

# **New Futures Programme, South Africa Graduate Follow-up Study**

**Prepared for SchoolNet South Africa**

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# **New Futures Programme South Africa**

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## **Graduate Follow-up Study**

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**The follow-up study was carried out and the report prepared by:**

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## ***Acronyms and Abbreviations***

<b>AED</b>	Academy for Educational Development (USA)
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>NFP</b>	New Futures Programme
<b>NFP 1</b>	New Futures Programme – Phase One of the pilot
<b>NFP 2</b>	New Futures Programme – Phase Two of the pilot
<b>PBL</b>	Project Based Learning
<b>Saide</b>	South African Institute for Distance Education
<b>SNSA</b>	SchoolNet South Africa

# Background

## Introduction

SAIDE was asked by SchoolNet SA to collaborate in a follow-up study to survey and interview graduates about their experience on the *New Futures South African Programme*, their current employment status, and what features of the programme were of greatest value.

## Approach used for follow up study

- In collaboration with SchoolNet SA and the AED representative a general follow up survey questionnaire, a schedule of questions for a focus groups discussion, and two in depth interviews schedules were designed and developed.
- The follow up survey was administered online using Survey Monkey;
- A focus group discussion with a selection of 10 participants from both NFP 1 and 2 was held;
- With input from SchoolNet SA two NFP graduates were selected and individual in depth interviews were conducted;
- The description of results from the three investigations were prepared; and
- The findings were synthesised and conclusions were drawn.

## The South African context

Unemployment levels among South Africa's youth are critically high. The number of young people - 18 – 24 year olds - not in employment, education or training in South Africa is estimated to be around three million (Nico Cloete, p3: 2009)<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, it is estimated that in the age group 24- 30 years old, another three million, are also unemployed. The majority of these unemployed youth lack technical skills, have weak basic education competencies, and are ill prepared to access employment. Added to this, is South Africa's high Gini co-efficient of economic disparity that's virtually unmatched worldwide.

The quality of public schooling is poor. More than 80% of schools are deemed to be dysfunctional. To paraphrase Cloete's words, this is not only an educational problem but it constitutes a social and economic disaster. The need therefore to find a range of diverse programmes and flexible methods of delivery to enable youth to gain the skills, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that are essential for securing quality employment in the 21st Century, is critical. The New Futures Programme is one such option.

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<sup>1</sup> Cloete, N. (ed) 2009 *Responding to the Educational Needs of Post –School Youth, 18 – 24 year old*, Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET): Cape Town.

## The New Futures Programme

AED (Academy of Education Development), with funding from Microsoft Corporation offices in the US and South Africa, approached SchoolNet SA to collaboratively deliver and administer the New Futures Programme (NFP) in Johannesburg, South Africa.

### Programme's aims

The programme aimed were to enable graduates from universities in South Africa who had been unable to secure quality employment after graduating to gain:

- a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT skills - to troubleshoot, diagnose and fix simple to complex computer problems including those that plague hardware, networks, software and communication systems; and
- a broad mix of critical soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work, build and nurture a professional network, communicate professionally, make good choices, and search for jobs, apply and prepare for the interview process, successfully secure entry level jobs, possibly in the ICT sector, and maintain employment and develop their career.

### In pursuant of these aims the following was accomplished:

- An employability programme for youth with a strong focus on using ICT was developed and piloted in two phases with two groups of participants, NFP 1 (October 2009 – March 2010) and NFP 2 (March – June 2010).
- The programme employed an integrated mix of learning activities, using project-based learning, including ICT skills, life and employability skills, work place readiness and electronic mentoring.
- An external evaluation, both formative and summative, was carried out, and recommendation regarding the programme refinement were made.

### Programme method

The NFP team used AED's approach to Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the programme to enable youth to rapidly gain and practice essential skills was . The principles that inform this learning approach include the notion that: learning focused on real-world problems captures students' interest and provokes serious thinking as the students acquire and apply new knowledge in a problem-solving context. The teacher plays the role of facilitator, working with students to frame relevant questions, structuring meaningful tasks and coaching both knowledge development and social skills and student create a product that demonstrates their competencies. As far as was possible, the programme sought to simulate the world of work that would result in the participants being able to demonstrate mastery of relevant skills, abilities and behaviours.

Participants in the NFP attended daily face-to-face session for a period of four months.

In addition to the PBL approach, an online mentoring process was set up. Twenty volunteer mentors drawn from a pool of experienced professionals helped to support the participants. A two week job shadowing opportunity was also structured into the programme in its second phase of delivery (NFP2).



# Description of results

## Introduction

Three questions frame this Follow-up study, they are:

- i. What were the graduate's experience with the New Futures South African Programme?
- ii. What is their current employment status? and
- iii. What features of the programme were perceived to have the greatest value?

The three questions were used as the basis for preparing the questions for the follow up survey, the focus group discussion and the two in- depth interviews. The results of these three research activities are presented in this section.

## 1. Follow up survey

A follow up survey was set up online using Survey Monkey and email invitations to complete the survey were sent to all NFP graduates.

### Response rate

The total number of graduates from both NFP 1 and 2 is 40. Of this total, 32 took part in the survey and of these, 24 completed the survey. From this it can be seen that response rates to specific questions was uneven.

### Respondent's profile

Age range: 22 -33 years old (most were between 23 – 25)

Number of males: 17

Number of females: 15

Languages spoken: A range of nine of South Africa's indigenous African languages were spoke across the group.

The majority of respondents, 14 or 44%, completed their secondary schooling in a rural area; 11, or 34%, in a Township; and 7, or 22%, in an urban area (inner city).

The majority of respondents, 22 or 69%, had obtained a 3 year Diploma as their highest post secondary school qualification. Seven youth, or 22%, had a 1-2 year Certificate; 4, or 12.5%, had an undergraduate university degree; and 3, or 9.4%, had a post graduate university degree (typically an honours degree).

The majority of respondents (15) obtained their qualifications from private Colleges of Further Education; 10 from Universities of Technology; 4 from contact Universities; 3 from state colleges; and 2 from the Unisa, the South African distance education university.

The NFP specifically targeted IT graduates, however, a number of other graduates also participated in the programme. Of the respondents 25 were IT graduates and 7 were from other subject areas.

In summary, the respondents were a diverse group.

### **Expectations, satisfaction and benefits of the NFP**

In response to the question: *At the time you decided to join NFP, what were your three most important expectations of the NFP?*

- The majority of respondents, 20, expected to get and/or improve their IT skills;
- 13 said that they expected to gain work experience;
- 13 also said that they expected to gain employment;
- 5 said they expected to be exposed to professional networking and 5 also said they expected to 'learn more'; and
- 2 expected to gain communication skills and 2 also expected to gain confidence.

In summary, the majority of expectation focused on the acquisition of hard skills. Much importance was also placed on gaining work experience and securing employment.

In response to the question: *To what degree were your expectations met?*

- A majority of respondents, 15, said that their expectations had been surpassed;
- 9 said their expectations had been adequately met; and
- 2 said their expectations had not been met.

The majority of respondents indicated a high level of overall satisfaction with the NFP. Fifteen rated the programme as excellent; 9 as satisfied and 2 as dissatisfied.

The results of the questions relating to *the most important benefits of the NFP* and *the most important skills perspectives/competencies/behaviours learned*, are interesting for the following reasons: The respondent's stated expectations do not necessarily correlate with what they have listed as the *most important benefits* and /or *most important skills/competencies/ behaviours learned*. These results are detailed on Table 1 below, however of key interest is the fact that while 20 respondents stated that they *expected to improve their IT skills*, only 11 mentioned IT skills when responding to the question, *write down the most important skills, perspectives, abilities, competencies, behaviors, etc. that you may have strengthened or gained as a result of participating in the NFP*.

Of equal interest, and worth noting is the fact that whereas only 2 respondents listed *communication skills* as a key expectation, 14 said that communication skills as the *most important benefit of the programme* and 17 as the *most important skill learned*.

### **Graduate's experience of the NFP**

In response to the question: *What were the most helpful soft skills learnt?*

The majority, 15, said *Communication/presentation skills* which ties in with the finding above in which the respondents said the communication skills were the most beneficial and important. Other soft skills mentioned were, *Interpersonal skills* (referred to by 4 respondents) and 2 that said *Time management* skills were most helpful.

In response to the question: *What were the most helpful hard skills learnt?* *Trouble shooting* was highlighted by 5 and *Installing operating systems & software* by 3.

A slightly differently phrased question regarding the *five most important things learnt on the NFP*, clearly highlights the great value placed by the graduates on soft skills. 21 respondents identified *Communication/Presentations* skills as being the most important; 6 *Confidence*; 5 *Networking*; 5 *Interviewing skills*; and some reference to *Creative thinking/respect for your job/critical thinking/team work/time management* etc.

In summary, under the heading of '*most important things learnt*' only soft skills are referred to.

### **Graduate's confidence levels and appreciation**

The 21 graduates who responded to the request to *rate their level of personal confidence before joining the NFP*, all rated themselves as very confident. When the question of confidence was extended to refer to, *confidence to secure quality employment*, 16 respondents said they felt very confident, while five said they did not feel **confident**.

When asked about their *current professional confidence to secure quality employment and develop rewarding career*, the positive response went up from 16 to 21 graduates who all said that they felt *very confident*.

From the graduates overall responses to the survey, it is clear that their experience with the NFP was a positive one, many affirmed the positive value of the programme and expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in the NFP.

### **Graduate's current employment status**

Responses to the question: *If you are currently employed, when did you start this job?* Reflect that of the 20 respondents that are currently employed, 10, or half, were able to secure employment during, or immediately after completion of the NFP. The other 10 spent between one and five months seeking employment before securing a job

Table 1: Expectations of the NFP, benefits and skills/competencies acquired

Key expectations of NFP?	Most important benefits of NFP?	Most important skills / perspectives / competencies/behaviours
Get/improve IT skills: 20	IT skills : 18	IT skills : 11
To gain work experience: 13		
To get employment: 13	Being employable: 4	
To learn more: 5		
Professional networking: 5	Networking: 7	
To gain confidence: 2		Confidence: 8
Communication skills: 2	Communication/ Presentation skills: 14	Communication/ Presentation skills: 17
	Soft skills: 9	
	Team work: 6	
		Inter personal skills: 5
		Time management: 2

In response to the question: *Had you worked in a job for payment (at some time during the 6 months before joining the NFP?)*

Taking the data on the table below at face value, it would appear that the number of youth employed *before* and *after* the NFP had not changed much. However, although it was not possible to formally verify the correctness of this data, information provided during the subsequent focus group discussions and the two in depth interviews conducted, suggest that there may have been various interpretations of the question which asked about the youth's *employment status 6 months before joining the NFP?* For example, it was possible to confirm that not one of the ten graduates that participated in the focus group discussion had been employed in the six months immediately before the NFP, although seven of them had in fact participated in some modest sort of income generating activities that had been interspersed with their studies at various earlier points in their lives.

Interrogation of Table 3, below, also highlights a significant increase in the respondents earnings *after completion* of the NFP. *Before* the NFP, only three respondents earned R5,000 or more, whereas *after* the NFP, there are ten respondents that said they are earning R5,000 or more.

So although the findings in Table 2 are not entirely clear, when read in conjunction with Table 3, it becomes apparent that the impact of the NFP on the respondent's employability and earning capacity is a positive one.

Table 2: Employment status before and after the NFP

Employment status 6 months <i>before</i> joining the NFP	Current employment status ( <i>after</i> completing the NFP)
19/32 (59%)	20/32 (62%)
<b>Formal job with benefits</b>	<b>Formal job with benefits</b>
11/32 (34%)	13/32 (40%)

Table 3: Monthly income before and after the NFP

Total monthly income before joining NFP	Current total monthly income
R 1000 – 2000 = 4	R 1000 – 2000 = 4
R 2000 – 5000 = 13	R 2000 – 5000 = 5
R 5000 – 8000 = 3	R 5000 – 8000 = 7
	R 8000 – 10,000 = 2
	R10,000 – 12,000 = 1

In response to the question: *What is your job title and name of organisation at which you are currently employed?* This question was intended to probe the nature of employment. As can be seen under the section dealing with the respondent's *profile*, 25 of the respondents have an IT qualification and seven are qualified in a range of other fields.

Table 4, below, shows that a significantly greater number of graduates were able to find employment in the IT field. Before the NFP the four respondents had some kind of IT related employment, while, after the NFP, this number had more than doubled, with ten respondents now working in the IT sector.

Table 4: Type of employment before and after the NFP

Type of employment before joining the NFP	Current type of employment ( <i>after</i> completing the NFP)
IT related: 4	IT related: 10
Administration: 6	Administration: 4
Sales related: 2	
Operations management: 3	
Managed own ice cream business:1	
Client liaison: 1	
Workshop controller:1	

Internal business developer:1	Internal business developer: 1 (?)
	Fashion stylist: 1
	Volunteer in medical clinic:1
	Manger of a Petrol station: 1
	Lab assistant: 1

Of the 32 respondents, 13 (40%) were unemployed at the time that survey was administered. Of these, 9 were actively seeking employment; 2 were working as volunteers; 1 was continuing with studies; and 1 stopped seeking employment.

### **Graduate's future plans**

Over all, it was encouraging to see that the majority of the graduates were positively motivated to continue their personal and professional development through further studies and training. When asked about their future plans, 24 respondents said that they planned to further their studies or take part in further training and/or professional development.

The NFP graduates were also clearly motivated to improve their employment positions. When asked about their professional goals, a strong entrepreneurial theme came though. Many stated that they would like to be 'their own boss' and own their own business in the future. A strong desire to move into management positions was also expressed by a number of the respondents.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this survey provides evidence that the understanding and development of soft skills is a highly valued feature of the NFP. A significant correspondence exists between the graduate's responses to questions about the most important skills and behaviours learnt, programme benefits and the features that they view as being of greatest value. As has already been seen, the key programme skills highlighted are communication and presentation skills, linked to these were how to prepare a CV and how to conduct a good interview. Learning to work effectively with others (team work) understanding what is appropriate behaviour in a professional environment, and work related networking were also highlighted. Importantly, the graduates were able in their responses to explain and relate the value of these skills to their workplace.

Personal and professional confidence gained in the NFP and motivation to study /train further and setting of career goals are also flagged as key positive features of the NFP.

## 2. Focus Group discussion

### Selection

Twelve graduates were selected and invited to participate in a focus group discussion. As the focus was held at a central venue in Johannesburg, NFP graduates who currently live and work outside of Gauteng province were not contacted to be part of this process. Graduates from both NFP 1 and 2 were invited to participate.

### Participation rate

Although 12 graduates were invited to participate, eleven attended.

### Group profile

Eleven graduates participated, eight from NFP 1 and three from NFP 2. The group comprised of six young men and five young women. Ten of the group were employed at the time of the focus group discussion and one was working as a volunteer at a medical clinic.

### Discussion process

The focus group discussion kicked off with a request for the graduates to close their eyes and think back to their lives before the NFP and to reflect on changes in their life situation since completing the NFP. These could include changes to, their dreams, knowledge, abilities, plans for the future and social and professional networks.

### ***Discussion on changes experienced since joining and graduating from the NFP***

After reflecting back on their lives before the NFP and then thinking about what has changed in the meantime, and their current situation, there was consensus that the NFP had offered many of the graduates significant employability skills. But, over and above the range of soft and hard skills, the graduates spoke hopefully about their futures. Their confidence and their positive motivation was strongly evidenced during the focus group discussion. Everyone in the group felt that their life had undergone a positive change.

Lerato, one of the young women, was the first to speak about how difficult things were before she joined NFP and reflected on the new opportunities that the programme had open up for her:

*With me before I started the New Future Program life was quite difficult because I completed my diploma, then I had to stay home doing nothing, no job. After I was introduced to New Futures there were a lot of changes in my life. So I've learned a lot from New Futures and it really opened those doors for me. There are many opportunities that I am facing right now and what I have learned is how to communicate ... communication skills.*

Then one of the young male graduates shared how depressed he had been before joining NFP and how the programme had helped to lift this depression:

*My life was difficult hey. From the college ... expecting that when I get out of college I will just get a job easily but it was tough hey. I finished in 2008 and for the next 7/8 months I was so depressed because I couldn't find a job and I was applying and no replies. No interview. So if I was going for an interview it will be easier ... but none of them were calling me. It didn't work out until New Futures came. ... When the programme started it took that depression away.*

Others also spoke about the NFP as providing a **new beginning and hope** for the future. Another young man commented:

*It (the NFP) took away that load that I was carrying on my shoulders. When it came to the finish line (the end of the programme) eish, my heart was so sad, very sad, but all I just told myself is ... you know what it is time for you to go some other places elsewhere. Go and search for greener pastures and after a month I got a job, but it was paying R1,500 a month but I didn't even worry about the cash, the only thing that I worried about is let me just get this experience and I will be fine.*

Some of the graduates pointed to the fact that the NFP had helped them to make the transition from being newly qualified, inexperienced IT graduates, ill prepared for the world of work, to more focused and confident graduates armed with some practical IT experience and soft skills that would help them to negotiate the workplace. In a nutshell, they had become **more employable**.

Donald said he had changed from being 'a jack of all trades' to being proud to call himself 'a technician'. He felt that **the programme had focused him**.

Another male graduate shared the anxiety he had experienced at the thought of getting a job, but possibly not having the **practical experience** to manage it:

*For me it (NFP) came at the right time. I was doing nothing and I was just out from the college so I didn't have practical knowledge in IT. I was having that kind of fear that if I can get employed ... what I am going to do at work because I know nothing about IT to be honest. So I can say it came at the right time and I really ... what can I say? ... I was in need of those things so it came at the right time.*

Masego, a young woman graduate explained how the NFP had helped her to become **self directed**:

*I have experience of how to do what I want to do or get where I want to get and my skills, like I have the knowledge and the strength, whatever it takes to get skills that I need but I also have skills that I need to get where I want. And I am optimistic as well.*



### **Discussion on the graduate's experience of the NFP**

As soon as the group started talking about the changes that the programme had made to their lives, they began to refer to specific features of the programme and the effect (value) that these aspects of the programme had, had on their lives. The range of programme features mentioned went from the acquisition of specific skills like interviewing techniques and CV writing through confidence building, to understanding the value of work experience and the value of the support and personal investment made by the facilitators who delivered the NFP.

The very first young woman to speak flagged the importance of **communication skills**. In response to a probe as to *why communication was so important*, one young man responded:

*For example in an interview, the interviewer will see how you communicate with him or her. So the way you communicate with that person that will be interviewing you, it will be the way they want you to communicate with their clients outside. So it is important, you are selling yourself. Without that I don't think maybe most of the people will be working because most organisations look for communication skills.*

The group then debated whether soft or hard skills took presidents. One of the male graduates said:

*I think it is a 70/30 situation. Communication skills ... an interviewer is looking for those skills. ...they need to see if you can communicate with their clients and the most important thing in this world is the client. So without the client, if you lose a client then you lose your job. So it is important.*

As the discussion continued other examples of how communication skills are applied in the workplace were provided. These included the idea of being able to '**sell yourself**', the need to communicate well in emails and letters, clear communication of tasks and briefs, the ability to communicate with colleagues and in the preparation and presentation of reports.

Masego, highlighted the important role of good communication skills in the work place with another example, this had to do with the tricky matter of renegotiating her work responsibilities which she felt had become too onerous. In the telling of the story, her pride at being confident enough to address her manager in this regard also came through clearly:

*... I mean, for me, it was a big thing to set up a meeting with the manager of the whole department. It was bit, I was like wow okay, and after that I felt that it was an achievement of my communication skills.*

The focus group conversation then turned to the '**outward bound camping**' **experience** and the value of getting to know one another before the NFP formally started. The group felt that it had helped them to bond and to get to know each other

and that this had a positive impact on their classroom interaction, one young man said:

*I think with the camp you get to know one another before you go to class. So if they ever ask you to go and present or do whatever you are not shy as to ... I don't even know them or anything like that. So you already know them from the camp and it was just like informal like that. It was quite helpful.*

Another young man added that:

*It keeps your expectations high. Whatever you see what is happening on the camp you will always expect more to come from that (in the course).*

The conversations wove together individual histories with details of specific benefits and important lessons that various graduates had derived from the NFP. Another young woman spoke in the group of how she had learnt to **prepare a good CV** and **interview skills** and of how the NFP had built her confidence:

*The one thing I like about the program in terms of communication, the way we were writing our CVs, I believe my CV made me go places to where I am today because I got an interview with Alexander Forbes. ... I was confident; I was free in that interview. That is one thing that I learned. ... what is important is how you sell yourself, how you communicate with them. ... they say ... do you have any questions. Before (NFP) I would have said no. I asked them questions and the minute I walked out that door I knew I got it!*

Then a young man added his thoughts on having a well written CV:

*... especially with the CV writing skills it makes your CV stand out there. Nine out of ten chances they are going to call you for maybe an interview or something. So I would say the skills really did help a lot.*

He reported that shortly after the NFP had finished he got a job at the SABS (South African Bureau of Standards).

Another young man spoke about how proud he was of his ability to learn new skills – he had entered the programme with an HR (Human Resource) Management qualification and had had to take extra lessons with Themba (NFP IT facilitator) to catch up on the IT skills. He spoke of the **confidence he gained from applying his new found skills**. During his job shadowing/workplace experience:

*...they (the company at which he did his workplace experience) are installing computer labs in schools... They are using Ubuntu operating systems. So like Ubuntu was new to us because we never did Ubuntu here at New Futures, so I had to learn another new thing. So it was a lot of things within a short period of time but then ... I am proud of myself ... I learned those things... I was working with my friend from the NFP. So we went to North*

*West together... that is where we were installing computers. So it was successful, our installations were good, they were impressed with us.*

On the topic of **job shadowing**, one of the young man talked about how hard it was to make a real connection with the workplace – how hard it was to really understand what is expected if you have not worked before:

*... I gained a lot of experience... in the job shadowing programme because we had to deal with clients, we had to deal with equipment that we were using. We had to deal with a lot of things and you had to deal with your colleagues and your manager, you had to deal with him too.*

In the focus group discussion it also became evident that many of the graduates had learnt to **value their jobs**, even if they were not their 'ideal job', to value work experience and to value earning a living, however modest it was to start with. Willi, a male graduate commented:

*...after a month I got a job, but it was paying R1,500 a month but I didn't even worry about the cash, the only thing that I worried about is let me just get this experience and I will be fine.*

Lungi, one of the woman graduates, the only one in the focus group not to have secured formal employment yet, spoke passionately about the voluntary work she was doing at a township-based medical clinic. She described how she has been trained to administer HIV tests and counselling. She spoke at length about the challenges of offering counselling to men, old enough to be her grandfather. She spoke about how she had been very shy before joining the NFP, but now she felt **more confident** and had also gained communication skills which helped her to do this work. She said that she was proud of her **time management skills** which she attributed to the NFP. Lungi tried to remain upbeat, even though she was really still struggling to find formal employment:

*I just pray that something will come up. I am (only) earning R1,500, but I told myself as long as I wake up every day (I will go to the clinic) and you know, when it comes to time management they can even see ... I am really on time.*

The huge effort and **personal investment of the NFP facilitators in the Programme** was acknowledged and referred to by numerous graduates in the focus group discussion, one Bayanda, a male graduate said of himself:

*I was a naughty student I do admit. I didn't know when to grow up, you know. My behaviour was just all over, it wasn't good. But now I've changed, I am a better person thanks to NFP.*

When asked what in particular had caused the positive change, the answer was unequivocal:

*Sophia! Sophia (NFP facilitator) guided me and taught me a lot of things and to me I looked up to her. She told me about her past and how she got to where she was at that point. So like most of the NFP officials they knew that I was a troubled kid so now even though they didn't drop me, but Sophia was like outstanding out of all of them. So she went all out to do things for me that she wouldn't normally do as an NFP official. She advised me about a lot of things, she taught me a lot of things. ... yeah Sophia was like a big sister.*

Another male graduate added:

*They really touched us in some way or another... Themba or whoever, they were just special, all of them.*

The importance of having someone who is interested in you, someone rooting for you, someone to listen to you and to be a **role model and guide**, was emphasized by numerous graduates. Some like *B* experienced that strongly through the engagement with one of more of the programme facilitators, while others developed meaningful relationships with their eMentors.

Responding to the question 'what in the NFP caused the positive change?' One of the male graduates responded that **his relationship with his mentor** had been key to stimulating positive change. He observed:

*For me I would say my mentor. I had a mentoring program. We are still in contact with each other until now. For me I would say my mentor. He has been there for me.  
... He even got me a job.*

Another male graduate, Sonwabo, was also assisted by his mentor to get a job. Three of the ten graduates in the focus group said that they were still in contact with their mentors (a year after the programme had finished). All agreed that the mentoring component of the programme was very important, even though in a few instances it did not work out well. For example, in one instance, it was reported that the mentor made inappropriate approaches to one of the woman graduates. In a couple of other cases, the mentor was just too busy to offer the necessary support or there was a lack of understanding regarding the nature of the mentoring role. This emphasizes the importance of careful selection, briefing and monitoring of mentors.

Importantly, the woman graduate who had, had the bad experience with the male mentor had been able to assert herself in the situation and when she reported what had happened to one of the programme facilitators, she got their full backing.

In a very different example, Willi reported on how he had been able to assert himself in the workplace and negotiate a change in his terms of employment from a contract position to a permanent position. This he ascribed to the confidence gained on the NFP in general.

***Discussion on the features of the programme that are of the greatest value (and should not be left out of any future version of the programme)***

All graduates cited a variety of programme features that they believed were critical to the success of the programme and should therefore definitely be included in any future version of this programme. Key amongst these was the focus on soft skills, the practical IT /technical component, job-shadowing and eMentoring.

The value of the **soft skills** learnt through the NFP became one of the main themes of the whole focus group discussion. Communication and presentation skills were referred to over and over again.

Although some debated about the ideal soft skill/hard skill (technical skill) balance, the group generally agreed that soft skills should be allocated about 60% of the programme time, and hard skills 40%.

All of the graduates in the focus group that had participated in the **job shadowing** experience (NFP 2) felt that it helped to crystallize the nature of workplace culture and the requirements for successful engagement in a professional environment.

The majority of the graduates emphasized the value that they derived from the **eMentoring** component of the programme. During the focus group interview it became particularly clear that this element of the programme was very important in providing support, boosting confidence and generally pointing these young people in the right direction.

The initial bonding experience facilitated by the **weekend camp** that preceded the NFP (Outward bound) was greatly valued by the graduates from NFP 1 (the graduates from NFP 2 did not have an away weekend together). The consensus was that it should be included as a feature of any future programme.

Bar one graduate who did not enjoy the voice training exercises and one who did not enjoy the car washing fundraising project, there was nothing in the two New Futures pilot programmes that the group thought should be left out of any future version of the programme.

Two strong recommendations made by the group for any future delivery of this programme were that a dedicated venue be secured for the duration of the programme. The graduates experienced being moved around from one venue to another, in the Sci- Bono centre, as very disruptive. They also strongly urged the organizers of any future programme to try and ensure that there are sufficient computers (laptops) for each programme participant. The group felt that having to share a laptop led to a range of frustrations and that it was not an efficient use of time as one person was often 'hanging around' waiting while the other was busy working on the computer.

## **Conclusion**

All the graduates said that they felt that the NFP had made them more confident personally and professionally. Many spoke of the depressing situations they had been in before the NFP, and how the NFP had presented them with a way out of their frustration (and despair for some) by offering them hope and supporting them to achieve their goals.

They also all agreed that they had become much more employable. This was attributed to their exposure to a range of soft skills and the practical technical experience gained on this programme. Typically, the soft skills are absent from school and college/university programmes and college/university IT programmes tend to be dominantly theoretical in nature and void of opportunity to implement learning in practice, resulting in ill prepared graduates. In general, the graduates now see themselves as able to take charge of their personal and professional lives better.

### 3. In depth interviews with two NFP graduates

#### Introduction

The in depth interviews were done as part of this follow up study to provide a more detailed account of the context of the lives of two of the NFP graduates and to show the impact of the NFP on their personal and professional lives. Two mini case studies, intended to exemplify the kinds of challenges encounter by many South African youth, at the same time tracking their learnings from the NFP, largely recorded in their own words.

The selection of these two graduates for the in depth interviews was purposive, one female and one male graduate was selected, one from an urban, township setting and one from a deep rural setting in order to compare and contrast their experiences.

#### Mathapelo's Story: Making the path by walking it



#### ***Growing up on the East Rand***

Mathapelo Sehume (Mathapelo – *Mother of Prayer* in SeSotho) grew up with her grandmother in KwaThema on the East Rand near Springs. Her grandmother was a pensioner of modest means, having to care for five children, Mathapelo, her brother, a step sister and two cousins. Her parent's circumstances were difficult and her

mother and father separated. Later her father lost his job as a boiler maker and has remained unemployed.

Mathapelo attended primary school where the language of instruction was English (it had been a Model C School, a previously whites only school which had opened up to all races after 1991). This provided her with a good foundation in English language usage which has stood her in good stead. Today, people comment on her English proficiency.

She attended high school in Tsakane Township also on the East Rand. With her family struggling to make ends meet, her Dad used his savings to buy an ice cream machine. While still at school, Mathapelo started selling ice cream on the weekends at the taxi rank with her Dad.

On completing Matric (graduating from secondary school), Mathapelo registered with Boston College in Springs to do an IT course. Her Dad, eventually gave her the ice cream machine and Mathapelo divided her day between studying in the mornings and selling ice cream in the afternoon. Mathapelo reports:

*On a good day, I could sell about R150 worth of ice cream, on a bad day only R50 and then I still had to pay for the ice cream mixture, the electricity and to have the machine serviced. But this money paid for my transport to the College, from KwaThema to Springs was R80 a week.*

### **Mathapelo's dream - then**

When asked why she had chosen to study IT Mathapelo answered:

*Right from when I was at school, I liked doing hair, so I used to do some hair dressing as well and also earned some money like that. My dream was to own a beauty spa, but my Dad said I must have some hard skills so I registered for the Microsoft Certificate Engineer (MSCE). I had hoped to then do Business Studies and to open my own beauty spa.*

Completing her initial IT studies was a challenge:

*There were only two of us doing the A+ Certificate, it was challenging. At Boston College you have to learn on your own, there are no lectures, it is all self study. They give you a CD or a DVD and you have to work through it on your own. It was boring as the material is not interactive. But I learnt to be self disciplined and to do my own research on the internet.*

### **Taking the next step**

Talking to Mathapelo, it was evident that she had quickly developed a good sense of what she needed to do, what steps to take to actualize her dream. She realized that she lacked work experience, the course that she had completed had been predominantly theoretical, so she started to look for an opportunity to gain work



experience. She had hoped to secure a Learnership or an internship. Searching on the Microsoft website she came across the advertisement for the New Futures Programme (NFP). The ad talked about developing entrepreneurial and technical skills and preparation for the world of work. She realized that this course could be a “stepping stone” for her.

Mathapelo describes finding the NFP as being, “the right thing at the right time”. She says of herself:

*I was not confident as an individual in general and also not confident of my skills. My nature is shy and I tend to withdraw.*

Yet, she also knew that she did not want a life like her parents’ life:

*I saw how we struggled because of our family which could not be together, my father losing his job, my parents separating, having to live with my grandmother... I wanted my life to be different, I had to make a choice and find a way to change my life...*

She also did not want to be like the girls that she saw “dropping out and having babies, I did not want that for me!”

### **Learning to stand and be confident**

Mathapelo described the personal and professional gains she derived from participating in the NFP enthusiastically. It is clear that she greatly valued the involvement and support of the Programme facilitators, that her confidence grew and that many of the soft skills learnt, helped her to prepare for the world of work:

*Firstly we received the best support from the NFP facilitators, especially from Sis Vi and Sis Sophia. They helped so much to motivate us and we gained confidence.*

*The facilitators knew us as individuals, they made the time, they gave us what we needed to stand and be confident.*

*We had one-on-one sessions and Sophia would tell us what to expect in the world of work. I still apply what I learnt. For example, how to work well in a group, the importance of being friendly - small things that make a big impact. Eye contact is another thing, it’s something that is not practiced in black African culture. It is considered disrespectful to look directly at an older person or at someone in authority. I also learnt to sell myself through the mock interviews that we did and through preparing my CV.*

*At the same time I could be working with Themba like crazy – he was able to take my technical skills a step further. Themba and me and about seven others would remain for an hour after the course each day and we became Networking gurus.*

Mathapelo also reflected on what she had learnt from her peers in the course:

*Phindi is a person who respects every one, she values everyone, Thandiswa also is very respectful of others and Olga, I learnt the importance of time from her, to value time.*

### **Putting learning into practice**

When asked about how she came to get her current job at SchoolNet South Africa, Mathapelo said that about half way through the NFP, she had been alerted to the job vacancy by the NFP administrator, Beauty. Mathapelo and one other NFP participant put forward their CVs and were both interviewed. Mathapelo was offered the job. She started work at SchoolNet immediately, initially on a half day basis. She would participate in the NFP in the morning and after lunch would work at SchoolNet. She is happy to be earning her first formal salary – R8,000 per month.

Prior to getting the SchoolNet job, she had already started applying for other jobs, but none of these had worked out:

*I got two interviews but nothing came of them, in both cases they said I needed experience.*

The position that Mathapelo currently has with SchoolNet (a NGO focusing on the integration of ICTs into education) is as a Project Administrator. Her main responsibilities are: Organizing training; keeping expense schedules; writing project reports; and Help Desk training. She would like to do more of the Help Desk training work, but she needed to be able to drive herself to the training venues and at the moment she is still learning to drive.

When probed about her level of job satisfaction, Mathapelo admits that at first she felt a bit frustrated because she was not directly applying her IT skills in this position, but then she realized that it is providing her with work experience and that she is learning new things daily. She reflects: *“In anything you do, there is always something to learn.”* From her previous failed job interviews, she has learnt the importance of *“having experience”*.

### **Shift your mind: Feed yourself**

When asked what advice she would give on dealing with the enormous problem of youth unemployment in South Africa, Mathapelo reflected:

*The most important change that needs to occur in the youth of South Africa is a mind shift - a shift away from a sense of entitlement.*

She went on to say:

*Grants do make a difference, but work makes more of a difference, even ‘small jobs’ like picking up litter in the townships, even if you work for a stipend, it*

*is some sort of experience and it builds in one way or another. There needs to be shift from the notion of 'the world feeding you, to, you feeding yourself'.*

These ideas she linked back to the NFP, commenting that she thought that including fund raising activities in the Programme was a good thing, for example:

*In the second pilot phase of the NFP the group needed money to cover their transport, instead of trying to find additional sponsorship, they were tasked with setting up a car wash and a food stall and they raised the money in that way.*

She felt that the general school curriculum should include the type of soft skills that were offered on the NFP as well as a choice of some more vocational subjects, like hair dressing. If these were a part of basic education, it would be a way of up scaling the work readiness for many young people.

Finally, Mathapelo commented on the fact that people are lazy to read:

*We should read to grow the mind. If the mind is empowered, one can break down a whole lot of barriers.*

### **Mathapelo's dream – now**

After completing the NFP and after about a year's work experience, Mathapelo's dream has stayed constant – she still dreams about owning and running a spa, but her planned approach to achieving this has changed a bit and the dream has been elaborated. Rather than enroll for a Business Studies course, Mathapelo hopes to go to university to study Industrial Psychology and Human Resource (HR) Management. Then to put the new qualification into practice, she thinks it would be good to work in a company to gain the HR and management experience, before opening her spa.

### **The New Futures Programme: Making a difference**

From this interview, it seemed as though Mathapelo has figured out what she wants to achieve in life. It also seems that she is well prepared to put one foot in front of the other until she gets to where she wants to be. It really felt like she is 'making her road by walking it'. It was therefore interesting to hear her explain what it *was* in the NFP that had made a difference in her life. She explained the positive impact of the Programme as follows:

*If you are alone with no one to reinforce you or to guide you, it is hard to make decision... that is why I say, the facilitators of the NFP were god-sent people.*

*Sometimes one feels down and out and having those people there, at that time, made a big difference!*

- *Now I am able to ask questions, instead of shying away.*
- *I'm now sure I can do it!*
- *I have confidence, it does not necessarily have to show, but it is there on the inside*  
*- from Sis Vi (NFP facilitator) I learnt the importance of being humble – she has*  
*gone far in life, but she is still so humble.*

Mathapelo's response provided clear evidence on a young woman 'on the right track', confident in her own abilities and taking responsibility for realizing her dreams.

## Sonwabo's Story: Finding direction

### ***Growing up in rural Bizana***

Sonwabo Ndelemanane (Sonwabo means Happiness / Joy in IsiXhosa) grew up in Bizana in rural Eastern Cape. He describes his early childhood growing up in *i khaya elikhulu* – his grandparent's homestead - as one of 27 grandchildren.

He says:

*My grandfather was an inspiration to me. He taught me how to take care of stock, cows, how to ride horses, to plant and to plough. When my grandfather died, I did this work alone with my cousin who was also my best friend.*

After his grandparent's death, tensions arose and the families, who had all lived together, and they split up. They left the grandparents homestead and moved to their own houses. In the last three years of high school Sonwabo lived with his immediate family – his mother and three siblings. His father worked on the mines in Johannesburg. In 2003, his father had become paralyzed in a car accident and could no longer work as a miner and so the family had no income. Being the first born, Sonwabo felt he had to try and contribute towards supporting his family. He tells the story of how difficult life was:

*There was no money for school fees, not even enough for food. We had no electricity and I had to fetch water from the river. It was a terrible situation, but we had to cope in order to proceed. I had learnt from my grandmother to be business minded and I started selling sweets at school to make some money.*

Despite this struggle, he was able to complete his schooling (Matric). He then got a job in his village, where for about a year he worked at a local trading store, operating the public telephone. His income amounted to about R 200 per month. This was very little and his father encouraged him to go to Durban to look for a better paying job.



### **Moving to the city: Work and study**

Although he was very scared as he had never been to Durban before and had only heard bad stories about crime in the big city, he linked up with a friend from Bizana and soon found employment – first temporary and then permanent. The job entailed hard manual labour. He helped to install granite kitchen and bathroom surfaces, earning about R1,000 per month. After about a year-and-a-half of doing this, his great aunt offered to pay for him to study at a college in Durban:

*I went for IT because I did not know what to do, but I had a friend who was doing it and I thought it would be easy... At college the computer was totally new to me, even though in Bizana, my high school was a new school built in 2000 and sponsored by Vodacom so there were about 20 PCs there, the teachers did not know how to use them, so we hardly even managed to see them.*

While attending the college, he lived with this great aunt, but she was sick so he had to look after her while he was studying. There was no extra money, so he had to work while he was studying. He got a job delivering bread from 12 – 6.00 p.m. every day and he learnt from another aunt how to buy perfume from a wholesaler and to resell it:

*It was hard, but worth it! In 2007 I successfully completed the National Certificate in IT (information systems and programming). My results were awesome, but the course was mostly theory.*

At this point, Sonwabo's father had been paid compensation for the injuries he sustained in the car accident. He offered to use some of this money to pay for Sonwabo to further his studies. The humid climate in Durban had made Sonwabo ill, so this time he registered at a college in Johannesburg.

### **Then a move to an even bigger city - Johannesburg**

Sonwabo reports that in Johannesburg he encountered new friends from different backgrounds:

*I was the newcomer in Joburg, I had to experience new things and I had to learn what was right and what was not. I experienced a lot of crazy stuff, like clubbing and alcohol, but I knew I had to have something – a diploma - to show my parents. I am glad to have parents like them.*

*I managed to balance my life and I did finish my studies, some did not graduate, I obtained the Diploma in IT at the end of 2009.*

### **The struggle to find employment**

On graduating with a two year national diploma, Sonwabo struggled to find a job. There were no opportunities at home in Bizana and in Johannesburg it was also

difficult to find a job. He realized that experience was the key, but did not know how to get it. By chance, he wandered into the Sci-Bono Centre in Newtown, Johannesburg (he had heard that they had some kind of employment placement centre) and then heard about the New Futures Programme (NFP).

### ***New skills: New future***

When asked about the features of the NFP, if any, that contributed towards securing employment, Sonwabo responded, saying:

*The Programme was phenomenal because it taught both IT and soft skills. My background was poor, so my communication skills (English language skills) were poor. For me especially, given my rural background, the soft skills had great value.*

Sonwabo described how he had been advised by the NFP facilitators to work extra hard at verbal and written English and how he had been supported to do so. He also recounted how he was helped to learn how to “deal with his nerves”:

*I struggled to communicate effectively, but I managed to overcome those nerves through learning breathing techniques.*

He reported proudly on the presentation he made at Toast Masters – he spoke for six minutes about his own life. He also learnt interview skills and to make eye contact.

He had come to understand that a lack of networking skills and a lack of access to information were major barriers to finding a job. He learnt the importance of cultivating relationships and networking.

The NFP also provided opportunity to work hands-on with computers, to assemble computers from scratch, to load applications, configure networks and even work on the server:

*I needed this experience of working with computers, at college, it was mainly theory. For success in my career, I had to do practical, I had to get technical skills. The practical work also helped me to realize that I would be better at networking computers rather than working in programming where I would need to cram a lot of codes.*

Another positive feature of the NFP that Sonwabo highlighted was the eMentoring component of the programme. He felt that he had received invaluable guidance from his mentor, Nicki and expressed how much he valued his ongoing relationship with her. In particular she had also helped him with his English, recommended books and helped him to secure a learnership (a government sponsored internship program in South Africa) with the company where he is currently employed.

Also highlighted as a great benefit of the NFP, was the job shadowing experience:

*It is very important, because it is real. I learnt how to take care of equipment and tools, I was given responsibility and I gained confidence when I was sent*

*to the North West province to help install a new IT system. I even slept in a hotel for the first time.*

Sonwabo summed up the positive changes in his skills, competencies, behaviours and attitudes – both personal and professional as follows:

*Even though I was successful as a student, I was a bit lost, I could not find a job. I looked at all the advertisements and saw they required experience. I did not know how to get it.*

*Before NFP I was not ready for work, I had communication challenges and no skills in conducting interviews. Now I am more comfortable and confident. I value what I can do and I know what I can't do and I can articulate what I still need to learn. I feel better prepared, NFP gave me many resources, but I know there is still more to learn, I want to be a life-long learner.*

### **Getting a job**

After completing the NFP he had applied for about six jobs and had been invited to two interviews. In one instance, the incumbent of the position was required to have their own car, this exclude Sonwabo. In the other, he was told that he was “*too qualified*” for the job requirement. Then Nicki, Sonwabo’s mentor, directed him to apply to I-Com Services where he was accepted onto a learnership (apprenticeship) programme. I-Com (a company specializing in IT services, asset management and financial services). Sonwabo is employed as an IT technician to offer technical support to the call centre and other users in the company.

His personal circumstances are still difficult, getting to work on time - he is very aware of the importance of punctuality - in the morning means that he has to leave home around 04h00 and travel on three trains from Germiston to Hatfield in Pretoria. On the return trip it's the same three trains back, often he gets back home after 19h00 in the evening, making it a 15 hour day.

He speaks very positively of his experience at I-Com, speaking appreciatively of I-Com as a learning organization, an organization that provides opportunity for personal and professional growth. It is obvious that he is excited about the positive interpersonal relationships that he has established and it is clear that his self confidence is growing:

*I learn new stuff every day- this is my passion! I am learning more IT skills; I am learning and applying at the same time; and I am interacting well with others – the people in the call centre do not log calls to the IT department- instead they go straight to Sonwabo.*

*I also help some of the people with their personal computers at home, it gives me more experience.*



## **Future plans**

Sonwabo believes that there is a good opportunity for him to grow at I-Com. His three month probationary period is up in few days time and he is sure that he will be offered the opportunity to study further, to do the Cisco ComptTIA A+ and CCENT Certificates for computer support and Network technicians. He says he sees himself at I-Com for the next five years, with obvious pride he says:

*There are three of us in the IT networking department – I am the only Black person – it's a challenge and the people are nice.*

Sonwabo has other dreams too, to have his own business and to share the skills and learning that the NFP have afforded him with other young graduates:

*I also want to build six computers from scratch – I will buy the necessary hard and soft ware to do that and then I will be able to set up an Internet Café, it will be my own business. In the meantime, I-Com has provided me with the opportunity to practice putting computers together.*

*My big dream is to have an IT company offering technical support. I will recruit graduates and offer Internships or Learnerships and share what I have learnt. I want to help young graduates to get experience.*

Ultimately what strikes one about Sonwabo is that he values the benefits of education and the opportunities he has been afforded and has been able to maximize these.

*Growing up in Bizana I was not sophisticated, I did not have money, but I always knew that to get something for myself I would need to get it through studying. NFP has prepared me for this job, now I dream to study further to do a degree at a university.*

In the context of a youth culture that often appears to be one of entitlement and self serving, it is hugely encouraging to encounter a young man, who has a vision for his future and who has learnt to take responsibility for achieving that vision.

## Conclusion

Although the two graduates who participated in the in depth interviews come from different living contexts, one urban and one rural, they both experienced a range of challenges to get to where they are today. What they have in common is a sense of wanting a different life from the one they saw when growing up. Both seemed to have the understanding that education and training was an important first step on this road. Both had a realistic appreciation of the fact that they needed work experience. Remarkably, they both display a strong sense of responsibility and an understanding that they are in charge of their own futures.

Both display a keen sense of determination, doggedly putting one foot in front of the other to get to their end goal, yet both realizing and acknowledging the value and role played by the NFP in bringing positive change to their lives. Both gained greatly from the strong interpersonal relationships that they forged. Mathapelo with the programme facilitators, who motivated her and offered support, thus growing her confidence.

Sonwabo also had very good interpersonal relationships with the programme facilitators, but found a personal strong champion in his mentor.

Mathapelo spoke about the value of having '*someone to guide you, someone to help you with decisions, someone who is there for you*' – particularly when you are on your own.

Sonwabo reflected a lot on the fact that he had grown up in a rural area – '*growing up in Bizana I was not sophisticated*' – and therefore the value of having a caring mentor to guide you, to provide direction as you negotiate, not only the big city, but the need to catch up on English language skills not mastered in a rural school setting and to offer support for entry into the work place.

Both acknowledged the value of the soft skills learnt on the programme and the huge boost given to their confidence. Mathapelo talked about being confident enough to ask questions and of feeling she *can do it!*

# Overall findings

## Introduction

The very large number of young people not in employment, education or training is one of South Africa's largest socio-economic challenges.

In the light of this, the need for programmes like the New Futures Programme is unquestionable.

The data gathered from the survey, focus group discussions and the two in depth interviews held with graduates of the NFP in this follow up study provides evidence of the programmes' value. The overall programme aim is to make young IT graduates employable. This is to be achieved by offering them a broad range of practical ICT skills congruent with the requirements of entry level IT technicians. Importantly, the IT skills component is coupled with a range of soft skills that are integrated into the programme to enable the graduates to successfully navigate the world-of-work. The fostering of 'employability' skills, attitudes and behaviours are further enabled through the inclusion of the eMentoring programme and the opportunity to do some job shadowing.

As shall be evidenced in this synthesis of findings, all the graduates that participated in this follow-up study felt that they had benefited significantly from the NFP.

The follow-up study had three aspects to it, a follow-up survey questionnaire, a focus group discussion with 12 youth, and in-depth interviews with two NFP graduates.

A key finding of this study is the fact that the same key issues are drawn through all three levels of the study. The results from all three aspects of the study are congruent and serve as a method of triangulation. The focus group discussion results elaborate the results of the survey, and the in-depth interviews serve to further elaborate the results of the focus group. This provides both a rich description of the overall findings, as well as a solid basis for answering the three central questions of this study: *What were the graduate's experience on the New Futures South African Programme? What is their current employment status? and What features of the programme were of greatest value?*

## Findings

### ***What were the graduate's experience on the New Futures South African Programme?***

At a personal level, the graduates reflected on the positive changes brought about in their lives through their involvement in this programme. Many of the graduates were unemployed at the point of joining the NFP - some had been without employment for more than two years. As a consequence, they had felt depressed and unmotivated. They reported on how their participation in the NFP had given them new hope and had supported them in gaining the confidence needed to embark on the world of work.

They also reflected on the numerous ways in which they had become more employable by gaining technical skills and soft skills as well as some orientation to the workplace through the work placement and mentoring components of the NFP.

### ***What is the graduate's current employment status?***

The results of the survey reflect that 20 of the 32 survey respondents (62.5%) are currently employed. Ten, or half, were able to secure employment during, or immediately after completion of the NFP. The other ten spent between one and five months seeking employment.

A significant increase in the graduate's earnings *after completion* of the NFP is evidenced. *Before* the NFP, only 3 respondents earned R5,000 or more, whereas *after* the NFP, there are 10 respondents who said they are earning R5,000 or more. It is therefore apparent that the impact of the NFP on the respondent's employability and earning capacity has been a positive one.

Data from on the graduate's profile provided in the survey shows that 25 of the graduates have an IT qualification and 7 are qualified in a range of other fields. Currently, 10 graduates are employed in the IT sector and the other 10 are in a range of other fields, including four in administrative positions. However, 10 represents a significant increase. Before the NFP, four respondents reported having had some kind of IT related employment. The number of graduates in IT has therefore more than doubled.

### ***What features of the programme were of greatest value?***

#### ***Commitment and engagement of the NFP Facilitators: Having someone rooting for you!***

This aspect did not come up in the survey, however in both the focus group discussions and the two in-depth interviews, the value of the facilitator's engagement came through very strongly. The graduates identified the commitment and individual engagement of the NFP facilitators and their mentors as key to building their confidence and personal motivation. The fact that someone took an interest in them, listened to them and was there to provide some guidance, made a significant positive difference in the graduate's lives. Some graduates articulated that the facilitators had become their role models. This finding is of particular significance in the context of South Africa. The majority of young people do not have the opportunity of growing up in a nuclear family, instead they grow up in single-parent households or with grandparents who may often be struggling with large families to make ends meet. The poor public schooling system (well documented) is largely characterised by overcrowded classes, under resourced schools and poorly qualified teachers, means that many young people complete their schooling with little or no support or interest from both family and teachers.

The fact that the NFP used a team-teaching approach, with, generally more than one facilitator present at a time, gave the facilitators time to have this level of individual engagement with the youth.

Both Mathapelo and Sonwabo, in their in-depth interviews, spoke about how much they had gained from the strong interpersonal relationships that they forged with the programme facilitators who motivated them and offered support, thus growing their confidence.

Mathapelo also spoke about the value of having '*someone to guide you, someone to help you with decisions, someone who is there for you*' – particularly when you are on your own.

***Personal and professional confidence building – Yes I can!***

All the graduates participating in the follow-up study articulated the importance of personal and professional confidence gained. This they related both to the positive support and affirmation provided by the NFP facilitators as well as to confidence gained from new skills acquisition. This came through clearly in all three aspects of the study. In the focus group discussion, particularly, many of the graduates spoke of the depressing situations they had been in before the NFP. They described how the NFP had presented them with a way out of their frustration (and despair) by offering both hope and professional development. This built their confidence and made them feel that they could achieve their goals. Mathapelo talked about being confident enough to ask questions and of feeling that she *can do it!*

In general, the graduates reflected that they now see themselves as able to take charge of their personal and professional lives better.

***Soft skills - Very important***

From the perspective of young people, now in formal employment, all the graduates in this study commented on the value of the soft skills learnt during the NFP.

The survey results reflect the fact that even though most of the programme participants had entered the programme with the expectation of strengthening their technical skills, they now appreciate the critical importance of the range of soft skills learnt during the programme. In particular, the following were highlighted: communication and presentation skills; preparing CVs and refining their interview techniques; learning to work effectively with others (team work); understanding what is appropriate behaviour in a professional environment; and work related networking. Importantly, the graduates were able in their responses to explain and relate the value of these skills to their workplace.

Worth noting, is the fact that whereas only two graduates responding to the survey listed communication skills as a key expectation, 14 listed communication skills as the most important *benefit* of the programme and 17 as the most important *skill learned*.

In the focus group, the graduates all expressed the idea that they had become much more employable. This, they attributed to their exposure to the combination of a range of soft and technical (or hard) skills gained on the programme. They observed that typically, the soft skills are absent from school, as well as from college and university programmes.

In the in-depth interviews, both respondents acknowledged the value of the soft skills learnt on the programme and the huge boost given to their confidence. In particular, Sonwabo spoke about the need to catch up on English language skills not mastered in a rural school setting. He commented on how Sophia, and his mentor Nicki, had put extra time and effort into supporting him to improve both his spoken and written English.

English is that language of economic development in South Africa (and globally) yet for the majority of South Africa's people, it is a second or even third language. This coupled with poor English language teaching in the most public schools results in many youth leaving school with a very weak ability to communicate effectively in English. The value of this type of additional language coaching can therefore not be underestimated.

***Technical skills – gaining experience - invaluable!***

The graduates also commented very positively on the value of the practical, technical programme component. Thirteen graduates in their response to the survey had stated that *gaining practical experience* was a key expectation of the NFP.

The IT training that most of the graduates had, had at college and university was dominantly theoretical in nature and therefore did not adequately equip them for the workplace. Both in the focus group and in-depth discussions, the graduates reported how, while seeking employment, they kept on coming up against the problem of 'lack of experience'. As new graduates this proved to be a real *Catch 22* situation which would have been even more difficult to overcome without the intervention of the NFP. Over and above the experience requirement stipulated by most companies and organisations, some of the graduates in the focus group expressed his anxiety at the thought of entering formal employment without any practical experience.

In the in-depth interviews, Mathapelo spoke about the positive value gained from the extra practical sessions that she and about seven other NFP participants had set up with Themba (the IT facilitator) after hours and how they had become "*network gurus*"!

The NFP opportunity to work hands-on with computers, to assemble computers from scratch, to load applications, configure networks and even work on the server really excited Sonwabo:

*I needed this experience of working with computers, at college, it was mainly theory. For success in my career, I had to do practical, I had to get technical skills. The practical work also helped me to realize that I would be better at networking computers rather than working in programming where I would need to cram a lot of codes.*

Sonwabo reflected - the practical technical work had given him a clearer understanding of what he wanted to do – it gave him “*direction*”.

### ***Job shadowing - workplace experience***

Linked to the challenge of gaining practical experience, the graduates also acknowledged the importance of the work placement component of the NFP as it helped to orientate them to the requirements of the workplace. During the focus group discussions, those that had, had the opportunity of jobs shadowing (NFP 2) as well as those that had not had the experience (NFP 1) all agreed, that in any future version of the NFP, this feature should definitely be included.

Sonwabo, in the in-depth interview, highlighted the job shadowing experience as a great benefit of the NFP:

*It is very important, because it is real. I learnt how to take care of equipment and tools, I was given responsibility and I gained confidence when I was sent to the North West province to help install a new IT system.*

### ***Mentoring programme – someone to provide direction***

In the survey, the focus group discussion, and in the in-depth interview graduates spoke positively of the value of the mentoring programme. Responding to the question ‘*what in the NFP caused the positive change?*’ One of the male graduates in the focus group responded that his relationship with his mentor had been key to stimulating positive change in his personal and professional life. He observed:

*For me I would say my mentor. I had a mentoring program. We are still in contact with each other until now. For me I would say my mentor. He has been there for me.  
... He even got me a job.*

Three of the ten graduates in the focus group said that they were still in contact with their mentors (a year after the programme had finished). All agreed that the eMentoring component of the programme was very important, even though in a few instances it did not work out well. Where the eMentoring processes had been reported as not successful, it appeared that the problem lay with the type of person chosen for this position. This emphasizes the importance of careful selection, briefing, preparing and monitoring of mentors.

Sonwabo reflected a lot on the fact that he had grown up in a rural area – ‘*growing up in Bizana I was not sophisticated*’ – and therefore the value of having a caring mentor to guide him was huge – someone to provide direction.

***Dreams and future plans - evidence of the NFP's positive impact***

Evidence of the NFP's positive impact on the graduates was revealed when asked in the survey about current dreams and future plans? It emerged that many of the graduates were strongly motivated to study/train further. Many have also set career goals, setting their sights on management positions or realising their dream of one day owning and running their own businesses.

The same positive sentiments were also expressed by the graduates in the focus group discussion and by Mathapelo and Sonwabo during the in-depth interviews. After completing the NFP and after about a year's work experience, Mathapelo's dream has stayed constant from before the NFP till now. She has dreamt about owning and running a beauty spa. She has a plan for achieving this dream carefully mapped out. First she hopes to go to university to study Industrial Psychology and Human Resource (HR) Management. Then to put the new qualification into practice, she thinks it would be good to work in a company to gain the HR and management experience, before opening her spa.

Sonwabo dreams to have his own business and to share the skills and learning that the NFP have afforded him with other young graduates:

*My big dream is to have an IT company offering technical support. I will recruit graduates and offer Internships or Learnerships and share what I have learnt. I want to help young graduates to get experience.*

In talking about their dreams, both Mathapelo and Sonwabo realize and acknowledging the value and role played by the NFP in bringing positive change to their lives.

## **Conclusion**

When asked about which features of the NFP should be kept in and which should be excluded in any future version of this programme, there was consensus across the group that all the features should be included and that none should be left out.



# Conclusions and recommendations

As has already been seen, the youth unemployment situation in South Africa needs urgent attention. The recently released (June 2011) diagnostic report of the National Planning Commission (NPC) identifies poor education outcomes and unemployment (and job creation) as the two most important national priorities for eliminating poverty and reducing inequality.

The positive overall findings of the NFP follow-up study present a strong case for offering this programme again in the future. The rich information obtained from the NFP graduates in this follow up study unequivocally answers the three central questions.

## *What were the graduates' experience on the New Futures South African Programme?*

At a personal level, the graduates reflected on various positive changes brought about in their lives through their involvement in this programme. Key among these were that the NFP gave many of the graduates *hope* after being unemployed, some for considerable lengths of time. There were numerous instances in which the graduates reported that the programme had helped to crystalize their career goals and had provided them with the tools to pursue their ambitions. They also reflected, how, by being equipped with a range of new soft and hard skills, they had gained the confidence needed to embark on the world of work. In short they had become more self-directed and more able to take charge of their own lives.

## *What is their current employment status?*

The graduates also reflected on how the acquisition of new technical skills and soft skills, coupled with workplace orientation and one-on-one eMentoring had made them more employable.

As shown, the results of the follow up survey reflect that 20 of the 32 survey respondents (62.5%) are currently employed. Ten, or half, were able to secure employment during, or immediately after completion of the NFP. The other ten spent between one and five months seeking employment. A significant increase in the graduate's earnings *after completion* of the NFP was also evidenced. Whereas *before* the NFP, only 3 respondents earned R5000 or more, *after* the NFP, 10 respondents reported earning R 5000 or more, confirming the NFP positive impact on the graduates' employability and earning capacity.

The data gathered from the follow up survey also showed that *before* the NFP only 4 respondents reported having had some kind of IT related employment. *Currently*, 10 graduates are employed in the IT sector and the other 10 are in a range of other fields. The number of graduates employed as IT technicians has therefore more than doubled.

***What features of the programme were of greatest value?***

The findings of this follow up study are clear, the main features of this programme as it is currently conceptualized, i.e., the combination of practical- technical and soft skills with workplace experience and the eMentoring component – are all essential to the programme's success.

This is confirmed the graduate's response. When asked, during the focus group discussion, about features to be included or excluded from any possible future delivery of the NFP, there was consensus across the group that *all* the features should be included and that none should be left out.

In summary, the findings of the follow up study show that the graduate's experience of the NFP is very positive and the programme aims of *providing a strong foundation across a broad range of ICT and soft skills to enable youth to navigate the world-of-work and search for and secure entry level ICT technical support positions or to start their own ICT technical support businesses*, are well met.

The employability outcome has, to a large extent, been well met with the 62.5% employment rate of the sample of graduates in this study.

The challenge that remains, is how best to take the NFP to scale? While the current face-to-face programme delivery is a well tested and proven approach, it is personnel intensive. Ideal facilitator to participant ratios being around 1:20. It is therefore suggested that it may be more efficient to explore a blended approach to delivery. This would allow for greater flexibility of delivery, cut down on staff contact time and thus support delivery on a much larger scale.

Careful consideration would need to be given to the best 'blend' of delivery methods. Initially, however, it is proposed that the option of delivering certain aspects of the soft skills component through distance education methods (online or electronically prepared on an interactive CD) be thoroughly investigated and costed. In particular, aspects such as language, competencies, preparation so CVs, report writing and the like may be well suited to distance methodologies. While other soft skills may require a strong inter personal involvement in delivery. It is also recommended that the hard skills component continue to be offered using a classroom-based, face-to-face approach. Other key features such as the eMentoring component and work place experience can be implemented in much the same way as they were in the pilot programme.

It is believed that with the necessary refinements (for more detail see NFP Summative Evaluation Report, Saide July 2010) the NFP will make an invaluable contribution to the national project of skilling youth for successful employability. It is therefore hoped that the NFP will be taken to scale in ways that have been recommended above.



## **Appendix 1: Instruments**

### **List of instruments used in the Follow-up Study**

1. General Follow-up Survey (WORD Version)
2. Focus Group Question Schedule
3. In-depth Interview Schedule

## Appendix 1:1

### Survey Questionnaire for Follow up Study on the New Futures South Africa Programme (NFP)

**As a graduate of the NFP you will be asked a series of questions about yourself, this will include questions about your education, expectations, satisfaction with the NFP and the benefits (if any) that you feel you may have derived from participating in the NFP as well as questions regarding your current employment status.**

**This information will remain confidential, individual names will not be used. The responses from this survey will be used solely for the purpose of preparing a narrative account (a story) about the graduate's experiences of the NFP and the relationship (if any) the NFP has to their current employment status. It is hoped to use the success stories to promote the NFP in the future and to improve the programme for other South African youth.**

Do you agree to participate in this survey? Yes/No (*if "no", exit*)  
(*new screen*)

**Thank you for your participation.**

**Please read each question carefully and respond as best you can. Your honest responses are extremely important to the outcome of this follow up study report.**

**Let's begin**

#### **Demographic Information**

1. Name and Surname
2. Age
3. Sex
4. Home language

#### **Education**

5. Did you attend secondary school in a:  
Rural area  
Urban area (inner city)

Township

6. Tick the highest level of post school education that you have you completed before starting the NFP?

Certificate

Diploma

Undergraduate degree

Post graduate certificate/diploma/degree

7. Name the institution at which you completed your qualification (*write in field*).

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Name the qualification (*write it out in full do not use abbreviations*) (*write in field*)

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Expectations, satisfaction and learnings from the NFP**

9. At the time you decided to join NFP, what were your three most important expectations from NFP ?. (*write in field below*)

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

10. To what degree were your expectations met?

Expectation i: Not met\_\_\_\_\_; adequately met\_\_\_\_\_; surpassed my expectations\_\_\_\_\_ .

Expectation ii: Not met\_\_\_\_\_; adequately met\_\_\_\_\_; surpassed my expectations\_\_\_\_\_ .

Expectation iii: Not met\_\_\_\_\_; adequately met\_\_\_\_\_; surpassed my expectations\_\_\_\_\_ .

11. In order of priority, list the three most important benefits of participating in the NFP. (*write in field*)

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Using the 3 point scale below, provide an overall rating of your experience in the NFP.

1. Unsatisfactory;    2 Satisfactory;    3 Excellent (*tick relevant rating*)

13. Write in the spaces below the most important skills, perspectives, abilities, competencies, behaviors, etc. (up to 5 specific items) that you may have strengthened or gained as a result of participating in the NFP as a whole (i.e., the most things you learned) (*write in field*)

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**Employment status before starting the NFP**

14. Had you worked in a job for payment (at some time during the 6 months before joining the NFP? Yes/No (*if no, then skip to Q19*)

15. If Yes, was this a formal job (a job that included benefits and tax deductions)? Yes/No

16. State the general type of work you did in this job. (*write in field*)

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17. Considering all sources of income (from formal or non-formal sources), what would you estimate your personal total monthly income was before you started the NFP?

R\_\_\_\_\_

18. If you earned an income, did you contribute any of your income to help support your family members? Y/N If yes, what fraction do you contribute on average for the year:

less than 25%\_\_\_\_ ; 25-50% \_\_\_\_; 50-75% \_\_\_\_ ; more than 75% \_\_\_\_.

**Employment status after completing the NFP**

19. At any time since completing NFP, have you been employed? Yes/No (*if no, then skip to Q 29*)

20. If yes, please list the types of jobs you have held since graduating?

Job: \_\_\_\_\_  
Job: \_\_\_\_\_

21. Are you currently employed? Yes/No (if no, then skip to Q29)

22. If currently employed, indicate whether this is a:  
a. Full time job  
b. Part time job

23. If you are currently employed, when did you start this job?

During the NFP\_\_\_\_; immediately after graduating from the NFP\_\_\_\_; only after \_\_\_\_\_ months (fill in the number of months in the blank space)

24. Please write the name of the company/organization that you currently work for:

25. What is your job title?

\_\_\_\_\_

26. Please provide a short description of your primary work duties/responsibilities or this job:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

27. How long have you been in this position? \_\_\_\_\_

28. What is your current monthly, after tax income? Please tick the relevant salary category:

R1000 – R2000

R2000 – R5000

R5000 – R8000

R8000 – R10,000

R 10,000 – R12,000

Above R 12,000



29. If you are *not* currently employed, please indicate which of the following statements most accurately describes you current situation (check all that apply):
- a. I am actively seeking employment (I am submitting my CV for a job opportunity at least once a week). \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. I have stopped seeking employment. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. I am working as a volunteer \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. I have a learnership position \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. I have an internship position. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. I am currently continuing with my studies or I am attending a technical skills development programme. \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Other situation? (e.g. Working but also studying/training further **or** working, but looking to change your job). Please describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Application of NFP learning to your work place**

30. In order of priority, list 3 soft skills learnt on the NFP that you feel have most helped you in your job/you use most in your job. (*write in field*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
\_\_\_\_\_
31. In order of priority, list 3 hard skills learnt on the NFP that you feel have most helped you in your job/you use most in your job. (*write in field*)
- \_\_\_\_\_ ; \_\_\_\_\_ ;  
\_\_\_\_\_
32. Please rate the level of *personal* confidence you **currently have** in your ability to secure quality employment and develop a rewarding career:
1. Not very confident \_\_\_\_\_; 2. Confident \_\_\_\_\_; 3. Very confident \_\_\_\_\_ .
33. Please rate your level of confidence in being able to secure quality employment and develop a rewarding career **before** you joined the NFP:
1. Not very confident \_\_\_\_\_; 2. Confident \_\_\_\_\_; 3. Very confident \_\_\_\_\_ .
34. Please rate the level of *professional* confidence you **currently have** in your ability to secure quality employment and develop a rewarding career:
1. Not very confident \_\_\_\_\_; 2. Confident \_\_\_\_\_; 3. Very confident \_\_\_\_\_ .

35. Please rate your level of confidence in being able to secure quality employment and develop a rewarding career **before** you joined the NFP:

1. Not very confident \_\_\_\_\_; 2. Confident \_\_\_\_\_; 3. Very confident \_\_\_\_\_ .

36. Write down the five most important things that you learned during your time in the NFP which you believe have been the most valuable to you in your ability to secure work and/or perform your job effectively. Briefly explain why you think each is so important (*write in field*).

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ I did not learn anything during my participation in NFP that contributed to securing a job or performing this job well. (*Please check/tick in the space provided if this statement is true.*)

The following is a list of up to five (5) of the most important things I learned during my participation in the NFP that have contributed to securing a job and/or performing it well.

Most important things I learned:	Why this is important?

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37. Complete this sentence (*write in field*)

Having a job has

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**Future plans**

38. Briefly state what your future plans are in terms of:

a. Your job/career path (*write in field*)

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b. Further personal development (*write in field*)

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c. Further professional development (like registering for any other educational or training programmes) (*write in field*)

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39. Any other comments:

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**Thank you for completing this survey.**

## Appendix 1:2

### Focus Group Questionnaire for Follow up Study on the New Futures South Africa Programme (NFP)

Welcome and brief introduction to the purpose of the FG discussion.

1. *Please close your eyes and think back to the time when you first applied to join NFP SA. Think about your situation, what you were doing (how you were spending your time), what your abilities were, what your knowledge about working and careers, what your plans for the future were, and what your dreams were. Hold these thoughts in your mind and now think about today, what your situation is, what you are doing (how you are spending your time), what your abilities are, your knowledge about working and careers, what your plans are now for your future, and what your dreams are. When you think of who you were before joining NFP SA and who you are now, can you identify any differences? Have you changed in any way?*

*Now, please open your eyes. I would like to ask you to talk about the different changes in your life. How your situation, your dreams, youth knowledge, your abilities, your plans for your future and your networks may have changed.*

Ask someone in the group to start talking about:

- any changes they have experienced since joining and graduating from the NFP
  - ask them to explain changes if any that have occurred in their skills, knowledge and dreams/plans for their future – comparing their lives before the NFP and since graduating
2. Many of you had jobs before you joined the NFP – explain your motivation for wanting to participate in the programme.
    - If you already had a job, were you hoping to get a job in IT? Explain why
    - A better position? Explain why
    - A different position? Explain why
  3. Discuss the ways in which your expectations regarding:
    - IT skills improvement
    - gaining work experience and
    - getting employment

were achieved / or not though the NFP.

4. Discuss the ways in which improved IT skills and work experience ( if any) during the NFP helped you secure employment
5. What other skills, competencies, behaviours and attitudes learnt on the NFP would you say were key to you securing new/ different employment. Discuss.
  - Communication/language and presentation skills? Other soft skills
  - Networking?
  - Confidence?
6. What skills, competencies, behaviours and attitudes learnt on the NFP would you say were key to you successfully managing your current job.
  - Discuss qualitative difference, if any, between current & previous employment
  - Better position?
  - Greater Confidence?
  - Greater skills set?
  - Greater job satisfaction?
7. If you were hired as a consultant to help us improve the design of FNP for another group of youth who are unemployed college graduates, which features and activities of NFP would you strongly commend including in new program? [Note—the interviewer should have the list of program features on hand to use as a tool to remind the person of certain program features.]
  - are there any features and activities that you would strongly recommend that we eliminate from future programs?
  - are there any things that were not in NFP that you feel should be part of future programs?
8. Describe /discuss the type of job you aimed to have (your ideal job) before joining the NFP.
  - Has your vision of an ideal job stayed the same since completing the NFP or has it changed?
  - If it's changed – explain how?
  - Explain how, if at all, your experience on the NFP changed your thinking in this regard?
  - Do you feel equipped to now take the necessary steps to achieve your ideal job? Explain

9. I have one final question. Suppose that you have been invited to your school to speak to a group of younger students about preparing themselves for a successful future. You have been asked by the Director of the school to suggest one (or more) key principle/s of success that are important to you.
- When you talk about your principles, please describe why they are important to your success.

I have really enjoyed this discussion with you and I've learned a great deal. Is there anything else that you would like to tell us about your experience in the program?

## Appendix 1:3

### In–depth Interview Questionnaire for Follow up Study on the New Futures South Africa Programme (NFP)

1. Briefly describe your life before you joined the NFP
  - Personal /family circumstance, where were you living?
  - Were you studying?
  - Working? Nature of job? Level of income?
  - Comment on your dreams
  - Describe yourself in terms of your skills and competences and attitudes
  - How confident were you about your ability/capacity to achieve your dreams?
  - Did you feel that there were barriers and challenges that would make it difficult for you to achieve your dreams?
  - Had you been involved in any program or activity at college that was designed to prepare you for the world of work and/or to help you navigate the process of identifying job opportunities and competing successfully for them?
  
2. Briefly describe your life now, after graduating from the NFP, how have things changed?
  - Describe the changes, if any, in:
    - Personal /family circumstance, where you living?
    - Are you studying?
    - Working? Nature of job? Level of income?
    - Comment on your current dreams – have these changed?
    - Describe yourself in terms of your current skills and competences and attitudes and compare these to what you remember them being before you joined the program.
    - Where do you expect to be professionally and personally 3 years from now?
  
3. Focused discussion of current job
  - Please describe briefly the process you used to get your job. Are there things that you learned through your participation in the project that helped you carry out this process and get hired? If yes, please talk about some of the most important.
  - How do you like your job?
  - What are some of the things you like most about your job? What are some things you like least?
  - As you think about the work you do on a daily basis, were there any things that you learned during the NFP that have contributed to your success in carrying out your work? If yes, could you please talk about some of these features in NFP that you feel have contributed to doing your work.
  - How soon after you completed NFP did you secure this job?
  - How many jobs did you identify and apply for before being hired here?
  - How many jobs did you interview for before deciding to take this one?

- Had you been hired for a formal job after graduating from university and before starting NFP?
  - How long of a time was this?
  - About how many job opportunities did you apply for between graduating from college and starting NFP?
  - Again, congratulations on being hired. Do you feel that participating in NFP helped you in any way to being hired for this job?
  - If yes, please list specific features or activities of NFP that you feel contributed most to your success in securing this job.
  - Are there any features or activities of NFP that you feel made no contribution to your effort to secure this job?
4. If you were hired as a consultant to help us improve the design of NFP for another group of youth who are unemployed college graduates, which features and activities of NFP would you strongly commend including in new program? [Note—the interviewer should have the list of program features on hand to use as a tool to remind the person of certain program features.]
  5. Do you believe that it would be beneficial to other young people like you to have an opportunity to participate in NFP? If yes, what would you tell a perspective donor to convince them to provide funding to NFP?
  6. Do you think it would be helpful to involved NFP graduates in identifying and selecting youth to participate in future NFP activities? Why? Would you be willing to help in this regard?
  7. Similarly, are there any features and activities that you would strongly recommend that we eliminate from future programs?
  8. If you could go back in time to watch yourself in different situation, being with your family, visiting with friends, looking for work and working, etc., do you feel that “you” that you are observing is different from the “you” of today?
    - If yes, in what ways have you changed?
    - Do you feel that the NFP contributed in any way to these changes?
    - If a friend of yours were to ask you for advice on some important “Dos and Don’ts” to finding a job, what might you tell your friend are the most important things to do and not do?
    - What skills, competencies, perceptions, behaviors and attitudes do you feel were most important in terms of convincing your employer to hire you?

There is a great deal of talk today in South Africa about the problem of youth unemployment. If you were asked by a presidential commission for suggestions on how to help address this problem, what might you say? Please suggest 5 doable actions that could be taken to help address this problem. Many people who worked with NFP in South Africa and elsewhere are concerned that the program is too labour intensive to be scaled up so



that thousands of youth could participate. Do you agree with this? What advice could you give us about how to scale up this program so that many more youth could benefit while not decreasing the quality of the results.