YOUTH CONVERSATIONS FOR ACTION: TOWARD A BASIC PACKAGE OF SUPPORT FOR YOUTH

Report prepared by Youth Lab and Poverty and Inequality Initiative

On the 20th October 2017, the University of Cape Town's Poverty and Inequality Initiative (PII), University of Johannesburg's Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA), UCT's Bertha Centre for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Programme to support Pro-poor Policy Development (PSPPD), DG Murray Trust, Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) and the Economies of Regions Learning Network (ERLN) hosted a Youth Conversation for Action to discuss the options for "A basic package of support for youth".

The Youth Conversations for Action: Towards a Basic Package of Support for Youth dialogue was aimed at exploring possibilities to develop a basic set of structures and interventions that could adequately support young people in South Africa throughout the stages of their development, set against the background of severe socio-economic challenges that many of them face. It was the second edition in the Youth Conversation series, and was aimed at developing a research and advocacy agenda. The audience consisted of researchers, development practitioners, government officials and young people.

The workshop was opened with welcoming remarks from University of Johannesburg's (UJ) Prof. Leila Patel who introduced the dialogue by highlighting some of the challenges that young people face. The dialogue was timely, she said, as a failure to address the issues would have long-term consequences for the country and the economy. Therefore, this dialogue is an attempt to shift our lens away from an ad-hoc attempt to solve the issues towards developing a more holistic approach. This requires reframing our thinking, and

putting the question into what young people need to develop and grow their capacities, at the center.

Prof Patel framed the expectations for the outcomes of the dialogue as: 1) identifying the key challenges for youth in transition towards adulthood; 2) establishing what support structures are currently in place for youth; 3) comparing the existing models of support with other cohorts in the populations; 4) outlining what core elements would be necessary to provide adequate support to young people that will enhance their overall wellbeing, as well as their participation as social and economic actors; and 5) formulating what exactly we mean with a package, and to make progress in articulating its rationale, theory of change, objectives, and outcomes.

The socio-economic challenges for youth in SA

South Africa continues to grapple with high inequality, poverty, and unemployment levels. This generates systemic disadvantages in various spheres of young people's lives, including education, health, and employment. In addition, the current social security system in the country does not provide sufficient support for youth. As a result, many are growing up without the ability to reach their full potential.

The first presentation by Lauren Graham (CSDA) and Ariane De Lannoy (PII) explored these systemic issues. Data indicate that almost 60% of youth aged 15 to 24 live in income poverty, and income poverty continues to be strongly associated with race: 65% of African youth live below the poverty line, compared to just over 4% of White young people. In addition, spatial inequalities persist, with young people in the former homeland areas continuing to experience the highest levels of deprivation. The stark differences in youth outcomes according to age, race, class, and geography highlight the heterogeneity of the South African youth cohort.

It was however noted that for the purposes of initiating a basic package of support, and of selecting its most basic components, attention must be given to cross-cutting issues that are faced by the majority of young people. These could include the impact of education and post-education on labour market opportunities, the marginalisation of opportunity based on structural factors such as geographic inequities, and the high cost of job seeking.

Ariane reiterated that deprivation is not limited to income poverty alone: many young people experience multiple forms of deprivation simultaneously, including low levels of education, poor health and limited access to housing, basic services and economic opportunities. These vulnerabilities are inter-related: for example, income poverty can compromise children's health, which, in turn, impacts on education and employment prospects. In addition, poor youth don't have access to the kinds of information and social networks (or the cultural and social capital) needed to access further education and employment.

Lauren introduced statistics that illustrate the low rates of throughput of young people from basic to tertiary education. Many young people drop out of school before reaching matric,

and very few have access to tertiary education. Seeing the comparative advantage of education for employment opportunities, low levels of educational attainment have become a poverty trap for young people. 37% of youth aged 15 to 34 are unemployed, facing a skills mismatch, a lack of information and social capital among others, as barriers to employment. Youth are marginalised in other domains of life too, with very few institutionalized mechanisms of participation available to them; they are also often perceived in negative ways regarding their contributions to society or their willingness to be agents of their own success. This is in contrast with young people's own positive sense of the future, and their perceived levels of self-efficacy and resilience.

Planning infrastructure: an opportunity for alignment with existing plans

Mr John Kruger, on behalf of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), presented both the historical and current planning tools, and infrastructure that government has developed. The theory of change of a basic package of support would fit in well with the objectives of the National Development Plan, he said, which top priority is eradicating poverty and reducing inequality. The best way to do this is to create jobs and livelihoods, and make the economy more inclusive. The success rate of this, he said, depends on the people and their assets – which are not just physical and financial, but also cultural, human, natural, intellectual and social.

However, as with other national planning instruments, Mr Kruger cautioned that the implementation of the NDP suffered from several weaknesses in government, including duplication and poor coordination among and within departments, the complexity of a system that makes it hard to include stakeholders such as young people, and a lack of negotiations with other sectors to accomplish the planned tasks. Furthermore, government faces difficulties in its planning, as policymakers' focus on the laws and policies often means that the processes and tools which would assist in planning and implementation receive little attention.

Mr Kruger further stressed the need for more rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices, which currently fall short, largely due to the lack of a culture of data collection, capturing and analysis. He briefly discussed three central elements in the monitoring and evaluation process: access, adequacy and quality. To equip DPME to perform rigorous M&E, it requires more accurate and detailed *local* data. Particularly qualitative data is needed, he argued, such as case-studies and face-to-face encounters, that really delve into the realities people face in their neighbourhoods and communities. Also interpretations of the needs and aspirations of South Africans, such as those expressed by artists across the various arts, that traditionally have not been included should be given a place in DPME's work, as they have a finger on the pulse of the undercurrents in society.

Lastly he presented a few starter points to consider when defining a basic package of support for youth:

- Work needs to be done on understanding the different elements of a possible package, and on explaining the theory of change;
- The description of the planning should be accompanied by a model for how the package would be implemented;
- Local level initiatives and programmes that match local needs to services should be included;
- Consideration must be given to the ways in which these packages are going to affect growth and then use this as an advocacy tool;
- Ways in which to create functional linkages between civil society and government need to be taken into account.

The global context for support for youth

The second session was opened by Dr Mamphela Ramphele, who advocated for an agenda of national healing that fosters stronger dynamics of trust, common purpose, and constructivism, especially among population groups of different race, age, and socio-economic backgrounds. She argued that this aspect has remained underrepresented in the provisions made at the end of apartheid and in the transition to the Democratic Republic of South Africa. Unless this dysfunctionality in society is addressed adequately, Dr Ramphele argued, we will fail the young people of South Africa and the country's promise of a better future for them. A new system of social justice requires us to rethink many of our current systems. For instance, can we begin to think about providing education in mother tongue to make our schooling system more efficient? The current dysfunctionality of society has also an economic cost and prevents us from growing productivity and investing in the economy. Without a change, therefore, we are facing a huge opportunity cost, both for the people of South Africa as well as for our capacity to provide more equal and just outcomes for everyone.

Evelien Storme (PII) subsequently presented on various international examples of support for young people. Her opening remarks related to the complexities of the needs of young people, the need for a multidimensional approach, the fact that official data fail to capture the full extent of the number of youth that are suffering, but also that the current support system - despite its fragmentation - offers opportunities to start from. There is no current example of a similar "basic package of support" implemented elsewhere in the world, but much comparative work is available on the various basic components, such as health, education, income protection, as well as the provision of services towards parents and care takers. A few key insights include:

- A comprehensive approach whereby cash and access to services are combined works best;
- Impact differs according to age and gender;
- Interventions need to be anchored in a national consensus; and
- A process of starting with the basics and gradually expanding has proved successful. However, seeing the urgency in responding to some of the deprivations that the current youth cohort faces, and the relative ease with which some of the

interventions could be implemented, starting at scale may be necessary in some cases.

Evelien presented case studies of national interventions such as a guaranteed Youth Allowance coupled with active labour market policies in Australia; school vouchers in Malawi, Columbia and the USA; and health access smart cards in India. At city-level, much can be done too, as demonstrated in New York where one place offers a variety of services based on an initial interview with a counsellor, or by Canberra, where the city closely monitors over 50 youth-wellbeing indicators. All case studies highlighted the importance of a rigorous process for data collection and analysis, which allows for monitoring and evaluation, and the subsequent adjustment of particular programmes in cases where outcomes are not met.

An example of an integrated, multi-faceted policy framework in South Africa that has sought similar outcomes to those of a basic support package for youth, is in the early childhood development (ECD) sector. Solange Rosa (Bertha Centre) presented on the journey of developing the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy 2015, outlining some of the key levers that could be relevant to the policy development and advocacy efforts for a Youth Basic Package of Support. They include:

1) Early childhood development advocates were successful in demonstrating substantial evidence that early childhood is a critical stage of development and therefore has cumulative advantages for a person's further development.

2) Civil society and academia came to compromise agreements on the essential elements of the comprehensive package of support for early childhood development. It was necessary for advocacy purposes to present a united voice.

3) Section 28 within the constitution is dedicated to children's rights. There is therefore a constitutional obligation of the government to deliver and implement ECD services.

4) Challenges of resource allocation and coordinated implementation need to be worked out amongst the various stakeholders, including academia, non-government organisations, government and the private sector.

5) Getting political and budgetary buy-in from the highest level of decision-making in government is critical for the successful development as well as implementation of a multi-sectoral policy.

6) The ECD package tries to focus on a more coordinated approach for government's responsibilities towards social development, educational progress and health.

7) The ECD framework aligns with comprehensive long-term national strategies such as the National Development Plan.

The Q&A sessions that followed touched upon the following issues:

1) A balance should be struck between starting small and gradually phasing and scaling up of interventions after initial evidence of their impact on the one hand, and coming in at scale from the start for issues that allow for it, on the other hand. These processes are not mutually exclusive.

2) The government should partner with business and CSOs working with youth to get better outcomes.

3) Planning is easy and doable, but the challenge is monitoring and holding government accountable.

4) Budgeting and resourcing are challenges – how does the budget get spent, or not?

5) There is need to create singular spaces that "join the dots" towards supporting youth, and that are accessible to them. It was suggested that the Youth Cafés in the Western Cape Province might be a possible model for this. However, the current number of Youth Cafés is small and more evidence is needed on their model and impact. http://youthcafe.co.za.

6) It is important to note that including youth voices requires more than just bringing youth into the room. Institutions in the public sector, and universities and schools in particular, have a role to surface and facilitate the inclusion of young people's input in policy processes.

Youth voice

Pearl Pillay (Youth Lab) presented the views of youth about their needs and aspirations, gathered in a number of workshops held in Bonnievale and Eldorado Park. Young people indicated that a range of barriers hinder their access to the labour market. These included – in no specific order - poverty, limited resources, low or no work experience, few qualifications, early pregnancies, substance abuse, parents' and family members' high expectations, limited facilities, and lack of credit records. Jealousy among young people and their families was mentioned as well, and seen to create a 'pull down' syndrome whereby youth do not share information on vacancies or job application resources. Related YouthLab research found that young people are often expected to pay a 'fee' to the person holding particular information on job vacancies and other work opportunities, and that a proportion of the first month's salary needs to be paid in return for a job.

Pearl emphasised that young people are often misunderstood and construed as apathetic or uninterested while it is more a case of policy and practice lacking an understanding of the socio-cultural issues and of platforms that drive youth participation. She further highlighted the need for youth to be partners in youth-focused development, to have skills exchanges with youth and to promote youth ownership of solutions.

The Q&A session that followed touched upon the following issues:

1) In developing the package, we ought to go back to the basics and hear from the youth which solutions they propose, so that potential interventions are supported by youth and therefore more effective;

2) Psychosocial support services are inadequate at the moment, and there is a huge stigma surrounding mental health. Services should be high-quality, accessible, and youth should be incentivized to make use of the facilities;

3) All stakeholders should be involved in the actual implementation of the Package. For instance, the Department of Health is about to launch their National youth and adolescent's health policy. In developing the policy and its implementation plan, the Department realised "you can't do things for young people without them".

Designing a Comprehensive Intervention for Youth

In the second half of the day, National Planning Commissioner, Tessa Dooms, facilitated a group work session that explored in more detail the various building blocks for a basic package of support for youth. The session focused on defining the youth who need support, exploring sector specific options of support, defining roles for various stakeholders and prioritising options for an initial drafting of a package.

Defining the target youth

Taking note of the heterogeneity of 'youth' and the wide range of needs and support options that different youth may require, the success of a youth support package will be influenced by the ability to specify the target audience. An exercise to try to define that youth target demonstrated that there are wide-ranging views on which audience a basic package of support should target. The following list of words was used by the participants in the room to describe characteristics of a young person/youth in South Africa that would need this basic package of support:

Geography	• Live in township or rural area • Live in urban areas
Educational attainment	• School drop out • Quintile 1 & 2 school qualification • School leavers, no formal education • NEETs • Only has basic education
Socioeconomic status	• Low socio-economic status • Not economically independent • Hustlers • Affected by poverty or inequality • Breadwinner • Disadvantaged
Personal traits	• Aspirational • Persons with disabilities • Inquisitive young people • Energetic • Married • Visionary • Sensitive to peers • At risk

	• Idealistic and young in mind • Uncertain about future • No vision • Doesn't go through normal (transition) growth
Demographic	• Male and female • Black • 18 – 30 years of age • 14 -35 years of age • 18 – 34 years of age with no qualifications • 1 – 24 years of age • Under the age of 35 • 16 – 24 • 18 – 24 female

While there was some agreement about the socioeconomic status, personal characteristics and geography of young people who most need a basic package of support, age was a more contested descriptor. The need to move away from the National Youth Policy definition of youth was noted, because not all young people transition in the same ways and so age may be a limiting factor for determining need. Other perspectives to consider when defining youth that need support would include:

1) **Critical life phases** (Such as completing matric; looking for a job; or becoming parents), people go through these life phases at different ages and each phase may require a slightly different form of support.

2) **A preventative lens** that seeks to reach youth before they become at risk of economic and social marginalization. For instance, warning signs of **school drop-out** are noticeable even before the age of 15, which makes it possible to intervene in an attempt to prevent drop-out at ages 18 or 19.

Ages of vulnerability: the Department of Health's definition of vulnerable youth encompasses youth between the ages of 10 and 19. This shows that depending on the issues, a different definition of youth may be necessary.

Thematic options developed

During the group work session, participants split up in small working groups focusing on: Health; Basic education; PSET; Employment; Income/ social security; Living conditions; Connectedness (which included transport and ICT). For each theme, participants identified a problem statement, and a maximum of three options as a means of tackling the problem. Participants then raised the type of youth that an option would be directed to and the role that the young people, government, public sector and private sector would play to ensure success of the proposed solution. The following table presents the outcomes of the group work. The priority column indicates the sense of importance attached to each of the options, as expressed by the workshop's participants.

Problem statement	Target	Role of youth	Role of government	Role of Business	Role of civil society/Academia	Priority
Health and wellbeing: Access to quality preventative, promotive, curative and rehabilitative services						
Option 1 Educational institutions that provide or house health care programmes	All school going youth	• To be informed • Accept the services • Drive the design of well-targeted programmes • Develop clubs at school • Be pro-active • Take ownership and participate in making the clinics • Obtaining information concerning service provision • Create demand and inform fellow youth • Obtaining information concerning service provision • Create demand and inform fellow youth	• Design policy framework • Coordinate programmes • Provide resources • Provide services • Provide monitoring and evaluation • Capacitate existing health institutions and provision of new ones in underserviced areas • Skills development for staff in dealing with youth and their parents • Capacitate local government institutions to coordinate the programme • Provide funding to civil society • Provide access to public spaces for community gatherings	• Provide services • Provide training • Development of innovative health interventions • Skills development for staff in dealing with youth and their parents • Providing services	• M and E services • Provide services • Development of innovative health interventions • Research • Training • Watch-dog services • Inform youth on clinics • Support clinic staff with services • Drive various community initiatives • Develop indicators of success	XXX
Option 2 Primary care clinics that are youth friendly and easily accessible	All youth 10y-24y with healthcare needs					X
Option 3 Capacitating communities	All youth 10y-24y					X
Employment and economic empowerment: Create decent jobs and social protection in an environment of general job scarcity. However, the group recognized the limits to the economy's job creation capacities. A job-seekers allowance may turn out to be permanent instead of a grant for a short period of unemployment. Some members of the group thus recommended substantial expansion of social protection, e.g. in the form of a Basic Income Grant.						
Option 1 Creating an environment conducive for manufacturing	All youth	• In signing on for this allowance youth would have to comply with weak conditionality to ensure continued receipt – for example evidence of making job applications – but admin capacity of the state is a challenge Make use of the	• Funding • Providing services • E-government services • Creation of correct regulatory environment • Promotion of SMEs (ie moving away from policy biased towards large firms) • Funding • Administration of the allowance	• Provide internship programs • PPP • Funding (tax) • Tech companies to design digital platforms/apps • Provide resources in kind, eg human resources; advice re	• Evaluation against indicators • Co-administration – eg in monitoring conditionality. This could be coupled with support provided under option 3	XXX
Option 2 Support to job seekers in the form of a work seekers allowance (although there is an ideological barrier against "handouts") and other ways to connect them to physical	Job seeking and unemployed youth					XX

spaces of work opportunities		services • Compliant in terms of loan repayments • Provide community service	and of possible conditionality. • Regulation: eg in curbing abusive data pricing practices that impede job search	CVs (templates etc); other materials about careers etc		
Option 3 Technological-led platforms for youth to: access information, access to virtual currency, microloans, entrepreneurship, mobile loans in virtual currency	Township and rural l youth					X

School and Education: Young people are leaving school without empowering qualifications

Option 1 Providing an "empowerment package" to learners at critical stages, and especially at exit points, such as Grade 10-12, before they leave school. This should provide support for learners to obtain: ID, bank account, awareness of rights, self-esteem, civic education through volunteering	Youth in school	• Actively take up the opportunity • Communicate the need for information to institutions such as schools, labour centres, community leaders • Flag gaps in information already provided	• Cross departmental co-ordination • Embedding interventions • Financing • Implementing research produced by academia	• Internship • Work exposure	• Research • Delivery mechanisms	XXXX
Option 2 Targeted interventions that connect youths to opportunities upon leaving	Youth exiting school	• Form clubs in schools whereby older youth mentors younger youth				X

Tertiary education: Young people are not supported to realize their potential once they leave school

Option 1: Clear out the blockages in pathways from grade 9/10 to TVET (NCV or SETA)	Youth in grade 9-10, (15y-18y without matric)	• Mentor youths/ children going to school • Advocate for what they need	• Be an enabler and servant to developing talent in youths	• Providing linkages with TVET and Higher Education Institutions • Providing	• Training quality educators. • Encouraging spaces for young citizenship • Create points of access and information.	XX

Option 2: TVET to provide quality programs and link them to workplace (expanding access for young people)	15y-24y No matric or with matric TVET students	• Pro-actively look for ways in which youth can contribute		information about skills needs • Providing bursaries • Staff development • Value development	• Promoting shared values • Committing to being inclusive and supportive	XX
Option 3 Inclusive and fully funded supportive colleges and universities (comprehensive model of support)	18y – 24y Post matric students					XX
Economic opportunities: Lack of access to financial resources for poor young people over 18 years' old						
Option 1: Provide a "Once-off jump-start package" with - A small amount of cash (e.g. R400) - Bank account - Pathway information -Transport voucher - Airtime voucher - Access to digital application platform based on their matric number	Matriculating youth and graduates	• Co-creating • Designing options	• Data gathering and distribution to relevant government departments and agencies. • Budget development	• Providing ICT Platforms for job search • Contributing to the jump-start package • Providing job-seeker programmes (e.g. Harambee)	• Costing different options • Monitoring and evaluation systems • Co- creating	XXXXXX XX
Option 2: Mean-tested youth development grant. Made conditional on education and job search, linked to active labour market policies. Youth taking up work in Community Works Programme should become eligible for UIF	Vulnerable youth in education or job-seeking					
Option 3: Raising compulsory school age from 15 to 18	Youth between 15-18					X

Professor Murray Leibbrandt (PII/SALDRU) wrapped up the dialogue. In his closing note, he called upon youth to be part of the process, and pointed out that the basic package of support should revolve around what youth need, not around what government's planning processes are. He stressed the need for engagements at both macro and micro level, urging for a clearer lead on job creation, a conducive environment for entrepreneurs, firms and businesses, and inclusive economic growth. At the same time, he said, we should make sure the systems at the micro level work, and that we experiment and engage with elements of the basic package of support in order to build up evidence and support for a wider national engagement on how to take this further. This dialogue, he said, provided us with a basic framework, with some strong theoretical and practical starter points. He thanked everyone for their participation.