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# Studying the Impact of the Community Work Programme on its Participants

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Matric Geography  
Project 2011

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Megan Cochrane

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Matric Geography Project:  
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## Introduction

### Location:

The Mpumalanga Community Work Programme is located in the Bushbuckridge Local Municipality in northern Mpumalanga. Bushbuckridge is located in northern Mpumalanga, 90 km North of Nelspruit. The approximate population, according to the 2007 Community Survey is 509,970 people in an area of 2,589.56 km<sup>2</sup>.

**Figure 1:** the location of Bushbuckridge in Mpumalanga



Source: Lima Rural Development Foundation Socio-Economic Profile of Bushbuckridge

The ethnicity of Bushbuckridge varies, but the majority of the population is African (Table 1). This could be mainly due to the fact that the area was mainly made up of the Gazankulu and Lebowa homelands pre-1994.

**Table 1:** Population group of Bushbuckridge Local Municipality

Population Group	African(%)	Coloured(%)	Asian(%)	White(%)	Total(%)
	99,7498	0,0016	0.00018	0,00071	100

**Aim:**

The Community Work Programme (CWP) is an initiative of the State President’s office which is designed to create an employment safety net in rural areas. The aim of this investigation is to study whether or not the CWP has made a positive impact on the lives of its participants in social and economic areas. These initiatives are very helpful towards alleviating poverty in South Africa which is why it is important to study whether or not they are actually making the desired difference in peoples’ lives.

**Hypothesis:**

I believe that the CWP will have made a positive impact in most of the lives of its participants because it is a well structured and managed program which enables the local people to gain skills and education which gives them an opportunity to break out of poverty.

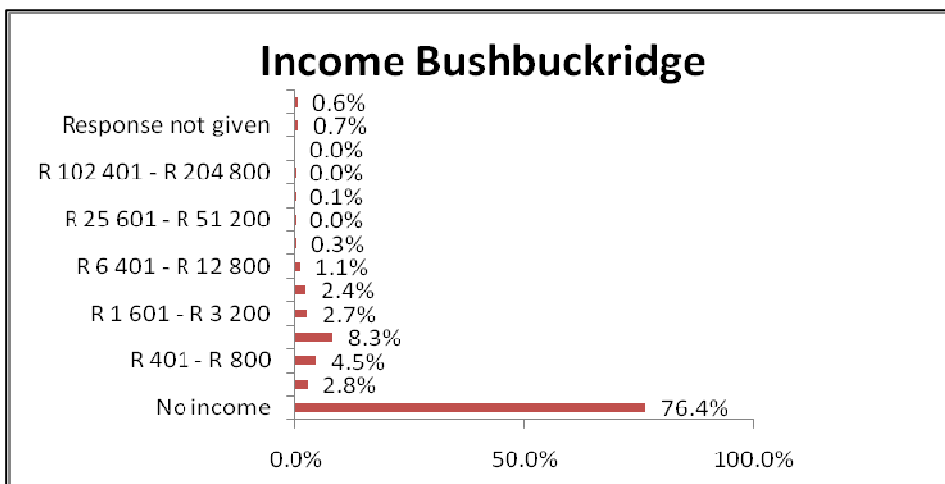
**Secondary Data**

**Programme Background:**

The CWP was started in 2008 in various areas of South Africa but only started in 2009 in Bushbuckridge. It falls under the Department of Cooperative Governance but it is implemented by the Lima Rural Development Foundation a non-governmental organisation operating in KwaZulu Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo. The CWP is structured in 22 of the 135 villages in Bushbuckridge and within each village the project runs its four sectors; agriculture, construction, education and healthcare. There are two groups of participants in each sector and each group Work eight days each month (two four-day weeks) and gets paid a minimum wage of R60 per day (R480 per month). The aim of this project is to equip the communities with skills whilst also building up the communities’ assets through the different sectors. The participants can stay in the program as long as they need to, but they are encouraged to go out and find formal employment or seek further education.

**Bushbuckridge Local Municipality**

Figure 2: Annual income of people aged 15-65 years old in Bushbuckridge

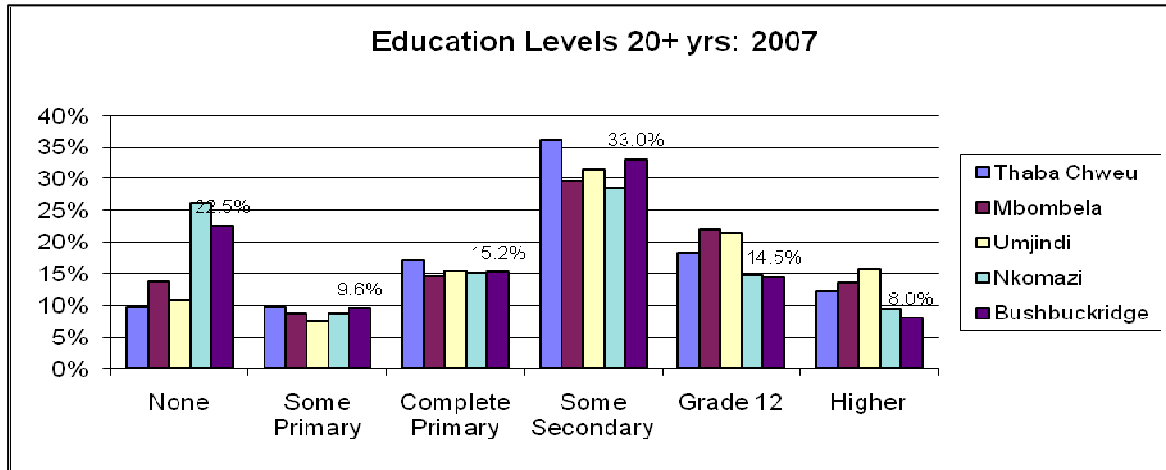


Source: StatsSA Community Survey 2007

It is clear in Figure 2 that the lack of income in Bushbuckridge for those of working age is very high (76.4%) which is why programs such as the Community Work Programme are essential for alleviating poverty while providing dignity, personal development and work experience.

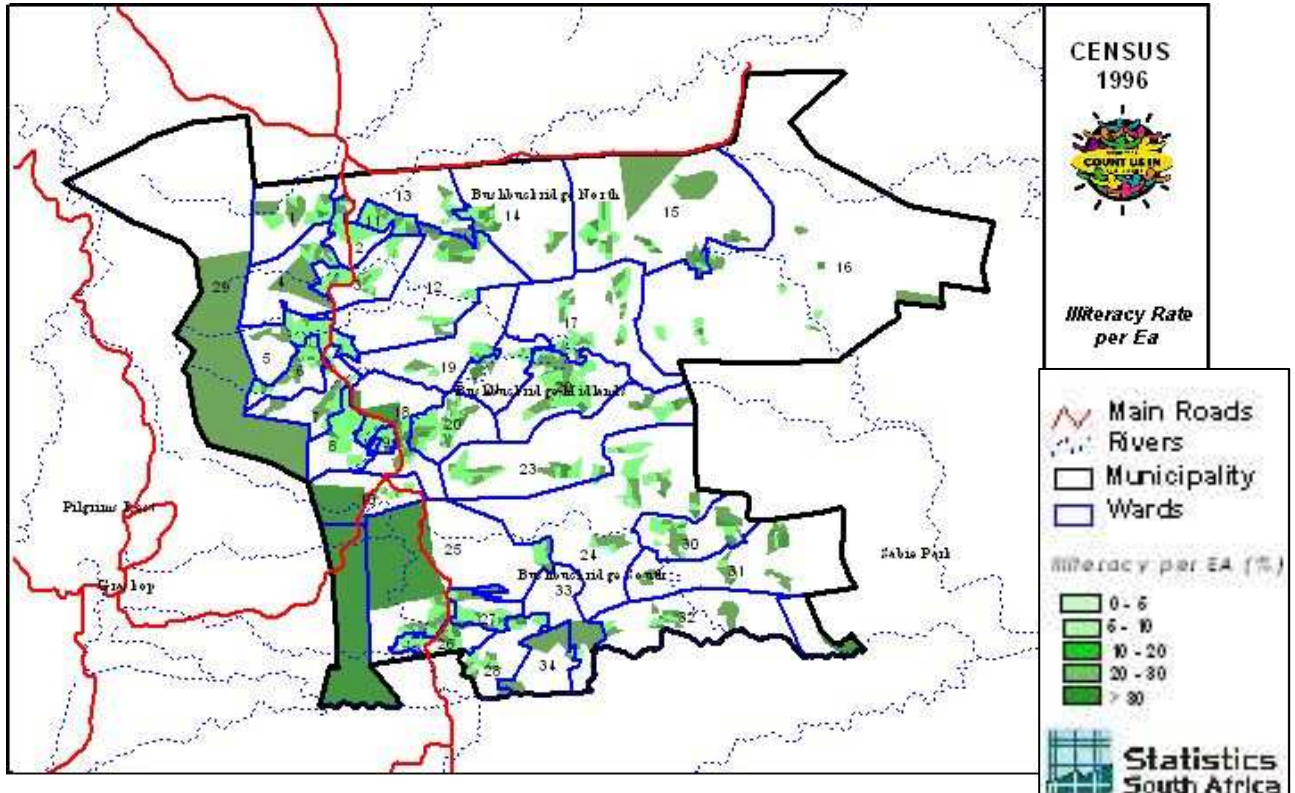
The education sector of the CWP is the focus of this research project because education in Mpumalanga is infamously weak, especially in the rural areas of Bushbuckridge.

**Figure 3** Graph showing the education levels of 20+ year olds in Mpumalanga (exact percentages of Bushbuckridge shown)



Source: Lima Rural Development Foundation Socio-Economic Profile of Bushbuckridge

**Figure 4** Illiteracy rates in the wards of Bushbuckridge



Source: StatsSA

As Figure 3 and Figure 4 show, the education and literacy in Bushbuckridge is especially low which is why the CWP includes the education sector in the program. Unemployed matriculants are appointed



as education assistants to the schools in their area. Currently, 550 education assistants have been allocated to 30 secondary schools, 1 school for disabled, 48 primary schools and 10 crèches (Saaiman, 2011). In Bushbuckridge there are 119 secondary schools with 4 combined schools, 213 primary schools and 2 community libraries. The assistants only do administrative work such as ordering the library, photocopying, coaching extra-mural activities, homework assistance, truancy control and helping teachers to monitor the students as there can be up to 80 students per class. The participants are not allowed to take on any academic tasks; they take administrative burdens off the teachers allowing them to concentrate on academics.

The applicants for the education sector are required to have a Matric Certificate and it would be interesting to see how they respond to the opportunity of work experience and personal development given that they are in the top quarter of qualified people in Bushbuckridge.

*Mathukwane Secondary School, in Zoeknot recorded a 4.5% pass rate, only two of the school's 45 grade 12 learners passing.*

*At Qokiso Secondary School, in Demulani last year only 7 of the school's 182 matric learners passed, 4% pass rate.*

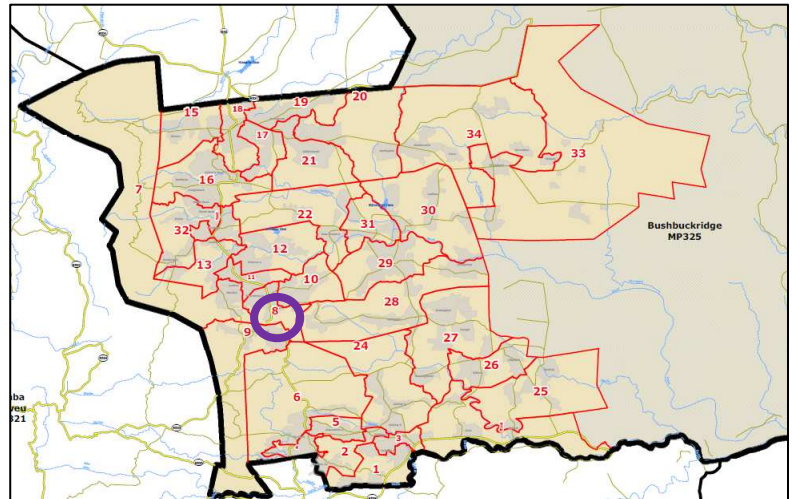
*Source: Times Live Jan 13, 2010*

## Primary Data

### *Data Collection and Recording*

I collected my primary data by creating a questionnaire (Figure 6) which I gave to the two main facilitators of the program who then passed them onto some of the supervisors in the villages and from there they were distributed to the participants. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed so that I would have a very wide representative sample. I could not hand out all of the questionnaires personally to the participants because they are spread over such a large area

(see Figure 5) that it was much less time-consuming and more effective to give them to the supervisors who would see the participants every day. I decided to survey a random sample of 100 participants because there is a total of 550 of them in the education sector so I thought that this would be a good sample size to give me reliable and valid results. I also interviewed two supervisors, a field clerk and the senior facilitator to give me additional, qualitative information on the CWP.



**Figure 5** Map of the wards in Bushbuckridge. (Bushbuckridge CWP Head Office circled) *Source: Bushbuckridge Local Municipality*

**Figure 6:** Example of the final questionnaire

#### 1. Gender:

- Male                       Female

**2. How long have you been in the Community Works Program?**

Start date:	<i>Example:      January 2010</i>
-------------	-----------------------------------

**3. Highest qualification and year obtained**

Grade/Qualification:	Year obtained:
----------------------	----------------

**4. Do you have any other form of employment *while* working in the Community Works Program?**

- Yes                       No

**5. Did you have any form of stable income *before* becoming part of the Community Works Program?**

- Yes                       No

**5.1 What did this income come from?**

- Formal Employment                       Government Grant

**6. In which sector do you wish to pursue a career in (cross boxes)?**

- Education                       Agriculture                       Construction/Engineering
- Medicine                       Commerce                       Government
- Tourism                       Information Technology
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Which of the following skills would you like to learn through the Community Works Program?**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Life Skills</b>                            | <b>Formal Training:</b>                      | <b>Informal Training:</b>                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Development | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid           | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS Prevention  | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Skills     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentorship Training     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Career Guidance      | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management |  |

**8. Has your experience at the Community Works Program given you confidence to find permanent employment elsewhere?**

- Yes                       No

**9. Has the stable income from the Community Works Programs helped you to improve your living standards?**

- Yes                       No

**10. Why did you join the Community Works Program?**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire, it is much appreciated.

## ***Qualitative data***

### **Community Work Programme Interview: Dumisani Mdluli**

**1. What is your role in the Community Work Programme (CWP)?**

I am a facilitator so I oversee the four sectors (agriculture, health, construction and education) in 13 sites in Bushbuckridge.

**2. In your opinion, have the schools that the CWP Work into improved? In what ways?**

Yes definitely, there is now less stress for the teachers and therefore many of the schools have improved their results. We have found that many of the school also want more assistants. The education sector of the CWP is very effective because it offloads work from the teachers so that they can focus on their teaching. The educational assistants also help the teachers to control the students because there can be 86 students per class which is difficult to handle for one teacher.

**3. Have you seen an improvement in the community that the CWP Work into? In what ways?**

There used to be many young people that would wander around the area without jobs or any focus. Now that some of them are involved in the Community Work Programme it has provided them with employment and some focus in their lives.

**4. Have you seen the experience in the CWP impact individuals' lives?**

Yes definitely, the participants start getting better jobs because they gain confidence with their skill development. Some even get jobs in rural development or become supervisors in the CWP. The participants learn computer and admin skills which help them to find better employment elsewhere. The program also gives them a small salary which helps them to better their living standards better their living standards. Even though it is a small amount, it is much better than nothing.

**5. Do you enjoy working in the CWP?**

Yes, I am representing the poor, the voiceless. This is God's work and I am serving with a clear conscience, touching peoples' lives.



## Community Work Programme Interview: Ntsoake Chuene

**1. What is your role in the CWP?**

I am a field clerk and the agricultural supervisor for the food gardens at Hosanna Christian Fellowship.

**2. Do you notice a difference in the participants when they complete their CWP experience compared to when they join?**

Yes, when they start they can only do tasks such as cleaning because they do not have many skills but then they get taught computer and administration skills. They come from backgrounds of poverty and a low standard of education, but through this program they receive money which they can use to improve their education or just to put food on their tables.

**3. Do you notice a difference in the schools due to the CWP?**

Yes of course, the teachers are much less stressed because they are relieved of their small duties such as administration and supervising extra-mural activities. This focus from the teachers allows them to teach better and the CWP participants help them by making sure the students are working and listening properly.

**4. What exactly do the educational assistants do in the schools?**

The assistants mainly help with administrative duties such as organising the library, photocopying papers for the teachers and supervising extra-mural activities. The assistants are not at all involved with the academic side of the schools; they do not do any teaching or marking of papers.

**5. How else is the CWP involved in the schools?**

Besides the educational assistants helping the teachers, the agricultural teams in the CWP make food gardens at some of the schools which the educational assistants then use to help make food for the feeding schemes at the schools on certain days of the week. The construction teams also help out at the schools by repairing structures. For example one of the schools did not have a floor in one of the classrooms so the construction team built a cement floor in there.

**6. What do you think of the CWP?**

I think that it is a very good program because it provides opportunities for underprivileged people and it gives them confidence to find good jobs and make better lives for themselves. It is very fulfilling for some of the participants and they are very willing to help. For example, at Tembahosi, a school for disabled children, the assistants are being taught sign language so that they can communicate with the deaf children.

## Community Work Programme Interview: Johan

**1. What is your role in the CWP?**

I am a supervisor and clerk for the Mkhulu Tulani region.

**2. How many schools do you supervise in the region?**

Two; Tulani Primary school and Makosana High School. The primary school has eight CWP assistants and the High school has ten CWP assistants.

**3. Do you think the CWP makes a difference in the schools?**

Absolutely, the assistants help with the admin which gives the teachers more time to focus. Some of the assistants in the primary school do give practical lessons such as helping them to read but they do not get involved in any academic activities in the high schools. The assistants mainly help with extra-mural activities in the high schools because the teachers do not have time for the activities.

**4. How does this program help its participants?**

It encourages them to use their skills and to get good jobs. It also gives them opportunities to learn computer literacy and admin skills. The financial part of the program is not as strong but it is still better than nothing and they get experience so that they can find permanent jobs. Some of the participants become clerks in the program, one person even got a job doing admin for a bus company.

**5. Have there been any problems in the program?**

Not really, but some schools have closed down in the past which meant that the participants had to move to another sector in the CWP. There have also been small communication problems with people in the steering committees disagreeing with each other, but there have been no major problems.

**6. Have there been problems where the participants don't want to leave the CWP to find better jobs?**

No because we always tell them that this program is not a job, it is a stepping stone to finding a stable job. It provides opportunities for the participants to build skills and work experience so that they are more prepared and confident to find better jobs.

**7. How has the CWP helped your life?**

It has challenged me and helped me to grow. I have learnt level 1 first aid and food garden skills. I would like to learn more first aid because I want to become a paramedic one day.

**8. How did you become part of the CWP?**

I had many jobs before this one. First I was an operator at Multinet Products and I then worked for a man that hired out tents in Johannesburg but it was very hard to be so far away from my family so I quit. Then I got a job at a mine in Middleburg but I got retrenched. Then I came back to Bushbuckridge to live with my family again and I did not have a job for one year. Then I heard about the CWP that had just started and I applied to participate but I did not get in the first time and the second time I did. I started as a participant in the construction sector and then became a supervisor in the agriculture sector and then moved to the education sector and became a supervisor and clerk.

## Community Work Programme Interview: Joseph

### 1. What is your role in the CWP?

I am the education supervisor in Cork Village.

### 2. How many schools are there in the village?

There is Mvuyazi Primary School which has 1337 students, Mkhumbeni Primary School with 688 students and Dumisani High School with 1242 students.

### 3. How did you get involved in the CWP?

When it started in 2009 I applied and I was appointed as a supervisor based on my CV.

### 4. Do you think the schools appreciate the CWP participants' help?

Yes definitely, the teachers have a lighter load and there is less stress for them. Some of the principals have sent letters to us to tell us how much they appreciate our work in the schools.

### 5. Do you think the participants benefit from the CWP experience?

Yes they enjoy the work and they get taught office skills which they can use in other jobs. They also appreciate the small salary that they get because it is better than nothing. The participants usually get taught how to photocopy and how to use computers by the senior teachers in the schools.

### 6. How have you benefited from the CWP?

I enjoy helping the people around me, my community. It has given me good experience and the money helps me to put food on the table because before I worked for the CWP I relied on grant money. I think it is better to have money that you work for.

### 7. Do you have a problem with participants who do not want to leave the program to find better jobs?

Not really because we tell them that this is not a permanent job, it is to help them with a small salary and work experience. There are many people that want to get involved in the CWP; there is a long waiting list!

### 8. Do you think the program is more effective in Primary or Secondary schools?

I think they both work well but there are more jobs for the participants to do in the secondary schools such as distributing papers in classes, typing out the teachers' notes and photocopying etc.

### 9. Do you think there are any problems or challenges in the program?

Not many, but the participants would like to get a slightly larger salary and there have been requests for uniforms for the assistants.



**Figure 10** Ntsoake Chuene, Field Clerk and Dumisani Mdluli, Senior Facilitator.



**Figure 10** Students singing the national anthem at a primary school in Bushbuckridge.



**Figure 10** Ntsoake and Dumisani at Tembahosi, school for the disabled.



**Figure 10** Education Participants helping with the feeding scheme at a local school.

From my questionnaire (sample Appendix A) I made a data table (example Table 2 below) in Microsoft Excel, which I could then filter and graph. The data table is useful to look up specific details of the survey quickly to find correlations.

**Table 2: Section of Data table from questionnaire**

No	Gender	Start	Grade	Grade year	Current income	Previous income	Income source	Career	Skills	Job confidence	Improved living
1	Male	Nov-09	12	2007	no	no		Commerce	Business Management	yes	yes
2	Female	Nov-09	12	2008	no	no		Medicine	HIV/AIDS Prevention	yes	yes
3	Female	Nov-09	12	2007	no	no		Medicine	HIV/AIDS Prevention	yes	yes
4	Female	Nov-09	12	2003	no	no		Medicine	HIV/AIDS Prevention	yes	yes
5	Male	Nov-09	12	2007	no	no		Government	Computer Skills	yes	yes
6	Male	Nov-09	12	2007	no	no		Information Technology	Computer Skills	yes	yes
7	Female	Nov-09	12	2006	no	no		Medicine	HIV/AIDS Prevention	yes	yes
8	Female	Nov-09	12	2000	no	yes	grant	Education	Administrative Training	yes	yes
9	Female	Nov-09	12	2001	no	yes	grant	Education	Computer Skills	yes	yes
10	Female	Nov-09	12	2001	no	yes	grant	Government	Computer Skills	yes	yes

**Figure 11. Pivot table for Career Choice by Gender**

I then utilised pivot tables to better analyse the data from the table and construct graphs which makes the data easier to present and compare. The example to the right is the pivot table used for the graph of Career Choice by Gender.

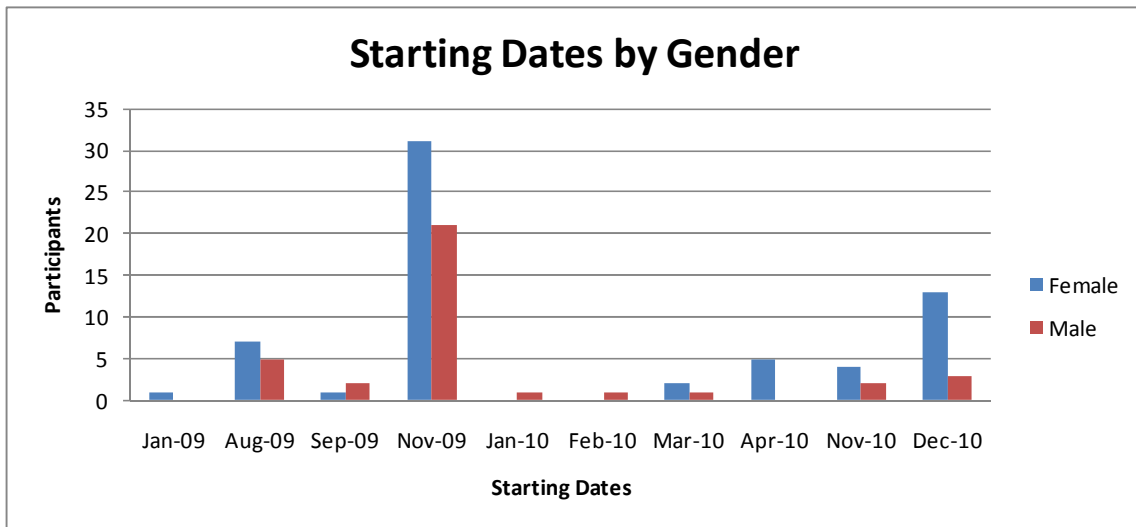
Count of Career	Gender	
Career	Female	Male
IT	0%	6%
Commerce	2%	6%
Const/Eng	3%	8%
Agriculture	6%	11%
Government	11%	28%
Tourism	6%	3%
Medicine	19%	8%

**Data Presentation**

**Start date by gender**

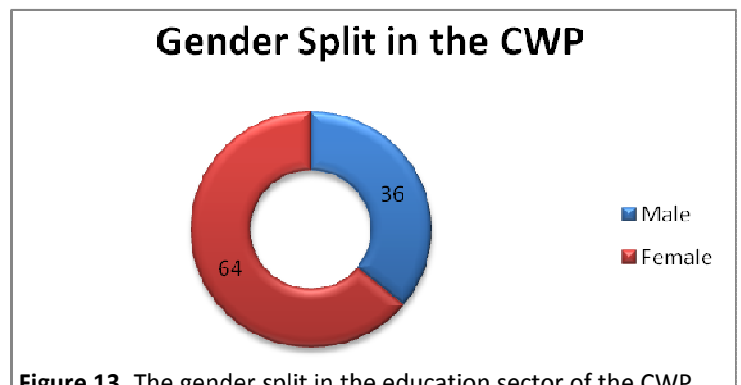
Figure 12 shows the trends in the influx of new participants by gender. It is very clear that in November 2009 there was an extremely high influx of participants, especially of females. This could be because the CWP had only started in 2009 and it only started becoming well-known towards the end of the year as its successes could be seen by those in the communities. The number of new participants seems to increase towards the end of each year. This could be due to people getting laid off from their jobs during the year or inflation rates due to the recession, causing them to need more income or that additional budget became available on the programme to employ more people.

**Figure 12.** Different start dates by gender of participants.



**Gender of participants**

There is a clear dominance of females in the education sector of the CWP as seen in Figure 12 and also in Figure 13. The majority of the participants may be female due to the fact that many women rather rely on child-support grants whilst the men predominantly go elsewhere to find formal employment so there is a small amount of men in the program. This inequality could also be due to the fact that it is the education sector. There

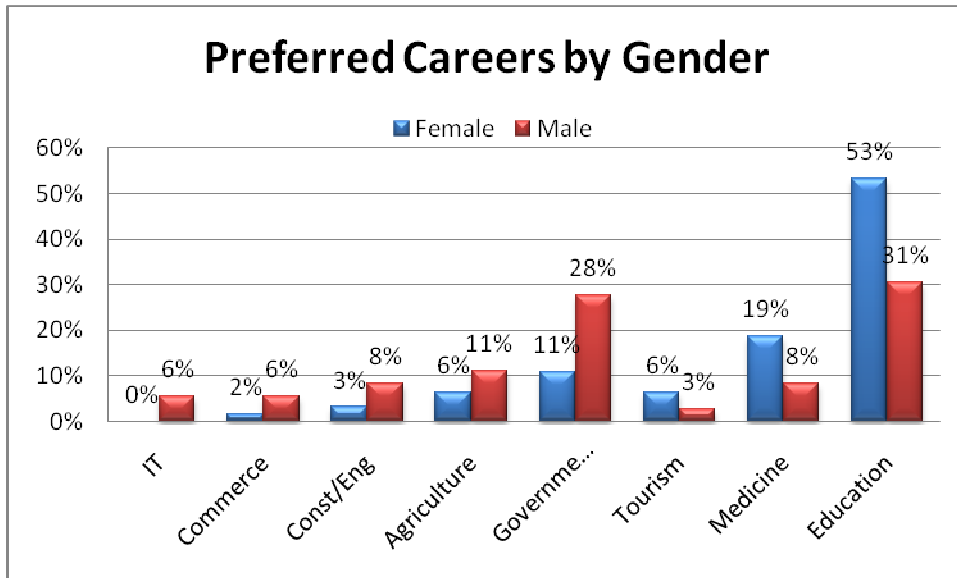


**Figure 13.** The gender split in the education sector of the CWP

may be more men in the sectors such as construction or agriculture. It is clear that many of the women want to actually pursue careers in education (see Figure 14).

### Preferred career by gender

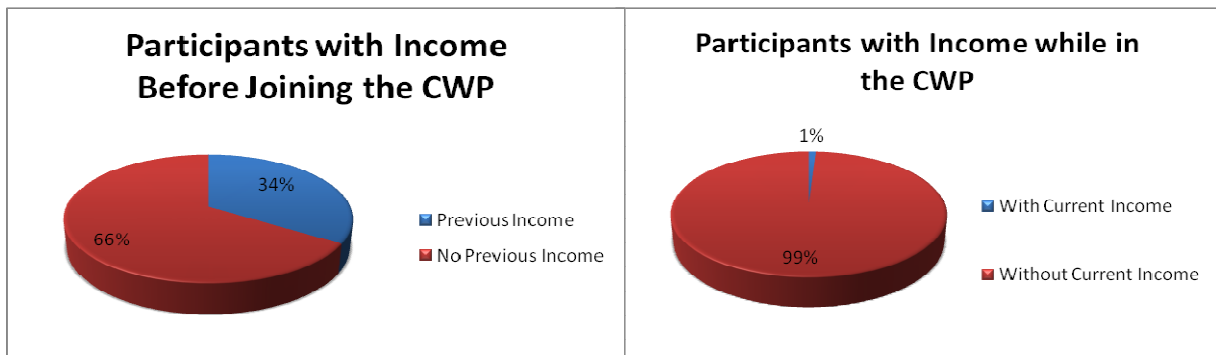
Figure 14 Graph showing the differences between Gender in the preferred career sectors



The most desired career of the participants in the education sector, especially the women, is education. This is very good because it shows that the participants are enthusiastic and inspired by the work they do and are encouraged to pursue careers where they are definitely needed in the community. Even though the number of males that want to pursue careers in education is much lower than the females, it is still the most desired career among them. The career sector after education that is most desired by females is medicine and many of the comments made by the respondents express a desire to help their community and alleviate sickness. Second most desired career sector among male respondents is government and comments here show a desire to change the circumstances of their communities: *“To serve the community with whatever they need in order to cope with the problems they encounter in life”*.

### Previous and current alternative income of participants

Figure 15 Percentages of participants with previous income and current alternative income.





Due to the fact that the CWP is not meant to be a replacement for formal employment, it is interesting to see how many of the participants have alternative sources of income whilst in the program compared to how many had an income before joining the CWP. This does not mean that the participants quit their formal employment once they joined the CWP, but the majority of this former income was from government grants (Figure 17). Only one percent of the participants have an income whilst working in the CWP which is not good as the participants are encouraged to find other employment as well. It shows that the dependency on the salary from the CWP is high and the participants need to find more formal employment in order to earn a higher income and thus be able to better their living standards.

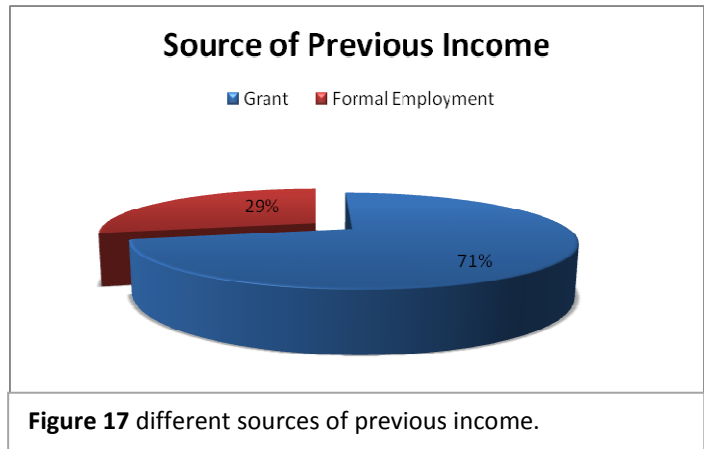


Figure 17 different sources of previous income.

### Impact on Job Confidence

The ability of the participants to find alternative formal employment is partly owing to their confidence to find other employment. They can gain this confidence through their experience and skills gained in the CWP. It is shown in Figure 16 that 94% of the participants felt that the CWP did help them to gain confidence to find formal employment which shows that there was definitely an impact on the personal development of the participants. Of the 6% that have not gained confidence, only 50% of them had a previous income, all of which came from government grants. Interestingly, the 6% that did not feel they had gained confidence said that the CWP had helped them to improve their living standards. This shows that even though they may not have been impacted through personal development, they were in fact, impacted financially.

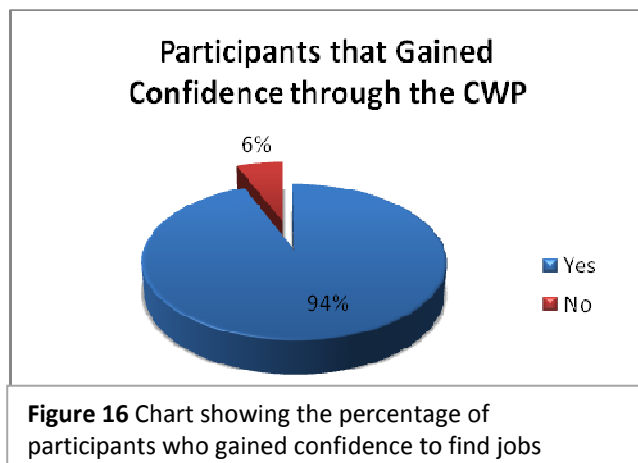
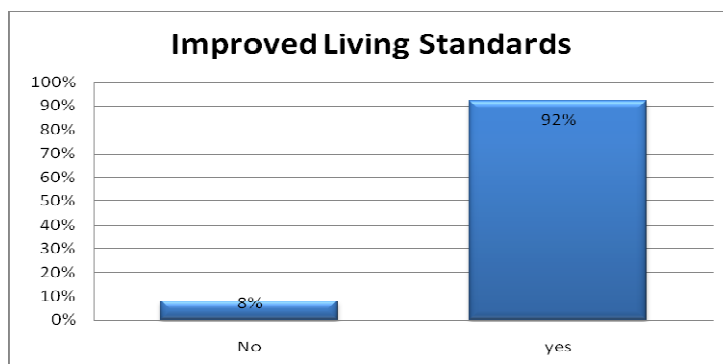


Figure 16 Chart showing the percentage of participants who gained confidence to find jobs

### Impact on Living Standard

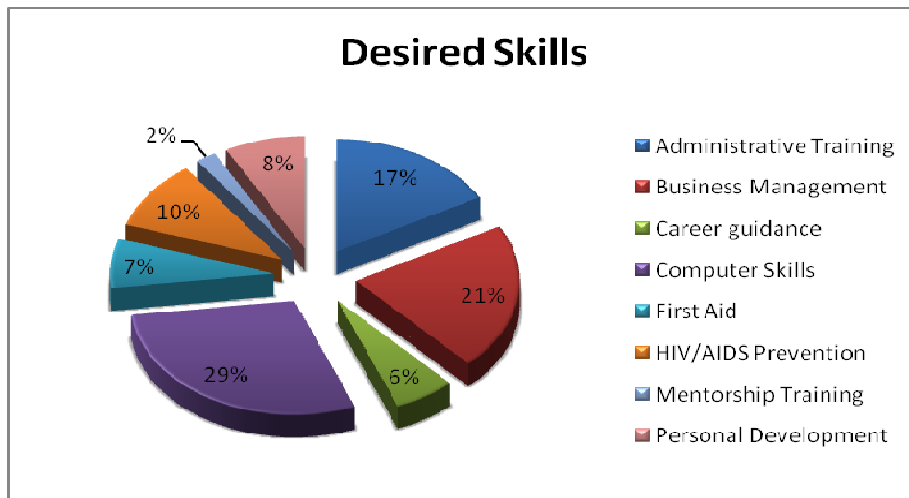
Figure 18 Participants who felt that the CWP income has helped them to improve their living standards



Similarly to Figure 16, Figure 18 shows that the vast majority of the participants felt that the stable income from the program has helped them to improve their living standards. It is clear that 92% of the participants were impacted financially. Furthermore, 93% of them received confidence through their experience in the CWP which shows that 86% of the participants were impacted both financially and in personal development. Interestingly, the 8% that did not benefit financially all benefitted through the CWP experience and therefore were impacted through personal development.

### Desired Skills by Participants

Figure 19 Skills that the participants would like to gain through the CWP



Skill development is an important part of the CWP and it is instrumental in being able to find formal employment. The most popular desired proficiency among respondents were computer skills (29%). Computer skills are fundamental in society this century so it is important for the participants to become computer literate as it opens many opportunities for future employment and self employment. The next major desired skill is business management. Training in this area can be very useful in a community such as Bushbuckridge to build strong and well-run businesses in order to develop the community.

## ***Comments from respondents***

**Figure 20** Reasons from some participants for why they joined the CWP

“To gain knowledge and skills, and to improve my standard of living”

- *Mashego Dineo*

“I joined the CWP to improve my living standards in my family. It helps me to let my dreams come true.”

- *Monyane Elvis Vicious*

“I joined CWP because I want to help teachers and learners to improve their results at the end of the year.”

- *Japhtah Goodman Monareng*

“To serve the community with whatever they need in order to cope with their problems in life.”

- *Phanias Elija Maladji*

“To improve my living standard and get experience so that I am able to find good/proper employment.”

- *Sekatane Thato*

“Because they help us and I was always staying at home but I’m proud of my work and I’m so happy.”

- *Anonymous*

“To help our nation because people are dying without knowledge and to prevent corruption in our community.”

- *Anonymous*

“I joined the CWP because I love to help children and to work as a teacher! It helps to know how I can teach children.”

- *Anonymous*

“To help people to be civilized, fight poverty and creating jobs for people to fight poverty. This knowledge will heal the nations.”

- *Anonymous*

“I had no job and because of poverty. I have been struggling for the past four years until I joined the CWP.”

- *Anonymous*

“To improve life for people in the community and fight poverty. With this knowledge I will create jobs for people across the world and fight crime.”

- *Anonymous*

“Because I need to help the community”

- *Anonymous*

This qualitative data shows the true opinions of the some of the participants about the CWP and their reasons for joining it. It illustrates how many of them are community oriented and they want to build up their community and those around them instead of it all being for personal benefit.

## **Conclusion and Evaluation:**

From the data collected, it is clear that the hypothesis was correct in assuming that the Community Work Programme has made a positive impact on the lives of its participants in areas such as personal development, finances and work experience. This program is noticeably making a difference in the community of Bushbuckridge by building up its social, physical, human and financial assets through skill development and work experience. The opinions of the participants on the CWP are positive and appreciative and it is clear that most of them understand the value in their skill development and ability to help others in the community in order to help alleviate poverty. Overall the CWP has produced very successful results in Bushbuckridge and is thus instrumental in the fight against poverty by providing the community with opportunities to learn and grow.

There were some limitations in my techniques such as I was not able to go out and deliver the questionnaire myself due to the large sample size and the area it was spread out over. I think that it would have been better for me to distribute them personally so that I could meet some of the participants and ask them different questions which could have contributed more to my qualitative data. There were some improvements I could have made to the questionnaire itself such as a space for names and for ages. The names would have helped the qualitative data to be more personal and the ages could have been useful in my quantitative data to show samples of age range and the numbers of working age people who have never had former employment.

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## APPENDIX: Questionnaire Example

SEKATANE THATO

### Community Works Program Questionnaire

This is a short questionnaire to study the impact of the Community Works Program on its participants.

1. Gender:

- Male  Female

2. How long have you been in the Community Works Program?

Start date: FEBRUARY 2010 Example: January 2010

3. Highest qualification and year obtained

Grade/Qualification: MATRIC	Year obtained: 2008
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4. Do you have any other form of employment *while* working in the Community Works Program?

- Yes  No

5. Did you have any form of stable income *before* becoming part of the Community Works Program?

- Yes  No

5.1 What did this income come from?

- Formal Employment  Government Grant

6. In which sector do you wish to pursue a career in (cross boxes)?

- Education  Agriculture  Construction/Engineering  
 Medicine  Commerce  Government  
 Tourism  Information Technology  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Which of the following skills would you like to learn through the Community Works Program?

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Life Skills</b>                                  | <b>Formal Training:</b>                      | <b>Informal Training:</b>                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal Development       | <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid           | <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> HIV/AIDS Prevention        | <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Skills     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentorship Training     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Career Guidance | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Management |  |

8. Has your experience at the Community Works Program given you confidence to find permanent employment elsewhere?

- Yes  No

9. Has the stable income from the Community Works Programs helped you to improve your living standards?

- Yes  No

10. Why did you join the Community Works Program?

TO IMPROVE MY LIVING STANDARD AND GET EXPERIENCE SO THAT I CAN ABLE TO FIND GOOD PROPER EMPLOYMENT.

Thank You for taking your time to complete this questionnaire, it is much appreciated.