



HUMBLE BEGINNINGS BRIGHT FUTURE



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A TRACKING STUDY OF THE FIRST FULL INTAKE OF STUDENTS ON THE
RURAL EDUCATION ACCESS PROGRAMME A DECADE ON

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It was very useful. My family could not support me so REAP did and they gave me glasses for the first time. They taught me time management and how to control myself, life skills and to see people in a different way."

FORMER REAP STUDENT



The Rural Education Access Programme

2001 to 2011 – Ten productive years

In 2001 two bursary programmes of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, established to assist black students during apartheid, merged to form the Rural Education Access Programme (REAP). REAP's objectives were to reduce poverty and address inequality by providing opportunities to access tertiary education for poor rural students, recognising their severe marginalisation. Given that funds for bursaries were hard to come by a partnership was established with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) to cover tuition costs. To ensure students the best chance of success the holistic programme of developmental student support, forged by

the Catholic Education Aid Programme (CEAP), was continued, complementing financial provisions in a support model that has more than proved its value over the years. A small cohort of students was taken onto the programme in 2001.

Since 2002 an annual intake of between 100 and 160 new first year students has been maintained, with a cohort of between 330 and 400 students receiving support each year. Young students are drawn from rural areas in all nine provinces of South Africa through an active network of volunteers and are studying at some 15 state Higher Education institutions (universities and universities of technology). Two

tracking studies have indicated a graduation rate of between 57% and 66%, a substantial enhancement of current undergraduate graduation rates in South Africa.

Since 2003 a number of South African corporate and local and international foundations and agencies have partnered with REAP by providing resources for student grants and programme costs. Not only does REAP deliver a holistic programme of student support through student advisors, performance monitoring, referrals, life and academic skills development and engagement around social, emotional and health issues but, through regular research and publications, contributes to

debates in the Higher Education sector.

2011, REAP's 10th year of operation, has proved a watershed. The intake of new students grew to 187 and a partnership with the National Skills Fund has enabled REAP to provide full cost bursaries. A regional office was established in Johannesburg and further growth is anticipated which will see REAP providing opportunities to many more poor rural youth and offering a face-to-face service in institutional hubs in an additional four locations.

Glenda Glover, manager programme development, research & advocacy & Russell Davies, REAP director, July 2011



Introduction

The Rural Education Access Programme (REAP) was established in 2001 to assist academically able learners from poor rural backgrounds in South Africa to access a tertiary education and be successful in their studies. REAP aims to provide a holistic programme of support and student development to academically able youth from poor rural communities. More specifically REAP has, to date, used existing state funding mechanisms to assist needy students to access study loans and drawn on its own resources to provide additional support, including small grants for books, equipment, travel and living expenses, workshops to build social and academic skills, counselling and advice and performance monitoring and feedback. REAP's original approach was to assist students to gain admission to tertiary institutions and make good

progress especially in their first year of study. Within the first three years of the programme this approach shifted to include support and development interventions throughout the period of undergraduate study. REAP currently has over 400 students from all over rural South Africa on its programme. This represents significant growth from its first full intake of 153 students in 2002, who are the subjects of this study.

While REAP has conducted regular comprehensive evaluations of its performance, it has also recognised the value of conducting tracking studies as a means to understand what impact the programme has had on the lives of students who have been on the programme. For example, a tracking study was carried out on the 2002 cohort in 2005. However, with the tracking studies undertaken to date, the maximum

period from when the student commenced their course was five years. This has not allowed much, if any, time to elapse following graduation and has not captured what impact REAP's support may have had on its former students and those they interact with in the longer term.

Conducted a decade after their studies commenced, this tracking study for the first time allows REAP to examine a student cohort whose members have had enough time to complete their studies and establish themselves in their post-study lives. This study is particularly timely because REAP is this year celebrating its 10 year anniversary and would like to use the study results to help tell its story.

However, it must be stated at the outset that this tracking study is no more than a case study of a small sample of 153 former

students who were supported by REAP in 2002. No systematic attempt was made to compare the findings arising from this study with broader literature or with other data on student success during and after their studies. Thus, while they should be of interest to all those involved in the education sector, the findings of this study should not be taken to reflect or represent the broader cohort of South African students who have studied over the last decade, but should rather be considered in the context of REAP's intervention.



Objectives of the Study

At a broad level, this study seeks to present how the lives of previous students (the 2002 cohort) and those around them have been changed, both economically and socially, almost 10 years after they first commenced their studies. Because one of REAP's primary goals is to lift rural people out of poverty, the study aims to establish the long-term impact of the intervention on the economic circumstances of its direct beneficiaries (the students) and indirect beneficiaries (their families and home communities). Recognising that poverty also has social dimensions that impact on community cohesion and wellbeing, the study also

seeks to explore in what ways REAP has had a social impact on rural communities and institutions through the students that have been supported. The study therefore attempts to establish the location of former students, their employment and economic status, their relationship, connection and social engagement with their rural homes and their impact on rural institutions.

The study also aims to produce both quantitative data about the impact of REAP's interventions and a qualitative understanding of REAP's impact on individual students and their families through in-depth

interviews, life histories and photography. In order to fulfil these objectives, key study questions centred on themes relating to education, location, economic status and social (family and community) life. The answers to these questions were analysed with reference to gender, racial grouping, region of origin, academic discipline and institution where study was undertaken.

Finally, while this study was not an evaluation, it seeks to shed light on both the relevance of REAP's interventions and its impact on its beneficiaries. The study therefore explores whether REAP's interventions

have enabled the beneficiaries to change their economic and social status for the better and whether they are able to assist their family and/or community to do the same. In terms of impact, the study has examined to what extent REAP's former students have so far been able to bring skills home and use them for the benefit of rural communities and services, send remittances home to support rural households and generally benefit their home areas.



ABOVE: Volunteer student recruiters

Methods & Sampling

The aim of this study was to make contact with as many of the 153 former students as possible and gain information on them using structured interviews and life histories. From the outset it was envisaged that making contact with many of the students would be difficult within the time and budget constraints of the project because of the amount of time that has elapsed since they were supported by REAP. Because it was likely that most of the former students were scattered throughout the country, the research approach was to use telephonic interviews as the main means of gathering information from them. However, it was also decided

that where possible, former students would be interviewed face-to-face in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

To make contact with the former students, a variety of methods were employed. The first involved using the contact information (landline and cell phone numbers) held by REAP for each student and calling each of the available numbers. As feared, most of these phone numbers were not valid any longer and only just over 30 students were contacted in this way.

The next approach was to try to obtain more up-to-date

contact information from the tertiary institutions and from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). With the few institutions which were able to provide such information, it tended to be similar to the information held by REAP, and therefore out of date. The NSFAS contact numbers, however, yielded more success, with 20 more students tracked down as a result. However, it is indicative of the mobility of students and the ready availability of cell phone lines that even most of the NSFAS numbers were out of date. Many of the landline numbers were no longer in use, suggesting

that families have given up fixed lines in favour of personal cell phones. Further attempts to reach participants through fellow students, the internet and family members yielded some success and close to 20 more were contacted through these means. In addition, reliable information was gained on the whereabouts and activities of several more, despite the fact that we could not contact them directly.

In this way, 77 students (just over half) were tracked, of which 65 were interviewed. Telephonic interviews lasted between 15 and 30 minutes each, while the nine face-to-face interviews

were slightly longer. Of the 12 who were not interviewed, a number appeared reluctant to participate in the study and therefore did not answer their phones despite initially agreeing to take part, one was out of the country and two were deceased. However, these could be included in the final sample of tracked students because we managed to gain at least some basic up-to-date information on their whereabouts and occupations.

In addition to the 77 on whom we obtained detailed information, REAP records and information obtained from

those institutions which were willing or able to supply us with their records yielded data on graduation rates for 54 more of the 2002 students. We thus know whether 131 of the 153 (86%) passed or failed their courses. This means that we are able to tell more clearly if the students we were not able to track have been successful or not, even if we could not find them during the course of the study.

2002 Cohort and the Study Sample

A large majority of the 2002 cohort are now in their later 20s,

“I did not know anything about town. They took me from rural to town and I became aware. If not for REAP, today I would not be sitting where I am or even talking to you now!”

REAP STUDENT



since most of the cohort was born in 1982, 1983 and 1984. Only six started university at the age of 17, being born in 1985. However, 31 members of the 2002 cohort (20%) were already in their 20s when they commenced tertiary studies with nine being born in the 1970s.

Of the 153 students who made up the 2002 cohort, 114 were black (75%) and 39 were coloured (25%). In our study sample of 77 students, the racial make-up closely mirrors the overall racial composition, with 56 black former students (73%) and 21 coloured former students (27%). In terms of gender, the sample we were able to track does not as closely mirror the 2002 cohort which was made up of 93 women (61%) and 60 men (39%). We were able to trace 50 women (65%) and 27 men (35%) to give a gender balance slightly skewed in favour of women when compared to the 2002 cohort.

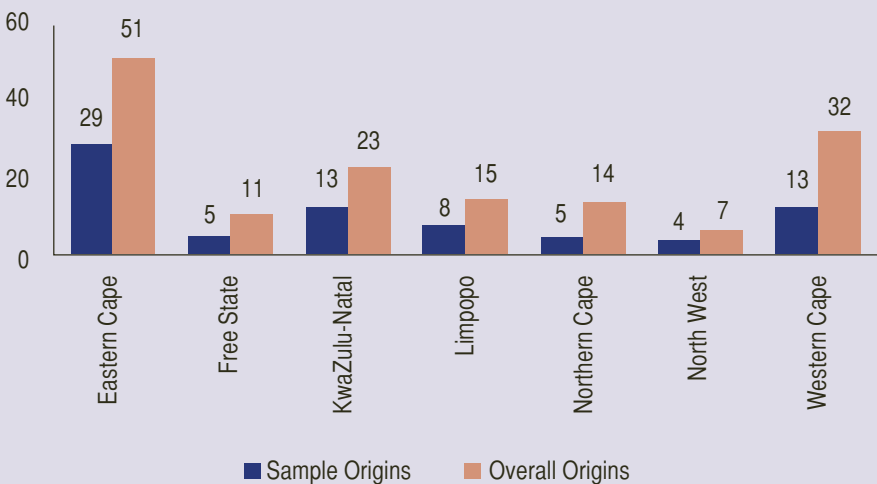
Students in the 2002 cohort were drawn from rural areas in seven provinces. No students came from the largely urban Gauteng Province while there was also no one in the intake from Mpumalanga that year. As Graph 1 shows, most students came from the Eastern Cape (51), followed by the Western Cape (32) and KwaZulu-Natal (23). In the sample for this

study, we were able to obtain a very good spread of students in terms of origins, as illustrated in Graph 1. We tracked around half

of the former students in each of the seven provinces, although interestingly ex-students in the Western and Northern Cape

proved the most difficult to find, while we were able to track 57% of students from the Eastern Cape and the same for KwaZulu-Natal.

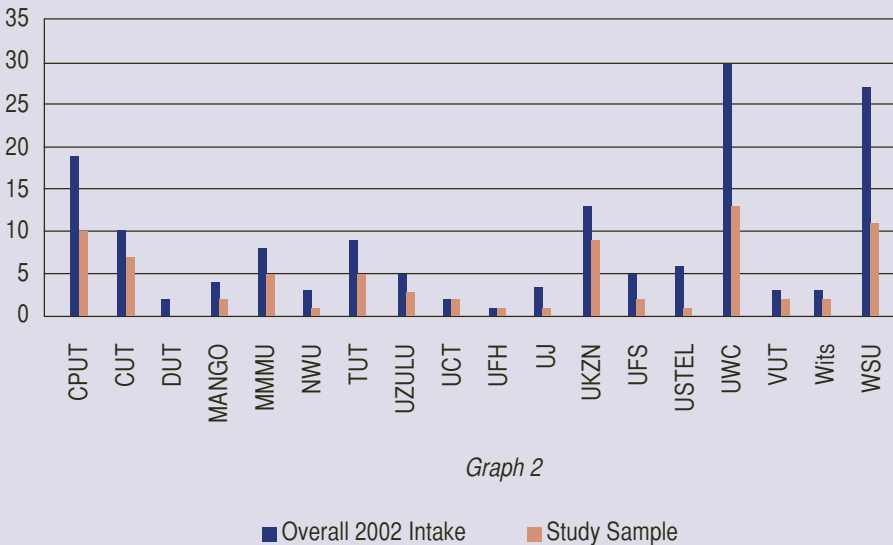
Student Origins



Graph 1



Institutions Attended

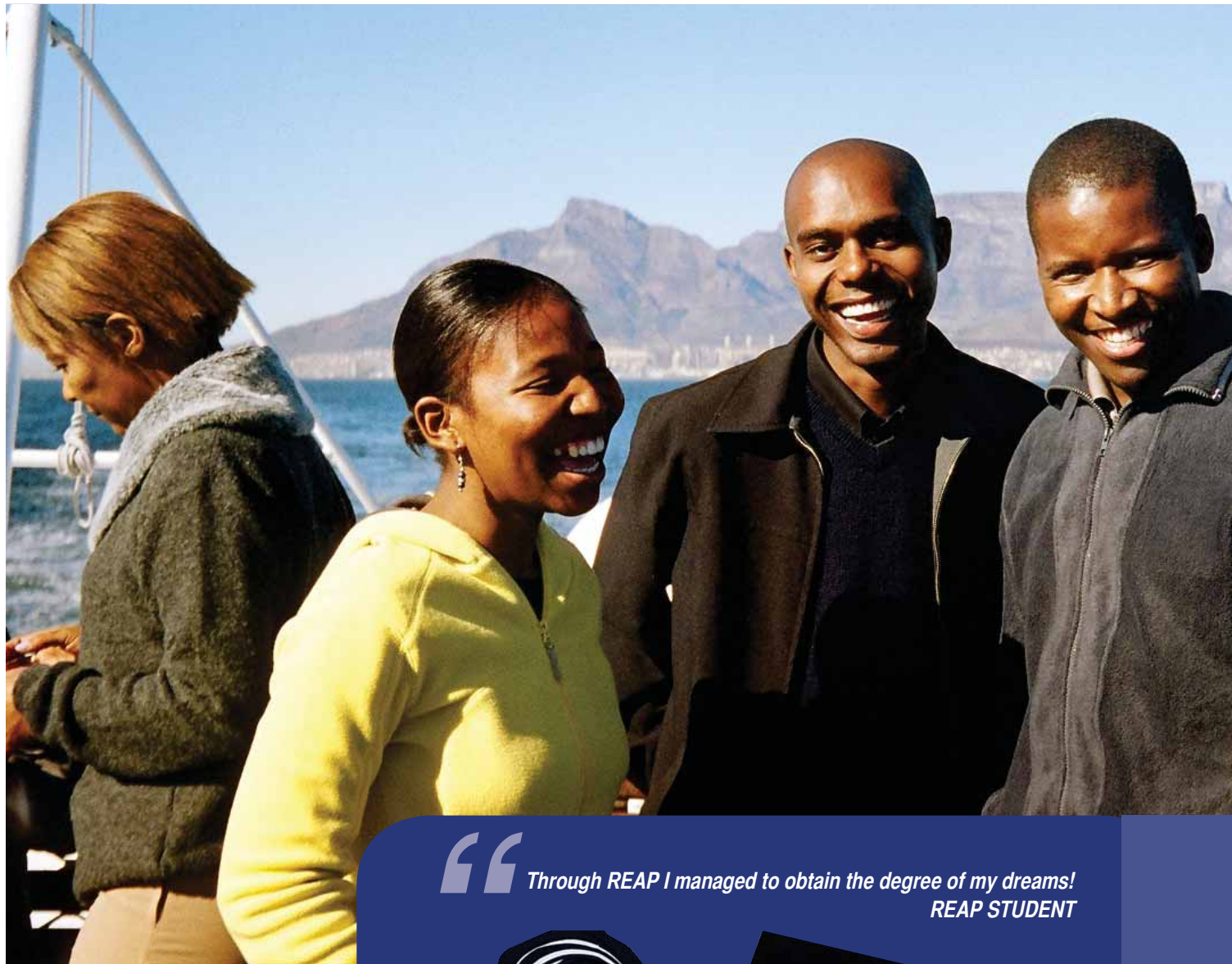


Graph 2

As with student origins, the 50% of the 2002 cohort tracked in this study also mainly reflect the range of institutions and the numbers of students who attended these institutions. In 2002, these students were spread across 29 institutions, but since the merger process, this has been reduced to 18. As shown in Graph 2, the University of the Western Cape (UWC) had the most students (30), followed by what became Walter Sisulu University (WSU) after the merger of the University of Transkei, various technikons and smaller institutions.



ABOVE: Jacqui Layman, Student Development Advisor



“Through REAP I managed to obtain the degree of my dreams!”
REAP STUDENT

The only institution from which we did not track any students was the Durban University of Technology (DUT) while again, surprisingly given REAP's presence in the Western Cape, students from Stellenbosch University in particular, as well as UWC, proved difficult to make contact with.



So far, the study sample has proved fairly representative of the whole 2002 cohort. But how representative might it be in other areas, and how reliable are the 77 former students we tracked as an indication of the whole?

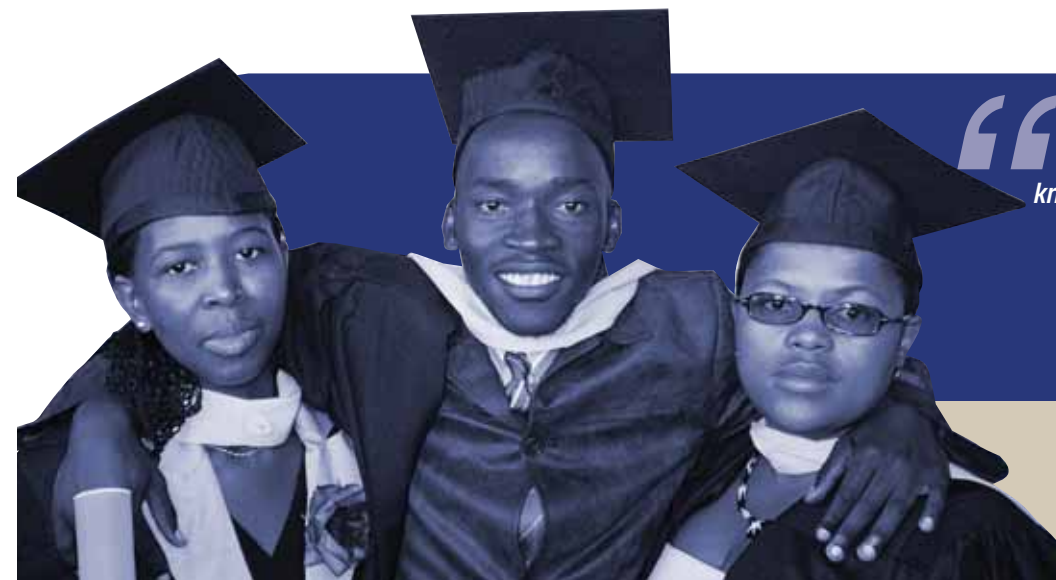
REAP records show that the 153 2002 students were registered for 48 different courses of which B Com was the most popular course (with 23 individuals or 15%), followed by B Sc (12 students) and LLB (10 students). This study managed to capture almost half of those studying B Com and LLB, but only a quarter of those registered for B Sc. Just over half of the 2002 students (53%), however, were spread across 27 National Diploma courses. We managed to track only one of the eight students registered

for a National Diploma in Electrical Engineering and only one of the five registered for ND Civil Engineering. For several of the other less popular Diploma courses we were unable to find representatives. On the other hand, we tracked the majority of those doing Diplomas in Accounting, Information Technology and Chemical Engineering. While our study sample is representative of the whole in terms of the relative numbers doing degrees or diplomas, it is less representative of the full range of Diploma courses, with a slight bias towards students who studied accounting or auditing compared to civil or electrical engineering.

A comparison of the pass rates between the 77 students tracked and the 76 we were

unable to track also reveals that our sample may contain slightly more of the successful students, a factor which must be borne in mind when considering the findings arising from the study sample. Forty (52%) of the 77 students tracked had been supported by REAP for three or more years while only 29 of the students we failed to track were similarly supported. The most likely reason for this is that students who had been supported for longer by REAP were easier to contact given their greater connection to REAP and the more up-to-date contact details compared to those only supported in 2002. This is significant because there is a strong correlation between prolonged REAP support and passing, with 62 (90%) of the 69 students supported by REAP for three

or four years being successful in their studies. REAP's policy at that stage was to offer support mainly for the first year of study and a number of those who went on to pass were thus only supported for one year, having been given a good start on the programme. Others, who applied for continued support, were assisted as their courses progressed. However, it is also clear that many of those who failed or dropped out early on would only have been on the programme for one or two years. Almost half (45%) of the students we could not trace were supported by REAP for one year only compared to a third of those we could trace who were supported by REAP for a year. Table 1 compares the relative numbers of students supported by REAP.



“I went to Cape Town not knowing anyone, but through REAP I found a family.”
REAP STUDENT



Table 1: REAP Support

REAP SUPPORT	2002 Cohort	Study Sample	Those Not Tracked
1 Year	39%	34%	45%
2 Years	16%	14%	17%
3 Years	21%	22%	20%
4 Years	24%	30%	18%
Total Numbers:	153	77	76

In the study sample, at least 56 individuals (73%) are known to have graduated while in the group we could not trace, it is known that only 35 (46%) probably passed and 22 (29%) definitely failed. REAP records show that at least

half of the 19 individuals we could not get detailed information on were doing well enough to suggest that they could have gone on to obtain their qualifications. The other half are unlikely to have passed given that they are known to have

lost contact with REAP, done poorly in first year or dropped out. This suggests that the pass rate for the group we could not track is close to 58% if around 44 individuals can be assumed to have passed. Thus, the many positive findings

arising from the students we tracked must be tempered with the fact that the 50% we could not find may not be doing as well. Having said this, however, the students who we did not manage to track should by no means all be assumed to be struggling. At least half of them are likely to be doing as well as the successful former students we have tracked since they also passed and presumably also went on to find jobs.

Yanda Kolanisi

Accountant with a Heart for Home



29 year-old Yanda comes from a village near Butterworth in the Eastern Cape which he still visits often, being what he calls a “home seeker”. As attached as he is to home, he is currently experiencing the bright city lights of Johannesburg, where he works as an accountant.

Yanda’s journey to the city began when he finished school and registered for

a B Com (Accounting) at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in his province’s biggest city, Port Elizabeth. Being the fourth born of six children, raising funds for this degree was not easy. Fortunately REAP assisted him for three years and he managed to secure a student loan from NSFAS. “I cannot put a price on how valuable REAP’s support was,” says Yanda, “not only financially but also in terms of life skills”. He adds: “I

used to think of myself as an introvert, but REAP taught me how to find myself and be myself.”

Upon completing his degree in 2005, Yanda worked as an intern at the port of Coega, near Port Elizabeth. After his internship, he worked in the supply chain section for a while before deciding that he wanted to build his accounting skills further. He was then given the opportunity to train

through the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants, who sent him to Johannesburg. After training, he was attached to Watermans Accountants, where he did his articles. He then worked his way up from junior auditor to audit supervisor in three years.

While Yanda has all the responsibilities of being engaged, having a child and being a significant



contributor to his rural family's income, this has not prevented him from also being involved in the wider community back home. "I grew up in an area where few went far", explains Yanda. "Many don't see much of a future so they look up to me and I am now a kind of ambassador to the area."

Together with some of his more successful friends from his village, Yanda has embarked on a project to make a difference in his community. They organise an annual cleanup campaign, give motivational speeches at the local schools and have sponsored a local soccer and netball team with kit and equipment. In his personal

capacity, Yanda also sponsors the school fees of two learners and advises others where they can obtain bursaries for tertiary study. Yanda has ambitions to run his own accounting firm, but it is clear that he is also nurturing many in his home community and will likely use his earnings to help

many more. "In my very first interview for REAP, they asked me questions about community service", Yanda recalls. "This was a big factor in my current community work since I started such involvement with REAP. I feel strongly that you are always a member of the community".

From: Yanda Kolanisi [yandak@watermans.co.za]
Sent: Thursday, July 28, 2011 8:20 AM
To: Glenda
Subject: RE: Photos
Attachments: Peace Lovers FC - December event.JPG; Peace Lovers FC.JPG

Good day Glenda

Good to hear from you and I will always create time for REAP. The assistance I got from the program was phenomenal and priceless. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity.

Please find attached, are the pictures for my soccer team back home. We had a huge celebrating event and the community was all out to support the initiative. In case you are wondering where am I in the picture, I am in the front row number 2 on the left (next to captain). We also developed a fascinating program subsequent to this event, not only for social events but for academics as well. I told Andrew about our support initiative for selected learners in areas such as financial assistance; mentorship; career guidance etc. It is still a very small project, because I don't want it to overwhelm me along the way, but with patience, it is going to reap the rewards.

You will understand that, one of the things REAP taught me very well was, "before I am what I am, I was a member of my community and whilst I am what I am, I am still a member of my community."

Watch the space for more to come. Please do not hesitate to contact me for any further event assistance.

Thank you

Regards



Findings

The tracking study found the following dynamics among the 2002 cohort:

• Pass Rates

As noted above, pass (or graduation) rates are one aspect of the 2002 cohort on which we have data for 86% of the former students. Of these 131 individuals, 84 definitely passed (64%), seven probably passed (5%) and 40 definitely failed (31%). At least half of the students we could not get data for are likely to have failed given that many are known to have dropped out or done poorly in their first year. It is therefore possible to estimate that the likely overall pass rate for the 2002 cohort is approaching 65% if close to 100 students graduated. This is in line with REAP's 2005 tracking study which estimated that the pass rate would be between 57% and 66%.

An examination of pass rates by race and gender are revealing. Among the 131 students for whom we do have reliable data on pass rates, 101 are black and 30 are coloured. Of the black students 69 passed, while another six probably also passed. This gives black former students a probable pass rate of 74%.

Of the coloured students, 15 passed and another one probably also passed, giving a pass rate of only 53%.

Of the 131 students, 76 are female while 55 are male. Of the female students, 50 definitely passed and four probably passed, giving the 2002 female students a probable pass rate of 71%. Of the male students, 33 definitely passed while three probably did so, giving a probable pass rate of 65%. These probable pass rates must be balanced against the fact that 17 out of the 22 students for whom we have no data are female and are likely to have failed, suggesting that the 71% pass rate for female students

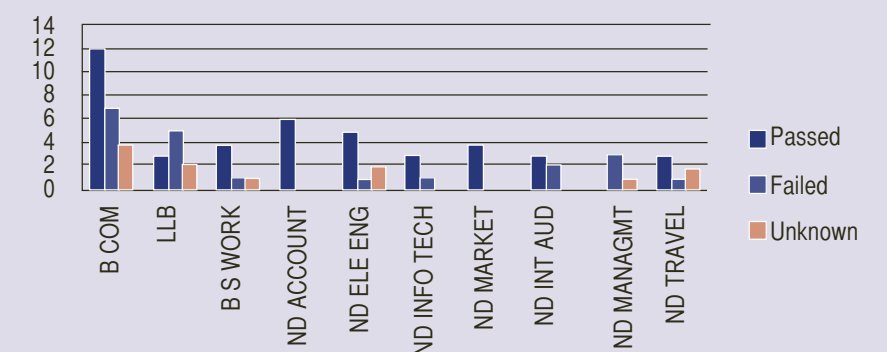
is inflated by perhaps five percentage points.

However, the trends brought out by the data are still important and interesting. Black males, for example, had a pass rate of 78%, followed by black females at 73%. Coloured females come next with a pass rate of 64% while coloured male students had the poorest pass rate at only 44%. It is not possible from this study to tell why coloured male students did so poorly compared to the rest. This certainly invites further investigation to understand the dynamics of success rates among different population groups.

Another dynamic of pass rates that can be examined using the data on the sample of 131 students is course pass rates (Graph 3).

Graph 3 shows the 10 courses with the most significant pass-rate dynamics. Bachelor of Commerce degrees were the most popular courses among the 2002 cohort. It would appear that most students also passed their B Com degrees, but given that the unknowns probably failed, the pass rate for this course is possibly just over 50%. Bachelor of Law (LLB) was also one of the most popular courses, but it appears to have had a high failure/dropout rate of somewhere

Course Pass Rate



Graph 3

approaching 70%. National Diplomas in Management had a similarly high failure rate while ND Internal Auditing was failed by 40% of students who

took the course. On the other hand, Bachelor of Social Work and Diplomas in Accounts, Marketing, and Information Technology proved to have

high pass rates among the students.

It must be pointed out that some students who failed

or dropped out of their initial qualifications re-registered for other courses and most of them have done very well the second time around.

Regomoditswe Maboitshego

The Value of Perseverance



Regomoditswe is a testament to the value of the expression “if at first you don’t succeed, try again”. Hailing from Taung, in the North West Province, 28 year-old Regomoditswe is the fourth born of five children. When she obtained a place at the University of the Free State, and financial support from REAP, Regomoditswe gave in to family pressure and decided to study a B Sc. While she tried hard to do well in this degree, and was supported by REAP throughout, she dropped out of her studies in her third year.

“I was depressed for a long time when I dropped

out”, says Regomoditswe. In 2005 she moved to ThabaNchu to do a temporary volunteer job as a data capturer at the local clinic. She was persuaded by her mother that job opportunities would be better in Johannesburg, so she moved to the city in July 2005. However, the only opportunity Regomoditswe could find was another volunteer position at a home for abused women and children, where she worked for a year. Still feeling depressed, she got involved with an unsuitable boyfriend and fell pregnant in July 2006. She moved back to Taung during her pregnancy and she describes 2007 as a “baby year”.

The baby gave Regomoditswe hope and a new focus and in 2008, she moved back to

Johannesburg and became a “house mother” at the same shelter where she had previously worked. The shelter was run by the Gauteng Department of Community Safety and it was not long before she was recruited to be a receptionist at their headquarters. Regomoditswe’s experiences had showed her that her calling in life was to be a social worker – something she had not considered when she did her original studies. “Social work was looked down on in those days, but it’s in demand now,” she explains. Her Department gave her a bursary and she is currently completing her third year of a Social Work degree in which she is doing very well. The job as a receptionist suits her as she has a lot of time to concentrate on her studies.

Regomoditswe is very passionate about issues facing women and children and her ambition is to start an organisation which empowers them. Although she is not currently active in her home community, through both her job and church, she volunteers weekly at the IkhlanyaLethemba shelter, helping women to compile their CVs, find jobs, adapt to motherhood and overcome their difficulties. This, she balances with being a single mother, her studies and her job. “I got a second chance to study, which not many people do” she says gratefully. Regomoditswe is clearly not taking this second chance for granted.

• Time Taken to Complete

The only reliable data on time taken to complete qualifications comes from the sample of 77 students we were able to track. Of these students, 51 completed their studies (66%), with 26 of them (51%) completing within the normal time for their course and 25 taking longer than they were supposed to. REAP factors into its support approach the fact that many rural students need to take a year or two longer to complete their qualifications. The sample shows this to have been true for the 2002 cohort where two of those who passed took an extra two years to complete, 20 took one year extra and three took six months longer. The average course duration for all 51 students was 3.3 years, while the average time needed to complete was 3.6 years. Nevertheless, it is heartening that only 49% of students in the sample needed extra time despite the disadvantages they faced in terms of inadequate schooling, poor preparation for tertiary level and language barriers.

In terms of academic success rates, 50 students from our sample provided self-assessments of their performance. Fifteen of them (30%) said that they simply passed, or were average students. Twenty students (40%) felt that they had done

fairly well and had a number of distinctions throughout their courses to prove it. The other 30% felt that they had done very well in their courses, with many citing multiple distinctions, awards and Dean’s Merit List appearances as evidence. There does not appear to be any strong correlation between race, gender or institution when it comes to these assessments of success. It is not possible to tell how well the students we could not track did in their courses, but at least five of them are known to have studied at a higher level, which suggests that they passed their courses well.

• Further Studies

As discussed above, five of the students we were unable to track did either B Tech or Honours degrees. That is all that is known of this group and so the information we have on further studies comes from the main study sample. Of the sample, 14 former students who did not pass their original qualifications have studied a range of alternative courses, ranging from computer courses and a Theology Licentiate, to Diplomas in Nursing and Agriculture and degrees in Criminology and Financial Management. It is encouraging to note that so many (around two-thirds) of those who failed their original courses have

not given up on becoming qualified, but have instead chosen alternative courses through which to realise their goals. Indeed, some of those interviewed talked of having chosen their original courses unwisely and said they were doing well now that they had discovered the course they were truly interested in.

Twenty-four of those who did obtain their initial qualifications have gone on to study further, mostly self-funded or paid for by their employers. Sixteen have done Honours, B Tech or Post-Graduate Certificates while three have registered for Masters. Five more studied for various certificates or vocational courses, including in Business Management and Community Development. Overall, 13 of the study sample are still busy with studies at various levels, mostly while also doing full-time jobs. For seven of the sample, who we tracked but could not interview, we do not have information on whether they have studied further.

Finally, of those who have not yet undertaken further studies, eight say they are intending to do so in the near future. Most say they are constrained by work pressure and lack of finances when asked why they have not already tried. Two of them say they did try but had

to give up due to the same pressures. The remaining 22 appear to have no desire to study further at this stage.

• Location of Students

Of the 77 tracked students, two have died within the last five years, meaning that we have information on the whereabouts of 75 former students. Both black female students, the two who have died did so in ways which reflect the dangers young people in South Africa face. One was stabbed to death by her boyfriend, while another died after a long illness. Recent statistics show that black females in their 20s are the most vulnerable section of the population to HIV infection, with an HIV prevalence of 33%. Black males of the same age follow closely behind. It is also known that urban informal settlements, where many of the students are likely to have stayed at one time or another, have the highest HIV prevalence. It is therefore possible that these two former students are not the only members of the 2002 cohort who have died, which may also have been a factor in the difficulty we faced in tracking the cohort.

Map 1 shows the location of the 74 students we did trace who are still in South Africa. One student is currently in

Austria working as an au pair and is therefore not represented. Unsurprisingly given the economic might of

Gauteng, 18 former students are now located there, despite none being from the province originally. Cape Town has also

attracted 8 of the sample while Durban and Bloemfontein have 3 each. Thus, it is clear that most opportunities for these

young people are found in the urban areas, with 60% now located there despite all being from rural backgrounds.

Map 1: Location of tracked students

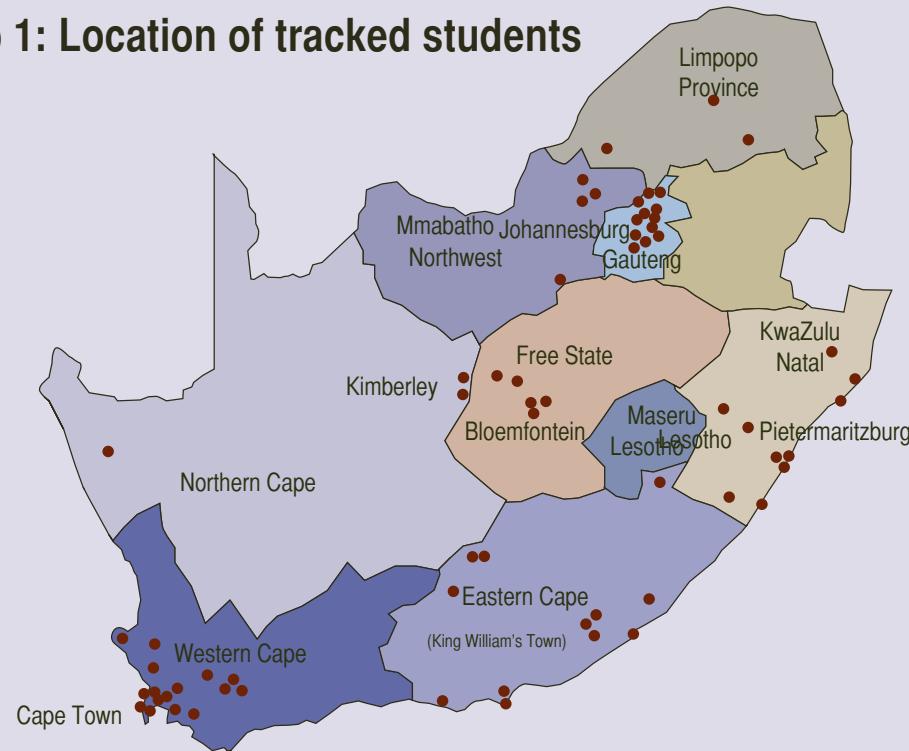


Chart 1 explores the location of former students in further detail. Large cities are now the home of 46% of the sample, while medium cities such as Kimberley, King Williams Town and Rustenburg are home to 15%. However, 39% are still living in small rural towns. Many of these rural settlements are close to their rural homes, but a number more are not, being mining settlements or those where people have been posted by their government employers.

Location of sample

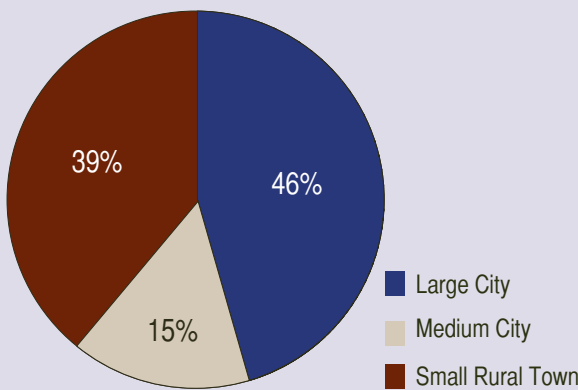
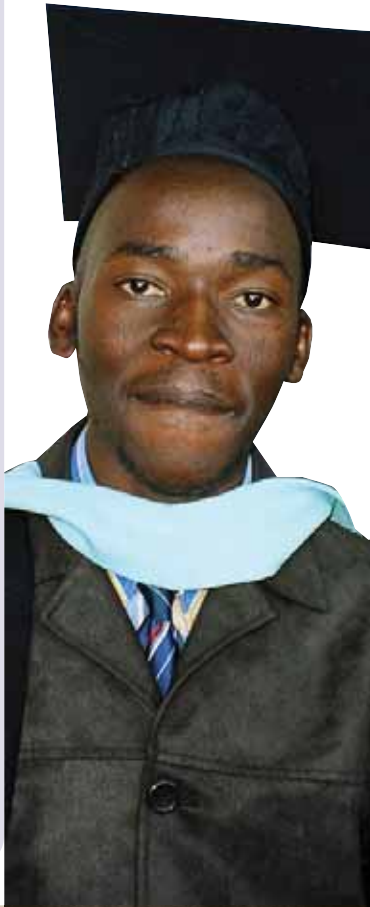


Chart 1



The information presented above represents a snapshot which may give the impression that the former students have lived in

these locations since completing their studies. Interviews with 65 of the students, however, show that this is certainly not the case,

with the overwhelming majority of them moving two or three times since their student days. These moves have been determined by

factors such as job availability, work postings and the presence of family support.

Amanda Peter

REAP Ambassador



"It's not about where you come from, but where you are going and what you are doing to make your tomorrow better" says Amanda, a 29 year-old BSc Physiotherapy graduate from Cofimvaba in the rural Eastern Cape.

After completing her Matric in her home area, Amanda managed to get a place at the University of the Western Cape, in distant Cape Town. REAP supported her studies in her first year by helping her to get a student loan from NSFAS. For all four years at university REAP provided Amanda with funds for books, transport and food as well as

training workshops, counselling and academic assistance. This all-round support was invaluable, according to Amanda: "Even English", she says, "I did not understand it – it sounded like French to me! But they helped me to learn." When her father died in her second year, she credits REAP with helping her to get through and keep concentrating on her studies.

Amanda did so well in her course that she obtained several distinctions, graduated in the top three in her faculty and was given an award of merit by the Golden Key International Honour Society. She then undertook her internship at Pretoria Academic

Hospital and has been living in Tshwane ever since.

Following her internship she worked at Tshwane Academic Hospital as a physiotherapist for a while before moving to Life Healthcare, a private medical facility, as a Rehabilitation Therapist. Not satisfied with the pay or the opportunities afforded by these jobs, Amanda studied a short course in business and began to do locum work on weekends with a view to setting up her own practice. A couple of years ago, she took the plunge and started her own physiotherapy practice in Pretoria. "It was hard at first," says Amanda, "because it is difficult to get patients when you are new. But I wanted independence, needed better earning power and saw a gap that I could fill." Now, although her income fluctuates, she earns twice the amount of her salary at Life Healthcare and she feels her career is moving forward.

This is just as well because Amanda has a nine-month old child with her long-term partner and four other family members to support. With these responsibilities, Amanda only visits home once a year and is not involved with any community outreach work at the moment. She has, however, been a motivational speaker at her old primary school and continues to do pro bono work in Tshwane's townships with old people or those who cannot afford her fees. "I am not in health to make money," she says, "but to help people". She therefore aims to build her practice further and employ several therapists so she can continue to offer a helping hand to her community.

Amanda has also been an ambassador for REAP. In this role she has given many presentations on behalf of the organisation and in 2006, she travelled to Holland and Austria to meet with REAP's partners.



ABOVE: Amanda & Lynette Harding being interviewed by Joke d'Hart chair of Tania Leon Studiefonds in the Netherlands

Phandle Phandle

Showing the Way

Phandle was born in ThabaNchu, rural Free State, 29 years ago, the last born of three children. Life for Phandle changed forever when his eyesight started to deteriorate at a young age. Despite an operation, he became completely blind and has had to adapt to this disability ever since. Although he came from a modest rural family, Phandle did not let his disability deter him, and he managed to pass his Matric and obtain both a place at the University of Cape Town and a bursary from the Department of Labour for his tertiary studies.

At UCT, Phandle studied a Bachelor of Social Science, majoring in Psychology. Fortunately, UCT had the necessary facilities and support mechanisms to allow a blind student to progress with his degree.

Another crucial source of support for Phandle during his degree was from REAP, which gave him funding for his transport, study materials and food throughout the four years he took to complete it. He also cites the REAP workshops as being very useful, especially those on financial management and budgeting.

Having graduated at the end of 2005, Phandle went to Bloemfontein to stay with family members and seek employment. Constrained by the lack of opportunities for people with his disability, he could not find a job for two years. He persevered, however, and in 2008 he was employed by the Department of Correctional Services as a Skills Development Facilitator in the Human Resources section. After some time in this position, he was moved into the investigations section, where he is responsible for following up on cases of corruption and any other misdemeanours by

Correctional Services personnel. When asked if he learnt anything from REAP which he applies in his job he replies: "Yes: Things like professionalism, humanity, my approach towards doing research and an avoidance of complacency and mediocrity". He feels that these values have had a positive influence on the way his colleagues work.

Phandle has taken these values into other aspects of his life, where he is the Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee of the South African Council for the Blind. Through this job, he has been able to promote and protect the rights of blind people

and advocate for them to have equal opportunities with sighted people. He has also become a role model to other blind people struggling to live a normal life in his community.

Phandle is currently single, but has a two-year-old daughter with his ex-girlfriend. With his modest salary, he supports his daughter and two nephews, who rely on him for school fees and clothing. Phandle's wish is to obtain a Masters Degree in Psychology so that he could get a job which would allow him to earn a better salary and buy his own house.



Interestingly, nine of those who failed their studies are still living in their home towns or very close by. Similarly, four out of the six who are unemployed are in their home towns although they are not necessarily living at home. This suggests that for these individuals, family support networks, cheaper accommodation and small income-raising opportunities in their rural homes are more useful than the high-risk strategy of seeking employment far from home. A far higher proportion of successful students with full-time jobs are living in cities far away from home where the best opportunities are.

Only eight of the sample live with their parents in their family homes. This is not necessarily an indication of unemployment or lack of independence as six of them are employed and one of the top earners in the sample is living with his mother. It should also not be assumed

that these students returned straight home after their studies as four of them lived and worked elsewhere before returning.

Most of those who have now obtained secure employment and have started families (45) say they are settled and see themselves remaining where they are for the medium or long-term future. However, 20 want to move in the near future, either back to their home areas or in search of new opportunities. The few who want to move back home cite the expense and fast pace of city living as disadvantages.

Lastly, in the context of "brain drain" which affects so many African countries, it is encouraging that so few of these qualified students are either overseas or planning to leave South Africa. Only one former student in our sample was out of the country, performing short-term unskilled au pairing work in Austria.

Another, a medical doctor who we traced but could not interview, was said to have recently applied for permission to relocate overseas. Of course, some of those we could not track may be overseas as well, which may have been a factor in our inability to get hold of them.

• Livelihood Status

Fifty-eight of the 77 in the study sample have managed to secure full-time jobs, which represents a full-time employment rate of 75% (see chart 2). A further five are currently performing part-time or temporary work (6%), while only six (8%) are unemployed. The rest of the sample are studying (3 individuals), deceased (2 individuals) or their current employment status is unknown (3 individuals).

Interestingly, 11 (19%) of those employed full-time did not obtain their qualifications,

illustrating that it is possible to find stable employment without completing tertiary studies. However, 10 of these individuals earn below R10 000 per month, demonstrating that without a qualification, promotion and high earning power are unlikely.

As suggested previously, given the high pass rate found among the members of the study sample, this employment rate is likely to be higher than it would be for the full 2002 cohort. With what is known about those we could not trace and the employment patterns among those we could, the overall employment rate is likely to be close to 60%. The high employment rate found here indicates that for young previously disadvantaged graduates (and non-graduates), there are opportunities available in the job market.

In terms of employment rates by population group, both black and coloured students who

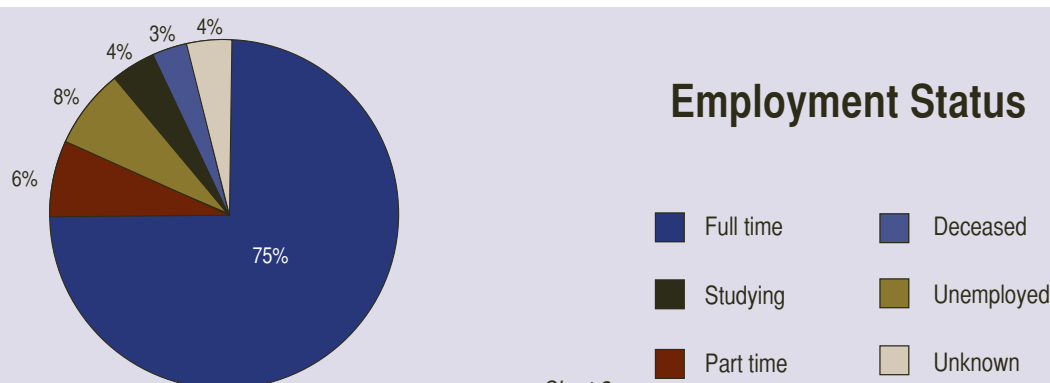


Chart 2

Table 2: Employment sector

Employer/Occupation	No.
Government Sector	
Prov Govt Departments (Education, Correctional Services, Social Development)	9
SAPS	8
Local Government	5
Nat Govt Departments (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Justice)	4
Parastatals (e.g. Eskom, Telkom, StatsSA)	4
Sub Total:	30
Private Sector	
Accountant/auditor/book keeper	5
Medical sector	4
Consulting (e.g. engineering, research)	4
Agricultural sector	3
Mining sector	3
Legal sector	2
Banking sector	2
Tourism	1
Marketing	1
Retail	1
Construction sector	1
Sports	1
Sub Total:	28
Total:	58

• Employment & Earning Dynamics

Table 2 sets out the number of former students employed in various sectors. Of the 58 who are employed full-time, 30 work in the government sector (52%) and the private sector employs the other 28. Provincial government departments such as Education and Correctional Services are the biggest employer, with nine, while the South African Police Service alone employs eight people. It appears from our sample that these are the easiest places to find employment if you do not have a tertiary qualification since a number of those employed here failed their courses. More qualified students were employed in the other government services, including municipalities (e.g.: accountants and engineers), national government departments and at parastatal bodies.

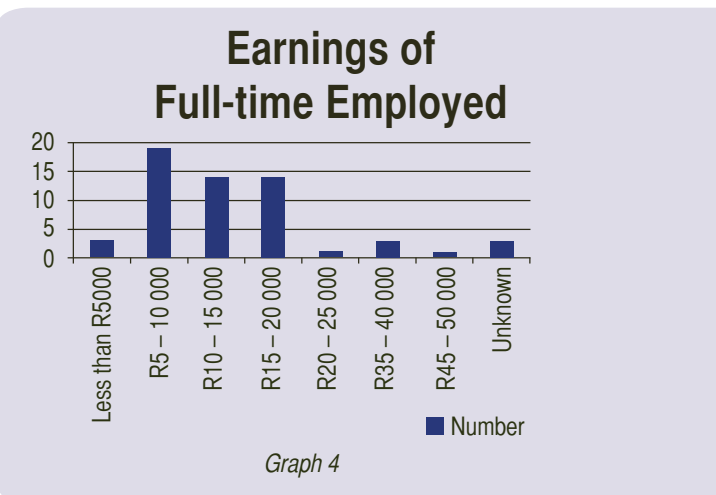
were tracked showed full-time employment rates in line with the overall rate (75% and 76% respectively). Only 5% of black former students are employed part-time while 7% are unemployed. Among the 21 coloured students, 10% are employed part-time while 10% are unemployed.

Among the 50 females in the sample only 70% are employed full time compared to 85% of their male counterparts. In addition, 8% of females are employed part-time and 10% are unemployed compared to 4% in both categories for the men. Four of the five who have part-time jobs are women while five of the six sample members who are unemployed are women, suggesting that full-time employment is still skewed in favour of men despite affirmative action policies. It must be pointed out, however, that several of the unemployed women are being supported by their husbands while they have small babies to raise.

The private sector has employed 48% of the former students. As shown in Table 2, they are employed in a range of fields, from accounting and auditing and law to the commercial agriculture sector and even sports development. Jobs in these sectors range from highly skilled positions (e.g. lawyer, accountant, metallurgical engineer, physiotherapist) to semi-skilled jobs such as shop manager, plant operator, and receptionist. The latter jobs are performed by students who did not get their qualifications but still managed to find full-time jobs.

For most of those who were employed, their current jobs were not their first, and many had not been there long enough to gain promotion. However, those who were in skilled positions and had remained in their jobs over a number of years were certainly working their way up into higher positions within their companies. A number had also left previous companies to take up more senior positions at their current workplace. In addition, two of the sample had worked for a number of years before deciding that they would like to form their own companies. Many of those who are employed full-time are thus on promising career paths.

Graph 4 shows that the largest single group of former students with full-time jobs (19 individuals or a third of them) are earning between R5 000 – R10 000 per month before deductions. Three (all coloured females) are earning less than R5 000 per month, of which one is a receptionist, one is a teacher and the other is an assistant shop manager. All of them failed to obtain their qualifications. Of the 22 who are earning less than R10 000 per month, 68% are women and the same percentage are black. It is therefore not surprising that 10 of these lowest earners are black



Graph 4

women. Nine out of the 22 lowest earners did not obtain their tertiary qualifications, which is partly the reason for their low earning power. However,

gender has also played a role judging by the fact that seven of the 10 black women who earn less than R10 000 did obtain their qualifications.



Luvo Makhasi

Lawyer and Leader



At 27, Luvo is already a Senior Associate at law firm Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr and sits on the Board of Directors of two business enterprises. Luvo comes from Whittlesea, in the former Ciskei homeland (now the Eastern Cape) and is the 14th born of 18 children.

Luvo was clearly a gifted student from the start, and in 2002, he gained a place at the University of the Western Cape to study law. Being from such a large family, he needed the financial support he received from REAP

and NSFAS: "It came at the right time", he explains, "the support made studying much easier, alleviated the burden and allowed me to fit into a class of society which most UWC students come from". He did very well during his four year LLB, being placed on the Dean's Merit List for three years running.

Upon completing his degree, it was not long before the Cape Town branch of Cliffe Dekker Hofmeyr recruited Luvo as a Candidate Attorney in early 2006. He was happy to stay in Cape Town because a lot of his

family members now live in the city. After completing his articles he was appointed as an Associate, specialising in Public Law and he has since been promoted to the position of Senior Associate and given the responsibility of handling several big clients. Although he says he lives every day as it comes and has no specific ambitions, his next step will be to become a Partner in the firm. He has already managed to buy a house and a car, so perhaps he feels that he has already achieved more than he could have hoped for when he was a child in the Eastern Cape.

As can be expected with such a large family and the good position he finds himself in, Luvo supports four siblings with their tertiary studies, as well as his ageing parents. He has no other responsibilities since he is still single and has no children to take care of.

Being very busy, Luvo does not travel to his rural home more than once a year, but when he does, he normally addresses community gatherings and gives free legal advice where possible. In Cape Town he assists the Anti Eviction Campaign with legal support from time to time. He is also involved with youth politics and clearly has ambitions to become involved in governance as time goes on. This is illustrated by the fact that on top of all his other work, Luvo is currently studying a Masters degree in local government. Perhaps one day he will be a well-known politician? "Watch this space" is his answer.



ABOVE: Luvo with the then Minister of Education Naledi Pandor

Twenty-eight (48%) of the former students, however, are earning comfortable salaries of between R10 000 and R20 000 per month (see Chart 3), performing skilled jobs for which they are qualified. Women are well represented in this category, being 20 out of the 28 in the group. Five individuals are earning over R20 000 of which one is earning between R20 000 and R25 000 (an auditor), and four are earning between R35 000 and R50 000 (an accountant, a lawyer, a civil engineer and a mining engineer). Of these top five earners, all are male and four are black. As with the data on employment, the fact that the top earners are all male suggests that men find it easier to gain high-paying jobs and promotion within their fields than similarly qualified women. In our sample, several of the women were accountants, auditors and lawyers, but none of these earned over R20 000 per month.

Those who are employed part time all earn less than R5 000 per month performing jobs such as contract teaching or working as shop assistants. As noted above, 80% of those doing part-time work are women. Of the six who are currently unemployed (5 women and 1 man), only two did not complete their studies. Three of them are supported by their husbands, while the other two females are supported by their parents. The only unemployed man runs several small businesses in his home town in order to survive, including a hair salon. Despite not obtaining his B Com, he learnt much in his four years of studies that he is able to apply in his entrepreneurial activities.

Only a few others in the study sample show any signs of being entrepreneurial, with most saying that they are currently concentrating on their professions. Two of

those we have classified as full-time employed run their own businesses after several years of working in their fields. Eleven former students run small businesses in addition to their formal employment. These businesses include running a phone shop, selling duvets and comforters, doing bookkeeping for small businesses, buying and selling property, commercial cleaning, import and export, property development, catering, selling Avon and Watkins products and making business cards. Several more (5) used to run small businesses before obtaining full-time employment, including an internet shop, tailoring and small-time vending. A further seven say they have plans to start their own businesses in such fields as civil contracting, IT, mushroom farming, catering and transport.

An additional indicator of how well these former students are doing economically is to what extent they have been able to buy property or their own vehicles. The overwhelming majority of the tracked students (44) are still renting while one is living in company accommodation and eight live at home. To date, only 13 have managed to buy property of any form and it is unlikely that more than a couple of those in the group we could not get such information on have bought property so far. The fact that less than 20% of the sample have managed to buy property, despite many being employed, is indicative of how difficult young people in their early careers find it to obtain housing loans and get onto the property ladder in the current economic climate. Car ownership is unsurprisingly higher with at least 28 of the sample buying a motor vehicle so far.

Earnings Breakdown

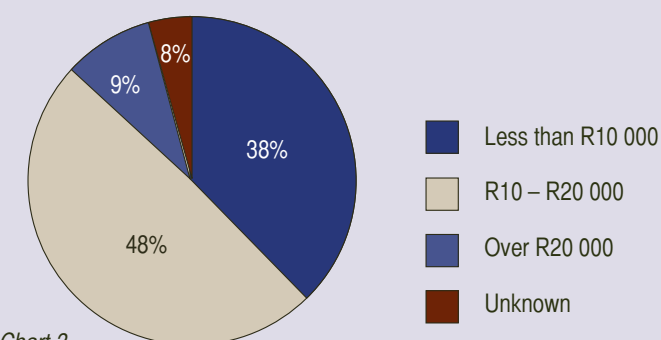


Chart 3

“REAP helped me very much! My parents had no money to send me to school, but REAP took me there and I'm where I am because of REAP. Starting is very important so I'm very thankful, I wish they can continue doing what they did with us”.

REAP STUDENT

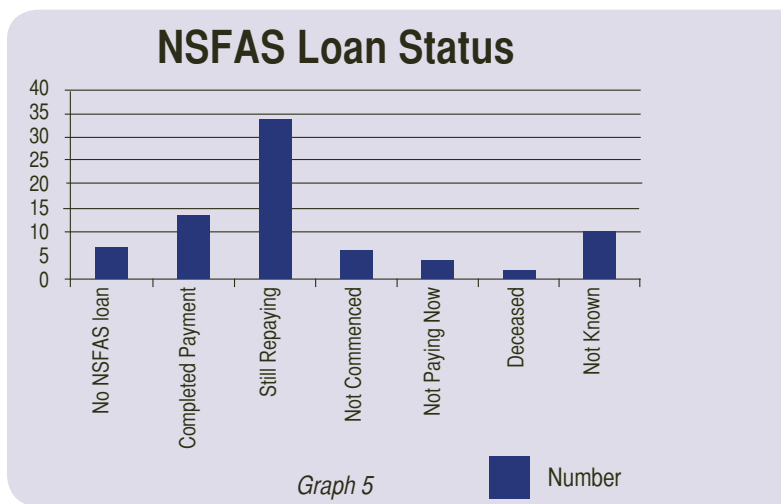


Nevertheless, almost half of the sample (36) are still using public transport as they either cannot afford to own a car, or have not yet obtained a driver's licence.

• NSFAS Debt Status

For at least 44 of the sample of 77 tracked students, over and above their other financial commitments, there is the debt they owe

to NSFAS for their student loans (see Graph 5). Some of those who we tracked but could not speak to may have avoided participating for fear that NSFAS might be able to find out their whereabouts or their earnings and make them resume or increase payments. Seven did not have a student loan while 14 former students have been able to complete their payments entirely.



Lekahla Nkhahle
Ploughing back the Skills

Lekahla comes from the impoverished Matatiele area of the Eastern Cape, from a family of four children of whom he is the oldest. Having shown promise at school, he was able to get a place at the University of Zululand to study a B Com (Accounts), as well as support from REAP for his first year. Lekahla spent four years at university, and despite academic support from REAP, had eventually to drop out with a few modules left to complete.

Without a qualification, but having learnt much in the

course of his studies, Lekahla then went to Johannesburg, where he registered for courses in computers and call-centre management while he worked in temporary jobs. These jobs included work for the Auditor General and at ABSA and Standard Banks. Having completed his courses but not finding any longer-term employment, Lekahla decided to return to his rural home and use his commercial and accounting skills to run small businesses with his family.

Luckily, his father has employment, but Lekahla helped his mother to set up and

manage a sewing business while he launched a small hair-dressing salon in his home village. "I did research on what was needed in my area," he explained, "I saw that I could make money doing cheap haircuts." Being a natural leader and community-minded individual Lekahla also got involved in a local vegetable-growing cooperative of which he is currently the chairman. It is clear that his presence at home, with the business acumen he acquired while studying, has already assisted his family and the cooperative in their endeavours to make a living.

But Lekahla's involvement in his community does not end there. One of his main ambitions is to use his skills to advise local businesses on financial management. He is putting this vision into practice through being the treasurer of the local youth forum. "I am from a poor community so I could really make a difference", says Lekahla. Having learnt much at the REAP HIV workshops, an additional goal of his is to impart this knowledge to the youth and sports teams he currently works with.



Most of those making repayments to NSFAS owe between R5 000 and R30 000, but surprisingly many of those earning decent salaries are paying back small monthly amounts that are not making a dent on their debts. Those still studying, unemployed or earning less than R5000 per month are not paying anything at the moment with the result that their debt is accumulating interest which threatens to put even more financial strain on them.

• Social Status & Family Life

The former REAP students in the sample are not only forging ahead with their careers and economic lives, but they all have social and family lives to manage at the same time. For many of the former students in the sample, they are in the process of settling down

with life partners and starting families of their own. Almost 70% of the sample are in serious relationships (either long-term partnerships, or they are married or engaged to be married). For some of the 28 who have long-term partners but are not yet married, the cost of traditional bridewealth payments and the wedding ceremony are cited as reasons for delaying their marriage. This has not stopped 19 from getting married and a further 6 from getting engaged. Thirteen are still single while marital status of the nine who we traced but could not interview is unknown.

For those who have partners, a high proportion of them (58%) met in their home towns or rural areas. Four of these have been together since high school days. Thirteen of the former students met

their partners while working away from home and only 8 (15%) met their partners while studying. It is interesting to note that despite the high mobility and opportunities available all over the country, most of these former students have chosen partners from their home areas. This will play an important role in their continued engagement with their home areas and ability to visit often and invest time and resources into their areas of origin.

The partners of those who are in relationships are reasonably well qualified and employed themselves. Less than 25% of

them have only high school qualifications, and of these, many are working as artisans or in the police. Ten partners hold university degrees while another 10 hold diplomas in various areas of skill. Two have done Honours or B Tech qualifications. A further 11 have done short courses and five are still in the process of completing their studies. For the majority of the sample who have partners, it thus appears that the burden of supporting their families and paying bills does not solely fall onto them, or at least may not do so in perpetuity.



Matshediso Molebatsi

Dressed for Success



Matshediso is the youngest of three children in a family from Bela-Bela in Limpopo Province. Having done well in science at school, she registered for a BSc in Dietetics at the University of the Western Cape, which she completed (with Honours) in 2005. When asked how she did in her studies, Matshediso unabashedly states: "I did very well, got some distinctions and graduated at the top of my class." But she is quick to point out that REAP's support helped "tremendously" in her success. Matshediso argues that whereas other bursary schemes only cover tuition fees, REAP's support for additional needs is invaluable. For instance, when she discovered that she needed glasses in her second year, REAP paid for them. She also valued the

support of her student advisor, adding: "there was a toll free line so there was never an excuse not to call them".

Upon completing her studies, Matshediso returned to Bela-Bela to do her Community Service at the Warmbaths Hospital. Finding that this hospital was too small and offered too few challenges she left after her mandatory year and went to work at Thembisa Hospital as a senior dietician. For two and a half years she worked in this position before the frustrations of working in the public sector, as well as poor pay, persuaded her to seek employment in the private sector. In June 2009 she took a job as a medical representative at Nestle in Midrand, Gauteng. During this time she has also obtained a postgraduate Diploma in Management through Wits University.

Her degree was not the only thing Matshediso gained from UWC as she met her long-term partner – an environmental health graduate – while she was studying there. They have an 18 month-old child together but Matshediso is currently the sole breadwinner as the economic downturn has meant that her partner is out of work. She also supports her mother, sister and niece, giving them money when she visits Bela-Bela, which is almost every week.

While she does not want to live in Bela-Bela, Matshediso is still very engaged with her home community. Many people there look up to her and she has thus started the Bela-Bela Education Advocacy Group, which aims to help

the youth realise their dreams. Matshediso and her friends provide career counselling and advice on subject choices to learners from Grade 8 upwards, as well as sessions on stress management, drugs, teen pregnancy and HIV. They also refer school-leavers to institutions which can provide access to funding for tertiary education and help them to write applications. When asked how it is that she has such a heart for this kind of work, Matshediso replies: "REAP helped me, so now I can help others". For her, the REAP workshops and community outreach activities she was expected to perform while studying have really helped her in both her career and in her ongoing engagement with her home community.

Of the 67 for whom we have such information, most (61%) have already had at least one child. Thirty-five of the former students have one child, while

six have two children and one is currently expecting a child. While most of these children have been born in the context of long-term partnerships and

represent a move towards establishing families by many of the former students, a number of the children have been from previous relationships and

two of the study sample are single mothers. Most of the men with children by previous partners are still supporting their children, who live with

their mothers. The other 25 (37%) former students have not yet had children, even though many of them are in long-term relationships.

Of the 41 who already have children, 54% have kept the children with them where they are living and working. In most cases, this suggests that they can afford child minders and day care while they are working. A quarter, however, have drawn on extended family support and sent their children back to live with their families at their rural homes. Meanwhile, half of those with two children have adopted a combined approach, keeping one child with them and sending the other to live with their grandparents at home. The fact that over a quarter are directly linked to their rural families in this way has implications for the remittances they are sending and the kind and quality of relationships they maintain with their home areas. Six of the children born to previous partners of men in the sample are living with their mothers elsewhere.

• Remittances & Family Support

Financial support and remittances for rural families are clearly constrained for most by their employment and salary status (most being currently in a low-middle income bracket),

the high cost of living in cities, debts such as student loans and their obligations towards their own partners and children. Nevertheless, 45 of the 67 former students we were able to gather such data from (or 67%) did indicate that they were supporting family members other than their own partners and spouses. Several said they were the primary breadwinner in their family.

For example one woman who is working part-time says she is supporting 15 of her family members, being the only one with an income (other than pensions and other grants). Others who are supporting many have six or seven family members to look after. Those 45 who are supporting family other than their partners and children are mainly supporting unemployed parents and

siblings, assisting with school and university fees and feeding and clothing younger siblings or nieces/nephews, a number of whose parents have died. In all, the 45 former students are supporting 125 such people between them, an average of 2.7 each. Seven of the tracked students say they do not support any family members, or only do so on an ad hoc basis if a request is made.

Elizabeth Zwane

Breadwinner to Many

Elizabeth is the third born in a large family of 15 from Mtubatuba in KwaZulu-Natal. In 2002, she embarked on a B Com (Banking) degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, with the support of REAP. She did well enough to qualify for three years of REAP support, but dropped out at the end of her third year with six credits to go due to "financial reasons". After a break from her course she attempted to re-register in 2006, but was again unable to continue due to lack of funds.

Elizabeth had little choice

but to return home and look for employment. During this time she made small amounts of money selling chips and sweets "just to put something on the table". Having spent more than a year unemployed she finally found short-term teaching work at a school in Ulundi in 2008. She has been performing this work since then, but has had to register for a teaching degree through UNISA as one of the conditions of her contract. This takes up a lot of her spare time and is a financial strain.

Meanwhile, only one other person in her family is currently employed, which means that

Elizabeth bears a lot of responsibility to meet their needs on her very small salary. She sends almost R2000 home every month to cover school fees, clothing and other needs. Elizabeth also has a child of her own with her long-term partner, who lives in Durban.

Although she still wishes she could finish her original degree and get a job in the Department of Trade and Industry, Elizabeth knows that her family are counting on her for support, so there is little chance she will realise this dream any time soon.

Despite the above obligations faced by many of the study sample, it is clear that their financial support for their rural families cannot at this stage be huge. Most of those who remit, send money every single month, but amounts are mostly small, seldom being above R1 000 per month. As noted above, a number have drawn on their families to assist in child-rearing, which illustrates the reciprocal relationship between remittances and family support for urban wage labourers. While some claim to be the only breadwinner, or to be supporting their rural families, these claims must be viewed in the wider context of rural livelihoods in which families often draw on multiple small contributions from various sources in order to survive. It is therefore likely that these former students are performing an important role as a reliable contributor to a number of livelihood strategies, including money from grants and other wage labour, as well as subsistence agriculture. Where they are probably playing a vital role is in the contribution they are making to ensuring that younger siblings and other relatives have the means to be equipped for and attend school. Having themselves been given such an opportunity, many are highly aware of the value of this contribution to their family.

• Influence on Family and Community

As discussed above, the former students are already playing an important role in assisting to school their rural siblings. Many, however, also claim to have played an important role in setting a good example of success and offering good advice on studies and careers to their family members over and above the financial role they play. Forty-three of those interviewed (66%) say they have had a positive influence, with some claiming to be role-models for younger family members. A number of them point out that they are the first people in their families to have graduated, which gives them a very important role in providing advice and guidance. Some also help their families with things they have learnt through their studies, such as business and accounting advice or imparting knowledge

about health. Others have helped younger siblings to fill out application forms and get onto the REAP and NSFAS programmes. Even those who have made bad choices have used the lessons they learnt to advise their younger siblings not to make the same mistakes. The following are some quotes from students on their influence on their families:

"I had a big influence! My family were thinking like rural people with no hope, so I taught them to see that there is a future even for us rural people."

"Yes, through me my cousins saw that it is possible to study."

"I advised my younger sisters not to waste their opportunity doing what they think is cool."

"At home I am the only one who graduated and they even had a ritual to celebrate. I also advised my cousin not to study

tourism like me as there are no opportunities."

"My family does not make a decision about business without consulting me."

"I see that I put a smile on their faces, my brothers brag about me to their friends and the youngest looks up to me so much."

"I am a free motivational speaker."

However, there were still a few (5) who did not know if they had an impact, and 17 who felt that they had not been able to influence or advise their families due to being the youngest, being too busy or not being in regular contact with their families. One even raised a negative aspect, describing how her siblings were put off studying when they saw she was in debt from her NSFAS loan.



For most of these former students, maintaining a close relationship with their wider home communities is very difficult due to the fact that they are away for long stretches of time and have commitments to the new families they have started. Even many of those who are based in rural areas are not close to home, having been posted to other rural areas for work. While their skills are being utilised in rural areas at mines, municipalities, police stations and farms, these are not always close to home. As discussed above, a large number of those who are living in their home areas have failed their studies or are unemployed and there are thus very few who have brought significant skills directly back to their home areas at this stage. One exception is a young man who failed his B Com but

nevertheless used his four years of learning to move back and help his family to start and manage a number of small businesses in his home village. Only a few of the former students have been able to have an influence on their communities in terms of imparting skills that they learned, but several have been back to their high schools to give talks and career guidance, and a few more have been approached by neighbours and other community members for advice about studying, bursaries and careers.

In terms of involvement in community activities, the situation is much the same with the majority of those interviewed (54% or 35 individuals) performing no community role, either at home or where they currently stay (see Chart

4). Most understandably cite their distance from home, busy careers and the responsibilities that come with trying to build young families as barriers to participation. As many of them stressed, it is not because they do not want to participate, but rather that they are unable to at the moment. However, 21 of those interviewed are active either directly or indirectly in their home communities in church, sports, youth or other outreach activities. Most of these still live in their home areas or in nearby towns (they thus spend weekends at home) but three former students who live in big cities participate through sponsoring youth clubs, sports teams or community radio. While they can only participate in community activities at home on occasional visits, a further nine former students

are involved in community activities through their workplace or where they are now living, showing that they do have a heart for community work despite being away from home. Such activities include church, helping at shelters, outreach to street children and pro-bono (medical and legal) work for those who cannot afford to pay. Both those who are involved and many of those who are not currently involved in community activities, credit the values they learnt in REAP workshops and community service activities as being a major factor in their outlook towards giving back to society. Some are still involved in projects they started working with when they were with REAP. One woman cited the fact that she is still donating blood today, which is a practice she was introduced to by REAP.

Community Engagement

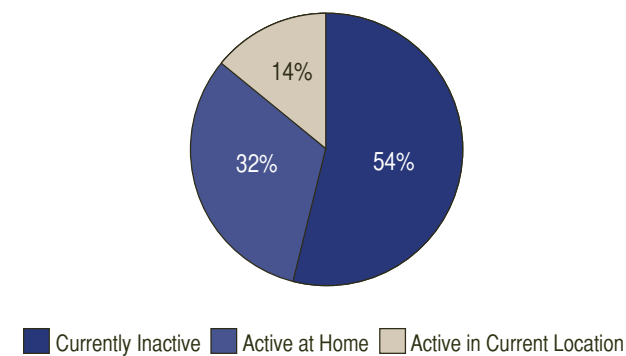


Chart 4





Lusanda Mtiya

Building Women's Sport



Lusanda has loved sports from an early age. However, growing up in Whittlesea, in the rural Eastern Cape, she could hardly have dreamed that one day she would be playing provincial rugby for KwaZulu-Natal and be in the training squad for the Women's national team.

Fortunately for Lusanda, sports was not the only thing she was good at, and having done well at school,

she went to the University of KwaZulu-Natal to study Sports Science. With assistance from REAP and a student loan, Lusanda completed her degree and graduated with an Honours degree in 2006.

Realising that there would be few opportunities in sports at home, Lusanda stayed in Durban after her studies and continued playing club and provincial rugby. Lean and athletic, her favourite positions

are the full-back or wing. But despite her qualifications, she found getting a full-time job challenging. She thus did part-time jobs, including teaching physical education, being a trainer at the Virgin Active gym and odd jobs for the KwaZulu-Natal Rugby Union.

Lusanda's patience finally paid off in January 2011 when she was offered a job as a Development Officer for women's rugby by the Union,

which she admits is her "dream job". Her greatest ambitions are to open her own sports agency and to study law so that she can advocate for the rights of sports people, who she feels are often exploited. On REAP's contribution to her life she says: "They gave me a second chance in life. I would never have completed my studies or been where I am today if it weren't for them".

Relatively few have taken on leadership responsibilities largely due to time constraints and their young age. Apart from a few who are youth, church or sporting leaders, only four

others stand out in terms of leadership roles. One is involved in youth politics in the Western Cape and sits on the Board of a couple of companies, another is the Provincial Chairman of

the South African Council for the Blind (he himself is blind), another is the Chairman of a land reform project (he is an agricultural manager) and the last one is the Chairman

of a vegetable cooperative in his rural village. All four are men, perhaps indicative of the fact that women are still marginalised from leadership structures in many instances.



• Impact on Rural Public Services

As indicated above, 30 of those who we managed to track work in government jobs. Of these, just over half are based in small towns or rural areas. In terms of numbers, then, it is clear that the 2002 student cohort has not yet had a great impact in providing skills to rural public services since many of the jobs available have been in urban areas. In addition, almost half of those working in rural public services such as in the SAPS are performing low-level jobs in which they can have little impact other than to perform their duties well. There are some, however, performing skilled middle-level jobs through which it is likely they are making a good impact. Such jobs

include a crime intelligence officer, a warrant officer, an accountant, a human resources manager, a finance officer, a civil engineer and a prosecutor. However, these individuals are themselves modest about what impact they may have had so far, pointing out that they are still young and relatively junior and can therefore only have a limited impact in terms of ensuring good delivery and a positive ethos in the provision of services to rural communities. What is clear, however, is that all of them are committed to their jobs and to making a contribution to their country through the jobs they perform. This work ethic too, many ascribe largely to valuable lessons about time management and responsibility they learnt in REAP workshops.

• Aspirations and Future Dreams

The dreams and aspirations of the former students who were interviewed differ depending on what they have achieved so far. Most of those who have failed to complete their courses see obtaining their qualifications and securing steady and well-paid employment as their long-term dream. For many of those who are qualified and working, however, their ambitions are to study further (part-time) so that they can be promoted into senior positions in their workplace. A number of these individuals are very ambitious and say that they want to be in senior management within the next five years. Judging by the progress of some of them, these are not unrealistic ambitions. Others who are

qualified and working see themselves leaving in-house positions to establish their own companies in their fields of expertise. They feel that having worked for several years, they will have enough experience to make such endeavours a success. In so doing, they will follow in the footsteps of the two who have already branched out into their own businesses so far.

Only three of those interviewed have the desire to study at a high level and become academics. One, for example, wants to do a PhD in Theology and become a professor while another wants to become a "brilliant" social scientist and the third wants to do a Doctorate in Public Health. Only a few want to work in fields where they perform social

Mahlatse Mokwatlo

Building Capacity

Mahlatse has recently launched his own consulting company after five years of working in-house as an engineer. His journey to this exciting point started in Doringspruit, Limpopo Province, where he was born, the youngest of seven children. After completing high school, Mahlatse got the opportunity to study a BSc (Civil Engineering) at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He was supported by REAP for his

first year and managed to obtain funding to cover his tuition fees.

Having passed his degree well, Mahlatse took a post as a site engineer with contracting engineers working at a mine in the Northern Cape. He then spent two and a half years in Secunda, working as a junior structural engineer, before being promoted to a structural engineer. In 2009, Mahlatse was transferred by his company to their office

in Pretoria, where he had wanted to be based for some time. While working, he completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Engineering in order to build on his original qualification.

Having gained much experience, Mahlatse decided in 2011 that he was ready to establish his own consulting company, despite the fact that he was in a secure position and earning a good salary. It appears the risk

has paid off because he already has his first contract. Mahlatse's vision is to build his company slowly and bring in trainees and other employees as it grows. "I want to build a sustainable platform and make a difference", he says. While he is unable to be involved meaningfully in his home community at present, he sees a great chance of making a contribution through his new company.

or community outreach work. One, for example, wants to start an NGO which advocates for women's rights, one wants to market tourism in her own province, one wants to study law and advocate for the rights of sports people and another wants to start her own social work practice. Even fewer want to be teachers, a finding as unsurprising as it is concerning as talented young people are desperately needed to inspire new generations of graduates. However, several more say they want to give back to the community through building capacity and creating employment as they develop

in business. Others say their dreams are to provide for their family and meet their own needs rather than being successful as an end in itself.

• Former Students' Views on REAP's Impact

REAP has clearly had a positive impact even on students who were only on the programme a short time or failed their studies. In fact, it was often the students who struggled academically or socially who made more use of the REAP advisors, workshops and network of fellow rural students for support. Some

of them are now using the lessons they learnt while on the programme to complete alternative qualifications and build their careers. One female student, for example, who was supported by REAP for one year and is still trying to complete her social work degree said:

"REAP was THE opportunity for me to get out of my home town and see the big city! This opened my eyes and changed my small-mindedness and I saw new opportunities".

She still keeps in touch with four fellow students she met

through the REAP programme. Another young woman who was also supported for only one year and failed said:

"It was very useful. My family could not support me so REAP did and they gave me glasses for the first time. They taught me time management and how to control myself, life skills and to see people in a different way."

Another, who passed but was only with REAP for one year explained:

"I went to Cape Town not knowing anyone, but through REAP I found a family."

Many other former students were effusive in their praise for REAP's role in their lives. The following quotes sum up the sentiment among most of the students about the impact REAP has had:

"REAP helped me very much! My parents had no money to send me to school, but REAP took me there and I'm where I am because of REAP. Starting

is very important so I'm very thankful – I wish they can continue doing what they did with us".

"Through REAP I managed to obtain the degree of my dreams!"

"There are so many new things at university. REAP taught me how to behave and be a good person."

"REAP opened the university door for me. If it had not been for REAP, I would not know anything about university."

"If not for REAP, I'm not sure I'd be where I am today! The whole set up was good. The workshops played a big role – I remember they brought good speakers like Naledi Pandor and Zackie Achmat!"

"Yoh! They really helped me! I enjoyed being part of REAP. Besides giving money they really know how to talk to you. I am not an 'A student' but they helped me to pass. Now I have my degree that no one can take away from me!"

"At that time, my parents were not working, so they really helped me."

"If not for REAP, I would not now be supporting my family and community."

"Phumi and Jackie were so caring – you would feel as if you were their child!"

"At the time I thought the workshops were pointless, but now I've realised how much they taught me."

"I had a lot of problems with self esteem, but REAP gave me motivational sessions and I'm now confident. I would not be the person I am today if not

for them!"

"I was frustrated in first year and not sure what to study. But REAP helped and guided me and now I am a professional in my field."

"I did not know anything about town. They took me from rural to town and I became aware. If not for REAP, today I would not be sitting where I am or even talking to you now!"

"Many programmes cover fees and so on, but REAP is different because they meet all your other needs like transport, food and stationery."

In addition, former students emphasised how useful the stress, time and budget management workshops were to them. However, a number of the students could not remember very much about the programme or the workshops. A few even complained about such things as producing expense slips, the fact that workshops were held on Saturdays, and transport difficulties in getting there. A couple whose support was terminated still did not understand why this had occurred. However, it appears that for most, what they put in was what they took out of the programme. As one former student said: *"If you don't want to go where REAP wants to take you, you will not go far!"*





Conclusion

Whilst, due to the constraints outlined at the beginning, not all of the students from the REAP 2002 cohort could be tracked, the half of the cohort who were traced and interviewed provide a clear indication of the value of giving opportunities and support to rural students in the way championed by REAP. There may be a greater number of successful students in the group who were tracked, but the fact that at least half of those who were not found managed to pass their tertiary studies suggests that the positive impacts and trends recorded above also reflect the majority of the entire cohort.

As is clear from the last section, REAP has left a major legacy with most of its former

students. Many of them have a good work ethic and the ambition to succeed coupled with a desire to contribute to society. Although most have left home and are very busy building their own lives and families, the majority clearly have a heart for their home communities and are proud of where they have come from. In time, when these young people are more settled, this will probably translate into more involvement and support for their rural communities. In the mean time, most are already deeply engaged with helping their extended families in financial and other ways while a few have already actively sought to give back to their home communities. Others have taken their desire to be involved in building

community to their new urban settings, where they continue to make a contribution.

As noted above, due to the small numbers working in rural government services, and their junior positions, their impact so far in terms of providing technical skills and contributing positively to the ethos of rural public services is minimal. However, for most of the students tracked, and undoubtedly for many of those we were not able to track, REAP's intervention has enabled them to change their economic and social status for the better and to assist their families in small ways to do the same. It is premature to judge whether they have yet made a significant impact in reducing rural poverty at

this point, but many of their families are benefiting from the remittances, support, advice and connection to a world that would have been largely inaccessible were it not for REAP.

REAP's contribution to the lives of the students in this study is particularly noteworthy given that they were supported by REAP when the programme was in its infancy. It is highly likely that the impact, relevance and effectiveness of the programme have been greatly improved over the decade it has been operating and that the thousands of students it has supported since have experienced as much of, if not greater, a contribution in their lives, and those of their families.



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Published by the Rural Education Access Programme, 2011

Study managed by: Glenda Glover

REAP's vision

To see hundreds of young rural South Africans equipped with the skills, qualifications, values and motivation necessary to effectively lead and serve their communities.

REAP's mission

To offer talented and motivated young South Africans from poor rural areas the chance to study at high quality tertiary institutions and provide them with the support and guidance they need to graduate, sustain themselves and become the leaders of tomorrow.

Acknowledgement & appreciation

REAP would like to acknowledge all staff and board members who served the programme in the early years, and more especially the student development advisors Lynette Harding, Jacqueline Layman, Phumelele Zonela, Eugene Machimana & Tsepo Senoamali.