



## CONFRONTING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

### Understanding the Youth

This newsletter focusses on youth unemployment, the extent of the challenge facing the country and how media, and the youth view it. While consideration is given to the concerns expressed by various sectors, it is also important for us to take note of the significant inroads government is making to address the issue.

Prior to 1994 South Africa was a technically bankrupt country with only a few weeks of foreign reserves. Its debt as a percentage of GDP was at its worst level in 40 years and inflation was in double digits. The economy was in recession from March 1989 through most of 1993, largely in response to the long-term effects of apartheid.

The majority of South Africans did not enjoy equal access to education, job opportunities and initiatives aimed at encouraging further development and training as was the case for minority groups. June 16, 1976 however saw a sea change when multitudes of South

African youth emerged from township school classrooms to confront the apartheid system, especially within the context of education. This day and the events that unfolded contributed greatly to change the course of the country.

Years of struggle against an oppressive regime and system culminated in the first democratic elections in the country. Since the beginning of South Africa's democratic dispensation in 1994, the country's macroeconomic policy has sought to strike a balance between meeting the basic needs of its citizens and promoting investment and growth.

At the outset, the democratically elected government committed itself to improving the quality of education for all South Africans and has over the years made significant budgetary allocations to ensure it enjoys the priority status it deserves.

This not only addresses the historical ills of the apartheid system, but equally important it is a significant investment in the future leaders of the country and contributors to economic growth and prosperity in South Africa.

The recently publicised results of the Census 2011 confirm the youthful nature of South African society. It describes the country as a 'youthful nation' with the average age of the population at 25 years. A third of our population of 52 million falls under the age of 15 years.

While a youthful population is generally seen in a positive light, especially for the future development of a country, the results of the Statistics South Africa Quarterly Labour Force (QLF) survey: Quarter 3, 2012 paint a bleaker picture. It shows that the unemployment rate among the youth stands at of 36,1 per cent

4,67 million unemployed  
(Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 3, 2012)

25,5 per cent national unemployment rate  
(Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 3, 2012)

70,9 per cent of youth aged 15-34 years are unemployed  
(Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 3, 2012)

Youth aged 15 – 35 years make up around 38 per cent of the population (Stats SA 2011 Mid-year Population Estimates Report)

31,4 per cent youths were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET)

NEET rate was higher among women -35,7 per cent and 27,1 per cent for men

– this is indeed a red flag that we as a country need to take notice of and increase our efforts to turn it around.

For the first time the Quarterly Labour Force Survey also looked at people who are described as "idle" – i.e. not in employment, education or training (NEET) – who accounted for a third of the youth aged 15 – 24 years.

"The Integrated Youth Development Strategy is a deliberate effort to ensure that we build effective building blocks for youth development. It is a strategy that seeks to mobilise the whole of society to participate and make youth development everybody's business."

Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Minister  
Collins Chabane



# Youth development is a shared responsibility

One could very well become disheartened and overwhelmed by these figures, however before feelings of dismay set in let us consider for a moment what government has done over a number of years to improve education and assist this crucial segment of society to become economically active and play a significant part in the economic development of our country.

Government introduced various pro-youth policies, set up institutions to advance the youth and established youth employment initiatives as a component of all its work programmes.

The Integrated Youth Development Strategy is the foundation of South Africa's youth development with commitments by government, young South Africans and civil society to mainstream youth development.

In addition, government has invested heavily in education and in this

instance it is significant to bear in mind the notion as expressed in the Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 3, 2012 namely that "in general lower unemployment rates are associated with higher levels of education".

This is all good and well, however research commissioned by GCIS shows that the youth believe that government could do more to address job creation. The GCIS Tracker Survey: Quarter 4, 2011 indicated that 74 per cent of youth believe government is doing fairly/very badly in addressing job creation while 65 per cent of youth believe government is doing fairly/very badly of narrowing the income gap.

This is a clarion call to government and its partners – business, labour and civil society - because while government has taken the lead in many

instances, it is a shared responsibility to ensure our youth are developed, have access to opportunities and are able to contribute meaningfully to the future growth of the country.

South Africa is however not alone in this dilemma, research by the United Nations and African Progress Panel shows that youth unemployment is a global problem that has been made worse by the global economic crisis. Africa alone will need an estimated 74 million jobs over the next decade to address the issue.

The *futurefact* 2011 survey has shed further light on our youth. It indicated that a large percentage of the youth access the internet via their cellphones as opposed to using a computer for internet access. Most stated that they generally used the internet for searches, e-mail, social networking and chatting.

## The numbers are going up...

Overall the trend is positive with school enrolment and education of the population improving since 1996. Over the years there has been a steady increase in the percentage of adults who are educated.



The proportion of people who completed higher education has increased from 7,1 per cent in 1996 to 11,8 per cent in 2011 (Census 2011)



There has been a significant increase in the percentage of individuals aged 5-24 years attending an educational institution between 1996 and 2011, from 70,1 per cent to 73,5 per cent (Census 2011)



The 5-7 year age group has shown the most significant progress in terms of enrolment from 48,2 per cent in 1996 to 89,8 per cent in 2011 (Census 2011)



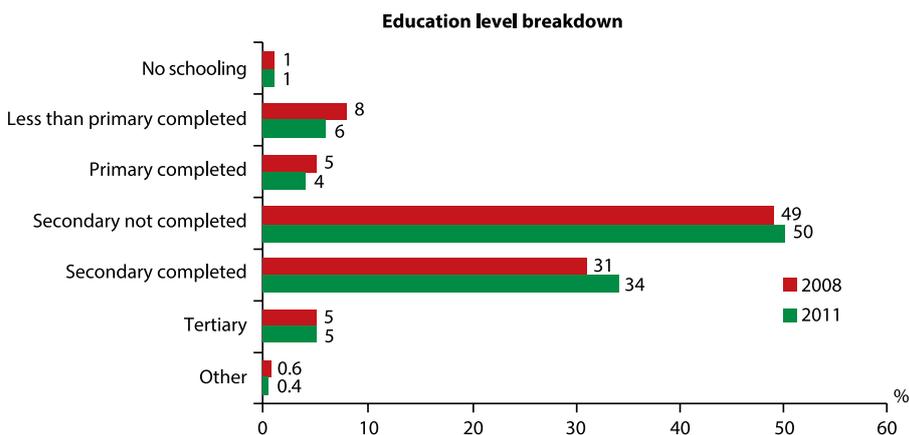
More people 20 years and older have attended schooling – the percentage who have no schooling decreased from 19,1 per cent in 1996 to 8,7 per cent in 2011 (Census 2011)

## The role of education

Education undeniably remains the most powerful weapon in the fight against unemployment. Stats SA in its Quarterly Labour Force Survey: Quarter 3: 2012 noted that lower unemployment rates are in fact generally associated with higher levels of education.

Education, especially on tertiary level, however needs to be responsive to market demands and skills expectations such as in the healthcare, physical, mathematical and engineering sciences and technology fields.

The graph below shows the education levels of unemployed youth for the period 2008 to 2011.



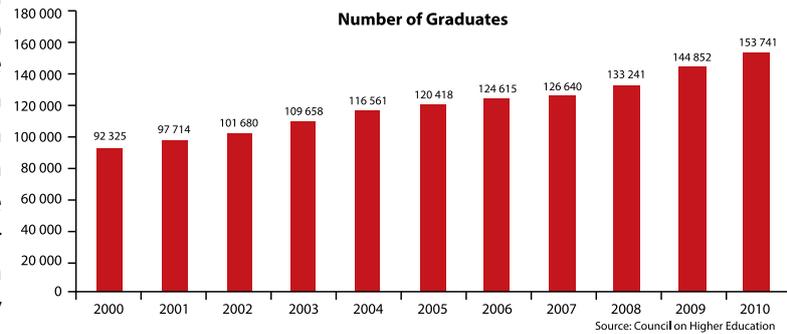
## More graduates

As a country we have seen some shifts in qualifications obtained as demonstrated by the Census 2011 results.

In the quest to close the youth unemployment gap, government has over the years made great strides in expanding access to institutions of higher education and has supported students with financial assistance.

The Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) shows the upward trend in the number of graduates between 2000 and 2010 as illustrated in the graph to the right. In 2010 about 153 741 people graduated from public higher education institutions, an increase of approximately 6 per cent from the 144 852 who graduated in 2009.

## How graduation numbers have changed over time



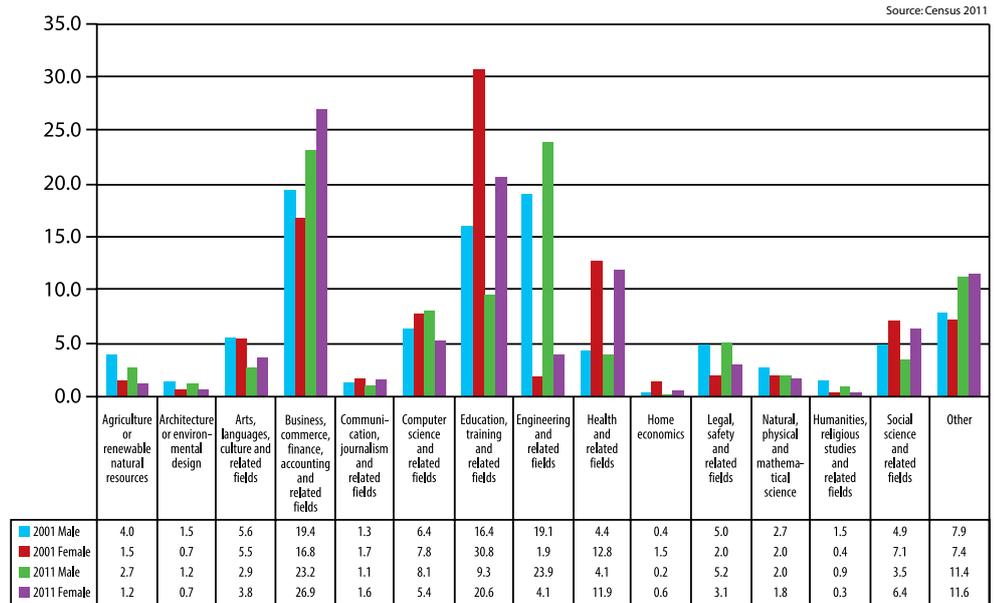
## Qualification spread

Results from the Census 2011 illustrate - in the graph to the right - the range of post-school qualifications that persons aged 20 years and older have attained.

In 2001 most of the qualifications attained by men were in the fields of business, commerce or management sciences (19,4 per cent) and engineering or engineering technology (19,1 per cent), whilst most women completed qualifications in the fields of education, training and related fields (30,8 per cent), as well as to a lesser extent in business, commerce or management science (16,8 per cent).

The picture in relation to the main fields of study did not change in 2011 for men albeit with greater proportions qualifying in the two dominant categories. However, for women, a significant shift took place in 2011 towards business, commerce or management sciences (26,1 per cent) and away from education, training and related fields (19,8 per cent) making the former the dominant field of higher education.

Healthcare and health sciences remained important for women in both periods with 12,8 per cent in 2001 and



11,5 per cent in 2011, whilst qualifications in the third most dominant field for men decreased significantly from 16,1 per cent in 2001 to 9,4 per cent in 2011.

Despite the positive development towards commerce and management sciences, the South African economy continues to face a major problem when it comes to scarce skills as a result of a mismatch between the skills required and graduates produced.

The South African Graduates Development Association (SAGDA)

Graduate Employability Assessment Report 2011 highlighted that professionals including accountants, lawyers, medical doctors and engineers had the lowest unemployment rate at 0.4 per cent, while only 3.1 per cent of those holding degrees in commerce, science and accounting science were unemployed. A list of the scarce skill in the country can be found at the [Skills Demand List 2012 - 2013](#).

## Improving access to funding

Government has committed itself to raise university enrolments to 1,5 million by 2030 compared to approximately 900 000 recorded in 2011. In addition, it is targeting 4 million enrolments in colleges or other post-school institutions such as community education and training centres.

Government's commitment to education is demonstrated through its investment which makes up 21 per cent of our national budget. The 2012 Medium-Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS) also showed education spending rising to R269 billion in 2015/16.

Government has steadily increased student funding from R2,3 billion in 2008 to R7,4 billion in 2012. However, although young people are aware of various types of financial assistance available, the GCIS National Qualitative study conducted in February/March 2012 amongst youth 18 to 35 years, suggested that there might be some reluctance to access various types of financial assistance mainly because of the cumbersome administration involved in the application process and feelings of apprehension of having to repay the loans whilst still unemployed.

# Government leading the charge with youth development programmes....

## Integrated Youth Development Strategy (IYDS)

The IYDS has been developed to be a holistic and integrated strategy which should respond to all socio-economic needs of young people in South Africa. It is aligned with key national policy frameworks such as the National Youth Policy (NYP), the National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF), the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP), the New Growth Path (NGP) and the National Skills Development-South Africa (NSD-SA).

## The National Rural Youth Service Corps (Narysec)

Narysec is a two year programme that targets development and training of youth in 3 300 rural wards throughout the country. More than 4 500 youths have either received training or are being trained in areas such as construction. Government has allocated R190 million in this year's budget towards it and a total of R900 million will be invested over the next three years.

All government departments have youth programmes with dedicated youth initiatives.

## Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

EPWP provides temporary work opportunities for the unemployed and prescribes that 40 per cent of people employed on these projects must be youth. The EPWP's National Youth Service Programme develops artisan skills among the youth who want to develop their careers in the built environment.

## Further Education and Training (FET) colleges

Through FET colleges, youth who have either dropped out of school or have been unable to find jobs owing to a lack of skills, are given practical experience to prepare them for their careers. More than 30 000 unemployed youth took up learnerships in 2011. Bursaries for financially needy FET students have increased tenfold assisting 165 273 students in 2011.

## National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)

The NYDA has provided loans to young entrepreneurs totalling R66,7 million and youth enterprises secured opportunities worth R144 million via the NYDA's Business Opportunities Support Service. More than 152 300 young people have been trained, including 84 644 on the National Youth Service Programme, which develops young people for service in their communities.

## Communicating with the youth

Mainstream media usage by youth mimics the national trend with television, radio and followed by newspapers. Metro FM attracts 21 per cent and Ukhozi FM 19 per cent of youth listenership. About 80 per cent of 15 to 34 year olds tune into SABC 1 and 54 per cent read the Daily Sun while 25 per cent read the Sowetan (AMPS 2011).

The *futurefact* 2011 survey shows that a high percentage of the youth use cellphones to access the internet. Most stated that they used the internet for searches, e-mail, social networking and chatting.



"It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become a head of a mine, that the child of farm workers can become the President of a great nation. It is what we make of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another."

*Former President Nelson Mandela*



# Perspectives from media reporting

According to media research commissioned by GCIS the issue of youth unemployment attracted media coverage on three main occasions during the period November 2011 to October 2012.

As illustrated the graphs below, media reportage peaked during the State of the Nation Address, Budget Speech, Youth Month, and the march by the Democratic Alliance (DA) on COSATU's offices. In latter instance it was in relation to the youth wage subsidy issue.

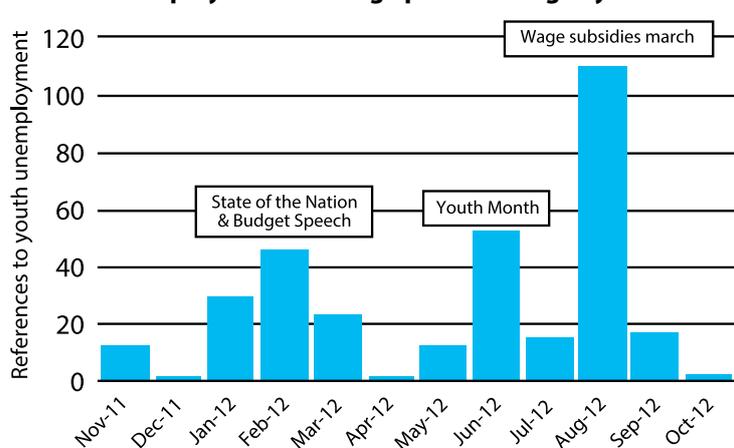
Although youth unemployment is an emotional issue, little opinion is expressed around government initiatives and youth unemployment. At times when government received most criticism in media around this issue, it has mainly been generated by opposition parties and labour unions.

The opportunity exists for media to play a more constructive role through the provision of holistic coverage that includes private sector initiatives and practical information for youth that assists them in finding employment.

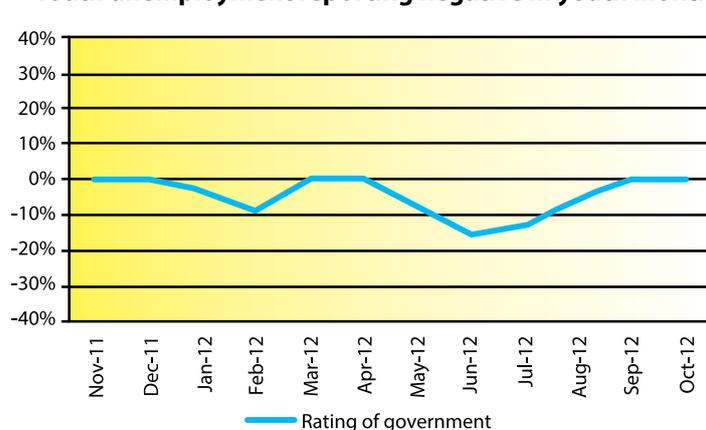
The private sector can use media to profile their various employment initiatives and highlight vacancies that they need filled and the requirements for those positions.

Moreover, through regular coverage, media can highlight the national scarce skills of the country and how these skills can be developed through education and training.

Youth unemployment coverage peaks during key events



Youth unemployment reporting negative in youth month



Graphs : Media Tenor South Africa

## THE WAY FORWARD...



**When Communicating:** When using mainstream media in communicating to young people consideration should be given to SABC 1, Daily Sun, Metro FM and Ukhozi FM which have the greatest reach with youth.



**Information Drive:** All communication should take on an information and educational approach on the initiatives available to youth. Information must be clear and concise as well as mobile-friendly.



**Talking to Media:** Youth opportunities must be packaged in a way that makes it easy for media to use. Media should be engaged to include private sector initiatives and practical information to ensure holistic coverage.

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