

# CWP4Education: Driving Youth Unemployment and Early Learning Opportunities

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## 1 Problem statement

By Ilifa Lanbantwana's estimates; 1 million poor children aged 3-5 years do not have access to any early learning programme - and even for those children who do have access, programmes often don't meet minimum standards. Access to early learning is crucial if want to change the trajectory of the 50% of South African children who leave school without a matric certificate, and end up in a labour market in which they are virtually unemployable.

More than a third (36.4%) of the population is unemployed, and this unemployment is concentrated within young people. It is estimated that 7.6 million young people are out of work, education or training opportunities. As we consider this, we must recognise that deprivation from learning and work opportunities are compounded across generations; and this embeds poverty within families and communities. **Our challenge is that in order to really change the employment trajectory of South Africa, we must invest in early in the learning potential of our children for the future, while simultaneously creating meaningful work opportunities for young people in our present.**

The CWP4Education strategy is a unique opportunity to tackle two ends of this spectrum: to expand access to early learning programmes, while creating opportunities for vulnerable young people otherwise excluded from employment to take a first step on a pathway towards decent jobs.

## 2 Jobs impact

The Community Work Programme (CWP) is a public employment scheme which was initiated by the South African government in 2007. Today, it is administered by the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) and falls under the broader Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). In 2016/17 the CWP has been active in 238 'sites' (municipalities) with roughly 1 000 participants in each site. Targeted at vulnerable communities, with a mandate to include 55% young participants; it is a powerful mechanism to reach economically excluded young people.

The core design elements of the CWP are:

- The provision of work opportunities for 2 days per week (or 100 days in each year). Participants are paid R92 per day.
- Communities participate, through 'Local Reference Committees' in identifying what 'meaningful work' is in their local context.

- DCoG appoints Implementing Agents (IAs) to manage the CWP programme at a site level. IAs manage a budget that is meant to cover management and administrative costs as well as training materials, tools, and technical support. Stipends are paid directly to CWP participants from DCoG.

CWP is significant opportunity to contribute to a much needed pipeline of human capital to ensure universal access to early learning. At the same time, we are also aware of government’s prioritisation of early child development (ECD) as a driver of economic growth in the National Development Plan. This position implies that the sector is likely to see a large, and rapid, increase in the need for human resources – which is also crucial to making a dent in the long-term unemployment prospects of the majority of young people.

Our vision is that as the CWP rolls out across South Africa, Implementing Agents, following a mandate from DCoG, will:

- choose to include home visiting, play groups and reading groups in their site plans;
- dedicate resources to these models;
- have the support and resources to implement these models effectively; and
- be enabled by CWP structures and systems.

The DG Murray Trust (DGMT) is currently in a process of engagement with its NGO partners and DCoG officials to explore how best to unlock the full potential of CWP for early learning. Although the partnership is thriving in isolated communities, the CWP is by and large viewed as a straightforward “poverty alleviation programme” – not as a proactive community improvement project.

Moving forward, we must not lose focus of this broader opportunity to shift what “community work” means. Training and follow-up support must not just enable people to “go through the motions”, but must give participants meaning, purpose and useful skills. While CWP participants focus their energy on developing the learning outcomes of children, they must also be empowered, trained and resourced to make a meaningful contribution. If we establish mechanisms for this, CWP4Education could be positioned as a stepping-stone in a wider pathway towards decent work.

### **3 Existing initiatives/experience**

A number of the DGMT’s partners – including SmartStart and Nal’ibali - who operate at scale – have developed early learning programmes that can be run by community members with limited formal education, and in ways that fit well into the part-time nature of CWP work. Recognizing this opportunity, the DGMT has been in a formal partnership with the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) and early learning partners since 2014 to implement CWP4Education. Essentially this is a partnership to leverage the existing public spend on CWP participants to facilitate ECD and early learning interventions.

By the beginning of 2018, 2 863 CWP4Education participants had been trained, and 966 of them remained active - dedicating their time to enriching the lives of children through early learning interventions. Working with early learning focused NGOs - Nal'ibali, Smart Start, Count, and the Zoe Reading Project - participants managed to reach over 18 000 children in the Free State, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

## 4 Benefits

Group	Job creation	Other benefits
CWP participants	Through CWP4Education, participants have the opportunity improve the education outcomes of children. Participants gain experience in facilitating ECD, early literacy or early numeracy interventions.	Participants have the opportunity to become upskilled through training offered by various organisations.
Children		Children are able to experience early learning and stimulation
Parents/care givers		Parents and caregivers in vulnerable communities are able to expose their children to early learning.

## 5 Risks

At this stage, key risks include:

- the need for stronger site level management; and
- CWP4Education participant attrition.

## 6 Risk mitigation

Site Managers are responsible for the functioning of the programme at each site, which each has up to 1 000 workers. As the CWP4Education participants often make up very small numbers at a site level, it can be difficult for site managers to prioritise their needs while still attending to the needs of the majority. Over the next year, we aim to strengthen site level management by:

- investigating was to invest more in CWP4Education participants who are supervisors - through more intensive training, and deeper engagement, so that they are equipped to support CWP participants implementing learning programmes; and
- accessing the technical support budgets to strengthen the management of the CWP4Education programme implementation at sites.

In terms of attrition, one of the contributing factors to the high attrition rate is that CWP4Education participants often take on more demanding and complex work for the same pay when compared to other participants within CWP.

In order to mitigate against this reality, we must build the motivation and sense of purpose and belonging amongst participants. Moreover, this must be supported by positioning CWP4Education as a useful stepping-stone to real opportunities in life beyond the CWP.

Our planned actions to achieve this include:

- developing a CWP4Education brand to build a sense of positive collective identity of CWP4Education participants;
- creating a lifestyle magazine for participants, and the sense of a 'club' for CWP4Education participants; and
- connecting CWP4Education participants broader information and skills development to assist them in a wider career path.