

2020

# Identifying Skills for Sustainable Livelihoods in Local Communities: A Conceptual Framework

Labour Market Intelligence  
research programme

# Identifying Skills for Sustainable Livelihoods in Local Communities:

## A Conceptual Framework

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June 2020

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### 1. Introduction and Background

The project will deepen an understanding of the skills required for building sustainable livelihoods in marginalised communities. The qualitative research will enable the Department of Higher Education and Training to refocus and recalibrate its service provision, especially via its TVET colleges and Community and Education Training Colleges (CETCs), to provide policy advice and direction towards addressing the changing needs for skills development for sustainable livelihoods in South Africa. The project will undertake research at two sites. The work has two components: a desktop study and field research. The desktop study will examine current literature on the educational and training requirements & suitable approaches for sustainable livelihoods. The field research will test theoretical and empirical findings as identified in the literature review. Two waves of field research will be undertaken; one in an urban community (Delft South, Western Cape) and one in a peri-urban / rural community (Sweet Waters, Kwazulu-Natal or alternatively South Pinetown, Kwazulu-Natal). The research methods will be qualitative and use quantitative data for contextualisation and comparison where relevant data is available.

### 2. Objective of the Proposed Activity

The skills requirements for sustainable livelihoods are poorly understood. Within marginalised South African communities, people derive livelihoods through reciprocal exchanges in social networks and through participation in informal economic activities as well as formal labour markets. The skills needs of these individuals to either enhance business opportunities or transition into the (formal) labour market are not well understood nor captured within conventional labour market surveys such as the StatSA Quarterly Labour Force Survey. It is therefore necessary to conduct primary research to investigate these needs, taking into consideration the specific constraints within the two

communities. Furthermore, little is known about how these skills requirements are impacted by developments such as climate change, the shift towards 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution technologies, and deepening globalisation. The overall objective of the research is to better inform the DHET on the skills needs for sustainable livelihoods to translate the research output into the development of appropriate support for skills for sustainable livelihoods.

### 3. Approach and Methodology

The project will respond to the following research questions:

- What opportunities exist in communities for sustainable livelihoods?
- What kinds of skills are needed for sustainable livelihoods in the South African context?
- What are the advantages and limitation to the sustainable livelihoods approach, from the perspective of skills development and to enhance the incorporation of unemployed persons in labour markets (both formal and informal)?
- What research methodologies can contribute towards identifying the skills requirements for sustainable livelihoods?
- What kinds of data sources can be used to assess the skills requirement for sustainable livelihoods?
- How can the research methods be replicated in sites with different characteristics and skills needs?

There are two components in Theme 4, Project 1.

The first component will undertake an extensive scoping of literature with respect to skills needs for sustainable livelihoods.

The second component will undertake original field research in two different sites, one in a Cape Town urban settlement and one in rural KwaZulu-Natal to understand both the demand for technical and vocational skills within local economies as well as the skills requirements within these communities to enter into the labour market and/or pursue informal income generation. The two sites were chosen to reflect contrasting urban / rural contexts. The researcher has established networks within these two communities. In addition, the research will benefit from past-research on these communities, including the SLF small-area census of micro-enterprises which was undertaken in 2011, 2015 and 2020. The field research will focus on both demand-side and supply-side factors that need to be taken into consideration in the provision of skills training.

In respect of the first component, in a desktop study the research will first examine theoretical writings on sustainable livelihoods, giving particular attention to the shifts within this concept from deep rural societies where livelihoods are inextricably tied to agricultural production (and thus access to land / water) to peri-urban and urban marginalised communities where livelihoods are increasingly reliant on informal economy participation and occasional wage labour. In contrast to rural contexts, livelihoods in urban areas are strongly influenced by access to markets, social and financial capital, and legal-institutional frameworks. The literature survey will assess existing knowledge on the particular skills requirements to advance livelihoods within marginalised geographies, including: i)

entrepreneurship, ii) the role of technologies, iii) access to social and investment capital, and iv) (labour) market information. In addition, the literature survey will explore the methodologies employed in other countries / contexts to identify skills for sustainable livelihoods.

The third aspect of the literature review will consider literature on the effectiveness and suitability of initiatives to facilitate employability amongst the unemployed. In this respect, the researchers will consider scholarship addressing issues such as i) work readiness, ii) skills sets for work entry (soft skills and technical skills, iii) reskilling, and iv) training effectiveness. Finally the literature review will consider the potential impact of external developments including climate change, the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution industries, and the deepening processes of globalisation on skills for sustainable livelihoods in the South African context. We have budgeted a combined input of 20 days for the literature review (5 days for the Sub-Project Leader (PhD) and 16 days for a senior researcher (MA).

In respect to the second component, the researcher (SLF) will undertake original field research in two sites. We propose the sites of Delft South in Cape Town and Sweet Waters in KwaZulu-Natal. The Delft site falls within the catchment of two TVET FET colleges (College of Cape Town and Northlink College). The Sweet Waters site falls within the catchment of the Umgungundlovu TVET College, based in Pietermaritzburg. A possible alternative site is the peri-urban area of South Pinetown in eThekweni. SLF has significant experience of conducting research in Delft South and will consult with a partner organisation who has conducted research on informal micro-enterprise in Sweet Waters or South Pinetown. The primary research will comprise three main elements:

- A scoping of the state of the local economy in terms of micro-enterprise activities and the provision of goods and services. The scoping will entail a survey of up to 100 micro-enterprises in two spatially distinct situations; these may include the high street; a neighbourhood residential area; a transport hub; an agricultural production cluster (market gardens; chicken farms etc.). Sampling will be based on spatial position, non-randomly selecting sites of economic opportunity. We will seek to interview all informal / formal businesses within these identified spatial nodes. Our questionnaire will be informed by the results of the literature survey. The results of the micro-enterprise scoping will be compared to existing data-sets and available academic research into the state of the local township economy. As the purpose of the scoping exercise is to understand potential demand-side influences, the field researchers will engage in open-ended discussions with local informal businesses and entrepreneurs. The research team will undertake field based observations (ethnography) into the workings of the local economy, noting issues such as temporal and spatial patterns, demand for goods and services, business risks (including crime), technological and business innovations, marketing strategies and competitiveness. The output (output 1) will include an assessment of the skills' gap within local businesses and market opportunities, hence their demand for particular skills.
- A survey of 100 individuals; the target group will comprise an equal distribution of gender and include school drop-outs, students and persons with prior work experience in both formal and informal businesses. The survey will be based on a purposeful selection (non-random), to be identified within different neighbourhoods. Interviews will be conducted at the respondent's homes. All households within the neighbourhoods will be visited

although participation will be voluntarily. The survey will comprise both quantitative and qualitative questions. The respondents will be questioned on their knowledge of skills training options; their current strategies to acquire skills; their unfilled skills needs; and the obstacles that hinder the take-up for skills training opportunities. At the conclusion of the field survey, the researchers will analyse the data and prepare a report (output 2) on the findings, identifying general trends and also specific needs.

- The researchers will conduct a participatory engagement workshop for the Delft South research site **only**. At these workshops, the researchers will use either a **body mapping** or **hand mapping** research methodology to explore in depth the participants' skill requirements and challenges for sustainable livelihoods in the context of the demand side opportunities we identify. This process will provide deep qualitative insights on real world skills issues. SLF has pioneered the use of these methods in community research and found that such methods surface experiences and insights that are richer and more granular than those obtained from standard methods, such as field surveys. The methods will result in visual outcomes which in themselves will constitute an important research product. The workshop participants will be purposefully selected from the cohort of individuals whom we interview in the first research activity. At the conclusion of the workshop, the researcher will produce a written document, describing the research process, the main research findings and showing how the visual data of the maps provides insight into the skills requirements for sustainable livelihoods (Output 3).

In the project conclusion, the research will provide suggestions on the range of role-players that could contribute towards supporting sustainable livelihood skills development.

SLF will mobilise a team comprising: i) project manager, ii) technical specialists in field research and participatory research (PhD), ii) two experienced field researchers (>5 years of experience, MA and BA), iv) a community liaison officer, and v) a data analyst.