction goals.

⁵⁵ human and capital

⁵⁶ pregnancy and lactation needs for women

The EPWP is intended to be a transformational programme. Phase Three (3) implementation sought to do away with conceptions of a first and second economy gap, and emphasised skills development, maximization of employment and creation of assets, while ensuring prioritisation of women, youth and people living with disabilities in employment (South African City Networks, 2016). Despite this emphasis, the situation for women and youth remains dire, with rising unemployment and deepening poverty having worsened over the years among these groups (Statistics South Africa, 2020). This chapter presents findings on the challenges and weaknesses faced by the programme. It is divided into two (2) sections. The first section highlights the reasons for persistent structural unemployment among women and youth in South Africa through a discussion on the weaknesses of the programme. The second section presents an analysis of the challenges that continue to bedevil the EPWP and are responsible for the current ineffectual form of the programme.

7.2 Weaknesses of the EPWP

The programme does not have its own policy and this a significant major weaknesses. One EPWP official who took part in the interviews expressed a concern about this in the following words:

This is a massive and critical programme for this country to assist with poverty and unemployment challenges. Its implementation for over 15 years has been relying on piggybacking on other country's policies, hence it is going nowhere (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

This was equally identified as a stumbling block by a study by Moeti (2013:101) who stated: "...the delays and inability of the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality to approve the EPWP policy will pose challenges as buy-in may not be secured from both internal and external stakeholders". Some of the implementation anomalies are a result of lack of policy.

Lack of a strategy to support sustainable livelihoods is one of the concerns raised about this programme. One EPWP official who took part in the interviews expressed her disappointment on this, stating that:

The EPWP is not taking this cross-cutting function seriously because when we changed the Economic Sector to cross cutting as Enterprise Development, we thought we will be more focused and have enough resources. The only service that we provide in-house is Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training which one of the many SMMEs' needs. We refer people to other agencies and departments for further support. This is not enough, this function is very important to assist people with permanent income (Mrs van Rooyen, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

The EPWP continues to act as a trap in which participants remain for extended periods because the support functions that are supposed to exit them to full-time employment or self-employment are not fully functional. She further elaborated this point in the following words: *“The programme has not found a way to tap into funding opportunities outside the fiscal purse”* (Mrs van Rooyen, interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020). Funding for skills development is dependent on a MoA and that for enterprise development on a MoU with other government institutions, both of which have not facilitated adequate resourcing of these critical support functions. The programme has progressively emphasised the sustainable livelihoods approach in its support to participants (Department of Public Works, 2019; South African Cities Network, 2016), and there is an expectation that it would secure funding for these two support functions in order to facilitate transition to full-time employment through skills development or self-employment. This has not been the case yet, despite its explicit emphasis.

Dependency on the government funding alone which is not sufficient is a major weakness of the programme. Tax base is narrow and shrinking in the underdeveloped countries due high tax collection costs and tax avoidance by companies or individuals (Hirschman, 2015). The National Treasury has raised alarm in several budget speeches on soaring government spending in comparison to revenue collection. Government is sinking deep into debt in trying to finance its

operations. For example, in the February 2019 budget speech, the Minister of Finance Mr Tito Mboweni, said the country had a shortfall of R 243 billion which had to be financed through debt (South African Government, 2019). This means the country's fiscal purse alone is not sufficient to finance government's needs. There are several austerity measures designed to reduce state the fiscal burden introduced from 2014/15 financial year with one of the consequences being a reduction on social spending and cuts on infrastructure grant allocations (Sibeko, 2019). The infrastructure grants are the funds that public bodies use to create EPWP employment. Reduction of those grants cripples the programme's expansion potential.

Apparently the National Treasury might not be able to rescue the programme as clarified in Mrs van Rooyen's view. It is not going to be possible for the National Treasury to allocate separate funding for these sub-programmes given the rising fiscal constraints. The programme could be creating temporary jobs though at a smaller scale but the poor and unskilled are likely to remain trapped in the programme because the sustainable livelihood component which is expected to exit them into full-time employment or income activities is shaky.

Policy haziness is another critical weakness of the programme which hinders effective delivery on its set objectives. In most cases, the unclear policy intentions give implementers the leeway to do what they see fit and, in the end, compromise the intended outcomes. Elsewhere, programmes have been supported by very clear policy prescripts. For example, the Pakistan's Ehsas says:

the overarching goals of Ehsas are to establish a safety net for at least 10 million families, livelihoods opportunities for 3.8 million individuals, financial access to health care for 10 million families, scholarships and education incentives for five million students (50% girls), financial and digital inclusion for seven million individuals (90% women) (Faith *et al.*, 2020:11).

This is unlike the case of the EPWP, in which even Parliament pays little attention to enabling sustainable livelihoods strategies despite their centrality to the success of

the programme. The EPWP reports made by project implementers to Parliament provide information on temporary jobs created, project costs or deviations, budget expenditure and expected project completion timelines (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2011). Given the levels of structural unemployment in the country, detailed reporting to Parliament on the skilling or reskilling of women and youth as well as other strategies that could enable them to transition to full-time employment should be mandatory. The Code of Good Practice only states vaguely that participants are entitled to training (Department of Public Works, 2019). This provision does not provide sufficient guidance because it does not give specifics on the numbers, gender and age composition of participants that must be trained, as well as the types of qualifications expected.

The vague provision in this regard is left to be interpreted by the implementer, which is a key weakness of this programme given the number of people who are unskilled in the country and who cannot access job opportunities. Similar cases have been identified from other PWPs or PEPs, for example, Ethiopia's PSNP has been criticised for lack of policy clarity on women participation in the programme beyond creation of temporary work opportunities and theorisation of women's needs based on perception rather than reality (Holmes & Jones, 2011a). Such cases leave the needs of the vulnerable at the mercy of project implementers and there tends to be no uniformity in handling sustainable income beyond the programmes. This obscurity in policy on such matters subverts the intended beneficiaries of the programme who end up unintentionally remaining trapped by the programme because they have no other choice.

The EPWP's support structure is fragile because it mainly depends on the government sector, which in many cases has its own pre-existing performance challenges affecting the programme (Auditor General South Africa, 2019). Government is highly criticised for failing to provide the necessary public goods and services to the communities which has seen a rise in service delivery issues over the years. Since EPWP is delivered through this model, it is also caught in this trap of

long standing issues which government has not been able to resolve over the years. Some critical agreements in the development of its initial framework in 1992 which proposed involvement of private sector have not materialised (South African Cities Network, 2016). This emphasises the point that as much as the Keynes approach to government intervention is necessary, government alone is not able to effectively provide the much-needed relief to the economy hence the need to involve the private sector.

7.3 Challenges Associated with the Programme

The challenges that affected the PWP or EPWP are not a new phenomenon. The South Africa's Special Employment Creation Programme (SECP) of 1983 faced challenges such as insufficient funding, fragmented allocation of funds, contentious minimum wage, politicisation of the programme, lack of implementation tools and its general makeshift approach (Department of Public Works, 1997). These challenges are also not unique to South Africa. Examples exist of a host of similar well-intentioned programmes that have failed to achieve their goals or lost government resources (see Eja & Ramegowda, 2020). However, such failure was not expected of the EPWP given its centrality to core developmental blueprints like the RDP and the recent NDP as well as government's commitment to ameliorating the conditions of the poor. This section provides an analysis of challenges that have compromised the programme, despite its noble objectives and centrality to the achievement of the government mandate to create and provide jobs to the country's citizens with emphasis on women and youth.

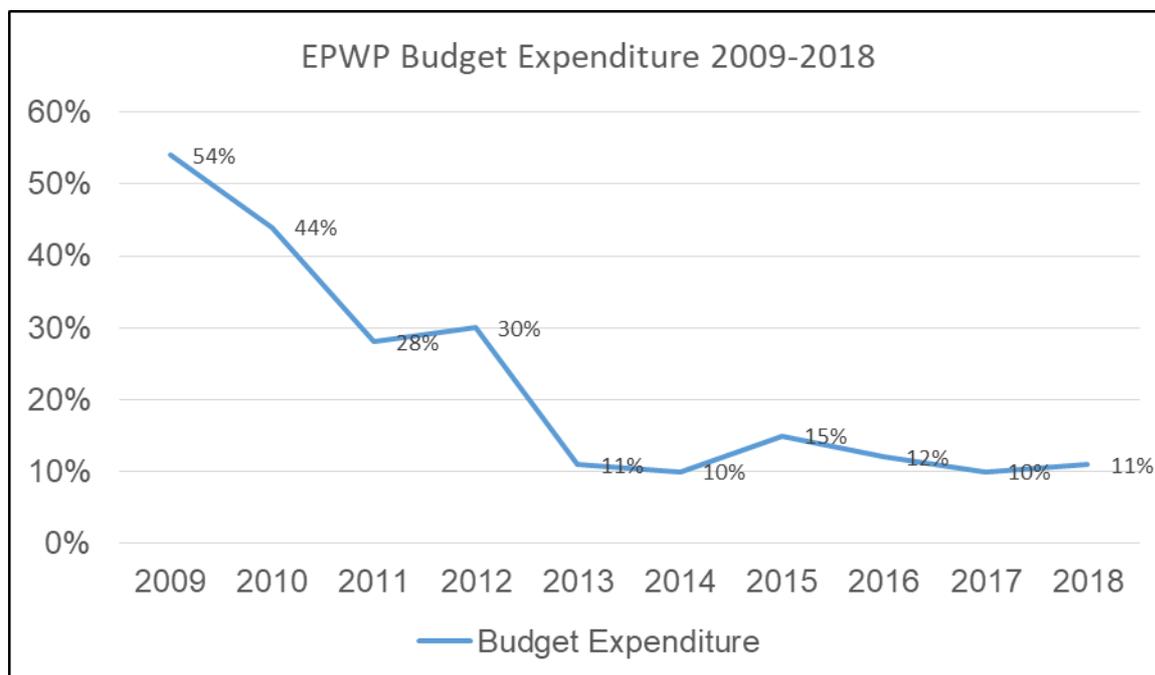
7.3.1 Poor implementation of projects

It is worth noting that the programme has suffered from challenges that are similar to, and have defined, postcolonial initiatives in Africa. Key to these challenges is the relationship of the programme to fiscal expenditure which is deemed to be poor across all government spheres. Government entities are not implementing projects

or sub-programmes and this has been highlighted by their poor expenditure of allocated resources. Spending has been a concern since the start of the programme in 2001 (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2001). Two decades later, the challenge still persists. This leads to serious questioning of the government's sincerity in addressing the country's challenges. Poor implementation of projects is an old debate that has consequences for the government, in spite of acknowledging this anomaly.

A look at the programme's expenditure paints a disquieting picture of the extent to which government entities are not spending resources given the challenges faced by the country. Poor spending of resources translates to poor creation of the work opportunities because project implementation is determined by resource expenditure. As observed by Fourie & Malan (2020), local government is the worst spender among public bodies implementing the EPWP, with the 2018/19 financial reports showing underspending of 13% on municipal budgets and conditional grants. This is despite this sphere of government being the face of the administration or service delivery within the communities. Figure 7.1 shows 10-year budget expenditure from Phase Two (2).

Figure 7.1 Reported Budget Expenditure 2009-2018



Source: EPWPRS various reports (own calculations)

Figure 7.1 illustrates expenditure on projects as reported on the EPWP reporting system from Phase Two (2) to Phase Three (3). As illustrated above, the programme was only able to spend over 50% of the allocated resources only once in the 10 years of implementation. In 2009, when the Non-State Sector was introduced, the programme managed to spend 54% of the allocated resources. From 2011, the programme has consistently spent less than 20% of the allocated resources. A number of reasons were given for government’s failure to spend resources as discussed below:

Firstly, poor expenditure of resources is blamed on lack of human capacity in government to implement projects. This was one of the findings by the Auditor General of South Africa in 2018/19 financial year who queried the high vacancy rate noted in some key positions which affect government performance (Fourie & Malan, 2020). The Auditor General’s finding was supported by one EPWP official who participated in the interviews who observed that:

Government does not have capacity to implement infrastructure projects, some unit heads are former educators who have no knowledge of the construction sector, so some projects cannot be implemented (Mr Adams, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

It also emerged that some projects are expected to be implemented by project administrators who are not qualified or have no knowledge of what is expected of them, especially in the construction sector. This sector requires highly specialised skills, like engineering and project management for the design as well as implementation of certain projects. Implementation suffers from lack of capacity which comes in two forms: some institutions are under resourced, while others have staff that does not have the necessary skills occupying professional administrative positions which require highly specialised labour.

This challenge was also picked up by the Financial Fiscal Commission as one of the issues that lead to non-expenditure of the EPWP Incentive Grant. A report by the Financial Fiscal Commission in 2014 highlighted that implementing public bodies struggle with the implementation of labour-intensive infrastructure thus, affecting the spending of the EPWP Incentive Grant. To try and ease the challenge, the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure appointed service providers in 2012/13 to support with the design and reporting of infrastructure projects (ibid).

Secondly, there is a lot of reliance on consultants in implementation of projects, another major set-back in the programme because consultants tend to be more knowledgeable than the officials that are supposed to monitor them. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews elaborated on this saying:

Most projects in EPWP are implemented at the mercy of consultants because employed government officials have no capacity and cannot explain what is happening on projects or even monitor the consultant. In most cases government officials have no skills or qualifications to run projects (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

This means government has limited control on what consultants do and this also strains government resources because a lot of funds are then spent on consultants

who are obliged to deliver on outsourced projects while government continues to pay officials that cannot do the work. This was a concern raised by another EPWP officials who said: “*South Africa’s construction projects are expensive because 30% of project budget goes to consultants*” (Mr Mdunge, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020). While financial resources are constrained, the manner in which government conducts its business puts more strain on the already limited resources. If a third of the project’s budget goes to the consultants, only 70% is left to implement the project.

The views by Mr Adams, Mr Mdunge and Mr Pietersen were supported by 52% of respondents from government officials who took part in the surveys. They indicated that indeed, capacity is a challenge in the implementation of projects and as a result some of the planned and budgeted projects fall by the wayside because of lack of skills to implement. One of the critical issues identified by the International Monetary Fund (2002), are that weak capacity deprives government’s ability to implement own policies and this is costly to the society. Indeed, most government institutions have warm bodies but some of these officials do not have capacity to perform their duties. One of the criticisms faced by the democratic government is that:

...senior public servants, without the requisite knowledge, competency and management skills, are ‘deployed’ on the basis of patronage, political connections and corruption to crucial public service posts (*Mail and Guardian Online*, 2017).

Public service is criticised for lack of critical skills at key service delivery level. Local government institutions which consist of district, metropolitan and local municipalities have project implementation challenges. Under-expenditure issues have been raised on various platforms as highlighted by reports to Parliament and other government structures. The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) admits that the local government sphere, for example, is very weak in governance and financial management due to lack of capacity (SALGA, n.d). Service delivery challenges such as lack of water and sanitation are a common phenomenon with 28% of towns with inadequate water supply due to lack of skills (South African Government, 2015b).

Water and sanitation projects are some of the infrastructure projects which local government can use to create EPWP employment opportunities. Institutional capacity is critical; it is identified as one of the critical aspects in the reduction of poverty. The International Monetary Fund, 2002 said it is necessary for:

- the ability to effectively plan government expenditure and the delivery of public services at both central and local government levels;
- the public sector's absorption and project implementation capacity.

This makes it critical that government has enough capacity to implement projects because they are necessary for the livelihoods of the beneficiary communities. Lack of capacity has (1) Implications on projects because it leads to abandonment or delays in the implementation of some projects. (2) Leads to reliance on consultants thus, taking away resources that would have been used to create more employment for the payment of consultants. (3) Deprives the sub-programmes or projects' maximisation of creation of employment opportunities because implementing officials or project managers would be lacking strategies to maximise labour intensity. The view by the International Monetary Fund that capacity is important for the reduction of poverty applies to the South African case because despite various strategies by government to reduce poverty lack of capacities sabotages the intended outcomes.

Thirdly, government's procurement system is another hindrance in the implementation of projects. Of late, government has focused on the improvement of public procurement systems with the aim of promoting efficiency and effectiveness in spending of public resources to ensure '*value for money*' (Fourie & Malan, 2020). However, this has created too much red tape in government, again hindering implementation of projects. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews blamed the government procurement system for poor expenditure of resources. She said, "*the tender documents take a long time with supply chain management and therefore projects could not be implemented*" (Mrs Bhala, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

However, the Auditor General does not agree with this view. Several reports from this office attach blame on to government officials for the poor performance of government. Problems cited for poor performance include high non-compliance with the supply chain and procurement policies, irregular expenditure and lack of accountability (Fourie & Malan, 2020). The Auditor General also attributes poor performance of government to the manner in which government officials conduct its business. In the 2019 report, the Auditor General said:

reasons for inadequate performance are poor project planning, poor project and financial management, poor monitoring of projects and grants as well as lack of corrective action to address project failures and SCM [Supply Chain Management] irregularities (Auditor General South Africa, 2019:75).

As identified by the Auditor General in its various reports, government performance is not adequate and since the EPWP is implemented through government projects, it is affected by all the challenges in the public sector. As much as there are limited financial resources, government institutions are not doing what is expected of them.

Performance in government is apparently not monitored properly by the employer. The Auditor General South Africa has on several occasions raised concerns over government employees neglecting their duties but there is no consequence management because the old trend remains unperturbed. In the Auditor General's 2019 report, there were concerns of lack of accountability in government. This report highlighted that there is a continued decline in accountability in local government, some departments and public entities (AGSA, 2019). This assessment was similar to that of the 2017-2018 financial year report. Implementing public bodies have their own performance challenges and the EPWP has been caught up in this web of challenges. One of the reasons could be cadre deployment and lack of capacity at senior management level which reduce the state's ability to reign in officials that are not performing.

Fourthly, cumbersome project administration requirements have also been cited as one of the reasons for poor implementation of projects. Of the EPWP officials who

participated in the survey, 23.5% said that projects are not implemented at times due to challenges with project administration. EPWP projects require registration and verification of information which takes time. However, some EPWP officials disagreed with this. For example, one official who took part in the interviews said:

capacity is an issue in government, but the programme is not taken seriously by some public bodies. It is treated as a Department Public Works and Infrastructure 'thing' so some stakeholders neglect it. They do not take the initiative to plan properly or implement and monitor their work (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

The EPWP is not a mandate of the implementing public bodies but these government entities are expected to create EPWP employment opportunities through their service delivery mandates. Government capacity is allocated according to the mandate of the institution and since EPWP is an add-on responsibility to the other functions of these institutions it relies on other units. Even if the programme may be too cumbersome in terms of its requirements, officials are also not making an effort to do the right thing as argued by Mr Pietersen.

Lastly, 17.6% of EPWP officials said that some projects are not implemented due to community unrest. Community buy-in is important in project implementation. At times some community groups and public bodies do not agree on project priorities, and as a result, certain groups in the community may refuse to allow a certain project to be implemented in their area. In addition, political leadership in municipalities and departments changes all the time. This tends to influence the planning and implementation of projects. Hlatshwayo (2017) found that local government elections held in 2016 led to a delay or cancellation of some projects because incoming political administration had to fulfil political promises made to the electorate, which meant that some compromises had to be made on projects.

At times, the community may not want the project implementer or not agree with the process used for recruitment of the workers in the project, resulting in stoppages to negotiate, thus, affecting budget expenditure for that particular year. This means that

plans to create employment opportunities in some areas had to be abandoned or redirected to other areas on instruction of the political leadership. There are similar observations by some studies who said that:

policy makers' fickleness and second thoughts frequently, but invariably, caused by a change in political leadership which may cause them to withhold funds or to divert funds already set aside for the project to other uses (Hirschman, 2015:53).

The employment contracts of political leadership are not aligned to the plans of their institutions, as a result projects that they would have started sometimes are abandoned before completion or they start after the leadership has left. There are instances of political interference in the programme. It seems to be a huge challenge to separate politics from administration. As a result, politicians have had a say or influence on implementation of government programmes instead of concentrating on policy. This programme has a significant role to play in the country. As Ticherneva (2012: 9) puts it, "... whatever its specific objective, it is often rationalized by the need to liberate individuals from the oppressive social conditions that prevent them from realizing their full potential and engage in meaningful work". These challenges affect the programme's ability to release people from the bondage of poverty and unemployment. Most importantly, shield women and youth from the harsh economic conditions in the country as well as empower them to get full time employment or sustainable income. This makes overcoming the pending challenges a priority for the programme.

These challenges if left unattended will continue to pull the programme down. Since they are long term challenges that have stuck with the programme since inception their continued existence has sabotaged the programme's potential. What has been lacking is a strategy by government to address these challenges despite several reports by the Auditor General South Africa raising concerns about the manner in which government officials conduct state business. It is these challenges that the International Monetary Fund identifies as key challenges that sabotage poverty reduction strategies. The EPWP as a poverty reduction strategy in the country needs

skilled labour to be able to implement projects or sub-programmes. Challenges identified in this programme puts its intended objectives at a disadvantage.

7.3.2 Low employment of women and youth

The programme's absorption of women and youth is very low. One of the EPWP officials who participated in the interviews said politicians are to blame for this because they interfere with recruitment. She said:

political interference in some wards lead to the stoppage of recruitment of certain EPWP workers and at times the whole project stops completely. There is a lot of favouritism which gives preference to people of certain political affiliation or a certain councillor's camp as a result project implementation is delayed by councillors looking for loyalists (Mrs Greyling, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

Government officials blame management and politicians for the poor performance in creation of work opportunities or absorption of women and youth. The EPWP officials especially, at provincial and local government, feel there is too much interference in their work leading to delays in implementation of projects. Politicians are said to reward their supporters with EPWP jobs, making it difficult for project implementers to comply with requirements of employment quotas of women and youth. One study revealed that ANC members who took part in party activities or form part of ward committees were given EPWP jobs (Hlatshwayo, 2017). Local government, especially councillors, play a big role in the recruitment of EPWP participants. Of the survey respondents who were working on the programme, 14% said that they were recruited directly by the councillor, which clearly points to their influence in recruitment, and in the creation of employment opportunities. Involvement of politicians in EPWP recruitment processes means that they have influence in the selection of who gets the EPWP employment and on implementation of projects.

There is poor consultation within the programme, which leads to misalignment of EPWP targets with public body budgets. Of the respondents, 47% felt that misalignment of targets and budget allocation led to lack of financial resources and

the failure to create employment opportunities. Targets are set over a five-year period at the start of the phase, and do not take into consideration budget revision as well as reallocations which occur each financial year. A report to Parliament on implementation of Phase 3 indicated that the EPWP sets unrealistic targets which most public bodies are not able to achieve. In response, the parliamentary portfolio committee suggested that the programme should align targets to the budgets of the public bodies (Department of Public Works, 2019). The EPWP targets are set and public bodies always have to figure out how to achieve them despite lack of financial resources. Financial challenges faced by the country and the now perennial budget cuts affect employment targets set for EPWP because there should be resources for public bodies to be implement projects and employ people.

Budget constraints contribute to poor creation of employment opportunities with 17.6% of the EPWP officials who took part in the survey saying that budget cuts impede the growth in creation of employment opportunities by public bodies. This was supported by one EPWP official who said:

Our budgets are cut and EPWP work opportunities are not revised according to budget cuts. We end up reprioritising projects and in the end people we are supposed to employ end up not getting the opportunity (Mr Gill, Kuruman, Interview, 17 October 2020).

Some EPWP officials said they agreed that government faces financial resource constraints, but they also thought that project implementers were not making an effort to maximize creation of employment opportunities. Another EPWP official who participated in the interviews said:

a lot of government entities have no project managers or engineers, and some projects are implemented with no project plans or designs just people doing things from their heads (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

Labour intensity requires proper planning in which the implementer carefully calculates the labour, but this was not happening in most projects to the detriment of the creation of employment opportunities.

Outsourcing of government work was cited as another reason for poor creation of employment opportunities for women and youth. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the surveys said:

our programme implementers do not make an effort to look for women and youth to be employed in their projects. At times their activities are not attractive to these groups (Mr Adams, Kimberley, Interview, 3 October 2020).

Of the EPWP officials who took part in the survey, 11% said that service providers implementing projects on their behalf are not willing to employ a lot of people. Infrastructure projects are implemented by contractors or service providers, so are Social and Non-state sector projects, which are implemented by non-profit organisations. When project implementation is outsourced, control is taken away from the project owner, especially where monitoring systems are as poor as is the case with government projects. However, government officials are to blame for this challenge because they neglect monitoring their specified tasks in the project. The Auditor General has cited feeble monitoring as cause for the parlous government performance (AGSA, 2019). In such cases, project implementers compromise the creation of employment opportunities and the quality of EPWP reports.

Poor project administration was also identified as a challenge leading to poor creation of employment opportunities on the programme. Of the EPWP officials who took part in the survey, 41% said that jobs are created but are not reported due to poor administration. Employment created is reported on the EPWP reporting system. A report on EPWP by the South African Cities Network (2017:43) stated that, "...changes to the reporting system requirements made in 2015/16 led to data relating to projects being non-compliant and so projects and work opportunities created could not be reported". As a result, some data is discarded because it is unreliable thus losing track of work opportunities created.

As much as creation of employment is a challenge, poor monitoring of projects also contributes to the lacklustre performance of the programme. This is said to have

resulted in poor reporting by some public bodies. The fact that some data on employment opportunities cannot be reported has been cited as one of the reasons why achievements by some municipalities and departments are not tangible (South African City Networks, 2014:34). A study by Melody and Zonyana (2017) have also argued on the challenges of reporting saying that in the City of Cape Town, the EPWP unit is understaffed, the reporting system is a challenge, there are always reports required on an *ad hoc* basis and there is also no vertical or horizontal integration in the programme. Most EPWP offices are said to be understaffed, resulting in staff from other units doing EPWP work which hinders the smooth implementation of projects because, often such staff are also busy with tasks from their own departments. This is further exacerbated by a complex reporting system which tends to overburden officials, thus affecting creation of employment opportunities as officials spend a lot of time on reporting responsibilities.

Local government is cited as a contributor to the poor performance of the infrastructure sector due to poor reporting (Department of Public Works, 2018). EPWP officials feel employment opportunities are created but due to administrative challenges, they are not recorded in the EPWP reporting system. Public bodies have expressed their displeasure with the programme's reporting system. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews elaborated on this saying:

we need a less cumbersome reporting system. The programme almost fell flat due to the new reporting system which came with stringent requirements, we had a lot of projects that we could not report, and we had to spend a lot of time attending system training. The system would crash a lot and there will be a lot of missing data. I think Public Works (meaning Department of Public Works and Infrastructure) should rethink this thing of changing systems in every phase, its disruptive (Mr Gill, Kuruman, Interview, 17 October 2020).

EPWP officials have been unhappy with the EPWP reporting system. When a new reporting system was introduced in 2015, the programme saw a huge fall of 42 percentage points in growth of employment created, from 9% in 2014 to -33% in 2015. All sectors saw a fall in the creation of employment opportunities of between -

33% and -71%. In the Environment and culture sector work opportunities fell by -33%, -50% for Social and Infrastructure sectors and the Non-state sector NPO programme -71%. The four sectors contributed a total of 533 447 decline in work opportunities created compared to 2014. On the other hand, the Non-state sector Community Work Programme reported an increase of about 400% work opportunities.

One of the EPWP officials who took part in the interviews who is familiar with the situation laid blame on the implementers of projects. He said, *“the quality of EPWP data is an issue because public bodies do not want to comply with the programme’s guidelines, as a result some of the employment opportunities created in this financial year could not be reported”* (Mr Pietersen, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020). Despite the reporting challenges the programme is not growing in the creation of employment opportunities as expected.

Inasmuch as the new reporting system was meant to ensure quality data is reported, its teething problems are said to have lasted for too long resulting in poor performance of the programme. However, there is also a perception among EPWP officials that public bodies do not take the EPWP reporting system seriously. Mr Pietersen went on to say:

programme implementers are not providing the required reports for reporting. Their information is either incomplete or unreliable therefore making even payment of EPWP wages difficult.

Given that government policy direction depends on quality data provided, it is important that reports are accurate and reliable. Success of the programme depends on reliable data and if monitoring and reporting is not done properly, the whole programme suffers.

The short duration of projects has also been blamed for low creation of employment opportunities. Of EPWP officials who took part in the survey, 5.9% said that some

projects are too short and cannot be reported. At times, public bodies employ people for a few days or weeks, depending on the project, to complete a certain task and these work opportunities are not reported. One EPWP officials who took part in the interviews said:

Some of these employment opportunities are not reported because administration requirements to report requires a lot of paperwork in which when compared to the time an individual will spend at work it is not worthy reporting it. As a result, some EPWP created work opportunities are not reported (Mrs Bhala, Interview, Kuruman, 12 October 2020).

At times created employment opportunities are not reported due to their duration and officials feel due to compliance requirements they would rather not report. Since duration of project determines the duration of time spent at work, employment opportunities created in shorter projects end up falling through the cracks.

However, some EPWP officials said that resistance to change by government employees is one of the challenges faced by the programme. One EPWP official said, “*public servants resist change either out of fear of losing their jobs or performing new tasks*” (Mr Mndunge, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020). By so doing they tend to compromise the objectives of the programme. Public servants prefer to stay in their comfort zones. Innovation or new models that take them out of their comfort zone is resisted. The public choice theory says that public employees tend to push own objectives instead of interests of the public (Ritchie, 2014). As a result, the aim of the programme to provide relief to the vulnerable is compromised because the interests that come first are those of politicians and civil servants. This also reduces the programme’s growth potential because innovative initiatives that have a potential to create more employment opportunities will be limited by the project implementers who would want to remain in their comfort zone or push own interests.

7.3.3 Low skills development for women and youth

Poor consultation between workplace and training implementers is one of the reasons leading to the failure of the programme to provide relevant skills. For example, Thabo, a 26-year-old male from Glenred Village in Kuruman, who holds a Grade 12 certificate with five subjects. Thabo has been struggling to get to tertiary education because he did not do well in Mathematics and Science subjects. He expressed his frustration in the lack of relevant skills, yet he intends to do a plumbing course. Thabo joined the EPWP in 2018 working as a tracer at a hospital in Kuruman. He and others are supposed to look for defaulters, i.e. people who are no longer taking chronic medication, and bring them back to the hospital system. He is not happy with the training that he received. The hospital that he was placed in gave him a cleaning responsibility, something that he did not want and was not trained to do. He expected to work in the community tracing people who are no longer taking medication and bringing them back to the system, yet now finds himself cleaning the hospital instead, work that is supposed to be done by permanent cleaning staff.

He is not performing the tasks he joined the programme to do. The workshop he attended is not relevant to his current duties, so it was a waste of resources. Young people like Thabo find themselves frustrated in the EPWP programme because they have career ambitions that are firstly, overlooked, secondly, they find themselves in incomplete or unaccredited training courses that do not help them in the work environment. In the final analysis, the workplace tends to abuse them by giving them duties that have nothing to do with what they were recruited for or trained on.

Some young people drop-out, fail and end up not completing their qualifications. In such cases the programme does not contribute to the skills needed by the country. The EPWP apparently develops skills for very few participants but some who get a chance to refine and sharpen their skills drop out or lose certificates received from the programme. This is a major drawback given that, already, there are very few young people with access to training in a country with such low skills. An EPWP

official who once saw a majority of learners drop-out from a training programme expressed concern about this. He said, “*we once had a skills development programme where 66% of the learners dropped out. This was a waste of resources given that this was a short skills programme. We could have taken a few people on a full qualification*” (Mr Modise, Interview, Pretoria, 3 October 2020).

The EPWP officials have diverse opinions on the reasons for this trend. Some EPWP officials think that this is because young people cannot cope with the amount of work required in the skills development environment. One EPWP official said:

Young people lack emotional intelligence which enable them to endure a training programme to the end when they feel a bit of pressure on one programme they hop to the next learnership or move to a better paying learnership. In the end there is no qualification achieved. (Mr Nzama, Interview Kimberley, 3 October 2020).

This could be due to lack of support structures to prepare and support youth for the world of work. In addition, this could be due to lack of coordination within the government institutions, thereby allowing young people to change from one skills development programme to another without any detection.

Another EPWP official said some young people do not commit themselves much to skills development. She said, “*Some EPWP participants lose certificates or use the certificates received from skills development to make fire especially for short skills programmes*” (Mrs Nagel, Interview, Kimberley, 3 October 2020). Another EPWP official had a different view about this. She questioned the recruitment process and the support structures for the practical component in skills development. According to her, government seems insincere in implementing skills development. She said:

the main challenge with training is that some learners fail to complete their courses because of failure to cope with the chosen qualification and others realize after enrolment that they have chosen a course that they are not interested in. Work placement for the practical component of training is a problem because some learners fail to get employers where they can do practicals due to geographical locations since some may be from the rural areas or small towns (Mrs Mngoma, Interview, Pretoria, 12 October 2020).

A lack of mental preparedness among some young people causes them to fail to cope with some chosen skills development programme and they end up dropping out. The programme has not implemented skills development in a holistic way and recruitment, screening and implementation continue not to be done properly before an intervention is implemented. As much as skills development is emphasised lack of a systematic way to recruit and manage it renders the whole exercise futile and a waste of government resources.

7.4 Chapter Summary

In the previous two chapters, this thesis demonstrated how government's response to the country's unemployment and poverty challenge has been inadequate, especially in dealing with these challenges among women and youth. This failure has been attributed to a number of weaknesses and challenges of the programme. This chapter explored these weaknesses and challenges, highlighting two key issues: firstly, that policy cracks have led to the programme's failure to swiftly respond to structural unemployment or poverty challenges among women and youth thus, allowing implementers to define what to do and in the process compromising the programme's intended objectives. Secondly, a lack of policy has also limited the potential of this programme. The programme cannot maximize its potential without a robust policy guidance. The absence of policy guidance has left grey areas in some critical programme functions, such as the funding of sustainable livelihoods. This makes policy development an urgent and critical matter for the programme.

Lastly, the government's way of doing business has tainted the good intentions of the EPWP. These challenges have continued to haunt government and the EPWP implementation model is equally affected. It is worth noting that these challenges are not a new phenomenon. They have been around since the Special Employment Creation Programme (SECP) that was implemented by the apartheid government in 1983, and the country has not been able to solve these challenges in over 30 years. On several occasions, the Auditor General of South Africa has expressed concerns

over the manner in which government business is handled by its officials, but these have been ignored because of a lack of consequence management. For a very long time government entities have been blamed for failing to provide public goods and services. These entities have responded by citing lack of capacity (human and financial), corruption challenges, the political principals interfering in their work and community unrests hindering their ability to operate. The next chapter concludes this thesis. It presents an overview discussion on key issues, conclusions and policy implications of the findings of this thesis.

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

“Nihil do nobis, sine nobis”- Poland, 1505⁵⁷

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis and presents detailed arguments on the key issues that have led to persistent and high structural unemployment, especially among women and youth in the country. Structural unemployment, a legacy of the apartheid era in South Africa, affects women and youth the most. It is evident that beyond the oppressive rule, structural unemployment has persistently affected women and youth mostly, due to systematic labour market exclusions. Such exclusions have continued to dominate the country’s capacity to generate meaningful employment opportunities (Haider, 2016; ILO, 2017, 2018). These impacts have forced government to come up with innovative ways to address the challenge, with several policy instruments proposed from both the ‘demand side’⁵⁸ and the ‘supply side’⁵⁹ (Government Gazette, 2014*b*; McCord, 2005; Maskaeva & Msafiri, 2021; South African Government, 2020).

This thesis strove to provide an evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), an employment creation tool for South Africa, paying particular attention to the unemployment challenge facing women and youth in the country. Central to the objectives of this study was to provide an in-depth understanding of how the EPWP, as South Africa’s PEP, has responded to structural unemployment questions relative to the gender and youth cohorts. The study examined the role of the programme in cushioning these groupings by providing temporary work, and in skilling the unskilled in response to labour market demands. The weaknesses and associated challenges of the EPWP were also assessed.

⁵⁷ ‘Nothing about us without us’ (Lang, R., 2019)

⁵⁸ Expanded Public Works Programme, National Treasury’s Job Fund and the youth wage subsidy

⁵⁹ Promotion of employability of youth, Presidential Youth Employment Intervention, Youth Employment Service and skills development

The key question asked in this study was to what extent the Expanded Public Works Programme, in its various forms, has addressed structural unemployment through the provision of employment to vulnerable population groups, particularly women and youth, in the post-apartheid South Africa. To answer this question, the study adopted a mixed methods approach consisting of primary quantitative and qualitative data collection from women and youth in EPWP sites in Sol Plaatje (Kimberley) and the Joe Morolong Local Municipality (Gamothibi and Glenred Villages), in the Northern Cape Province. In addition, primary data was generated from EPWP officials in Kuruman, Kimberley and at the EPWP Head Office (Pretoria), where officials addressed national issues.

Primary data was collected from former EPWP participants on how they have integrated into the labour market and the challenges they have encountered in accessing employment. The former EPWP participants are from the Northern Cape Province, but due to unavailability of employment opportunities in this province, some have migrated to other provinces in the country. The primary data was supplemented with secondary data drawn from a review of literature from government, labour market stakeholders and EPWP as well as media reports. This thesis is based on the notion that the socio-economic landscape shaped by colonial and apartheid laws, biased racial development and various other oppressive measures, led to the emergence and persistence of the uneven unemployment demographics that are sore characteristics in the country today (Currie & de Waal, 2005; Marais, 2001; Rotich, 2015; World Bank Group, 2018). Close to three decades after democratic rule came to South Africa, the country has not been able to overcome these unemployment challenges.

Chapter 1 of this study illustrated how systematic racial exclusions of the past created employment deprivation among the majority, against the background of a restructuring economy, leaving them trapped in poverty and unemployment (Altman, 2004; Marais, 2001; McCord & Bhorat, 2003). The democratic government inherited a fragile and declining economy, and a society characterised by high racial tensions in the workplace, and poor access to basic services. The new government quickly

sought to redress these challenges through a number of policies aimed at the promotion of equality and national cohesion (McCord & Borat, 2003; Moon, 2017; Terreblanche, 2002).

In its response to the employment crisis, and as had been observed elsewhere, South Africa introduced the EPWP as a temporary measure to provide short-term employment and to reskill the unskilled (Department of Public Works, 1997; Mail and Guardian, 2004). Two key issues have dominated discussions in the previous chapters. Firstly, women and youth continue to struggle to access EPWP employment and skills development opportunities. This is despite the commitment made in Phase Three (3) of the implementation of the programme that at least 55% of beneficiaries would be drawn from these groups (Department of Public Works, 2019). This failure has been blamed on unclear policy guidance and a lack of commitment by government officials who have failed to attend to women and youth unemployment challenges. As a result, government's emphasis on solving challenges experienced by these groups have been reduced to mere rhetoric.

The second key issue discussed hitherto is the poor performance by government, which is linked to public choice theory assumptions (Ritchie, 2014). In addition, lack of capacity and financial resources across all spheres of government have hindered the programme's success. These are long standing mysteries that have been experienced by the country even before the dawn of democracy. These challenges have sabotaged the good intentions of the programme, thus depriving women and youth's structural unemployment challenge the attention it deserves. Evidence discussed in the above chapters proves that women and youth continue to face employment and skills development challenges even in specially designed programmes like EPWP that are meant to cushion them.

The EPWP continues to contend against challenges. The manner in which government business is conducted has affected implementation of projects and hindered achievement of the programme objectives on the creation of employment

opportunities and skills development. Furthermore, they have impeded the capacity of the programme to transition participants into the labour market, undermining the pro-poor policy thrust of the government. The EPWP is regarded as a programme set to create temporary employment and facilitate labour market entry or provide some rebound for the unemployed.

This thesis acknowledges that PEPs or PWP are traditionally crisis relief programmes. As highlighted in Chapter 2, traditionally, PEPs or PWPs have been used in Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America to cushion the poor and unemployed. They have been used during short-term crises such as drought, sharp economic downturns or war, and have also gained popularity as strategies for addressing long-term challenges such as food insecurity, unemployment and poverty (Department of Public Works, 2009; Derjadin, 1996; Frances Perkins Centre, 2014; Nath, 2021; Subbaro *et al.*, 2013; von Braun *et al.*, 1991). The choice of the EPWP in South Africa was therefore influenced by the socio-economic crisis in the country, a challenge with its roots in apartheid rule which systematically removed the majority from key economic sectors, relegating them to cheap labour pools meant for the mines and farms (Marais, 2001; Rotich, 2015; Terreblanche, 2002). The new government needed a strategic way to bring the majority back into full economic participation.

This chapter is divided into four sections. It commences with a discussion on ‘*why*’ and ‘*how*’ the EPWP has not been able to provide the much-needed relief to youth and women unemployment or facilitate their labour market integration in South Africa. The second part of the chapter presents the conclusion derived from this study. The third part of the chapter advances the policy implications of the study, and proffers a programme design for the EPWP which adapts the established short-term crisis relief philosophy behind PEPs. It seeks to enable the realisation, in the local context, of what Phillip (2013a) termed the ‘*transformative potential*’ of PEPs. The chapter concludes with suggested areas for future research which could be explored to advance knowledge on addressing challenges faced by the poor.

8.2 Conceptual issues

The EPWP policy is well-intentioned, having been identified as one of the strategies to build this country's labour force in the post-apartheid era. The programme's model is guided by principles of PEPs or PWP's which are uniform globally and emphasise short-term crisis relief. In addition, the EPWP assumes that:

1. The programme reaches the poor, unskilled, unemployed and the majority of these are women and youth;
2. EPWP participants receive capacity-building as part of the package for participating in the programme;
3. EPWP participants develop interest in income-generating activities, participate in skills development initiatives or they participate on job search initiatives;
4. Participants receive income, create community assets and receive entrepreneurship support; and
5. Participants access full-time employment or entrepreneurship opportunities upon exit from the programme.

These assumptions about the EPWP have been seminal in guiding government decision-making and analysis of the programme policy by researchers. This study challenged most of these assumptions except for the assumption (1) which relates to the programme reaching the poor, unskilled and the unemployed, and part of assumption (4) which relates to participants receiving income, accessing temporary employment and the creation of assets through the programme. The other assumptions are not challenged because they are incorrect and there is a lack of empirical evidence.

In analysing the EPWP as a policy meant to cushion the unemployed or unskilled women and youth through the provision of temporary employment or skills development, this thesis considered the lived experiences of EPWP active and

former participants and project implementers. The study challenges these assumptions based on the findings with which its analytical method made use of thematic⁶⁰ analysis. Four themes were identified (See Table 8.1 below) as key themes emerging from the data in response to the main question on the effectiveness of the programme as an employment creation tool, with special focus on the employment of women and youth.

Table 8.1 Data analysis themes

Main Theme	Sub-Theme
1. The EPWP's response to gender and youth challenges	a. EPWP policy b. EPWP implementation
2. The EPWP's response to women and youth's structural unemployment challenge	a. Creation of temporary employment for women and youth b. Labour market effects c. Transition to full employment
3. Skills contribution by the EPWP	a. Skills development for women and youth b. Labour market response through capacity building
4. The EPWP's weaknesses and challenges	a. Programme weaknesses b. Programme challenges

EPWP lacks policy to implement its projects or sub-programmes

The study established that the EPWP lacks a policy framework and its implementation is based on a weak strategic plan which is undermined by the implementing public bodies. The discussion in sub-section 4.2.2 of the study confirmed that the programme does not have its own policy, and its implementation depends on two pieces of legislation, which are the Ministerial Determination and the Code of Good Practice. This has led to the programme being criticised by scholars, among them, Chakwizira (2010) and Moeti (2013), who have argued that the programme's implementation is ineffective due to the lack of policy guidance.

⁶⁰ "...is a method for systematically identifying, organising and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset" (Braun & Clarke, 2012:2).

The failure by the programme to generate its own implementation policy instrument suggests that the government underestimates the challenges faced by the vulnerable, who are its target for relief, especially women and youth in the labour market. A programme of such magnitude in a country faced with structural, gendered and age-related unemployment and poverty requires a clearly specific policy framework for its implementation to achieve the envisaged relief impact. Without such guidance, the programme suffers from inadequate implementation, for instance, the insufficient prioritisation given to skills development since implementation is not guided but depends on the discretion of project implementers. In addition, initiatives to transition participants into permanent employment are limited and efforts by government employees towards achieving these are also minimal.

EPWP targets employment of vulnerable groups

The findings in Chapter 4 verified that the EPWP targets employment of the vulnerable, including women, youth and people living with disabilities. In its strategy, it emphasises employment of these groups with Phase Three (3) of programme implementation, setting an employment quota of 55% for women and youth, and 2% for people living with disabilities (Department of Public Works, 2019). This has been a common approach in PEPs or PWP as was the case in India where MGNREGA targeted 33% women, while in Argentina, the programme targeted 71% women, of whom 60% were single (Berg *et al.*, 2018; Kostzer, 2008). In addition, literature shows that, indeed, the EPWP supports empowerment of women. Studies by Baijnath (2012), Chakwizira (2010), Mohapi (2013), Nzimakwe (2008) and Phillip (2013*b*) concur, stating that the programmes are a way to address gender inequality and they give women a chance to access employment and enact their abilities through remunerated work, which gives them some degree of financial freedom.

EPWP provides normal employment conditions

Firstly, the programme abides by the country's labour legislation⁶¹ in terms of working environment as confirmed by 94.5% of the survey respondents, while 100% of the respondents confirmed that they have employment contracts. This was also supported by one of the interview participants who is an EPWP official (Mr Pietersen) in sub-section 5.2.1 who emphasised the importance of ensuring a suitable work environment. Employment in the country is guided by the labour laws. The EPWP programme abides by the country's legislation and therefore ensures that people work under normal employment conditions.

Secondly, the programme provides temporary employment and income transfers. Some of the EPWP participants indicated that the programme is the only employment option they have in their locality. For example, Kealagile, from Glenred Village, said it is the only employment option for them because in the rural areas there are limited employment opportunities or 'skrops' (piece job) as discussed in sub-section 5.3.1. This view is equally endorsed by a study by Meth (2011) who argues that the unemployed have no choice but to join the EPWP or remain without a job.

The EPWP is similar to Ipeleng in Botswana, a programme that was launched in 2008 to reduce poverty (Nthomang, 2018). Numerous studies point to the potential capacity of these programmes to create employment, alleviate poverty and develop skills (Dejardin, 1996; Maphanga & Mazenda, 2019; Mohapi, 2013; Nzimakwe, 2008; Overseas Development Institute, 2004). The EPWP also transfers income to the people employed by the programme, which is used to cover household needs of the beneficiaries. This was confirmed by Hilda from Greenpoint, in sub-section 4.5.1, who said she uses the income for her household expenses. Studies by Dyantyi and Fore (2019), Hlatshwayo (2017) and Mohapi (2013) also confirmed these findings.

⁶¹ Occupational Health and Safety Act Number 85 of 1993, Compensation for Injuries and Diseases Act Number 130 of 1993 and Basic Conditions of Employment Act Number 75 of 1997

Lastly, the EPWP pays below minimum wage except in roles where skilled labour is required, in which it pays sector specific wages. This is done in order to ensure that the programme does not displace full-time employment by not paying the equivalent to the minimum wage which would certainly deter people from looking for full-time work. Women and youth that earn these wages say that it is not enough to cover their living expenses because they have families fully depending on it. In most cases, it is the only income they have except for those who earn other government grants. Some of the EPWP participants supplement their wages with income from other sources such as *stokvels*, selling of Tupperware or Avon Products, or other income generating activities. This was the case with one of the interview participants Gadifele, an EPWP participant from Kimberley as discussed in section 5.4 of this thesis. This is also supported by a study on the EPWP by Mohapi (2013), who recognises that other sources of income such as *stokvels* supplement EPWP income.

Women and youth continue to fall through the EPWP employment cracks

The EPWP is too miniscule to address the country's unemployment challenge. This view was shared by one of the interview respondents who is an EPWP participant in sub-section 5.2.2, Nolwazi, from Gamothibi Village. She said that some women waited for three (3) years to participate in the programme because there was no budget to pay their wages. Of the EPWP officials who responded to the surveys, 47% said that the programme does not take into consideration budgetary constraints because implementation is done through service delivery projects that have fiscal challenges. The EPWP has contributed little temporary employment, with only 15% to 22% of the unemployed by Altman and Hemson (2007), Bokolo (2013), Meth (2011), Nzimakwe (2008), and the Overseas Development Institute (2004) who critique the scale of such programmes.

The proponents of these programmes contend that they can provide some temporary relief to the unemployed but the size of these programmes limit their

ability to provide the much needed relief in the implementing countries as is the case with South Africa's EPWP. In its current form, the EPWP has not reached its full potential to contribute to cushioning of the unemployed in the country. The EPWP's five year targets have consistently failed to offer the number of jobs required annually. In the country, over 80% of the unemployed are not absorbed either by government (through the EPWP) or private sector annually. These targets are set but budget constraints that are not addressed on time foment the anomalies between projection and reality.

Women and youth continue to find themselves trapped in the structural unemployment predicament because of a lack of sincerity by the government in implementing its commitment to their empowerment. The EPWP has struggled to meet the 55% (Phase Three) employment quota for women and youth especially in the infrastructure sector. The programme has failed to follow labour intensity guidelines, thereby limiting its potential to create the much needed employment opportunities. This has been the case even at local government level where both district and local municipalities which largely invest in infrastructure projects have failed to absorb these groupings or formulate activities that attract them.

Some of the reasons given for this are, for example, failure to get women who want to work on these projects as highlighted by Mr Mbana, an EPWP official who took part in the interviews as discussed in sub-section 5.3.2. In the case of youth, it is said that at times project implementers fail to get young people who meet the minimum requirements to undertake certain projects. This came from an interview with Mr Nzama, an EPWP official from Kimberley in sub-section 5.3.2, in which he said at times they struggle to get young people who meet minimum requirements. The programme therefore falls short in providing the much needed employment relief for women and youth who are most affected by the structural unemployment challenge.

There have been suggestions to expand the programme, for example by the Parliament of the Republic in 2019, studies such as Oosthuizen *et al.*, (2009); Parenzee and Budlendar (2016); Bokolo (2013) and others. These suggestions have also come from some EPWP officials who took part in the study (for example, Mr Pietersen and Mr Adams in Chapter 5 suggested that the programme needs more projects to employ people). Creation of employment through the programme continues to be high on the government agenda despite inconsistencies between policy and implementation. The programme's potential is bigger than what has been portrayed in its current form. These suggestions of expansion have seen its potential and especially coming from the implementers who are involved on the ground it means if expansion areas are properly identified it can absorb more people.

However, the programme's reach and impact is far removed from meeting the need among the unemployed and this is worsened by the 'short-term crisis relief or safety net' philosophy. This makes the intervention to be incongruent with the nature of the unemployment challenge in South Africa, which is long-term in nature. A long-term challenge requires a solution that is suitable for such and as a result a short-term approach might not bring any results. The programme needs to move beyond the current short-term crisis relief because the countries that used this approach were indeed in short-term crises. Findings by Altman & Hemson (2008); Meth, (2011) and others point to the fact that the programme is excluded in the active labour market policy. If the country is to go far in solving the structural unemployment challenge a more innovative approach is required.

Women and youth have been deprived from benefitting either from short-term employment or labour market rebound. Conflict between monetary and fiscal policy prescriptions has been another challenge. The country adopted 'inflation targeting'⁶² monetary policy strategy which has led to emphasis on keeping 'inflation' under control or point inflation target, a policy that can be inefficient in times of supply side

⁶² a policy that is popular in developed world countries like Canada, Sweden, Spain, New Zealand, USA and Australia and emerging economies such as Chile, Brazil and South Africa (with 3-6% target range adopted in the year 2000)

shocks such as increases in oil prices (International Monetary Fund, 1999; Kamal, 2010; Mboweni, 1999; Muhanna, 2006). Given the country's challenges one would have expected a monetary policy that supports employment creation such targeting of wages, employment or economic growth. In addition, the country's recent austerity⁶³ measures that have had effects on government spending also do not support employment creation through fiscal expansion. These findings challenge government's approach by emphasizing that good policies not rhetorical statements translate to positive developmental outcomes.

The EPWP scope is too wide and complicated

Weaknesses and challenges of the EPWP discussed point out two important issues. Firstly, EPWP scope is too wide as a result the programme is found fumbling between lots of responsibilities. Despite being implemented by all government spheres the programme needs to streamline and identify a niche that only EPWP can provide. The debate on creation of employment needs revisiting with questions being raised on quantity and quality of employment opportunities. Given the country's challenges multiple objectives are necessary but they are one of the reasons for the failure of PEPs in general. The reality is that the programme cannot do everything and there may be a need for other complimentary programmes to provide other functions.

Two critical issues are dominant in the country- poverty and unemployment. Given the current state of affairs both challenges have the same weight and therefore they both need an urgent attention. Increasing the quantity of jobs will cushion many against extreme poverty and not necessarily take them out of it. Concentrating on the quality of jobs (skills development and work experience aligned to labour market needs) will take people out of unemployment thus, becoming a long-term strategy to totally root out poverty. If the programme takes the former it can increase the current

⁶³ Sibeko, 2019

target for employment opportunities to absorb large numbers of the unemployed and only concentrate on providing temporary employment. This means government will need another strategy to build the country's capacity. If the programme chooses the later it means it will have to concentrate on labour market aligned skills development (artisan programmes and learnerships) and work experience.

Secondly, government alone cannot successfully implement the programme. There is a need for private sector involvement. Centrally to the Keynesian model, government intervention is necessary in the South African situation but the government alone cannot solve the challenge at hand. Government and private sector need to find a middle ground and work together to solve the country's challenge. In the current situation a standalone Keynesian Model or Neoliberalism approach cannot solve the country's challenge given the weaknesses or challenges by government in the case of the former and the interests of the markets in the case of the later. The emphasis on public-private partnerships needs to be taken into consideration to offset the weaknesses of each sector.

EPWP labour market contribution is limited

The labour market contribution of the programme is only in rhetoric as per the findings presented in section 5.5 of the study. There is high desire for full-time jobs among the EPWP participants, but they find themselves trapped in the programme because transition to full time employment is not possible. This is said to result from the following;

1. the time spent at work is very little for people to acquire experience to enable transition into employment. This came out in the discussions in sub-section 5.5.1 where major issues such as time spent at work were raised. The EPWP participants' time spent in projects is too short with EPWP officials raising this for example Mrs Bhala from Kuruman said employment is too short because it is linked to the duration of the project while Mr Adams from Kimberley said

they rotate participants in projects. This was also supported by data from surveys where 52.4% of the EPWP workers who participated in this study said that their contract duration is less than six (6) months. Since the programme is project based there is not enough time spent at work by the EPWP participants because their employment contracts are linked to the duration projects.

2. the quality of EPWP labour is very poor because are involved in unrelated activities as presented in Figure 5.6. For example, one of the EPWP workers, Kgosi has three (3) years' work experience having been involved in all four EPWP sectors. Kgosi has performed unrelated task in the three (3) spent on the programme and will therefore struggle to identify one particular economic sector to say it is the sector to apply for to for work. In addition, tasks performed also do not add value to the employment profiles of the participants. For examples, one of the EPWP officials Mr Adams from Kimberley who took part in the study said that tasks are allocated depending on what is available. Even if EPWP participants sign employment contracts, their tasks are not clear they end up doing anything that arises. Some of the EPWP workers also said some of the tasks do not improve their employment profiles.

In sub-section 5.6.2 one of the EPWP participants, Miranda from Glenred Village said that she has not learnt much from the programme. When she joins the labour market she is going to start from the bottom despite having spent eight years on the programme. What rose from these discussions is that the EPWP participants have two challenges with their activities firstly, they do not identify themselves with any sector of the economy and secondly, they are not confident of the work experience gained.

3. the EPWP is used as government low cost employment instead of a capacity building programme as pronounced in its launch. It displaces permanent jobs because there has been a tendency by public bodies to use EPWP participants on full-time tasks or key service delivery functions. As discussed

in sub-section 5.5.2 for example, Annelia, from Glenred, who works at a local school, does work that is supposed to be done by people who are employed on a full-time basis. Government institutions are using the EPWP workers to save on costs of employing full-time labour a trend that displaces full-time jobs. This was supported by several studies, including Baijnath (2012) and the Overseas Development Institute (2004) who found that the EPWP is causing unemployment through substitution of full-time jobs.

In sharing their labour market experiences some former EPWP participants said that with the right skills it is possible to gain full-time employment. Cases discussed in sub-section 5.6.2 illustrated two things. Firstly, the labour market requires skilled people. This was proven by people who have managed to successfully join the labour market on exiting the programme. Some of these former EPWP participants have been able to get full-time employment or start businesses and employ others. While those who failed to acquire necessary skills have continued to struggle to get employment. This was case with James a former EPWP participant discussed in sub-section 5.6.2. His case illustrated that where one has no relevant skill or has a partial skill, joining the labour market is impossible.

Secondly, it has come out clearly that employers need work experience. Post training work experience of a minimum of two years is required by some employers. Work experience only acquired during skills development is not enough. This was revealed in the interview with an EPWP participant (Innocentia) in sub-section 5.6.2 who has been working on short contracts because employers are looking for longer work experience post training. These cases illustrate that the labour market requires skilled people and these skills should go with relevant work experience. The labour market experiences and challenges shared by these former EPWP participants illustrate that the country's labour market is clear on the type of skills and work experience it requires.

The persistent skills shortage and rising levels of unemployment for women and youth in the country can largely be blamed on the design of the programme. Literature and empirical evidence presented by this study shows that the country requires a different approach to solve the challenge because the manner in which the programme is conceptualized does not respond to the current challenge. According to (Meth, 2011:7), "...to expect skills and training of any significance to be imparted to people who work for 70 days on a rural road maintenance project... is to engage in wishful thinking." Design problems are common in PEPs, for instance, the Ipeleng programme of Botswana has been criticised for benefiting the non-poor (Nthomang, 2018). In India, the MGNREGA was criticised for the lack of structures that support gender equality in the programme (Holmes & Jones, 2011*b*) thus, falling short of maximizing its potential. The design of a programme is directly linked to its outcomes.

The EPWP is a lower tier poverty trap

Chapter 6 of this thesis illustrated that skills development is limited, haphazard and is treated as a secondary priority by the programme. One of the EPWP officials, Mrs Nagel, said that some EPWP participants exit before receiving any training, and another official Mrs Bhala, added that there are pending training promises that have not been fulfilled by the programme. The unemployed need skills and experience which the programme should be providing, but skills development interventions reach less than 1% of people employed on the programme. This is very little compared to the number of unskilled people on the programme.

Skills development is not possible in a situation where it has no budget allocated, it focuses on short skills programmes, implementation is entangled in red tape, and it is undermined by implementing officials. Implementing public bodies look up to the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to provide skills development so they do not allocate funding for it but this is taking place at a very low scale. A study by Mogagabe (2016) noted that in cases where implementation is

done by a consultant, there is no enforcement of the business plan commitment to provide skills development. The literature has shown how the programme continues to exit participants who do not qualify for jobs in the active labour market (Bokolo, 2013; Chakwizira, 2010; Meth, 2010; Overseas Development Institute, 2004).

The programme currently focuses on unaccredited training or short skills training where participants are trained in more than one unrelated qualification. The practice adds little value to participants' skills and fails to prepare them to pursue careers of interest. The cases of Miranda and Kealagile discussed in section 6.5, who have acquired more than five (5) unrelated short skills programme qualifications are a stark illustration of this point. The labour market requires a full qualification for transition into full-time employment, which could be a minimum of a learnership or artisan programme. These minimum qualifications are very rarely offered in the EPWP.

Given that the unemployment challenge in the country is structural all government capacity building efforts are to be directed towards skilling and reskilling of people. The employers are very clear on the type of skills they need. EPWP workers can take part in learnerships or artisan programmes in skills development to prepare participants to successfully join the labour market. Short skills programmes can be used to build towards a full qualification if participants are trained in one qualification over time, accumulating credits in the same qualification each time they are involved in skills development.

However, in the current context, participants are trained in three (3) or four (4) short skills programmes that are not related. In the end, the participant has a few credits in several unrelated qualifications, which they cannot use to look for a job. The resources invested in skills development are therefore wasted. Critically, this practice hinders the successful exiting of participants from the programme to join full time employment as they do not have or acquire the requisite skills to enable the transition, so, they remain trapped in the programme. By so doing, the programme

is relegating on the commitment made by the then President Mr Thabo Mbeki who said the programme would assist to build the country's capacity (Mail and Guardian, 2004).

The EPWP participants receive soft skills training on managing personal finances and business skills. However, findings presented in sub-section 6.4.2 illustrated how entrepreneurship support continues to fall short of meeting the need and desired outcomes. Most EPWP participants' business ventures are in start-up phase and desperately in need of support to get on the path of eventually being sustainable. One of the EPWP participants who took part in this study Nolwazi, from Gamothibi village, said that her cooperative expects more support from the programme. She said they have been frustrated in her cooperative because this support is not forthcoming. Nolwazi acknowledges that this has hindered her cooperative's potential, leading to some of her colleagues losing patience with their business efforts and dropping out of the cooperative.

The programme offers only training (SIYB package) out of all available business support services, with participants and groups in need of further support being given referrals. Dladla and Mutambara (2018) have called this practice resorting to "*piece meal or referral syndrome*". Such approaches to entrepreneurship support are not sufficient if the programme is to channel people into self-employment. On several platforms entrepreneurship is flagged as another avenue for creating employment through self-employment. One EPWP official, Mrs van Rooyen, also confirmed this saying that the Enterprise Development Unit has no financial resources and is not even capacitated in the provinces, so officials do the bare minimum.

The manner in which the programme is handling this function is surprising given the emphasis on entrepreneurship as a way to create employment in the country through self-employment because the economy cannot employ everyone. The need to create sustainable employment is great. Literature emphasises that it is important for the programme to create sustainable employment beyond temporary EPWP work,

because short-term jobs do not take people out of poverty (Mtapuri, 2014; Mubangizi & Mkhize, 2013; Parenzee & Budlender, 2016). This gap between policy and reality emanates from the programme's short-term crisis relief approach which has been the known role of these programmes through-out the world.

The EPWP policy did not reflect the country's dynamics

There is general poor government performance which affects the performance of the programme. Mr Pietersen and Mr Adams, the EPWP officials quoted in Chapter 7, said lack of capacity or dependency on consultants coupled with government officials who do not care about the programme are hindering its success. These are standing challenges that have haunted government for a very long time. Another official, Mrs Greyling, said there is too much political and other interferences in government which lead to abandonment of some projects. On several occasions the Auditor General of South Africa has raised concerns about general defiance by government officials, lack of consequence management and poor performance within government institutions.

The programme has been unable to meet its annual targets because of many reasons, among them poor capacity, lack of skills to implement projects, in all government spheres, lack of financial resources, outsourcing of work, budget cuts, lack of commitment by government officials, poor administration skills, and interference by politicians or senior management which leads to abandonment of some projects, as discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis. The programme is caught up in the service delivery challenges that are typical at implementing public bodies who have a reputation of non-performance. In a nutshell, lack of funding, competing government priorities and government officials tiptoeing around the real challenges, are some of the reasons why the programme's envisaged contribution to addressing structural unemployment has not materialised.

The way government business is conducted is a concern (Auditor General South Africa, 2019). The country's progress is slowed by what has become '*a culture of government*' in South Africa, characterised by commonly acknowledged corruption, incompetence, political interference, wasteful expenditure and outsourcing of key functions, with several studies (Bokolo, 2013; McCutcheon & Parkins, 2012; Mogagabe, 2016; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2009; Overseas Development Institute, 2004) expressing concern on the matter. The EPWP is not spared from these challenges. Despite its well-intentioned objectives, it is implemented through the same government systems that have been severely criticised for inefficiency and other vices consistently over the years.

The country has long been experiencing service delivery challenges which is a long-term problem emanating from separatist development laws prior 1994 and the post-1994 weak provision of services (Modimowabarwa, 2014; Public Service Association, 2015). The programme is expected to create employment through government projects which already have many challenges that are not captured in the programme policy. As a result, the expectation that this programme will provide a cushion to the poor and unemployed will be hindered by these long standing challenges.

The country social dynamics also need to be taken into consideration. With estimates showing that more than 50% of young people in developing countries live in rural areas (Faith *et al.*, 2020), it means the unemployment challenge for this group requires a strategy that takes into consideration these dynamics. South Africa's inequality is due to racial differences and within races the location of people also affects their access to services such as education, health, employment opportunities and others. All these factors need to be taken into consideration in policy because they influence response of challenge to policy.

The EPWP work has a stigma that it is work for old people. Some young people find EPWP work to be unsuitable for them. This was confirmed by Mercy, an EPWP

participant from Veregenoerg, cited in Chapter 5 sub-section 5.3.1. She said that some participants drop out after joining the programme because they think the work is degrading. This group of participants complain that they do not learn much from the programme as they are assigned tasks they find demeaning and a waste of time especially for people who need experience for employment. As a result, some young people opt not to work than work on the programme. This affects the efforts by government to cushion young people and skill or reskill them in preparation for future employment opportunities. This challenge has not been captured by the programme in its transformation in different phases because by now there could be strategies to create activities attract young people.

The education system has not responded to labour market requirements. In Chapter 5 sub-section 5.3.2, one EPWP official, Mr Nzama, said some sub-programmes and projects fail to get participants with the minimum job entry requirements. Government acknowledges skills shortages especially in the construction sector, which is said to have resulted from a decline in apprenticeship training in the country (Government Gazette, 2014*b*). Some tasks in sub-programmes or projects have minimum entry requirements, but due to lack of some prerequisites such as Mathematics and Science subjects in some high school leaving participants in the communities the programme is unable to recruit women or young people in such activities. As a result, people lose out on job opportunities even if they are within their proximity.

In addition, interest in joining projects in the infrastructure sector is low, especially for women and youth. In Chapter 5 sub-section 5.3.2, one of the EPWP officials, Mrs Bhala from Kuruman said that in the local government sphere most projects are infrastructure projects. It is therefore difficult to meet targets for the employment of women or youth in these projects because these groups tend not to be interested in the construction work. These projects require low skills in general labour, and it is hard work. This is the biggest sector on the programme with more financial resources and work opportunities. However, it is one of the sectors that is not able to create activities that employ more women and youth.

There is also a high drop-out or failure rate in skills development initiatives with a less than 50% qualification rate recorded. In the case of the Northern Cape Artisan Programme cited in Chapter 6, only 48% of the learners enrolled qualified. For example, in sub-section 7.3.3 James from Roodepan who said he is struggling to find employment is one of the few former EPWP participants who was lucky to be enrolled onto the artisan programme. He was training as a boiler maker but could not pass one course which he has not been able to do on his own to get his trade test certificate. James has remained unemployed because he does not have a skill. If he had passed and obtained his trade test certificate he could be working as a boiler maker.

In addition, high drop-out rate is said to be due to a shortage of places for practical training component of skills development. The programme targets people in the townships and rural areas, which are places with limited employers and where government itself cannot provide employment opportunities for all trades. One of the EPWP officials, Mrs Ngoma, said the high drop-out rate is also due to lack of work placement opportunities for EPWP participants in certain trades. This was supported by literature, for example, the study by Mohapi (2013) which found that EPWP jobs are predominantly in short-term projects which cannot accommodate apprenticeship training or learnerships. Some areas do not have employers for certain trades and government has no capacity to place the participants.

8.3 Conclusion

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is highly compromised. It emerged from this study that it is used as a government low cost employment instead of a programme that builds capacity in the country. Evidence from primary data collected from former and current EPWP participants, officials and the literature, challenges the assumptions made firstly, on PEPs or PWP at a global level, and secondly, within the EPWP about the benefits that would accrue to women and youth from the programme. This thesis argues that the assumptions that guide PEPs or PWP

principles cannot be generalized throughout the world because these programmes are no longer deployed only to address short-term crises. The recent innovation by some countries have seen a rise in their incorporation as strategies to solve long-term and structural developmental challenges.

Thus, implementing country policy cannot be shaped by what happened in the USA during the Great Depression or in the former East Germany when the Berlin Wall fell, where conception and implementation of these programmes was to deliver short-term solutions. In these historic cases, when the crises ended, the economy was expected to rebound and provide employment. The same outcomes cannot be expected in the case of South Africa, which has deployed the EPWP in response to a long-term, very deeply entrenched, structural unemployment and broader poverty challenges. This provides a challenge to the current policy framework and supports suggestions for looking into active labour market policy as a uniquely South African policy solution (Altman & Hemson, 2008; Antonopolis & Toay, 2009; Meth, 2011).

As demonstrated in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, the EPWP will remain a semi-permanent programme, which is a lower tier poverty trap for the poor and unemployed. The programme has no strategy to exit participants to full-time income generating activities. The above challenges limit what Phillip (2013a) termed “the transformative potential” of PEPs. For the unemployed and unskilled who join the programme there is lack of supportive functions that ensure successful exit for permanent income activities. Some of the EPWP participants have been on the programme for over 10 years and they do not see a way out. The programme itself has not been able to figure out how to successfully exit them. Little skills development successfully done has proven that EPWP participants with the required skills can join the labour market. However, there has been some challenges identified by some former EPWP participants who have indicated that little experience gained from skills development limits their ability to get employment.

Furthermore, the aim to employ women and youth is treated as a secondary priority. While emphasized on paper, employment of women and youth has not met targets because the Infrastructure sector, which is the biggest employer on the programme, and the local government sphere are still dominated by middle-aged men. Evidence presented in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that women and youth still struggle to access employment or skills development in the EPWP. This is despite the high levels of unemployment among these groups, which are also the targeted beneficiaries of the programme. The programme is hindered by a plethora of long-standing government challenges which have undermined its main objective as pronounced by then President of South Africa Mr. Thabo Mbeki at its launch in 2004, namely, to develop the country's capacity.

Evidence presented above demonstrates that the status quo will remain intact unless policy finds a new strategy to support women and youth to emerge from the unemployment challenge. Current programme policy is based on unsubstantiated assumptions of the needs of women and youth, which has left these groups struggling with intractable unemployment challenges. The programme requires a policy that is based on lived experiences of these groups. Policy should incorporate the strategy in the 'White paper for post-school education and training' (Government Gazette, 2014*b*) produced by the Department of Higher Education and Training in 2014. The country needs skilled labour, so government efforts needs to be directed towards capacity development in the country.

8.4 Policy Implications

This thesis agrees with findings by Altman and Hemson (2007), Biyase and Broomberg (2011), Hlatshwayo (2017), Mubangizi and Mkhize (2013), McCord (2005, 2013), Meth (2010, 2011), and Nzimakwe (2008), that:

- i. the EPWP is too limited to cushion the poor and the unemployed; and

- ii. it is not able to facilitate labour market rebound of the unemployed through skills development or work experience.

It also confirms findings by Phillip (2013a) that PEPs have tended to suppress their potential by defining themselves as social protection interventions instead of labour market policies. This thesis supports the view that the employment creation role of PEPs is a critical socio-economic strategy of any country that cannot be left in the hands of the private sector alone (ibid). In addition, this thesis emphasizes the need for government's commitment to addressing the challenges faced by women and youth in the labour market, based on their lived experiences. This requires a holistic solution to the unemployment challenge. As Ayele *et al.*, (2017:25) proposes:

in order to address the youth employment challenge there is a need for integrated approaches involving different levels of government and multiple stakeholders, including relevant ministries, education and training providers and social partners.

Abrupt policies that are neither evidence-based nor effectively implemented do not yield desired results. Below, is a discussion on the policy implications of these findings on policy.

8.4.1 Broader policy implications

The analysis presented suggests that the country missed out on the opportunity of a total socio-economic overhaul in 1994, where all key sectors like the economy, education, public service and others would have been aligned to the new vision of the democratic government. Currently, the country is overwhelmed by challenges within and is having to keep up with global changes that have an impact internally. Below, are the key issues that should be addressed at a broader level in order to ensure effective policy implementation.

Building government networks

There is a need for coordination and integration within government to ensure synergy between different organs of the state to ensure ownership of government policy across all spheres. The tendency of government institutions of standing alone, without a supportive policy framework limits the potential of the state and also sabotages policy implementation. This is the feeling even at global level where government institutions are encouraged to work together. It was said that:

the traditional 'silo' approach to development taken by many countries in the past has been counterproductive and undermines the integrated planning approach necessary for achieving sustainable development (United Nations Development Programme, 2017:11 b).

Government institutions in South Africa need to be properly aligned for them to be effective. This was emphasised by a study by Pindus *et al.*, 2020:4 who said that: "characterised by features such as common intake and 'seamless' service delivery where the client may receive a range of services from different programs without repeated registration procedures, waiting periods or other administrative barriers". Some effective policies end up being tamed by lack of necessary support structures within government.

Government has room for cross-fertilization across all spheres and this will improve its efficiency and effectiveness. South African government structure which is monitored by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation can make use of the already existing reporting lines and various government structures or clusters to implement an integrated approach. Programmes like the EPWP can take advantage of this by ensuring that implementation is not treated as a responsibility of the coordinating department but all implementing government institutions treat the programme as own responsibility. A study by Melody and Zonyana (2017:24) emphasised the need for synergy saying: "...the challenge of proper alignment and exploitation of EPWP with strategic policies and frameworks is not just a local

government challenge, but a national issue that requires urgent and ongoing (structured) intervention.”

Stakeholder integration is critical for the programme because resources can be put into good use and objectives of government policy can be achieved if all pull to the same direction. Unlike the private sector, government institutions are not in a competition meaning that they can benefit more from collaborations. Pindus *et al.*, (2020:4) also added that “coordination tends to make each of the agencies more aware of services that the others are providing, resulting in more appropriate client referrals.”

Need to build state capacity

Government needs to improve its human resource base so that its operations are not reliant on consultants who tend to hike the cost of provision of government goods and services, and also compromise some government policy initiatives. The public service in the country needs to be transformed to align with Chapter 10 of the Constitution (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 1996). Currently, state employees lack skills, accountability, transparency, ethics, development orientation, efficiency and effectiveness (Auditor General South Africa, 2019; Muthien, 2014; Public Service Commission, 2019). Government efforts need to be directed towards building its capacity to deliver on public goods and service as mandated by the Constitution. The current state of affairs infringes on the rights of citizens as stated in Chapter 2 of the Constitution (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 1996).

This calls for the Department of Public Service and Administration to intervene by empowering its workforce, restoring ethics and tightening consequence management. Citizens of the country look up to the civil servants to provide public goods and community services. This is a structure which is expected to ensure each government entity delivers on its mandate. The government needs to *‘build a*

capable state' as referred to in Chapter 13 of the NDP (National Planning Commission, 2012). Government programmes like the EPWP will benefit from improvement in the quality of state capacity. As discussed in Chapter 7, the programme is pulled down by long standing government challenges which have hindered maximum performance. Government needs to change the manner in which its business is conducted. For a very long time government has been complaining about the conduct of its workforce but very little effort is going towards correcting the current state of affairs because the situation has not changed.

Align country's skills development to labour market needs

The country faces critical structural unemployment challenges which can only be addressed by an education system that responds to the needs of the labour market. It is said that lack of skills in the country forced 52% of the workforce into occupations they do not qualify for in 2018 (ILO, 2019c). The country's need for skills is very urgent. Government needs to address the root cause which is said to be due to unequal access to post-high school education, with 2016 estimates indicating 13.4% had access to post-high school education in urban areas, 8.6% in the farms, and 7.1% access in the rural areas of the country (ibid). Failure to access quality and equal basic education puts other people at a disadvantage from higher education up to the labour market. These discrepancies perpetuate unequal access to employment opportunities with people living in the rural areas and farms being at a far more disadvantage than the urban population.

The country needs to address this inequality so that the education output from any part of the country have similar characteristics. Some unemployed people miss out on the EPWP employment opportunities because they do not meet the minimum requirements of certain sub-programmes. One of the EPWP officials who took part in the study, Mr Nzama in sub-section 5.3.2 said that in some of the projects they fail to get people with minimum requirements. This is a limitation because these people are unskilled and their failure to meet EPWP minimum requirements for some projects

excludes them from the programme when they are already excluded in the labour market. This makes it difficult for their challenges to be solved. Education and employment requirements need to be aligned to ensure that people who exit the schooling system meet the labour market needs.

8.4.2 Specific policy implications

In its current form, the EPWP as a programme, is nowhere close to providing short-term socio-economic crisis relief or facilitating labour market rebound of the unskilled as expected. This conclusion is made based on three key observations: Firstly, failure by the programme to provide temporary relief to the unemployed women and youth; secondly, low empowerment of women and youth that hinders their transition to full time employment; and thirdly, the programme weaknesses and challenges that hinder its impact in addressing the unemployment challenge. These observations have implications on the EPWP policy, as well as in its design, which need to be reassessed in order to ensure effectiveness. In its current design, the programme is not able to provide the much-needed relief in the country and has unintentionally been reduced to a low tier poverty trap.

Develop programme policy

As much as the programme has been identified as a key government strategy to cushion the poor and unemployed, there is no policy that clarifies what this programme entails in full. Law makers and government officials are also not even sure of what the programme is, as it is at times referred to as the Extended Public Works Programme instead of the Expanded Public Works Programme. The programme is implemented without proper policy prescripts. There is a need for policy clarity on what this programme is and if it is the country's lead PEP that should be clarified and that territory marked clearly on who takes the lead. Any other entity that wants to implement a PEP should do it within the confines of the legislation that guide the country's PEPs and managed by the lead Department.

The programmes needs ownership at strategic and implementation level. This clarification is required so that implementation and monitoring can be done holistically and proper reporting done to the decision makers for proper planning. The challenge that the country is facing is very huge and discussions in Chapter 1 illustrated that the country has been struggling to free its self from the clutches of these socials for a very long time. This means government needs to tighten things at policy level so that objectives of programmes such as the EPWP do not just fall through the cracks. The programme is bound to fail if such is not addressed. The policy should affirm the programme's objectives and it must be adopted and owned by all relevant stakeholders for it to be effective. The programme needs to make a contribution to the long-term solution to the country's structural unemployment.

A clear policy will address concerns around the programme by specifying exactly what the programme's objectives are and how to work towards achieving them. There are several proposals from labour unions, EPWP workers and civil society on what the programme should address. PEPs are guided by their principles with one of the key characteristics being short-term crisis relief. The challenge in South Africa is not short-term so what worked in the former East Germany or USA will not work in this case because firstly, these countries were in short-term crisis. This thesis emphasises the need for a policy that is based on lived experiences of the EPWP participants rather than experimental assumptions that were tested in short-term crisis relief situations in countries that were going through a transition.

Redesign the programme

Once policy is clarified, the programme has to be redesigned. Key questions to be addressed in this regard include whether the programme should shift its focus from short-term relief to the provision of longer term opportunities in recognition of the structural and long-term characteristics of unemployment (Altman & Hemson, 2007). The second option will be to design itself as an employer of last resort (Meth, 2011;

Simkins, 2010). In the first instance the programme will be focusing on the quality of jobs which means skills development and work experience will be key in the programme design. In the second instance the programme will be providing employment to the poor and unskilled who cannot be absorbed by the labour thus, focusing on the quantity of jobs. In the current design the EPWP is doing a bit of both and it is not effective in any of the two.

The EPWP is a twin programme which provides social protection and employment opportunities. Redesigning, therefore, means the programme should separate its social protection imperatives from the creation of employment opportunities. This is critical because the programme is expected to save the poor and unemployed. The former relates to provision of a cushion to the poor, and the latter aims to ensure that the EPWP participants are supported in transitioning to full time employment. This is a critical issue to be considered in the design of the programme. Mixing the two deprives new labour market entrants or youth from getting full-time employment in the future.

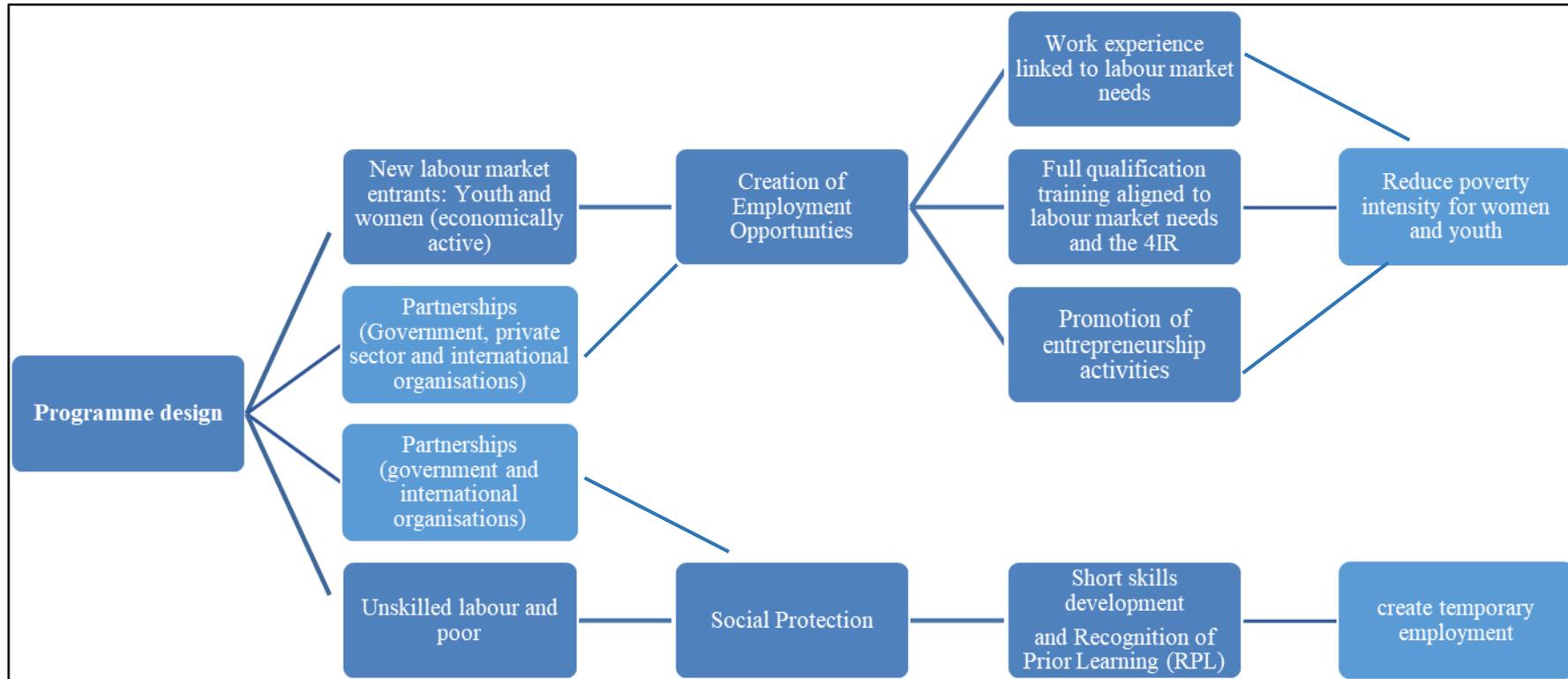
Discussions in the findings above highlighted that the EPWP is too broad and as a result its impact especially on unemployment of women and youth is insignificant. This therefore leads to a discussion on what the programme can do differently in order to be able to (1) provide a cushion to the poor, (2) skill or re-skill women and youth and (3) facilitate transition of women and youth to full-time employment. Above findings pointed out that skills development does not respond to labour market needs therefore the programme is not effective in providing 2 and 3. In designing the programme it is important to consider that the country is sitting on a *'ticking time bomb'* due to the unemployment of women and youth which makes every effort towards addressing it urgent. People targeted by the programme have different needs. Some people youth and some economically active people need skills and work experience to re-join the labour market. There is another group that needs to be cushioned from poverty. These different needs are to be taken into consideration in the design of the programme.

In redesigning the programme the process should address three (3) questions as follows:

- i. *Who* – the programme should separate EPWP participants according to their needs (those who need cushion from poverty or unskilled who are economically active).
- ii. *What* – social protection or creation of employment opportunities. In this case, EPWP participants should be classified according to age and either under social protection or creation of employment opportunities.
- iii. *How* – this is the implementation part of the programme, which will be guided by the classification of the EPWP participants.

The above three (3) questions are summarised in Figure 8.1 below where identification and profiling of EPWP participants and profiling of their needs will assist the programme to respond accordingly. This thesis acknowledges the complexity of the country's challenge but proposes that the programme needs to be redesigned as in Figure 8.1. The proposed design is based on the challenges that South Africa is currently facing. South Africa's challenges are unique this thesis proposes that if the programme chooses to maintain being a twin programme it needs to redesign to be able to serve the two groups of beneficiaries that have been identified as social protection beneficiaries and employment seekers. By so doing, the programme will continue to serve the poor but also contribute to solving the unemployment challenge. This means the package for employment seekers needs to be different from that of social protection beneficiaries. In relation to the former this thesis proposes that unskilled or semi-skilled economically active women and youth are targeted by the programme. In the case of the later the aim is to reduce poverty intensity.

Figure 8.1 Proposed EPWP Design



Source: Own design

Redesigning of the programme is necessary to improve targeting by the programme. Discussions in the findings highlighted that even if women and youth are said to be prioritised at policy level this does not cascade to implementation because these groupings still struggle to access temporary employment or skills development. Secondly, transition to full-time employment is said to be a challenge. The programme has become a trap whereby people who join it have no means to exit because there is limited skills development and it is not aligned to labour market needs. For people who intend to join the labour market it then becomes impossible for them to find work despite having worked for the programme for years. In the case of one of the EPWP participants Miranda from Glenred who took part in the interviews who said that she feels she has not gained anything and when she goes to the labour she will be like starting from scratch despite the eight (8) years she has spent on EPWP.

Miranda and other women or young people want to join the labour market but they cannot do so if the EPWP activities do not build their profiles towards that. The social protection package already put them as economically active people in a poverty trap that they cannot exit on their own. In this case the programme requires partnerships with the private sector which will ensure labour market aligned skills development and work experience. In addition, entrepreneurship activities need to be supported to ensure exit opportunities to self-employment. In the second instance, the social protection package requires increased quantity of temporary jobs that will only provide a cushion to the vulnerable. It may include recognition of prior learning as a means to develop skills for people who have skills but have not certificates. This package will be able to absorb large numbers of people in temporary employment.

However, this design will be cumbersome if the programme continues to use the manual recruitment system because it requires screening of EPWP participants on recruitment. The screening process will be difficult given the current programme capacity challenges. This design requires a situation where participants are able to use a system to apply for work and their input onto the system is able to place them

in the correct category according to their needs. In addition, this design will also need commitment of resources by both government and the private sector. In the case of the former government institutions need to ensure expansion of employment creation initiatives to give people more choices. Government needs to respond to the country's needs by scaling up the programme and tightening monitoring. The current absorption of 15% to 22% of the unemployed is not enough. Increasing projects within provinces will give participants more options to choose from and be able to build their employment profiles. Participants will remain trapped in the programme if they fail to build employment profiles that will allow them to be absorbed by the active labour market. In the case of the later partnerships between government and private sector are difficult given the levels of corruption in the country where the private sector has little trust on government. Convincing the private sector to put resources on the table will be very difficult.

It is a fact that the EPWP is not a solution to the country's structural unemployment challenge. However, it can do two things; (1) help participants build their employment profiles through skills development and work experience. This is one of the key issues highlighted in the findings with EPWP officials who took part in the interviews such Mrs Bhala, Mr Adams and Mr Nzama mentioning factors such as short projects, quality of work, participant migration or rotation and lack of defined duties as some of the challenges compromising quality of labour. (2) As Meth (2011) puts it, "hold the fort" for the economy through large scale temporary employment. This makes scaling up the programme a priority in order to cushion the unskilled and the poor. This also supported by some EPWP officials who took part in the interviews Mr Adams and Mr Pietersen whom the former called for increase in budgets to expand the programme and the later having emphasised the need to make it compulsory for all government projects to be implemented through EPWP.

There is also a need for sub-programmes or projects targeting youth or women in the working age group to be longer so that there is enough time for skills development or accumulation of relevant work experience. Some projects or sub-programmes, are,

by their nature, not suitable for empowering people, but targeting employment can ensure that such projects are reserved only for people who require social protection.

In addition, the Infrastructure sector need to come up with sub-programmes or projects that absorb women and youth. The NYS sub-programme is able to absorb female youth, but its targets are too low, and skills development only focuses on short course skills programmes. This is not adding much values to the lives of the young people. This sub-programme can only focus on artisan skills. The programme needs to identify other strategic partners within the public sector (departments or parastatals such as Eskom and Transnet) in which EPWP participants who are on artisan programme training can be placed for workplace experiential learning. The programme needs to set a quota for skills development of women and youth, as well targets for long-term training or systematic accumulation of credits towards full qualification. Skills development is currently randomised with many people acquiring credits in unrelated qualifications. Please who have gone through four (4) or five (5) short skills programmes could be holding a full qualification by now if training was structured.

Expand stakeholder base

Proper alignment of the programme and other government services is essential. It will ensure integration and coordination within government. If the programme is to add value to the efforts aimed at addressing structural unemployment, it should bridge the gap between the Department of Employment and Labour and the employers. For example, the EPWP and the Department of Employment and Labour need to have closer working relationship beyond development of policy, which should start with a clean and up to date Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA) database for recruitment of people. The country's public employment services are governed by the Employment Services Act, no 4 of 2014, which bridges the gap between employers and employees, thus improving access to labour or work (Department of Employment and Labour, 2019). The programme can take

advantage of this by (1) recruiting through this database and (2) linking those who are ready for the labour market through this department.

The database needs to also monitor movement of people between employment and unemployment, so that the EPWP or unemployment policy is guided by up-to-date data. Database-informed recruitment will eliminate criticism of the programme related to allegations of corruption in recruitment, and enable tracking of participants' career interests so that project placement and skills development will be aligned to their aspirations of the participants. Exiting of EPWP workers requires close management and monitoring so that the programme can track the areas that need improvement for future policy guidance. Some EPWP participants exit and re-join the programme because they would have failed to make it in the active labour market. Proper monitoring will ensure that those who remain in the programme are those who would have failed to join the labour market or will be working towards joining the labour market. Participants need to be guided properly or provided with the necessary support so that they do not continue to lean on the programme.

Partnering with private sector to provide skills development is essential. Skills development is critical if the country is to solve the unemployment crisis. The EPWP cannot be expected to train all the unskilled people in the country, but those who go through the programme should exit with sufficient skills so that they can transition into employment. On-the-job training makes it easier for the unemployed to get skills and work experience. Government does not have workplaces to accommodate EPWP participants on training, and this has been a challenge, leading to some young people failing to complete their courses. The programme needs to identify key employers as per the skills scarcity list, and enter into agreements with them to take EPWP participants for the work placement component of training. This is to be done in such a way that it does not displace permanent jobs.

There is a need for clear policy direction from the EPWP and National Treasury to ensure that it is mandatory for public bodies to make use of EPWP funding from the

Division of Revenue Act (DORA) for skills development. This can be part of performance measurement of the various implementing public bodies. Skills development is important, especially towards full qualifications, because they improve chances of an individual getting employment (Ayele *et al.*, 2017). The EPWP is not expected to replace or be part of skills development institutions, but it should respond to labour market needs. The majority in the country are unemployed and the most urgent need is permanent jobs. If the programme is to be effective, there is a need to respond to this by developing relevant skills and experience.

Skills development strategy needs to align to the labour market needs (Faith *et al.*, 2020). Skills development is a very critical component of the programme and it cannot be done without proper support and guidance from the Department of Higher Education and Training and the SETAs. The programme should prioritise development of skills that are aligned to the needs in the labour market. There are qualifications like landscaping which hundreds of participants go through. These may be quick wins for the programme in terms of meeting its targets, but skills development should add value to the life and career aspirations of the recipients. There are training options based on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for young adults who have experience in work they have been doing for several years. This is common in some EPWP sectors where people have been performing same activities for over 10 years and have gained enough knowledge or experience. Such people cannot transition to the labour market without a qualification to go with the experience.

Economic opportunities and factor endowments differ across provinces and the programme should be guided by this in planning, rolling out projects as well as in skills development. There are provinces that are tourist destinations while others have high renewable energy potential (wind and solar power). Youth skills need to be aligned to the labour market needs guided by the opportunities in different provinces. For instance, the programme can train artisans, targeting the renewable sector for provinces where there are renewable energy projects.

To effectively pursue and deliver on entrepreneurship, as guided collectively by other developmental policies, there is a need for clear policy direction from lead departments in the economic cluster such as the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and the National Treasury. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) and the Department of Public Works and Infrastructure signed in 2018 for three years, which EPWP officials said was never implemented. The entrepreneurship space has its own challenges. Literature said that:

...the unemployed face significant barriers to entry into the informal economy due to licensing and restricting bylaws, large scale South African firms, labour legislation which is often extended to non-parties in the SMME sector, poor access to capital, land and credit, crime, risk of business failure and high transport costs (Valodia, 2007:5).

The current haphazard implementation of SMME support does not support efforts to salvage the country from the unemployment crisis. Dependency only on SMME support structures in the country which are already overstretched by other SMME needs delays the EPWP participants resulting in some ideas failing at inception. When this happens potential entrepreneurs simply continue to participate in the EPWP. Some EPWP participants said they feel the programme is setting them up to fail. As the country's special programme, EPWP created SMMEs should also have own resources set aside and have their needs fast tracked.

In addition to public partnerships, the programme also needs the private sector, civic and international organisations to partner with it in order to improve implementation. This has been emphasized on various platforms that have recognised that there are other international organisations, which offer resources for SMME support or skills development such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Planning and Coordination Agency, and others. Partnering with such organisation would enable the programme to provide support, especially to sustainable livelihoods initiatives, so that EPWP

participants can get adequate resources for skills development or support to start their own businesses.

Funding or capacity building support through government coffers has not been enough due to limited resources and consequent budget cuts to reduce the fiscal deficit. In addition, to international donor organisations, the programme can explore crowd funding initiatives, especially for the training of EPWP participants or financing of SMMEs. The programme's policy can incorporate these strategies so that instead of trying to squeeze the already overstretched National Treasury for funding, some short-term projects can be financed through crowd funding. Large corporates can also be encouraged to adopt SMMEs formed by EPWP participants to help them set up and start operating. Support from corporates could include provision of a wide range of support services such as compliance (relating to licensing where required), product development, mentorship, market access, funding and others. Among the challenges identified by Fal (2013) in a study on entrepreneurship in Africa, lack of funding, business advisory service and infrastructure are among the main issues that affect small business success. Government on its own does not have the human and/or financial resource capacity to assist SMMEs in the country. It is therefore important that programmes like the EPWP that aim to strengthen sustainable livelihoods partner with the private sector.

8.5 Suggested Research Areas

This thesis argued that government or private sector cannot independently solve South Africa's unemployment challenge. It suggested a possibility of bringing together public and private sector efforts to come up with a mixture of a Keynesian and Neoliberal approach to solve the challenge. Evidence in this thesis pointed out that policies that promotes the markets or the government independently will not solve the country's challenge. On the same breadth, crisis relief programmes like the EPWP adopted with a short-term crisis relief philosophy has failed to build the country's capacity. South Africa's unemployment challenge which has dominated

among women and youth is a case which has proven that as Phillip (2013a) puts it, the employment creation role cannot be left for the markets alone. This is an avenue for future studies to explore further, how the role of government in building or maintaining assets can be turned into full-time employment. As Gehrke and Hartwig (2015) indicated, there is a need to look into long-term benefits brought by assets created by PWPs or PEPs. South Africa faces a unique unemployment challenge, the solutions to which cannot emerge from the private sector alone given the history and dynamics of this country (Levihnsen, n.d.). The country therefore needs to come up with a uniquely South African solution.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Overview of PEPs

Purpose	Programme	Targeted Population	Skills Development
Short term Economic crisis relief	Jefes Y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados of Argentina	Households with an unemployed head of household	Option for training
Social protection of the most vulnerable	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) of India	Universal	None
-Creation of employment opportunities; -Social protection; and -Asset creation	Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) of South Africa	Poor and unskilled	Option for training
Poverty reduction in the mid term	PNSP of Ethiopia	Chronic food insecure	None
Employment Guarantee	EGPP of Bangladesh	Households with a land holding of less than 0.5 acres and head engaged in casual labour	None
Short term crisis relief	PATI of El Salvador	Vulnerable urban households	Compulsory Training
Medium Term poverty reduction	PNMP of Indonesia	Universal	Various
Short term crisis relief	LIWP of Yemen	Universal	None
Medium term poverty reduction	VUP of Rwanda	Poor households with able bodied members	Credit
Short term crisis relief	YESP of Sierra Leone	Individuals aged 15-35 years in poor communities	None

Sources: Bergemann *et al.*, (2016); Joshi (2018); Koohi-Karmali (2010); Lechner and Eichler, (2002); Devereaux and Solomon, (2006); Lieuw-Kie-Song, (2011); Tsukamoto, (2011); Gehrke and Hartwig, (2015)

Appendix B: Approval to conduct research by the EPWP



Private Bag X65, PRETORIA, 0001. Tel: 012 406 1405/ 012 492 1445 Fax: 012 323 0140
e-mail: Stanley.Henderson@dpw.gov.za website: www.epwp.gov.za / www.publicworks.gov.za

The Chairperson
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA (Ethics Committee)
Private Bag X 20
HATFIELD
0028

28 February 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME (EPWP)

This letter serves to confirm that Ms Nomazulu Sibanda (Student No. 18380248), a PhD student in Development Studies at your University has been granted permission to conduct research on the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

The permission is in line with the topic she has presented to the Department of Public Works i.e. "*An assessment of the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa*"

She would be obliged to adhere to the requirements of your ethics research committee, as well as any requirements from the Department of Public Works.

I hope that you will find the above in order, and should you need any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me on the above contact details.

Thank you.

Yours Sincerely



MR S. HENDERSON
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL: EPWP
DATE: 2018-03-15

Appendix C: Ethics Approval-HUM040/0620



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo



11 August 2020

Dear Ms N Sibanda

Project Title:

Researcher: Supervisor(s): Department: Reference number: Degree:

An Evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's Employment Creation Tool
Ms N Sibanda
Prof V Thebe

Anthropology and Archaeology 18380248 (HUM040/0620) Doctoral

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 30 July 2020. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project. Sincerely,

Prof Innocent Pikirayi

Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics Faculty of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za



Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotheo

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof I Pikirayi (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr P Gutura; Dr E Johnson; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr I Noomé; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa

Appendix D: Informed Consent – EPWP Participants

You are hereby invited for to participate in a research study by Nomazulu Sibanda, a PhD in Development Studies student in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. The study seeks to evaluate the role of EPWP in creating employment opportunities in South Africa. Please take time to read through this letter as it gives information on the study and your rights as a participant. If you would prefer me to read the letter, I will read it in a language that you prefer.

Title of the study

An evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's employment creation tool.

What will happen in the study?

The study will involve interviews with you on information and views on aspects that the study is interested in understanding. The interview involves completion of questionnaires which will take about an hour of your time. The questionnaire is in English, but questions can be interpreted to you in Afrikaans or Setswana. You need to circle your choice of answer where there is answers or fill in spaces where it requires you to fill in your response.

Risks and discomforts

There will be no danger to you or your household or EPWP project. Completion of this questionnaire will not affect your current or future participation on an EPWP project. It may however be difficult for you to share some information, and you will be free not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. If you experience some level of discomfort after joining the study, and you would like to stop participation, please be free to let me know. You will be allowed to stop participation without any prejudice and the questionnaire already completed will be discarded.

Are there any benefits for joining the study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for your participation. Your contributions will assist me in developing a dissertation for my qualification, but it is also going to be beneficiary to EPWP as a five (5) phased project each new phase is guided by research such as this one. The findings from this research may assist the community, National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and project implementing Public Bodies to find better ways of implementing beneficial and sustainable projects that may improve the unemployment problems in your locality.

Confidentiality

Apart from me as the researcher, the data will be shared with my supervisor, Professor V. Thebe of the University of Pretoria. Every effort will be made to ensure that the information you share is not linked to you or your household. Your identity and that of your household will not be revealed or identified. You do not need to write your names or phone numbers or ID numbers on the questionnaires. The questionnaires will be stored in a safe place during the fieldwork, and in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, for a period of 15 years for archiving purposes. If the data is used during this period, it will only be for research purposes.

The results will be produced in the form of a dissertation or scientific paper or may be presented at both local and international forums like workshops and conferences. The information on the completed questionnaires will not be shared with the public or media but will be utilised to make findings for the study.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or would want me to explain anything further, you are welcome to phone or text me on 083 769 2115. You can also send me an email on the following address: nomazulusibanda07@gmail.com.

Consent Declaration

I _____ (write your name) hereby agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix E: Structured Questionnaire-EPWP Participants

**Topic: An evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP):
South Africa's employment creation tool**

<p>1. Gender</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Male ● Female ● Other _____ 	<p>2. Age __</p>
<p>3. Place of residence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rural ● Urban ● Township 	<p>4. What is your highest education completed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary Education ● Grade 9 ● Matric ● Diploma ● B Tech ● Degree ● Other Please specify <p>_____</p>
<p>5. Do you have any skills?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No <p>If yes, please specify</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>6. Before joining EPWP what were you doing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student at High School ● Tertiary/College Student ● Unemployed ● Employed <p>If employed, please specify employer or sector:</p> <p>Reason for leaving your job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of contract ● Retrenchment ● Company closure
<p>7. Do you have any previous work experience outside EPWP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No <p>If yes, please give examples and number of years for the past 5 years.</p>	<p>8. Have you ever participated in EPWP before?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No <p>If yes, please state projects and number of years.</p>

<p>9. Why did you join EPWP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am unemployed • Gain work experience • I am pensioner my pension is not enough to cover my expenses • There is no work done in EPWP so I just go there to earn money 	<p>10. What is the duration of the current EPWP project?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than One week • Less than one month • 2-6 Months • 12-18 Months • 2 Years • More than 3 Years • Other <p>Please specify _____ Please state your current activities. _____</p>
<p>11. Are you performing duties that are supposed to be performed by a permanent employee?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No I am working on a short-term project • Yes, I am employed on a short-term contract that is renewed annually but earning a stipend • Yes, the employer is going to advertise the post in 6 months' time • Yes, the section is short staffed because of financial constraints • Yes, the position has been vacant for more than year 	<p>12. Are you registered in the Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA) as an unemployed person?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No <p>If no explain why?</p>
<p>15. What is your current monthly salary?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less than R1000 • R1001 - R2000 • R2001 - R3000 • R3001 - R5000 • Above R5000 	<p>16. How many days do you work per week?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 days • 3 days • 5 days • 7 days • Other <p>Please specify _____</p>

<p>17. How many hours do you take to complete your daily task?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 hours • 4 hours • 6 hours • 8 hours • Other <p>Please specify start and stop time</p> <hr/>	<p>18. Do you have tea and lunch breaks?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes <p>Please specify time:</p> <p>Tea _____</p> <p>Lunch _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No
<p>19. Are you allowed to take time off?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I am allowed paid sick leave • Yes, I am allowed annual leave • Yes, I am allowed maternity leave • No leave allowed • Other _____ <p>If selected yes on any of the above, please specify _____ duration _____ of leave _____</p>	<p>20. How are you monitored by the Department or Municipality?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I sign attendance registers every day for time in and time out • I sign attendance registers once a week for time in and time out • I sign attendance registers once a month for time in and time out • There is no monitoring of our work
<p>21. Who do you report to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisor on site • Department or Municipality official • I do not report to anyone 	<p>22. Are you aware of the duties that you are supposed to perform on a daily basis?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I am aware of my daily tasks • No, it depends on what is available the supervisor allocates work • No Sometimes we come to work and there is nothing to do
<p>23. Do you have tools and protective clothing to perform you task?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No <p>If no, please specify what you need</p>	<p>24. Do you have a suitable work environment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, I have access to toilets, kitchen and drinking water • Yes, I have access to a toilet only with no running water • No, I have no access to either a toilet, kitchen or drinking water
<p>25. Have you ever attended any EPWP training before?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No <p>If yes, please specify the course/s you have attended</p> <hr/>	

<hr/>
<p>26. Was the training/s relevant to your career interests?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, I want to continue with this qualification ● No, I want to start a new qualification ● I am not sure of what I want to do will just attend any training <p>Other: _____</p>
<p>27. Did you get a full qualification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No, it is unaccredited training ● No, it was a short skills programme ● Yes, it was a learnership <p>If yes please specify Qualification _____</p>
<p>28. On completion of this project what are your plans?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Look for another EPWP project ● Start own business related to skill earned from EPWP ● Start a business which is not related to what I learnt in EPWP ● Look for a full time job with skill gained from EPWP ● Will not be able to use skill gained from EPWP because there are no jobs that require it ● No job opportunities will join the unemployed ● No plans will go back home and do nothing ● Go back to college to further my studies on the course started in EPWP ● Go back to college and start a new course
<p>29. If you intend looking for employment have you started applying for work?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No <p>If yes, please specify</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Farm ● Mine ● Domestic Work ● Retailer ● Municipality ● Government Department ● Other _____

30. If intending to start own business have you started setting it up?

- Have registered a business
- Have registered a business and received funding
- Business has started operating while working for EPWP
- No still looking for support
- I am not sure how to start a business

Appendix F: EPWP Participants- Semi-structured questions

1. Why did you join EPWP?
2. What are the reasons for low participation of youth and women in EPWP?
3. What is your view on the EPWP employment conditions and skills development?
4. What do you intend to do on completion of your EPWP project?

Appendix G: Informed Consent – EPWP Stakeholders

You are hereby invited for to participate in a research study by Nomazulu Sibanda, a PhD in Development Studies student in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. The study seeks to evaluate the role of EPWP in creating employment opportunities in South Africa. Please take time to read through this letter as it gives information on the study and your rights as a participant.

Title of the study

An evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's employment creation tool.

What will happen in the study?

The study will involve interviews with you on information and views on aspects that the study is interested in understanding. The interview involves completion of questionnaires which will take about an hour of your time. You need to circle your choice of answer where there is answers or fill in spaces where it requires you to fill in your response.

Risks and discomforts

There will be no danger to you or your household, EPWP project and Organisation. It may however be difficult for you to share some information, and you will be free not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. If you experience some level of discomfort after joining the study, and you would like to stop participation, please be free to let me know. You will be allowed to stop participation without any prejudice and the questionnaire already completed will be discarded.

Are there any benefits for joining the study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for your participation. Your contributions will assist me in developing a dissertation for my qualification, but it is also going to be beneficiary to EPWP as a five (5) phased programme with each new phase guided by research such as this one. The findings from this research may assist the community, National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure and project implementing Public Bodies to find better ways of implementing beneficial and sustainable projects in the programme.

Confidentiality

Apart from me as the researcher, the data will be shared with my supervisor, Professor V. Thebe of the University of Pretoria. Every effort will be made to ensure that the information you share is not linked to you or your household. Your identity and that of your household will not be revealed or identified. You do not need to write your names or phone numbers or ID numbers on the questionnaires. The questionnaires will be stored in a safe place during the fieldwork, and in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, for a period of 15 years for archiving purposes. If the data is used during this period, it will only be for research purposes.

The results will be produced in the form of a dissertation or scientific paper, or may be presented at both local and international forums like workshops and conferences. The information on the completed questionnaires will not be shared with the public or media but will be utilised to make findings for the study.

Any questions?

If you have any questions or would want me to explain anything further, you are welcome to phone or text me on 083 769 2115. You can also send me an email on the following address: nomazulusibanda07@gmail.com.

CONSENT DECLARATION

I _____ (write your name) hereby agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Appendix H: Structured Questionnaire- EPWP Stakeholders

**Topic: An evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP):
South Africa's Employment Creation tool**

<p>1. What is your role in EPWP?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project Manager/ Project Administrator ● EPWP Coordinator/Technical Advisor ● EPWP Sector Manager ● EPWP Director/Manager ● EPWP Supervisor/Foreman ● Other _____ 	<p>2. What is your sphere of government?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local Government ● Provincial Department ● National Department ● State Owned Enterprise ● Non- Governmental Organisation
<p>3. Which EPWP sector do you participate in?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Infrastructure ● Environment and Culture ● Social Sector ● Non-State Sector ● Other _____ 	<p>4. What is your understanding of an EPWP project?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>5. What determines type of project to be implemented?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community needs ● Political mandate ● Available resources 	<p>6. What is the main problem in project implementation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of capacity ● Challenges in project administration ● Resources re-allocated to other priorities leading to abandonment of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Targeted work opportunities 	<p>project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project budget under estimation leading to failure to complete the project ● Community unrests
<p>7. What are the reasons for failure to maximize creation of work opportunities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of financial resources ● Service providers implementing projects not willing to employ lots of people ● Jobs are created but not reported due to poor administration by service providers ● Some projects are too short to be reported ● Budget cuts 	<p>8. How do you recruit EPWP participants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Through advert in the local media ● Recruitment done by councillors ● Through the Department of Employment and Labour's ESSA database ● Community consultations ● Through service providers ● Guided by EPWP recruitment guidelines
<p>9. What informs allocation of tasks to participants?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skill and previous work experience ● Participants are just allocated tasks ● Depends on recommendations by local councillor ● Personal preference of project managers or supervisor 	<p>10. Is there any alignment between activities done by participants and labour market skills requirements?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, participants perform duties similar to those done by full-time employees ● No participants perform tasks just to earn a stipend
<p>11. Are EPWP participants used to</p>	<p>12. Do EPWP participants perform duties</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-accredited trainings ● Entrepreneurship training programmes
<p>17. Have your organisation ever been able to employ participants from EPWP permanently?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes ● No <p>If No, please explain why</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>18. Do you have programmes that link participants to full time employment?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes, we link the participants to the Department of Employment and Labour ESSA database ● Yes, we have a policy that links participants to entrepreneurship opportunities ● Yes, we link participants with employment in the private sector ● Yes, we have a policy to absorb participants who qualify for full time opportunities in the organisation ● No, we leave participants to look for their own employment
<p>19. Do you participate in EPWP support programmes or structures (e.g. Provincial Steering Committee, District Steering Committee)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes <p>Please specify _____</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No <p>Why not?</p> <hr/>	

20. Do you have any two main areas that you would like the National Department of Public Works and Infrastructure to change in order to make your work or support much easier?

Appendix I: Semi-structured interview questions -EPWP Stakeholders

1. Why is implementation of projects low in EPWP?
2. What are the reasons for low creation of employment opportunities for women and youth in EPWP?
3. Is the programme preparing participants for the active labour market?
4. Why is training of women and youth low in EPWP?
5. Do you think EPWP training is contributing to skills needed in the country?
6. Why is uptake of entrepreneurship low on the programme?

Appendix J: List of EPWP studies reviewed

This thesis reviewed studies by Altman and Hemson (2007); Antonopoulos and Toay (2009); Baijnath (2012); Beuke *et al.*, (2016); Biyase and Bromberger (2015); Bokolo (2013); Chakwizira (2010); Cloete (2015); and Dejardin (1996). Added to these, the following provided valuable information: Dladla and Mutambara (2018); Dyantyi and Fore (2019); Gehrke and Hartwig (2015); Hlatshwayo (2017); Hirschman (2015); Holmes and Jones (2011*b*); Maphanga and Mazenda (2019); and Melody and Zanyana (2017). Other relevant literature included, Meth (2010, 2011); McCord and Bhorat (2003); McCord (2005, 2013); McCutcheon and Parkins (2012); Mishra (2011) and Mogagabe (2016). Studies by Mubangizi and Mkhize (2013); Mohapi (2013); Mtapuri (2014); Nthomang (2018); Nzimakwe (2008); Oosthuizen *et al.*, (2009); Overseas Development Institute (2004); Parenzee and Bundlender (2016); and Phillip (2013*a*, 2013*b*).