

# EPWP Webinar

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## REPOSITIONING OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES (PEPs) IN THE ERA OF COVID19 AND ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

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## *Employment opportunities in the context of COVID-19 and beyond*

7 July 2020

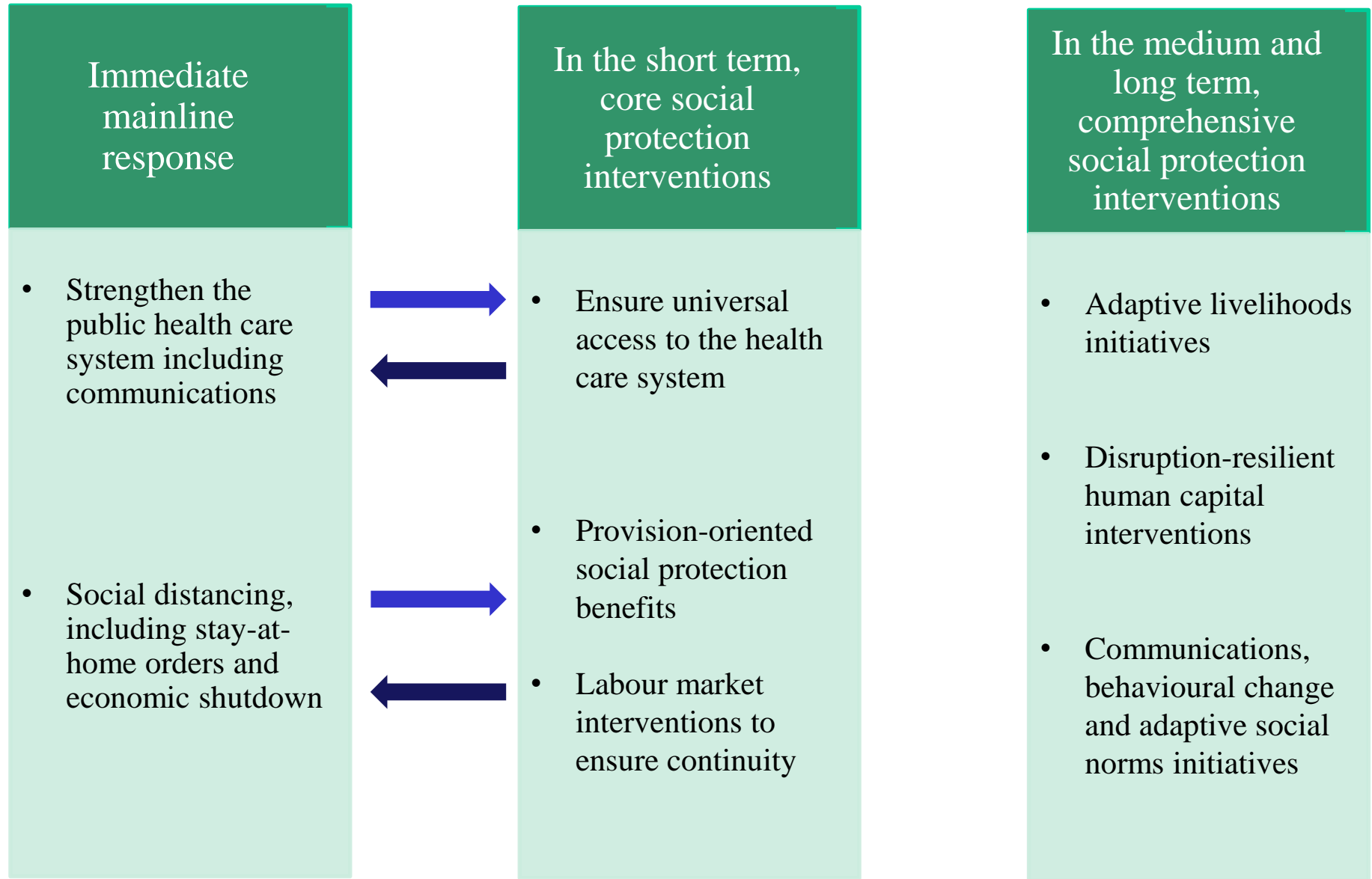
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# Overview

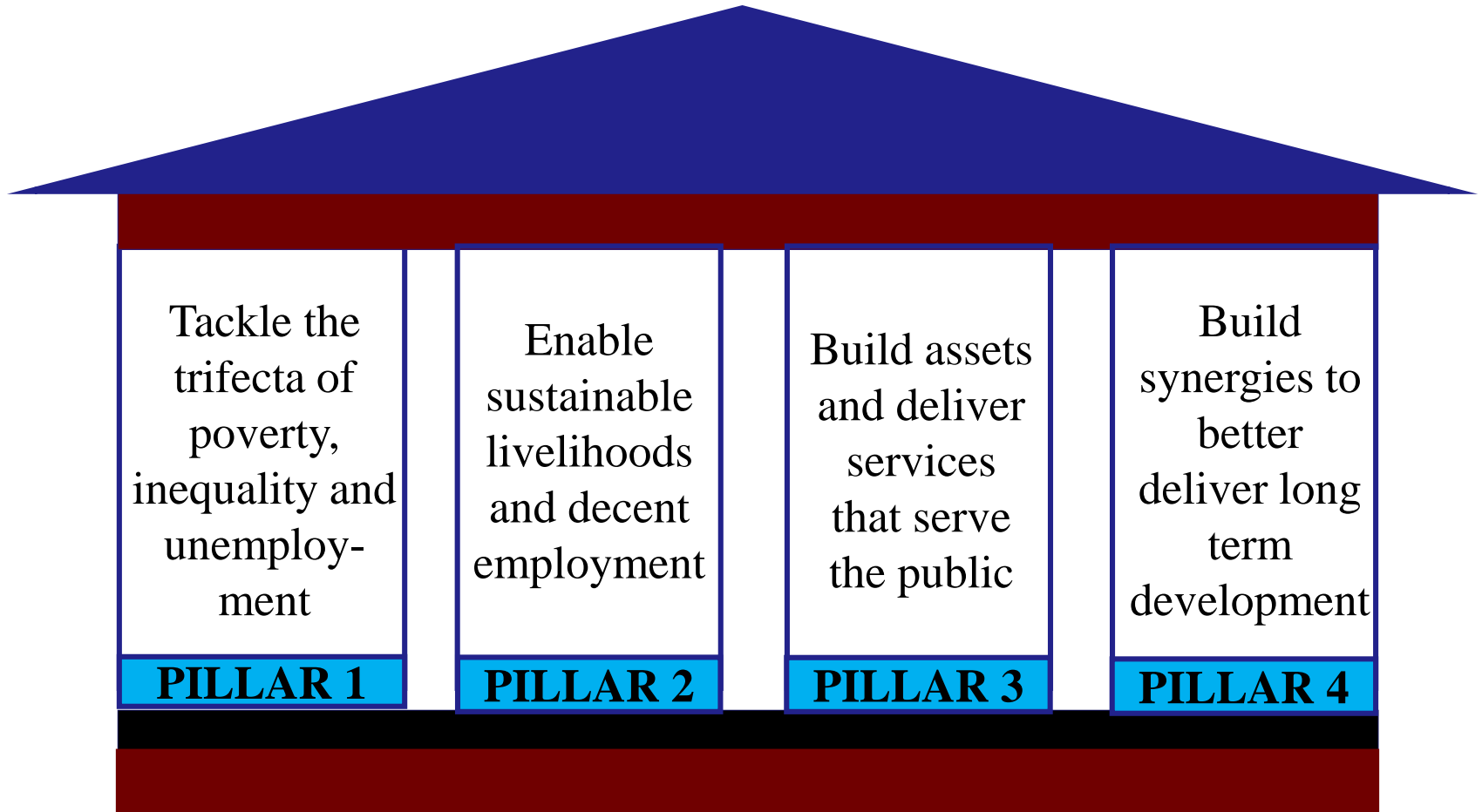
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- EPWP policy and the paths to employment creation as part of a comprehensive COVID-19 response
- Global and South African lessons of experience
- Policy implications

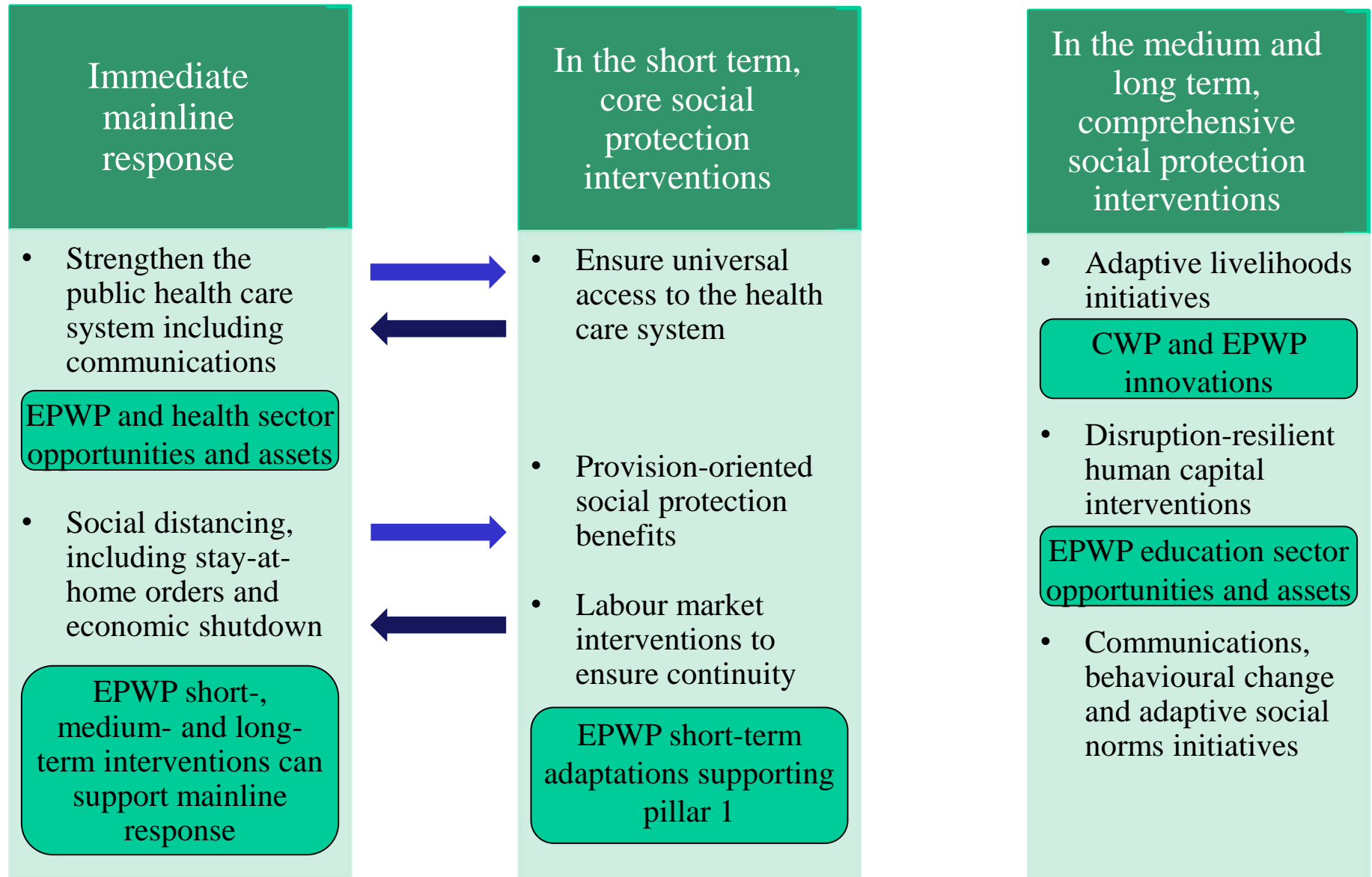
# Within a comprehensive pandemic mitigation framework, EPWP can support a long-term strategic response to COVID-19



# EPWP's Policy Pillars



# Within a comprehensive pandemic mitigation framework, EPWP can support a long-term strategic response to COVID-19



# EPWP as a core social protection response to the pandemic

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- EPWP must address two demands:
  - Adapt existing programmes to respond to COVID-19 risks.
    - Addressing contagion challenges in existing programmes
  - Expand employment opportunities to address cascading and interacting shocks adversely affecting employment
    - Addressing immediate employment needs
    - Expanding EPWP to deliver more opportunities
    - Contributing to macro-economic stabilisation and demand stimulus
- Short term:
  - provide accessible benefits to EPWP workers unable to engage in traditional opportunities— for example, India and other countries waive work requirements and pay benefits in lieu of wages
  - Pandemic-compatible systems: e.g. Namibia’s Emergency Income Grant online registration system enrolled half a million people in two weeks

# EPWP innovates sustainable employment opportunities tackling the COVID-19 pandemic

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- EPWP workers support epidemiological response: contact tracing, testing sites, infection control [e.g. Sierra Leone, DRC during Ebola]
- EPWP for mask production [e.g. Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)]
- EPWP workers provide community support: distribute sanitiser/soap, hygiene education, create hand wash facilities for those without piped water, disinfect high risk areas and conduct clean-up campaigns, support household-level disinfection and sanitation
- Workers provide home-based health care and support [e.g. EPWP]
- “Prudent governments will use the first phase of the crisis to get ‘public good’ works projects with strong health standards ‘shovel ready’ for when the initial viral explosion has been contained.” (World Bank Jobs and Development Partnerships Blog)

# EPWP creates valuable assets and provides vital services that support pandemic response

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- EPWP provides the widest range of assets and service in the world
- EPWP work can creates assets and provides services that can:
  - Enhance public health response: provision of protective gear and chlorine-treated water for workers
  - Strengthen disruption-resilient human capital initiatives
  - Rebuild disrupted supply chains and provide alternative paths supporting supply of essential goods and services
  - Food distribution, water drainage or garbage collection



# Convergence and policy coherence

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Convergence: “the **collaboration within and between different EPWP sectors and public bodies** in order to create synergies or increase efficiencies, with the ultimate objective of taking full advantage of the developmental impacts of these interventions”

- Convergence seeks to **minimise the following challenges** that were experienced in the previous phases of EPWP:
  - Sectors working in “silos”
  - Duplication of efforts reducing efficiency
  - Overlapping mandates
- Convergence opens the door for comprehensive and integrated developmental initiatives that expand EPWP’s transformational potential

# EPWP and long-term development strategy

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- EPWP and building information networks
  - The role of internet access
- Opportunities for “digital public works”
  - Information and communication technologies (ICT) and infrastructure have expanded rapidly along with mobile subscriptions and broadband usage
  - 47% of the population of developing countries have internet access
  - 19% in least developed countries with lower access among women and rural areas
  - Create option for ‘digital public works’ and expands EPWP employment beyond traditional focus
  - Appeal to youth with greater affinity for digital technology

# Advantages and features of digital public works

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- Potential to provide home-based work opportunities for the unemployed in poor urban communities with the required infrastructure
- meets physical distancing requirements and may address gender-based constraints to working outside home
- examples of work activities: digitization of public records, digital public services, tracking C-19 contacts, digitizing health records
- requires computer equipment and internet access as well as skills and knowledge of digital technologies
- Digital technology could also facilitate home-based manufacturing such as the distributed production or assembly of PPE (clothing/face masks), with remote supervision
- Digital technology can restructure commerce and other services to safely support pandemic-resilient economic activity: e.g. Bhutan Commodity Exchange

# Policy implications

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- EPWP's poverty reduction mandate complements that of South Africa's larger social protection system to support pandemic response and economic recovery
- EPWP's innovative decent work mandate offers the potential to strengthen health responses and other social sectors while building more adaptive livelihoods
- The assets and services EPWP creates can reduce the medium- and long-term costs of the pandemic— and better enable South Africa to tackle both this pandemic and other future crises
- The COVID-19 pandemic creates opportunities and demands for transformational approaches such as digital public works
- An effective strategy requires significant investment in and commitment to planning, cross- sectoral policy coordination and financing