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How effective is EPWP employment in enhancing the employability of participants once they exit these programmes? the case of the Modimola Integrated Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), North West province.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the efficacy of EPWP employment in enhancing workers' subsequent employability once they exit these programmes. The study also examined the conditions of EPWP employment to glean evidence about whether or not jobs offered in these programmes are distinguishable from other forms of casual employment preponderant within the South African labour market. Through the use of structured interviews complemented by individual diaries conducted with thirty-two former participants of the Modimola Integrated EPWP in the North West province this study reveals that public works employment is not distinguishable from other forms of "precarious" employment when evaluated against the general indicators of labour market security, minimum wages and benefits, working time, training, and union representation, *inter alia*. Contrary to the documented policy expectation that EPWP employment will enhance workers' skills and labour market exposure and thereby improve their subsequent labour market performance, this study reveals that public works employment was not successful in enhancing participants' access to other employment opportunities. This study found a broad unemployment level of 97% amongst former participants of the Modimola EPWP almost five years after they went through the programme's training component. The principal reason given by all the respondents was overwhelmingly lack of employment opportunities that required a recipe of skills they had acquired during participation in this programme.