

# The vulnerability of day labourers in South Africa and the role of community development in an integrated approach to achieving sustainable livelihoods

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## Abstract

*Poverty and unemployment are significant barriers to growth in South Africa and are reflected in low levels of income and high levels of unemployment and human deprivation. Rising unemployment is forcing the majority of deprived people to venture into a variety of survival activities such as day labouring in the informal sector of the South African economy, to eke out a meagre livelihood. As the vulnerability of day labourers in South Africa is socially and economically unjust, the main thrust of this article concerns the role of community development in an integrated approach to achieving sustainable livelihoods for South African day labourers. This article takes the form of a review of relevant available literature to provide a coherent account of the vulnerable circumstances of day labourers in South Africa. The inevitable conclusion that can be drawn from the review is that the hardships to which day labourers and their families are subjected, as a consequence of the nature of their work and the poor remuneration that it generates, when they are able to secure a day's work, effectively condemn them to being obliged to cope in circumstances that could best be described as untenable.*

**Keywords:** Community development, day labourers, sustainable livelihoods, South Africa, vulnerability.

## 1 Introduction

The aim of this article is to provide a coherent and comprehensive appraisal of the vulnerability of South African day labourers and the potential of community development as a means of contributing to improving their livelihoods. Day labourers are among the groups in South Africa that have been identified as vulnerable. Vulnerable groups can be defined as segments of the South African population that are subject to a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion than the general population (Statistics South Africa 2020). The following excerpt from an interview in a study that Smith (2020:84) conducted is an illustration of the experience of a typical day labourer and reflects the hardships that they encounter in their work and daily lives.

“... Being a day labourer is very hard and is very difficult to survive, especially for myself. I come here by the robot [traffic lights], specially [specifically] for work. I can paint, I can be a plumber, I can be a paver, but most cases I can go for any general duty, and the money you know, the income you are getting per day, haa, I can't make ends meet. It's very difficult, 'cause I'm also a family man you know. I've got a lot of responsibilities”

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The response of this day labourer to a question reveals the extremely arduous circumstances under which he struggles to earn sufficient money to afford even basic necessities. Schenck and Blaauw (2018:1) characterise day labourers as unemployed people, mostly men, who try to earn an income by selling their labour and skills at locations such as roadside labour markets or traffic intersections. The emergence of the day labour<sup>1</sup> market in South Africa is an indication that levels of unemployment are rising significantly (Xweso, Schenck & Blaauw 2021). Reasons for the phenomenon of day labourers in the informal economy of South Africa include the residual effects of decades of apartheid and the persistent, widespread poverty that more than two decades of democracy have failed to eradicate. The era of formal apartheid was a development of British colonial rule that had promulgated legislation to drive young black males from their rural lands and oblige them to seek employment on the mines or commercial farms. It was a structured system, whose laws such as job reservation deprived the majority of black South Africans of economic freedom. In the aftermath of apartheid, South Africa was left encumbered with vast inequalities among the race groups of which its population is comprised (Francis & Webster 2020). Although the post-apartheid South African government has subsequently implemented overarching micro-economic policies to combat poverty and unemployment (Francis & Webster, 2020; Xweso *et al.* 2021), there is little evidence to suggest that any of the initiatives have been successful. South Africa continues to be plagued by high levels of unemployment, with the official rate of unemployment being estimated at a staggering 34.4 percent (Stats SA 2021).

Owing to the ever-rising levels of unemployment in South Africa, the likelihood of securing employment, in either the formal or informal sectors, is exceptionally low for many at present (Alfers *et al.* 2018). As a direct consequence, increasing numbers of people venture into informal sector activities such as day labouring, as a means of employment to generate subsistence-level livelihoods. According to Blaauw (2017), the informal economy in South Africa provides opportunities for employment to the unemployed and offers an alternative and, often, a long-term means of survival to thousands of people who cannot find formal employment. Cichello and Rogan (2018) contend that informal employment in South Africa contributes significantly to alleviating poverty.

The day labour phenomenon in South Africa provides a clear example of the precarious nature of working in the informal sector, which is frequently characterised by low wages, casual labour, poor working conditions and short-term contracts (Etim & Daramola 2020; Blaauw 2017; Mahadea & Zogli 2018). The problems that day labourers in South Africa encounter often stem from the unregulated nature of their work (Xweso *et al.* 2021). The circumstances of day labourers in South Africa can be best understood in the specific contexts in which they seek employment and against their shared socioeconomic history (Schenck & Nell 2009). The findings of studies that Malinga (2015), Xweso (2019) and Mapandere (2019) have conducted in different provinces of South Africa reveal that day labourers are effectively precluded from obtaining formal employment by low levels of educational attainment. Owing to the unregulated nature of their work, day labourers are often required to perform strenuous, difficult, dangerous and poorly paid tasks (Blaauw, Pretorius, Louw & Schenck 2007; Blaauw 2010; Smith 2020). The family ties and social networks of day labourers are often subjected to substantial strain, owing to the precarious nature of their work and the frequent need to relocate to seek employment, often leaving their families behind (Xweso 2019). Other privations to which they and their families are frequently exposed include food insecurity (Blaauw 2010). On the basis of all of these findings and the exacerbating effect that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the plight of day labourers, the following research question was formulated: *In which respects are day labourers in South Africa*

1. The emergence of the day labour phenomenon in South Africa accords with the trend of increased levels of casualisation in the labour force.

*particularly vulnerable and what is the role that community development can play to increase the sustainability of their livelihoods?*

## Research methodology

The literature review entailed gathering data by analysing and reviewing studies and other relevant literature pertaining to the day labour phenomenon in South Africa, to answer the research question. The Research Scholar academic database was employed to obtain access to data that had been compiled during the previous 20 years, by using the keywords, 'day labourers', 'informal economy', 'vulnerability', 'community development' and 'South Africa'. Although there was an extensive amount of literature concerning the day labour phenomenon in South Africa, there appeared to be no literature that reflected the work of practitioners and researchers in the field of community development in endeavours to increase the sustainability of day labourers in South Africa. Accordingly, this study represents a pilot foray into assessing the potential of community development as a means of responding to the plight of day labourers in South Africa. The observations that the literature review yielded pertaining to the senses in which day labourers could be considered to be highly vulnerable are discussed in the sections that follow.

This article has three components. First, it provides a coherent account of the circumstances of day labourers in South Africa. The second component consists of recommendations that are framed within the aims and objectives of community development to enable people who are day labourers by default to develop sustainable livelihoods, while the third is devoted to an appraisal of the conclusions that were drawn from the study and its broader implications.

## The vulnerability of day labourers in South Africa

The hardships that are experienced by day labourers throughout South Africa and other countries in which the phenomenon is found, stem largely from the informal nature of their relationships with employers and a lack of regulation and legal protection. Although day labour is often denigrated, it remains a source of income for those who lack access to other forms of employment. This section of the article summarises the respects in which the relevant available literature characterises day labourers in South Africa as being vulnerable.

## Day labour and poverty

South Africa has a long history of poverty, with no apparent end in sight, as the economy of the country continues to stagnate. According to Francis and Webster (2020), poverty in South Africa inflicts damage on the lives of the people who have no choice but to endure it, as it is a manifestation of the significant inequalities that are still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa. Although official statistics list children, 17 years of age and younger, blacks, females, inhabitants of rural areas and the provinces of the Eastern Cape and Limpopo and those who have received little or no formal education as being among the demographic groups that are most severely adversely affected by poverty (Stats SA 2018), day labourers constitute another poverty-stricken group. Table 1 summarises the amounts of money that are required to meet the minimum requirements of three specific poverty lines, which are also known as poverty thresholds, poverty limits or the breadline that are used in South Africa to determine the minimum income that is deemed to be adequate. It was abundantly evident from the literature review that day labourers struggle to earn the minimum amount for each poverty line to support themselves and their families.

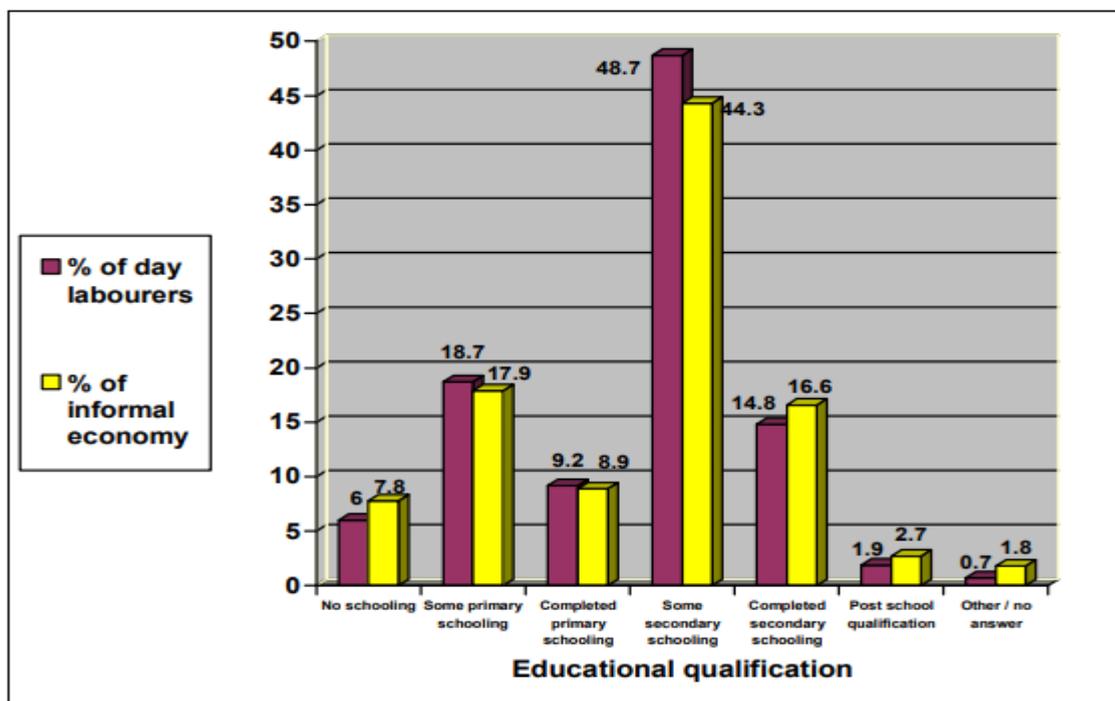
<b>Table 1</b> National poverty lines in South Africa for 2019 (per person per month in Rand)
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Poverty line	Description	Amount per person per month
Food poverty line	This term refers to the amount of money that an individual person would need to afford the minimum required daily energy intake.	R561.00 per person per month.
Lower-bound poverty line	This term refers to the food poverty line, plus the average amount spent on non-food items by households whose total expenditure is equal to that of the food poverty line.	R810.00 per person per month.
Upper-bound poverty line	This term refers to the food poverty line, plus the average amount spent on non-food items by households whose expenditure on food is equal to that of the food poverty line.	R1 227.00 per person per month.
Source: Adapted from Stats SA (2019)		

The findings of a study that Blaauw, Pretorius and Schenck (2016) conducted in Tshwane in South Africa from 2004 to 2015 revealed that poverty was becoming increasingly pervasive among day labourers. The 2004 survey revealed that from 79 to 96 percent of the day labourers in their research sample, depending on the poverty line that was used but irrespective of nationality, earned incomes that positioned them and their dependents below the poverty line. In addition, the findings of a study that Mapendere *et al.* (2019) conducted in Cape Town in South Africa concerning the risks to which day labourers were exposed and the resilience that they displayed, revealed that fluctuations in their earnings frequently placed them even below the upper-bound food line. Mapandere *et al.* (2019) found that the day labourers in their sample who did not earn sufficient income by the end of each month were subject to severe stress, as they feared that their families would face the consequences. The findings of a recent study that Smith (2020) carried out in Embekweni in South Africa revealed that 46.5 percent of the respondents earned an income of from R0.00 to R999.00 a month, less than the upper-bound poverty line. The overarching conclusion is that although the plight of South African day labourers is dire in the extreme, global shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated their circumstances still further (Mutandiro 2020; Xweso *et al.* 2021).

#### Increased educational attainment as a means of securing employment

Levels of educational attainment provide a significant indicator of the development of human capital and can also provide a viable means of escaping extreme poverty. It was evident from the studies that were consulted that levels of educational attainment among South African day labourers are generally minimal and that relevant comparisons with those of day labourers in other countries placed South African day labourers firmly in the lower tier. The findings of the national study that Blaauw (2010) conducted in South Africa from 2007 to 2008, in which the levels of educational attainment of day labourers were compared with those of workers in the informal economy as a whole, are depicted graphically in the bar graph in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** The educational profile of day labourers in South Africa, 2007

Source: Blaauw (2010)

As can be seen in Figure 1, no discernible differences were found between the levels of educational attainment of day labourers and workers in the broader informal economy. The graph reveals that while 6 percent of the day labourers had received no schooling, approximately 20 percent had received some primary schooling and only 14.8 percent had completed their secondary schooling. These findings have grim implications for their ability to secure permanent employment in the formal sector of the labour market (Blaauw 2010). The findings of Xweso *et al.* (2020) also suggest that the low levels of educational attainment among the day labourers in their research sample inevitably made the likelihood of finding employment in the formal sector remote in an economy that is characterised by high rates of unemployment. The findings of Blaauw (2010) that are depicted in Figure 1 are similar to those of a survey that Mapandere *et al.* (2019) conducted among day labourers in Cape Town, which revealed that only 16.8 percent of the 24 day labourers who were interviewed had completed secondary school. By contrast, some of the interviewees indicated that although they had tertiary qualifications, they were obliged to work as day labourers owing to a lack of other opportunities for employment in the formal and informal sectors.

Blaauw (2010) made a comparative study of foreign and South African day labourers and found that the educational attainment profile of foreign-born day labourers was significantly higher than that of their South African counterparts. Although only 0.6 percent of the South African-born day labourers had obtained a tertiary qualification, the figure was slightly less than 8.5 percent among the foreign day labourers. A finding of a study that Blaauw, Schenck, Pretorius and Schoeman (2017) conducted concerning the experiences of Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa revealed that Zimbabwean day labourers had generally relatively high levels of educational attainment, which corroborates the findings of other studies (Bloch 2008; Makina 2007). In the research sample of Blaauw *et al.* (2017), 50.99 percent had completed secondary school and 11.83 percent had completed a tertiary qualification. The findings of the study that Xweso (2019) conducted in East London in South Africa were significantly different, as only 8.40

percent of the 130 day labourers who were interviewed had completed Grade 8, only 4.66 percent had completed secondary school and only one had obtained a tertiary qualification.

Both Xweso (2019) and Mapandere (2019) concluded that the most common reasons for day labourers in South Africa not completing their schooling included a lack of financial support, being forced to leave school to herd cattle, being obliged to support younger siblings after the death of parents and being discouraged by severe disruptions in their families. Xweso (2019) also concluded that the relative ease with which the day labour market could be entered encouraged day labourers to try to earn subsistence wages, thereby exposing them to the precarious existence that is often the fate of the severely marginalised.

### Dislocated family lives of day labourers

The frequently dislocated family lives of day labourers in South Africa (Xweso *et al.* 2020) extend the long history of dislocated families in South Africa, as a consequence of forced migration and the segregation of the homelands and traditionally white communities during the apartheid era (Dubeld 2013; Hall & Posel 2019). The day labourers in South Africa provide an example of the continuing tradition of the men in families being required to seek employment wherever it could be found, to support their families at home. Consequently, the dislocated lives of day labourers are the result of this practice and the influence of other structural factors. The severe strain to which family ties are subjected is manifested in the absence of fathers while their children<sup>1</sup> are growing up, minimal contact with families owing to extended periods in towns and cities in an endeavour to find work and the frequent inability to send money to their families to enable them to subsist.

Schenck *et al.* (2012) and Malinga (2015) found that day labourers in South Africa usually seek employment to support their extended families. The effects of the disrupted lives of families that the literature reveals have extremely adverse consequences for the lives of both day labourers and their families (Xweso 2019; Mapandere *et al.* 2019). Schenck and Blaauw (2018) contend that the social fabric of the families of day labourers is subjected to tremendous pressure and sometimes unravels. They found that 26 percent of the day labourers in their research sample were married with children and did not earn sufficient income from their daily work to afford to take care of themselves and their dependants. This assessment implies that they and the members of their families live constantly in uncertainty and have only a limited hope of ever achieving and maintaining stability.

The inevitable consequence of the absence of day labourers from the daily lives of their families while they search for opportunities for employment is the creation of fatherless families. The findings of the study that Xweso (2019) conducted in East London also revealed that some day labourers abandoned their families in the rural areas and established new families in the towns and cities to which they migrated to find work, thereby creating fatherless families at home. These findings accord with those of Malinga (2015), who found that although day labourers in Cape Town acknowledged that they had a responsibility to support their dependants at home, they perceived that not seeing their children for extended periods placed great strain on their ties with their families.

### Poor working conditions and the violation of the human rights of day labourers

The human rights of day labourers are frequently violated as a direct consequence of a lack of regulation in the informal sector and the absence of protection from any community structures (Xweso *et al.* 2021), which exposes them to exploitation and abuse. Blaauw (2010) characterises the potentially exploitative and abusive conditions under which day labourers find employment as haphazard, in the sense that there are no contractual arrangements and no formal agreements between day labourers and their employers, before, during or after the completion of their work.

1. See Malinga (2015), for a detailed appraisal of fatherhood among day labourers and the precarious conditions in which they endeavour to support their families.

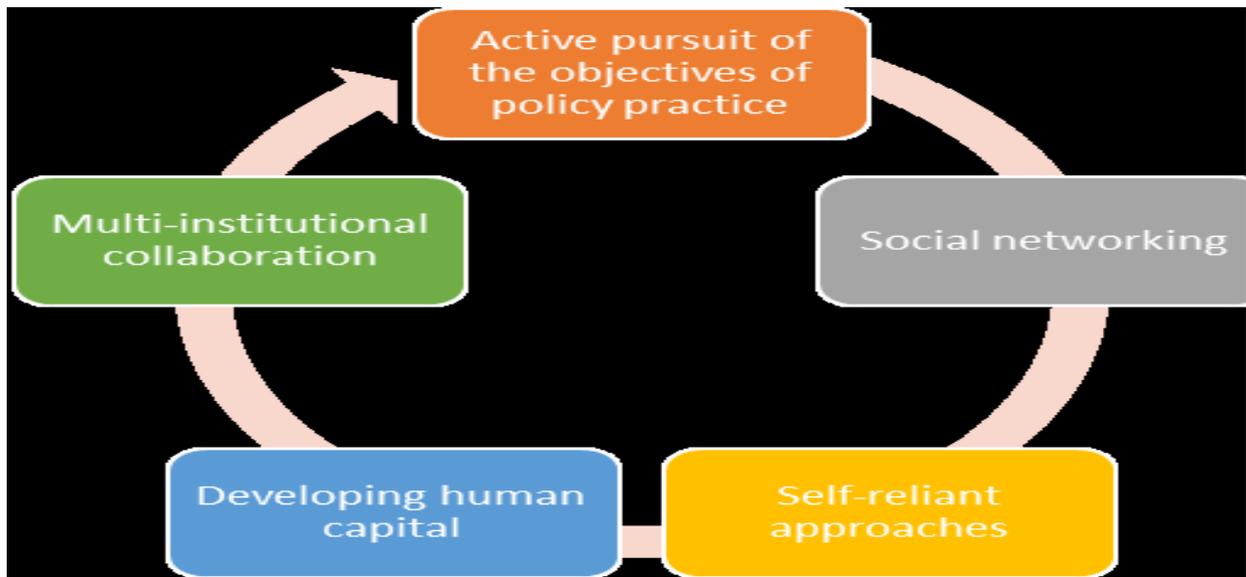
Xweso (2019) found in his investigation of the working conditions of day labourers in East London that those who were interviewed often did not know the names of their employers and were unable to locate the addresses of employers in instances in which they had not been paid. In the assessment of Schenck, Xipu and Blaauw (2012), as the conditions under which informal workers such as day labourers are employed are not regulated, informal hiring sites are, to a certain extent, not conducive to proper employment practices and could encourage exploitation and exposure to abuse by the public. They also emphasise that this appraisal does not imply that day labourers are generally exploited by the public.

As day labourers in South Africa are prone to violations of their human rights in the course of their work, their plight is deserving of the attention of the developmental community, which is dedicated to upholding the rights of marginalised groups. One of the principal aims of community development is to ensure the holistic well-being of poor people, in South Africa and also throughout the world. The appraisal of the conditions under which day labourers are required to work at present will be followed by a discussion of the role that community development has to play in enabling day labourers to have sustainable livelihoods.

The role of community development in improving the lives of vulnerable day labourers  
Community development, as a practice-based profession, has demonstrated its ability to ameliorate the socioeconomic conditions that are experienced by vulnerable populations in South Africa (Maistry 2012) and other parts of the world. The National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) (2014) defines community development as *a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity and social justice, through the organisation, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether these be of locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.*

It follows from this definition of community development that it is a function of social development to facilitate the socioeconomic development of underserved communities. In South Africa, a vital function of social development is to harmonise social and economic policies (Patel & Hochfeld 2012), as an effective response to the developmental needs of the poor. In its role of fulfilling the agenda of social development, as it is articulated in the South African *White Paper for Social Welfare* (Department of Welfare and Population Development 1997), community development can be considered as an intervention strategy by means of which social development policy is put into practice.

Community development is essentially inclusive, as it endeavours to strengthen the capacity of people as active citizens through their community groups, organisations and social networks (Chile 2012). It performs a crucial role in supporting active democratic life by providing the means for the autonomous voices of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups such as day labourers to be heard. The uncertainties that dominate the day-to-day concerns of day labourers warrant the attention of community development practitioners, as they remain excluded from social and economic activities that could improve their lives (Smith 2020; Xweso *et al.* 2021). Consequently, it is imperative that interventions that are informed by the tenets and objectives of community development should be formulated and implemented to expand the range of social and economic activities in which day labourers are able to participate, in order to foster social inclusion and empowerment. Figure 2 depicts the interactions of community development initiatives that together could raise the standing of day labourers, in both local and the national economies.



**Figure 2** Community development cycle

The sections that follow provide recommendations concerning the types of community development-oriented initiatives that could assist day labourers to develop sustainable livelihoods.

#### Active pursuit of the objectives of policy practice

It is recommended that community development practitioners (CDPs) should actively engage in policy practice as an integral component of their professional mandate to improve the well-being of vulnerable day labourers. Jansson (2018) defines policy practice as efforts to change policies in legislative, agency and community settings, either by establishing new policies or improving existing policies, or by defeating policy initiatives that run counter to the interests of vulnerable or marginalised groups. Policy practice essentially entails purposefully participating in and contributing to the formulation and implementation of policy, for the purpose of amending or modifying policies that are unfair, oppressive, discriminatory or unsuitable. In addition, it also entails the evaluation of policy that results in either the formulation of new policies or changing or improving existing policies to advance the agenda of social well-being (Pawar 2019). It was evident from the literature that CDPs perform a crucial role in influencing the formulation and implementation of policies to improve the conditions that limit human and social rights. Advocacy structures are highly effective vehicles for CDPs to facilitate the attainment of the objectives of policy practice. Consequently, the effective application of policy practice to meet the specific needs of day labourers could represent a significant stride towards bringing relief and social justice to this neglected and marginalised segment of the population.

#### Strengthening and expanding social capital

The literature review provided ample evidence to confirm that day labourers are highly reliant on social support from institutions in their communities such as churches and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Malinga 2015; Mapandere *et al.* 2019; Xweso 2019; Xweso *et al.* 2021). Accordingly, it could be contended that these institutions make a significant contribution to the social capital that permits day labourers to survive and function as a subset of their society. According to the Department for International Development (DFID) (2000), from the perspective of sustainable livelihoods, social capital should be understood as the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihoods, which are developed through:

- Networks and connectedness, the ability of people to work together and expand their access to a wider range of resources.
- Membership of formalised groups, which often entails adherence to mutually agreed or commonly accepted rules and norms.
- Relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchange that facilitate cooperation and reduced transaction costs and can provide the basis for informal safety nets among the poor.

The development and strengthening of social capital is central to community development practice. CDPs are able to enable day labourers to receive assistance from relevant community organisations to permit them to expand their access to social resources. The strength and effectiveness of social networks determine, to a large extent, the quality and diversity of the resources to which members can potentially have access. A practical example of the unavailability of social networks for day labourers is provided by Mapandere *et al.* (2012), the findings of whose study revealed that the day labourers in their research sample lacked adequate safety networks in their communities or families that could provide them with the support that they required to complete their schooling. Machalek and Martin (2015) explain that social capital contributes significantly to the development of human capital. As the average level of educational attainment of day labourers in South Africa is low, outside assistance represents the only viable means of enabling them to work towards developing their human capital. Consequently, CDPs should formulate and implement strategies to make resources available to day labourers and expand resource networks for vulnerable populations, as the development of social capital holds the key to subsequent socioeconomic development.

### Self-reliance approaches

Self-reliance is one of the foundations of effective community development in sub-Saharan African countries (Fonchingong & Fonjong 2003). The concept of self-reliance is located centrally within the discourse of community development and is closely associated with related concepts such as self-help, mutual-help, indigenous participation and rural development. Self-reliance emphasises the need for people to improve their conditions by making optimal use of local initiatives and resources (Fonchingong & Fonjong 2003). Community development practice centres on encouraging members of communities to apply their knowledge and skills to the resources that are at their disposal (Chile 2012), to develop new and innovative ways to generate economic benefits and motivate people to become independent in their pursuit of socioeconomic advancement. As Kang'ethe (2014) explains, the grants that the social welfare system in South Africa provides have encouraged many people to become dependent on the state for a livelihood. By contrast, community development does not promote dependence (Littrell & Littrell 2006), but instead promotes self-reliance on the basis of the assumption that people are capable of becoming increasingly able to direct their future with a sense of purpose, as autonomous agents. Consequently, participatory community development approaches that reinforce self-reliance need to be followed rigorously to improve the lives of day labourers, which requires a significant paradigm shift towards increasing their capacity through the application of the knowledge, principles and values that are the cornerstones of community development. Self-reliance, particularly among vulnerable populations such as day labourers, represents a positive step in the direction of achieving sustainable livelihoods.

### Developing human capital

Human capital refers to the skills and knowledge that enable people to pursue effective strategies for securing livelihoods and achieving specific objectives with respect to their livelihoods (Department of International Development 1999). The development of human capital in poor and marginalised communities remains one of the principal objectives of the community development profession, which is articulated by the community development imperative of community capacity building. Ife (2012:21) explains that developing the capacity of communities entails the development of the strengths of individual communities to enable their members to

achieve their own specific goals. As developing and increasing particular skills is a central goal of developing the capacity of communities, it is imperative that CDPs should serve as catalysts for developing the skills of day labourers, through the implementation of capacity building programmes to enable day labourers to have access to opportunities for employment, even in the formal sector of the economy. Enabling day labourers to develop skills also fulfils the mandate of CDPs to play an active role in the development of sustainable livelihoods.

Although the research that is documented in the relevant available literature generated a diverse range of recommendations for developing skills in poor and marginalised communities (Blaauw 2010; Xweso 2019; Mapandere 2019; Xweso *et al.* 2020), none appears to have been acted upon in practice. The framing of the recommendations of this article within the academic discipline of community development and its practices represents a significant departure from those that were made on the basis of the findings of many of the studies that were consulted in the literature review. Comprehensive programmes to strengthen the capacity of communities for entrepreneurship should be formulated and implemented as drivers of community-based economic development. Specific emphasis should be placed on skills and activities such as financial literacy, venture formation, business skills, technical skills and the formation and management of cooperatives. Achieving these objectives would empower day labourers to increase the profitability of their work and begin a shift towards diversified livelihoods, such as self-owned businesses that afford them an increased stake in national and regional economies. Strengthening capacity would also enable day labourers to generate secure livelihoods.

#### Multi-institutional collaboration

The most fundamental characteristic of community development is its integrated approach to development and eradicating poverty (Monaheng 2000; Swanepoel & De Beer 2011). Integration in community development has two principal implications (Monaheng, 2000). The first is that as development is essentially a multifaceted undertaking, it needs to be facilitated in a coordinated manner. The second is that different groups of stakeholders should coordinate their efforts through collaborative action. Malik, Kumari, Manalai and Hipolito (2017) maintain that multi-institutional collaboration provides an effective means of distributing resources. In addition, collaboration and partnerships in community development promote sustainable growth through a variety of resource-based approaches that aim to capacitate the members of communities. The plight of day labourers in South Africa will not dissipate if institutional partnerships are not strengthened. Accordingly, government agencies, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations should coordinate their efforts to optimise the effectiveness of their support for day labourers to enable them progressively to overcome their vulnerability. Through collaborative action, approaches could be devised to facilitate access to a wider range of resources for day labourers. Figure 3 illustrates the proposed function of institutional collaboration as a viable strategy for enabling day labourers to escape from poverty and participate meaningfully in the economy at the local, regional and national levels.



**Figure 3.** Facets of effective multi-institutional collaboration

The social policy engagements component that is depicted in Figure 3 reflects the function of collaborative action that is not confined to the role of CDPs in community development. Policy engagements at this level are informed by the principles of the complexity approach (Yosef 2010), which requires an adequate understanding of the interactions that occur among interlinking systems. Policy engagements in multi-institutional collaboration are an effective means of evaluating present policies and their ability to respond to the needs of the poor. Although there are a variety of overarching policies that do not reflect the needs of the poor, through unified engagement with stakeholders, policymakers can be influenced to change policies and, consequently, professionals in the field of community development, including CDPs, become active policymakers.

The second component of multi-institutional collaboration in Figure 3 concerns the devising of practical strategies and approaches that will assist day labourers to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Rautenbach (2009:1) provides a highly relevant insight into the realities of devising practical strategies, by maintaining that *'the notion that knowledge alone can contribute to poverty alleviation is elusive. Teaching the poor man to fish will only change his life, if he is given a fishing rod or a net'*. He explains that equipment-based entrepreneurship, as it can be observed in the streets and markets of China and other Asian countries, could well be the model that South Africa, in particular, needs to adopt to ensure the sustainable development of the poor in a dignified manner. The findings of several of the studies of day labourers in South Africa that were reviewed revealed that in many instances day labourers were able to perform work for which they had received no formal training. Xweso (2019) found that some of the day labourers in his research sample maintained that although they were able to perform work such as painting, carpentry and building, in many cases they were unable to obtain the temporary employment that prospective employers offered because they lacked the tools to perform the tasks that were required. This finding suggests that there is a need to supplement the development of human capital with the providing of equipment, to ensure that day labourers are able to support themselves and their families. The overarching recommendation that is prompted by this finding is that appropriately coordinated initiatives should be launched to develop entrepreneurship specifically among day labourers as an economically marginalised segment of South African society, through the opening of small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs), to

enable them to register small businesses and become active entrepreneurs. Although it is evident that the social security initiatives that are being implemented by the government at present, including the macroeconomic programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)<sup>1</sup>, are not sufficiently inclusive of day labourers (Xweso *et al.* 2021), it is the considered opinion of the author that equipment-based entrepreneurship represents the most effective response to ensure the sustainability of the livelihoods of day labourers.

The third component concerns the shared advocacy efforts of relevant institutions. Advocacy is a vital strategy for achieving social change (Fayoyin 2017) and is a fundamental principle of community development (Swanepoel & De Beer 2011). The primary role of CDPs is to advocate for the communities whose inhabitants remain voiceless. Through shared advocacy and the sharing of information concerning capacity building, self-help initiatives, income-generating activities and access to services, key stakeholders would be able to assist and educate day labourers. The fourth and final component, efficient service delivery, is the *sine qua non* that ultimately determines whether developmental efforts in communities are likely to be successful, as without it all initiatives are doomed to failure.

## Conclusion

The principal thrust of this article rests on the conclusion that day labourers are generally unable to earn sufficient income to sustain themselves and their families and lack the means to improve their circumstances. The author has striven to make a cogent case for community development as an optimal means of developing sustainable livelihoods for members of economically vulnerable segments of South Africa such as day labourers, in order to bring about the reforms that social justice demands. That significant numbers of South Africans should remain economically marginalised and vulnerable to severe exploitation and untenable living conditions almost three decades after the attainment of democracy is a chilling indictment of the ability of political change to provide even a modicum of social justice to large swathes of the disadvantaged population. Consequently, it is an urgent moral obligation of the post-apartheid government to develop and implement a coordinated goal-driven community development programme to raise standards of living progressively for those whose circumstances remain unchanged by the nominal democracy that has been achieved in South Africa to date. The example of China was cited in the study. Although many would claim that China is a woefully undemocratic country by comparison with South Africa, it has nonetheless demonstrated considerable political will to raise standards of living by large margins for all of its citizens, a trend that continues unabated as levels of prosperity continue to rise. By contrast, for vulnerable groups such as day labourers, the universally acclaimed constitution that heralded the advent of democracy in South Africa remains a document of fine words that many might not even be able to read.

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