



EMPLOYMENT ACCESS

IMPACT REPORT 2020

by Hylton Bergh, Employment Access Programme Manager



OVERVIEW

The national lockdown and subsequent shrinkage of the South African economy, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, greatly impacted Employment Access. Within days, jobs were no longer available for our clients. This led to the re-evaluation of the programme's employment processes for the continuation of support despite clients not being able to apply for jobs. The decision taken was to provide clients with support that would enable them to become more independent and self-regulated so that once restrictions were lifted and the economy opened up, clients would have adapted to the new normal and were EMPOWERED to succeed in their access to employment. The following changes were incorporated into the programme:

- The entire Intake process was transformed into a remote process as clients could not visit the centre to create their CVs. Clients had to complete an online application form to register with the service. Many clients were unfamiliar with our new digital processes thus, Employment Access contacted and assisted clients through the process.
- Communication with clients is integral to the programme. To ensure this continued, Support@EmploymentAccess WhatsApp groups were created, enabling the team to keep clients informed about upcoming trainings, changes to government policy, answer questions, maintain motivation and later, post job searches.
- The in-house Job Readiness training was adjusted to a suitable online learning platform, Funzi. Clients are instructed to focus on Founder 101, Get that Job and COVID-19: Adapt and thrive in South Africa; free courses offered by Funzi. To complement these courses, clients are encouraged to attend Interview Preparation discussion sessions, where important aspects of the interview process is reviewed. These free course plus the Interview Prep sessions, give clients a strong basis for success in an interview.
- On completion of the Funzi training, clients have a telephonic consultation with the Skills Training Manager where employability is assessed through mock interviews. This discussion also allows for engagement with clients on training gaps and how they could be assisted further with sponsored training by external providers.
- SAQA application support provided by the Foreign Professionals Desk (FPD) was converted into a remote intervention. Clients complete an online registration form with FPD. This information is used to assess client's eligibility and complete the actual application via Zoom consultation. Clients are still advised on the correct documentation and administration that goes with this process.
- As computer literacy classes could be conducted coupled with clients increased reliance on their phones, Employment Access designed and developed a Smartphone Digital Literacy training course. Made up of 3 modules: Using Gmail and Google Drive, Writing Professional Emails and Apply for work with Gumtree, the course is conducted remotely with learner guides, audio-enabled PowerPoint Presentations and in-house videos providing content needed to navigate the courses.
- After numerous iterations, Professional Skills training is conducted via Google Classroom. It has been found that this course works best for higher level clients wanting to enter professional industries like administrative, IT and financial services sectors. Clients attend 1-on-1 support sessions, post training.

These innovations have forced our clients to engage with technology as never before. They have to navigate websites, download documents, and communicate with employers via email. Initially, the clients took a while to adapt to the new format of our service, but we have found that with our guidance and assistance, most clients have risen to the occasion and have grown in confidence.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In collaboration with Women's Platform, Employment Access trained 44 business owners using a blended model approach by combining course content from the Coursera: Fundamentals of Business courses with online training sessions.
- Employment Access has secured a partnership with Coursera for Refugees, which enables all Scalabrini Centre clients' access to certified, high quality free online training.
- Working with SAQA's Foreign Evaluations department, the FPD managed to get 6 clients, with missing requisite documentation, to successfully have their qualifications verified and certified.
- Job Placement Service has been aggressively engaging with employers, not only on the value of this service, but also on the rights of foreign nationals to work in South Africa.
- To facilitate a professional working environment and protect clients from exploitation, Job Placement has developed a Service Level Agreement that employers have to agree to, in order to use this free service.
- The programme ran 2 open seminars: Adapting to Covid-19 and Understanding Employment Contracts. More seminars are planned for 2021.

IMPACT



405
NEW CVS CREATED



TRAINING

317

CLIENTS OFFERED TRAINING

31



FPD SAQA APPLICATIONS AND REGISTRATIONS

946
HELP DESK CONSULTATIONS



167
JOB READINESS

61
DIGITAL LITERACY

80
INTERVIEW SKILLS

25
SKILLS TRAINING (3 MONTHS)

134 EMPLOYED

44
SMALL BUSINESS SKILLS



293

TOTAL Funzi CERTIFICATES RECEIVED



Firstly, Thank you so much for everything you have done, you are a fantastic organization. I am EXTREMELY HAPPY with Brenda, she is fantastic. **I feel so blessed to have found her and would recommend your organization to anyone.** Brenda is hardworking, she loves my children, she takes such good care of them, us and my home. I am so glad I saw your ad on Facebook, **you truly came to my rescue when I needed a housekeeper and you sent me the best.** Thank you so much.

Feedback from one of many satisfied employers



MAKING BUSINESS PLANS WITH EMPLOYMENT ACCESS

A warm, friendly voice on the other end of the phone, with echoes of children playing and talking in the background – Divine instantly makes you feel like you are talking to an old friend. Leaving her home country of DRC and her eventual arrival in South Africa were both journeys mired in fear. But Divine is a resilient, determined woman: she has taught herself English, raised a family, found jobs in all sorts of sectors and has used this experience and various online sessions from Employment Access to find a job during COVID-19. She wants to share her success and resilience with other women and eventually start her own business.

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

Often, a barrier to integration is language. In Divine's case, her lack of English actually helped her land her first job! "I could only say 'good morning'. But Cross Trainer hired me because I spoke French – and that's where I started learning English!" Divine started working at the Cross Trainer in Cape Town's International Airport during the 2010 World Cup. It was here that her dreams of starting her own business began.

Divine was an accountant at a big supermarket back home in Lubumbashi. Her father was a CEO, but because of ethnic fighting her father lost his job. Following this, Divine and her eldest sister fled to South Africa after being attacked in their home. The journey was long and potholed: what agents promised to be a few days took more than a week – with Divine and her sister being arrested at one point – while their family had no idea where they were.

Although things seemed difficult on initial arrival in South Africa (Divine and her sister were victims of an armed home invasion) – Divine has managed to build a beautiful life. Having built up stability in South Africa, Divine is now focused on achieving her goals and assisting other women.

AN ARRAY OF EXPERIENCE

After leaving Cross Trainer, Divine worked in various different companies and positions. From an assistant manager at King Pie to a sales assistant at Exotic Persians, Divine has gained experience in an array of careers – which has helped her to find her current employment. "I like the hospitality world and I am definitely a people's person," she remarks, reflecting on her ultimate role as a guesthouse manager.

After Divine took maternity leave from the guesthouse, she approached Scalabrini. She accessed the Advocacy Programme, then the Women's Platform and then Employment Access – who helped Divine find employment during lockdown. When South Africa went into lockdown, Employment Access started various online sessions for clients aimed at getting them ready for successful job applications once the lockdown eased. Divine joined many of these sessions including 'Interview Questions Discussion' and Funzi courses (a platform that offers free job readiness courses).

With the preparation and support offered to Divine from Employment Access – she went into her interview with confidence and got the job as Front of House Manager at a guesthouse – with the employer being particularly impressed that Divine had completed a COVID-19 course.

Divine is now working this job with her business dream in mind. "I would like to start a sewing business. I'm good with outfits and evening wear, so I would like to start something where I can make lots of different things, and then help others who are also looking for jobs. I won't let a woman like me just sit at home. I can help them and we can work together."

NOT LETTING LOCKDOWN SLOW HER DOWN

Like many in South Africa and across the world, lockdown has been difficult time for Divine. It had the potential to derail her plans. "Lockdown was very stressful. We have three kids and my husband is still not back at work. They were sending invoices for school fees, the kids need to eat, and I need to buy nappies for the little one."

With the help of Employment Access and her dedication to the sessions offered by them, Divine is working again and can set her mind at ease. "I'm enjoying it and I'm learning more every day. I like learning. Before starting my own thing, it's good to see how to run a business – from what I'm doing today, I will be able to run my own thing."

With the preparation and support offered to Divine from Employment Access – Divine went into her interview with confidence and got the job as Front of House Manager at a guesthouse



LOOKING FORWARD...

- With the changing landscape of the labour market, Employment Access will be trying to change clients' mind-set of not only looking for 'jobs' but rather finding sustainable OPPORTUNITIES, this might be in formal employment, or various contract work as well as entrepreneurial endeavours.
- Skills Training will be expanding its repertoire of sponsored courses that seeks to elevate clients from entry-level positions to leadership and supervisory roles.
- Plans are in place to increase job placement capacity in order to reach more employers which will result in increased employment for clients.



The centre is registered with the South African Department of Social Development as a non-profit organisation (021-079 NPO), as a youth and child care centre (C7569) and as a Public Benefit Organisation with the South African Revenue Services (930012808) and governed by a Trust (IT2746/2006).
Auditors: CAP Chartered Accountants.

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