

ISSN (E) 3007-0376
ISSN (P) 3007-0368

Journal of Advanced Studies in Social Sciences (JASSS)

Vol.4, Issue 2 (July-December 2026)



Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International



Academy of Social Sciences
BAHISEEN Institute for Research & Digital Transformation
Street 14-G, Coral Town, Islamabad
Email: editor@jasss.pk, Website: <https://jasss.pk>

Beyond the Rhetoric: Assessing the role of NGO-Led Poverty Eradication Initiatives in the Qwaqwa Region, South Africa

Nthatis Nkoebele

Postgraduate Student, Department of Social Work, University of the
Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa and Lecturer, Centre for Gender
& Africa Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa

Email: Nkoebelen@ufs.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-2397-4680>

Emmison Muleya (Corresponding Author)

Lecturer - Department of Social Work,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Email: Emmi.Muleya@wits.ac.za

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5931-1872>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21904450>

Abstract

This study examined the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in alleviating poverty in Qwa-Qwa, a rural area in the Eastern Free State, South Africa. Employing a qualitative case study design, the research utilised purposive sampling to select thirteen participants, including NGO representatives, officials from the Department of Social Development (DSD), and a municipal Local Economic Development (LED) manager. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2022) six-phase approach. Findings reveal that NGOs contribute significantly to poverty reduction through strategies such as Community Nutrition and Development Centres, short-term employment creation, and collaborative initiatives with government and private stakeholders. The study concludes that intentional, well-coordinated partnerships, coupled with financial and skills support, are essential for NGOs to address poverty effectively. It also emphasises the value of recognising community assets, advocating for the view of communities as active agents. NGOs should be empowered as catalysts for sustainable poverty eradication in rural contexts.

Keywords: collaborations, community development, Non-Governmental Organizations, poverty eradication, Qwa-Qwa, rural development

1. Introduction and Background

Global poverty remains a pressing development challenge, with the World Bank estimating that approximately 700 million people live on less than \$2.15 per day (World Bank Group, 2024). Sub-Saharan Africa continues to experience the highest levels of deprivation, shaped by persistent rural underdevelopment, conflict, and institutional fragility (Beegle & Christiaensen, 2019). In South Africa, poverty affects an estimated 62.7% of the population, while access to basic services such as water and electricity remains uneven, particularly in rural areas (World Bank Group, 2024). Rural poverty is especially severe, with an 81.3% headcount compared to 40.7% in urban settings (Bila, 2021), highlighting the need for targeted, context-responsive poverty-alleviation strategies.

Qwa-Qwa, located in the Maluti-A-Phofung (MAP) municipality, is among the most economically marginalised regions in the Free State. The municipality records one of the highest unemployment rates in the province at 44.1% (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2023), while nearly 60% of households survive on less than R1650 per month and 42% of residents remain unemployed (Mocwagae & Nel, 2023). For many households, social grants form the primary source of livelihood (Nishimwe-Niyimbanira, 2020; Maluti-A-Phofung, 2024), yet these grants do not offer sustainable pathways out of poverty. Compounding this vulnerability are ongoing governance failures, including political instability, corruption, and financial mismanagement, which have led to unreliable service delivery, discouraged investment, and caused the closure of industries previously supporting local employment (Marais, 2023; Mollo, 2022). Despite these constraints, Qwa-Qwa's agricultural potential presents opportunities for improving food security and expanding livelihood options when supported appropriately (Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2022).

In this context, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become central development actors in rural South Africa. They contribute to income generation, food security, health and education support, and long-term livelihood development (Fuseini et al., 2022; Kabonga, 2023). South African NGOs such as Kagiso Trust, Save the Children, Khulisa Social Solutions, and Gift of the Givers operate across various sectors, offering services ranging from environmental education to food relief (Makofane & Selepe, 2022; Mpofu & Govender, 2022; Wango, 2024). However, poverty-eradication activities are often embedded within broader programmes rather than being dedicated interventions, and their effectiveness varies across local contexts.

Despite the growing reliance on NGOs to fill gaps left by state and market failures, little is known about how NGO-led poverty initiatives function in Qwa-Qwa, a region characterised by chronic poverty, weak governance, and limited economic opportunities. Existing literature does not adequately explain how NGOs design and implement programmes in settings where basic services are inconsistent, nor how these initiatives contribute to sustainable livelihoods in structurally disadvantaged rural environments. Moreover, the extent to which NGO activities complement or compensate for municipal shortcomings remains underexplored.

This study, therefore, addresses a critical knowledge gap by examining the nature, contributions, and challenges of NGO-led poverty eradication initiatives in Qwa-Qwa. By

doing so, it provides insights into the role of civil society organisations in supporting rural livelihoods in contexts marked by deep structural inequalities.

1.1 Statement of the problem

South Africa's rural poverty is deeply rooted in its apartheid legacy, which relegated Black communities to underdeveloped homelands and entrenched long-term socio-economic marginalisation (Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2022). Qwa-Qwa, one such former homeland, continues to experience extreme poverty, chronic unemployment, unreliable basic services, and deteriorating infrastructure-conditions exacerbated by political instability, governance failures, and weak municipal performance (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). Although the region possesses arable land and a history of industrial activity, these assets remain underutilised due to financial mismanagement, declining investment, and the collapse of local industries. As a result, livelihood opportunities have diminished, forcing most households to rely heavily on social grants, which, while essential, do not provide sustainable pathways out of poverty (Muleya & Xweso, 2025).

The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies the need for multisectoral collaboration to address these structural challenges. It highlights NGOs as key actors capable of supporting grassroots development, strengthening community resilience, and delivering services in contexts where the state is unable to do so effectively (National Planning Commission, 2011). However, efforts to integrate NGOs into rural development strategies have been inconsistent, limited by inadequate coordination, weak government transparency, and chronic underinvestment in community-based initiatives. Although research shows that NGOs can contribute to poverty reduction through employment creation, skills development, food security initiatives, and social support services (Fuseini et al., 2022), their role in deeply marginalised rural settings such as Qwa-Qwa remains insufficiently understood.

The problem is therefore twofold: first, rural poverty in Qwa-Qwa persists despite the presence of NGOs and government interventions; and second, there is limited empirical evidence on how NGO-led initiatives are designed, implemented, and experienced in this uniquely constrained context. This gap hinders the development of responsive, evidence-based strategies needed to address chronic poverty in the region. Accordingly, this study examines the role of NGOs in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa, to inform more effective and transformative social policy for rural South Africa.

1.2 Objective and rationale of the article

The broad aim of this article is to assess the role of NGO-led poverty eradication initiatives in the Qwa-Qwa Region of the Eastern Free State, South Africa. The corollary objective is to understand poverty eradication interventions employed by NGOs in rural Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State.

Rural communities such as Qwa-Qwa continue to face persistent challenges linked to colonial legacies, poor infrastructure, underinvestment in services, and high levels of poverty and unemployment (Marais et al., 2023). While previous studies in Qwa-Qwa have addressed food security, economic development, and social entrepreneurship (Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2022), they have largely overlooked the role NGOs could potentially play in poverty eradication. Despite having access to arable land, the lack of farming and social infrastructure hampers sustainable livelihoods. In this context, NGOs play a crucial role by bridging service delivery gaps, advocating for communities, and designing context-specific

interventions (Makofane & Selepe, 2022). Given the limited research on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa, this study sought to investigate the specific role NGOs play in addressing poverty in the region, with a focus on collaborative solutions involving government and private sector partners.

2. Understanding Poverty and the role of NGOs in Poverty Eradication in Qwa-Qwa

Poverty remains a major challenge in developing countries, with about 80% of the world's population living in extreme poverty-much of it concentrated in rural, conflict-affected regions of Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank Group, 2024). Poverty is also understood differently and experienced in different ways leading to different meanings and definitions. Poverty is generally characterised by the inability of individuals, households and communities to have resources to satisfy their living capabilities and conditions (May, 1998). The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) as a guiding framework for this study conceptualises poverty as a multidimensional condition shaped by people's access to and control over livelihood assets, institutional structures, and vulnerability contexts (Scoones, 2015). NGOs have demonstrated their ability to reduce poverty through micro-credit, asset provision, housing support, and educational financing (Fuseini et al., 2022). Evidence from Zimbabwe and Bangladesh shows that income-generating initiatives can reduce unemployment and strengthen livelihoods, suggesting that NGO interventions often succeed when they combine resources with opportunities for local economic participation (Mago & Hofisi, 2016; Ghalib et al., 2015).

Yet, the literature also identifies clear conditions under which NGO efforts fall short. Microfinance outcomes are inconsistent, with studies showing that loans alone have a limited impact without complementary financial literacy and entrepreneurial support (Samer et al., 2015; Uddin et al., 2020). Moreover, when NGOs act as micro-lenders, they risk reproducing exploitative lending practices that increase household vulnerability rather than reducing it. These findings highlight that NGO effectiveness depends on context-sensitive programming, ethical financial practices, and holistic, capability-building approaches.

NGOs are widely recognised as key actors in poverty eradication because they address the multidimensional nature of deprivation through interventions in education, health, and community development (Abdullahi, 2019; Ngumbela & Mle, 2019; Ayoo, 2022). However, the broader scholarship provides a critical lens on their effectiveness, noting that donor dependence, corruption, and accountability to foreign funders may limit their autonomy and reinforce neoliberal agendas, thereby constraining their impact (Cordeiro & Nyaruwata, 2016; Nega & Schneider, 2014; Niyonkuru, 2016; Sakue-Collins, 2021). Evidence from Ghana and Cameroon further demonstrates that NGO-led poverty eradication efforts often fail when programmes overlook basic needs or exclude beneficiaries from key decision-making processes (Amofah & Agyare, 2022; Nsah, 2024). These findings reaffirm arguments that sustainable poverty reduction hinges on context-specific knowledge, meaningful beneficiary participation, and NGOs' ability to mobilise the expertise of employees and volunteers embedded in local communities (Fuseini et al., 2022; Tshiyoyo, 2019; Cwaile, 2023; Kabonga, 2023). Participatory approaches, therefore, remain central to enhancing project relevance, ownership, and long-term sustainability (Nega & Schneider, 2014).

Within South Africa, home to the largest number of NGOs on the continent (Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014), these debates are especially relevant for rural areas such as Qwa-Qwa, where deep-rooted inequalities, service-delivery failures, and chronic underinvestment exacerbate multidimensional poverty (Marais et al., 2023; Nishimwe-Niyimbanira, 2020). Although research focusing specifically on NGOs in Qwa-Qwa is limited, existing evidence illustrates their ongoing contributions and their potential role in filling governance gaps. NGOs in the region support Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDs), creating short-term employment opportunities and linking residents to external opportunities. Approximately R9.6 million was allocated to sustaining CNDs in 2022/23 (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). Some organisations, such as Thusang Advice Centre, also collaborate with the government to advance women's rights and strengthen local advocacy (Mushonga & Seloma, 2018). Yet, while CNDs and similar initiatives provide important safety nets, they remain temporary measures, underscoring the need for more sustainable, community-driven poverty eradication strategies. Despite criticisms regarding donor dependence and limited autonomy (Brass, 2022; Ismail & Kamat, 2018), donor funding remains vital to NGO operations and can still enable positive outcomes when paired with participatory, context-sensitive approaches. Strengthening collaborative efforts between NGOs, government, and private partners is therefore essential for advancing long-term, locally grounded poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa.

Addressing rural poverty requires a multisectoral strategy that incorporates innovative service delivery models and collaborative leadership suited to rural contexts (Mubangizi, 2023). Partnerships between the state and NGOs are therefore essential for enabling structural transformation. Although progress has been made, limited research examines how rural NGOs can effectively contribute to poverty eradication, and existing literature offers mixed conclusions about their impact. Three decades of persistent poverty into South Africa's democracy highlights the need for more intentional, coordinated approaches involving actors who understand community needs-particularly NGOs capable of promoting sustainable development and upward mobility.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), which conceptualises poverty as a multidimensional condition shaped by people's access to and control over livelihood assets, institutional structures, and vulnerability contexts (Serrat, 2017; Scoones, 2015). The framework was particularly relevant for examining poverty eradication initiatives in Qwa-Qwa because the region is characterised by limited employment opportunities, weak infrastructure, governance failures, and constrained access to financial and social resources. Within the SLA, livelihoods are understood through five interrelated asset categories: human, social, natural, physical, and financial capital (Department for International Development, 1999). In Qwa-Qwa, these assets are significantly constrained through high unemployment, deteriorating municipal services, weakened local economies, and dependency on social grants. The SLA therefore enabled the study to move beyond income-based understandings of poverty and instead examine how NGOs contribute to strengthening livelihood capabilities, community resilience, and access to sustainable opportunities in structurally disadvantaged rural settings (Nel, 2015; Patel, 2016). The framework also aligns with participatory and community-driven development approaches because it recognises local knowledge, agency, and collective action as central to sustainable poverty reduction.

The SLA informed the study's research questions, methodology, and interpretation of findings by directing attention to how NGO interventions strengthen or constrain livelihood assets within Qwa-Qwa communities. The study specifically explored how NGOs support financial capital through temporary employment and income-generation initiatives, natural capital through community food gardens, human capital through skills development and training, and social capital through collaboration and community mobilisation. The interpretive qualitative design was consistent with the SLA's people-centred orientation, allowing participants to describe how poverty, vulnerability, and local assets are experienced within everyday rural life. The findings further reflected core SLA assumptions by demonstrating that sustainable poverty eradication depends not only on short-term relief measures such as food provision, but also on strengthening local capabilities, participation, and institutional support systems. At the same time, the challenges identified including limited funding, weak stakeholder collaboration, and shortages of volunteers highlighted how fragile institutional environments undermine livelihood sustainability and reduce NGOs' capacity to support long-term community resilience (Krantz, 2001; Kim et al., 2019; Cattaneo et al., 2022). In this way, the SLA provided an appropriate analytical framework for understanding both the contributions and limitations of NGO-led poverty eradication initiatives in Qwa-Qwa.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach and design

Poverty is complex, and understanding NGOs' perspectives on addressing it in rural areas is crucial. Qualitative methods offer a holistic view of NGOs' roles and fill knowledge gaps by capturing participants' insights. This study adopted an interpretive qualitative paradigm with an exploratory case study design, allowing in-depth exploration of NGOs' efforts in poverty eradication within the specific context of Qwa-Qwa (Yin, 2014).

3.2 Population and sample

The study investigated the work of NGOs involved in rural poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa, located in the Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality of the Eastern Free State-an area characterised by entrenched socio-economic marginalisation, including high unemployment rates (41% overall; 53% among youth) and persistent poverty (Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, 2024). Three NGOs actively engaged in poverty alleviation were purposively selected from 66 organisations identified in the National Development Agency records (NDA, 2025). To broaden perspectives, community development practitioners from the Department of Social Development and the Local Economic Development Manager were included.

3.2.1 Inclusion criteria

Participants were volunteers, part-time staff, and permanent employees aged 18-75, with at least secondary or tertiary education, occupying roles such as facilitators, managers, or community development practitioners, and 0-5 years of experience in rural poverty-eradication NGOs. The final sample comprised 13 individuals: nine from NGOs, three from the Department of Social Development, and one local economic development manager (See Table 1 below).

3.3 Data collection

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with NGOs, the Department of Social Development (DSD), and the Local Economic Development (LED) unit in Qwa-Qwa, using an open-ended interview guide to elicit in-depth insights. Given the well-documented privacy challenges associated with qualitative interviewing (Ruslin et al., 2022), informed consent was obtained, confidentiality was assured, interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the process.

3.4 Data analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Elliott, 2018). The process began with familiarisation, where transcripts were read repeatedly to gain an in-depth understanding of the data. This was followed by systematic coding, in which meaningful features were identified and organised. Codes were then collated into initial themes i.e Participant 1, etc, after which themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and alignment with the dataset. The next phase involved defining and naming themes, as well as clarifying their scope and analytical focus. Finally, the themes were compiled into a coherent narrative, presented in relation to the research questions. A deductive approach allowed themes to emerge directly from the participants' accounts, enabling a nuanced understanding of NGOs' responses to poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study prioritized the ethical protection of participants by adhering to strict standards, including approval from the institution's non-medical ethics non-medical committee (Protocol: SW24/07/04). Participants received detailed information about the study, their roles, and voluntary participation rights. Informed consent was obtained, with opportunities to ask questions and withdraw at any time. Confidentiality was ensured through pseudonyms and secure data storage. Researchers avoided harm by steering clear of sensitive topics, providing referrals for distress, and debriefing participants. Participants were also offered access to the research findings in digital research reports and journal articles.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1 Biographical Profiles of Interview Participants

The following table depicts the participants' profiles according to their respective ages, education levels, roles and years of experience

Table 1: Research Participants Profiles

Participant Code	Age	Highest level of education	Position/ role	Years of Experience
1	56	University	Director (Founder)	18
2	54	University	Coordinator	4

3	32	Grade 12	Volunteer	2
4	56	University	LED Manager	27
5	44	University	Community Development Practitioner	5
6	37	University	Community Development Practitioner	13
7	52	University	Deputy-Director	27
8	Preferred not to say	College	Director (Founder)	7
9	21	University	Deputy-Chairperson	2
10	Preferred not to say	Grade 12	Treasurer	7
11	38	University	Director	16
12	35	University	Operational Manager	9
13	25	University	Project Coordinator	5

Table 1 above illustrates the respective profiles of the participants who were interviewed from different organizations and government departments.

The lowest qualification among participants was a Grade 12 certificate, and the highest was a Masters degree. Most participants (N=9) had university degrees, which is in line with the literature on skills needed by NGO staff. The years of experience varied from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 27 years. Equally, the age distribution ranged from 21 to 56 years among those who indicated their ages.

Staff are crucial to an NGO's success (Brass; 2022). Sustainable NGOs require knowledgeable personnel skilled in project management, proposal writing, fundraising, and monitoring and evaluation (Ismail & Kamat, 2018; Brass, 2022). Keeping up with sector trends is also vital and effective service delivery depends on qualified staff, and those with longer tenure possess valuable experience and insight into skill gaps and poverty-related challenges within their organizations (Kabonga, 2023).

4.2 Themes

Theme 1: Prevalence of Poverty and Unemployment in Qwa-Qwa

Participants in this study consistently reported the prevalence of poverty in Qwa-Qwa. Several NGOs noted that poverty in Qwa-Qwa was a challenge and many people's lived reality. Interestingly, participants also noted that poverty persists because people do not know how to create their own income and emancipate themselves from poverty. The following excerpts build on this argument:

so the houses I went to, maybe about 150 walking in the village. But then I found that there was nobody working there. (Participant 6)

If you know the poverty level here in Qwa-Qwa was 20% at that time. Today I'd say to you, it's 95%. It's more than tripled (Participant 4)

but poverty is hammering our community, it is heartbreaking. The situation that we're living in people being unemployed... we realised that there are needy kids who go to bed on empty stomachs, and when you think sleeping on an empty stomach as a child (Participant 3)

There is no, I would say there is no vision of creating employment for your fellow members of the community and again, I think that is what is creating a lot of poverty. (Participant 12)

Participants consistently identified poverty and unemployment as pervasive and persistent socio-economic challenges in Qwa-Qwa. Their accounts suggest that poverty is not experienced merely as a lack of income, but is reflected in widespread unemployment, food insecurity and limited opportunities for households to improve their socio-economic circumstances. Collectively, the above accounts portray poverty in Qwa-Qwa as a multidimensional and persistent condition shaped by unemployment, food insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities, while also raising questions about the extent to which communities are supported to develop their own income-generating capacities.

Theme 2: Community Assets and Capabilities

Participants mentioned community assets, lack of support and participation as factors that have an impact on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa as shown in the excerpts below:

they need to lead us, and they need to take ownership because we cannot tell them what to do...because it's community development, we don't decide for the community, the community needs to decide for themselves (Participant 6)

People must use their talents, must use their assets. That's what we're promoting, solidarity, Ubuntu, let's us help each other live and move forward, (Participant 7)

Lack of support from the community. Even when I say I'm asking them to help, they have a mentality that ok, they should get something in return whereas they are also helping themselves, (Participant 10)

Participants emphasised that poverty eradication should not be understood solely in terms of providing resources to communities; rather, communities should be enabled to identify, mobilise and utilise their existing assets and capabilities. This perspective was particularly evident in Participant 6's emphasis on community ownership and participation. This emphasis on local capabilities was reinforced by Participant 7 while Participant 10 identified limitations to community participation, particularly where expectations of material compensation affected willingness to contribute.

Theme 3: Role of NGOs in Poverty Eradication

Participants in this study highlighted some strategies they used in their organizations to try and alleviate poverty in Qwa-Qwa. They described a range of NGO interventions aimed at responding to immediate needs while also creating opportunities for community members to improve their livelihoods. These interventions included food provision,

community gardens, agricultural support and employment-related projects. This is clearly shown in the excerpts below:

We address poverty eradication through the CNDC, whereby in the community members come and eat from Monday, for five days Monday to Friday (Participant 5)

And in their gardens, they now have their own gardens. Agriculture was here and they gave them seeds, people in this village. So that they can plant, regardless of the size of your plot. Once they have produced, you can eat and sell to people, if they want to. (Participant 10)

They told me there is a project that is coming and asked me to identify people. So they are able to work at the end of the month they are earning that stipend so it is how we alleviate poverty (Participant 8)

Taken together, these accounts indicate that NGOs play multiple roles in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa, ranging from immediate relief and food security interventions to livelihood development and access to temporary income-generating opportunities. At the same time, the sustainability and scale of these interventions appear closely connected to the resources available to NGOs.

Theme 4: Challenges Facing NGOs and Resource Constraints

Various challenges emerged from the findings as key constraints to effective community development by NGOs in Qwaqwa and key were lack of funding, lack of volunteers and limited collaboration. Conversely collaboration emerged as another important dimension of NGO capacity, although participants reported differing experiences of inter-organisational and stakeholder partnerships

Funding

Many participants in this study mentioned a lack of funding as the main challenge for their organizations. Other challenges included a lack of volunteers and skills as shown in the findings below:

we have many years without being funded, we only have two years to being funded anyway (Participant 1)

so with the little money we had as a department, because we have R3.5 million for the whole province (Participant 7)

So, it is quite a challenge for us as NGOs because many institutions don't cover salaries or stipends for volunteers. So I still need to source out funds for them to be able to join our organization (Participant 12)

Lack of Volunteers

Participants identified the lack of volunteers as a significant obstacle to meeting their NGOs' operational requirements and effectively implementing programmes within communities.

They want money, they tell you they won't volunteer. At the end of the month, they are expecting something (Participant 10)

Our biggest challenge is we have volunteers, but you know, volunteers have families that they have to, you know, make means (Participant 12)

No, people don't volunteer, all they think is money **(Participant 3)**

So number two, eh the majority of people here are are, they don't understand volunteering, you understand. We are short of many volunteers, we need manpower, a lot. Yes, I don't know **(Participant 8)**

The biggest resource participants highlighted as a critical need was funding.

Uh, number 1, yeah, it's lack of funds, lack of funds, that is the one I think is the biggest challenge because if we have certain funding, it will help the organization to have more personnel **(Participant 2)**

And sometimes you find that the department is busy funding the same organizations...they funded them last year and this year they are still funding them.... even though they misuse funds...(Participant 6)

So... so the biggest challenge we have it's it's funding **(Participant 11)**

Collaborative Approaches to Poverty Eradication

Some participants viewed collaboration as important and beneficial to communities; others had no collaborations. The following findings came up:

Yes, the organization alone won't meet the needs of the community, so it's important for us as an organization to collaborate with other stakeholders. it helps a lot **(Participant 2)**

So, those partnerships but we don't have partnerships with donors or funders, we don't have ties **(Participant 4)**

you understand, so in actual fact., the vision says we must integrate with other stakeholders.....so we have to do it, besides the fact that we do it in a grassroots level **(Participant 6)**

We are trying to conduct seminars and everything together but we are not in partnership. **(Participant 12)**

As shown from the findings, NGO interventions are undermined by inadequate funding, limited volunteer capacity and weak or inconsistent partnerships. Importantly, the findings therefore suggest that poverty eradication cannot rest exclusively on NGO interventions or on the expectation that communities should become self-reliant. Rather, sustainable poverty eradication requires the mobilisation of community capabilities alongside adequate institutional resources, stable funding, meaningful stakeholder collaboration and opportunities for sustainable employment and livelihood development. The findings presented above will then be discussed below.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Prevalence of Poverty and Unemployment in Qwa-Qwa

Unemployment in Qwa-Qwa significantly undermines household financial well-being, particularly for youth, where the unemployment rate is 53%, well above the national average of 45.5% (Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, 2024). This limits households' ability to meet basic needs such as food, education, and transport, perpetuating cycles of poverty. Historically, Qwa-Qwa's economy was bolstered by factories that provided

employment, but many have closed due to inconsistent municipal services, including water and electricity, further exacerbating unemployment (Marais, 2023; Membretti et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with broader studies linking high rural unemployment to persistent poverty and diminished economic opportunities in South African townships (Mbajorgu & Odeku, 2023). The concentration of youth unemployment in Qwa-Qwa aligns with global and regional patterns where rural youth are disproportionately affected by labour market challenges (World Bank, 2024).

From an SLA perspective, the erosion of financial and physical assets-such as stable income and functioning infrastructure-significantly weakens household resilience. Strengthening these assets through skills development, improved service delivery, and youth-focused employment pathways is essential for expanding livelihood options (Chambers & Conway, 1992; Serrat, 2017). Similar findings in other Sub-Saharan contexts show that where local economic diversification is weak, structural unemployment drives deeper vulnerability and limits long-term livelihood sustainability (Mago & Hofisi, 2016; Ghalib et al., 2015). Thus, the Qwa-Qwa context reflects a broader link between limited employment opportunities and entrenched rural poverty, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions such as livelihood diversification, youth employment programmes, and investment in basic infrastructure.

5.2 Community Assets and Capabilities

The study revealed that residents in Qwa-Qwa demonstrate limited engagement in community initiatives due to competing priorities like securing food and basic services, alongside a lack of municipal support (Nyathi et al., 2024; Matloga et al., 2024). Persistent service delivery failures undermine community trust, reducing participation in programmes that could foster local development. These findings mirror prior research emphasizing that low engagement in rural South African communities is often tied to infrastructural deficiencies, unemployment, and weak governance (Mansuri & Rao, 2013, as cited in Atinga et al., 2019). Consequently, strategies aimed at poverty reduction must account for local capacities and barriers to participation.

SLA emphasises that human, social, and natural assets are critical for community resilience, yet in Qwa-Qwa these assets remain underutilised due to structural constraints. Strengthening local skills, rebuilding social networks, and improving access to natural assets-such as land for food production-can enhance collective agency and sustainable development outcomes (Scoones, 2015; Krantz, 2001). Studies elsewhere in Africa demonstrate that mobilising local capabilities, coupled with supportive governance structures, significantly improves community resilience and livelihood outcomes (Fuseini et al., 2022; Tshiyoyo, 2019). These findings suggest that interventions combining local asset mobilisation with municipal support and NGO collaboration are essential for empowering communities and achieving long-term poverty reduction.

5.3 Role of NGOs in Poverty Eradication

NGOs in Qwa-Qwa play a critical role in mitigating poverty through Community Nutrition and Development Centres (CNDCs), home food gardens, and short-term employment initiatives (Mdiya & Mdoda, 2021; Vávra et al., 2018; Mbajorgu & Odeku, 2023). Food gardens enhance household food security and offer opportunities for income generation, aligning with the SLA's focus on leveraging community assets and promoting local

ownership (Maredia et al., 2023). Such locally driven interventions are consistent with studies in Tanzania and other African contexts where community-based agricultural projects enhanced livelihoods, income, and social cohesion (Kim et al., 2019; Cattaneo et al., 2022). Employment initiatives facilitated by NGOs, although often short-term, contribute to immediate income security and poverty alleviation (Ngumbela & Mle, 2019).

These interventions strengthen key SLA assets-particularly natural (land for agriculture), human (skills training), and financial (income opportunities)-which enhance household resilience and adaptive capacity (Department for International Development, 1999; Serrat, 2017). However, the sustainability of these initiatives hinges on continued investment in capacity-building and long-term support systems that move beyond short-term relief towards structural transformation. These findings align with regional studies that show NGO-supported livelihood programmes and micro-employment initiatives can buffer communities against extreme poverty (Ghalib et al., 2015; Mago & Hofisi, 2016). Nonetheless, the short-term nature of these interventions highlights the need for sustained development strategies that integrate skills development, enterprise promotion, and broader economic opportunities.

5.4 Challenges Facing NGOs and Resource Constraints

NGOs in Qwa-Qwa face significant funding challenges, exacerbated by donor requirements and limited government support, which often force organisations to prioritise donor agendas over community needs (Ratlabanya et al., 2016; Kabonga, 2023; Chanase, 2023). Reliance on short-term or single-source funding poses a threat to programme continuity, staff development, and overall sustainability, echoing findings from studies conducted across rural South Africa and other African countries (Batti, 2014; Shava, 2019). Limited human resources and high volunteer turnover further undermine organisational capacity to implement and monitor poverty reduction initiatives (Mavee, 2022; Mothusi et al., 2018). Collaboration deficits with stakeholders, including local government and private partners, also compound these challenges (Asogwa et al., 2024; Zeleke et al., 2024).

SLA literature emphasises that enabling institutional environments are essential for strengthening livelihood assets; however, the organisational challenges experienced by NGOs weaken their ability to support community financial, human, and social assets effectively (Scoones, 2015; Department for International Development, 1999). Improving donor coordination, local partnerships, and resource-sharing mechanisms can enhance NGO capacity to deliver sustainable poverty-reduction interventions (Banks & Hulme, 2012; Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Evidence suggests that NGO effectiveness improves when partnerships are strengthened, enabling resource pooling, skill-sharing, and coordinated service delivery (Hazara, 2016; Ditlev-Simonsen, 2022). Local Economic Development (LED) initiatives, such as small-scale agriculture and microenterprise support, also demonstrate the benefits of NGO-government collaboration for rural job creation and sustainable economic development (Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality, 2024; Mahlalela, 2014). These findings reinforce the literature advocating for integrated, stakeholder-driven approaches to rural poverty eradication.

6. Conclusions, implications for work practice and recommendation

6.1 Conclusions

This study concluded that poverty in Qwa-Qwa remains deeply entrenched and is exacerbated by high unemployment, especially among youth, deteriorating infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities. NGOs play a vital role in poverty alleviation through grassroots initiatives such as poultry cooperatives and household food gardens, often in partnership with the DSD. However, these efforts are hindered by significant challenges, including inadequate and inconsistent funding, weak stakeholder collaboration, community apathy, limited volunteerism, and a general lack of capacity within both NGOs and local government structures. Despite these challenges, the presence of arable land and the willingness of some communities to engage in self-sustaining activities offer a basis for building sustainable livelihoods if supported appropriately.

6.2 Implications for Practice

Social work and community development practitioners must prioritise capacity building, both within NGOs and among community members, to foster self-reliance, effective project management, and community ownership. Theories such as the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) focus on community strengths, collaboration, and participatory planning and should be integrated in rural community development practice and social work practice within rural communities. Practitioners should also work to cultivate stronger multi-stakeholder partnerships, including local government, private sector actors, and donors, to enhance resource mobilisation, information sharing, and programme sustainability. Given the socio-economic context, innovative approaches to incentivise volunteerism, such as skills development and internships, should be considered to ensure active community engagement and resilience.

6.3 Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of poverty eradication initiatives, it is essential to strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration by fostering coordinated partnerships among NGOs, relevant government departments, particularly the DSD and LED from local government sector actors, and local communities. These partnerships should be geared toward aligning efforts, pooling resources, and promoting shared development goals. Furthermore, government departments must review and streamline NGO funding mechanisms to ensure equitable, timely, and transparent disbursement processes that support compliant organisations. In promoting sustainable livelihoods, particular emphasis should be placed on youth-focused skills development in agriculture and entrepreneurship, especially in areas experiencing high unemployment like Qwa-Qwa, to stimulate economic self-sufficiency. Structured volunteer programmes offering stipends, formal recognition, and pathways to employment are also necessary to encourage meaningful volunteerism in impoverished communities where unpaid service may be unsustainable. Investment in community development education is critical to capacitate NGO personnel and practitioners with the knowledge and skills necessary for contextually relevant and development-oriented interventions. Additionally, community-led food security initiatives should be supported through the provision of seeds, tools, and training to address immediate nutritional needs while facilitating income generation. Finally, promoting accountability and good governance across all institutional levels is imperative.

to combat corruption, restore public trust, and ensure the efficient delivery of services to intended beneficiaries. In sum, sustainable poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa requires a holistic, community-centred, and multi-stakeholder approach that builds on existing assets, strengthens partnerships, and empowers communities to take ownership of their development pathways.

7. Declarations

Funding: This research did not receive any external funding.

Acknowledgements: This research is part of the MA in Social Development studies by the 1st Author. We thank the participants from the NGOs for their voluntary participation.

Declaration

The authors declare the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in writing this paper. In particular, the authors used ChatGPT AI for only language editing in terms of grammar and coherence. The authors declare that AI (ChatGPT) was not used for theme generation nor analysis. All work is original and is based on primary research data from an unpublished Master of Arts in Social Development Study by the 1st Author supervised by second author and the article was written by the authors with data synthesis, thematic development, and analytical conclusions remain entirely the original intellectual work of the researchers

Conflicts of Interest: The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement: The data are not publicly available due to confidentiality agreements with participants and ethical restrictions imposed by the Ethical Committee. However, de-identified data can be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to approval by the ethics committee.

References

- Abdullahi, K. T. (2019). *The Roles of Non-Governmental Organizations in Combating Poverty and Inequality*. 2.
- Amofah, S., & Agyare, L. (2022). Poverty alleviation approaches of development NGOs in Ghana: Application of the basic needs approach. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2063472. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2063472>.
- Asogwa, I. E., Varua, M. E., Datt, R., & Humphreys, P. (2024). Accounting for stakeholder engagement in developing countries: Proposing an engagement system to respond to sustainability demands. *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 32(3), 888–922. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-10-2021-1461>.
- Atinga, R. A., Agyepong, I. A., & Esena, R. K. (2019). Willing but unable? Extending theory to investigate community capacity to participate in Ghana's community-based health planning and service implementation. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 72, 170–178. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.10.001>.
- Banks, N., & Hulme, D. (2012). The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction (Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper No. 171). Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2072157>.
- Batti, R. C. (2014). Challenges Facing Local NGOs in Resource Mobilization. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 57. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20140203.12>.

- Beegle, K., & Christiaensen, L. (2019). *Accelerating poverty reduction in Africa*. World Bank Publications.
- Bila, S. N. (2021). *Determinants of subjective poverty in rural and urban areas of South Africa*. University of Johannesburg (South Africa).
- Brass, J. N. (2022). Do Service Provision NGOs Perform Civil Society Functions? Evidence of NGOs' Relationship With Democratic Participation. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(1), 148–169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764021991671>.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Conceptual and design thinking for thematic analysis. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qup0000196>.
- Cattaneo, A., Adukia, A., Brown, D. L., Christiaensen, L., Evans, D. K., Haakenstad, A., McMenomy, T., Partridge, M., Vaz, S., & Weiss, D. J. (2022). Economic and social development along the urban–rural continuum: New opportunities to inform policy. *World Development*, 157, 105941. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2022.105941>.
- Centre for Social Development in Africa (CSDA), University of Johannesburg. (2019). *Poverty, inequality and social exclusion in South Africa: A systematic assessment of how key policies, strategies and flagship programmes address poverty, inequality and equity issues*. Development Management and Research Directorate Research Unit National Development Agency. https://www.nda.org.za/assets/resources/CF824421-4FA0-41EE-AB69-4DB10CD0384A/NDA_Poverty_inequality_and_social_exclusion.pdf.
- Chambers, R., & Conway, G. (1992). Sustainable rural livelihoods: Practical concepts for the 21st century. *IDS Discussion Paper*, 296.
- Chanase, G. (2023). Exploring the potential effects of international donor funding on local NGO mission creep in Ghana. *Journal of African Political Economy and Development*, 8(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-japed_v8_n1_a2.
- Cordeiro, B., & Nyaruwata, L. T. (2016). The role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in poverty reduction: A case of Zambézia Province. *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 4(3), 1–14.
- Cwaile, M. S. (2023). *The influence of civil society organisations in the new governance framework of democratic South Africa*. University of the Free State.
- Dallmeyer, S., Breuer, C., & Feiler, S. (2024). To Pay or Not to Pay? The Effects of Monetary Compensation on Volunteers in Sports Clubs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 53(5), 1181–1204. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08997640231210456>.
- De Vos, A. S., Strydom, H., Fouché, C. B., & Delpont, C. S. L. (2011). *Research at Grass Roots: For the Social Sciences and Human Service Professions*. Van Schaik Publishers. <https://books.google.co.za/books?id=M5GEnQAACAAJ>.
- Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. (2023). *Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality profile* [Municipality fact sheet]. https://www.cogta.gov.za/cgta_2016/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/DistrictProfile_THABOMOFUTSANYANA0807-2.pdf.
- Department of Social Development, Free State. (2023). *Budget 7: 2023/24*. South African Government. <https://www.freestateonline.fs.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Social-Development-21-April-2023-Budget-Speech.pdf>.
- Department for International Development. (1999). *Sustainable livelihoods guidance sheets*. DFID. <https://www.livelihoodscentre.org/documents/20720/100145/Sustainable+livelihoods+guidance+sheets.pdf>.
- DG Murray Trust. (2025). *A guide to setting up, registering and governing an NGO* [Online post]. <https://dgmt.co.za/resources/a-guide-to-setting-up-registering-and-governing-an-ngo/>.
- Ditlev-Simonsen, C. D. (2022). *A Guide to Sustainable Corporate Responsibility: From Theory to Action*. Springer Nature.
- Elliott, V. (2018). Thinking about the Coding Process in Qualitative Data Analysis. *The Qualitative Report*. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2018.3560>.

- Francis, D., & Webster, E. (2019). Poverty and inequality in South Africa: Critical reflections. *Development Southern Africa*, 36(6), 788–802. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2019.1666703>.
- Fuseini, M. N., Sulemana, M., Abdulai, I. A., Ibrahim, M. G., & Azure, E. (2022). Role of non-governmental organizations in poverty reduction in the global South: Evidence from world vision Ghana, Kintampo South district. *SN Social Sciences*, 2(11), 240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00545-y>.
- Ghalib, A. K., Malki, I., & Imai, K. S. (2015). Microfinance and household poverty reduction: Empirical evidence from rural Pakistan. *Oxford Development Studies*, 43(1), 84-104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2014.980228>.
- Gibbens, M., & Schoeman, C. (2020). Planning for sustainable livelihood development in the context of rural South Africa: A micro-level approach. *Town and Regional Planning*, 76(1), 14–28. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2415-0495/trp76i1.2>.
- Gwacela, M., Ngidi, M. S. C., Hlatshwayo, S. I., & Ojo, T. O. (2024). Analysis of the Contribution of Home Gardens to Household Food Security in Limpopo Province, South Africa. *Sustainability*, 16(6), 2525. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16062525>.
- Hazara, M. A. (2016). *NGOS, CBOs and poverty reduction and service delivery*. Unpublished. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3997.1602>.
- Ismail, F., & Kamat, S. (2018). NGOs, Social Movements and the Neoliberal State: Incorporation, Reinvention, Critique. *Critical Sociology*, 44(4–5), 569–577. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920517749804>.
- Kabonga, I. (2023). NGOs and poverty reduction in Zimbabwe: Challenges and the way forward. *SN Social Sciences*, 3(6), 90. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2023.2166552>.
- Kang'ethe, S. M., & Manomano, T. (2014). Exploring the Challenges Threatening the Survival of Ngos in Selected African Countries. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n27p1495>.
- Kermani, F., & Reandi, S. T. A. (2023). Exploring the Funding Challenges Faced by Small NGOs: Perspectives from an Organization with Practical Experience of Working in Rural Malawi. *Research and Reports in Tropical Medicine*, Volume 14, 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.2147/RRTM.S424075>.
- Kim, Y., Sohn, H.-S., & Park, B. (2019). Make the village better: An evaluation of the Saemaul Zero Hunger Communities Project in Tanzania and Bangladesh. *World Development*, 124, 104652. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104652>.
- Krantz, L. (2001). The sustainable livelihood approach to poverty reduction. *SIDA. Division for Policy and Socio-Economic Analysis*, 44, 1–38.
- Lewis, D., & Kanji, N. (2009). *Non-governmental organizations and development*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203877074>.
- Mago, S., & Hofisi, C. (2016). Microfinance as a pathway for smallholder farming in Zimbabwe. *Environmental Economics*, 7(3), 60–66. [https://doi.org/10.21511/ee.07\(3\).2016.07](https://doi.org/10.21511/ee.07(3).2016.07).
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). *Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide*. 9.
- Mahlalela, S. (2014). Investigating the role of LED as a tool for poverty alleviation in Mbombela Municipality. *BSc Honours in Urban and Regional Planning Thesis, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg*.
- Makofane, H. R., & Selepe, M. (2022). The Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in South Africa with Specific Reference to Rural Development. *Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(4), 262–276.
- Maluti-A-Phofung Local Municipality. (2024). Draft Integrated Development Plan 2024–2025. <https://www.malutiaphofung.fs.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/DRAFT-IDP-2024-2025.pdf>.
- Marais, L. (2023). Phuthaditjhaba: The Rise and Fall of a Homeland Capital. In A. Membretti, S. J. Taylor, & J. L. Delves (Eds.), *Sustainable Futures in Southern Africa's Mountains: Multiple*

- Perspectives on an Emerging City* (pp. 7–16). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15773-8_2.
- Maredia, K. M., Dissanayake, D. H. G., Freed, R., Madan, S., Mikunthan, G., Attorp, A., Patidar, N., Blanco-Metzler, H., Meka, R. R., & Gonsalves, J. (2023). Building sustainable, resilient, and nutritionally enhanced local food systems through home gardens in developing countries. *Development in Practice*, 33(7), 852–859. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2023.2218068>.
 - Matloga, S. T., Mahole, E., & Nekhavhambe, M. M. (2024). Challenges of public participation in improving basic service delivery in Vhembe District Municipality, Limpopo, South Africa. *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation*, 5, 160.
 - May, J. 1998. *Poverty and Inequality in South Africa*. Durban: Praxis Publishing.
 - Mavee, S. E. A. (2022). The Relevance of Civil Society Participation in Democratic Governance. *Administratio Publica*, 30(3), 171–191. https://doi.org/10.10520/ejc-adminpub_v30_n3_a11.
 - Mbajiorgu, D. G., & Odeku, K. O. (2022). Fighting food insecurity, hunger, and poverty: The content and context of the socio-economic right of access to sufficient food in South Africa. *Obiter*, 43(3), 467–488. http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1682-58532022000300003&lng=en&tlng=en.
 - Mdiya, L., & Mdoda, L. (2021). Socio-economic factors affecting home gardens as a livelihood strategy in rural areas of the Eastern Cape province, South Africa. *South African Journal of Agricultural Extension (SAJAE)*, 49(3), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3221/2021/v49n3a12823>.
 - Membretti, A., Taylor, S. J., & Delves, J. L. (Eds.). (2023). *Sustainable Futures in Southern Africa's Mountains: Multiple Perspectives on an Emerging City*. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15773-8>.
 - Mocwagae, K., & Nel, V. (2023). Planning for the expansion of Phuthaditjhaba CBD through UN Sustainable Development Goals. In A. Membretti, S. J. Taylor, & J. L. Delves (Eds.), *Sustainable futures in Southern Africa's mountains*. Sustainable Development Goals Series. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-15773-8_3.
 - Mollo, T. A. (2022). *Industrial Parks development: A case of Maluti-A-Phofung Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Free State, South Africa* [University of Johannesburg; M.Eng.]. <https://hdl.handle.net/10210/502589>.
 - Mothusi, B., Molokwane, T., & Ruele, L. N. (2018). Civil society and the public policy process: The case of NGOs in Botswana. *Journal of Public Administration and Development Alternatives*, 3(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.10520/EJC-1375e87eb7>.
 - Mpofu, L., & Govender, K. (2022). Donor–NGO partnerships in South Africa: A qualitative case study of five NGOs in Gauteng. *African Evaluation Journal*, 10(1), 619.
 - Mubangizi, B. C. (2023). A Rural Perspective on the African Peer Review Mechanism: Views on Socio-Economic Development and Public Service Delivery in Rural South Africa. In I. Ile & O. Fagbadebo (Eds.), *Democracy and Political Governance in South Africa* (pp. 59–81). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-16313-5_4.
 - Muleya, E., & Xweso, M. (2025). “Social Welfare Responses after COVID-19 in South Africa: A Conceptual Review,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no.7 (2025): 1006 – 1021. <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.2025675>.
 - Mushonga, M., & Seloma, T. M. (2018). Women's voices, women's lives: QwaQwa women's experiences of the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 43(1), 196–214. <https://doi.org/10.18820/24150509/JCH43.v1.10>.
 - National Development Agency. (2023). *Exploratory Study on Skills Development Interventions in Strengthening the Institutional Capacity of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)* (pp. 1–48). <https://www.nda.org.za/publications/research-publications/research-reports>.
 - National Development Agency. (2025). *NDA Executive Authority Overview / Annual Performance Plan 2024/25* [PDF]. <https://www.nda.org.za/assets/resources/3BE50F99-C163-494E-B564-2E16BA55A0C7/NDASP2025Final.pdf>.

- National Planning Commission (NPC). (2011). *National Development Plan: How to build a capable state*. South African Government. <https://www.politicsweb.co.za/documents/national-development-plan-how-to-build-a-capable-s>.
- Nel, H. (2015). An integration of the livelihoods and asset-based community development approaches: A South African case study. *Development Southern Africa*, 32(4), 511–525.
- Nega, B., & Schneider, G. (2014). NGOs, the State, and Development in Africa. *Review of Social Economy*, 72(4), 485–503. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00346764.2014.958901>.
- Niyonkuru, F. (2016). Failure of Foreign Aid in Developing Countries: A Quest for Alternatives. *Business and Economics Journal*, 7(3). <https://doi.org/10.4172/2151-6219.1000231>.
- Ngubane, M. Z., Mndebele, S., & Kaseeram, I. (2023). Economic growth, unemployment and poverty: Linear and non-linear evidence from South Africa. *Heliyon*, 9(10), e20267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20267>.
- Ngumbela, X. G., & Mle, T. R. (2019). Assessing the role of civil society in poverty alleviation: A case study of Amathole district in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa. *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/td.v15i1.547>.
- Nishimwe-Niyimbanira, R. (2020). Income poverty versus multidimensional poverty: Empirical insight from Qwaqwa. *African Journal of Science, Technology, Innovation and Development*, 12(5), 631–641. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20421338.2019.1638585>.
- Nsah, E. S. (2024). Ambiguity in NGOs Poverty Reduction Programmes. *Journal of Developing Country Studies*, 8(1), 9–25. <https://doi.org/10.47604/jdcs.2283>.
- Nwauche, S., & Flanigan, S. T. (2022). Challenges to Nonprofit Organization Participation in Social and Development Policy Planning in South Africa. *Nonprofit Policy Forum*, 13(2), 119–139. <https://doi.org/10.1515/npf-2021-0049>.
- Nyathi, L., Balogun, T., De Lange, J., Human-Hendricks, A., Khaile, F., October, K., & Roman, N. (2024). Social issues affecting social cohesion in low-resource communities in South Africa. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 13(2), 135–162. <https://doi.org/10.36369/2616-9045/2024/v13i2a7>.
- Patel, L. (2016). *Social Welfare and Social Development (2nd Edition)*. *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, 52(2). <https://doi.org/10.15270/52-2-507>.
- Ratlabyana, L., Mkhonza, L., & Magongo, B. (2016, February). South African government funding to non-profit organisations: What is the investment value? *National Development Agency*. https://www.nda.org.za/assets/resources/97BB1A6D-430C-421F-9595-E018FB203EA5/SA_NPO_Funding_Government_1.pdf.
- Republic of South Africa. (2012). *National Development Plan 2030: Our future – make it work*. The Presidency.
- Republic of South Africa. (2014). *Draft Integrated Urban Development Framework*. Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.
- Ruslin, R., Mashuri, S., Rasak, M. S. A., Alhabsyi, F., & Syam, H. (2022). Semi-structured Interview: A methodological reflection on the development of a qualitative research instrument in educational studies. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education (IOSR-JRME)*, 12(1), 22–29.
- Sakue-Collins, Y. (2021). (Un)doing development: A postcolonial enquiry of the agenda and agency of NGOs in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(5), 976–995. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2020.1791698>.
- Samer, S., Majid, I., Rizal, S., Muhamad, M. R., Halim, S., & Rashid, N. (2015). The impact of microfinance on poverty reduction: Empirical evidence from Malaysian perspective. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 195, 721–728. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.06.343>.
- Scoones, I. (2015). *Sustainable livelihoods and rural development*. Practical Action Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.3362/9781780448749>.
- Serrat, O. (2017). The sustainable livelihoods approach. *Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance*, 21–26.

- Shava, E. (2019). Accountability of non-governmental organisations in poverty alleviation programmes. *Africa Insight*, 49(1), 122–136.
- Skhosana, R. M. (2025). Harnessing local strengths: Asset-based community development and sustainable livelihoods in South Africa. *Inkanyiso*, a151. <https://doi.org/10.4102/INK.v17i1.151>.
- Tshiyoyo, M. (2023). The Changing Roles of Non-Governmental Organizations in Development in South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities. In V. Bobek & T. Horvat (Eds.), *Global Perspectives on Non-Governmental Organizations*. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.107015>.
- Tsotetsi, C. T., & Omodan, B. I. (2022). Transforming socio-economic development in Qwa-Qwa community of South Africa. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* (2147-4478), 11(3), 184–194. <https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v11i3.1762>.
- Uddin, M., Pramanik, A., Haque, A., & Hamdan, H. (2020). Assessment of Islamic microfinance on poverty reduction in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Islamic Marketing and Branding*, 5, 326. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIMB.2020.114402>.
- Vávra, J., Megyesi, B., Duží, B., Craig, T., Klufová, R., Lapka, M., & Cudlínová, E. (2018). Food self-provisioning in Europe: An exploration of sociodemographic factors in five regions. *Rural Sociology*, 83(2), 431–461.
- Wango. (2024). *World Association of Non-Governmental Association: Connecting & Serving NGOs Beyond Borders*. [Online post]. <https://www.wango.org/>.
- World Bank Group. (2024). *The World Bank in South Africa*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview>.
- Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5. edition). SAGE.
- Zeleke, L., Guyo, W., & Moronge, M. (2024). Stakeholders Engagement and Performance of Non-Governmental Organizations In Ethiopia. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Economic Review*, 12–19. <https://doi.org/10.36923/ijsser.v5i4.240>.