

Making the Invisible Visible: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Value of Public Employment Programs in South Africa

Duke University, Sanford School of Public Policy

Student Team: Mai Malesky, Anna Ortwein, Audrey Suh, Maria Hernandez San Vicente
(ordered alphabetically)

Instructor: Catherine Admay, J.D.

Sept. 1, 2026

Abstract

South Africa's persistent unemployment crisis, characterized by the world's highest unemployment rate, extends beyond the immediate economic consequences of income deprivation. The unemployment crisis negatively impacts economic participation, skills development, individual dignity, mental health, and community well-being. Although long-term macroeconomic reforms are necessary, their effects will take time to actualize, creating an urgent need for an immediate, intermediary intervention. Our research aims to highlight the role public employment programs (PEPs) can play in mitigating the multidimensional effects of unemployment, through the economic, skills-development, psychological, social and community, and constitutional value generated by PEPs. We use a mixed-methods approach that combines semi-structured interviews with policymakers, journalists, activists, researchers, and PEP participants; fieldwork; individual participant narratives; and an extensive review of South African and international academic and policy literature. The analysis identifies five dimensions of PEP value: economic, skills development, psychological, social and community, and constitutional. We find that well-designed PEPs can support pathways into employment and entrepreneurship, stimulate economic activity, provide work experience and transferable skills, advance dignity and socioeconomic inclusion, improve participants' confidence, agency, and sense of purpose, and strengthen communities and public services. These benefits reinforce one another, producing effects that extend beyond individual participants to households and communities. This study matters because unemployment is projected to increase worldwide, driven by climate change and the AI boom. South Africa's PEPs can serve as a model for how other countries will address unemployment.

Table of Contents

1. Problem Statement	3
2. Context	4
2.2 Economic Stagnation in South Africa	6
2.3 How the Minerals and Energy Complex (MEC) and Corporate Concentration Contribute to Unemployment in South Africa	8
2.4 The Consequences of Unemployment	9
2.5 The Definition of Public Employment Programs	10
3. Necessary Macroeconomic Policies	14
4. Why Macroeconomic Policies Will Not Be Enough	14
5. Methodology	17
6. The Five Value of PEPs	21
6.1 Economic Value of PEPs	21
6.2 Skills Development Value of PEPs	30
6.3 Psychological Value of PEPs	37
6.4 Social & Community Value of PEPs	42
6.5 Constitutional Value of PEPs	50
7. Addressing Common Arguments Against PEPs	56
8. Further Research	58
9. Conclusion	63
Appendix A: Macroeconomic Policy Proposals in Gqubule's Vision 2035	102

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Parliamentarians	107
Appendix C: Graphs of Survey Results from Next Step Exchange User Survey	109

Abbreviations and Acronyms

PEP	Public Employment Programs/Programmes
PWP	Public Works Programs/Programmes
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programmes
CWP	Community Work Program
PES	Presidential Employment Stimulus
BEEI	Basic Education Employment Initiative
PESP	Presidential Employment Stimulus Program
SEF	Social Employment Fund

1. Problem Statement

South Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world, exacerbating inequality, poverty, and social unrest. In the past 30 years since the end of Apartheid, unemployment has been compounded by low economic growth, capital-intensive investments, and corporate concentration. Unemployment is especially problematic because it is multidimensional: it has negative multiplier effects on the economy, limits the ability of individuals to build skills and gain work experience, harms the mental health of individuals, contributes to social unrest, and undermines the South African constitutional vision to “improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person” (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Preamble). Long-term macroeconomic solutions have been proposed to address high unemployment; however, their positive impact will take a long-time to materialize. South Africa needs an interim solution to address the consequences of youth unemployment immediately. This paper highlights how one policy solution, public employment programs (PEPs), can address these multidimensional consequences of unemployment in South Africa.

2. Context

The Constitution of South Africa was written with a vision of a country built on social justice, equality, and human dignity. These principles establish a state commitment to continuously improving the socioeconomic conditions of South African livelihoods and to ensuring that individuals have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in society. However, persistent unemployment presents a significant challenge to this constitutional vision.

Unemployment (%)

All countries, Most recent values (2021 - 2023)

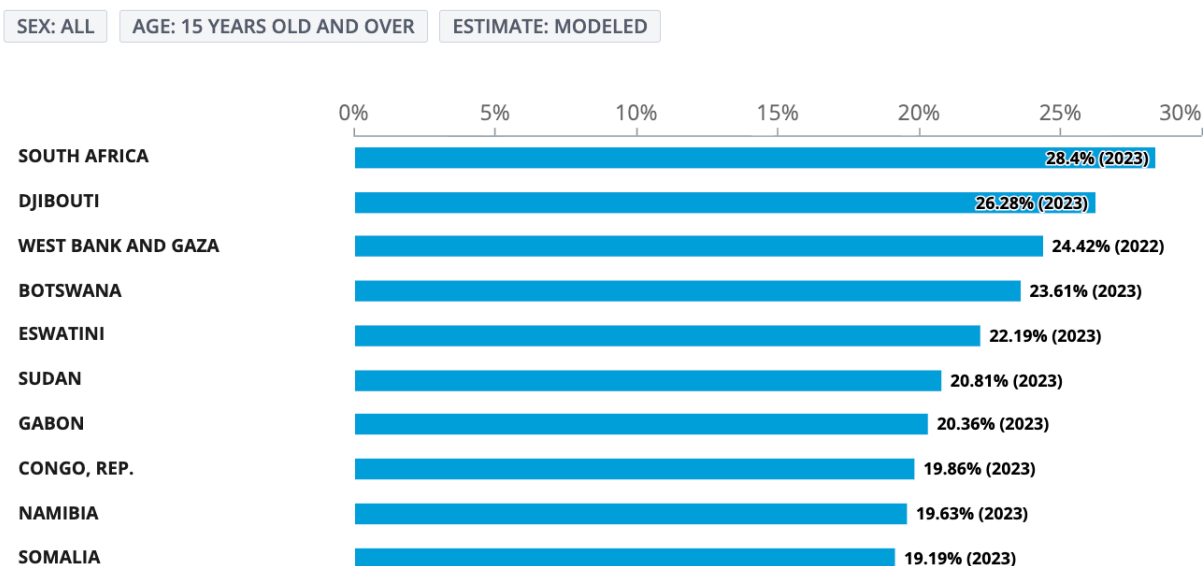


Figure 1: Unemployment rates worldwide. 2021-2023.

Source: [Unemployment \(%\) 2021-2023 | 217 Economies from the World Bank Group | Data 360](#)

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) from the second quarter of 2026 reveals that the official unemployment rate of South Africa sits at 33.6%, up 0.9% from the previous quarter. Between the second quarter of 2016 and 2026, the number of unemployed people increased from 5.6 million to 8.5 million. In the same period, the portion of those in long-term unemployment increased from 66.9% to 77.9% (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026).

According to World Bank data from 2023, South Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world (World Bank Group, 2023). The graph above from the World Bank (2023), with the most recent data from 2021-2023, illustrates the stark contrast between South Africa's unemployment and other unemployment rates internationally. This situation continues to worsen, with formal sector employment decreasing by 41,000 jobs between the first and second quarter of 2026 (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026).

These disparities are extremely racialized, with Black South Africans experiencing significantly higher unemployment rates than other racial groups (Statistics South Africa, Q4 2024). For instance, the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) rate among White South African youth (15-34 years) is 18.5%, whereas it is 47.8% for Black South Africans (15-34 years) (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026).

Underlying this problem is youth unemployment. Young South Africans bear the brunt of the world's highest unemployment rate. In 2026, young people (aged 15-34) made up roughly 50.2% of South Africa's working-age population, approximately 21 million individuals (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026). Consequently, as also seen in the graph below, youth unemployment is especially stark, at 62.8% for 15-24-year-olds and 41.8% for young people aged 25-34 (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026). Youth unemployment overall has also continued to worsen: it increased by 9.9% between the second quarter of 2016 and 2026 (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026).

Youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years continue to have the highest unemployment rates at **62,8%** and **41,8%** respectively.

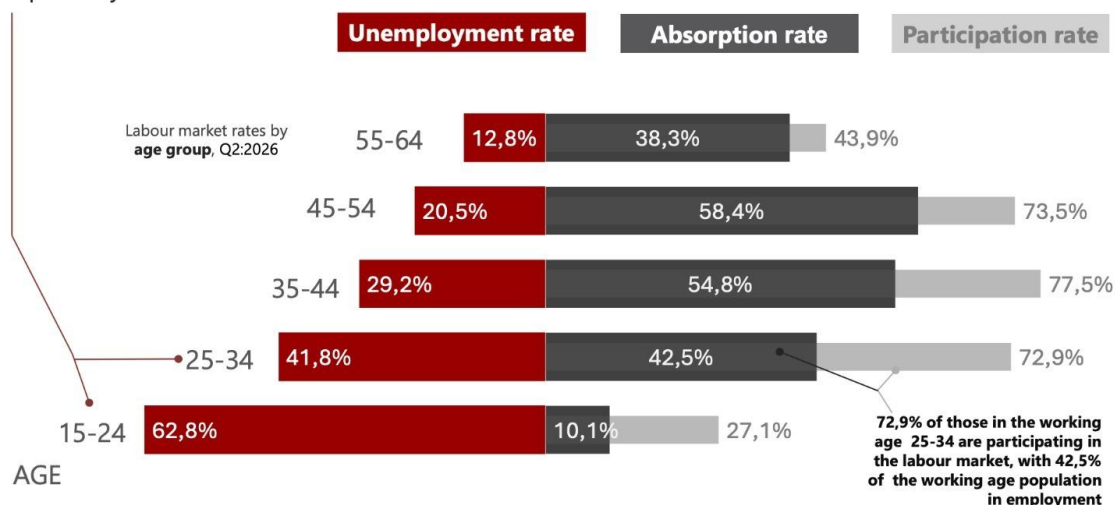


Figure 2: Unemployment rate in South Africa based on age group. Q2:2026.

Source: [Presentation QLFS Q2 2026.pdf](#)

2.2 Economic Stagnation in South Africa

A key driver of unemployment in South Africa is the country's extremely weak economic growth over almost the past two decades. According to the OECD Economic Survey of South Africa from 2025, "economic growth has averaged only 0.7% per year over the past decade" (OECD, 2025). In 2012, South Africa's annual GDP growth was only 2.5%, down from 3.1% in 2011 (Alessi, 2013). In 2013, the government reported that "it will need growth rates around 7% to alleviate unemployment and poverty;" however, South Africa has yet to achieve this target (Alessi, 2013). In 2025, the annual GDP growth rate was only 1.1%. Comparatively, China's GDP growth rate in 2025 was 4.96%, Rwanda's 9.38%, and Vietnam's 8.02% (see Appendix A). Weak economic growth is often associated with higher levels of unemployment, poverty, and income inequality, as limited economic expansion constrains job creation and household income growth. In particular, economic growth and unemployment remain in a "vicious cycle:" "slow growth is limiting employment opportunities, [and] an unqualified labor force is holding back growth prospects" (Alessi, 2013). The graph below demonstrates South Africa's weak economic growth since 1994, showing that GDP annual % growth has not exceeded 6% in the past 30 years.

GDP (annual % growth)



South Africa, 1994-2025

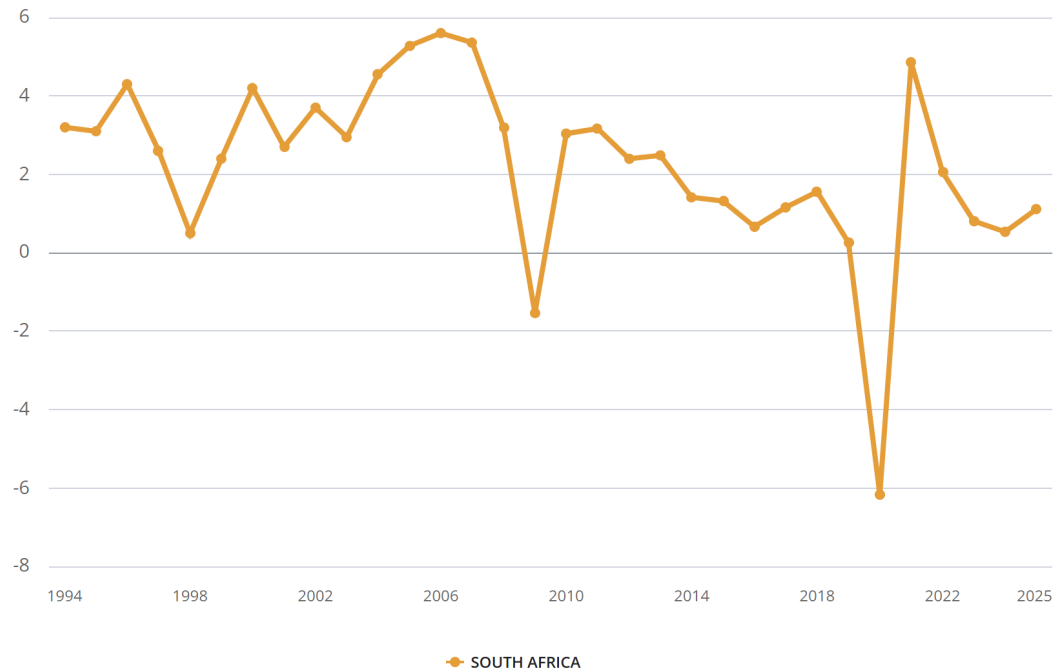


Figure 3: GDP growth in percentage points in South Africa. 1994-2025.

Source: [GDP \(annual % growth\) | World Development Indicators](#)

2.3 How the Minerals and Energy Complex (MEC) and Corporate Concentration

Contribute to Unemployment in South Africa

Even this aforementioned minimal growth is not creating jobs, because South Africa's unemployment is rooted in "jobless growth." As Tshepo Moloi, Head of Economic Research at the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), explains, "While the economy has recorded periods of positive growth, this growth has often been concentrated in capital-intensive, highly concentrated sectors that are less labour-absorbing" (Moloi, 2026). After the transition from

apartheid in 1994, the South African government chose not to pursue a developmental-state path, instead liberalizing “domestic financial markets and capital controls” (Mohamed, 2024). This financialization has resulted in a misallocation of capital, and the “South African economy has [since] been dominated by a system of accumulation, referred to as the Minerals and Energy Complex (MEC)” (Mohamed, 2019). While “historically, sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and mining absorbed large numbers of low- and semi-skilled workers,” “technological advancement, automation and global competition have significantly reduced labour intensity in many of these industries” (Moloi, 2026). In fact, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) from Q2 2026 showed a decline in employment for these sectors (Statistics South Africa, Q2 2026). Financial institutions continue to benefit more from capital- and energy-intensive industries than from labor-intensive ones, such as manufacturing (Mohamed, 2019). Addressing the entrenchment of the MEC requires government intervention and financial sector reform to ensure investment is directed toward labor-intensive industries.

Furthermore, “South Africa also faces the persistent challenge of high levels of market concentration” (Moloi, 2026). This corporate concentration is born out of a colonial and apartheid legacy, in which “large conglomerates dominated by whites controlled large parts of the economy,” inhibiting the “development of small and medium-sized enterprises, including the informal and agricultural sector” (Essa, 2025). Domestic-industry-minded apartheid policies empowered large corporations to “dominate not just heavy industry...but also the production of basic consumer goods” (Essa, 2025). This corporate concentration translated to concentrated investment and capital. By the 1980s, “a few large corporations controlled around 85% of the market capitalization of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange” (JSE) (Mohamed, 2024). The implications of the colonial and apartheid era continue to harm South Africans today: “aspiring

entrepreneurs in poor communities face an uphill battle: they must contend with established multinationals who control production, distribution, and brand recognition even in the most remote areas” (Essa, 2025). Therefore, government intervention must address decades of corporate concentration to create viable employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors

2.4 The Consequences of Unemployment

Employment provides individuals with much more than income. Importantly, some outcomes of unemployment extend beyond individual financial hardship, contributing to poverty, social instability, mental health pressures, and declining social mobility. A critical effect of unemployment is the deprivation of individuals’ sense of agency and purpose. It is human nature to want to feel that you have meaning and to be seen by society as having meaning and contributing to it. Work gives people the sense that their contributions are valued and that they play a meaningful role in society.

When a large part of the population is excluded from opportunities to work and contribute, the consequences extend beyond the individuals themselves and pose a broader challenge to social cohesion. Economic growth that benefits only a small margin of society, as in South Africa, is particularly concerning because it “will deepen inequality and social frustration” (Moloi, 2026). Therefore, unemployment should be viewed not merely as an economic problem but as a broader social challenge that can undermine individuals’ ability to participate fully in society.

Evidence that the unemployment crisis is also a social challenge can be seen in the recent emergence of anti-immigrant movements in South Africa, such as March and March and Operation Dudula. These movements are rooted in frustration over unemployment and politics’

failure to address it. They argue that migrants intensify competition for employment in the South African economy, particularly where employers favor migrant workers willing to accept lower wages (Peyton & Hlophe, 2026). These movements called on all undocumented foreign nationals to leave South Africa (Kelly, 2026), setting a deadline for June 30 that has now been extended to September 30. Ahead of this deadline, the movements have ignited violence across the nation. For instance, in May and June 2026, three people were killed, two Mozambican men and one South African, in Mossel Bay (Qoyo & Majadibodu, 2026). However, the deeper underlying unemployment that is igniting fear and targeting anger at migrants has not been solved. Instead, President Cyril Ramaphosa has only “rehashed old policies in an attempt to take control of the immigration debate” (O’Regan, 2026a).

Given the scale and persistence of unemployment as well as current social tensions in South Africa, more effective government interventions such as public employment programs (PEPs) are particularly important.

2.5 The Definition of Public Employment Programs

“Public employment programs” or “PEPs” is an umbrella term for government-funded programs that directly create temporary, part-time, or transitional employment opportunities for unemployed people (McCord et al., 2024). Since 2004, South Africa has implemented a range of PEPs, including programs that target specific economic sectors and populations. Among them are public works programs (PWP), which are a type of public employment program in which the government creates jobs through projects that improve infrastructure and other public services. In terms of PWPs, South Africa has implemented the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and later established the Community Work Programme (CWP).

In 2020, in anticipation of the serious social and economic harms likely to be incurred on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) was introduced, transforming the landscape of public employment programs in South Africa (Presidential Employment Stimulus, 2026). It is a Presidency-led portfolio that expands public employment and supports livelihoods (Presidential Employment Stimulus, 2026). Among the most significant programs of the PES are the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP), which funds employment opportunities and projects within the creative sector; the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI), which employs young people as general and education assistants to support teachers and schools; the Social Employment Fund (SEF), which funds civil-society partners to create work that address local needs; and the Cities Public Employment Programme/Metro Programme (cut in 2026), which provide temporary employment in cities in areas such as waste management, informal settlements upgrading, and public-space maintenance (Presidential Employment Stimulus, 2026).

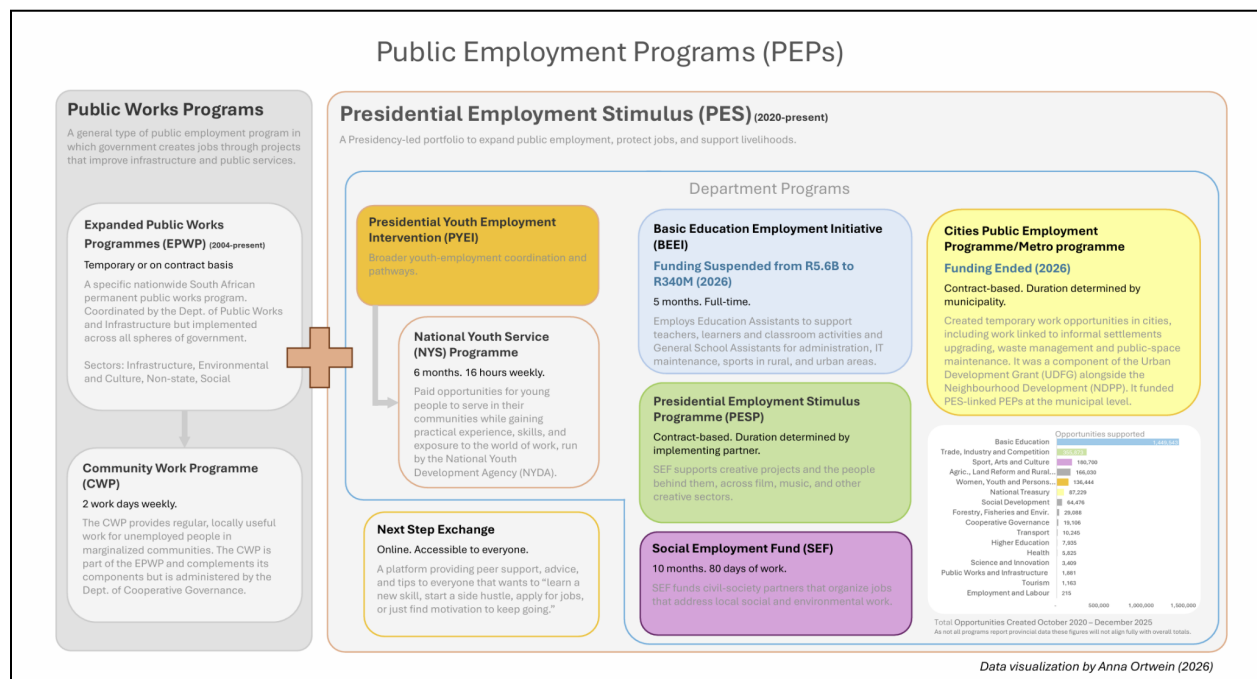


Figure 4: Overview of the public employment programs (PEPs) in South Africa

One challenge for PES is that some preceding PEPs have generated skepticism about claims of public employment. For example, instead of advancing opportunities for the unemployed, some of these programs became channels for political party patronage, in which local politicians biased job distributions to political sympathizers (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2026). Additionally, the fact that 39% of all projects in FY 2024 lasted under 44 days (or 2 months), with 53% under 3 months, raises questions about the actual value of livelihood support to jobholders and the quality of the jobs they held (Philip, 2025). These concerns continue to contribute to many South Africans' reticence towards PEPs (Dr. Kate Philip, personal communication, July 6, 2026). However, senior public employment policymakers, such as Deputy President Mashatile and Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure, Mr Dean Macpherson, and PES Programme Lead, Dr. Kate Philip, are addressing these concerns as part of the EPWP's reform agenda, in which the EPWP, CWP, and the PES are working together to improve processes and outcomes.

This paper examines the broader values of public employment programs, especially the Presidential Employment Stimulus in South Africa, and attempts to make them visible. These values include economic, skills development, psychological, social and community, and constitutional value, showing that PEPs' significance extends far beyond the temporary income they provide. While employment creation and income are critical immediate outcomes, PEPs can also help stimulate local economic activity, develop the population's employable skills, strengthen social and community relationships, improve psychological well-being, and advance the socioeconomic and dignity values underlying South Africa's Constitution. Understanding these broader benefits is essential to evaluating PEPs as mechanisms through which the state can improve livelihoods and address the wider consequences of unemployment.

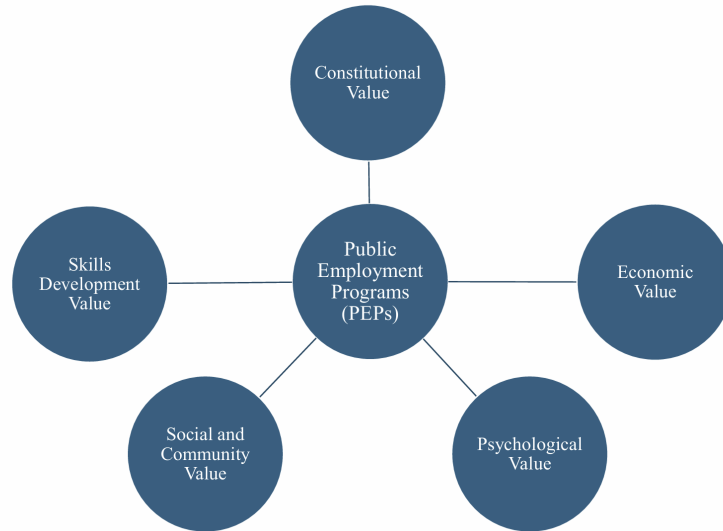


Figure 5: Overview of the five values of public employment programs (PEPs)

Our paper proceeds in four parts. First, we explain why proposed macroeconomic policies alone are insufficient and must be supplemented by PEPs. Second, we explain our paper’s methodology. Third, we demonstrate the economic, skills development, psychological, social and community, and constitutional value of PEPs. Fourth, we address arguments against PEPs based on research outside the South African context. Finally, we highlight opportunities for further research on PEPs.

3. Necessary Macroeconomic Policies

As discussed above, South Africa’s economy remains characterized by low economic growth, which “remains too weak to materially improve jobs and poverty outcomes” (World Bank, n.d.). By the end of 2027, South Africa will have experienced two decades of declining average living standards (Gqubule, 2026). According to financial journalist Duma Gqubule, South Africa must “calibrate the tools of macroeconomic policy” and enact a 20-year plan to “[double] the size of [the] economy every decade” (Gqubule, 2026). In Appendix A, we describe

the most important macroeconomic tools and policies that must be implemented to address the unemployment crisis in South Africa, such as GDP growth and unemployment rate targets, infrastructure spending, industrial policies, and universal basic income, as recommended in Gqubule’s “Vision 2035: A Plan to Achieve Full Employment in South Africa.”

4. Why Macroeconomic Policies Will Not Be Enough

While these policies are crucial to growing the economy and addressing the unemployment rate, their effects will take time to materialize. This is because the South African economy is underpinned by profound inequality. Michael Sachs, the newly appointed economic adviser to South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa, has identified this inequality as a “binding constraint to growth” (Sachs, 2026). It remains to be seen whether this diagnosis will translate into meaningful policy efforts to reduce inequality, address the exclusion of large parts of the population from the labor market and sustainable livelihoods, and develop what Sachs himself describes as the “scarce” “capacities to redistribute assets and endowments” (Sachs, 2026).

A lack of political commitment is visible in the institutional architecture surrounding the budget process. From the perspectives of the scholars, activists, journalists, and policymakers that we have met, the National Treasury, the government department responsible for managing the country’s public finances, is often perceived as having most of the influence over the country’s budget. This is despite the mandate set out for the Parliament in Chapter 4 Section 42(3) of the South African Constitution, which gives Parliament the responsibility of “scrutinizing and overseeing Executive Action” (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) was established partly to address a central problem underlying this imbalance: Members of Parliament often lack both the time and the economic

expertise required to prepare for and participate effectively in highly technical discussions with the National Treasury (Mc Lennan, 2018).

Yet, the establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office has not fundamentally altered the dynamics of budget negotiations. One reason is the structure of political accountability. Parliamentarians are not directly accountable to their constituents, as their prospects for re-election remain heavily dependent on their political parties (Mc Lennan, 2018). This can weaken incentives to engage deeply with the budget process to pursue policy outcomes demanded by citizens, such as greater funding for public employment programs, and can limit the extent to which citizens' lived experiences inform parliamentary decision-making.

As part of our research, we conducted qualitative interviews with policymakers to understand how Parliamentarians assess public employment programs and what role the personal experiences of PEP participants play in that decision-making. In those interviews, we sought to bring such lived experience metaphorically “into the room” through the story of Sibongile Joni, who found employment as a Human Resources intern with Mercedes-Benz after being a BEEI participant and whose experience is examined in greater detail later in this paper. We asked parliamentarians: *“What would you ask Sibongile if she was in the room with us?”*

The Parliamentarians' responses often revealed assumptions about employability, privilege, and individual agency. One respondent portrayed Joni as someone who must have attended a private or former Model C school, a formerly white public school during Apartheid, and therefore “came from a somewhat privileged background.” This portrayal does not reflect Joni's background and shows that Parliamentarians are not aware of the transformative impact of PEPs, as they don't see personal stories but rather only quantitative evidence as the foundation for policymaking (personal communication, June 30, 2026). Another questioned whether she

could “use [her skills] in Germany or in America or anywhere in the world.” This question both dismisses Parliamentarians’ responsibility to resolve the unemployment crisis and overlooks the substantial work that remains to be done in South Africa (personal communication, July 3, 2026). Other responses reflected an assumption that “taking initiative,” “tak[ing] up those opportunities,” and “run[ning] with it” are sufficient for young people to secure sustainable livelihoods and overcome unemployment.

The emphasis on well-resourced individual agency, or imagined access to opportunity, risks overlooking the structural barriers to employment and the consequences of prolonged unemployment. These include, among others, the erosion of skills and productivity during extended periods of chronic unemployment, as well as wider forms of social instability as already discussed in the introduction in relation to March and March, Operation Dudula, and the June 30 deadline.

For these reasons, relying exclusively on macroeconomic reforms and waiting for them to be enacted and to take effect is insufficient. Millions of South Africans are already facing the immediate consequences of unemployment and cannot afford to wait for macroeconomic policies outlined in the Appendix to take effect and for unemployment levels to decline gradually. Even with massive economic growth, it would still take decades to achieve a single-digit unemployment rate. This is reflected in the labor force growth rate (LFGR), which is currently 2.3%, meaning there will be 768,000 new entrants to the labor market annually until 2036 (Gqubule, 2026). South Africa would need GDP growth of 4.6% just to absorb a number roughly equal to the new entrants: 754,000 (Gqubule, 2026). Public employment programs, therefore, remain essential not as a substitute for structural economic reform, but as an immediate

intervention that can support livelihoods and mitigate the social and economic costs of unemployment while longer-term reforms are pursued.

5. Methodology

In this paper, we adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining an extensive literature review; a synthesis of secondary quantitative and policy data; qualitative evidence through interviews with community members, policymakers, journalists, activists, researchers, and PEP participants; and individual case narratives, to evaluate the different values of public employment programs in South Africa, considering their impact and spillover effects.

Analytical framework

This paper organizes evidence around five categories of value that PEPs may generate: constitutional, skills development, social and community, economic, and psychological. These categories were chosen because they capture distinct mechanisms by which unemployment harms individuals and communities, allowing the paper to show the value of PEPs as an initiative that invests in people. This values framework was developed by drawing on existing literature on employment, PEPs, constitutional law, social cohesion, individual meaning-making, and our own fieldwork.

Literature review

We conducted an extensive literature review of government reports, program evaluations, and academic research. This includes, but is not limited to, Statistics South Africa's Quarterly Labour Force Survey, World Bank and OECD data on unemployment and GDP growth, program-specific reports such as the BEEI Phase V Programme Monitoring Report and the Sozo

Foundation Annual Report, and macroeconomic policy analysis, most notably Duma Gqubule's Vision 2035 framework.

For sources engaging law, social cohesion, and individual meaning, we drew on a mix of primary and secondary literature depending on the subject matter. Legal analysis was grounded in primary sources, including the text of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and relevant case law, paired with secondary sources such as academic scholarship on transformative constitutionalism and constitutional literacy handbooks. Literature on social cohesion and individual meaning-making combined academic scholarship, such as the South African ChildGauge series from the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town, with policy reports addressing unemployment, unrest, and youth identity in the South African context.

We reviewed international literature on public employment and works programs, including evidence from India's NREGA, Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme, and Argentina's Jefes y Jefas. These studies are used comparatively to benchmark what is plausible or contested about PEP effects internationally, and to identify counterarguments or arguments in support of public employment programs that South Africa-specific literature has not fully tested.

Additionally, we compared the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) approach of the South African PES with the Kenyan National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement Project (NYOTA). We met with the World Bank Group's Special Protection Specialist and Poverty and Statistics Consultant who supports NYOTA. Through insights from our conversation, we were able to develop recommendations to improve the PES's M&E approach in the section titled, "8. Further Research."

This mixed-methods approach allows our analysis to move beyond employment statistics alone. By examining the economic, skills development, psychological, social and community,

and constitutional value of PEPs, our paper assesses whether the individual stories we encountered aligned with, complicated, or extended findings in the current literature on PEPs, employment, and social welfare.

Primary qualitative data

Between June of 2026 until July of 2026, we conducted qualitative as well as semi-structured interviews in South Africa with community members, policymakers, journalists, activists, researchers, and public employment program participants, including:

- Parliamentarians and policy stakeholders involved in Portfolio and Select Committees of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) relevant to the topic of unemployment, such as Public Works and Employment (NA), Small Business Development (NA), Trade, Industry and Competition (NA), and Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism (NCOP). These qualitative interviews were conducted to understand how Parliamentarians assess public employment programs and what role personal experiences by PEP participants play in that decision-making. In these interviews, we sought to bring lived experience metaphorically into the room through the story of Sibongile Joni, a BEEI participant, and asked parliamentarians what they would ask her if she were in the room with us. This allowed us to surface underlying assumptions about employability, privilege, and individual agency that might otherwise remain implicit in how policymakers evaluate PEPs.
- Litha Sam-Sam, the Co-founder and Project Manager of Loxion Mobile Library Project, a non-profit in Vrygrond, Cape Town, dedicated to improving children's literacy in the community. Loxion Mobile Library grew significantly as an implementing partner of the Social Employment Fund.

- Kyle Vernon Hendricks, a community facilitator and advocacy practitioner, whose reflection during our conversation with him surfaced the constitutional stakes of public employment.
- Dr. Kate Philip, Programme Lead of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) and “development strategist with over [30] years experience in social and economic policy development and implementation” (Econ 3x3, n.d.)

We also conducted two site visits to implementing partners of the Social Employment Fund in Vrygrond, an informal settlement in Cape Town, South Africa. In Vrygrond, we visited the Loxion Mobile Library Project and the Sozo Foundation, including their Skills Development Hub, Genesis Entrepreneurship Hub, and Education Hub. At both sites, we had the privilege of meeting with the founders, project managers, and beneficiaries of both non-profits to observe how community-building, skills development, mentorship, and sustained support from PEPs can translate into a sustained livelihood.

Individual case narratives

The paper draws on individual case narratives of former PEP participants – Litha Sam-Sam, Sibongile Joni, Mmakguta Mokoena, Lithema Cetywayo, Vincent Mosebe, and Leandro Antonio – sourced from a combination of our own fieldwork, Sozo’s Annual Report and publicly available reflections on the Next Step Exchange platform, a platform that provides peer support, advice, and tips to everyone that wants to “learn a new skill, start a side hustle, apply for jobs, or just find motivation to keep going” (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). These narratives are treated as illustrative case studies rather than a representative sample; they ground the paper’s argument that PEP value cannot be captured by statistics alone, and make visible mechanisms that are difficult to observe through data alone.

6. The Five Value of PEPs

6.1 Economic Value of PEPs

This section will examine the economic value of PEPs. First, PEPs create jobs in a “crisis of missing jobs,” where the formal sector has not created all the needed employment opportunities (Philip et.al, 2025). Second, PEPs enable further economic inclusion by empowering self-employment, providing program participants with the “skills and capital needed to engage in hustling and self-employment” (The Presidency, 2025). Third, through program stipends, PEPs relieve participants and their households of poverty by enabling households to pay off debts, cover “essential expenses,” and accumulate assets for future investments (e.g., business, homes, education, etc.). Fourth, program stipends stimulate the local economy by increasing demand for goods and services in the community. Finally, targeted PEPs can contribute to the development of a green economy, and serve as a “catalyst for South Africa’s future economy” in a global context where the threat of climate change is becoming increasingly apparent (Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme, 2026).

Job Creation

As discussed earlier above, financialization policies and corporate concentration have continued to inhibit the creation of employment opportunities in South Africa. As per Statistics South Africa’s Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1: 2024, “between 2014 and 2024, the labour force added approximately 5.5 million people (22.5 million to 28 million, including discouraged work seekers), while the number of jobs in the formal sector over the same period increased by only 700,000 (10.8 million in 2014 to 11.5 million in 2024)” (Essa, 2025). This demonstrates that the formal sector is not creating enough jobs to address the growing unemployment rate.

The South African government has the responsibility to intervene by providing employment opportunities through public employment programs. Public employment programs are “often judged solely [on their ability] to propel participants directly into sustainable, market-based employment or entrepreneurship” (Essa, 2025). However, in an “in-depth analysis of the third phase of the EPWP (2014 – 2019),” “most participants did not find formal employment” (South African Cities Network, 2021). This is because South Africa is facing a crisis of missing jobs, “which occurs when an economy systematically fails to create enough decent jobs for people, despite both the existence of work that needs doing and people willing to do it” (Essa et. al, 2025). In an economic environment where “only 8.7% of the unemployed are absorbed into employment each year,” PEPs provide a direct mechanism for job creation (The Presidency, 2025). Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, noted in his weekly ‘From the Desk of the President’ newsletter in 2022 that “even as millions of people are unemployed, there is no shortage of work to be done to build a better South Africa” (Ramaphosa, 2022). Public employment programs offer an opportunity to uplift the “work that needs doing for the common good, rather than focusing only on the work that markets find valuable” (Essa et. al, 2025).

PEPs can “create higher quality, better paid work that meets growing social and environmental needs,” and “these programmes raise aggregate levels of employment and provide work experience, at scale, for a labor market that is unable to do so” (Essa et. al, 2025). For example, the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) addresses youth unemployment by meeting a pressing social need through placing young people as teaching assistants in under-resourced schools across the country (Basic Education, 2026).

PEPs have the possibility to create jobs in a “crisis of missing jobs” in which the private sector does not (Philip et.al, 2025). This is demonstrated by the fact that in South Africa’s Quarter 1: 2026 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), “the single biggest contributor to the rise in unemployment was the loss of jobs from the termination of Phase 5 of...the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI)” (Philip, 2026). The BEEI employed 195,481 people as school assistants across South Africa (Philip, 2026). However, in 2026, “the programme did not resume with the start of the school year,” and the Q1: 2026 QLFS showed “that the single biggest decline in employment in the last quarter was in Community and Social Services – and within this, in education, where jobs fell by 168,000” (Philip, 2026). As Kate Philip notes in an opinion piece for the newspaper Daily Maverick, “Statistics are estimates based on a sample survey; they are never as accurate as administrative records. Exact alignment is rare. But this match is striking...” (Philip, 2026).

The BEEI, for example, creates employment by offering participants a pathway into teaching. Some 21,000 former teaching assistants and BEEI participants are now employed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), and 4,000 are supported in further education or training (De Groot, 2026). These statistics demonstrate that public employment is a “vital factor cushioning the labour market,” creating employment in an economic context inhibited by over-investment in capital-intensive industries and corporate concentration.

Enables Self-Employment

Beyond creating jobs, PEPs can also create sustainable livelihood activities and enable economic inclusion by empowering individuals to pursue self-employment. While PEPs are vital for creating jobs in the South African economic context, they are still only able to employ individuals for limited periods of time, and “with limited labour market opportunities, many

[former program participants] turn to entrepreneurship and the informal economy to take up this significant slack” (Essa, 2025). However, as we noted in the Macroeconomic Recommendation section above, corporate concentration creates significant barriers to entry, and “these challenges are compounded for a large proportion of public employment participants who generally live in remote or peripheral areas” (Philip, 2013).

PEPs are an “instrument of economic inclusion” and have created hustling opportunities and enabled sustainable livelihoods, even after program termination, by equipping program participants with the skills and capital needed to engage in hustling and self-employment even in rural and impoverished areas without an industrial base (The Presidency Republic of SA, 2025). PEPs can create “interfaces and pathways into small enterprise or co-operative activities,” through “entrepreneurship support,” “exposing participants to new livelihood opportunities,” “facilitating access to productive assets,” and “financial inclusion by facilitating the formation of savings groups, financial literacy trainings, and linkages to financial services” (Essa, 2025).

The Social Employment Fund is a public employment program that is part of the PES, which “supports organizations active at community-level to employ people to undertake ‘work that serves the common good’” (Observatory of Public Sector Innovation, 2023). A presentation from November 2025, titled “An Agenda for PEP Reform” produced by the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, noted that of 50,000 participants in the Social Employment Fund, 12,691 participants were engaged in complementary entrepreneurial activities, 5,835 new micro enterprises were established, 6,162 existing micro-enterprises were supported and mentored through SEF, and 1,651 participants were able to leave the program for full-time self-employment (The Presidency Republic of SA, 2025). These statistics from the SEF demonstrate that well-designed PEPs with strong support systems can help participants develop

complementary livelihood strategies, enabling participants to leave the program and sustain themselves through self-employment alone.

Mmakgauta Mokoena

Mmakgauta Mokoena is both an ex-beneficiary of the SEF and an entrepreneur. She is a social work student at the University of South Africa and founder of Tangled Creations.

Mokoena started Tangled Creations, a crochet business, as a side-hustle while participating in the SEF. In her interview on Next Step Exchange, a public platform created by the Presidential Employment Stimulus providing peer support, advice and tips for people working towards their next opportunity, Mokoena shared that the SEF empowered her to learn a new skill to start her side-hustle: “[The] SEF programme literally gave an opportunity for us to go and learn how to crochet...So the SEF programme actually gave me the opportunity to learn because I've always wanted to learn how to crochet, but I didn't have the motivation” (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). She also noted that the SEF taught her important skills for managing her side hustle and ensuring its long-term sustainability. She states that the programme taught her how to manage working, being a university student, and starting a business at the same time: “I learned how to manage my time, my finances, because the SEF programme came with a lot of other trainings – your financial literacy, your computer skills – ...and they actually helped me as an individual” (Next Step Exchange, n.d.).

Household-Level Economic Benefits

Beyond creating employment opportunities or enabling self-employment, PEPs can also relieve participants and their households of poverty (BEEI Phase V PM Report, 2025) through program stipends alone. Participants receive a stipend for the duration of the program, with the BEEI stipend set at R4,000. The BEEI focuses on no-fee schools, which are generally located in

communities with high unemployment, low income, and low literacy, with a preference for employing participants who live near these communities. This enables the BEEI stipend to play a “crucial role in strengthening household welfare and financial stability” (BEEI Phase V PM Report, 2025). It was also observed in the BEEI Phase V PM Report (2025) that teaching assistants “experienced reduced debt burdens or improved capacity to cover essential expenses, indicating increased financial resilience” (BEEI Phase V PM Report, 2025).

The household-level economic benefits of PEPs have also been documented in studies on PEPs beyond South Africa, such as two studies on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MG-NREGS) (Ravi and Engler, 2015), a large public employment program in India, a study on the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), a large social safety net (SSN) program from Ethiopia (Berhane et al., 2014), and a study by Bagga et al. (2024), which found a medium-term increase in household assets after participation in the program has ended across six reviewed studies from 9 countries. These assets enable households to make lifestyle-changing investments. For example, a study on MG-NREGS found that these investments, enabled by the increase in assets from the PEP’s stipend, allowed families to use more inputs and cultivate riskier crops (Gehrke, 2019).

Local Economic Spillovers

The stipends that PEP participants receive can also extend far beyond a single household. This is because the stipend increases demand for goods and services, such as groceries at the nearby store, which in turn increases the recipient retailer's revenue. This development expands across the whole local economy through the “recirculation effect:” the “buying of intermediate goods passes on demand through the supply chain, which generates additional wages and capital income throughout the entire local economy” (Bassier & Budlender, 2024). This means that if

BEEI participants spend part of their stipends at a local bakery, the additional demand may lead the bakery to hire more workers and buy more inputs from suppliers, such as a local farm. The initial stipend thus recirculates through the economy, generating further rounds of income and spending. Stephanie Kelton, former chief economist for the Democratic staff of the U.S. Senate Budget Committee and Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Stony Brook University, noted how important this demand is for local economies in 2020: “Capitalism runs on sales. In survey after survey, we find that the number one reason businesses are slow to hire and invest in new plants and equipment is a lack of demand for the things they produce. Businesses hire and invest when they’re swamped with customers.”

The recirculation effect was proven by a difference-in-differences study by Josh Budlender and Ihsaan Bassier (2024). After the start of the BEEI, they measured a sharp 15% increase in sales for the chosen retailer (Bassier & Budlender, 2024). This sales increase was maintained at about 4% after the program compared to pre-participation in the BEEI. This may be explained by participants accumulating savings during the program or being better positioned to find other employment (Bassier & Budlender, 2024). If you scale up the effect of the R4,000 stipend on the local economy to the whole South African economy, based on the roughly 200,000 BEEI participants nationwide per year, the recirculation effect adds R 38 million per month to the South African economy (Bassier & Budlender, 2024). Of this amount, approximately R 19 million is associated with employment-related effects, meaning that increased consumer spending generates additional demand for goods and services, which can enable businesses to hire additional employees (Bassier & Budlender, 2024).¹

¹ It is important to note that, internationally, evidence on PWP’s effect on food consumption is ambiguous. While a few studies report a positive effect on food consumption for rural programs that target “poorer and more credit-constrained households (Alik- Lagrange and Imbert, 2026), other evaluations of PWPs find small or null effects on food consumption (Bagga et al., 2024).

Green Economy

Beyond addressing current economic strife, public employment programs also have the capacity to shape the nation's economic future. South Africa is particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. As noted by the United Nations Development Programme Climate Change Adaptation, “the potential changes in climate may have significant impacts on the South African society and economy” due to the fact that the nation is “lying within a drought belt, [and has an] economy largely dependent on climate-sensitive sectors” (United Nations Development Programme, 2026). However, PEPs can serve as a “catalyst for South Africa’s future economy” by contributing to the development of green industries such as ecosystem restoration, water management, and sustainable construction (Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme, 2026). They can also strengthen climate resilience within informal settlements themselves. This is supported by the work currently being done by the Social Employment Fund (SEF) and the Cities Support Program. The Cities Support Program was guided by the Just Urban Transition (JUT) approach that integrates “climate action, infrastructure development and sustainable livelihoods” (Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme, 2026). Although the Cities Support Program no longer exists, it created a circular economy through local waste management, local recycling, urban gardening, and alternative energy and construction technologies.

An organization that, among other things, addresses environmental work is the Sozo Foundation, which is financially supported by the Social Employment Fund (SEF). As part of Sozo Foundation’s Entrepreneurship Hub, Vincent Mosebe and Leandro Antonio, who are from the township Vrygrond and whose childhood was marked by “poverty [...] and fractured family

structures” (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025), established Mosebe Enterprise. The research team had the pleasure of visiting their enterprise.

The company was first founded when Vincent developed small portable solar-powered energy systems using recycled materials and self-taught skills, and Antonio came up with the idea of powering homes in informal settlements such as their own, for example, to electrify a fridge. Through the Sozo Foundation and the SEF, they received mentorship and opportunities such as pitching platforms. As Leandro says himself, “Sozo is our anchor. It is the one place that keeps us coming back, not just to be safe but to build something better here” (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). Sozo's support enabled the business partners to move beyond the initial idea, learn how to run an enterprise with 6 employees, and plan to “distribute 100 solar units to households without electricity” (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). Mosebe and Antonio show that when public employment programs foster neighborhood development and community-led climate action, significant progress is possible.

6.2 Skills Development Value of PEPs

This section highlights the value of PEPs as a means to develop skills. First, we explain that PEPs provide critical work experience that the formal sector currently does not offer, but that is needed to move into further employment. Second, we examine why skills development is urgently needed to address the work that must be accomplished in South Africa, particularly in its schools. Third, we argue that work experience gained through PEPs enables business founders to be more likely to achieve success. Lastly, we suggest that while Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges undergo reform, it is crucial to offer work experience through PEPs so that TVET students can complete their vocational training.

Work Experience as a Pathway into Employment

The job absorption rate, which stood at 39.6% in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey for the second quarter of 2026, leaves 60% of South Africans without opportunities to gain work experience and skills in the formal sector. This situation is especially critical for young people, as Stats SA (Q1:2025) found that 58.7% of unemployed youth had no previous work experience. However, without a first job, young people cannot acquire experience, while employers frequently demand experience before hiring. Additionally, research indicates that the likelihood of young people being productive decreases with each year they remain out of employment, education, or training (NEET) (De Lannoy, 2025).

The need for work experience increasingly affects people with tertiary education, whose unemployment rate was roughly 176% higher than in 2012 (Philip & David, 2026). This demonstrates that, even for people with tertiary education, work experience is crucial, as education alone will not secure a job or help individuals succeed in other opportunities, such as self-employment. Given South Africa's crisis of missing jobs, the near impossibility of securing a job without any work experience, and the private economy's failure to provide those opportunities, PEPs are needed. They can be designed across the skills spectrum to help people close to the labor market enter it and bring those further away from the formal labor market closer to it (Philip, 2025).

The need for work experience among young people to secure employment is also reflected in Sibongile Joni's story. Although she holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Human Resource Management, which she completed by correspondence at the University of South Africa, she was unable to find a job (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). This changed after she worked as a Teaching Assistant at Emsengeni Primary School in the Eastern Cape as part of the Basic

Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) (Ramaphosa, 2025). “Through working very closely with principals and educators,” she “developed a very strong sense of professionalism and effective communication” (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). This experience within the educational sector also “equipped [her] with key professional skills” (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). By highlighting these skills in subsequent interviews after the program ended, she secured her employment as a Site Supervisor in an NGO called Masinysuane, received further mentorship, and eventually obtained a Human Resources internship with Mercedes-Benz in East London (Next Step Exchange, n.d.).

In her reflection for Next Step Exchange (n.d.), she highlights the skills certificates she completed during her time as a BEEI participant, such as courses on mentorship and Microsoft Excel, and explains how she applied those skills as a teaching assistant and later in an HR analysis. Thereby, Joni shows that skills certificates alone are not enough (Philip, 2026). While she was able to complete courses, she also underlines that only when applying those courses to her role as a teaching assistant within the BEEI to “get [her] day-to-day job done” did the skills certificates become valuable. The practical experience enabled her to apply the skills she developed through the program to her subsequent work in HR data analysis (Next Step Exchange, 2026).

The Labour Market Dynamics in South Africa report (2024) tells the same story. It indicates that young people with work experience are four times more likely to secure employment. Albay et al. (2024) also conclude that employers prioritize work experience over educational background in hiring decisions, surveying 151 HR practitioners.

Skills for Employment and Beyond

Skills development programs provide participants with both technical and transferable skills. For example, the Sozo Skills Development Programme, supported by the Social Employment Fund (SEF), provides, among other things, six months of vocational skills training in hairdressing, artisan baking, barista coffee making and serving, or nail care. Participants also develop transferable skills, including communication, time management, and confidence. This combination of technical and transferable skills helped graduates achieve a 93% placement rate into employment, education, further training, and entrepreneurship, ultimately resulting in a 75% retention rate (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). This is particularly impressive, considering the labor market absorption rate is 8.7% (The Presidency Republic of SA, 2025).

From Work Experience to Entrepreneurship

Work experience is not only needed to find employment but also to succeed in self-employment. This is because running a business requires skills such as communication, time management, and confidence, which are developed through work experience. In an economy in which the private sector does not create sufficient job opportunities, this work experience can be gained through PEPs, as seen with the Sozo Skills Development Programme. Lithema Cetywayo, “a dancer, choreographer, content creator and founder of EVERYTHING Lit,” is an example of this (EVERYTHING Lit, 2026). When she was selected to study performing arts but couldn’t afford it, she completed barista training with Sozo in 2024 and afterward joined Starbucks (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025; EVERYTHING Lit, 2026). Because of the skills she gained through work experience, she later joined the Sozo Entrepreneurship Hub, where she continues to develop her entrepreneurial skills, and successfully founded EVERYTHING Lit (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). With that support, she was able to turn her unrealized dream that “nearly broke and crushed” her into a platform that “helps people connect and grow within

their community” through opportunities like talent shows and dance competitions that she never had (EVERYTHING Lit, 2026). By turning “street dancing into global stages,” she shows a community “expected to think small” that they don’t have to wait for opportunities but can create their own (EVERYTHING Lit, 2026).

As Lithema Cetywayo’s case shows, Entrepreneurship Hubs and the entrepreneurship skills they provide can increase the number of people who successfully build and sustain businesses. The Genesis Youth Incubation Hub, supported through the Social Employment Fund, for example, provides one-year programs that teach participants business fundamentals, financial management, leadership, and personal development. The program also helps its participants access valuable advice through coaching, even after the one-year program ends, and make contacts through networking events and partnerships with the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), and ORT SA, thereby enabling them to get R30,000 seed funding in 2024-2025 (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). Participant surveys demonstrate the program’s effectiveness from 2024-2025: 88% felt upskilled, 75% improved their business skills comprehension, and 85% were subsequently able to register new businesses (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025).

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college students and PEPs

In principle, workplace experience and skills development would be available through South Africa’s Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. These institutions’ mandate is to provide students with vocational and occupational training to prepare them for employment (Madambi, 2025). In his 2026 address on the budget vote, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that they “are working to transition TVET colleges to offer occupational qualifications with embedded workplace experience, allowing more graduates to transition into

employment” (Ramaphosa, 2026). However, the placement challenges identified in “From theory to practice: TVET college students’ challenged in search of experiential training” (2025) – such as lack of funding, “reluctance by the employers to host the learners” because of skills misalignment, and missing opportunities for experiential training – were found to be only “symptoms of the underlying problems generated by the apartheid system and the modern political economies” (Madambi et al., 2025). Given these structural challenges, it is “naive optimism to think that TVET colleges located in previous townships with no or thin industrial base” can offer those opportunities promised by President Ramaphosa (Madambi et al., 2025). This is also especially unlikely given the extent of political interference, nepotism, and corruption identified in TVET colleges in a 2025 study by the University of the Western Cape Institute for Post-School Studies (IPSS) (Fengu, 2024).

TVET colleges show that South Africa does not lack institutions intended to build vocational and workplace skills. Rather, existing institutions have struggled to fulfill that function consistently. If they had worked well, they could have fulfilled some of the roles that are proposed for PEPs in this paper. Therefore, PEPs are needed as a complementary pathway that can provide work experience and skills while longer-term reforms improve the structural challenges within the vocational training system.

Building Management and Leadership Skills - Featuring the Story of Litha Sam-Sam, founder of Loxion Mobile Library

Another skill PEPs can build is managerial and leadership experience. An example of this is the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), where 130 people held supervisor roles that included “managing participants, preparing work schedules, tracking sales, managing

biometric clock-ins and other administrative tasks, thereby learning highly valued skills” (Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme, 2026).

The story of Litha Sam-Sam, founder of Loxion Mobile Library, shows how PEPs can also strengthen leadership by enabling community members to develop and scale their own solutions. We had the honor of meeting and learning from Litha Sam-Sam, founder of Loxion Mobile Library, a non-profit dedicated to improving children’s literacy, at the organization’s permanent library space in Vrygrond, an informal settlement in the Western Cape of South Africa. Loxion Mobile Library was born out of a desire to “meet children where they are” (Litha Sam-Sam, personal communication, June 18, 2026). During COVID-19, “schools were closed, and many kids could not go to school” (People’s Post, 2022). Litha Sam-Sam, a 20-year-old new assistant teacher, recognized the devastating impact school closures would have on children’s literacy. He aimed to address this challenge by taking books into the community, to playgrounds, and parks. Riding a 3-wheel bike painted to look like a giraffe, Sam-Sam would go from park to park in neighborhoods around Vrygrond and call children to read by playing drums. He explains, “I knew how to play drums, read, and give books, and the children immediately loved it” (Litha Sam-Sam, personal communication, June 18, 2026).

From this small-scale initiative, Sam-Sam began developing many of the characteristics associated with leadership: identifying a community need, mobilizing people around a solution and a vision, building partnerships, and expanding an organization. He used social media to share stories and attract partnerships, with the goal of growing the program to reach even more children. Eventually, he applied for funding from the Social Employment Fund (SEF), a public employment program (PEP) which funds civil-society partners to create work that addresses local needs. According to Sam-Sam, SEF funding “opened so many doors” and enabled

Sam-Sam to hire young adults from the Vrygrond community to lead mobile library sessions, buy more books and materials, organize after-school support programs, and open a permanent library location. He also expanded the program beyond Vrygrond, hiring two staff members in Khayelitsha, another township in the Cape Flats (Litha Sam-Sam, personal communication, June 18, 2026).

As Loxion Mobile Library grew, Sam-Sam's role expanded from personally delivering reading activities himself to leading an organization. This transition illustrates how PEPs can provide beneficiaries with opportunities to develop and practice skills in supervision, hiring, delegating tasks, partnership-building, program expansion, and strategic decision-making. His leadership role also reflects his aspiration to be a role model within Vrygrond to “empower kids to see a superhero in themselves rather than looking for it in other people” (Litha Sam-Sam, personal communication, June 18, 2026).

Sam-Sam's experience demonstrates how PEPs can strengthen local leadership by equipping community members who have recognized challenges in their community and developed solutions with the resources they need to take meaningful action. In doing so, PEPs empower participants to become “active partners and drivers of change” (Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme, 2026). We will explore this topic further in the section highlighting the social and community value of public employment programs.

6.3 Psychological Value of PEPs

In this section, we will highlight the psychological value of PEPs by first explaining the negative bidirectional relationship between unemployment and mental health. Second, we will discuss evidence that shows how re-entering employment positively impacts mental health

outcomes. Third, we will examine why the positive psychological outcomes of employment are particularly important for South African youth and the development of their identity and personal agency. Finally, we will introduce the influence and impact of PEPs in improving psychological outcomes. Please note that this section includes discussion of suicide.

Unemployment & Mental Health

The essay “What Does Life Cost?” by Natasha Lourens from Wesbank, Kuils River, written for the book project *The Work We Carry* (2026), whose launch we attended in Cape Town, deals with the conversation she had with a young man aged 25 who comes from a good family and “because of unemployment [...] took the wrong path.” She recounts their conversation partly in Afrikaans, in which he tells her:

“Kyk vir my, ek moet skarrel, and honestly I do drugs because what else can I do? My ouers soek my nie daar nie, ek kan nie 'n vaster werk kry nie, I can't even look after myself. I steal and take what's not mine, I have to face consequences that makes me a bad man. Die mense is al bang vir my tronk in, tronk uit. Niemand is lief vir my nie. Kyk vir my, I'm a gangster looking for a normal life.”²

When Lourens asks him how this makes him feel, he says: “*Baie kak, kyk hoe lewe ek, nerens omte gaan nie. Somtyds wil ek n mes vat en my keel af sny.*”³

Lourens’ essay and this young man's story show that unemployment and mental health are closely interconnected and influence each other in a reinforcing cycle. There is a bidirectional association between unemployment and poor mental health, with unemployment contributing to poor mental health and poor mental health making it more difficult to obtain and

² “Look at me, I have to scramble, and honestly I do drugs because what else can I do? My parents don't look for me there, I can't find a more permanent job, I can't even look after myself. I steal and take what's not mine, I have to face consequences that make me a bad man. The people are already afraid of me in jail, out of jail. No one loves me. Look at me, I'm a gangster looking for a normal life.”

³ “A lot of crap, look at how I live, nowhere to go. Sometimes I want to take a knife and slit my throat.”

maintain employment (Boardman & Rinaldi, 2021). As unemployment prolongs, it erodes self-worth and personal identity as individuals begin to feel they no longer contribute meaningfully to society. A study published in the *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* found that unemployed individuals commonly experienced decreased self-worth and self-esteem, loss of self-confidence, feelings of disconnection from society, and emotions such as emptiness, uncertainty, conflict, loneliness, and boredom (de Witte et al., 2012). These experiences demonstrate that unemployment affects more than an individual's financial stability; it can disrupt the psychological foundations that shape how people view themselves and their place within their communities.

The consequences can become increasingly severe over time as the story of the young man in Lourens' essay shows. A systematic review and meta-analysis examining unemployment and suicide found that "long-term unemployment is associated with greater incidence of suicide" (Milner et al., 2013). The results of the meta-analysis "suggest that risk is greatest in the first five years, and persists at a lower but elevated level up to 16 years after unemployment" (Milner et al., 2013). This shows that unemployment is not merely an economic issue but also a significant public health concern, underscoring the importance of employment initiatives.

Empowerment through Employment

Substantial evidence shows that re-entering employment improves psychological outcomes and helps reverse many of the negative effects associated with unemployment. A systematic review published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found "a positive association between returning to work and health outcomes in a variety of populations, at different times, and in different settings" (Rueda et al., 2012). Beyond improving mental health, employment helps individuals develop a stronger sense of identity, purpose, and confidence in

their future. Employment also allows individuals to rebuild their sense of self through meaningful work, social interaction, and recognition from others and society.

Psychological Value of Employment for Youth Specifically

The psychological benefits of employment are particularly important for young South Africans. As aforementioned, over half of the South African working-age population is under 34; young South Africans, particularly those aged 15-25, face the highest unemployment rate, at 60.9% (Statistics South Africa, 2026). The implications of unemployment for an individual's psychological health are severe, but they are likely to be especially acute for young people. As noted in the essay titled “Youth health and well-being: Why it matters” in the *South African ChildGauge* published by the Children’s Institute at the University of Cape Town, “adolescence and young adulthood represent a period of experimentation and identity formation, and also a time when lifelong behavior patterns are typically initiated or established” (Cooper, De Lannoy, and Rule, 2015). The essay, “A focus on youth: An opportunity to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty,” also goes on to state that adolescence is considered a “crucial stage of development,” because that is when “children ‘move toward social and economic independence’” (De Lannoy, Leibbrandt, and Frame, 2015). Due to the psychological significance of adolescence on young adults, adolescence “is recognized internationally as a critical point for interventions that can lead to long-lasting change” (De Lannoy, Leibbrandt, and Frame, 2015).

In the wake of high youth unemployment, PEPs targeting youth and thereby geared towards addressing high youth unemployment are the optimal intervention to limit the psychological consequences of unemployment on adolescents. This is further reinforced by evidence demonstrating how high youth unemployment wears on young South Africans. In 2025,

the South African Department of Statistics posted an article on their website focused specifically on “South Africa’s Youth in the Labour Market: A Decade in Review,” based on the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for Q1:2025. The Q1: 2025 statistics noted that “approximately 1,9 million youth aged 15–34 were classified as discouraged work-seekers (persons who have given up looking for work)” (Stats SA, 2025). This statistic “reveal[s] how young people are especially vulnerable to discouragement, driven by limited experience and fewer employment opportunities” (Stats SA, 2025).

Not only does unemployment have a significant impact on the mental health of adolescents, but it also significantly affects their personal identity and feelings of belonging. As discussed in the essay entitled “Youth identity, belonging and citizenship: Strengthening our democratic future,” “young people’s senses of identity, belonging and citizenship are formed, based upon: personal agency and a sense of ownership; that is, the ability to exercise some form of control over one’s financial, emotional and social circumstances, structural support and appropriate bridging relationships that connect individuals to families, peer groups, communities, and more formal institutions such as schools and the labour market, and identity-affirming rituals or traditions...that mark important milestones in life, build confidence, and offer opportunities for personal growth and performance” (Burns, Jobson, 2015).

However, “the pre-conditions for a sense of belonging are largely absent in [South Africa],” with high unemployment and disconnection from labor markets, amongst other factors, limiting “opportunities for young people to exercise personal agency” and to “signal [their] transition to adulthood” (Burns, Jobson, 2015). Employment signals and instills a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Dr. Kate Philip states, “The overriding social and economic priority in South Africa is...to provide work for those who need it...to give people access to the dignity of

being productive rather than being dependent...” (Philip, 2010), and this priority is particularly vital for adolescents, who seek traditional signals of their productiveness in society to support their sense of personal agency.

In 2024, a study from the University of Johannesburg used qualitative design methodology to analyze the experiences of South African youth who had successfully transitioned from unemployment to employment. It found that participants who had been employed for a period “progressed towards more mature career identity development and began planning their future with a newfound sense of well-being and life satisfaction. They appeared to need a job to develop a more positive self-concept. The participants did not have a choice regarding their initial occupation; however, once employed, they entered a phase of developing an understanding of who they were and which occupational path to follow” (Pereira et al., 2024).

Role of PEPs

PEPs can provide the significant psychological benefits of employment. While only providing preliminary results, a systematic review on “The impact of employment programs on common mental disorders,” published in *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, “highlights the potential for employment programs and other poverty-reduction interventions to be utilized and integrated into the wider care, prevention, and treatment of common mental disorders” (Evans, Lund, and Fuhr, 2022). The review found that “employment programs show promise in improving common mental disorder outcomes through reducing poverty and other social determinants of mental ill health” (Evans, Lund, and Fuhr, 2022).

6.4 Social & Community Value of PEPs

This section will illustrate the social and community value of PEPs by first making the case that public employment programs are needed to address persistent educational gaps by strengthening literacy, learning, and educational outcomes inside and outside of the classroom, drawing from evidence from the Rural Education Assistant Project (REAP). We will do this by focusing on the effects of teaching assistants on learners and teachers. Second, we show PEPs' social and community value by highlighting the fact that creative projects facilitated by public employment programs can help preserve cultural heritage and strengthen communities. Third, drawing from research on India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) program, we argue that public employment programs can prevent and moderate social unrest and conflict.

The community and social value of PEPs is especially important since the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the second quarter of 2026 showed a substantial employment decline of 57, 000 jobs in the community and social services sector. Reflecting the serious consequences of these public employment declines in the community and social sector, the Budget Justice Coalition (2026) released the following statement:

“This is the direct, measurable consequence of a provincial equitable share formula and compensation ceilings that have forced provinces, the Eastern Cape worst of all, to leave clinic posts unfilled, cap teacher numbers, and freeze the community health worker and Early Childhood Development practitioner stipends that keep the most labor-intensive, most redistributive part of the public service running.”

To expand this argument, the following section will elaborate on the need for social and community work carried out through public employment programs.

PEPs as a Response to Persistent Educational Gaps

In gaining skills through PEPs, participants, especially BEEI participants, take on roles that add real value in South African schools and that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) has aligned with school and community needs (The Basic Education Employment Initiative is Back, 2025).

This is necessary because South Africa's educational inequalities are deeply rooted in Apartheid. Education in Bantustans was purposefully designed to provide inferior schooling intended to create manual laborers (Levy, 2015). This led to constant underfunding of education for Black South Africans, with per capita spending on education ranging from R17 (\$189) in 1950 to roughly R150 (\$330) in 1980 (Desmond and Leah Tutu Exhibit, n.d.). This effect is still felt in South Africa's education system today. The 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study found that 81% of South African fourth-graders cannot read for meaning. The dropout rate, with 4 in 10 students failing to complete 12 years of schooling, also reflects poor school infrastructure, inadequate resources, and a teacher shortage (Baloyi, 2026). Moreover, 56% of South African homes do not own books (Masinyusane, n.d.). Public employment programs can address these historical inequalities by providing additional support to the most marginalized South Africans.

Strengthening Literacy, Learning, and Educational Outcomes Inside and Outside of the Classroom

PEPs help improve these literacy gaps and South Africa's educational inequality through after-school programs, second-chance programs, mentorship, literacy support, and direct support in schools and classrooms. For example, the Sozo Foundation, which is supported by the Social Employment Fund (SEF) and the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI), provides high

school learners aged 13 to 18 with additional support not available in schools. This support includes after-school tutoring, mentorship, and holistic development (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). The positive effects are evidenced in the fact that their beneficiaries achieve a 93% Matric Pass Rate and thereby gain access to tertiary education.

In addition, Sozo Foundation's EduLab aims to address the literacy rate, which, as shown by the 2021 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, is deeply concerning. It does so by strengthening participants' literacy and numeracy in vocational training (Sozo Foundation Annual Report, 2025). The same aim can be seen in Loxion Mobile Library, which enables children to borrow and read books, and in Masinyusane's Zazi iZandi program, which employs literacy coaches across the Eastern Cape, the most impoverished region in South Africa (Masinyusane, n.d.). With this extra support, the number of children meeting reading benchmarks has doubled in the schools supported by Masinyusane's literacy coaches (Masinyusane, n.d.).

Evidence from the Rural Education Assistants Project (REAP)

The BEEI offers direct classroom support through teaching assistants who support teachers, learners, and the implementation of activities in classrooms and beyond. These improvements can be seen in the direct benefits to learners and teachers. While the effects of the BEEI on learners, teachers, and the community itself are still being researched, South Africa's Rural Education Assistants Project (REAP) and teaching assistant programs in other countries have been studied. REAP was piloted in 2018 in 188 schools across the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo to test the use of teaching assistants in rural primary schools for Grades 1 to 4, thereby serving as a predecessor to BEEI (REAP Research Report, 2021). Given the similarities between REAP and BEEI, the effects on learners and teachers found in REAP

will likely be similar in BEEI.

Evidence from REAP: Supporting Learners

The researchers observed five benefits for learners on-site and in interviews with teachers and principals, which are documented in the REAP Research Report.

First, as REAP teaching assistants often came from the same community as the students, students “sometimes relate better to the [education assistants] (EAs) than they do to [the teachers] as they are known people in the community,” according to an interview with a teacher. This was reinforced by a principal, who underlined that “learners are well disciplined because EAs are always with them, both inside and outside the classroom” (REAP Research Support, 2021). The study "Educator Workload in South Africa" highlighted the importance of these strong school-community relationships: teaching assistants from the same community can understand the cultural dynamics at school and in learners’ homes (Chisholm et al., 2005). In some instances documented in the REAP Research Report, teaching assistants were even able to visit the homes of children who had been absent from school (REAP Research Report, 2021).

Second, another benefit of deploying teaching assistants to schools was the extra support they offered learners outside of class. Among scholars, additional instruction is seen as an effective way to help learners catch up when they lag behind and need extra support to understand the material covered in class and complete their homework. For example, Ruthbah et al. (2015) provided supplementary after-school tutoring in a study conducted in Bangladesh. The authors found that participation was associated with approximately a 3.9 percentage-point reduction in dropout probability. They propose that this is because teaching assistants help learners complete their homework, which lowers the dropout rate, as students are no longer embarrassed about not doing their homework. This relationship between additional instruction

and educational success was also confirmed in the REAP Report, with teachers and principals attesting that “the pass rate percentage in maths has increased and learners can count and calculate” or “reading levels of the learners is good ever since REAP is implemented.”

Third, the creation of extracurricular activities was possible through the staffing provided by the teaching assistants. The positive impact of these initiatives is evident in the testimonials of teachers and principals, who described “many positive changes,” including the establishment of a choir that competed in choir competitions, a school’s participation in the regional soccer tournament, where they got “position 2, something that has never happened,” or a school’s success in a spelling bee where they “achieved a second position” (REAP Research Support, 2021). Beyond these evident, easily observable effects, extracurricular activities are also linked to improved academic outcomes (Feldman & Matjasco, 2005) and the development of values in children (Keser et al., 2011).

Fourth, as scholars have argued, teaching assistants enable supervised small-group learning, ensuring that more learners focus on their tasks (Navarro, 2015). This was also observed by the researchers of REAP on-site: After the teacher assigned a task to the class, teaching assistants often worked with smaller groups of children who were struggling and lagging behind, guiding them through the task completion process (REAP Research Report, 2021). If it had been just the teacher, given the reality of overcrowded classrooms in South Africa’s schools, this extra support that the most marginalized students need would not have been possible. This was also confirmed by a teacher in an interview: “It’s difficult to reach slow learners at the same time and those who need extra help, so the EAs have made it easy to deal with slow learners as a result; some have grouped and improved.” (REAP Research Report, 2021).

Fifth, as rural schools often lack Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM), teachers must devote valuable time to creating relevant LTSM. Through the REAP program, teaching assistants completed this task by adding to existing LTSM, enhancing teaching quality in those schools and allowing teachers to spend more time teaching and helping children learn (REAP Research Report, 2021). Teaching assistants taking over LTSM development and supervising small groups also increased curriculum coverage (REAP Research Report, 2021).

Evidence from REAP: Supporting Teachers and Strengthening Educational Capacity

Apart from the effect of teaching assistants on learners, a positive effect on teachers can also be observed. This effect is especially critical in South Africa's education system, which is characterized by "overcrowded classes which make it difficult to reach [...] some misbehaving and some not concentrating" (REAP Research Report) and an immensely high educator workload that often leads to teacher absenteeism and high stress levels (Chisholm et al., 2005). Interviews with teachers who supervised REAP confirmed that this was also the case before the start of the REAP program: "You feel tired at the end of the day, having to deal with so many learners and so many issues at the same time" (REAP Research Report, 2021). This leads most student teachers (75% at one university and 85% at the other) to view teaching as stressful, potentially exacerbating South Africa's classroom crisis, with half of teachers being 50 or older and a retirement age of 60 (Pongweni, 2026).

To reduce teachers' workload, stress levels, absenteeism, and job dissatisfaction, the teaching assistants have contributed by, as outlined before, attending the needs of struggling and misbehaving kids by supervising them in small groups and taking over administrative tasks so that teachers "don't have to worry about things such as attendance registers which makes it easier for [them] to do [their] preparations" (REAP Research Report, 2021).

Cultural Heritage

Beyond educational value, PEPs also generate broader spill-over effects that strengthen social and community relationships. A notable example is the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP). As part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus, the Presidency “provided support to the arts and culture sector, including through a stimulus to create employment managed by the National Arts Council and the National Film and Video Foundation on behalf of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC)” (Mabye, 2023). This stimulus and collaboration created PESP, which, among others, funded South African filmmaker Murena Netshitangani. Netshitangani received funding through the PESP to create *Lubunyu*, a film rooted in the experiences of the Venda community, a cultural and linguistic group primarily from the northeast section of the Limpopo province (Britannica Editors, 1998). The project created employment for nearly 400 people in Makuleni, Limpopo, where the film was produced, providing temporary jobs and stimulating local economic growth (Next Step Exchange, n.d.). However, *Lubunyu* demonstrates that the value of public employment programs extends beyond job creation. Throughout production, Netshitangani consulted local elders and residents to ensure accurate representation of Venda culture, fostering community participation and preserving local heritage. By transforming a traumatic personal memory into a story that confronts gender-based violence, *Lubunyu* also created a platform to talk about justice, silence, and the lived experiences of rural South Africans; a platform that reached the international community when *Lubunyu* won Best African Film at the World Film Festival in Cannes. Rather than producing only economic benefits, *Lubunyu* demonstrates how public employment programs generate positive spillover effects that can strengthen communities, amplify marginalized voices, and create lasting social and cultural value.

Moderating Conflicts

In addition to these direct educational and cultural contributions, public employment programs can act as social insurance against income shocks and help stabilize communities by weakening the link between economic hardship and unrest. They have been used to protect populations against pre-colonial famines in South Asia (Drèze and Sen, 1991) and against the 2001 financial crisis in Argentina (Jalan and Raval, 2003). Long-running programs, such as the PES in South Africa, can also serve as a “safety-net against common or idiosyncratic shocks” (Alik- Lagrange and Imbert, 2026).

The effectiveness of PEPs in moderating conflicts is seen in research on India’s National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) program, which found that guaranteeing employment cushioned households against income shocks and substantially reduced conflict. Conflict was even reduced amongst non-participants, since the program’s wage floor gave workers a stable outside option, stabilizing incomes across rural labor markets (Fetzer, 2020). This dynamic is directly relevant to South Africa as unemployment continues to fuel social instability, most visibly in the rise of anti-immigrant movements, contributing to violence throughout South Africa. This social unrest has emerged in communities where competition over scarce jobs and resources contributed to economic anxiety and fueled xenophobia and afrophobia. NREGA’s findings suggest that PEPs can interrupt this mechanism by offering unemployed South Africans a stable income floor, and thereby reducing desperation through social insurance against the kind of economic-driven unrest caused by economic shocks.

6.5 Constitutional Value of PEPs

This section will examine the constitutional value of PEPs. First, this section will situate PEPs within South Africa's constitutional history to show how the South African Constitution specifically aimed to dismantle apartheid's legacy of exclusion by establishing dignity, equality, and human rights as foundational values that PEPs can further (Kibet & Fombad, 2017). Second, this section frames the Constitution as a transformational founding document. This demonstrates that the state carries an affirmative obligation to reshape unjust social and economic relationships and positions PEPs as one tool through which this duty is enacted (Klare, 1998). Third, this section argues that the preamble and founding provisions of the Constitution reveal that dignity, equality, and social justice are not just aspirational language but rather binding constitutional promises that obligate the state actively to "respect, protect, promote and fulfill" these rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, ss 1(a), 7). Fourth, this section argues that PEPs should be seen through the lens of socioeconomic rights and illustrates how the Constitution's requirement of "progressive realization" translates dignity and equality into concrete, material entitlement (housing, food, water, education, and social welfare) that the state must work toward over time, with particular care for the most vulnerable (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, ss 26-27). Fifth, this section connects PEPs to Section 7(2)'s duty to promote and fulfill rights and highlights how public employment functions as a vehicle for unlocking people's freed potential, translating abstract socioeconomic promises into lived access to a dignified life. Finally, this section offers an example where testimony shows that PEPs advance human dignity by restoring income and confidence to the unemployed, though that dignity remains incomplete without security once the program ends (Hendricks, 2026).

Constitutional Background & History

South Africa's 1996 Constitution emerged directly out of the Apartheid system it aimed to dismantle – a system that institutionalized racial segregation and concentrated political, economic, and social power in the hands of a white minority.

Decades of resistance to this system culminated in the Congress of the People, where roughly three thousand delegates from all walks of life – workers, scholars, women, youth, and students of every race – adopted the Freedom Charter as a vision of a united, non-racial, and democratic South Africa (South African History Online, 2011). Every organization within the Congress Alliance subsequently adopted the Charter as its official program, making it the movement's shared statement of what a liberated South Africa should become (South African History Online, 2011).

After decades of continued resistance and negotiation, South Africa held its first democratic election in 1994 and, after the first national assembly negotiated the terms, adopted its Constitution in 1996 (Kibet & Fombad, 2017). The African National Congress describes the 1996 Constitution as the first in the country's history made for all South Africans, framing it as a document born of struggle, sacrifice, and negotiation, and establishing a constitutional order grounded in dignity, equality, freedom, and social justice (African National Congress, 2026).

South Africa's Constitutional Goal

The South African Constitution of 1996 is a transformational document, deliberately intended to change the country (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Preamble, s 1(a)). As Karl Klare, an American legal scholar who wrote the founding text of transformative constitutional scholarship in South Africa, explores transformative constitutionalism, he discusses how it functions as a legal and socio-political instrument to dismantle Apartheid's institutional legacies. On this reading, he recognizes that the law is a tool the state is obligated to

use to reshape South Africa's political, social, and economic relationships in a more democratic, equal, and just direction (Klare, 1998). Put another way, the Constitution commits the state to actively pursuing a different kind of society than the one it inherited by investing in an obligation that translates into concrete government instruments and interventions.

For South Africans, this transformational character means the Constitution is a living promise. This distinguishes it from a document that merely sets outer limits on government conduct: rather than only prohibiting laws and government action that conflict with its values, the Constitution positively requires the state to work toward realizing human dignity, equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. In practice, this means the state is positively obligated to work toward the people by investing in their dignity, economic participation, and full inclusion in national life. The Constitution asks South Africans to see themselves not simply as subjects of law but as participants in a project to build a new nation.

Constitutional Vision & Promise

The preamble lays out the vision of what the new South Africa is meant to become: healing the divisions of the past, founding a society on democratic values, and building a united, sovereign South Africa able to take its place among the family of nations (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Preamble). Importantly, the Preamble explicitly commits to social justice and to improving the quality of life of all citizens so as to realize the potential of each person (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Preamble). This means clearing away barriers, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity, that stop people from exercising their freedom (Francis & Webster, 2019; Hoffman, 2026).

This vision is anchored, and made binding, in the founding provisions and the Bill of Rights. Section 1(a) finds the Republic on human dignity, equality, and the advancement of

human rights and freedoms, placing these values at the base of the state before listing any individual right (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, s 1(a)). Section 7 carries that foundation into the Bill of Rights, naming it a cornerstone of democracy and placing an active duty on the state to “respect, protect, promote and fulfill” those rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, s 7).

Together, these provisions turn the preamble's vision into a binding constitutional promise: that people in South Africa are entitled to live a dignified life, be economically engaged, be socially included, and realize their own potential.

South Africa’s Constitution Through the Lens of Socio-economic Rights

Socio-economic rights were central to South Africa's negotiated transition, marking a deliberate choice to treat material well-being as a constitutional concern. These rights cover housing, food, water, social welfare, and education, translating the Constitution's broader vision of dignity and equality into entitlements the state must work toward. Rather than guaranteeing these outcomes outright, the Constitution requires the government to take “reasonable measures” to “achieve the progressive realisation” of each right (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, s 26–27). This means the state's budgets and policy plans must actively account for these obligations over time (Heywood, 2021), with particular attention to those who are most vulnerable and marginalized, rather than treating socio-economic delivery as optional or secondary to other priorities.

This framing also reflects a distinctly South African understanding of rights. Socio-economic rights under the Constitution are held both individually and collectively, a structure rooted in Ubuntu, the African philosophical tradition summarized as “I am because we are,” which positions communal well-being alongside, and at times ahead of, purely individual

entitlement (Gcumeni & Rautenbach, 2025). This emphasis means the state's obligations are not just to isolated rights-holders but to society's shared progress toward equitable conditions. Socio-economic rights are therefore the mechanism through which founding values reach people's everyday lives.

Investing in Freed Potential, Dignified Livelihoods and Lives

PEPs are one way the state can make these Constitutional promises a reality. More specifically, because of the Constitution's transformational core purpose, PEPs can be seen as the state taking seriously the value of freeing people's potential that has been left unlocked by circumstances.

This connects directly to Section 7(2) of the Constitution, which obliges the state not merely to protect rights but to actively promote and fulfill them. Public employment services are one way this duty plays out in practice, because employment makes other socio-economic rights accessible, rather than leaving them as abstract guarantees on paper. Access to employment, grants, and skills-building programs therefore functions as a vehicle for progressive realization, transforming those abstract socio-economic rights into lived access to the basic conditions of a dignified life.

Kyle Vernon Hendricks's Constitutional Perspective

In South Africa, we had the opportunity to meet with Kyle Hendricks, a community facilitator and advocate at Youth Capital, a Project Lead at Designers Without Borders SA, a Spark Ambassador at Sunshine Cinema, and a storyteller. In our conversation, our faculty advisor, a human rights lawyer, asked: "Does the Presidential Employment Stimulus connect, in any way, to the Constitution this country fought so hard to have?" Hendricks immediately said: "100%."

For Hendricks, the constitutional value most at stake in this conversation is human dignity. Unemployment, in his account, produces a “sense of worthlessness,” causing a psychological injury (Kyle Vernon Hendricks, personal communication, July 13, 2026). Income, sustained over time within a public employment program, can help repair it: it “rebuilds their confidence” and restores a person to their community (Kyle Vernon Hendricks, personal communication, July 13, 2026). His constitutional claim lies not simply in citing “dignity” as a core component of the Constitution, but in “the constitution of a dignified life” produced through the material fact of steady income (Kyle Vernon Hendricks, personal communication, July 13, 2026).

Nevertheless, he questions what happens once the program ends: whether a person simply returns to “living an undignified life” once the income stops. This points to a question Hendricks raises about how PES delivers dignity. A job offered in part to restore a person’s sense of worth is, by the nature of the program, temporary. For Hendricks, this raises the question of whether the dignity such a job restores is meant to last, or whether it is necessarily bounded by the program’s duration.

However, Hendricks’s own account suggests the latter is not the whole picture. The confidence he describes as restoring a person to their community does not necessarily end when the position does; the psychological and skills-based value discussed elsewhere suggests that some of these effects persist beyond the program's duration.

Weighing the scale of unemployment against the small number of jobs government programs actually create, he concludes that the constitutional relationship “is there for that year, and then thereafter, it's not sustained” (Kyle Vernon Hendricks, personal communication, July 13, 2026). This is the crux of his argument: dignity, for him, is necessary but not sufficient. The

program restores a person's sense of worth for the duration of employment, and some of that restoration can outlast the position, but without renewal or a pathway to something durable, that restoration remains partial.

Taken together, Hendricks offers a two-part constitutional test for evaluating the Presidential Employment Stimulus: whether it restores dignity through sustained income, and whether it delivers security by carrying people into something durable beyond the program itself.

7. Addressing Common Arguments Against PEPs

PEPs Only Provide Short-term Impact

One of the most common arguments against PEPs is that they do not produce long-term effects. This is what researchers from the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) argue in an article titled “Public works programs and labor market outcomes.” Researchers describe PWPs as providing only “short-term employment and earnings boost to [program] participants” (J-PAL Policy Insight, 2024). They go on to note that “in a review of thirteen randomized evaluations that measured the impact of PWPs...any positive employment or earnings effects usually faded to zero within a year after implementation ended.” This argument is seconded in a review of “experimental evaluations of public works programs from [11 low- and middle-income countries] LMICs,” in which Bagga et al. show that PWPs tend to have positive and overall significant effects on employment in the short run but smaller and overall insignificant effects in the long run (Bagga et al., 2026). Bagga et al. demonstrate evidence that “public works programs do not produce much sustained impacts on employment” (Bagga et al., 2026).

These two articles specifically pertain to public works programs (PWPs) rather than public employment programs (PEPs). In the international context, PWPs refer to PEPs that are

focused on employing participants to build national infrastructure. However, both articles' arguments remain relevant because, in the South African context, their difference is nominal. The South African PWP, the Expanded Public Works Program, spans several sectors, with participants both building infrastructure and participating in community, non-state, and social work, thereby making it similar to PEPs in the international context.

Addressing Critiques of PEPs' Ability to Provide Long-Term Impact

While PEPs may be unable to provide long-term employment, that is not their primary purpose. Rather, PEPs should be seen as a viable short-term solution to the “crisis of missing jobs” in South Africa. While the effects of macroeconomic policies are taking shape, PEPs can both “fill a short-term jobs gap” and have longer-term impacts on measurable outcomes beyond employment, such as increasing participants' savings and putting upward pressure on wages in the formal sector (J-PAL Policy Insight, 2024). Through the stipend received during the program, “many participants experienced lasting increases in savings or assets due to increased income during the program. These savings sometimes helped participants invest in durable goods or private enterprises, including self-employment” (J-PAL Policy Insight, 2024). Additionally, PEPs also have the capacity to improve market wages. For example, in the case of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MG-NREGS), a PEP in India, it was found that the program “increased private-sector wages, except in settings where the labor demand is slack” (Alik- Lagrange & Imbert, 2026). Additionally, in specific instances, Muralidharan et. al (2023) even found that the MG-NREGS has a positive effect “on wages and a crowd in of private employment” (Muralidharan et. al, 2023). This upward pressure on wages positively affects both participants and non-participants (Bagga et. al, 2026).

Furthermore, our paper argues for expanding PEPs in partnership with macroeconomic reforms to create more job opportunities in the formal sector. As noted by Bagga et. al, PEPs “have been relatively more successful in delivering on their short-run objectives to raise individuals’ employment and earnings, rather than in achieving medium-run impacts on participants’ economic outcomes after they exit the programs” (Bagga et. al, 2026). We recognize that PEPs alone are insufficient to address the unemployment crisis; however, they are useful, both as an intermediary solution and in combination with other macroeconomic reforms, to more quickly address the negative effects of unemployment in South Africa.

8. Further Research

This section will highlight opportunities for further research on the value of PEPs and related interim solutions for addressing South Africa’s “crisis of missing jobs.” These opportunities for further research were formulated on the basis of our own experience working on a peer-learning platform created by the Presidential Employment Stimulus in Cape Town, South Africa, called Next Step Exchange (NSE), meeting with researchers specializing in PEPs and unemployment in South Africa and (two in Kenya), as well as reviewing existing literature on PEPs in South Africa and internationally.

Utilizing Peer-to-Peer Learning

This past summer (2026) in Cape Town, our team had the honor of working with Clotilde Angelucci, a communications and advocacy professional currently seconded to the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) unit of the Presidency, on a new PES initiative titled Next Step Exchange (NSE). NSE is an online platform, “providing peer support, advice and tips for people working towards their next opportunity” (Presidential Employment Stimulus, 2026). The online

platform shares stories of hustlers, business owners, students, former PEP participants, social entrepreneurs, and individuals navigating transitions between employment opportunities. The landing page of the NSE platform underscores that “whether you’re looking to learn a new skill, start a side hustle, apply for jobs, or just find motivation to keep going - there’s something here for you” (Next Step Exchange, 2026).

Through our work with Next Step Exchange, we had the privilege of meeting with both individuals who used NSE to learn new skills and those who shared their own stories on the platform. In these conversations, we learned about the value of peer-learning platforms, not only for gaining valuable skills, but also for connecting social entrepreneurs and business owners in South Africa.

As part of our research, we distributed a survey to approximately 1,000 platform users to better understand their identities and experiences using the platform. We received responses from 30 users (3% response rate). Over half (63.3%) of them reported that they were unemployed and seeking work. Additionally, 22 users (73.3%) said they signed up for the NSE platform to get advice on finding a job. When asked, “On a scale of 1–10, were the videos helpful in providing practical advice?” with one denoting “not helpful at all” and ten denoting “very helpful,” the mean response was 7.53 out of 10 and a median rating of seven, demonstrating the utility of the videos in providing relevant advice. Additionally, when asked, “On a scale of 1-10, was it helpful to hear stories from other people?” the mean response was 8.2 out of 10, and the median was nine, indicating that personal stories were viewed as helpful. This preliminary survey highlights both the desire for and the potential of peer-learning platforms to provide valuable information on job-seeking, hustling, financial management, PEPs, and other livelihood strategies for unemployed individuals who are seeking work. Further research is needed to

evaluate the efficacy of expanding peer-to-peer learning programs within the context of South Africa's unemployment crisis, particularly as a way to supplement the loss of work experience.

Addressing Limited Engagement of Former PES Participants with Follow-Up Surveys and Further Programming

The NSE platform was sent to all 200,000 former beneficiaries of the BEEI program, and as noted above, only around 1,000 participants are currently signed up for the platform. Furthermore, only 30 of those 1,000 participants who subscribed to the NSE platform responded to the user-experience survey. Limited engagement of former PES participants with further programming can be explained by a variety of reasons, including: former participants' limited access to data and/or email communication; former participants' successfully transitioning into employment and/or self-entrepreneurship after program termination and no longer feeling the needs to engage with the PES initiative, or former participants' unsuccessfully transitioning into further employment and feeling disillusioned with PES. Limited engagement with the PES among former PES participants constrains researchers' ability to further assess the value of PEPs through interviews or surveys.

Research evaluating why disengagement occurs after termination of the PES program has yet to be conducted. Further research is needed to identify the factors contributing to disengagement and evaluate whether this pattern is also observed across other PEPs in South Africa and internationally.

To better understand how to assess PEPs by engaging former participants, we met with representatives from the World Bank's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team, which is helping facilitate Kenya's National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement Project (NYOTA). NYOTA is a "landmark initiative by the Government of Kenya, funded by the World Bank,"

focused on “[increasing] employment, earnings, and [promoting] savings among the targeted youth” (NYOTA, 2026). During our conversation with the M&E team, they highlighted two practices they found most effective for engaging former participants. First, they conduct the studies during the program. Second, they ask three short questions via SMS because of PEP participants' time and data constraints. These two practices have yet to be implemented in the evaluation of both the NSE platform and the PES. Further research on NSE, PES, and other PEPs in South Africa should consider incorporating these recommendations to address limited engagement of former participants.

Using Administrative Data to Evaluate the Impact of PEPs

Another potential metric for assessing the value of PEPs is anonymized administrative data to track livelihood changes and/or continuities among former program participants. Each participant receives an ID number from the national government. This same ID number is also used in both tax and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) records. The UIF provides “short-term relief to workers when they become unemployed or are unable to work because of maternity, adoption and parental leave, or illness” (South Africa Revenue Service, 2026). Using de-identified ID numbers, researchers can see whether and how many program participants earn enough to pay taxes or need to claim UIF benefits.

In a discussion with Kate Philip, the Programme Lead of the PES, Philip noted that this “administrative data that shows IDs and bank transfers...[is] a much more reliable source of data than a survey [because] surveys don't pick up the nuances [and] [i]t's hard to see the figures in the data ” (Dr. Kate Philip, personal communication, July 6, 2026). Given the aforementioned limited engagement of former participants with surveys and further programming, future

research needs to utilize this administrative data to track the livelihood outcomes of former participants after program termination.

Using PEPs to Address Future Unemployment From A.I. and Climate Change

Finally, this paper argues that PEPs should be utilized as an immediate intervention in South Africa to support livelihoods and mitigate the social and economic costs of unemployment while longer-term reforms are pursued. However, concerns about the rising unemployment rate persist, posing a problem not just for South Africa but for the global population as well. A report from the International Labor Organization (ILO) (2026) found that “global youth unemployment is rising as stagnant economic growth and weak job creation increase barriers to job entry for young people” (International Labor Organization, 2026). In reference to this ILO report, the United Nations also noted that the job market “risks being further undermined by AI and trade policy uncertainty” (Lennon, 2026). Climate change also poses a significant risk to the job market: the World Economic Forum noted that “by 2030, up to 3.8% of total working hours could be lost because of climate-induced high temperatures” (North, 2023).

The global unemployment rate, as of 2026, currently stands at 4.9%, which is “equivalent to 186 million individuals who are out of work” (Lennon, 2026). Fast-paced technological advances and the risks posed by climate change could dramatically increase the global unemployment rate and put millions of individuals worldwide out of work. In fact, researchers of PWP from the Jameel Poverty-Action Lab have noted that “studying the impact of PWPs on communities affected by climate change would be beneficial...Can PWPs provide a social safety net when climate change threatens people’s regular livelihoods?” (J-PAL Policy Insight, 2024). South Africa’s expansion of PEPs could serve as a model for other countries that will have to

address rising unemployment rates in the near future. Further research is needed to assess whether PEPs are a viable interim solution for the future global unemployment crisis.

9. Conclusion

South Africa makes a constitutional promise to build a better future for its citizens. The vision articulated, of a society that heals its divisions and works toward the potential of each person, is an active mandate placed on the shoulders of the state and the society at large. The country stands at a complicated crossroads, deciding whether to continue allowing jobless growth and corporate concentration as an employment crisis continues. While the macroeconomic reforms this paper outlines are necessary to address that crisis at its root, their effects will take years, if not decades to materialize, leaving millions of South Africans without an immediate answer to their unemployment. Public employment programs are not a full-scale solution to a crisis measured in the millions of unemployed individuals. But at an appreciable scale, they create an opportunity for tens of thousands to pursue a dignified life its founding document envisions, for the individual gaining a job placement or investing in the creation of their own business, for the participant who rebuilds a sense of confidence, purpose, and mental well-being through steady work, and for the community around them who benefits from their support and individual successes.

It is important to recognize that Kyle Hendricks', Sibongile Joni's, Mmakgauta Mokoena's, Vincent Mosebe's, Lithema Cetywayo and Leandro Antonio's stories showcase that this pursuit cannot be measured solely by statistics or rates. Their stories highlight that a stipend, mentorship, or first work experience does not just move one person off the unemployment rate; at its core, it changes what that person believes is possible for themselves, and often for the people around them. We cannot simply reduce people and the worth of their lives to numbers. In

this case, individuals' stories show what the dignity of being productive looks like in a person's life. These narratives should be central to policymaking: PEPs do not just give people skills and opportunities, they restore the belief that their dreams are possible.

That restoration is, ultimately, the fullest value PEPs offer. Across skills, economics, community, and psychological well-being, this paper has shown that public employment does not operate along a single axis of benefit. A single BEEI placement builds a participant's professional skills and confidence, restores a sense of dignity and purpose, relieves a household's debt burden, strengthens a struggling school and its surrounding community, and recirculates income through a local economy, all at once. This compounding effect is what makes PEPs worth defending as durable infrastructure rather than emergency relief. South Africa does not need to choose between addressing unemployment and building human capital, strengthening communities, or improving mental health outcomes. Rather, well-designed public employment programs advance all of these simultaneously, and that multiplier effect is the strongest argument for further scaling, not shrinking, the state's investment in them.

While South Africa faces the highest unemployment rate in the world, South Africa's unemployment crisis is not unique to South Africa. It is what jobless growth looks like when capital-intensive, automation-driven expansion outpaces an economy's capacity to absorb its labor force. As other developing countries move toward a similar unemployment crisis as South Africa, how South Africa deals with its crisis can carry stakes well beyond its own borders and serve as a role model for how other countries will address unemployment. If public employment programs, paired with macroeconomic reforms, can turn a story of jobless growth into one of collective and individual renewal, South Africa can set the example for many other nations to invest in that path.

Works Cited & Consulted

About us. (n.d.). The StartUp Tribe & World Class Cities.

<https://www.worldclasscities.org/pages/about-us>

Actor Spaces. (2024, July 30). *New Film “Lubunyu” Set to Captivate Audiences as the Second Tshivenda Film Since 2012*. Retrieved August 1, 2026, from

<https://www.actorspaces.co.za/new-film-lubunyu-set-to-captivate-audiences-as-the-second-tshivenda-film-since-2012/>

Albay, J., Aquino, M. A., Faron, K. M., Ishida, K., Talenjale, N. H., Tungol, C., & Cruz, H. G.

(2024). Examining the Relationship between Work Experience, Educational Background, and Employability: A Correlational Study. *Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 24(8). <https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=32350>

Alessi, C. (2013, May 17). South Africa’s Economic Fault Lines. *Council on Foreign Relations*.

<https://www.cfr.org/backgrounders/south-africas-economic-fault-lines>

Alik-Lagrange, A., & Imbert, C. (2026). Public Works Programs. In *The Handbook of Social Protection: Evidence and New Directions for Low- and Middle-Income Countries* (pp. 183–196). The MIT Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/14927.003.0017>

Allais, S., Cooper, A., & Shalem, Y. (2027). Rupturing or reinforcing inequality? The role of education in South Africa today. *Transformation: Critical Perspectives on Southern Africa*, 101, 105–126. <https://doi.org/10.1353/trn.2019.0039>

Ardé, G. (2026, May 24). Xenophobic mobs set June 30 deadline, raising fears of the next July 2021 riots. *Daily Maverick*.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2026-05-24-xenophobia-crisis-who-is-funding-the-june-30-fear-mongering/>

- Ashor Sarupen. (n.d.). People's Assembly. <https://www.pa.org.za/person/ashor-nick-sarupen/>
- Bagga, A., Holmlund, M., Khan, N., Mani, S., Mvukiyehe, E., & Premand, P. (2024). Do Public Works Programs Have Sustained Impacts? A Review of Experimental Studies from LMICs. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 41(1), 1–38.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/wbro/lkae011>
- Baloyi, X. (2026, January). South African School Dropout Crisis. *Guardian Report*.
<https://guardianreport.co.za/south-africa-school-dropout-crisis/>
- “Bantu Education or the Street” by Norman Levy. (2026, July 20). South African History Online. <https://sahistory.org.za/article/bantu-education-or-street-norman-levy>
- Bloomberg. (2026, June 24). Ramaphosa appoints Michael Sachs as his economic adviser. *News24*.
<https://www.news24.com/business/economy/ramaphosa-appoints-michael-sachs-as-his-economic-adviser-20260624-0806>
- Britannica Editors. (1998, July 20). *Venda | History, Culture & Language*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Venda-people>
- Budlender, J., & Bassier, I. (2024, February 15). South Africa has spent billions in 4 years to create jobs for young people: how their wages affect the broader economy. *The Conversation*. <https://doi.org/10.64628/aaj.n55qesgvx>
- Burns, J., Jobson, J., & Zuma, B. (2012). Youth identity, belonging and citizenship: Strengthening our democratic future. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp. 83–91). Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.
https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf

Butterworth, P., Leach, L. S., Strazdins, L., Olesen, S. C., Rodgers, B., & Broom, D. H. (2011).

The psychosocial quality of work determines whether employment has benefits for mental health: results from a longitudinal national household panel survey. *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 68(11). <https://doi.org/10.1136/oem.2010.059030>

Caged No More! (2018). On the Pulse, YearBeyond & Chrysalis Academy.

Canning, T. (2025, September 17). *Countries with highest youth unemployment rate worldwide*.

Statista.

https://www.statista.com/statistics/1389824/youth-unemployment-rate-countries-highest-world/?srsltid=AfmBOop4LBfMzylD6xgb9WKu9bYnvZoO0o5H3csV1XNni5kC2pLLc6eB#google_vignette

Carter, E. (2025, April 17). The Future of the South African Constitution in the Face of Political Change • ancarchives.org.za. *WordPress*.

<https://ancarchives.org.za/the-future-of-the-south-african-constitution-in-the-face-of-political-change/>

Children's Library | Loxion Mobile Library | Cape Town. (n.d.). LoxionMobileLibrary.

<https://www.loxionmobilelibrary.com/>

Chisholm, L., Hoadley, U., Wa Kivulu, M., Brookes, H., Prinsloo, C., Kgobe, A., Mosia, D.,

Narsee, H., & Rule, S. (2005). Educator workload in South Africa. In *HSRC Press* (No. 978-07969-2151-2). <https://hsrpress.ac.za/product/educator-workload-in-south-africa/>

Clark, D. (2026, April 1). *Countries with the highest unemployment rate Worldwide in 2025*.

Statista.

<https://www.statista.com/statistics/264656/countries-with-the-highest-unemployment-rate/?srsltid=AfmBOoolcOi-IX01z1LQOJc-Q2HOVsbA24ce3gg16xkgIXzKFr9tEcbB>

Community Work Programme Policy (2025-2030). (2025). In *Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs*.

https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/CWP-POLICY-FINAL-EDITED-30-JUNE-2025_docx.pdf

Republic of South Africa. (1996). *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*.

<https://www.gov.za/documents/constitution/constitution-republic-south-africa-1996-04-feb-1997>

Cooper, A. (2021). “Dancing on the ceiling” : young Black entrepreneurs leveraging capitals across sub-fields in Johannesburg tourism. *Social Dynamics*, 47(3), 403–421.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02533952.2021.1981582>

Cooper, A. (2023). ‘Morphing between the margins’: how youth make a living across multiple spaces in South Africa and beyond. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 28(1), 49–65.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2023.2246919>

Cooper, A., Swartz, S., & Mahali, A. (2018). Disentangled, decentred and democratised: Youth Studies for the global South. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 22(1), 29–45.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2018.1471199>

Cooper, D., De Lannoy, A., & Rule, C. (2011). Youth health and well-being: Why it matters. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp. 60–68). Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town.

https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf

- Davis, D. M., & Klare, K. (2010). Transformative constitutionalism and the common and customary law. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 26(3), 403–509.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19962126.2010.11864997>
- De Groot, S. (2026, August 13). 200,000-plus jobs on the line as DBE seeks Treasury lifeline. *Financial Mail*.
<https://fm.co.za/features/2026-08-13-200-000-plus-jobs-on-the-line-as-dbe-seeks-treasury-lifeline/>
- De Lannoy, A., Leibbrandt, M., & Frame, E. (2015). A focus on youth: An opportunity to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp. 22–33). Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town.
https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf
- De Schutter, O. (2023). The employment guarantee as a tool in the fight against poverty - Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. In *United Nations Human Rights Office of the Commissioner (A/HRC/53/33)*.
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc5333-employment-guarantee-tool-fight-against-poverty-report-special>
- De Witte, H., Rothmann, S., & Jackson, L. T. (2012). On the psychological consequences of unemployment in South-Africa. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences*, 15(3), 235–252. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v15i3.153>
- Deidré Baartman, Minister of Finance. (n.d.). Western Cape Government.
<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/treasury/profile/deidre-baartman>

Department: Basic Education. (n.d.). *BEEI: Basic Education Employment Initiative*. Basic Education. <https://www.education.gov.za/Programmes/BEEI.aspx>

Department: National Treasury. (2026). Budget Review 2026. In *The National Treasury* [Report]. <https://www.treasury.gov.za#Budget2026>

Department of Basic Education, Provincial Education Departments, DEL-UIF, & IDC. (2025).

Implementation Framework for the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) to Support Teaching and Learning in Schools: Phase V. In *National Department of Basic Education*.

https://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Publications/BEEI%20V%20Documents/Phase%20V%20Basic%20Education%20Sector%20PYEI%20Implementation%20Framework%20d2.pdf?ver=2025-07-22-124133-340&utm_

Department of Basic Education. (2026). *BEEI PHASE V Project Management Report 2025*. The Department of Basic Education.

https://pres-employment.dev/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/v8_Softcopy_BEEI_PhaseV_ProjectManagementReport_Final.pdf

Department of Labour. (2012). Basic Conditions of Employment Act, 1997: Ministerial

Determination 4: Expanded Public Works Programmes. *Government Gazette*, 1–16.

https://stanonprodmtpdxpzan.blob.core.windows.net/dxp/2023-11/ministerial_determination_4_expanded_works_programmes_4_may_2012.pdf

Department: Statistics South Africa. (2022, June 23). *What do South African households look like?* | *Statistics South Africa*. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=15473>

Department: Statistics South Africa. (2025, May 13). *South Africa's Youth in the Labour Market: A Decade in Review* | *Statistics South Africa*. <https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=18398>

Department: Statistics South Africa. (2026a, May 12). *South Africa's Youth and the Labour Market in Q1 2026* | *Statistics South Africa*. Statistics South Africa.

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=19526>

Department: Statistics South Africa. (2026b). P0211 - Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS), 2nd Quarter 2026. In *Statistics South Africa*.

https://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=1861&PPN=P0211&SCH=74512

Domenella, Y., Jamison, J. C., Safir, A., & Zia, B. (2021). Can Business Grants Mitigate a Crisis? Evidence from Youth Entrepreneurs in Kenya during COVID-19. In *World Bank Group*.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f4d48a61-9e52-50d8-b60a-ef6f64e8a56e/content>

Donaldson, A. (2022, April 6). Public employment programmes: what they contribute to jobs and earnings. *Econ3x3*.

<https://www.econ3x3.org/articles/public-employment-programmes-what-they-contribute-jobs-and-earnings/>

Dr Ivan Meyer, Minister of Agriculture, Economic Development and Tourism. (n.d.). Western Cape Government. <https://www.westerncape.gov.za/edat/profile/dr-ivan-meyer>

Drake, R. E., Frey, W., Bond, G. R., Goldman, H. H., Salkever, D., Miller, A., Moore, T. A., Riley, J., Karakus, M., & Milfort, R. (2013). Assisting Social Security disability insurance beneficiaries with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or major depression in returning to work. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 170(12).

<https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ajp.2013.13020214>

Drake, R. E., & Wallach, M. A. (2020). Employment is a critical mental health intervention. *Epidemiology and Psychiatric Sciences*, 29, e178.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/s2045796020000906>

DSD News. (n.d.). *Sassa Confirms 2026/2027 Social Grant Payment Schedule And Increases*.

Department of Social Development.

<https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/latest-news/21-latest-news/680-sassa-confirms-2026-2027-social-grant-payment-schedule-and-increases>

Economic Freedom Fighters. (2024, July 16). ♦ *Must Watch* ♦ *The EFF Member of Parliament, Commissar Mandla Shikwambana at the debate on vote 17: Higher Education and Training in Parliament*. [Video]. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/economicfreedomstruggle/videos/%EF%B8%8Fmust-watch-%EF%B8%8Fthe-eff-member-of-parliament-commissar-mandla-shikwambana-at-the-deb/1654527328640528/>

Economic Freedom Fighters. (2026, March 4). *EFF TG Omphile Maotwe introduces insourcing bill to Parliament* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xo6V7gRua0Q>

Encyclopedia and Reference Library. (n.d.). *Bonginkosi Madikizela*. Reference.org Encyclopedia and Reference Library. https://reference.org/facts/Bonginkosi_Madikizela/Nl814eIY

Essa, Z. (2025). Public employment and livelihood trajectories in South Africa's constrained labour market. In *OpenSALDRU* (No. 311). Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

https://opensaldru.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11090/1046/2025_311_Saldruwp.pdf?sequence=3

- Essa, Z., Philip, K., Setlhodi, M., Matuludi, M., Walker, T., & Koranteng, A. (2025, October 27). The crisis of missing jobs in a country full of work. *Econ3x3*.
<https://www.econ3x3.org/articles/crisis-missing-jobs-country-full-work/>
- Evans, J., & Repper, J. (2001). Employment, social inclusion and mental health. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 7(1), 15–24.
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2850.2000.00260.x>
- Evans, L., Lund, C., Massazza, A., Weir, H., & Fuhr, D. C. (2022). The impact of employment programs on common mental disorders: A systematic review. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 68(7), 1315–1323. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00207640221104684>
- EVERYTHING LIT. (2026, April 9). *Instagram Reel*. Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/reels/DW7wE-viInr/>
- Faculty of Arts & Design. (2025, April 30). From Venda to Cannes– Alum’s winning film shines a spotlight on indigenous storytelling at film’s most prestig. *TUTFADShowcase*.
<https://www.tutfadshowcase.ac.za/post/from-venda-to-cannes-alum-s-winning-film-shine-s-a-spotlight-on-indigenous-storytelling-at-film-s-mo>
- Fairbanks, E. (2022). *The inheritors: An Intimate Portrait of South Africa’s Racial Reckoning*. Simon and Schuster.
- Fedderke, J., & Garlick, R. (2025). Infrastructure Development and Economic Growth in South Africa: A Review of the Accumulated Evidence Munich Personal RePEc Archive. In *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*. <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/125288/>
- Feldman, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2005). The Role of School-Based Extracurricular Activities in Adolescent Development: A Comprehensive Review and Future Directions. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(2), 159–210. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543075002159>

- Fengu, M. (2024, June 30). Political interference, corruption and nepotism rife at TVET colleges, study reveals. *Daily Maverick*.
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-06-30-political-interference-corruption-and-nepotism-rife-at-tvet-colleges-study-reveals/>
- Ferguson, J. (2015). *Give a man a fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution*. Duke University Press Books.
- Ferguson, J., & Murray Li, T. (2018). Beyond the “Proper Job:” Political-economic Analysis after the Century of Labouring Man. *Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies*, Working Paper 51.
<https://uwcscholar.uwc.ac.za:8443/server/api/core/bitstreams/5f48bde8-918c-463a-8c5f-2ef321a65db1/content>
- Fetzer, T. (2020). Can Workfare Programs Moderate Conflict? Evidence from India. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 18(6), 3337–3375.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvz062>
- Fiscal dimensions of South Africa’s crisis. (2021). In *Wits School of Governance | University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*. Wits School of Governance | University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
<https://www.wsg.ac.za/research/research-project/fiscal-dimensions-south-africas-crisis>
- Francis, D., & Webster, E. (2019). Poverty and inequality in South Africa: Critical reflections. *Development Southern Africa*, 36(6), 788–802.
- Gaanakgomo, C. (2025, May 12). ‘It validates our traditions, language, and voices’ – Filmmaker Murena Netshitangani on Cannes win. *News24*.

<https://www.news24.com/life/arts-and-entertainment/film/it-validates-our-traditions-language-and-voices-filmmaker-murena-netshitangani-on-cannes-win-20250509-0923>

Get to Know Boyce Makhosonke Maneli. (2025, March 3). People's Assembly.

<https://www.pa.org.za/blog/get-know-boyce-makhosonke-maneli>

Ginsburg, T., & Dixon, R. (2013). The South African Constitutional Court and Socio-Economic Rights as “Insurance Swaps.” *Coase-Sandor Working Paper Series in Law and Economics*.

https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1644&context=law_and_economics

Goneos-Malka, A., & Dikgale, M. C. (2025, January 9). Parliamentarian & Chairperson Portfolio Committee: Small Business Development – Masefako Clarah Dikgale – Job Creation | Womanity. In *Womanity | South Africa's weekly gender-based talk radio programme*.
<https://womanity.africa/2025/01/09/chairperson-portfolio-committee-small-business-development-masefako-clarah-dikgale-job-creation/>

Goneos-Malka, A., & Phiri, C. M. (2024, December 19). Parliamentarian & Chairperson Portfolio Committee: Public Works and Infrastructure – Ms Carol Mokgadi Phiri – Integration | Womanity. In *Womanity | South Africa's weekly gender-based talk radio programme*.
<https://womanity.africa/2024/12/19/chairperson-portfolio-committee-public-works-and-infrastructure-ms-carol-mokgadi-phiri-integration/>

Govender, P. (2007). *Love and courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Jacana Media.

Govindjee, A., & Dupper, O. (2011). Constitutional perspectives on unemployment security and a right to work in South Africa. In *The Constitutional Court of South Africa*.

<https://collections.concourt.org.za/items/65294113-7932-4ca0-a147-e1a0441615da>

Gqubule, D. (2026, July 2). *VISION 2035: A Plan to Achieve Full Employment in South Africa*. Google Drive.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s6dnNdss1nVGKr6f7JkjMe3WUSFA8Vqo/view>

Gqubule, D., & Coleman, N. (2026, March 16). Why the current jobs debate fails to grasp the scale of SA's unemployment crisis. *Daily Maverick*.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2026-03-16-why-the-current-jobs-debate-fails-to-grasp-the-scale-of-sas-unemployment-crisis/?dm_source=blocks-horizontal&dm_medium=card-link&dm_campaign=inform

Gqubule, D., Duncan-Williams, K., & Angelucci, C. (2023, March 28). Two interventions

Treasury can make to stimulate SA's GDP and boost youth employment. *Daily Maverick*.

https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2023-03-28-two-interventions-treasury-can-make-to-stimulate-sas-gdp-and-boost-youth-employment/?dm_source=blocks-horizontal&dm_medium=card-link&dm_campaign=inform

Graham, L., & Mlatsheni, C. (2015a). Youth unemployment in South Africa: Understanding the challenge and working on solutions. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp. 51–59). Children's Institute, University of Cape Town.

https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf

Graham, L., & Mlatsheni, C. (2015b). Youth unemployment in South Africa: Understanding the challenge and working on solutions. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp.

- 51–59). Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town.
https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf
- Groep, W. (2016, March 22). Human dignity of many still devalued. *Stellenbosch University*.
<https://www.su.ac.za/en/node/1191>
- Gcumeni, F. G. A., & Rautenbach, C. (2025). Rethinking socio-economic rights in South Africa: Embracing ubuntu as a transformative legal framework. *Legal Pluralism and Critical Social Analysis*, 57(2–3), 105.
- Hall, K., Ebrahim, A., De Lannoy, A., & Makiwane, M. (2010). Youth and mobility: Linking movement to opportunity. In *South African Child Gauge 2015* (10th ed., pp. 75–82). Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town.
https://ci.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/health_uct_ac_za/533/files/ChildGauge2015-lowres.pdf
- Harambee. (2022). Breaking Barriers Q4 2022. In *Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator*.
<https://www.harambee.co.za/breaking-barriers-q4-2022/>
- Heywood, M. (2021). Economic Policy and the Socio-Economic Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996–2021: Why don’t they talk to each other? *Constitutional Court Review*, 11(1), 1–37. <https://doi.org/10.2989/ccr.2021.0013>
- Hoffman, P. (2026, February 27). *How much longer can SA tolerate poverty, starvation of infants, joblessness and non-delivery? Accountability Now.*
- How can I find work through the Community Work Programme? | South African Government.* (n.d.).

<https://www.gov.za/faq/employment/how-can-i-find-work-through-community-work-programme>

Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). (n.d.). *Young, black females are most unemployed in SA*. Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) | Equitable Education and Economies.
<https://hsrc.ac.za/news/equitable-education-and-economies/young-black-females-are-most-unemployed-in-sa/>

Hussam, R., Kelley, E. M., Lane, G., & Zahra, F. (2022). The Psychosocial Value of Employment: Evidence from a Refugee Camp. *American Economic Review*, 112(11), 3694–3724. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20211616>

Institute for Economic Justice. (2021). SOCIAL PROTECTION SERIES POLICY BRIEF #1 INTRODUCING A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME GUARANTEE FOR SOUTH AFRICA TOWARDS INCOME SECURITY FOR ALL. *IEJ POLICY BRIEF*.
https://iej.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/IEJ-policy-brief-UBIG_2.pdf

International Labour Organization. (2026, August 11). *Youth unemployment rises as young people face a harder road to decent work*.
<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/youth-unemployment-rises-young-people-face-harder-road-decent-work>

Isandla Institute & Cities Support Programme (CSP). (2026). SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS, NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE: A just urban transition approach to informal settlement upgrading. In *Presidential Employment Stimulus*.
https://pres-employment.dev/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Livelihoods-and-neighbourhood-development_Knowledge-brief-2026.pdf

Jacobs, S. (2026, January 15). The ANC wanted fixed investment to be 30% of GDP by 2030.

Instead, it has plummeted. *Daily Investor*.

<https://dailyinvestor.com/south-africa/115950/the-anc-wanted-fixed-investment-to-be-30-of-gdp-by-2030-instead-it-has-plummeted/>

Johnson, H. R. (2022, October 24). Harold R. Johnson on How We Tell Our Own Stories.

Literary Hub. <https://lithub.com/harold-r-johnson-on-how-we-tell-our-own-stories/>

Julius Malema – Conviction, sentencing, and the battle for the JSC. (2026, May 21). In *Spotify*.

https://open.spotify.com/episode/5vb9LGoV10R2CMnEwOKWs0?si=DRB_33ReRu64vwarpyyrgQ&nd=1&dlsi=1b96781e0b074105

Juma, A. B. (2025, July 28). DA's international relations spokesperson quits with fiery parting shot to ANC, DIRCO. *Current Affairs ZA*.

<https://currentaffairsza.com/2025/07/28/das-international-relations-spokesperson-quits-with-fiery-parting-shot-to-anc-dirco/>

Juma, A. B. (2026, June 13). What Geordin Hill-Lewis has pledged to achieve if he's re-elected Cape Town mayor. *Current Affairs ZA*.

<https://currentaffairsza.com/2026/06/13/what-geordin-hill-lewis-has-pledged-to-achieve-if-hes-re-elected-cape-town-mayor/>

Just Talk With DJ Cappuccino. (2024, May 21). *EPISODE 17: You can't be a Parliamentarian without Matric*"Dr. Joe Maswanganyi: Governance [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5RMijWt3vY>

Kelly, C. (2026, June 28). Parklands anti-immigration protest draws heavy police presence. *Cape Town ETC*.

- <https://www.capetownetc.com/news/parklands-anti-immigration-protest-draws-heavy-police-presence/>
- Keser, F., Akar, H., & Yildirim, A. (2011). The role of extracurricular activities in active citizenship education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 43(6), 809–837.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2011.591433>
- Kibet, E., & Fombad, C. (2017). Transformative constitutionalism and the adjudication of constitutional rights in Africa. *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 17(2).
<https://doi.org/10.17159/1996-2096/2017/v17n2a1>
- Kingdon, G., & Knight, J. (2007). Unemployment in South Africa, 1995–2003: Causes, Problems and Policies. *Journal of African Economies*, 16(5), 813–848.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/ejm016>
- Klare, K. E. (1998). Legal Culture and Transformative Constitutionalism. *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 14(1), 146–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02587203.1998.11834974>
- Klasen, S., & Woolard, I. (2000). Surviving Unemployment without State Support: Unemployment and Household Formation in South Africa. *IZA Discussion Papers*, 237.
<https://docs.iza.org/dp237.pdf>
- Klug, H. (2021). Shaping Constitutional Imaginations: Debating the Inclusion of Socio-Economic and Property Rights in the South African Constitution. *University of Wisconsin Legal Studies*, No. 1916.
https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=6731521
- Koomson, I., & Churchill, S. A. (2022). Employment precarity and energy poverty in post-apartheid South Africa: Exploring the racial and ethnic dimensions. *Energy Economics*, 110, 106026. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2022.106026>

- Kriegler, J., & Sachs, A. (2001). The Mamabolo Case: Constitutional Court Full Judgement. In *The Albie Collection* (Case CCT 44/00).
<https://www.thealbiecollection.org/library/law/the-mamabolo-case>
- Labour Research Service. (2026, May 24). *What research reveals about public employment programmes*. Labour Research Service | a Resource for Worker Representatives in South Africa.
<https://lrs.org.za/2026/03/19/what-research-reveals-about-public-employment-programmes/>
- Lavoie, M. (2006). *Introduction to Post-Keynesian Economics*. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.
<https://docenti-deps.unisi.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2021/04/Ma.-Lav.-2006.pdf>
- Lennon, C. (2026, January 14). Global employment stable but decent jobs in short supply. *UN News*. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/01/1166751>
- Loewald, C. (2024). Why South Africa's Economic Growth is Stalled. In *Economic Research Southern Africa*.
<https://econrsa.org/publications/why-south-africas-economic-growth-is-stalled/>
- Lubunyu - Joburg Film Festival*. (n.d.). Joburg Film Festival.
<https://joburgfilmfestival.co.za/title-item/lubunyu-jff-2026/>
- Mabye, K. (2023, February 16). The creative spark of a public employment programme. *Econ3x3*.
<https://www.econ3x3.org/articles/creative-spark-public-employment-programme/>
- Madambi, S. (2025). From theory to practice: TVET college students' challenges in search of experiential training. *International Journal of Studies in Inclusive Education*, 2(2), 8–13.
<https://doi.org/10.38140/ijisie.v2i2.1881>

Madikizela, B. (2011, March 30). Speech by Bonginkosi Madikizela Western Cape Minister of Human Settlements: Debate on Vote 8: Human Settlements Budget Western Cape Provincial Legislature | South African Government. In *gov.za | Official Information and Services*. Debate on Vote 8: Human Settlements Budget, Western Cape, South Africa. <https://www.gov.za/news/speeches/speech-bonginkosi-madikizela-western-cape-minister-human-settlements-debate-vote-8>

Mahlangu, S. (2026, June 3). MKP suspends Mmabatho Mokoena-Zondi | Politicsweb. *Politicsweb*.

<https://www.politicsweb.co.za/news/mkp-suspends-mmabatho-mokoena-zondi>

Maimane, M. (2025, February 4). SONA's sole focus must be how to grow the economy at 5% and create millions of new jobs. In *BOSA News*.

<https://bosa.co.za/sona-must-focus-on-5-growth-millions-of-new-jobs/>

Maimane, M. (2026, June 16). *The face of poverty in South Africa is getting younger. It is female. It is male. And it is unemployed. June 16 must be more than remembrance, it must be a call to create opportunity for a generation. . . | Dr Mmusi Maimane | 14 comments* [Video]. LinkedIn.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mmusi-maimane_the-face-of-poverty-in-south-africa-is-getting-ugcPost-7472702400051597313-HSHb/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAEcm6H4Bkt0Y4AuOql6HjtyLhQK7GyZnQ8

March & March - Citizen Advocacy for Immigration Reform. (n.d.).

<https://marchandmarch.org.za/>

Maseko, L., & Groep, W. (2021, October 14). Covid-19 has accelerated South Africa's youth mental health problems — breaking point is approaching. *Daily Maverick*.

- <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2021-10-14-covid-19-has-accelerated-south-african-youth-mental-health-problems-breaking-point-is-approaching/>
- Masinyusane. (n.d.). *Masinyusane | Education & Women's Employment in South Africa*.
Masinyusane. <https://www.masinyusane.org/>
- Masinyusane. (2022, December 28). *Masinyusane: Empowering Communities with Youth Jobs* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j2d6nlFVe8>
- Masinyusane. (2025, October 2). *2025 Citizen of the Year* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqXxGNOeQtM>
- Mayor or DA leader? Geordin Hill-Lewis on Cape Town, the GNU & why he's staying put.
(2026, March 23). In *Spotify*.
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0YypalldBBNzXTZA6Yvw4G?si=TwO1Wv0SQ5KzIeZe2wg3Cw>
- Mc Lennan, A. (2018). The power of the purse : fiscal oversight and the South African Parliamentary Budget Office. *Africa Journal of Public Sector Development and Governance*, 1(1), 90–105. <https://doi.org/10.55390/ajpsdg.2018.1.1.8>
- McCord, A., Lieuw-Kie-Song, M., Behrendt, C., & Tsukamoto, M. (2024). Public employment programmes at the intersection of employment and social protection policies. In *International Labour Organization* [Technical report]. International Labour Organization.
https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/ILO%20Technical%20Report_PEPs%20at%20the%20intersection%20of%20employment%20and%20social%20protection%20policies.pdf

MDNtv. (2026, April 11). *DR IVAN MEYER OUTLINES HIS VISION | DA CONGRESS 2026* 🇿🇦

#DACONGRESS2026 [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0PvGJeGsOE>

Milner, A., Page, A., & LaMontagne, A. D. (2013). Long-Term Unemployment and Suicide: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *PLoS ONE*, 8(1), e51333.

<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0051333>

Minister Dean Macpherson on urgent investigation into alleged political interference in EPWP applications in Limpopo | South African Government. (2026, March 25). South African Government.

<https://www.gov.za/news/media-statements/minister-dean-macpherson-urgent-investigation-on-alleged-political-interference>

Mkhize, S. W. (2016). *Possibilities and limitations of Zazi community dialogues for Social Change to Women in Zululand* [Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal].

<https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/2b2a617c-8cc6-4694-ad23-967feebea816/content>

Moabelo, K. (n.d.). Who is Mandla Shikwambana? In *Omny.fm*. Omny Studios.

<https://omny.fm/shows/power-lunch/who-is-mandla-shikwambana>

Modiba, M., Koma, O., & Parkerson, C. (2026). Leveraging Public Employment Programmes for an Inclusive Just Transition: Connecting Youth to the Green Economy Through City-Led Partnerships in South Africa. *Journal of Inclusive Cities and Built Environment*, 4(5), 49–63. <https://doi.org/10.54030/2788-564x/2025/spi4v5a5>

Modini, M., Joyce, S., Mykletun, A., Christensen, H., Bryant, R. A., Mitchell, P. B., & Harvey, S. B. (2016). The mental health benefits of employment: Results of a systematic

- meta-review. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 24(4), 331–336.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1039856215618523>
- Mohamed, S. (2019, January 18). The South African crisis: how we got here and what to do about it. *AIDC | Alternative Information & Development Centre*.
<https://aidc.org.za/the-south-african-crisis-how-we-got-here-and-what-to-do-about-it0-2/>
- Mohamed, S. (2020). Anglo-American corporation and corporate restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa. *International Review of Applied Economics*, 34(4), 439–455.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02692171.2020.1773642>
- Mohamed, S. (2024). Persistent and obscene inequality: A post-apartheid policy choice. *Sabinet African Journals*, 93(1). <https://doi.org/10.14426/na.v93i1.2270>
- Mohamed, S. (2025, January 21). *The challenge of economic development during the financialised phase of capitalism*. University of Cape Town | Summer School 2025.
<https://summerschool.uct.ac.za/challenge-economic-development-during-financialised-phase-capitalism>
- Mohamed, S., & Fine, B. (2025). Post-apartheid South Africa: A Neoliberal Disaster Made and in the Making. In *Trajectories of Declining and Destructive Capitalism* (Vol. 40, pp. 141–167). Emerald Publishing Limited.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/s0161-723020250000040010>
- Mohamed, S., Ngoma, A., & Baloyi, B. (2024). Strategic reflections on South Africa's economy. In *The evolving structure of South Africa's economy: Faultlines and futures* (7/8 ed., Vol. 120, pp. 4–5). Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA).
<https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/18034>

- Moloi, T. (2026, June 15). OPINION | Youth excluded from economic participation: Tshepo Moloi. *SABC News*.
<https://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/opinion-youth-excluded-from-economic-participation-tshepo-moloi/>
- Mr. Mathew John Cuthbert. (2019, November 14). *People's Assembly*.
<https://www.pa.org.za/blog/mr-mathew-john-cuthbert>
- Mr Michael Sachs. (n.d.). National Health Laboratory Service.
<https://www.nhls.ac.za/about-us/board-of-directors/mr-michael-sachs/>
- Murena Emmanuel Netshitangani - Joburg Film Festival. (n.d.). Joburg Film Festival.
<https://joburgfilmfestival.co.za/name-item/murena-emmanuel-netshitangani/>
- National Treasury. (2025). Explanatory Memorandum to the Division of Revenue. In *National Treasury May 2025 Budget Overview*.
<https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/National%20Budget/2025May/review/Annexure%20W1.pdf>
- National Treasury, Minister of Finance, & Director-General of the National Treasury. (2025). National Treasury 2025 ENE- Vote 8. In *National Treasury* [Report].
<https://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2025Mar/ene/Vote%2008%20National%20Treasury.pdf>
- Navarro, F. M. (2015). Learning support staff. In *OECD Education Working Papers*. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5jrnzm39w45l-en>
- Neighbourhood Development Partnership Programme. (n.d.). *The Urban Development Financing Grant (UDFG)*. Neighbourhood Development Partnership Programme (NDPP). <https://www.ndpp.treasury.gov.za/udfg-grant/>

Newzroom Afrika. (2026, March 6). *EFF officially tables the Insourcing Bill* [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70C-q4xJ9IM>

Next Step Exchange. (n.d.). The StartUp Tribe & World Class Cities.

<https://www.worldclasscities.org/pages/nextsteps>

Njilo, N. (2026, April 12). DA's youthful leadership aims for a political revolution by 2029.

Daily Maverick.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2026-04-12-das-youthful-leadership-aims-for-a-political-revolution-by-2029/>

Nobandla, S. (2022, June 17). *DOCUMENTARY FILM| "I'VE BEEN TRYING". 8 years without a job*. Youth Capital.

<https://youthcapital.co.za/ivebeentrying-shortdocumentary-youthunemployment/>

North, M. (2023, October 19). 3 ways the climate crisis is impacting jobs and workers. *World Economic Forum*.

<https://www.weforum.org/stories/climate-action/climate-crisis-impacting-jobs-workforce/>

Ntanzi, H. (2025, March 10). Mmusi Maimane urges immediate action on SA's budget crisis.

IOL.

<https://iol.co.za/news/politics/2025-03-10-mmusi-maimane-urges-immediate-action-on-sas-budget-crisis/>

Nyanchama, V., Wangare, J., & Ouma, J. (2019, February 7). KYEOP application: Courses, requirements and transition to NYOTA. *Tuko News*.

<https://www.tuko.co.ke/293136-kyeop-online-application-procedure-courses.html>

- NYOTA Project. (n.d.). *Project Overview | Nyota - National Youths Opportunities Towards Advancement*. National Youths Opportunities Towards Advancement (NYOTA) Project.
<https://nyotaproject.go.ke/project-overview>
- Observatory of Public Sector Innovation. (2023, January 3). *Presidential Employment Stimulus: Building a Society that Works - Observatory of Public Sector Innovation*.
<https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/presidential-employment-stimulus/>
- OECD. (2025). OECD Economic Surveys: South Africa 2025. In *OECD Economic Surveys* (Vols. 2025–14). OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/7e6a132a-en>
- O'Regan, V. (2026a, June 13). Cyril Ramaphosa recycles old plans as anti-foreigner pressure mounts. *Daily Maverick*.
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2026-06-13-cyril-ramaphosa-recycles-old-plans-as-anti-foreigner-pressure-mounts/>
- O'Regan, V. (2026b, June 22). SAPS launches R600m operation to counter anti-immigrant unrest ahead of 30 June deadline. *Daily Maverick*.
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2026-06-22-saps-launches-r600m-operation-to-counter-anti-immigrant-unrest-ahead-of-30-june-deadline/>
- Orkin, K., Garlick, R., Mahmud, M., Sedlmayr, R., Haushofer, J., & Dercon, S. (2023). Aspiring to a Better Future: Can a Simple Psychological Intervention Reduce Poverty? In *National Bureau of Economic Research* (No. 31735). <https://doi.org/10.3386/w31735>
- OXFAM South Africa. (2026, January 23). *Basic Income Grant: an urgent case for South Africa's economic and social future*. Oxfam South Africa.
<https://www.oxfam.org.za/basic-income-grant-an-urgent-case-for-south-africas-economic-and-social-future/>

- Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. (2024, August 2). *Meet Hon Mokgaetji Carol Mafagane, your member of Parliament in the National Assembly* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyCclNSkg-c>
- Paton, C. (2026, May 22). Carol Paton | Where did 300 000 jobs go? Cyril's youth employment takes a dive. *News24*.
<https://www.news24.com/business/economy/carol-paton-where-did-300-000-jobs-go-cyri-ls-youth-employment-takes-a-dive-20260521-1083>
- Payne, S., & Venna, L. (2024, September 4). National Skills Fund grilled – MPs ask why it's a money pit without sufficient oversight. *Daily Maverick*.
<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2024-09-04-national-skills-fund-grilled-mps-ask-why-its-a-money-pit-without-sufficient-oversight/>
- People's Assembly. (n.d.-a). *Meet your MPs- Andrew Dirk de Blocq van Scheltinga*.
<https://www.pa.org.za/>
- People's Assembly. (n.d.-b). *Mr Mkhacani Joseph Maswanganyi*.
<https://www.pa.org.za/person/mkhacani-joseph-maswanganyi/>
- People's Assembly. (2025, August 26). *Get to know Ms Molebogeng Sharon Letlape*.
<https://www.pa.org.za/blog/get-know-ms-molebogeng-sharon-letlape>
- People's Post. (2022, February 22). Rewriting kids' stories. *People's Post*.
<https://novanews.co.za/peoplespost/rewriting-kids-stories-20220221/>
- Pereira, D. J., Joosub, N., & Basson, P. (2024). The psychological factors influencing youth moving from unemployment to employment in South Africa. *African Journal of Career Development*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v6i1.118>

- Peterson, W., Jardine, K., Ndaliso, M., Magooda, J., Kalipa, S., Adams, J., Klaas, N., Klaas, T., Lourens, N., Ngoman-Maubane, N., Van Wyk, L., Ntshongontshi, A., Mazinyo, S., & Bula, N. (2026). *The Work We Carry*. Chrysalis and YearBeyond & Open Book Festival 2026.
- Peyton, N., & Hlophe, T. (2026, August 6). South African clothing factories struggle after migrant workers flee. *Reuters*.
<https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/south-african-clothing-factories-struggle-after-migrant-workers-flee-2026-08-06/>
- Philip, K. (n.d.). The Community Work Programme in South Africa. In *Levy Institute*.
https://www.levyinstitute.org/pubs/conf_june09/conf_june09_files/presentations/Session5b_Philip.pdf
- Philip, K. (2012). The rationale for an employment guarantee in South Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 29(1), 177–190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835x.2012.645650>
- Philip, K. (2013). The transformative potential of public employment programmes. In Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, UCT, *Occasional Paper Series*. University of Cape Town.
https://commerce.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/content_migration/commerce_uct_ac_za/470/files/KatePhilip_Transformative%2520potential%2520of%2520PEPs.pdf
- Philip, K. (2025). Public Employment Programmes in South Africa’s Changing Social Protection Landscape. *HAL*. <https://hal.science/hal-05488915/document>
- Philip, K. (2026, May 31). New data proves it: Public employment is essential to providing work for the young. *Daily Maverick*.

<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2026-05-31-new-data-proves-it-public-employment-is-essential-to-providing-work-for-the-young/>

Powell, E. L. (2025, February 18). DA Barred from Participation in SA-European Union Inter-Parliamentary Meeting. *Democratic Alliance*.

<https://www.da.org.za/2025/02/da-barred-from-participation-in-sa-european-union-inter-parliamentary-meeting>

Presidential Employment Stimulus. (2026). Building a Society that Works: 2,5 million jobs, opportunities and more. In *The Presidential Employment Stimulus*.

<https://pres-employment.dev/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/PES-Overview-February-2026.pdf>

Presidential Employment Stimulus, Industrial Development Corporation, & Department of Trade, Industry, and Competition. (2025). Terms of Reference: Social Employment Fund – Strategic Implementation Partners. In *Industrial Development Corporation (IDC)*.

<https://www.idc.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Terms-of-Reference-Strategic-Implementing-Partners-Open-Call-2025.pdf>

Presidential Employment Stimulus & Social Employment Fund. (2019, May). *Social Employment - Impact Overview 2024*. Google Drive.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oUJTGu7jkwOP9a5l_BTyMWV4cZcZLbLW/view

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW: Building a society that works. (n.d.). Presidential Employment Stimulus. <https://pres-employment.dev/>

Public works programs and labor market outcomes | The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. (2024, July 1). The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL).

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/policy-insight/public-works-programs-and-labor-market-outcomes>

Qoyo, N., & Majadibodu, S. (2026, June 3). Violence in Mossel Bay: Three dead and 400 Mozambicans evacuated. *Cape Times*.

<https://capetimes.co.za/news/2026-06-03-violence-in-mossel-bay-three-dead-and-400-mozambicans-evacuated/>

Ramaphosa bets on legal review to stall Phala Phala impeachment proceedings. (2026, May 13). In *Spotify*.

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6hEs4NT80KqBDcOmZfJZFT?si=OzjIm80xTbiYICJHeNKLcQ&nd=1&dlsi=a1a3b7ef5e2b495c>

Ramaphosa, C. (2022, June 13). *SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT OFFERS YOUNG PEOPLE HOPE AND OPPORTUNITY*. From the Desk of the President, 13 June 2022.

<https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/node/6914>

Ramaphosa, C. (2025). Conversations with the President. In *ANC TODAY*.

<https://www.anc1912.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/ANC-Today-6-June-2025.pdf>

Ramaphosa, C. (2026, June 2). Address by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the Presidency Budget Vote 2026, National Assembly, Parliament | The Presidency. In *The Presidency*.

Presidency Budget Vote 2026, National Assembly, Parliament, South Africa.

<https://thepresidency.gov.za/address-president-cyril-ramaphosa-presidency-budget-vote-2026-national-assembly-parliament>

Redman, G. (2024). *The Power of 10: A Decade of youth service, Partnerships, and impact*.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee1e6d81062c920d7b26763/t/67a5d4d1652bb07ce5482602/1738921307929/YearBeyond+-+10+Year+Publication_.pdf

Remarks by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Appropriations, Dr Mmusi Maimane, on the occasion of the Finance Cluster Media briefing - Parliament of South Africa.

(2026, March 2). [Press release].

<https://www.parliament.gov.za/press-releases/remarks-chairperson-standing-committee-appropriations-dr-mmusi-maimane-occasion-finance-cluster-media-briefing>

Resources – Presidential Employment Stimulus. (n.d.). Presidential Employment Stimulus.

<https://pres-employment.dev/resources/>

Robinson, P. (2000). Active labour-market policies: a case of evidence-based policy-making?

Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 16(1), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxrep/16.1.13>

Rueda, S., Chambers, L., Wilson, M., Mustard, C., Rourke, S. B., Bayoumi, A., Raboud, J., &

Lavis, J. (2012). Association of Returning to Work with Better Health in Working-Aged

Adults: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(3), 541–556.

<https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2011.300401>

Ruthbah, U., Rabbani, A., Hossain, S., & Sarwar, G. (2015). Do extra hours of tutoring payoff?

Evaluation of a community education programme in Bangladesh. *Journal of*

Development Effectiveness, 8(2), 196–215.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19439342.2015.1111922>

Sachs, A. (1999). S v Baloyi and Others: Full Judgement. In *South African Legal Information*

Institute (SAFLII) (Case CCT 29/99).

<https://www.saflii.org/za/cases/ZACC/1999/19.html#fn6>

Sachs, A. (2016). *We, the People: Insights of an activist judge*. NYU Press.

Sachs, A., & O'Regan, C. (2005). Fourie Case: Constitutional Court Full Judgment. In *The Albie*

Collection (Case CCT 10/05).

<https://www.thealbielcollection.org/library/law/the-fourie-case-constitutional-court-full-judgment>

Sachs, M. (2022). Basic income support is unavoidable, but making it work requires political courage. In *Econ3x3*.

https://www.econ3x3.org/sites/default/files/articles/Sachs%2C%20M_Basic%20income%20support_Feb22.pdf

Sachs, M. (2025, July 30). *Here's a presentation I made at the Kgalema Motlanthe Foundation seminar yesterday*. LinkedIn.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/michael-sachs-b08aab6_inequality-is-the-binding-constraint-ugcPost-7356251225543127041--pLj/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAE-wMqUBOSS6Q16MNrLrkm7IsjFw4yz_eu8

Sachs, M. (2026). Inequality is the binding constraint to growth. In *Econ3x3*.

https://www.econ3x3.org/sites/default/files/articles/Sachs%2C%20M_Inequality_Feb26.pdf

Sachs, M., Amra, R., Madonko, T., & Wilcox, O. (2023). AUSTERITY WITHOUT CONSOLIDATION: Fiscal policy and spending choices in Budget 2023. *SCIS WORKING PAPER SERIES*, 55.

<https://www.wsg.ac.za/research/research-project/fiscal-dimensions-south-africas-crisis>

Sarupen, A. (2026, January 21). *South Africa's average inflation for 2025 came in at 3.2% — the lowest level in 21 years*. LinkedIn.

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7419703081581400064/>

- Second Cabinet minister implicated in Chinese SUV scandal. (2026, May 1). In *Spotify*.
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0wj0w0f0pcM2uHTaFKncQT?si=Pzp3wpuhQ32lM65621zy1g&nd=1&dlsi=67ed9a8f8a2a468e>
- Senzo Jiyana (@senzation) • Instagram photos and videos. (n.d.). Instagram.
<https://www.instagram.com/senzation/>
- Sezoe, W. (2024, August 30). “I want education to get back to basics.” *Friedrich Naumann Foundation*.
<https://www.freiheit.org/liberal-workshop-south-africa/i-want-education-get-back-basics>
- Sibongile Joni | LinkedIn. (n.d.). <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sibongile-joni-999267205/>
- Skosana, G. M. (2021, February 20). *The psychosocial effects of unemployment on young adults in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan area, Gauteng*. Unisa Institutional Repository. Retrieved August 1, 2026, from <https://ir.unisa.ac.za/handle/10500/28063>
- SMWX. (2025a, April 5). Mark Burke: “GNU”, SA Budget, VAT increase, DA, ANC, SA economy, Action SA, MK Party, Parliament [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdQ868cF9Ms>
- SMWX. (2025b, December 3). Duma Gqubule on SA’s economic policy missteps: Anglo exit, Eskom, Ramaphosa, inflation, “GNU” [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTqmkVO18Bk>
- SMWX. (2026a, April 19). Dr Mmusi Maimane unpacks: BOSA, Unite for Change, GNU, Geordin Hill-Lewis, Joburg, Dobsonville [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4FQXu3N_WQ

- SMWX. (2026b, August 1). *Colin Coleman unpacks: SA's economy, Phala Phala, 2026 Election, ANC, GNU, Madlanga, Mashatile* [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved June 8, 2026, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_VRkkRTCnM
- SMWX & MIGHTI JAMIE TV. (2026, May 9). *Mighti Jamie warns Ramaphosa: Impeachment, Concourt judgment, ANC, Parliament* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fr8CvewqOLI>
- Snyman, D. (2026, July 7). The day the buses left: Confronting xenophobia and rediscovering our humanity. *Daily Maverick*. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2026-07-07-the-day-the-buses-left-confronting-xenophobia-and-rediscovering-our-humanity/>
- South Africa. (1993). Chapter 2: Bill of Rights. In *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*. <https://www.justice.gov.za/constitution/SACConstitution-web-eng-02.pdf>
- South African Cities Network. (2021). *The State of the Expanded Public Works Programme in South African Cities 2020-2021 - SA Cities*. SA Cities. <https://sacities.net/publication/the-state-of-the-expanded-public-works-programme-in-south-african-cities-2020-2021/>
- South African Government. (n.d.). *Social grants | South African Government*. gov.za | Official Information And Services. <https://www.gov.za/services/services-residents/grants>
- South African History Online. (2011, March 21). *Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter*. <https://sahistory.org.za/article/congress-people-and-freedom-charter>
- Sozo Foundation. (n.d.). SOZO Annual Report 2024-25. In *Canva*. https://www.canva.com/design/DAGu0KdVHvo/YdGbIufojlCZ9v59fbQ6pg/view?utm_c

ontent=DAGu0KdVHvo&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=uniqueLinks&utm_id=he5c5749ff0#1

Staff Reporter. (2022, August 31). Civil society groups tap national employment fund. *Cape Towner*.

<https://capetowner.co.za/news/2022-08-31-civil-society-groups-tap-national-employment-fund/>

Statistics South Africa. (2024). Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q4:2024. In *Department: Statistics South Africa*.

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q4%202024.pdf>

Statistics South Africa. (2026). Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2:2026. In *Department: Statistics South Africa*.

<https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Presentation%20QLFS%20Q2%202026.pdf>

Storey, P. (2022). *Protest at midnight: Ministry to a Nation Torn Apart*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Tcherneva, P. R. (2012). Full Employment through Social Entrepreneurship: The Nonprofit Model for Implementing a Job Guarantee. In *Levy Economics Institute of Bard College* (Policy Note No. 2). Levy Economics Institute of Bard College.

<https://www.levyinstitute.org/publications/full-employment-through-social-entrepreneurship-the-nonprofit-model-for-implementing-a-job-guarantee/>

TEDx Talks. (2025, March 21). *Building bridges and shaping futures through youth development.* | Wayde Groep | TEDxStellenbosch ED [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBKq7acePNg>

The Budget Justice Coalition. (2026, August 12). *Stats SA's Q2 2026 jobs data is a telltale sign of austerity budgeting.*

<https://budgetjusticesa.org/press/statements/stats-sas-q2-2026-jobs-data-is-a-telltale-sign-of-austerity-budgeting/>

The Homelands. (2011, April 17). South African History Online.

https://sahistory.org.za/article/homelands#:~:text=The%20homelands%2C%20also%20known%20as%20Bantustans%2C%20were,and%20Tsonga%20people%20**%20**QwaQwa**%20For%20Basothos

The Presidency. (2025, November 7). *An Agenda for PEP Reform.* Google Drive.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IBQICsicSUxR_dabUKyF9MP9y05p1Abv/view

The Presidency Pretoria. (2025, November 8). *Deputy President Mashatile convenes the inaugural Inter-Ministerial Committee on Public Employment Programmes | The Presidency.* The Presidency | Republic of South Africa.

<https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/deputy-president-mashatile-convenes-inaugural-inter-ministerial-committee-public-employment>

The Sozo Foundation. (2026, August 4). *The SOZO Foundation - Pathways to Youth*

Employment. The Sozo Foundation - Pathways to Youth Employment. <https://sozo.org.za/>

Tlhagale, F. K., & Nyoka, C. (2025). The High Unemployment Rate and the High Failure Rate of Black-Owned Small to Medium Enterprises in South Africa: The Paradox. *African*

- Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 4(1), 357–374.
<https://doi.org/10.31920/2753-314x/2025/v4n1a15>
- uMkhonto weSizwe Party. (2026, February 21). *Hon. Philasande Mkhize Reacts to SONA 2026 | In Conversation with Cde. Sithembile Nkosi* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsCntB0bx_Y
- Unemployment Insurance Fund | South African Revenue Service*. (2026, August 19). South African Revenue Service.
<https://www.sars.gov.za/types-of-tax/unemployment-insurance-fund/>
- Unger, J. M., Rauch, A., Frese, M., & Rosenbusch, N. (2009). Human capital and entrepreneurial success: A meta-analytical review. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 26, 341–358.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusvent.2009.09.004>
- United Nations Development Programme. (2025, September 18). *South Africa*. UNDP Climate Change Adaptation. <https://www.adaptation-undp.org/explore/africa/south-africa>
- Van Ryneveld, M., & Schneider, H. (2026). Community care policy at the intersection of HIV and unemployment crises in South Africa: paradoxes and paradigms. *Health Policy and Planning*, 41(5), 798–808. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czag024>
- Van Staden, M. (2024, October 8). *Colonialism and Apartheid's Legacy on Land and Labor in South Africa | Democracy in Africa*. Democracy in Africa | a Resource for the Study of Democracy in Africa.
<https://democracyinafrica.org/colonialism-and-apartheids-legacy-on-land-and-labor-in-south-africa/>
- Western Cape Government. (n.d.-a). *Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)*. Western Cape Government | Department of Infrastructure.

<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/infrastructure/service/expanded-public-works-programme-epwp>

Western Cape Government. (n.d.-b). *Western Cape Government Cabinet*.

<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/western-cape-government-cabinet>

Western Cape Government. (2026, March 16). *[LISTEN] Minister Deidré Baartman unpacks what the budget means for you, the residents of the Western Cape!* [Video]. LinkedIn.

<https://www.linkedin.com/posts/budgetwithdeidraez-wcg-provincialtreasury-ugcPost-7439196134863974400-HYzW/>

Whittles, G. (2016, October 20). The rise and fall of Nompandolo Mkhathshwa, the Wits SRC president. *Mail & Guardian*.

<https://mg.co.za/news/south-africa/2016-10-20-the-rise-and-fall-of-nompandolo-mkhatshwa-the-wits-src-president/>

Wikipedia contributors. (2026, June 7). *List of political parties in South Africa*. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_parties_in_South_Africa

World Bank Group. (n.d.). *GDP growth (annual %) - South Africa*. World Bank Open Data.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=ZA>

World Bank Group. (n.d.-a). *South Africa*. <https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/southafrica>

World Bank Group. (n.d.-b). *Unemployment, total (% of total labor force) (modeled ILO estimate)*. World Bank Open Data.

https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS?most_recent_year_desc=false&view=map

World Bank Group. (2017). *Implementation Status & Results Report: Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities (P151831)* (pp. 1–9).

https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/568631491324940976/pdf/ISR-Disclosable-P151831-04-04-2017-1491324929736.pdf?utm_source=

World Bank Group. (2023). *Unemployment (%)*. World Bank | Data 360.

https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/WB_GS_SL_UEM_ZS?view=bar&minYear=1960&maxYear=2023&SEX=_T&AGE=Y_GE15&COMP_BREAKDOWN_1=GS_TC_Z

World Bank Group. (2025, April 15). *The Youth Dividend: Investing in Kenya's Next Generation*.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2025/04/15/the-youth-dividend-investing-in-kenya-s-next-generation>

Yacoob, Z. (2000). The Grootboom Case - Part 1: Constitutional Court Full Judgement. In *The Albie Collection* (Case CCT 11/00).

<https://www.thealbiecollection.org/library/law/the-grootboom-case-1>

Youth Capital. (n.d.). *PEPs4Youth - Youth Capital*. <https://youthcapital.co.za/>

Supplementary Appendix to “Make the Invisible Visible: The Transformative Value of Public Employment in South Africa”

Table of Contents

Appendix A: Macroeconomic Policy Proposals in Gqubule’s Vision 2035.....	67
Appendix B: Interview Guide for Parliamentarians.....	72
Appendix C: Graphs of Survey Results from Next Step Exchange User Survey.....	73

Appendix A: Macroeconomic Policy Proposals in Gqubule’s Vision 2035

GDP Growth Targets and Unemployment Rate Target

A mobilizing vision can be instituted with a 6% GDP growth target that is binding on the National Treasury (NT) and the South African Reserve Bank (SARB). Through a similar strategy, China has increased its GDP per capita by 779%, Rwanda by 422%, and Vietnam by 354%, whereas South Africa’s GDP per capita has increased by only 22% from 1994 to 2024 (Gqubule, 2026).

GDP (annual % growth)

South Africa, China, Rwanda, Vietnam, 1996-2025

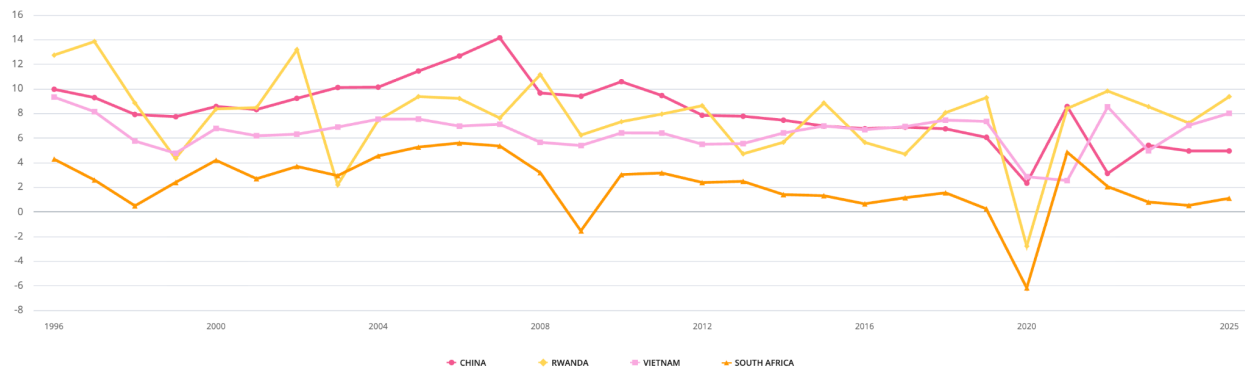


Figure 6: GDP growth in percentage points in South Africa compared to other large developing countries. 1996-2025.

Source: [GDP \(annual % growth\) | World Development Indicators](#)

While there is no unemployment rate or GDP growth rate target, South Africa has begun aggressively targeting inflation at 3% (Sarupen, 2026). Though it is essential to pursue higher inflation targeting due to the fact that increased inflation results in reduced medium-term real economic growth, and considering that countries employing inflation targeting have not experienced diminished growth, an exclusive focus on this singular policy instrument neglects the potential impacts of targeting unemployment or GDP growth rates.

Although the formula for the employment growth rate shows the importance of GDP growth rates, relying solely on the GDP growth rate and the unemployment rate will not be enough (Gqubule, 2026). Even with massive economic growth, it would still take decades to achieve a single-digit unemployment rate. This is reflected in the labor force growth rate (LFGR), currently 2.3%, which means there will be 768, 000 new entrants to the labor market annually until 2036 (Gqubule, 2026). South Africa would need GDP growth of 4.6% just to absorb a number roughly equal to the new entrants: 754,000 (Gqubule, 2026).

$$GDP\ growth * employment\ multiplier\ (EM) = employment\ growth\ rate\ (EGR)$$

Infrastructure spending

Infrastructure spending needs to be part of this mobilizing vision as well, as it is considered an “economic multiplier” of 2.7 or less in developing countries, depending on the study (Gqubule, 2026). This means that R1 of infrastructure spending could eventually generate about R2.7 of additional economic activity, given that construction creates jobs and demand immediately. At the same time, better electricity, transport and communications raise productivity over time. However, the R2.7 does not mean that the government receives the same amount back in tax revenue. Rather, the result depends on project quality, implementation capacity, corruption controls and whether the built infrastructure solves genuine economic bottlenecks.

The potential of infrastructure spending has also been recognized in the National Development Plan (NDP), which targets a quota of 10% for government investment and an additional 20% from the private sector, for a total investment target of 30% (Daily Investor, 2026). In reality, though South Africa's Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF), the total value of South Africa’s investments in long-term physical assets, such as infrastructure, machinery, and buildings during a specific period, was only 14% in 2025 (World Bank Group, n.d.). Businesses argue that hiring workers is a long-term investment because it entails ongoing costs and commitments related to wages, contracts, training, and employment protection. During periods of economic uncertainty or crisis, firms may therefore prefer more flexible and reversible forms of investment. This reflects a long-standing debate over the regulation and flexibility of the South African labor market. To achieve the investment target of 30% of GDP, approximately R1.1 trillion in investment would be required. The government would need to lead the way by

allocating public investment of 10-15% of GDP, especially in areas where public infrastructure is needed to encourage private investment (Gqubule, 2026).

Industrial policies (IP)

As outlined before, South Africa failed to achieve any "structural or racial transformation" of its economy (see "How the Minerals and Energy Complex (MEC) and Corporate Concentration Contribute to Unemployment in South Africa"), with black ownership at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) still being 1.2% in December 2022 (Gqubule, 2026). That is why industrial policies are needed to expand manufacturing, develop strategic industries, promote exports, support small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) and create jobs. The importance of industrial policies is clear when comparing job creation with the presence or absence of such policies. With 6% GDP growth and no industrial policies, the economy will create 15 million jobs, compared to 19.7 million jobs with industrial policies, and the unemployment rate will be 16.8%, compared to 4.7% with industrial policies.

Therefore, Duma Gqubule (2026) argues that effective industrial policies require an investment of 2.5% of GDP, specifically 1% for Black SMMEs, within five years. This is because, according to Gqubule (2026), "industrialization cannot succeed through small departmental grants alone," but industrial finance needs to become part of national fiscal, monetary, and employment policy. In contrast to this urgent need to address industrial inequality in South Africa, funding for direct government incentives (DTIC) fell from R6.5 billion in 2021-2022 to R5.4 billion in 2026-2027, a 17% decrease (Gqubule, 2026).

Universal Basic Income

In 2022, 51% of South African households relied on social grants as the most common source of household income (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The South African government

currently provides a Child Support Grant, Disability Grant, and Old Age Pension (South African Government, 2026). In addition, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the government also rolled out the special Social Relief of Distress Grant of R350 for unemployed adults not currently receiving a grant. According to the Institute for Economic Justice, “receipt [of the rollout of the COVID-19 grant] has provided much-needed relief for millions of previously unreachable people.” This evidence from the SRD grant endorses the need for a Universal Basic Income Guarantee (UBIG) “in the [South African] context of a highly strained employment environment where people [can] not access other means of income generation” (IEJ, 2021). Without other means of income generation, significant nationwide job losses translate to high levels of food insecurity and poverty. In the second quarter of 2020, Statistics South Africa estimated 2.2 million job losses, and in that same time period, “food insecurity, defined as running out of money to buy food, is at levels at least twice as high as in 2016, with surveys reporting that 37% of households are affected” and “approximately 70% of adults (18-64) live below the upper bound poverty line (UBPL) of R1265 per person per month, with approximately 40% living below the World Bank’s \$1.90 a day (R436pm) measure” (IEJ, 2021). A UBIG is extremely necessary to “enable people to provide a better standard of living for themselves, family members, and dependents,” in a context where South Africans are unable to find employment (IEJ, 2021).

In the Presidential Employment Stimulus 2026 Annual Report, the Presidency endorses the need for a “Work South Africa framework” to build “a coherent system of economic inclusion” (The Presidency Republic of South Africa, 2026). The Presidential Employment Stimulus is the face of reforms to public employment programs; however, the Presidency emphasizes the importance of “a whole-of-government framework to bring greater strategic coherence to South Africa’s fragmented economic inclusion ecosystem” (The Presidency

Republic of South Africa, 2026). As the Presidency explains, “no single instrument — whether cash transfers, PEPs, skills initiatives or enterprise support — can address unemployment and poverty on its own,” UBIG in South Africa is needed to supplement other measures of social protection (The Presidency Republic of South Africa, 2026).

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Parliamentarians

Background questions

1. When you think about a “good life” in South Africa today, what comes to mind?
 - a. Probe: What place does work have in that vision?
1. What has been your personal experience of making money?
 - a. Probe: Were there particular moments that shaped how you think about work and opportunity?
 - b. Probe: How have your personal experiences influenced your political views on unemployment?
2. How do you feel if you hear that young people are lazy and waiting for handouts? And how do you respond to that?

Public employment programmes

3. How do you view the role of public employment programmes in South Africa’s broader response to unemployment, poverty and labour-market exclusion?
 - a. Probe: In what circumstances, if any, do you think they are justified?
 - b. Probe: Where do you think they risk failing to take into account?
4. What evidence do you need to assess the value of public employment programmes?
 - a. Probe: What indicators matter most for you?

- i. How should we measure success for people who do not immediately move into formal employment afterwards?
- b. Probe: What would count as failure?
- c. Probe: How should the experiences of participants inform parliamentary oversight and programme design?

Video reflection

I'd like to show you a very short video of a woman called Sibongile, who participated in the Basic Education Employment Initiative. I'll let her introduce herself. Afterwards, I'll ask for your reflections.

- 5. What stood out to you most from Sibongile's story?
 - a. Probe: Did anything in her experience challenge or confirm your views?
- 6. If Sibongile were in the room, what would you want to ask her?
- 7. How should policymakers consider a story like Sibongile's in the context of aggregate evidence about programme costs and outcomes?
 - a. Would parliamentary decision-makers value this opportunity to see things through the eyes of the beneficiaries? See things that might otherwise be invisible within aggregate analyses?
 - b. Where are the limitations to this kind of evidence?

Concluding questions

- 8. What advice would you give to an unemployed young South African who is looking for work, but struggling to find a way in?

Appendix C: Graphs of Survey Results from Next Step

Exchange User Survey

5) Please select all options that describe your current work situation.

30 responses

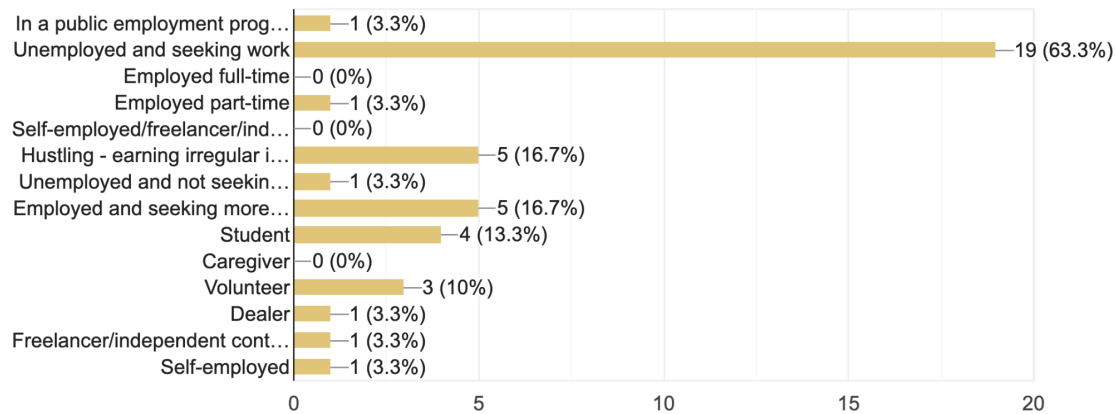


Figure 7: Results of survey question about respondents' current work situation

8) Why did you sign-up for the Next Step Exchange platform? Please select all that apply.

30 responses

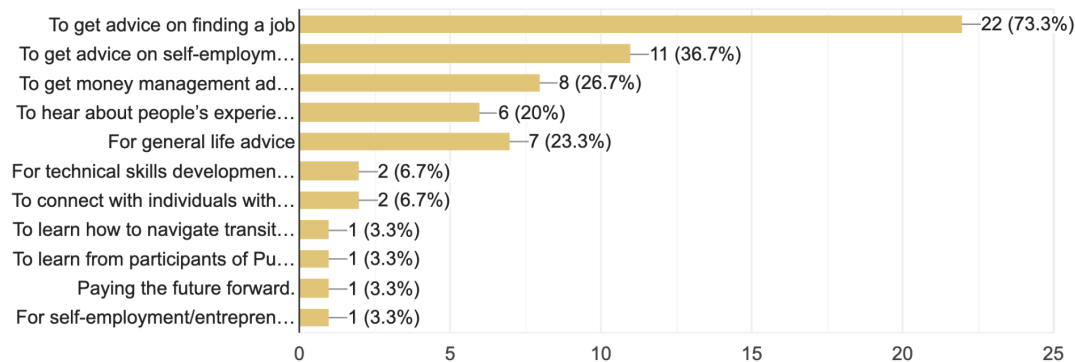


Figure 8: Results of survey question about respondents' reason for signing up for Next Step Exchange

9) On a scale of 1–10, were the videos helpful in providing practical advice?

30 responses

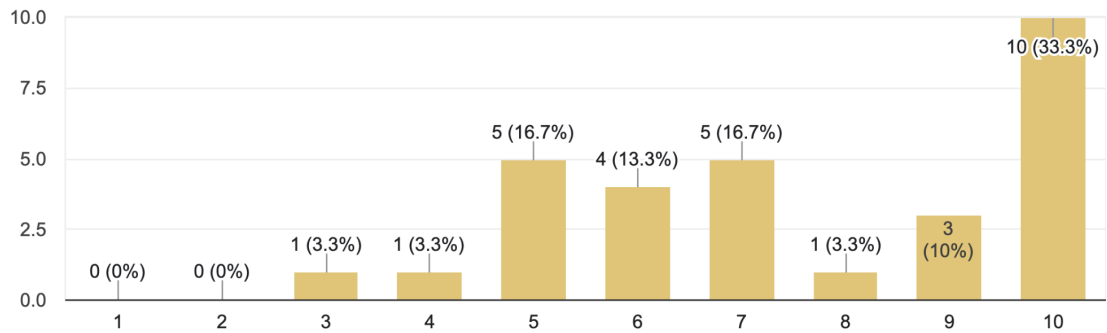


Figure 9: Results of survey question about Next Step Exchange’s helpfulness in providing practical advice for respondents

10) On a scale of 1-10, was it helpful to hear stories from other people?

30 responses

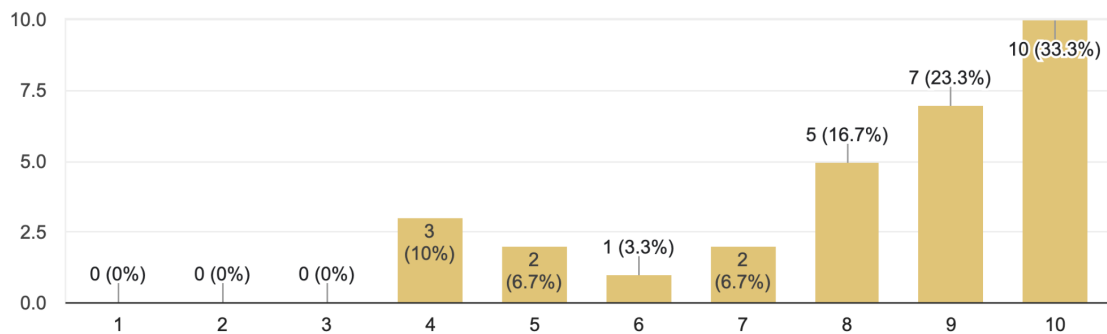


Figure 10: Results of survey question about helpfulness to hear stories from other people for respondents