

**The Effectiveness of the Expanded Public Works Program in Promoting Local Economic Development:
A case study of Zibambele Project, eThekweni Municipality**

Nonkululeko Zulu*, Jabulani Nyawo, Pfano Mashau
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville Campus, South Africa
nyawoj1@ukzn.ac.za*, mashaup@ukzn.ac.za

Abstract: In South Africa, with the advent of democracy, the Expanded Public Works Programme was conceived as an employment strategy by government in order to alleviate poverty and promote a better standard of living for marginalised groups, particularly youth and women in South Africa. This is a qualitative exploratory research in which the data was collected through face-to-face interviews with beneficiaries. The researcher utilised the exploratory research in order to explore the effectiveness of the Zibambele Project at the local level, and to see how it creates employment opportunities for marginalised groups. The key focus of the literature review is on local economic development, with special reference to the poverty alleviation strategies as a guideline for economic growth at local levels. The findings show that the government-led programmes that eliminate poverty at the grassroots level as well as creating employment opportunities for marginalised are crucial. Furthermore, the study shows that the government programmes are more needed in order to tackle poverty and also increase local economic development in South Africa.

Keywords: *Poverty, employment, empowerment, LED, EPWP*

1. Introduction

Unemployment is one of the most critical social ill that the South Africa faces today. According to Statistics South Africa (2015), the percentage growth of the unemployed (73.3%), however, has been higher than the growth of the employed (69.2%) within the country. Hence, prior 1994, the issue of unemployment became the focus of the newly elected government (Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014; Bernard, 2015). The issue of unemployment in the country continues to be a challenge (StatsSA 2015; Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014). The Quarterly Labour Force Survey (StatsSA, 2015) shows that the number of jobless individuals increased by 87 000 within the same period to 5.2 million, the highest level since the inception of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey in 2008. This caused an upsurge in the joblessness rate to 25.5% (up by 0.3 of a percentage age point), while the absorption rate remained virtually unchanged (StatsSA, 2015). The imbalance between the skilled and unskilled labor is great. Although the metropolitan municipalities are enjoying expanding economic progress, unfortunately this is not reflected in the inner metro areas (StatsSA, 2015). Chapter 7 of the South African Constitution of 1996, the responsibilities that local governments should include the elevation of social and economic expansion within their societies. Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs is charged with responsibility to ensure that all municipalities properly performs their basic duties and responsibilities.

The South African government has also indicated its intention of halving poverty levels in the country since 2008 (Stibbe, 2008; Rogan, 2012). Several approaches have been put in place to support local governments to realize the government's task of economic progression (Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014; Ferrerai, 2015). Local Economic Development (LED), as a process, has been presented in South Africa for local government to use as a mechanism towards the economic growth of people at the municipal level (Patterson, 2008). The Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs has also supported the use of LED as an economic development tool by drawing up a framework to serve as a guiding tool for municipalities (Patterson, 2008; Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014). In 2004, the South African government propelled the EPWP with a purpose of stimulating economic growth as well as ensuring that sustainable development is created. EPWP can be viewed as a mechanism that is designed to promote employment opportunities amongst the unemployed. Furthermore, it can be viewed as a conceptually complex intervention for poverty alleviation, in which there is training in community development work (Rogan, 2012). The EPWP initiative has been described as a nationwide process which will enable the unemployed to gain productive employment. Skills development is the mainstay of the program, which promotes an increase in people's capacity to earn an income (DSD, 2006). According to the Infrastructure Sector Plan for the Expanded Works Program (n.d.: 2), "The EPWP aims to increase employment in the infrastructure sector by increasing the labor-intensity of

government funded infrastructure programs". This is partly because the infrastructure sector is broad and there can be employment opportunities for the masses.

This aim of this study is to examine the impact of EPWP on local levels of economic development, specifically in the growth and stability of employment and skills development in KwaMashu Township. The target of the study, the Zimbabwe Poverty Alleviation Programme under the Expanded Public Works Programme (the Department of Public Works) has been highlighted in the study. The problem statement incorporates both unemployment rates as well as employment rates, with special reference to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of 2016; so as to bring forth an understanding of the current situation in as far as employment in South Africa is concerned.

2. Literature Review

The vulnerable groups are perceived as being it hard due to a lack of economic progression (Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014). The emphasis was based on the role of the United Nations as well as the South African framework with regards to acknowledging the plight faced by vulnerable groups who are in need of poverty eradication as well employment strategies. The important factor is to understand if the employment opportunities designed for the EPWP's beneficiaries are sustainable, and if those beneficiaries are able to market their credentials for improved prospects in the formal economy. The role of LED will be discussed in-depth, especially with regard to the promotion of economic development at grassroots levels. There is an extended history of poverty measurement; Alexander McDougall, Charles Booth, and Seebohm Rowntree, and were part of "the provision in the 1870 [British] Elementary Education Act requiring school boards to develop criteria of poverty". Therefore, although poverty was initially measured according to economic positions such as the Growth Domestic Product and in terms of income, its theory and measurement has made way to include the ability of individuals and households to successfully meet their basic needs, as well as to promote an equivalent balance in their societies (Muneer & Rehman, 2012; Rogan, 2012). There are three approaches which are applicable for estimating poverty –the absolute, relative and subjective approaches. Each views poverty and the experience of poverty differently. In this paper, the researchers focus on two approaches which are absolute and relative poverty.

The context of unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal: Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) defines unemployment as people within the economically active population who (StatsSA, 2011):

- were not able to work during the past seven days;
- have the desire to work and are available to start work; and
- are in the process of looking for work or starting some form of entrepreneurial business

Ten years ago, the province of KwaZulu-Natal contributed almost 16.5% to the national GDP, but was home to 19.8% of the South African population (Bhorat and Van Der Westhuizen, 2008). The quarterly labor force survey for the third quarter of 2015 estimated that the unemployment rate for South Africa was 25.5%; of the 4.4 million people who remained unemployed, just over three million (68.2%) had been without work for at least one year (StatsSA, 2015). Furthermore, 60.2% of job searchers had not completed Grade 12, which further limited their chances of finding employment. It is against this backdrop of high numbers of unemployed (and largely unemployed) but able-bodied South Africans that Public Works Programs are conceived and implemented. The below table highlights the gaps in distribution of monthly earnings that exists, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, where it's evident from above table that this province had monthly earnings that were R470 or less which is equivalent to bottom 5 % of the lowest earning income group.

a) The Poverty Line Approach: South Africa's historical background of poverty lines stem from Edward Batson, who has been acknowledged for the development of South Africa's first poverty lines in 1942 (Budlender, 1985, cited in Budlender, Liebbrandt and Woolard, 2015). Furthermore, these poverty lines were broken down to groups such as food, washing and cleaning, fuel, clothing, rent and transport, which are perceived to be the most important aspects of living. In the early 1970s, Batson's methodology was utilised in institutions to create a new poverty lines called Minimum Living Levels and Household Subsistence Levels (Budlender et al., 2015).

Table 1: Distribution of monthly earnings by province

Provinces	No. of employees Thousand	Bottom 5% Rand	Bottom 10%	Bottom 25%	Median	Top 25%	Top 10%	Top 5%
South Africa	11 058	570	845	1 500	2 800	6 500	12 000	17 000
Western Cape	1 617	950	1 200	1 733	2 700	5 500	11 000	16 000
Eastern Cape	1 064	470	600	1 200	2 200	5 200	11 110	15 000
Northern Cape	253	500	780	1 200	2 100	6 000	11 000	15 167
Free State	662	433	600	1 000	1 900	5 000	11 000	15 300
KwaZulu-Natal	2 055	470	700	1 200	2 487	5 900	11 000	15 000
North West	627	600	830	1 350	3 000	6 000	11 800	15 000
Gauteng	3 338	867	1 200	1 950	3 683	8 500	15 000	20 000
Mpumalanga	733	600	800	1 300	2 777	7 500	13 000	18 000
Limpopo	710	400	500	900	1 800	4 500	11 000	14 000

Source: Adapted from StatsSA (2010)

After the Apartheid era, the Poverty Line approach was applicable due to the fact that it is viewed as a mechanism which is able to single out the poor from the rich. This can be done in two ways – monetary, which measures the consumption of the poor, as well as non-monetary, which views literacy as an aspect that can be measured within the poverty line (Barker, 2003; Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014; Bernard, 2015). Households that fall within the poverty lines are perceived as poor, and there are a range of reasons which can contribute towards this state. These include physical weakness, isolation, powerlessness and vulnerability (Barker, 2003; Ferrerai, 2015).

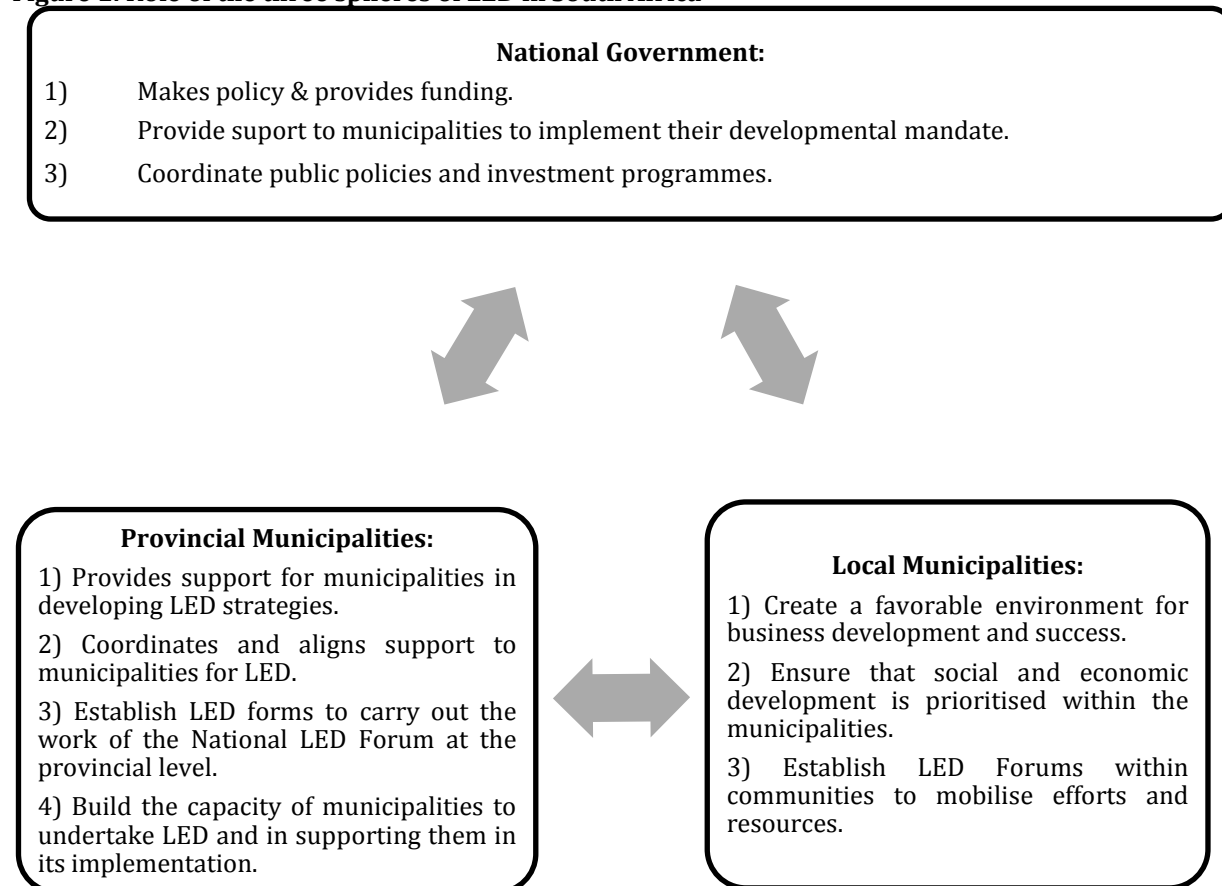
b) Gender employment inequalities: Inequalities are preventing women from having robust careers (Hames, Koen, Handley and Albetyn, 2006). In particular, these inequalities include lower incomes, fewer skills, a lack of education and a lack of decision making. The above mentioned are perceived as the most predominant features which make women vulnerable, in particular in economic growth (Kabeer, 2008). There has, however, been a shift from the traditional household make-up from male-headed households to female-headed households. With the advent to democracy, the South African government has developed numerous strategies that will empower and develop the women. This has caught the attention of the economic development within these households, as now the females have the duty of multi-tasking, i.e. being breadwinners, nurturers and actively engaging in their community - the predominant roles witnessed in the 21st century (Frey and Stutzer, 2010). The negative economic pressures have led to women pursuing employment due to high poverty-related aspect, and the rising cost of living.

LED as a promotion of employment opportunities at the local level: The inclusion of LED in this study was based on its significance at the grassroots level, in particular the community. LED takes place mostly within a municipal setting, where interventions govern the process that promotes LED. South Africa has embraced LED across all three spheres (national, provincial and local) of government. Within the three spheres, there is a need for systematic interventions to address the issues of unemployment, lack of entrepreneurship and the promotion of foreign direct investment (Bernard, 2015; Jonas, 2014). According to Patterson (2008:3), “Local Economic Development is an ongoing process which is driven by local actors from different societal sectors, which implies collaboration and even co-responsibility between the public and private sector for the economic development of a region or location”. Within the Expanded Public Works Programme, there are collaborations between the spheres of government so that employment opportunities for unskilled labour are created (Bernard, 2015; Ferrerai, 2015). The origins of LED date back to the early 1990s within the industrialised nations, at which time it was not yet defined. Patterson (2008:3) added that “in the early stages of LED, activities focussed strongly on the marketing of locations to external investors, often linked with incentive systems such as tax breaks and/or reduced costs of public services (such as water and electricity) and infrastructure development”.

The abovementioned highlights the motive behind LED, which was based on economic growth which involved investors, fiscal policies and labour markets embedded in public services. In the second phase, according to Patterson (2008:3), “attention shifted to endogenous economic potentials, striving to support the competitiveness of existing firms, promoting entrepreneurship and business start-ups”. The shift is evident as now business start-ups are assisted in the form of financial assistance, business support, and the build-up of an entrepreneurial mind-set for those who have entrepreneurial potential. This shift opened the way for a more complex method of sustainable economic development. Patterson (2008:3) stated, “The third and latest phase of local economic development improves the individual business support and sectorial development approaches of the second development phase by making the entire business and community environment more conducive to economic development”. The third stage views the community at large whereby economic development is distributed at the grassroots level, such as small-scale agricultural development as well as fishing. Patterson (2008:3) further elaborated on the importance of partnerships amongst the designated actors who are in support of economic growth and distribution. “The third phase promotes public/private and community partnerships, facilitating workforce development and education, focusing inward investment to support cluster growth and supporting quality of life improvements”.

a) The South African perspective on LED: Patterson (2008) acknowledged that within South Africa, the role of the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) and the ANC in 1994 were positioned in a way that shaped the early beginnings of LED through the obvious provision for community-based development and locally based initiatives. LED operates mainly at the local government with the supporting spheres such as national government and provincial government district municipalities and local municipalities. The figure 1 below outlines the role of the three spheres of LED in South Africa.

Figure 1: Role of the three spheres of LED in South Africa



Source: Authors contribution (2016)

b) Contributions towards the LED debate in South Africa: Patterson (2008) highlighted that the South African legislature acts as a guideline for the Local Economic Development process. The below mentioned legislative process was/are the pillar of the promotion of LED in the South African context:

- The Constitution of RSA (1996)
- White Paper on Local Government (1998)
- Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000)
- A policy paper on Integrated Development Planning (2000)
- LED Guidelines to Institutional Arrangements (2000)
- Draft LED Policy (2002)
- Policy Guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa (2005)
- National Framework for Local Economic Development (LED) in South Africa (2006 – 2011).

The Local Economic Development Guidelines to Institutional Arrangements (2000) and the draft LED Policy (2002) advocate for a more community-based method for LED, emphasising that LED should be pro-poor in orientation and focus on previously disadvantaged individuals as well as deprived towns and areas (Patterson, 2008). Clearly, the notion behind the support for the poor is of great importance, especially for disadvantaged populations. The inclusion of marginalised towns where living conditions may threaten economic growth are also receiving attention via the above-mentioned policies. Patterson (2008:7) also emphasised the part that local government plays in the campaign for LED: “Ideally, municipalities should support local initiatives, which encourage local job creation while still responding to changes in the national and global economy”.

The National Framework for Local Economic Development of 2006 emphasised that “municipalities should play a connector role in respect of LED drawing upon resources locked in a range of different government support instruments into their localities” (Patterson, 2008:8). An example of this is that the municipalities can advocate for the provision of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in support of skills development. Local Economic Development as a policy tool has been presented in South Africa for local government to apply it towards the economic growth of people at the municipal level. The Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs has also supported the use of LED as an economic development tool by drawing up an LED framework to serve as a guiding tool for municipalities in South Africa (Bhorat and Van Der Westhuizen, 2008; Ferrerai, 2015). Scaling down to EPWP, can be viewed as a mechanism that is designed to promote employment opportunities amongst the unemployed, and can be viewed as a conceptually complex intervention for poverty alleviation, in which there is training in community development work, HIV/Aids counselling and gardening skills (Bhorat, Van Der Westhuizen, and Naidoo, 2006).

In addition to the above, poverty and unemployment are the main challenges facing South Africa. LED strategies and programmes are the main instruments used at the local level to tackle job creation and poverty alleviation (Patterson, 2008). LED can be labelled as a regionalisation tool which makes way for both local and regional governments and their communities to benefit in all the economic activities that would make the GDP to increase thus contributing to the economy (Patterson, 2008). A positive aspect of LED is that it further aims to support previously disadvantaged people, communities, black empowerment enterprises and Small Medium Enterprises to participate fully in the economic growth of the country (Patterson, 2008). It is of great importance to incorporate both the formal and informal economies to reduce inequality in the country. According to the South African LED Network (2011), there has been engagements and linkages between the formal and informal sectors of the economy. There is a need to understand reasons to diversify local economic development strategy. Furthermore, LED reinforces local, national and international collaborations between communities, businesses and government to create combined business ventures and build up local areas. LED uses local resources and skills to create economic opportunities for development at the local level. This includes increasing specialised training and providing information and advice services to employment seekers. This, in turn, can promote economic development at a community level, as well as employment opportunities for persons who are long term unemployed. The South African LED Network (2011:19) advises that “adopting LED strategies, people in a local economy can work out ways of attracting investment to grow the local economy and also start businesses which will retain income in their area”. This can benefit both the

formal and informal economies, so those communities who rely heavily on informal economy production will have the chance to benefit in remuneration as well as in the economy.

c) South African skills development process: The Skills Development Act (Act 97 of 1998) and Skills Development Levy Act (Act 9 of 1999) outlined the provision of learnership programmes to grow the skills of the South African labour force, and in particular, to advance the employment prospects of people who have been previously disadvantaged, such as people with disabilities. The EPWP involves programmes which are labour-intensive, therefore skills development is of great importance for the beneficiaries involved in the programme (Department of Public Works, 2005). The need for collaborating with relevant departments as well as institutions would assist in the progression of the beneficiaries. According to the Infrastructure Sector Plan for the Expanded Public Works Programme (Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014). 8), “the Department of Public Works will develop capacity of training on the scale, required by the EPWP which involves train the trainer courses amongst a few”. To be able to move from being unskilled to a skilled employee has its advantages for the beneficiaries. McCord (2005:570) commented that “In South Africa unmet labour demand is primarily for labour with intermediate and high skills, and there is no easily identifiable unmet labour demand for semi or low skilled labour (cited from Kraak, 2003), which most closely describes EPWP labour at the point of exit from public works employment”. Again, the issue of skills provision has been raised in the promotion of employment opportunities, and the same can be said about the role that government can play in the provision of programmes directed at the populations who do not have any skills but are in need of employment.

According to the EPWP, it endeavours to provide accredited training to its beneficiaries in the form of:

- Skills programs: work-focused programs that are inclusive of a pre-registered collection of unit standards.
- Learnerships: organized learning programs within a specific industry, which are unit standard based and comprise of more than 120 credits.
- Artisan development: technical training systems, including practical, theoretical and workplace learning components offered in designated trades to achieve artisan status.

The situational context of unemployment in KwaZulu-Natal is remarkable, particularly in the employment gaps amongst the vulnerable groups. The issue of sustainable employment opportunities beyond EPWP has raised many discrepancies, as some argue that more needs to be done by the state in order to sustain employment. Local Economic Development, as a promotion of employment opportunities at the grassroots level, paves ways for local government to promotion the integrated development opportunities at grassroots levels. Skills development, training and capacity building as an empowering process has shown to be a much needed aspect with regards to the promotion of income generating activities.

Study area: The study was located in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, at the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality. The researcher conducted three site visitations in order to conduct research. Kwa-Mashu is the area of focus which is situated in the eThekweni Municipality, which has tried to provide the best services, yet high levels of unemployment amongst its citizen’s means they are very often unable to pay for these services. Kwa-Mashu is situated north west of eThekweni Municipality and has high levels of joblessness, social displacement, poverty and crime, which are worsened by insufficient physical infrastructure and severe degradation, as noted in the eThekweni Municipality Integrated Development Plan of 2012. The Zibambele Poverty Alleviation Programme was designed particularly for women and women-headed households, which fall within the vulnerable group category (Kwa-Zulu-Natal Department of Transport Pamphlet, 2005).

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative exploratory research with the utilisation of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews were chosen by the researcher as an appropriate data collection tool because it allowed for probing and additional questions during the interview process (Cox, 2008). Qualitative research is a form of research methodology that permits a researcher to gather data that are filled with written descriptions of how a target population is experiencing a phenomenon (Cox, 2008). The target population was the beneficiaries of the EPWP as well as their immediate supervisors. Within the EPWP there are approximately 250 beneficiaries. The study focused on 25 participants, which was inclusive of 23 beneficiaries and two supervisors of the program, who are directly involved in conducting labor intensive

road management. The participants were randomly selected from employees who were recruited from the inception of the program until 2015. This method was based on systematic sampling, which allowed the researcher to request permission to use the participants' daily workplace register.

The main aim of this study is to examine the impact of EPWP on local levels of economic development, specifically in the growth and stability of employment and skills development in KwaMashu Township. The objectives are to:

- understand how the Zibambele Project assists in poverty eradication, employment generation and skills development;
- investigate whether the Zibambele Project has met its target of empowering vulnerable groups with employment opportunities; and
- Establish the extent to which the beneficiaries of the EPWP are able to sustain employment beyond their participation in the Zibambele Project.

4. Discussion and Findings

Categorisation and formulation of themes: Four categories emerged from the research. There are several themes which were generated under each category that were relevant to the study. The table 2 below shows this categories and themes.

Table 2: Categories and themes developed in the research

CATEGORIES	THEMES
Sustainable livelihoods	Promotion of income relief. Poverty reduction process. iii) The promotion of breadwinners at household levels.
Income generating practice	Culture of savings/stokvels amongst beneficiaries.
Opportunity for learning	Recognition of learning needs for beneficiaries. Practical opportunities for beneficiaries.
Community engagement	The role of local government at grass-root integration.

Source: Authors contribution 2016

Sustainable livelihoods

Promotion of income relief: The promotion of income relief can be easily associated with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #8, which aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all". The objectives are to: firstly, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities. Secondly, improve regional and trans-border infrastructure to promote effective regional economic integration and facilitate trade. And lastly, promote formalisation of informal sector activities and employment. In essence this speaks to the Expanded Public Works Programme, which needs constant government interventions directed at the promotion of EPWP at grass root levels.

In South Africa, this is further supported by the National Development Path (NDP) within the South African economic policy. This identifies where job creation is possible and then targets limited capital and capacity so as to maximise the creation of decent work opportunities, using both macro and micro economic policies to create a favourable environment (South African Local Economic Development Network, 2011). Furthermore, the SA LED Network (2011) has broken down processes of the decent work opportunities as follows:

- Short-term: direct employment schemes, targeted subsidies and/or a more expansionary macroeconomic package.
- Short- to medium-term: support labor absorbing activities, especially in the agricultural value chain, light manufacturing and services.
- Long-term: as full employment is achieved, increasingly support knowledge and capital intensive sectors in order to remain competitive (SA LED Network, 2011: 9-10).

According to the EPWP's objectives as mandated in the State of the Expanded Public Works Programmes in South Africa (2012-2013:77), they aim to "provide ongoing and sustainable work opportunities for destitute households in an effort to break the poverty cycle". The beneficiaries who were targeted for the research study acknowledged that the EPWP provides their livelihoods, as now they are able to purchase groceries which are perceived as their most rewarding experience. Furthermore, the participants stipulated that the ability to provide for the household has emancipated them from being unable to provide. Hence, all the participants indicated that the Zibambele Programme actively promotes income relief. This is evident from one of the beneficiaries who said that:

The Zibambele Program helps me a lot. This is because I make a living out of the income that I receive from participating in this programme.

On other hand, few participants has highlighted that the income they receive from this programme is not enough to cover numerous necessities for the households. One of the beneficiaries said:

The income is too small as I cannot afford a lot of necessities such as foods, clothing, electricity, and savings.

The study conducted by Moeti (2013) on the effective implementation of EPWP in South African municipalities found that the key general benefits of the EPWP was creation of employment, skilling of the unskilled and earning of an income by the poor. The participation of beneficiaries in the EPWP projects has improved their lives. Both results of McCord (2004) and Moeti (2013) found that there was a real measurable impact on the participants in the EPWP programmes undertaken in both KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Tshwane. The findings of this study are in line with the results of this study. The Bill of Rights Section 27(1) specifically states that "everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water". The majority of the income received from the programme was used for purchasing food, as this was perceived to be the most important feature of the beneficiaries of the EPWP. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), food security is "access by all people, at all times, to the food required for a healthy life". The World Bank cited from the Department of Agriculture (2002:7) argued that food security is "the physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all, at all times, to meet their dietary and food preferences".

Poverty reduction maintained: According to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Number 1 - *End poverty in all its forms everywhere* - this goal is supposed to be reached in 2030. This focuses primarily on eradicating poverty through various interventions: firstly, by fully implementing nationally appropriate social protection measures with a focus on coverage of the poor, the most marginalised and people in vulnerable situations. Secondly, by pursuing sustained and inclusive economic growth as a key enabler for achieving poverty eradication. And lastly, ensuring and achieving an equal access to productive employment and decent work for all, including the poor, persons with disabilities, and other people in vulnerable situations as well as women and young people. Although the Public Works Programme (PWP) are not adequate to solve South Africa's unemployment problem, they are of great use in ameliorating poverty, as they provide temporary relief to the jobless, would-be workers who are poor. Within five years, the EPWP was anticipated to create one million poverty lessening job opportunities in the following sectors - environment, social, infrastructure and economy. With regards to this aspect, EPWP is viewed as the most important determinant of success. Much emphasis has been placed on poverty reduction mechanisms with regards to the EPWP in general. On the issue of poverty reduction and better living conditions after the Zibambele Programme's inception, the beneficiaries highlighted that this being part of the programme has assisted them in many ways i.e. able to purchase groceries; able to participate in women's organisation as they feel emancipated; and able to pay debt as well as taking their kids to school.

Mothapo (2011) also found that the EPWP are such a relief to the beneficiary given their dire poverty situation. Furthermore, the author's results showed that the EPWP enables the beneficiaries to participate actively in the local economy through buying food items, purchasing clothing, furniture, and other necessities to improve their standard of living. These results are in line with the findings of this study that clearly shows that the beneficiaries of EPWP directly benefit from participating in this programme. According to Kostzer, Lal, Lieuw-Kie-Song & Miller, 2010, the public works programme (PWP) such as India's Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) which main aim was to reduce poverty and address structural unemployment through PWP has been successful. "PWPs do not necessarily move participants out of poverty, but instead offer short-term relief" (Ghiassi-Razavi, 2012: 3).

The promotion of female breadwinners at household levels: Frey and Stutzer, (2010:33) highlighted that “A breadwinner is defined as the primary source of financial income in the household and was considered previously as an exclusively male role in the familial structure”. The current era has seen an increase in women being the heads of households, as well as a shift from women being dependent on men. According to Cunningham, Potts, Hartley & Ormerod (2008: 169), “women’s schooling and employment increased substantially during the latter decades of the 20th century, and these factors are especially likely to come into conflict with ideas about gender specialised roles”. The abovementioned takes into account the patriarchal system, which has dominated gender empowerment within the South African context. Furthermore, the rise of gender education and employment opportunities made way for single parents as well as female breadwinners. Employment has brought forth significant changes in household structures, especially among the ever increasing female breadwinners. Cunningham et al., (2008:167) stated that “women who are employed would be expected to adopt less supportive attitudes towards gender-specialised marital roles because they value the opportunity to work for pay”. This influx of female breadwinners not only supports the household but also the economy.

Out of the 25 participants, there were 23 females and two males. This acts as a stern reminder that the establishments of the Zibambele Poverty Alleviation Programme were based on women empowerment. When the beneficiaries were asked how many family members are dependent on them for their survival, most of them stated that there are more than five family members who are depending on them. One of the participants said:

There are 10 family members who depend on me; this is inclusive of 5 grandchildren and 3 children of my own. I also reside with my mother who receives Old Age Pension, and my brother who is unemployed, currently looking for employment.

The most predominant factor that kept coming up during the interviews was the active engagement of Social Assistance, which the families rely on. Friedman and Bhengu (2008:106) argued that “Social Assistance as an income transfers can be viewed as a form of a grant or financial award issued by government which is then provided to a resident who is unable to sustain themselves”. Social Assistance consists of various grants which are readily available to the public which are: Old Age Grant, Disability Grant, War Veterans Grant, Care Dependency Grant, Foster Child Grant, Child Support Grant or a Grant-in-aid (Friedman and Bhengu, 2008).

Income generating practices

Culture of savings/stokvels amongst beneficiaries: Within South African households, the culture of savings/stokvels plays a crucial role. Lukhele (1990:1) defined stokvels as “a type of credit union in which a group of people enter into an agreement to contribute a fixed amount of money for a common pool weekly, fortnightly or monthly”. Furthermore, Lukhele (1990) highlighted that stokvels are most trusted method of gaining financial support, especially in hard times. With no savings, households are likely to borrow more to deal with shocks to their income and expenditure. The South African government encourages the citizens to utilise different methods of savings available in the country, even if it is little money from the various grants that is being received, rather than get into debt. Here, the role of informal savings like Stokvels comes in handy as they pool savings for purposes like meeting burial expenses, Christmas spending, and education”. During the interviews, the beneficiaries shared their experiences of what they are able to do with the income that they get from the Zibambele Programme. Nine beneficiaries stated that through the Zibambele Programme, they are able to save in the form of stokvels as well as in trusted banking institutions. On other hand, the majority of the beneficiaries (sixteen) stated that they could not join any stokvels because the majority of money is being spent on the necessary needs of the households. Meaning that they do not have any savings mechanisms. The stokvels are perceived as more of a safety net, and have been recognised as a critical element for a consistent society (African Response 4: 2011).

Opportunity for learning: Sustainable Development Goal #4 emphasises school-going children, especially the promotion of educational opportunities for girls, however the larger issue lies with vocational training and such institutions. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goal #4 promotes the *inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all*. According to the EPWP’s objectives as mandated in the State of the Expanded Public Works Programmes in South Africa (2012-2013:

77), there is a need to “provide exit strategies in an endeavour to create other sustainable work opportunities, inside or outside the programme, for beneficiaries who complete the trainings programmes”.

Recognition of learning needs for beneficiaries: Looking back to the EPWP’s objectives as mandated in the State of the Expanded Public Works Programmes in South Africa (2012-2013:77), it clearly states that it is necessary to “increase the potential for skills-based and knowledge-based development of all the programme’s beneficiaries through targeted accredited training programmes”. The majority of the beneficiaries’ ages range from 40-59 years and they have some level of education. They also possess some skills, which can improve through on the job training designed to enhance their job performance.

The need to keep abreast with the latest skills developments is applicable both at national and international scales in order to allow a competitive and productive pool of beneficiaries. Providing the training that will allow the beneficiaries to be marketable is crucial for their personal growth and development. The beneficiaries’ supervisors highlighted they have been exposed to some training which was organised by the eThekweni Municipality. The beneficiaries’ supervisors said:

We were trained in Health and Management, First Aid Training, Environmental Management Training as well as Poverty Alleviation Trainings.

When the supervisors were asked if they were able to find lucrative employment with their training, one replied as follows:

I have tried to apply to Municipality of eThekweni but you find that they want more educational back ground like some form of Higher Educational Training qualification which I don’t have.

The results of this study is also in line with the findings of Moeti (2013) where state that the majority participants/ beneficiaries in the EPWP projects doesn’t get an opportunity to be absorbed once they complete their training. Furthermore, the results of Ghiassi-Razavi (2012) showed that the EPWP does not put more emphasis on the training and skills development of the beneficiaries as it has been considered unproductive and inefficient for short and medium programmes. As PWPs are designed to assist the poor households, it therefore, becomes crucial for government to properly organise and channel the resources into the PWPs for the benefit of the poor.

Practical opportunities for beneficiaries: According to the EPWP’s objectives as mandated in the State of the Expanded Public Works Programmes in South Africa (2012-2013), the safety management of the beneficiaries should be taken seriously. “Each beneficiary undergoes an introduction to the programme, as a measure to ensure that the beneficiaries are well informed and thus the promotion of safety working measures” (EPWP, 2012-2013: 78). The beneficiaries involved in the actual labour intensive programme shared that they were trained on road safety, especially with regards to the nature of their employment which is external and has an environmental background. This is further supported by the below beneficiary:

We were trained on road safety, this included being told how to protect ourselves from oncoming traffic by meticulously placing of cones so that there will be no car accident as well how to wear our protective gear such as gum-boots and identifiable bibs so that we are visible at all times.

One beneficiary indicated that they were very fortunate to have been chosen to attend one of the workshops about creative art skills as well as financial saving workshops. Unfortunately, the abovementioned training and workshops have not helped the beneficiaries much, as they cannot find employment elsewhere. They now feel that they have to await their old age pension in order to support themselves further.

Community engagement: The involvement of the community is crucial in the local development process in that the community must have a core of local, capable and respectable leaders who are willing to listen and ensure the support of the community. Community mobilization is performed mostly in the municipality, and in this case, the eThekweni Municipality has played a very active role in mobilizing the community - particularly the ward councilor.

The role of local government at grassroots integration: Local government in South Africa is guided by the concept of developmental local government, as described in the White Paper on Local Government, of 1998. Its vision is that local government should work with local communities to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives. It was discovered in the study that the role played by the ward councilor had an effect on who gets employed. This was shared by the majority of

the beneficiaries, who stated that they approached the ward councilor for employment opportunities. According to Paradza, Mokwena and Richards (2010), ward councilors are responsible for: evaluating whether the municipalities' plans are having their envisioned effect; evaluating whether facilities are being distributed justly, efficiently and in a maintainable way; determining whether capital projects are being undertaken in accordance with the Integrated Development Plan; and transmitting important information from the council to the residents. Furthermore, Paradza et al., (2010) stipulate that the ward councilors serve as the border between the people they represent and the municipal officials who design and implement development policies. The ward councilor, as chairperson of his or her ward, must also raise concerns to council on behalf of ward members when residents experience problems relating to the councilor. Clearly, the role of the councilor is of great importance, as they are perceived as the eyes and ears of the community as a whole, and are able to note the needs of the community such as programs for poverty eradication.

When the beneficiaries were asked how they were made aware of the Zibambele Programme, the majority of them stipulated that they were chosen per ward via the councillor and committee. Of the 25 respondents, one had a different response regarding the councillor's involvement in the programme:

I do not believe the community knows Zibambele Programme but it are aware that we work for the municipality.

As South African government emphasis on rural development and LED, it becomes vital for municipalities to create inclusive and robust local economies for the benefit of the poor through addressing socio-economic issues. In other words, it is important that the local communities are included or made aware of any developmental programmes that intend to benefit them.

Summary of findings and discussions: The importance of discussing the data allowed for the birds eye view of the role of the Zibambele Poverty Alleviation Program assists in poverty eradication, employment generation and skills development. Furthermore, the discussion of the data allowed to view how the Zibambele Program has reached its employment target as well as to promote sustainable employment opportunities for the beneficiaries particularly for the women. As discussed in the research, the Zibambele Poverty Alleviation Program has managed to alleviate poverty substantially, particularly among the vulnerable groups as well as those who are unskilled. A fraction of the beneficiaries is now able to save some of their income various institutions of their choice. The Zibambele Poverty Alleviation Program has the ability to sustain households, particularly women-headed ones; women are now able to play an active role in the economy, but more so in sustaining their families through purchasing food as well as maintaining the entire household. The research also unveiled that skills development training is being conducted, but this does not necessarily advance the skills of the beneficiaries beyond their employment. This is contrary to the EPWP's statement that the beneficiaries would be trained so as to find employment beyond the EPWP.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The EPWP Zibambele Project has to a certain extent improved the lives of the beneficiaries through employment opportunities targeted at unskilled labour. But this programme has not been fully effective in terms of developing and capacitating the individuals with other critical skills that are needed. The development of economic prospects for the deprived must, nevertheless, include more than employment: - it should also include increasing access to productive assets for the poor who are self-employed. This can be achieved by growing funds in infrastructure (e.g. rural roads and irrigation works), credit schemes via the banks, funding from the government which targets the poor, and extensive technical assistance which is inclusive of sharing information and skills development to increase efficiency levels in economic activities. The involvement of the community is crucial in the form of uplifting the community through local economic development. The role that is ultimately played by local government is also important when addressing the issue of community development. There is also a need for attentive focus of the empowerment of those who fall within marginalised categories, particularly with employment opportunities, skills/training development or even Adult Basic Education and Training. This initiative can be viewed as a form of capacitation of the marginalised groups with the opportunity to find better employment opportunities, or better yet, to make informed decisions with regards to economic matters or community empowerment matters. The EPWP decision makers need time and dedication to the maintenance of strong, multi-sectorial initiatives from all relevant stakeholders, including non-government organisations and community-based organisations, in order to actively promote not only partnerships, but also collaboration on informed ideas regarding the promotion of sustainability of all EPWP programmes across the board.

The main aim of this study was to examine the impact of EPWP on local levels of economic development, specifically in the growth and stability of employment and skills development. Hence, the following are the recommendations based on the results of the study:

- Inclusive policies and strategies: The government, particularly at the local level, should ensure that the EPWP policies and strategies are inclusive, in a way that everyone in need can participate in the programs. The abled-bodied mostly participate in EPWP programs with the exclusion of the disable people. Therefore, this study recommends that government should also create the policies that also accommodate disabled people, so that they can participate in EPWP programs.
- Training and skills development: It is crucial that the government provide the beneficiaries of EPWP with the market related trainings, not only basic trainings so that the beneficiaries can also be employable when opportunities arise. This is because of the reason that most of EPWP are short to medium term projects. Therefore, the beneficiaries find themselves falling back into poverty immediately after the closure of the projects.
- Design of EPWP Programs: The EPWP programs are normally seem as short to medium term relief from poverty. The study recommends the EPWP programs' training and skills development to be future orientated. In that way, beneficiaries are able to stand by themselves after the program. Findings reveal that beneficiaries find EPWP programs as laborious projects instead of opportunity for development.

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