

**Towards a Basic Package of Support for Youth in South Africa**  
**Results of two consultation rounds organised with youth**  
**in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces**

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August 2019



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IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

## About this report

This report is one in a series of reports and working papers by the project “Towards a Basic Package of Support for Young People who are not Employed, in Education or Training (NEET) in South Africa”. The BPS project, which commenced in November 2018 and runs until March 2020, explores the feasibility and design of a South African intervention to provide more comprehensive support to young people, aged 15 – 24 years, who are NEET.

Based on research and consultations, the project has put forward a detailed proposal for a programmatic intervention that can provide well-targeted, individualised and long-term support to young people in South Africa, while building a local community of practice to support both young people and the services and opportunities that exist for them. The proposal carefully sets out the various building blocks of such an intervention, founded in a review of best practices. It concludes with a proposal for a pilot that can be implemented at the local level across different South African municipalities. It also proposes an approach to develop an overarching, national institutional framework that can both ensure sufficient resource allocation and safeguard the quality, integrity and coherence of the intervention when rolled out at scale.

The project builds on earlier work, led by the Poverty & Inequality Initiative and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU), both at the University of Cape Town, in partnership with a coalition of partners in government, academia and civil society, to conceptualise a more comprehensive approach to support South Africa’s youth.

The 2018 – 2020 phase is led by SALDRU and conducted in partnership with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) Africa; the Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA), University of Johannesburg; DG Murray Trust; and The Jobs Fund. The work was funded and provided with technical support by the Capacity Building Programme for Employment Promotion (CBPEP), funded by the European Union and based in the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) in the National Treasury.

### **Suggested citation:**

Breakey, J. & De Lannoy, A. (2019) *Towards a Basic Package of Support for Youth in South Africa. Results of two consultation rounds organised with youth in the Western Cape and Gauteng*. Cape Town: Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

This study is co-funded by the European Union under the Capacity Building Programme for Employment Promotion based in the National Treasury’s Government Technical Advisory Centre. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Jessica Breakey and Ariane De Lannoy and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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# Introduction and Background

## Youth Consultation Workshops

As part of the SALDRU-led research consortium to design a Basic Package of Support for young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), SALDRU partnered with youth leadership organisation, ACTIVATE! In June 2019, to run a series of workshops aimed at gaining deeper insight into the challenges faced by young people in South Africa, their needs and their everyday experiences. The workshop approach was designed and implemented by the SALDRU and CSDA research teams in collaboration with facilitators from Activate! The main aim of the workshops was to discuss how young people from various urban and rural communities across South Africa view their own lives and the challenges they face, as well as what support they feel they need to overcome these challenges.

### Workshop format

The workshop started with ice breaker exercises meant to get to know the participants a little better, followed by two larger activities.

In the first activity of the workshop, young people were encouraged to reflect on the main issues affecting youth in their community, focusing specifically on the young people who are not in education, training, or employment. This session required each participant to draw what they believed to be the five main issues affecting their community on a piece of coloured card. The participants were encouraged to come forward individually and give a brief description of each issue and identify broader connecting themes. Through a process of feedback and discussion, the hope was that by the end of the activity we would be able to identify some of the most common issues affecting the communities represented in the workshop as well as to allow for further probing into what systems of support for young people would look like.

The second activity of the workshop was based on the Circles of Support image that was developed as part of the youth focused work for the 2015 South African Child Gauge. The facilitators divided the consultation venue into five separately labelled spaces;

1. Parents, peers and mentors
2. Social workers, youth workers and psychologists
3. School, teachers and religious leaders
4. Non-Governmental organisations
5. Government

We then asked participants to stand in the circle they believed they received the most support from. After facilitating discussion and feedback on where they chose to stand, we asked participants to stand in the area they believed they received the least support. From this activity we hoped to gain a better understanding of the areas where most young people felt supported and what their recommendations were for the failing circles of support to do better in their provision of support to young people in their community.

Broad discussions emerged throughout the workshop.

This report first presents the findings of the two main activities and then pulls together some of the key elements that emerged during both the icebreaker and broader discussion moments. It concludes with a short section on the implications of these findings on the design of the BPS intervention design.

The first workshop, held at the Isivivana Centre in Khayelitsha in mid-June, gathered 25 young people – 11 women and 14 men – who were from both rural and urban areas, ranging from Gugulethu to Beaufort West. The second workshop, held at the Tshimologong Precinct in Johannesburg on 21 June, engaged with 23 young people, 10 men and 13 women, also from both a rural and urban setting in Gauteng province. In both workshops the majority of young people present told us they were currently unemployed.

## Participants

Participants in the Western Cape were from the following communities:

- Khayelitsha
- Gugulethu
- Kenilworth
- Mitchells Plain
- Belhar
- Beaufort West

The second workshop in Johannesburg was attended by young people from the following communities:

- Soweto
- Tembisa
- Maboneng
- Daveyton
- Pretoria
- Eldoradopark
- Katlehong
- Alexander
- Bez Valley
- Braamfontein

## Activity 1: Mapping your community: biggest issues affecting youth

The facilitators drew a large outline of South Africa on a board in the front of the room and provided each participant with 5 different coloured cards. Participants were asked to write down what they believed to be the five biggest issues affecting young people in their community, one issue per card. The facilitator would then call on participants to bring forward one issue at a time with an explanation; those that believed they had written down a similar or relating issue would be asked to come up and stick their card alongside. Through a process of feedback and discussion the facilitators hoped to be able to identify some of the most common issues affecting youth in all the communities.

### 1. Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment was the single biggest issue identified by almost every participant in both the Gauteng and Western Cape workshops. Participants expressed that most young people do not feel supported at home or in schools to help them deal with the issue. When asked what kind of support they believe is missing from these spaces, a participant went on to explain that

“we get no guidance from our parents or our teachers, they don’t understand what is going on and so we don’t understand what is going on. The youth do not know how to access any of these opportunities you always talk about”.

The facilitators probed further into what participants imagined the support they said they needed to overcome unemployment might look like and again the focus moved back to the lack of support received at home and in school, most specifically the inability of those in these spaces to help people make key decisions about their lives. There was a sense from both groups of participants that young people are on their own when it comes to “figuring our lives out”. Participants said they needed to feel encouraged by their family and the people they live with at home, they needed to be pushed and encouraged to go out and get a job but they also want to feel supported and not judged when they cannot find one. The expectation of “career guidance” seemed to fall on the shoulders of both these young people’s home and school environments. At the Western Cape workshop many of the participants from Beaufort West said they wished that their schools focused more on soft skills and facilitated holistic growth, explaining how education is more than just learning subjects; they spoke about needing to have:

“mental growth, we need to know how to survive and live after school, how to get a job and how to apply with a CV and writing skills and also to start our own businesses if there are no jobs”.

The absence of guidance and support was also seen as the main reason as to why young people drop out before completing matric, with participants saying they get very little guidance on the skills and requirements necessary to find a job and they feel “lost and confused”. In addition, participants in the Western Cape discussed the “red tape” that created barriers to employment for young people:

“entry requirements to employment and training opportunities are too high, how can we need a degree to even apply?”

They also insisted that the expectations of skills by employers are too high and not accessible based on the level of education, experience and access to internships, Learnerships and entry level employment.

The Western Cape participants in particular said that SETAs and Learnerships were not the answer to youth unemployment. A young woman said that she “would never recommend a government internship to anyone, you just sit at home, you do not get experience or work”. Another participant told the story about how he and his friend both received the same Learnership and how they both sat at home doing nothing but that his friend got paid more than him every month, both payments were not the agreed upon stipends but “random amounts of money”. Participants also criticised the idea of “4 month work opportunities”, which gets them into debt because they have to pay for their own transport the first month before they even get a salary and then they can never earn enough to get out of debt.

## 2. Mental Health

In the Western Cape the conversation on mental health was ignited through a conversation on substance abuse and crime. Both of these issues were identified by many participants in the community mapping activity. Substance abuse and crime were seen as an outlet for young people who are experiencing high levels of stress, confusion and anger:

“youth unemployment is the mother of drugs and alcohol, there is nothing to rely on, young people want to forget their realities and drugs make them feel powerful”.

Participants from both provinces agreed that substance abuse was a way for young people to deal with their mental health challenges, a “dark place” when mental health is not supported.

Young people from both rural and urban areas in both the Western Cape and Gauteng also shared the sentiment that mental health issues remain stigmatised in their communities with one participant explaining how he has always been told “depression is not for black society, it is for white people”. The group agreed that this is a commonly held view among black communities and families, that not much awareness or understanding of mental health exists and that those who battle with mental health issues experience huge amounts of embarrassment, shame and isolation.

Participants in Gauteng spoke about how they saw mental health as the basis for everything: there was a clear acknowledgement of the importance of mental well-being and of the impacts of mental ill health, but older generations were described as not acknowledging this or taking it seriously - the older generation’s mentality that, “you are crazy, why do you need a psychologist?” was expressed by a young person in the Gauteng workshop.

In the Western Cape workshop a young woman, who was employed, spoke about how her poor working conditions also contribute towards her depression:

“guys, I don’t mean to sound privileged but having a job is not everything, these jobs are killing us, we still don’t have money”.

This participant in particular openly discussed her battle with depression, “getting access to support for my depression is a privilege I do not have, I just have my friends”. She shared how she cannot stand in the long queues at the clinics while she is in physical pain and a poor mental state and even if she does eventually make it to the front of the queue, there is a huge stigma attached to going to clinics in her community because “everyone knows everyone and the people in the clinics know us” and “when we do speak to a nurse at a clinic they tell us ‘we are dramatic and that everyone has problems’”. The youth present explained how strength in their families was seen as holding your

emotions in and carrying your problems by yourself. They insisted they did not feel comfortable reaching out for mental health support.

Other than turning to their friends and churches, many of the young people in Gauteng spoke about turning to social media support groups when they needed to talk to someone. They felt they were not judged or shamed in these online spaces and were able to be honest when reflecting on their problems. This was not mentioned at all in the Western Cape workshop or by those from more rural communities in Gauteng.

When probed on how we can overcome the stigma attached to mental health in their communities young people in Gauteng specifically spoke about how mental health needs to be “generalised and normalised” in their families and schools. One participant said that it will be important to define what mental health is and why people go to a psychologist and seek support. But the young people also spoke about they must feel like they can trust social workers:

“we will only trust them if they are trained on how to connect with young people because right now they do not even listen to us, they just tell us what to do”.

Participants in Gauteng emphasised the importance of those working in the BPS Hub to not only have the appropriate level of qualification but also the importance of relatability (comfortability). Whilst the participants were aware that older, skilled staff were important because of their level of experience they felt that younger staff would be easier to relate to since they know the challenges youth face and are aware of the appropriate ways to engage with them.

## Activity 2: Circles of Support

During the workshop facilitators carried out an activity around existing “circles of support” that young people use in their everyday life. This activity hoped to gain a deeper insight into where young people already receive support and what areas of support are lacking in their everyday lives. Facilitators divided the room into the following sections:

- Government
- Schools, teachers and religious leaders
- NGOs
- Parents, peers and mentors
- Social Workers, Youth and Child Care Workers and Psychologists

The Facilitators then asked the young people to go and stand in the section of the room where they felt they received the most support in their lives. In the Western Cape, few people said they felt supported by government and NGOs. Throughout the workshops NGOs and NPOs were criticized for having “dodgy agenda’s” with participants saying that funders dictate the work of NGOs and they see NGO work becoming more about guaranteeing funding and less about helping the community. However, in the Gauteng workshop, three participants did identify the NGO sector as being an incredibly important part of their support structure; they viewed NGOs as supportive, accessible and non-judgmental. One participant in particular spoke of an experience of support stating “NGOs have already talked the talk and walked the walk” when it comes to engaging and understanding the experiences of youth. Where the government was seen by most as detached from young people, there was a sense of agreement in Gauteng that NGOs had a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by young people and were doing the necessary work on the ground to offer different types of support.

The majority of the Gauteng participants identified Family and Friends as being their main circle of support but quickly made it clear they were standing there because they receive support from their friends and not their families. Family structures were described as “unknowing and judgmental”. A female participant from Bez Valley explained

“we cannot trust our families. They don’t understand what it is like to be young now and they judge us all the time. We can only trust our friends, they understand what we are going through and they don’t judge”

The idea of being judged was also something that participants connected to religious leaders - only two participants identified a religious leader as a main source of support for them, while most felt they could not turn to the church for support. In addition, there was a sense that young people do not feel supported by their schools as a structure but that they do receive support from individual teachers. Participants believed that the education system was failing young people in South Africa but a few of them said they had received meaningful support and guidance from a teacher. One participant did identify the government as being the most supportive circle of support in her life. She was an entrepreneur in the Tourist industry from Maboneng and she explained that the Government does support her but only because she forces them to:

“my mother always said that the government works for us, we need to make sure they work for us. The government needs to do the work for me when I need it. The biggest thing is knowing what’s available and how we can do it, that is the biggest thing is that young people don’t know about the services the government offer and we don’t know what to do to make them work for us”.

## Social Workers and Youth Care Workers

As mentioned, most young people said they turn to their friends when they need support, especially when they need mental health support as these are the only people in their lives they feel they can trust because they “are honest and realistic”. Only one young man from Gauteng, indicated that he felt supported by “social workers, child and youth care workers and psychologists”. He explained that he trusted medical professionals because they “are trained to know how to deal with people in a professional way and how support you. To walk you through your path”.

Five participants in Gauteng, however, indicated that they actively distrust and avoid Social Workers. When probed as to why this is the case, young people explained how the social worker is a part of their community and if they share personal details with them, they pass judgement and then “gossip” with others in the community.

This sentiment was shared in the Western Cape. Participants in the Western Cape were far more willing to talk about mental health issues, they opened up about their own mental health struggles and those experienced by their friends. When probed as to where they go when they need support they spoke about how they do not have the monetary resources to seek professional help, it is not made available to them in their communities and if it is, there is a huge stigma attached to it (as mentioned earlier, their families do not believe in depression, and nurses at clinics judge them). When asked if they would ever consider speaking to a social worker or a youth worker, they quickly dismissed that option saying that

“if we tell a social worker something today, tomorrow the whole community will know, they are gossips”.

This was a sentiment shared by both the urban and rural participants in the Western Cape. Gossip and judgement were the two fears commonly expressed when talking about social workers. A participant in Gauteng shared the story of how a young girl in his community was raped and fell pregnant, he did not know what to do so he took her to talk with a social worker who judged her for having sex and said that she could not help:

“they (social workers) have become complacent, it is just a job to them, they do not care about us”.

The distrust of social workers came up again when discussing the idea of the Hub as part of the Basic Package of Support. Though young people were supportive of the Hub and the fact that they could seek out guidance and support without the stigma of walking into an HIV clinic or a TB clinic, they still remained unsure about how they could trust the counsellors working in the Hub. When asked how this distrust could be overcome, the young people seemed unsure because though they might trust people from outside the community more, they felt that they could not relate to them. One suggestion that did come up is that the people who work in the Hub need to be young people themselves; participants agreed that they are more likely to trust other young people to understand them and not pass judgement in the way the older people in the community do:

“they are on the same level as us so there is a comfortability in engaging with them”.

## Existing Youth Employability Programmes

When the facilitators introduced themselves and gave a brief context to and aim of the workshop, participants immediately picked up on the idea of “support for young people who are not employed” and asked how the implementation of the Basic Package of Support would be different to existing organisations with a similar mandate. Existing youth employability programmes came up consistently by participants and remained a huge theme throughout the workshop in Gauteng. The participants explained how past experience with these organisations was part of their hesitancy to believe or “trust in another youth unemployment initiative”. The participants in Gauteng had extremely negative things to say about agencies who work in youth employment training and placement, relating to both their own experiences and the experiences of their friends. Almost every one of them had had some kind of interaction with these agencies in Gauteng. Many believed that the agencies are corrupt and “only help people that know someone in the organisation”; they spoke about these programmes being badly organised, not following up or communicate with applicants and that employers are rude and unwelcoming to young people that enter their office space. One participant told us about how she had registered with a youth employability programme and then never received any follow up information or communication for months, that she “had almost given up” when she finally did receive a text telling her to come into the office for a meeting about an opportunity. She got increasingly angry as she recounted her experience in the reception area where she waited and waited until eventually she was told to leave by the receptionist. Participants in the Western Cape group did not share these experiences, it appears to only be viewed as a resource for Gauteng-based youth.

## The need for a physical structure

In Gauteng many of the participants also mentioned having had some kind of interaction with local employment centers in their community or provincial government-driven youth employment initiatives. None of them said they had ever received any help or assistance from these institutions despite seeking them out. The main critique of these centers or initiatives was the lack of transparency and communication, with many participants claiming they submitted their CVs or a job application and never heard back. Similar to the perceptions around non-governmental youth employment agencies, the participants' perception was that government led employability centers are hostile and heavily political spaces and that the people that work there intentionally hold back jobs. One participant stated that:

“if an employee has a two-year-old son, they would rather keep the available job open until their son is 18 rather than give it to us”.

There was concern regarding the BPS Hub on how the Hub would be able to track young people when the Department of Employment and Labour cannot even track them.

It seems that the lack of constant or continued communication is at the root of the helplessness and hopelessness these participants said they feel and of the distrust with which they approach similar initiatives. The young people in both workshops had realistic expectations of what could be offered by the BPS and understood the employment crisis in SA, exclaiming that there “are no jobs in South Africa, we know”. They seemed accepting of the fact that the BPS could not guarantee work placement but they were excited and hopeful about the holistic support that it could offer. When the facilitators clarified again that the BPS could not guarantee a work placement, one young man from Soweto said “we know, we know but it will still help us and give us what we need”. A participant in Gauteng suggested that the Hub include financial literacy support as well as support for entrepreneurs and those wanting to go into business.

Overall, the participants from the Western Cape insisted that the two main things needed to make the intervention successful was that it be rooted in a structure where young people could physically go and that it offer clear, consistent and accessible communication and information. It seemed that their previously stated hopelessness at the status quo was not necessarily rooted in existing organisations and initiatives failing to provide them with jobs but rather in how poorly they felt they were treated by these initiatives: not being acknowledged, constantly updated and kept in the loop. Participants in Gauteng agreed that

“even if you get a work placement through the Hub, you need to stay on the system because we do not have job security”.

## Politics in circles of support

In both workshops young people brought up the problem of local politics and spoke openly about the current forms of corruption and nepotism in existing government structured and institutions within their various communities. In Beaufort West for example, young people explained that everything that happens in their community is controlled and influenced by local politics and local politicians. Nothing can happen in the community without the approval of the ward councillors. The other participants

agreed and expressed concern that the BPS and specifically the Hub would be sabotaged by ward councillors if they were not brought on board. Ward councillors were described as often feeling threatened by “outsiders” and so it is important to involve them in the process and to make sure that they feel this is part of their work and deliverables

The young people from Khayelitsha agreed and added that if their local politicians are not “made to think it was their idea to start with” the Hub would never be able to successfully operate in their communities. Young people in the Western Cape and in Gauteng shared their concerns that the Hub would be co-opted by politicians and would just be used as another corrupt scheme to hire and employ their friends and family.

## Themes that emerged from the broad discussion and Ice Breaker exercises

### Communication strategies

One of the workshop aims was to identify appropriate and effective communication and outreach strategies that can be used to reach out to young people. Facilitators probed into what type of communication strategies, by both state and non-state actors, participants have found useful previously. Facilitators were particularly interested in the effectiveness of using social media to reach young people and if those would be considered as not effective, what additional approaches young people have found engaging with broad reach. At both workshops the participants, drawing on their experiences, agreed that in order to reach young people there needed to be a multipronged approach. In the Western Cape the participants insisted there was a huge difference between how one reaches young people in urban areas and how one reaches young people in rural areas.

### Urban

The participants suggested that in urban areas a combination of social media (predominately Facebook) as well as a more “on the ground” approach was needed. Participants listed the following as good strategies for communication and outreach:

- Flyers
- Road shows
- Radio
- Posters
- Working with existing youth empowerment organisations and NGOs who already have a database of young people that they are working with. Participants gave examples of initiatives they were involved in - mainly ACTIVATE! - as organisations that have established trusted networks amongst young people.

When questioned on whether they truly believe Facebook was a useful tool to reach young people, all expressed the belief that it was and many went on to explain how they were made aware of certain opportunities through social media. For instance, participants had found information on employment and skills development opportunities on their Facebook feeds or through friends sharing it with them on social networks. Facebook was the most popular social network used by participants in the workshop, followed by Twitter.

## Rural

In the Western Cape participants from rural areas, specifically Beaufort West, gave a different set of inputs on effective communication strategies. There was agreement that the strategies used in the urban areas would not be as successful in rural areas. Social media in particular was said to be a “useless way to communicate with rural youth” and the participants even questioned the usefulness of the other strategies mentioned above such as roadshows. Conversations amongst the participants explained how the only meaningful way to reach rural youth was to go through the “community leaders”. The young people from Beaufort West in particular insisted that nothing happens in their community without the “approval” of the leaders in the community and all useful information comes via word of mouth from the community leaders. This connected to other forms of communication strategies such as radio and roadshows; community leaders seem to have authority not only on what is communicated in communities but also what is “accepted”. Roadshows and Radio advertisements may bring about an awareness of certain projects or initiatives, but they will not be accepted and supported by communities if there is no sense of approval from community leaders. In this way, participants insisted that rural communities are extremely hierarchal. When questioned on who the community leaders were, it seemed that this could be a formal and organic role, that the leaders could be elected officials, respected business people or simply a trusted elder in the community.

## Networks

The Facilitators wanted to get a deeper understanding of what the participants viewed as “success” and how they thought they would be able to achieve this. More specifically what kind of support young people identified as important in their journey to towards this success. When identifying the main issues affecting young people in South Africa and what could be done to curb the negative consequences of these issues, structures of support and guidance were common responses. In both the Gauteng and Western Cape workshop the theme of “personal and professional networks” came up consistently. When asked to reflect on the main differences between young people that are seen as “successful” versus those that are seen as “stuck” or “at risk”, the most common response was that successful young people have “networks”, they “know someone who knows someone and this helps them gain access to opportunities”. Networks were defined broadly and included supportive families, teachers, friends, NGOs and mentors.

Many reflected on the role of their “mentor” (both formal and informal) and what a huge impact this relationship has had on their personal and professional lives. One woman from Khayelitsha (age 19) told us that the main reason she was sitting in the room with us and “not sitting on the street corner outside with (her) friends” was that she had gotten involved with a youth organisation that was run through the Khayelitsha library. The organisation was community run and mainly acted as a space for young people to go and do their homework in a supportive environment. She went on to explain that she was connected with a mentor through this space, a woman she described as being “successful in her own life”. She told us that her mentor gave her advice when she needed it, specifically about school, possible career pathways and “planning for success”. More so, she found a confidant in her mentor and told us that she turned to her when she has personal troubles relating to issues with family, friends and the community. Ultimately, she expressed that having a mentor (and the space to go to in the Khayelitsha library) was one of the more important sources of support she had in navigating her life. Those that did not have access to mentorship expressed their desire for it and the benefit of knowing someone that could offer broad forms of guidance, with a young man from Beaufort West expressing “I know no one to help me get my foot in the door, I have to try get in the door by myself and I don’t know anyone. I need someone to help me”.

Importantly, the idea of having a physical “space” to access networks was brought up in the Western Cape and in Johannesburg before the BPS and its proposed approach were even discussed. Young people who had a “space” to go to (libraries, community center) where they could seek guidance and meet other motivated young people believed they were at an advantage both professionally and personally to those that did not have this. A male participant in Gauteng expressed his concern that there are no open spaces in his community to keep young people off the streets and “away from drugs”-

“we have no community centers where I am from, no spaces where young people can go to be safe and get support or help and guidance. If we have nowhere to go and talk and connect that’s why they [young people] turn to crime”.

In Johannesburg the concept of a “community center” was raised often. Again, participants believed that having that “tangible space” where young people could go, had a huge effect on the success of young people in the community. In Khayelitsha, the community library was said to serve as a really important space of support. One young woman from Khayelitsha spoke about her experience using the local library:

“I go there and I work, on my homework and on jobs [applications] and they also introduced me to my mentor and she changed my life. I wish other young people [in the community] would also go to the library, it would help them but instead they just sit on the street corner and do nothing and no one helps them”.

## Implications for pilot design

The consultation rounds corroborated much of the evidence that is at the basis of the current initiative:

- These young people feel that youth unemployment and a “lack of opportunities” is one of the biggest issues facing them in their communities. They feel unsupported and un-guided in their attempts to find resolution for the situation.
- The participants’ narratives underscore the importance of the provision of guidance and mentorship and of having safe, non-judgmental spaces where such support and guidance can be accessed;
- Mental health problems among young people – including substance abuse and depression – are seen as a consequence of youth unemployment. The lack of a recognition of mental health problems and of support to cope with them – as identified among the older generation in black communities, but also among service providers such as nurses and social workers – leads to a further sense of isolation, embarrassment and shame among young people;
- Participants express high levels of distrust towards a broad range of governmental and non-governmental service providers – including job search support programmes, that are seen as “taking” information but then not following up, not providing additional support and guidance, and even as “reserving jobs” for friends and family. Also within their own families, many young people expressed feeling misunderstood and unsupported.
- Local context matters, as initiatives that are not communicated via trusted channels would not easily be accessed by young people and what channel is trusted differs depending on geographical location.

Therefore:

- Outreach to young people needs to be developed with an understanding of the local context and trusted channels;
- There is a need to understand and work with local structures while protecting integrity of the intervention.
- Service provision needs to ensure long term, non-judgmental, honest, reliable, and accurate communication, guidance and support;
- This means that training front-line workers to understand the need of confidentiality and non-judgement will be crucial, but so is working with local service providers/partners and developing accountability mechanisms to ensure similar standards;
- An element of (reliable) mental health support needs to be included in the referral system. Where the provision of such support is absent, alternative routes to providing this will need to be explored. There is also a need for advocacy around mental health and the provision of care.