

# Institutional Challenges to Community Development: The Case of Kobodi Administrative Area in the Mnquma Local Municipality, Eastern Cape, South Africa



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## ABSTRACT

South Africa's key community development challenge is to overcome the legacy of colonialism and apartheid, characterised by racially segregated settlement patterns and unequal distribution of resources. The black rural communities are impoverished because they were discriminated against in terms of the distribution and access to resources and infrastructure under the apartheid system. Regrettably, due to institutional challenges, community development efforts have not been able to significantly impact the rural social economies of disadvantaged communities. Therefore, the study investigated the institutional challenges that hamper community development in impoverished rural communities, using the Kobodi Administrative Area as the case under investigation. The study used a qualitative descriptive research method to generate and analyse the data. Therefore, probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the 27 informants. The area has unequivocally identified the lack of agricultural services, poor infrastructure, unequal distribution of resources, and inadequate education as the primary barriers to community development. The study confidently recommends prioritising skills and knowledge development for community members and development practitioners as a necessary step toward overcoming these challenges. This study contributes to the scholarship on rural development and institutional challenges in post-apartheid South Africa by providing empirical insights from the Kobodi Administrative Area. It extends existing literature by critically illustrating how historical legacies of inequality, combined with present-day institutional inefficiencies, continue to undermine community development efforts in rural contexts. By identifying specific, the study offers a solid understanding of the structural and operational impediments to rural advancement.

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## INTRODUCTION

South Africa is currently faced with considerable challenges in the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods, the improvement of social conditions, and the reduction of poverty. Despite the shift to multi-racial democracy in 1994, the lasting impact of colonialism and apartheid continues to affect disadvantaged communities adversely (November 2012). These challenges persist despite periods of positive economic growth and are further compounded by the current recession. The 1996 Constitution of South Africa clearly articulates community development as a human right, requiring the government to ensure the

well-being of all communities.<sup>1</sup> This legal framework is designed to drive significant improvements in living standards, especially in underserved areas. However, the practical implementation of these constitutional mandates often needs to be improved.<sup>2</sup>

The government has introduced several policies and programs aimed at fostering community development, such as:

- **Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP):** Focused on meeting basic needs but limited by implementation challenges, particularly in rural areas.<sup>3</sup>
- **Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR):** Aimed at macroeconomic stability but criticised for not sufficiently addressing the microeconomic needs of rural communities.<sup>4</sup>
- **Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA):** Intended to accelerate economic growth, yet hindered by structural and administrative barriers.<sup>5</sup>
- **Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP):** Created job opportunities through public works projects, but not enough to solve widespread unemployment and poverty.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the challenges, the Kobodi area is not without hope. More than half of the community's households rely on social grants and remittances for livelihood, showing remarkable resilience in adversity. Although these financial aids provide immediate relief, they do not promote sustainable economic development or self-reliance. However, with the proper institutional support and services, the community has the potential not only to overcome these challenges but also to thrive and inspire other communities facing similar issues. Community development in Kobodi is heavily dependent on non-governmental organisations (NGOs), underscoring their crucial role in empowering rural communities and addressing their needs. NGOs bridge the gaps left by government initiatives, providing essential services and fostering development. Their tireless efforts are instrumental in the progress of these communities.<sup>7</sup> Located approximately 120 km from Butterworth, the Kobodi Administrative Area is a remote and underdeveloped region. Its residents lack access to crucial health, security, and financial services that are typically available only in urban centres.<sup>8</sup> The absence of institutional support and facilities has had a detrimental impact on the region's development, leading to widespread poverty, unemployment, high crime rates, and substance abuse. Despite ongoing community development programs and projects, the local social economy has yet to improve significantly.<sup>9</sup>

The study aims to underscore the critical need for institutional support in the Kobodi area. These challenges, rooted in apartheid's legacy, include poor service delivery, education, training, information access, and underdeveloped infrastructure. The South African government has formulated policies to fight these challenges since 1994, but the people still live in seclusion, poverty, and squalor. The study aims to unveil the institutional support needed to draw inhabitants into the mainstream of national economic development, providing a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), *Stimulating and Developing Sustainable Local Economies (SDSLE)* (Cape Town: Government Printer, 2006).; Z. Nkosi, "The Importance of Information Access in Community Development," *Journal of Communication Studies* 13 (2021): 85–100.

<sup>2</sup> South Africa, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act No 108 of 1996* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), *Stimulating and Developing Sustainable Local Economies (SDSLE)*.

<sup>4</sup> Nkosi, "The Importance of Information Access in Community Development."

<sup>5</sup> Siviwe Mditshwa, "A Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of Selected National Development Agency Funded Projects in the Eastern Cape Province" (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2012); M. Robinson, "The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives," *Journal of Career Development* 14 (2022): 110–23.

<sup>6</sup> Sipokazi Dunga, "The Implementation of Local Economic Development Projects in Amathole District Municipality" (Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> P. Jacobs, "Agricultural Policy in South Africa: A Critique," *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 96 (2003): 50–75.

<sup>8</sup> I. Davids, "Institutional Challenges in Rural Development," *Journal of Rural Studies* 64 (2019): 88–95.

<sup>9</sup> Nkosi, "The Importance of Information Access in Community Development"; J. Smith, K. Patel, and L. Davis, "Government Support for Entrepreneurs: Policies and Impacts," *Economic Development Quarterly* 25 (2020): 95–108.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Community Development

Community development describes how local communities raise their living standards.<sup>10</sup> These processes include establishing social welfare, health, protection, education, agricultural improvement, and developing small-scale industries.<sup>11</sup> Community development implies the supply and coordination of various elements and services that directly or indirectly affect local communities' economic, social, and cultural well-being. Development involves change, improvement, and vitality, which are direct results of efforts to improve participation, flexibility, equity, institutional function, and quality of life. These aspects contribute to wealth creation, meaning the things people value, not just money.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, community development is based on interaction between people and their collective actions rather than individual activity.<sup>13</sup>

Rural community development is a process led by community members, involving rural residents working together to help their community better manage change rather than only creating more jobs, income, and infrastructure.<sup>14</sup> Benefits such as infrastructure development and job opportunities come through community mobilisation and improving existing skills and resources.<sup>15</sup> Rural community development is built upon five types of community capital: physical, financial, human, social, and environmental.<sup>16</sup> The main reason for the lack of development in Kobodi is that its people are attached to traditional survival methods. This attachment affects them because they are reluctant to mobilise, thinking the government will stop providing support grants (Phillips,2020). Through cooperation, people become capable of rethinking problems and expanding contacts and networks that build social capital. They learn new skills, building human capital. They develop new economic options to construct physical and financial capital, such as starting petty buy-and-sell businesses. They can also improve the environment.<sup>17</sup>

### Legal Framework for Community Development

The Republic of South Africa Constitution requires municipalities to organise and manage their administrative, budgeting, and planning processes, prioritise the community's basic needs, and promote social and economic development. The Mquma Local Municipality, which administers the Kobodi area, has the constitutional obligation to provide essential services to fulfil its mandate. Equity and justice in the Kobodi area can only be achieved when residents receive the vital services and goods they are entitled to from the municipality.

The legislation and policy on Local Economic Development (LED) provide a legal framework and influence how local authorities conduct local development. The constitution legally mandates local government (Act 108 of 1996) to promote social and economic development. This mandate marks a significant departure from the service-oriented focus of local government and has led to substantial legal developments.<sup>18</sup> Within the five-year Local Government Strategic Agenda and Implementation Plan of 2006, LED has been identified as one of the critical performance areas (KPA) of local government.

Improved local governance performance regarding LED requires cooperation and partnership between the people and the government. The service delivery triangle related to LED comprises three

<sup>10</sup> C. Flora and J. Flora, "Mobilising Civil Society for Rural Development," *Journal of Rural Studies* 45 (2020): 130–45.

<sup>11</sup> B. Sithole, "The Impact of Education on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas," *Journal of Educational Research* 14 (2022): 112–28.

<sup>12</sup> R. Shaffer, *Community Economics: Economic Structure and Change in Smaller Communities* (Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1989), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Flora and Flora, "Mobilising Civil Society for Rural Development."

<sup>14</sup> P. Kumar and A. Jain, "Infrastructure Development and Its Impact on Rural Economic Growth," *Journal of Economic Planning* 19 (2023): 85–97.

<sup>15</sup> R. Patel, L. Thomas, and D. Murphy, "Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas," *Rural Development Quarterly* 16 (2022): 67–69.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Cavaye, "Understanding Community Development," *Cavaye Community Development* 1 (2006): 1–19.

<sup>17</sup> Cornelia Butler Flora and Jan L. Flora, "Entrepreneurial Social Infrastructure: A Necessary Ingredient," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 529, no. 1 (1993): 48–58; M. Zulu, N. Dlamini, and S. Madonsela, "Inequality and Its Effects on Rural Development in South Africa," *South African Economic Review* 18 (2022): 140–55.

<sup>18</sup> Etienne Nel and Tony Binns, "Initiating 'developmental Local Government' in South Africa: Evolving Local Economic Development Policy," *Regional Studies* 35, no. 4 (2001): 355–62.

partners: the government, the private sector, and local communities.<sup>19</sup> Various legislation and policies form the foundation of LED in South Africa. The Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) is the foundation and provides for a developmental model of local government. Local government is responsible for service delivery and the socio-economic development of its communities (Republic of South Africa, 1996, p. 67). Municipalities must provide and manage their administration, budgeting, and planning processes to prioritise essential community services.<sup>20</sup>

Another critical policy initiative is the 2005 Policy Guidelines for Implementing Local Economic Development in South Africa, which outlines economic growth and poverty eradication as the overarching goals of LED.<sup>21</sup> The LED Framework, also known as Stimulating and Developing Sustainable Local Economies (SDSLE), was initiated by the Department of Provincial and Local Government in 2006.<sup>22</sup> This framework emphasises that municipalities have a crucial role in creating a conducive environment for investment by providing infrastructure and quality services rather than developing programs and attempting to create jobs directly.

### Structural Challenges to Community Development

Structural challenges at the community level include poverty, unemployment, high inequality, low economic growth, inadequate education, and unequal distribution of resources.<sup>23</sup> The basic needs perspective emphasises institutional assistance to people experiencing poverty by promoting and supporting their access to sanitation, security, clean water, shelter, education, appropriate clothing, health, and an adequate and balanced diet.<sup>24</sup> However, residents of the Kobodi area only have access to clean water. Despite other perspectives on poverty, there is a strong emphasis on satisfying elements of deprivation first, which means [explanation of the concept]. This perspective has been operationalised through programs like the RDP, IDP, and the War on Poverty campaign.<sup>25</sup> However, these strategies do not work in the Kobodi area because they are unsustainable and have failed to make the community self-reliant. The development initiatives have not provided the relevant institutional support and services required to push the community into the national development orbit.<sup>26</sup> There is still a backlog of services and infrastructure in the community, indicating that strategies are formulated and implemented without community involvement.<sup>27</sup> The advantage of this perspective is that it attempts to address wide-ranging political, social, and economic issues responsible for poverty.<sup>28</sup> The critical policy instrument guiding this perspective is the Bill of Rights, enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996).<sup>29</sup>

### Institutional Support and Services

Institutional support and services are vital in fostering community development in South Africa, encompassing legal frameworks, financial and non-financial assistance, and essential services provided by the government and other agencies. For instance, the Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (MAFISA) offer credit facilities and incentives to farmers in disadvantaged communities

<sup>19</sup> S. Meyer, "The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa," *Economic Development Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2020): 15–30.

<sup>20</sup> South Africa, *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, Act No 108 of 1996*.

<sup>21</sup> Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), *Policy Guidelines for Implementing Local Economic Development in South Africa* (Cape Town: Government Printer, 2005); Meyer, "The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa."

<sup>22</sup> Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), *Stimulating and Developing Sustainable Local Economies (SDSLE)*, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Sithole, "The Impact of Education on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas"; Patel, Thomas, and Murphy, "Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas."

<sup>24</sup> World Bank, *Investing in Education and Infrastructure for Economic Growth* (World Bank Report, 2021).

<sup>25</sup> Davids, "Institutional Challenges in Rural Development."

<sup>26</sup> Meyer, "The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa."

<sup>27</sup> Kumar and Jain, "Infrastructure Development and Its Impact on Rural Economic Growth."

<sup>28</sup> Flora and Flora, "Mobilising Civil Society for Rural Development."

<sup>29</sup> Mditshwa, "A Socio-Economic Impact Analysis of Selected National Development Agency Funded Projects in the Eastern Cape Province", 55; Goodness Buhle Zondi, "An Examination of People's Reaction to the Children's Act 39 Section 134 in Chesterville (Durban)" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, 2015), 30.

to improve agricultural productivity.<sup>30</sup> Philip argues that these institutional supports are essential for achieving development goals, including delivering critical services, technology, and infrastructure crucial for rural and disadvantaged communities.<sup>31</sup> Agricultural development is critical to improving rural livelihoods, as it remains the largest employer in rural areas, contributing to food security and income generation.<sup>32</sup> However, challenges persist in rural areas like Kobodi, including inadequate infrastructure, skills shortages, and limited access to markets and credit facilities, which hinder agricultural productivity and economic development.<sup>33</sup>

### **Characteristics of The Rural Social Economy**

Rural communities in South Africa, including Kobodi, rely predominantly on agricultural activities such as planting crops and keeping livestock, supplemented by social grants. However, there is a notable shift from agriculture due to the need for more infrastructure and resources (fencing, machinery) for increased productivity. This shift has led to high unemployment among youth, who often migrate to urban areas for better opportunities.<sup>34</sup> The Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) provides relief by creating temporary employment opportunities in infrastructure projects.<sup>35</sup>

### **Institutional Approaches to Community Development in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

The post-apartheid South African government has formulated policies and programs to address community development and economic growth, particularly for marginalised communities. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) aimed to meet basic needs and promote small enterprises but faced challenges in implementation due to resource constraints and corruption.<sup>36</sup> The Integrated Development Planning (IDP) approach emphasises LED but needs help with issues such as inadequate resource allocation and sustainability.<sup>37</sup>

LED initiatives seek to stimulate economic growth through local participation and collaboration, addressing unemployment and poverty.<sup>38</sup> However, effective implementation requires robust infrastructure and support services, which are lacking in places like Kobodi.<sup>39</sup> The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) aims to transform rural economies but has limited applicability in areas lacking economic activities and skilled labour.<sup>40</sup>

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Social Development Theory that informs this study is rooted in the 1963 United Nations definition of community development.<sup>41</sup> Institutional services and initiatives encompass the infrastructure, technical, and other essential services that the government and other agencies provide to support local communities' efforts to enhance their economic, social, and cultural conditions.<sup>42</sup> These services include access to appropriate technology and knowledge, which are critical for community development. It is

<sup>30</sup> K. Philip, "The Impact of Institutional Support on Rural Development in South Africa," *Journal of Development Studies* 49, no. 2 (2013): 24–40.

<sup>31</sup> Philip, "The Impact of Institutional Support on Rural Development in South Africa."

<sup>32</sup> Philip, "The Impact of Institutional Support on Rural Development in South Africa."

<sup>33</sup> Jacobs, "Agricultural Policy in South Africa: A Critique."

<sup>34</sup> A. Roux and T. Nyamukachi, "Public Works Programmes as Instruments of Development: The Case of South Africa," *Development Southern Africa* 26, no. 2 (2009): 31–47.

<sup>35</sup> Roux and Nyamukachi, "Public Works Programmes as Instruments of Development: The Case of South Africa."

<sup>36</sup> T. Phillips, "Post-Apartheid Development Policies: A Critical Evaluation," *South African Review of Sociology* 51, no. 2 (2020): 50–65.

<sup>37</sup> Daniel Francois Meyer, "Local Economic Development (LED), Challenges and Solutions: The Case of the Northern Free State Region, South Africa," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5, no. 16 (2014): 624–34; Meyer, "The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa."

<sup>38</sup> A.R. Parray and S.P. Syebubakar, "Local Economic Development (LED) in South Africa: The Role of Local Authorities," *Journal of Public Administration* 43, no. 1 (2008): 135–50.

<sup>39</sup> Meyer, "Local Economic Development (LED), Challenges and Solutions: The Case of the Northern Free State Region, South Africa"; Meyer, "The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa."

<sup>40</sup> S. Ngomane, "Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy: South Africa's Experience and Lessons," *Development Southern Africa* 29, no. 5 (2012): 710–24; Phillips, "Post-Apartheid Development Policies: A Critical Evaluation."

<sup>41</sup> Flora and Flora, "Mobilising Civil Society for Rural Development."

<sup>42</sup> Phillips, "Post-Apartheid Development Policies: A Critical Evaluation."

argued that communities with adequate institutional services are more likely to escape poverty by meeting their food requirements, creating job opportunities, and contributing to national development.<sup>43</sup>

Community development fosters solidarity and agency through self-help, addressing felt needs, and encouraging participation. However, these values have been eroded, mainly due to historical processes such as the rise of industrial capitalism, the nation-state, and instrumental rationality. Bhattacharyya highlights positive community development practices in response to this erosion, including public health initiatives, violence prevention programs, micro-economic development, and food security efforts.<sup>44</sup> Bhattacharyya also argues that "place" as a proxy for community has become conceptually and practically inadequate, and effective community development requires coordination across different levels.<sup>45</sup>

The Social Development Theory posits that the poor state of community development and attendant poverty in the Kobodi area is mainly due to institutional challenges, namely, inadequate access to institutional and organisational services, support, and initiatives. In the broader context, community development in South Africa faces several institutional challenges and obstacles, including:

- Lack of a shared conceptualisation of community development
- Poor coordination across sectors and alignment at national, provincial, and local levels
- Lack of context-specific knowledge in both theory and practice
- Incoherent and inappropriate education, training, support, and development for practitioners and community-based organisations
- Lack of recognition of community development as an occupation<sup>46</sup>

This framework underscores the importance of robust institutional support in overcoming these challenges and fostering effective community development.

## METHODOLOGY

The article is grounded in a constructivist epistemological framework, which views knowledge as a socially constructed phenomenon. This philosophical perspective enabled a nuanced exploration of the social realities and institutional challenges impacting community development in Kobodi.<sup>47</sup> A qualitative descriptive method was used to effectively address the research problem. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive summary of the perspectives of the participants, facilitating an in-depth exploration of their lived experiences, particularly with regard to issues such as poverty, unemployment, and inadequate services.<sup>48</sup> The study identified key challenges by capturing the voices of community members and proposed meaningful solutions that are firmly rooted in their realities.<sup>49</sup> The research design functions as a framework that guides the systematic investigation into the institutional challenges faced by Kobodi. It outlines the stages from formulating research questions to presenting findings, thereby ensuring a structured approach to the study.<sup>50</sup> A case study design was selected to comprehensively examine the institutional challenges in Kobodi. This methodological choice allowed for a holistic analysis of the role institutional support in community development.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup> United Nations, *Community Development and National Development* (United Nations, 1963); International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Robinson, "The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives."

<sup>44</sup> Jnanabrata Bhattacharyya, "Theorizing Community Development," *Community Development Society. Journal* 34, no. 2 (March 2004): 5–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330409490110>.

<sup>45</sup> Bhattacharyya, "Theorizing Community Development," 6-7.

<sup>46</sup> I. Davids, *Development Theories: Past to Present* (Cape Town: Juta and Company Ltd., 2005), 4.

<sup>47</sup> L. Miller, *Constructivist Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 2016), 89.

<sup>48</sup> E. Taylor, *Qualitative Data Analysis* (London: Sage Publications, 2019).

<sup>49</sup> Margarete Sandelowski, "Whatever Happened to Qualitative Description?," *Research in Nursing & Health* 23, no. 4 (2000): 334–40.

<sup>50</sup> A. Jones, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 2018).

<sup>51</sup> S. Brown, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2017).

## Research Participants

Thirty participants from Kobodi, including community members and local officials, were selected to provide diverse insights into community development challenges. The sampling aimed to capture varied perspectives on institutional challenges.<sup>52</sup>

**Table 1: Distribution of participants**

Category	Proposed sample size	Actual sample size
Residents	21	20
Ward councilors	3	3
Social Development	3	2
Mnquma Local Municipality	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>

## Sampling

The study employed both purposive and probability sampling techniques to ensure comprehensive data collection. Purposive sampling targeted informants with relevant knowledge, while probability sampling ensured a representative sample from the community.<sup>53</sup>

**Table 2: Distribution of interviewees**

Category	Proposed sample size	Actual sample size
Residents	10	10
Ward councillors	2	2
Social Development	1	1
Mnquma Local Municipality	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents to whom questionnaires were administered.**

Category	Proposed sample size	Actual sample
Residents	11	10
Ward councillors	1	1
Social Development	2	1
Mnquma Local Municipality	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>

## Research Instruments

Data were collected through a combination of documentary sources, interviews, and questionnaires. These methodologies thoroughly examined the institutional challenges in Kobodi by integrating both primary and secondary data sources.<sup>54</sup> The primary survey began with the distribution of questionnaires, followed by face-to-face interviews conducted in IsiXhosa, the local language. This careful approach to data collection was designed to capture in-depth insights into the institutional challenges faced by the community.<sup>55</sup> Data analysis used both manual qualitative content analysis and quantitative techniques to identify patterns and relationships within the data. This dual analysis approach offered a comprehensive understanding of the institutional challenges that affect community development in Kobodi.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>52</sup> K. White, *Participant Selection in Research* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 130.

<sup>53</sup> Amory B. Lovins, *Reinventing Fire: Bold Business Solutions for the New Energy Era* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2018).

<sup>54</sup> P. Lee, *Research Instruments in Social Science* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2017).

<sup>55</sup> J. Clark, *Data Analysis Techniques* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>56</sup> Taylor, *Qualitative Data Analysis*.

## PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the investigation into institutional challenges that affect community development in the Kobodi Administrative Area. It provides an in-depth discussion of the data collected and aligns the results with insights from the literature review to ensure the research is credible, valid, and reliable. The findings are organised into three key sections: participant characteristics, institutional challenges, and proposed remedies, according to Tables 1, 2, and 3.

### Characteristics of Participants

The demographic characteristics of the participants provide a clearer understanding of the institutional challenges in Kobodi. They reflect the community's experiences with poverty, unemployment, poor infrastructure, and inadequate services. Understanding these characteristics helps establish the social dynamics that influence community development efforts.

#### Age Distribution

In Kobodi, 43% of participants were elderly (61+ years), with the remaining 57% aged 19–60 (Table 4). The elderly participants, drawing from a lifetime of experience, expressed nostalgia for older government initiatives and frustration with how new development efforts seem disconnected from past promises. One participant reflected, *"We have seen many programmes come and go, but without the proper follow-through, none of them lasted."* This resonates with Phillips, who argues that older communities, reliant on social grants, often resist new economic activities unless institutional support is consistent.<sup>57</sup>

**Table 4: Age Distribution**

Age groups in years	Respondents	
	%	Count
19-30	17	05
31-45	13	04
46-60	27	07
61-75>	41	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>

Younger participants expressed their struggle with unemployment and limited access to economic opportunities. One participant stated, *"We are trying, but there's no infrastructure to help us grow."* Their aspirations align with the NDP 2030 and Agenda 2063, which support vocational training and entrepreneurial programs to unlock youth potential.<sup>58</sup>

#### Gender Distribution

Men and women face distinct but interconnected challenges in Kobodi. Although male participants were preoccupied with employment and mobility, women expressed frustration with service delivery issues. One participant lamented, *"Without water, I spend hours walking to the nearest well. I could use that time to help my family in other ways."* This experience reflects Davids's observation that service delivery failures disproportionately burden women, limiting their economic participation.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>57</sup> J. Phillips, "Policy Approaches to Community Development," *Journal of Development Policy* 32, no. 1 (2020): 45–55.

<sup>58</sup> Patel, Thomas, and Murphy, "Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas."

<sup>59</sup> Davids, "Institutional Challenges in Rural Development."

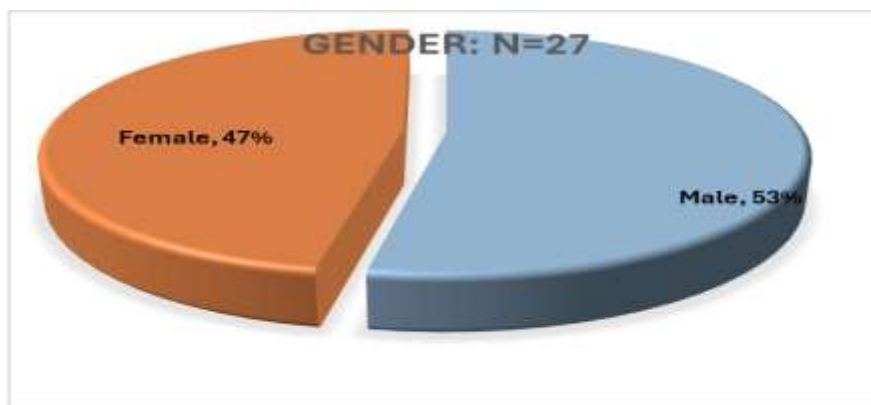


Figure 1: Gender distribution of participants

This gender disparity reflects Chant’s observation that women in rural areas often bear household management responsibilities while men seek income-generating opportunities.<sup>60</sup> The literature also emphasises that without proper service delivery, women are forced to spend more time searching for substitutes, such as alternative water sources, limiting their ability to participate fully in community activities.<sup>61</sup> This supports the objective of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which calls for reducing gender disparities by improving women's access to services and economic opportunities.

### Occupational Distribution

The economic stagnation in Kobodi is evident in the participants' occupational statuses: 43% rely on social grants, 27% are unemployed, 23% are employed, and 7% are retired, which aligns with Flora & Flora's notion of mobilising rural society for rural development.<sup>62</sup>

Table 5: Occupational Distribution

Occupation	% of respondents
Unemployed	27
Employed	23
Retired	7
Grant	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

The high dependency on social grants echoes the literature's argument that institutional support often sustains survival but fails to catalyse sustainable growth.<sup>63</sup> One participant noted, “*We survive on grants, but grants are not enough to build a future.*” This finding highlights the importance of aligning efforts with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by investing in agriculture, infrastructure, and entrepreneurship.<sup>64</sup>

### Marital Status and Educational Background

The marital status of the respondents offers insights into how family structures experience institutional challenges in the region. Married and widowed participants (67%) are more likely to feel the impact of poor service delivery, as they must meet the diverse needs of children and the elderly.

<sup>60</sup> S. Chant, *Gender, Generation, and Poverty: Exploring the “feminisation of Poverty” in Africa, Asia, and Latin America* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2006).

<sup>61</sup> Zulu, Dlamini, and Madonsela, “Inequality and Its Effects on Rural Development in South Africa.”

<sup>62</sup> C. Flora and J. Flora, “Rural Development and Civil Society: A Collaborative Approach,” *Development Practice Review* 12 (2020): 96–105.

<sup>63</sup> Smith, Patel, and Davis, “Government Support for Entrepreneurs: Policies and Impacts.”

<sup>64</sup> Roux and Nyamukachi, “Public Works Programmes as Instruments of Development: The Case of South Africa.”

**Table 6: Marital Status**

Marital status	Respondents	
	%	Count
Single	29	08
Married	34	09
Separated	3	01
Widowed	33	09
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>

In contrast, single individuals (30%) reported fewer service-related concerns but were still affected by unemployment (November 2012).

**Education**

Participants’ limited access to quality education was a recurring theme throughout the findings.<sup>65</sup> An average of the 60% of participants had only primary education, underscoring the educational challenges in the region. “There are no nearby colleges or training centres,” one participant complained, “and without them, we are stuck.” This sentiment supports Sithole<sup>66</sup>, who argues that the absence of education perpetuates dependence on external aid.<sup>67</sup> The literature emphasises the importance of vocational centres in equipping individuals with practical skills aligned with NDP 2030 goals.<sup>68</sup>

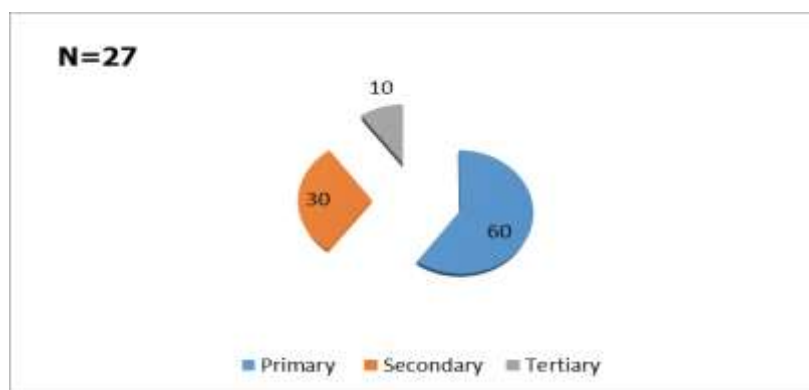


Figure 2: Education of participants

**Occupational distribution of participants**

The participants’ educational background shows that 60% have only primary education, 30% have secondary education, and only 10% have tertiary education, indicating the limited availability of quality education and vocational training.

**Table 7: Employment Status**

Occupation	Respondents	
	%	Count
Unemployed	27	07
Employed	23	06
Retired	7	02
Grant	43	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>27</b>

<sup>65</sup> World Bank, *Improving Educational Outcomes in Rural Areas: A Global Perspective* ( World Bank Publications, 2021).

<sup>66</sup> Robinson, “The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives.”

<sup>67</sup> Sithole, “ The Impact of Education on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas.”

<sup>68</sup> Robinson, “The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives.”

The lack of skills development opportunities perpetuates economic exclusion and reinforces dependence on external aid, aligning with the NDP 2030 goal of improving educational access and training.<sup>69</sup>

### **Institutional Challenges to Community Development**

The study result identified several institutional challenges that urgently need to be addressed to facilitate community development. These findings align with structural challenges discussed in the literature, such as lack of agricultural extension services, poor infrastructure, unequal resource access, inadequate education and training, and limited access to information and communication tools.<sup>70</sup>

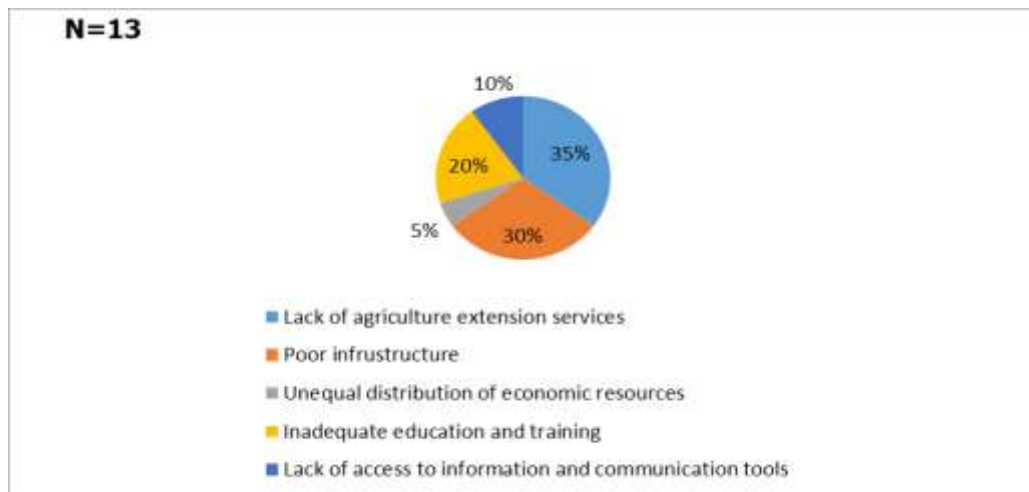


Figure 3: Institutional Challenges to Community Development

#### **Lack of Agricultural Extension Services**

The participants expressed frustration over the lack of agricultural extension services. One farmer said, “Droughts are already hard to manage, and without training, it feels impossible to farm effectively”, out of 35 % of participants in the survey. At the same time, one from the interviews (N=14) also lamented that “There is a river nearby, but access to clean water is inconsistent”. This aligns with Meyer, who highlights that modern farming requires skills and institutional support to thrive.<sup>71</sup> Several participants pointed out that existing agricultural policies are ineffective without adequate institutional capacity to implement them. “The policies are there,” one participant noted, “but they remain just words without action.”

#### **Poor Infrastructure Development**

The findings revealed that the lack of infrastructure became another significant obstacle. This is attested by 30% of participants in the questionnaire survey who described how poor road conditions and unreliable water supply disrupted daily life (November 2012). One participant lamented, “We have to travel all the way to Butterworth for healthcare, which costs time and money.” On the other hand, a participant from an interview (N=14) echoed, “But the services are inadequate, especially regarding water and roads.” This aligns with Agenda 2063, which emphasises the need for infrastructure investment to promote local economies. Without adequate roads, water, and healthcare facilities, economic growth in Kobodi remains stifled.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Robinson, “The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives.”

<sup>70</sup> Patel, Thomas, and Murphy, “Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas.”

<sup>71</sup> Meyer, “The Effectiveness of the Local Economic Development Framework in South Africa.”

<sup>72</sup> Flora and Flora, “Rural Development and Civil Society: A Collaborative Approach.”

### ***Unequal Distribution of Economic Resources***

Some survey participants (5%) expressed a sense of neglect, comparing their situation with urban areas. “Urban places get everything,” one participant said bitterly. “We are left with nothing.” Another from interviews (N=14) said, “We feel neglected. Urban areas have better infrastructure and services than rural places like Kobodi.” This reflects the SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) objective of balancing development efforts between urban and rural areas.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Inadequate Education and Training***

About 20 % of participants highlighted the absence of adult education and vocational training centres (Figure 2), and participants in the interviews had the same view. “There’s no opportunity for us to improve ourselves,” one participant observed. This finding supports the World Bank report, which emphasises the importance of human capital development through skills training to break cycles of poverty.<sup>74</sup>

### ***Limited Access to Information and communication tools***

The lack of communication channels between the community and local authorities limits residents' access to information.<sup>75</sup> One participant explained, “If we don’t hear it from someone, we don’t know what’s happening.” This gap hinders civic participation, aligning with Phillips, who stresses the importance of accessible information for community development.<sup>76</sup>

### **Proposed Remedies to Address Institutional Challenges**

The findings suggested various solutions to overcome institutional challenges, including workplace training and financial inclusion, improved education and infrastructure, entrepreneurial support and capacity building, and focus on career mobility. These remedies align with international frameworks such as the SDGs, Agenda 2063, and national policies under the NDP 2030. This alignment underscores the relevance and potential impact of these solutions in addressing the identified challenges.

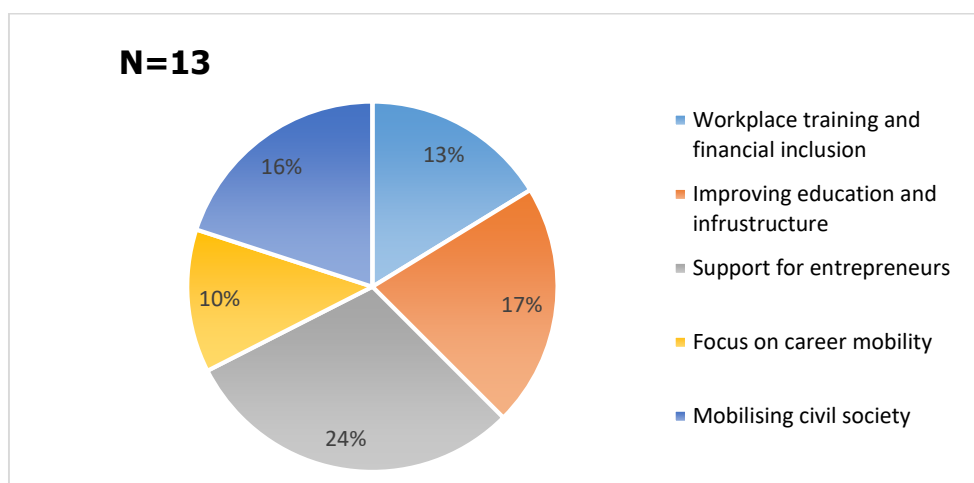


Figure 4: Proposed Remedies to Address Institutional Challenges

### ***Workplace Training and Financial Inclusion***

“We need leaders with the right skills,” one participant noted, emphasising the need for municipal training programs out of 13% of participants from the survey. This aligns with Robinson, who highlights the importance of competent governance.<sup>77</sup> Participants also advocated for micro-loans and savings

<sup>73</sup> Patel, Thomas, and Murphy, “Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas.”

<sup>74</sup> World Bank, *Improving Educational Outcomes in Rural Areas: A Global Perspective*.

<sup>75</sup> Nkosi, “The Importance of Information Access in Community Development.”

<sup>76</sup> Phillips, “Post-Apartheid Development Policies: A Critical Evaluation.”

<sup>77</sup> Robinson, “The Role of Career Development in Rural Community Initiatives.”

groups to reduce dependency on social grants, reflecting Smith et al.'s emphasis on entrepreneurship for self-reliance.<sup>78</sup>

### ***Improved Education and Infrastructure***

“Our children need more than just roads - they need knowledge,” said another participant out of 17% of participants. This call for better education and infrastructure is a desire and a necessity for rural development. It mirrors that of Sithole, who stresses the role of vocational training in rural development.<sup>79</sup> Infrastructure investment would improve mobility and economic growth, which is in line with the findings of the World Bank.<sup>80</sup>

### ***Support for Entrepreneurs***

The findings highlighted the need for business subsidies and leadership training to build local capacity, with the majority (24%) of participants lamenting, and that aligns with Patel et al.<sup>81</sup> These efforts aim to create jobs and foster civic engagement, supporting Chant's argument that empowered communities are more sustainable.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Focus on Career Mobility***

“We feel stuck without opportunities to grow,” one participant admitted out of 10% of the participants from the survey, and the “Increase budget allocations and financial accountability” interview (N=14) participant responded. The desire for career advancement reflects Phillips, who argues that career mobility promotes economic inclusion and long-term development, aligning with SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth.<sup>83</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study recommends that beneficiaries of community development in rural communities should have access to resources, institutional support, and services at reasonable cost. The government should develop skills and knowledge of both beneficiaries and functionaries of community development. Analysis. The research findings and conclusions suggest the following recommendations. If implemented with commitment and insight, these recommendations can alleviate institutional challenges in the Kobodi area and similar disadvantaged rural communities, paving the way for meaningful rural development.

- **Access to Institutional Support and Services:** Access to institutional services and support is essential to a successful community development. These services boost the productive capacity of beneficiaries and aid them in managing environmental stresses and unforeseen challenges. Community development programs in Kobodi should ensure the availability of affordable institutional support and services. This should encompass access to information, markets, extension services, inputs, credit facilities, infrastructure, and technology, all essential for influential community and rural development programs.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The research findings highlight various impediments in disadvantaged rural communities in promoting community development without accountability. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial for transparency and eradicating undesirable practices. Programs should define focus areas, objectives, performance indicators, service standards, communication networks, and emergency preparedness to achieve food security and empower communities.

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<sup>78</sup> Smith, Patel, and Davis, “Government Support for Entrepreneurs: Policies and Impacts.”

<sup>79</sup> Sithole, “The Impact of Education on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas.”

<sup>80</sup> World Bank, *Investing in Education and Infrastructure for Economic Growth*.

<sup>81</sup> Patel, Thomas, and Murphy, “Resource Allocation and Support Mechanisms for Rural Areas.”

<sup>82</sup> Chant, *Gender, Generation, and Poverty: Exploring the “feminisation of Poverty” in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*.

<sup>83</sup> Phillips, “Post-Apartheid Development Policies: A Critical Evaluation”; Smith, Patel, and Davis, “Government Support for Entrepreneurs: Policies and Impacts.”

- **Education and training of functionaries:** In Kobodi, it is vital to prioritise training for public sector functionaries to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to support community development. Understanding the beneficiaries' challenges, knowledge, and resources is essential for building trust. Coordination among functionaries from different institutions is also crucial to preventing program failure
- **Skills Development:** Efforts should be made to provide relevant skills to rural communities like Kobodi to initiate and sustain community development. Beneficiaries should be trained in all aspects of production, including processing, marketing, financial management, and environmental protection, beyond just the primary skills needed to produce goods and services.
- **Improved access to resources:** In Kobodi, residents need better access to resources to apply their skills. Providing a 'starter pack' of resources, including initial capital, in the form of loans or grants, would empower participants and make community development programs more effective. This support would include resources for agricultural and non-farm economic ventures. The study acknowledges the need for further research to cover the recommendations with a larger sample size.

## CONCLUSION

The study has investigated the institutional challenges that hamper community development in disadvantaged rural communities, using the Kobodi Administrative Area as the case under investigation. The study used a qualitative descriptive research method to generate and analyse the data required to answer the research questions. Therefore, probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the 27 informants who participated in the study. The study acknowledges the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 1, 10, 11 and 16, envisaged in the African Union Agenda 2063 and National Development Plan 2030. The study's outcome revealed that the lack of agricultural extension services, poor infrastructure, unequal distribution of resources, and inadequate education and training are the main constraints to community development in the Kobodi Administrative Area. The solutions suggested by respondents are standard and have proven effective elsewhere. The role of policymakers, community leaders, and researchers in implementing these solutions is crucial. The conclusion is that the prevailing institutional challenges are either due to deliberate neglect by public and private officials or a lack of capacity and knowledge to implement practical solutions.

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