

CAUSE OF OUR POVERTY: INTELLECTUAL FATIGUE OR RESOURCE CONSTRAINT

Dr. Olayemi Bakre¹, Nirmala Dorasamy²

¹Dept of Public Management, Durban University of Technology, South Africa,
Bakreolayemi@yahoo.com

²Dept of Public Management, Durban University of Technology, South Africa,
nirmala@dut.ac.za

Abstract

The dimensions of poverty are most egregious from a rural South African perspective. This study takes a deeper insight into the major causes of poverty 28 years after the expiry of the apartheid rule. It carefully examines if the cause of poverty may be largely attributed to intellectual fatigue or resource constraint, whilst shedding light on other instigators to poverty. To give precision to this paper, it is streamlined to three poverty stricken rural communities in South Africa. The nature of this study warrants the input of several stakeholders who are main drivers of poverty alleviation initiatives alongside their beneficiaries. Thus, the article adopted a Multiple Case study in order to obtain emic perspectives. Document analysis was also imperative as it served as a means of triangulation. Inferences from the study participants alongside views of commentators thus suggest that communities understudy are on an ineluctable path to failure, that which will continuously entrap these rural communities in poverty. Undoubtedly, the major cause of poverty in the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi is arguably not due to resource constraint, but partly due to the absence of intellectual acumen among key developmental stakeholders. The paper also argues that electoral victory attained through majoritarianism, and not that by the degree of competence or resourcefulness of candidate is often at the expense of the poor.

Keywords – Poverty, Intellectual fatigue, Intellectual acumen, Resource constraint, HDI, rural communities.

1. Introduction

The endemic poverty amongst the Black populace in South Africa (prior 1994) is often attributed to the oppressive legacy of the apartheid regime (Noble and Wright 2012). This era was characterised by discrimination, marginalisation and inequality between the White and Black South Africans. The privileged White populace was in full control of

South Africa's vast resources. The Black populace on the contrary was subjected to confined communities, commonly known as the Homelands or 'Bantustans' (Kendrick 2000). The Homelands were a textbook description of poverty, deprivation and penury. The injustices perpetrated by the White apartheid government resulted to poor service delivery, overcrowding, poverty and lack of opportunities within the Homelands (Jensen and Zenker 2015). The reversal of the socio-economic injustices perpetrated by the apartheid regime was the most prominent challenge the post-apartheid government faced in 1994. Hence, enormous efforts and resources were expended to narrow the gap between the "haves" and "have nots". The Homelands were eventually abolished on the 27th of April 1994. These marginalised communities were thereby integrated into the nine South African provinces we have today. Despite this abolishment, the miserable plights of the Black populace still remained same as they were unable to benefit from the on-going economic transformation of the new post-apartheid government. Hence, the popular narrative amongst the Black populace included food insecurity, high crime rate; lack of service delivery, inadequacy of sanitation, lack of social amenities or infrastructure, amongst other inequities. Dilapidated shacks, high disease burden, lack of technical competencies, poor education and high unemployment rates were also prevalent (Bakre 2020; Meyer 2013). In consonance to the afore-narrative, this paper takes a deeper insight into the major causes of poverty 28 years after the termination of the apartheid rule. It carefully examines if the cause of poverty may be largely attributed to intellectual fatigue or resource constraint, whilst shedding light on other instigators to poverty. To give precision to this article, it is streamlined to three poverty stricken rural communities in South Africa.

2. DIMENSIONS OF POVERTY

Having portrayed a vague description of poverty in South Africa in earlier section, this sub-section further elucidates on specific dimensions to poverty. It gives an insight into poverty at a global scale, and then narrows to a South African perspective. Studies conducted by Ravallion, Datt and van de Walle (1991) classify poverty into two broad types: (i) Absolute poverty and (ii) Relative poverty. The term 'Absolute poverty' is usually interchangeable with the word 'destitute'. By implication, a person may be considered destitute when they are unable to access adequate nutritional needs to support their minimal level of physical well-being (Ferreira et al. 2016). Hence, Absolute poverty is considered as having same denotation irrespective of country or region or part of the world. Relative poverty, on the contrary is bench marked by central government of a country. Due to this, citizens considered to be poor in Country A, may not be considered poor in Country B. More so, Relative

poverty may vary from region to region; or variances may even exist within a country (Mellish 2012; Healy 2017).

Furthermore, Relative poverty may vary amidst culture, ethnicity, or gender. Nevertheless, specific characteristics of poverty such as food insecurity, powerlessness, voiceless-ness, dependency, or the inability to find a reliable source of livelihood, are synonymous among the poor (Ravallion and Chen 2011).

Global poverty is perceived as one of the most serious challenges facing the world today. In a 2022 Poverty Trends report, Castaneda Aguilar et al. (2022) classified anyone, in any region of the world surviving with less than \$2.15 (American Dollars) per day to be living in extreme poverty. Going by this analogy, an estimated 9 percent of the world populace is living in extreme poverty, representing 698 million people. This report further classifies 1,803 million people, representing one-fifth of the world population to be living below the \$3.20 poverty line (a day); whilst 3,293 million people, representing two-fifths of the world populace live below the \$5.50 poverty line daily. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty increased by 50 million. As most economies began a recovery path in early 2022, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty has begun to decline. Unfortunately, some African countries alongside third world nations in other continents are on a much slower growth trajectory. The case is slightly different for South Africa whose economy contracted by 0.7 percent in the second quarter of 2022, but revealed an increment of 1.6 percent in its gross domestic product between July and September 2022 (3rd Quarter of 2022) (Statistics South Africa 2022).

Year 2012 marked the first time an extensive stakeholder's discussion amongst poverty experts and analysts was held in South Africa. The focus of this discourse was to find a suitable approach to measuring poverty (Statistics South Africa 2017). The aftermath of this extensive consultation resulted to South Africa's first publication titled, "First official national poverty lines". The South African poverty analysts equally adopted the internationally recognised "cost-of-basic-needs approach" which had earlier been recognised by world renowned poverty experts and analyst (Statistics South Africa 2017). Through the "cost-of-basic-needs approach", a team of South African Poverty experts was able to generate three poverty lines; namely: the Food poverty line (FPL); the Lower-bound poverty line (LBPL), as well as the Upper-bound poverty line (UBPL) (Statistics South Africa 2017). These three poverty lines were used by the South African government to measure and monitor degrees of poverty within the country. The FPL for instance denotes the 'rand value below which South African citizens are unable to consume or buy sufficient food which will support their minimal level of physical well-being'. Unlike the FBL, the LBPL and UBPL constitute non-food components; but are both derived from the FPL. The acronym LBPL

is explained as a situation when citizens do not possess adequate money to purchase food or non-food commodities. Thus, such people are forced to sacrifice the in-take of adequate food in order to obtain non-food commodities. As regards UBPL classification, citizens have adequate money to purchase both food and non-food commodities (Statistics South Africa 2017). According to Galal (2022), the current FBL in South Africa is R663 per month; the LBPL is at R945; and while the UBPL is presently at R1 417. Going by these estimations, about 56.90 percent of South Africans are considered to be living in Absolute poverty.

Galal (2022) further explain that any South African citizen with a monthly income less than 945 South African rands (\$55) is considered to be poor. The report further mentions that, South Africans who are unable to afford more than 663 South African rands (\$39) to buy food on a monthly basis are considered to be living below the poverty line. More so, an estimated 18.2 million South Africans are estimated to be living under \$1.9 a day, which is benchmarked as the international absolute poverty threshold (World Bank Group 2020). The income disparity between South Africa's 'have' and 'have not's' still continues to widen, as South Africa is classified as the World's most unequal society. South Africa has the highest income Gini index at 63 percent, which is way higher than any country in Africa or elsewhere. Further exacerbating this poverty concern is the 'non-availability of jobs'. Controversially, analysts have also claimed that a significant portion of South African youths are not employable, as they often lack the required qualification, competence or skills for the available jobs. This may partly be attributed to why a recent unemployment level as high as 59.6 percent was recorded amongst South African youths in 2020 (Mseleku 2022).

3. STILL POOR NOW

The 2020 United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Human Development Report highlights the inequalities amongst the 'haves' and 'have not's' in South Africa (Gumede 2021). The South African government has often been criticised for not doing enough to close this gap. Similarly, a report by the World Bank ranks South Africa as the most unequal country (Bridgman, Van der Berg and Patel 2020; Bhorat, Oosthuizen and Stanwix 2020). This level of (inequality) anomaly observed by the United Nation's HDI has persisted for more than five years. Due to the widening income inequality and deteriorating standard of living, South Africa is being ranked Country 114 amongst 189 others. The 2 million job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic further worsened the socio-economic plights of the poor; resulting to more South Africans falling into the poverty cycle (Mabuza 2020). To further emphasis the income disparity, studies by Webster and Francis (2019) allege that South Africa's wealthiest 10 percent possess more than 50 percent of

the national income, whilst the poorest 40 percent are said to own as little as 7 percent of the nation's income.

The later section of this subheading highlights the intensity of household poverty amongst the nine provinces of South Africa. Prior providing the level of poverty, the South African Multidimensional Poverty Index is illustrated below. The multidimensional poverty index serves as a benchmark for capturing the percentage of poverty amongst households who are deprived along these four dimensions of well-being – health, education, standard of living and economic activity. This is used to portray a more precise picture of severity of poverty in a country. Table 1 provides the South African Multidimensional Poverty Index.

Table 1: The South African Multidimensional Poverty Index

Dimension	Indicator	Deprivation cut-off	Weight
HEALTH	Child mortality	If any child under five in the household has died in the past 12 months	25%
EDUCATION	Years of schooling	If no household member aged 15 or older has completed five years of schooling	12.5%
	School attendance	If any school-aged child (7 to 15 years old) is out of school.	12.5%
	Fuel for lighting	If the household uses paraffin, candles, "other" or nothing for lighting.	3.6%
	Fuel for heating	If the household uses paraffin, wood, coal, dung, "other" or nothing as fuel for heating.	3.6%
	Fuel for cooking	If the household uses paraffin, wood, coal, dung, "other" or nothing as fuel for heating.	3.6%
STANDARD OF	Water access	If there is no piped water in the	3.6%

LIVING		household dwelling or on the stand.	
	Sanitation type	If the household does not have a flushing toilet.	3.6%
	Dwelling type	If the household lives in a shack, a traditional dwelling, a caravan, a tent or other informal housing.	3.6%
	Asset ownership	If household does not own more than one of these: a radio, a television, a telephone or a refrigerator. And does not own a car.	3.6%
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	Unemployment	If all the adults (aged 15 to 64) in the household are unemployed.	25%
TOTAL			100%

Source: Statistics South Africa (2014)

These well-being indicators - health, education, standard of living and economic activity are used to determine the extent or severity of poverty in a household. As deduced from Table 1, the Health dimension only has child mortality as its indicator. The health criteria is used to ascertain if a child below the age of 5 has died in a specific household within the last one year. The second dimension, Education is used to ascertain if no household members who are above 15 years of age have completed a minimum of five years of schooling; whilst the second educational dimension deals with school attendance among children within the school age-going bracket (7-15 years). The third dimension, Living standards includes seven parameters. This ranges from ownership of asset, water, sanitation, type of residence, type of fuel used for cooking, heating and lighting. The fourth dimension, Economic activity is an indicator used to measure if household members between ages 15 and 64 are unemployed. These four indicators are thus used to score every household. Should the score exceed 33.3 percent, such household is considered to be multidimensionally poor, or household members are said to be living in poverty (Statistics South Africa 2014).

In consonance to dimension of poverty illustrated in Table 1, the proceeding Table 2 provides an estimate on intensity of household poverty amongst South Africa's nine provinces.

Table 2: Poverty among the nine provinces

Population	Households	Average household size	Households in poverty	People in poverty (based on population)	People in poverty (based on households)	Intensity of poverty
Eastern Cape 6,996, 976	1,773,395	3.9	12.7%	888,616	878,363	43.3%
Free State 2,834, 714	946, 639	3	5.5%	155,909	156,196	41.7%
Gauteng 13,399,724	4,951,137	2.7	4.6%	616, 387	614, 931	44.1%
KwaZulu-Natal 11,065,240	2,875,843	3.8	7.7%	852, 023	841, 472	42.5%
Limpopo 5, 799, 090	1,601, 083	3.7	11.5%	666, 895	681, 261	42.3%
Mpumalanga 4,335,964	1,238, 861	3.5	7.8%	338, 205	338, 209	42.7%
Northern Cape 1,193,780	353, 709	3.4	8.8%	105, 053	105, 830	42.5%
North West 3,748, 436	1,248, 766	3	6.6%	247, 397	247, 256	42.0%
Western Cape 6,279, 730	1,933,876	3.2	2.7%	169, 553	167, 087	40.1%

Source: Alexander (2022)

As inferred from Table 2, the Eastern Cape Province recorded the highest proportion of poor households, 12.7%. This was followed by the Limpopo Province, at 11.5%. On the contrary, the proportion of poor household within the Western Cape Province was only at 2.7 %. Of note also is that, the wealthiest province (Gauteng Province), also recorded the most intense poverty at 44.1%. Going by the Community Survey of 2016, an estimated 4 040 038 South Africans were living in abject poverty.

Despite the vast natural resources in South Africa, poverty analysts are quite perplexed about the severity of poverty amongst the majority of the populace. Rural communities and Townships of South Africa where

not-enough-ness is the norm have been accustomed to this pitiable condition, and continue to anticipate a better livelihood. .

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides the research methodology and design used in the current study. The used data was that extracted from the first authors Doctoral dissertation. The nature of this article warrants the input of several stakeholders who are main drivers of poverty alleviation initiatives alongside beneficiaries to these initiatives. Thus, the article adopted a Multiple Case study. The research participants were selected on one hand through Judgemental sampling, whilst Typical case sampling (purposive) was also utilised. Hence, interviews, questionnaires and focus group interviews were mainly used to obtain pertinent information from participants. A number of audited documents were also useful, as a means to creating triangulation. Thus, this sub-section gives a summarised version of data collection approach; sampling method, sample population, data analysis, limitation and delimitation of the study, ethical considerations, confidentiality and anonymity; as well as the inclusive and exclusive criteria considered by the authors.

Before discussing the methodology, the author(s) make a slight digression by mentioning the three poverty stricken communities involved in this study: Gunjanani, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi. As at time of data collection, these three communities were identified as some of the most poverty stricken communities in the KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga Provinces respectively. The data used in this study was collected over a six months period. It was impracticable to involve every poor community in South Africa; hence, conclusions were based on the participants' responses amongst these three communities, alongside relevant literature, government documents and reports.

As mentioned above, the multiple case study approach used in this study was no doubt valuable as it enables researchers to obtain robust findings (Lewis-Beck et al. 2011); whilst also facilitating an in-depth exploration among cases, and within identified cases (Baxter and Jack 2008). Hence, the mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative) served as a primary study design in this study, whilst the multiple case study was employed as the data collection method. A total of 31 key stakeholders were interviewed during the data collection. This comprised personnel from the National Department of Rural Development and Land Affairs, Nduna's, alongside other key stakeholders involved in poverty alleviation initiatives amongst the communities where study was conducted. More so, a total of 600 questionnaires were administered amongst the three communities. However, only 533 were completed by participants, processed and analysed. This invariably signifies an 88 percent response rate. The 67

questionnaires considered to be void were either not ‘fully’ completed by respondents, or not answered at all. More so, a total of 44 participants took part in the focus group interviews within these three communities. These focus group interview sessions served as a means of triangulating information obtained through questionnaires, as well as those gathered through the structured interviews. Prior the data collection process, three key eligibility criteria were set:

- Participants were strictly rural community members residing in the Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini, or Mgobodzi;
- Participants had to be above 40 years of age, whom had witnessed a series of poverty alleviation initiatives; and
- Willingness to participate in the research.

In choosing the participants of the study, the “purposive” non-probability sampling technique was used, as researcher intentionally chose participants based on pre-defined criteria. This approach signifies a “typical case” purposive sampling (Bakre 2020). Furthermore, subjective judgement was used in choosing the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi. The researcher also used features of ‘quota sampling’ while administering questionnaires to participants of these three communities. This enabled the researcher to stop administering questionnaires when a pre-determined sample size was achieved in each of these localities. The line of questioning included within the Interviews, Questionnaire and Focus Group interviews revolved around questions relating to developmental/ poverty alleviation initiatives; capacitation of Councillor/ stakeholders ability to deliver upon project; core challenges faced by Councillors and key stakeholders; views of beneficiaries regarding poverty; electioneering process; alongside relevant questions attributable to cause of poverty. A variety of government documents were also valuable to this study. These included government reports, government gazettes, statistical reports, legislations, White papers, Green papers, amongst a host of other reliable documents.

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 was used to analyse the responses gathered through the questionnaires. On the contrary, the field notes and interview transcripts were analysed with the aid of the Atlas Ti qualitative data software. More so, the Cronbach Alpha test using similar standardised questionnaires were used to fortify the articles reliability and validity. To further enhance the reliability and validity of the research instrument, a pilot test was conducted among 36 women residing in these localities prior the actual data collection. To enhance a good understanding of the questions posed in the questionnaire, questions were translated into IsiZulu (for Gunjaneni participants); IsiXhosa (for Lusikisiki Mcobothini participants); and Siswati (for Mgobodzi participants). These mentioned languages are

the most commonly used means of communication within these respective localities. Pseudonyms were also used to create a form of anonymity among some interviewees who wanted to remain anonymous. More so, the researcher complied with the ethical standards stipulated by the Institutional Research and Ethics Committee of the Durban University of Technology.

5. THE TRUE CAUSE OF OUR POVERTY

This section is a continuum of the previous section, wherein the research methodology is linked to the key findings of the paper. Hence, it dwells on answering the research objective which was to examine if the main cause of poverty was more attributable to “intellectual fatigue” or “resource constraint”. More so, the paper saliently discusses other causes of poverty which are relatable to Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi communities. To simplify the findings, the authors give a casual summary in a tabular form wherein the findings emanating from Interviews (qualitative tool), Questionnaire (quantitative tool), literature review and other government and non-governmental sources (document analysis) are highlighted in Table 3. Thus, a portion of the narrative found in sections 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 are an elaboration of Table 3, which emanate from the primary or secondary data.

Table 3: True cause of our poverty

	Qualitative	Quantitative	Literature review	Document analysis
System	Legacy of the Apartheid era lack of infrastructure and basic amenities Unsustainable and poor revenue generation by rural municipalities	Corruption and ineffectual administration lack of partnership with the private sector lack of infrastructure and basic amenities	No clear mandates of Councillors or local actors Scarcity of skilled professionals and experts in poor communities	Weak municipality structure Poor monitoring Lack of information Outdated local government structure
Councilor	Deliberate sabotage by opposition	Favouritism	Incapacitation of Councillors lack of	Lack of comprehension of the content of the policy

	Minimal resources at the disposal of Councillors	Corruption Incompetent Councillors	accountability	documents
Stakeholders	The lack of synergy among the stakeholders at national, provincial and local government	Fraction fights as a result of politicking	ineffective policy implementation	Poor monitoring, evaluation and sustainability of poverty alleviation initiatives
Populace	High unemployment rate	The HIV/AIDS epidemic	Lack of quality education and skill	Dependency syndrome
Resources	Duplication of projects Resource constraint	Embezzlement and corruption of resources Reluctance of skilled workers to work in poor communities	Poor utilisation of scarce resources (funds and personnel)	Ineffective utilisation of 'resources'

Source: Compiled by Authors

Table 3 highlights some of the most reoccurring causes of poverty in accordance to data used for this study. These identified themes are considerably relatable to the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi. Some of these identified findings are synonymous to prior studies. However, the novelty of this paper is in its endeavour in enquiring if any other cause of poverty may be proven to be more consequential than resource constraint. Hence, based on available data, the authors attempt to probe if “intellectual fatigue” may be a more significant factor than “resource constraint”. For easy comprehension, the authors classify these causes to five distinctive segments - System, Councillors, Stakeholders, Beneficiaries and Resources.

This flow of thought is further elaborated through the following subheadings:

- The electorate versus the elected
- Ineluctable path to dismal failure
- Intellectual fatigue or resource constraint

5.1 The electorate versus the elected

The outcome of the first “five democratic elections” held in South Africa were mostly predictable. It was often known ahead of time that the ruling party - African National Congress (ANC) will have the majority of votes. This high predictability was attributed to the slow pace of change in partisanship (Schulz-Herzenberg 2020). More so, Runciman, Bekker and Maggott (2020) base this predictability on loyalty of the majority Black populace to the ANC.

De Kadt and Larreguy (2018) equally acknowledge that the influence of traditional leaders also contributes to this predictable election outcome. De Kadt and Larreguy (2018) argue that traditional leaders often support the ruling party as their resources, power and survival is largely dependent on the government, which happens to be the ruling party. Hence, traditional leaders are often seen canvassing voters during the electioneering campaign. The role this traditional leaders play during election has been found to boost the ANC’s share of votes to between 6.6 percent - 8.2 percent (in prior elections) (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018). However, the political landscape in South Africa has altered considerably. The loyalty of the ANC’s supporters has begun to shrink due to the party’s arguably poor performances, corruption, poor service delivery, and maladministration (Everatt 2016). This assertion has been manifested by the high absenteeism at the polling stations during the 2019 elections, where less than 49 percent of the voting age (population) participated. Of note, is that the most recent election (2019) recorded the lowest voter turnout since the dawn of democracy in South Africa (Roberts, Struwig, Gordon and Davids 2022).

However, despite this low voter turnout, leading political analysts in South Africa still consider ANC as the party of preference amongst the Black majority (Everatt 2016; Chauke 2020; Runciman, Bekker and Maggott 2020). Particularly in rural communities, the ANC had continuously won majority of the votes till in recent times when the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) began to surpass the ANC, and scored higher number of votes especially within the KwaZulu-Natal Province. In referral to Everatt’s (2016) work which used empirical voter behaviour data, generated, inter alia, via commingling census and official voting-district-level data on registration and turn-out; suggest that the poor have stopped participating in elections. His empirical study further reveals that the proportion of the poor voters had continuously dwindled since 2004. On the contrary, the majority of the voters are now often the middle class or those better-off than the poor.

More so, the South African electorates have often not chosen their candidates based on merit; manifesto such candidates deliver; or based on their prior track record. Electorates often cast their votes based on loyalty to political party such as the ruling party. Unfortunately, some of the candidates representing the ANC at such ward may not necessarily

be competent to execute the core duties of a Councillor (Runciman et 2020; Schulz-Herzenberg 2020). Majority of prior studies have not often looked into the selection process of Local Councillors and how this impacts on poverty alleviation. Hence, in addressing poverty, one of the key steps will be to elect competent leaders who would perform. The practice of electing individuals based on loyalty to individuals or loyalty to a political party is at the detriment of competent technocrats which will continuously result to cyclical poverty that has been a norm amongst many disadvantaged rural communities.

5.2 Ineluctable path to dismal failure

A major reoccurring concern within rural municipalities is the issue of political interference which has continuously bred unethical practices such as allotment of tenders and outsourcing of services and developmental projects to incompetent firms or individuals (Sebola 2015). This practice has not only exacerbated the extent of poverty amongst rural communities, but also adversely impacted on efficiency and effectiveness of administration. A further form of interference emanates from business tycoons and corporate organisations' that fund political parties in exchange for political favours (Corporate Governance Framework 2015; Bakre 2020). Often time, the vested interest of these business tycoons sways the directives taken by political parties, which is often anti-poor. This arguably has epitomised poor governance practice in South Africa, which invariably marginalises the voice of the electorates (Carrol and Buchholtz 2003: 8-12). Similarly, a structural undertone in the political sphere is the lack of synergy amongst state actors. The never ending discord amongst governmental departments, fractions within the ruling party; opposition parties; and disagreeing political authorities has often not being amicably resolved. Such discord is invariably at the detriment of the electorates who are the supposedly beneficiaries of projects or poverty alleviation initiatives (Labuschagne 2015). Empirical studies have also demonstrated the resulting consequences of the poor synergy among poverty alleviation stakeholders at national, provincial and local government. This has significantly undermined the efficiency of these parastatals; resulted to repetitive poverty alleviation projects; which invariably results to ineffectual usage of available resources (Meyer and Nishimwe-Niyimbanira 2016).

This section further continues its discussion by critically looking at the level of competence of local councilors. A plethora of sources have often described governance within rural communities of South Africa with words such as incapacitation, underperforming, inefficient, maladministration, mismanagement and other similar adjectives (Meyer and Nishimwe-Niyimbanira 2016; Rogerson and Nel 2016). Studies as far back as 2000, 2005, 2010, had often cited poor implementation or lack of execution by local Councillors; poor managerial skills; lack of technical

planning capacity; incapacitation of Councillors; and inefficient training as some of the key issues causing underdevelopment and poverty amongst rural municipalities (Sapa 2011: 2; Public Service Commission 2009: 63; Meyer 2014; Russon 2012); embarrassingly, 28 years after the dawn of democracy in South Africa, same issues still persist and remain major challenges (Alexander 2022; Mseleku 2022). Political commentators and analysts have often questioned if the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) can possibly deal with the predominant challenge of incapacitation amongst local Councillors in rural communities of South Africa (Sebola 2015). Considering the complexities surrounding the concept of capacity, it often becomes near impossible to train or capacitate Councillors who at times do not possess the minimal skills of writing, reading or ability to comprehend the content of policy documents (Maseng 2014; Bakre 2020). Notwithstanding, SALGA makes effort to provide capacity training sessions for Councillors alongside other local government officials. The desired result is however yet to be attained (Sebola 2015; Schulz-Herzenberg 2020). A further point of concern relates to the manner in which projects are implemented and sustained. Often time, there is lack of coordination amongst key state actors. One of such relatable example is the repetitive counting of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDP) programmes (Meyer 2013). Hence, such incoherence creates difficulty in evaluating progress made in fighting poverty (Jacob and Hart 2014). More so, poor monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation projects has resulted to uncertainty whether project met the desired goal or target (Alexander 2022; Mseleku 2022). Coupled with the issue of poor accountability; diversion/ embezzlement of funds intended for poverty alleviation initiatives; corruption; and absence of whistle-blowers has severely impacted the success of these supposedly laudable projects (Rogerson 2018; Bakre 2020). When implementers of such projects or Councillors are accused for poorly implementing a certain projects by community members; or when the beneficiaries raise cogent issues regarding projects, or they identify flaws or abnormalities, the state actors have been characterised by a denialist response or a “this is not within our mandate approach” (Paulus and Samuels 2012: 113). Such rhetoric has often prevailed due to silence of opposition amongst some remote communities, and lack of monitoring of poverty alleviation projects (Fombad 2018; Bekker and Mashaba 2018). Karriem and Hoskins (2016) also raise the issue of the inability of aligning a current developmental programme with the newly launched one. A variety of examples were given in this regards by Ndhambi (2015). For instance, the Rural Development Strategy of the Government of National Unity (1995) was unable to metamorphosis into the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) (1996); neither was the GEAR able to metamorphosis into the 1997’s Rural Development Framework; and the list continues. This lack of continuity or non-alignment of developmental projects has been a stumbling block to

winning the fight on poverty (Labuschagne 2015). Ironically, enormous funds go to waste in some of these projects (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation 2016).

Despite these raised concerns which are no doubt instigators to poverty, there still remain several unresolved structural and technical issues. One of such is the non-specification of rural regions or zones in South Africa (Financial and Fiscal Commission 2013). Due to this, evaluators and implementers are unable to quantify the pace of development amongst rural settings. Similarly, the non-standardisation of provincial budgets allotted for the rural populace makes it near impossible to analyse the efficiency of rural budgeting. Thus, it becomes problematic to ascertain the effectiveness of poverty alleviation initiatives (Financial and Fiscal Commission 2013; Bakre 2020). More so, most rural communities in South Africa are characterised by dispersed settlement patterns which pose a serious challenge in providing the much needed service delivery (Department of Rural Development 2013). Providing social amenities and infrastructure in these rural areas is often considered uneconomical. Hence, some of these rural communities are still faced with dilapidated infrastructure. Some of these raised issues have no remedy in sight. All of these undercurrents have resulted to cyclical poverty across several rural communities of South Africa, and resonate with the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini, and Mgobodzi.

5.3 Intellectual fatigue or resource constraint?

This section attempts to answer the key research objective posed in the preliminary section of this paper, where an enquiry was made to establish if Intellectual fatigue or Resource constraint was a more significant “cause of poverty” within the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini, and Mgobodzi. Hence, the discourse embodied herein is based on a qualitative and quantitative data’s; literature review, alongside document analysis extracted from government sources. Intellectual fatigue is defined by Waters (2021) as a state of feeling when the brain is exhausted and unable to function optimally, wherein an individual is emotionally and mentally drained. Cooks-Campbell (2022) also describes Intellectual fatigue as a condition of physical tiredness, except such tiredness emanates from the mind (brain) and not an individual’s muscles. Within the context of this study, Intellectual fatigue is described as a situation whereby a Councillor or key stakeholders are unable to maximally utilise their cognitive reasoning to initiate or formulate new developmental projects; or the inability to meticulously implement a developmental initiative for the betterment of the populace he or she serves. No prior studies in South Africa or Africa have considered how Intellectual fatigue may possibly be an attributing cause of poverty. More so, due to the fact that earlier studies have not discussed on Intellectual fatigue, nor have the term being used previously on discourses around poverty, this section will

adopt closely related words and terminologies such as – ‘Competence or skills’ level among stakeholders. Thus, the novelty of this study lies in its ability to provide such discourse from an emic South African rural perspective. On the contrary, Landau (2021) defines Resource constraint as the insufficiency of resources to meet the demands and outcome of an initiative or project. Such implied resources may include finance, equipment, human resources or materials. No doubt, Intellectual fatigue and Resource constraint are considerably contributory factors to poverty, but which one is more domineering within the communities being understudied?

To establish this, we exemplify with few examples relating to resources within the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini, and Mgobodzi. Government documents retrieved from the Mtubatuba Municipality reveals a budget surplus for quite a number of years. Specifically, budgets between 2011 and 2017 often were surplus (Mtubatuba Municipality Draft Budget and MTREF (2014: 7-14) cited in Bakre and Dorasamy 2017). It is believed such surplus funds may have been channeled to a number of tailor-made developmental initiatives within the Gunjaneni community (Mtubatuba Municipality) as a means of alleviating poverty. A further example is the abundance of tourism, agricultural and agroforestry potentials found within Mgobodzi and its surrounding villages and towns. Some of Mgobodzi’s greatest potentials may be found in the agricultural and tourism sectors. This claim is based on the grounds that bulk of the products being cultivated in and around this community can be produced at a commercial scale. Table 4 illustrates the tourism, agricultural and agroforestry potentials of Mgobodzi and surrounding villages and towns.

Table 4: Potentials within and around Mgobodzi

Industry	Location	Feature	Opportunity
Tourism	Dullstroom	Tourism potential	Flying fish
	Sibayeni		
	Malelane	A UNESCO World Heritage tourist site	Kruger National Park
	Bushbuckridge	Tourism potential	Mala Mala Game Reserve Inyaka Dam
Agriculture	Lydenburg	Huge agricultural potential	Fish production Sugar cane (sugar and biofuel)
	Barberton	World’s largest Macadamia	Macadamia nuts

		planting region outside Australia	
		Huge commercial potential in vegetable cultivation	Tomatoes, Green Bean, Pepper, Potatoes, Cabbage, Carrot, Cucumber, Green mealie, Lettuce, Onion, Pumpkin, Phaseolus bean and sweet potato
	Hazyview	Agricultural potential	Fruit, Citrus
	Tonga	Suitable for cotton production on a commercial scale	Cotton
	Bushbuckridge Madadeni area	Very fertile land	Cultivation of high value vegetables
Livestock and poultry	Bushbuckridge Nsikasi Nkomazi	Suitable for livestock and poultry production	Livestock and poultry
Agroforestry	Bushbuckridge	Home to various tree species that are drought-tolerant indigenous shrubs and trees	Timber, Honey production, medicinal plants, indigenous fruits (Marula)

Source: Adapted from Bakre and Dorasamy (2021)

The closeness of the Mgobodzi community to the renowned Kruger National Park also serves as a window of opportunity to artisans, craftsmen, and a variety of employment typologies within the hospitality and tourism sector (Bakre and Dorasamy 2021). Interestingly, Mgobodzi is strategically situated between Mozambique and Swaziland, which serves as a further opportunity to export agricultural, as well as valuable agro processed products (Nkhonjera and Das Nair 2018). But the key developmental stakeholders have failed to capital on these vast resources and potentials. During the course of the interviews, a number of artificial and contemporary barriers were mentioned by the interviewees. Some of which includes, lack of political will, exclusion or experts in the field of agriculture and tourism, nepotism, poor resource management, lack of capacitation or expertise amongst stakeholders, and inability to package developmental proposals to potential donors or investors (Makhathini, Mlambo, and Mpanza 2020). One of such recent

example was the missed developmental opportunity which the World Bank intended to spearhead within the Mgobodzi/ Nkomazi Municipality. According to an interviewee, the World Bank intended to finance the Agri-Park project in Nkomazi Municipality; but unfortunately, the Councillor nor any of the stakeholders were able to package a proposal or strong feasibility study to entice the World Bank. Within the context of this study, this missed opportunity can be classified as a causative effect of poverty linked to “intellectual fatigue”. Similar opportunities have been lost within the Tea industry and Agricultural sector of Lusikisiki Mcobothini; similar loss has occurred within the Tourism sector of Mgobodzi; and also within the Mining sector in Gunjaneni (Bakre and Dorasamy 2021). Furthermore, a research conducted by the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) alongside the University of Fort Hare established the vast agricultural potentials of the Lusikisiki Mcobothini area as well as the O.R. Tambo District Municipality in general (Bakre 2020). A comprehensive study of the climate and soil analysis of this district established that crops such as potatoes, tea, avocado, maize, sorghum and dry beans possess enormous potentials. Ironically, a significant number of inhabitants of the Lusikisiki Mcobothini, and its neighbouring villages and towns experience food insecurity.

Another finding emanating from the interview was the role of Council of Stakeholders (Cos) whom are mainly assigned to implement the developmental initiatives amongst these rural municipalities. These stakeholders consist of traditional rulers, government officials, community-based institutions, business entities, and ward committees. It was observed that personnel comprising the CoS may not possess the administrative skills or managerial competence to handle these developmental initiatives; however, these individuals were in charge of developmental concerns (Meyer 2013). A peculiar example is with the traditional rulers who ascend to leadership positions via a non-elective means. Such ascension to the Royal house does not guarantee such traditional leader will possess the right set of skills or competence to deliver the sought after developmental initiatives. Similarly, Councillors within rural communities are often elected due to their political affiliations or popularity, and not due to their level of competence (Chivhinge and Moodley 2012). More worrisome was the concern of these CoS not being able to read, nor understand or even comprehend the content of the South African policy documents (Rogerson and Nel 2016). Ultimately, the level of competence of personnel who constitute the CoS has a correlation with the administrative, managerial and financial viability of rural communities. Hence, studies have shown that this paucity of competence has largely contributed to poverty amongst these rural communities (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Hundenborn, Leibbrandt and Woolard 2016). Undoubtedly, “Intellectual acumen” or Intellectual capacity” are arguably distinctive features of visionary and

exemplary leaders possess (Alrowwad, Abualoush and Masa'deh 2020). Such feature embodies intangible requirements of deep insight, foresight, commitment, motivation, good leadership, endurance, and guts alongside other pragmatic attributes required to transform rhetoric into action. The above description however often does not describe an average Councillor or members of the CoS in a typical South African rural municipality (De Kadt and Larreguy 2018; Jacobs, Rivett and Chemisto 2019; Manamela, Maake and Meso 2016).

A further valuable contribution to this discourse is that of Sebola (2015) who sheds some insight on 'knowledge resources in South African local government'. He mentions that a plethora of literatures have been written within the domain of Public Administration in South Africa. However, a majoritane of such literatures discuss generic Public Administration content such as public finances, public personnel management, public policies, and constitution; whilst the main cogent issues such as the critical challenges revolving around local governance are often excluded. Sebola (2015) further notes that, the main three scientific journals on Public Administration in South Africa (*Administratio Publica*; *Politeia* and *Public Administration (JOPA)*) cover an array of broad themes and topics; however, these journals barely address critical local governance content in South Africa. This paucity of knowledge gap in the domain of local governance makes it quite impossible for a trainer to provide insightful and quality training content that will be impactful to Councillor's or other key stakeholders within rural municipalities (Sebola 2015). More importantly, for trainees to benefit significantly from a training session, it will be necessary such trainees possess a certain degree of skills, qualification and competence (Rankhumishe and Mello 2011). Sadly, an average Councillor serving a rural municipality often does not possess skills, qualifications and competence he or she may need to be pre-ready for such capacitation exercise (Sebola 2015; Rogerson and Nel 2016).

Further exacerbating this already compounding dilemma is the issue of poor management of available resources. Hence, in creating a clear developmental pathway for these poor communities, training of Councillors, alongside the key stakeholders on resource management skills, proposal drafting skills, as well as leadership skills are highly critical.

In consonance to the above narrative, it is tempting to deduce that, Intellectual fatigue is more a domineering concern than that of resource constraint.

6. NEED FOR A TRUE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

A society is considered to be reaping the dividends of democracy when the electorates have the ability to contribute towards policies and

programmes through their active involvement in decision binding resolutions (Umo-Udo 2014). He further argues that democracy extends beyond voting rights, but also comprises the electorates' control of the elected actions, as well as the ability to contribute towards the process of governance. Within this context, no community member (electorate) should be sidelined or deliberately excluded from participation. From a socio-economic standpoint, a society experiencing true democratic transition is said to be characterised by political stability, higher economic freedom, and higher human capital accumulation, where every member of the community benefits social economically. Going by the afore-narrative one may arguably infer that the residents of Gunjanani, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi have been sidelined economically, as these communities have high rates of poverty, nor are there economic opportunities. The standard of living and lifestyle amongst majority of the residence of Gunjanani, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi is evidential that these populaces are yet to fully benefit from the economic transformation in the post-apartheid South Africa.

Debatably, South Africa is considered not to have truly reached a full democracy as she's still ranked as the most unequal society in the world. The level of inequality still remains a topical issue, and likely to remain a critical point of discuss even in years to come. The never ending protest amongst the disadvantaged/ poor communities of South Africa is also a clear indication that the electorates are dissatisfied over the governments' performance. Though some of such protests are often service delivery related, yet the community members believe the violent protests may be the only approach they may use to gain the governments attention.

In achieving a true democratic transition, the poor need to be prioritised and put at the centre of planning. More so ethical reforms should be prioritised, one which will promote good, fair, efficient and transparent governance. Thus, it becomes imperative to elect competent Councillors and other office holders who have the interest of the electorates at heart. Hence, the election of Councillors alongside other elected members becomes a more critical concern which must be handled with every caution.

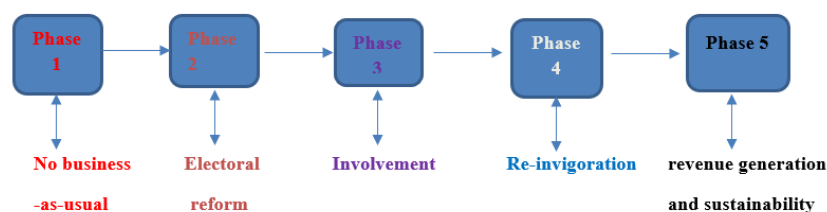
Selection of Councilor and other office holders should pass through a more rigorous process by political parties whom should thereafter go through a more scrupulous process by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). In assessing if candidates are fit for Councillorship/ or political positions, the IEC should engage these candidates in assessments and evaluations where they are given the opportunity to demonstrate their Intellectual capacity and competence; proof their technical and strategic skills in line with the office they intend to run. More so, all contending candidates should be made to have debates whereby they could outline their plans, and how they intend to

implement their respective plans. During such debates, the media and electorates should be given opportunities to question each candidate. After each of these candidates has proven their intellectual, technical, strategic competence; thereafter may the IEC consider to include them on the ballot papers. Invariably, this advocated democratic transition may be attainable when competent Councillors who are able to judiciously use their competence, skills and know-how for the betterment of the communities they serve. In referral to Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi, a resourceful Councillor is able to maximally utilise the abundance of natural, agricultural and tourism resources found within these communities for the upliftment of these poverty stricken rural areas.

7. WHERE TO BEGIN

Based on available data and literature, the cause of poverty in the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi is more inclined to 'intellectual fatigue' as opposed to 'resource constraint'. These trio poverty stricken communities possess enormous amounts of untapped agricultural and tourism potential. The community of Gunjaneni, not only possesses agricultural and tourism potentials, but does also has abundance of coal and manufacturing potentials. To harness these potentials (as a means to alleviating poverty), this study advocates specific phases, which if meticulously followed, may alleviate poverty to a significant extend amongst these three communities. As argued in Bakre and Ojugbele (2021), successful developmental efforts within rural municipalities such as the ones mentioned in this study, requires a strategic pathway which necessitates continuous involvement of several 'competent' stakeholders who consistently drive in the same direction. Hence, these stakeholders will invariably need a competent, strategic and highly resourceful Councillor who will direct the stakeholders (within these rural communities). In consonance, Figure 1 and Table 5 provide sequential phases designed to alleviate poverty amongst these three rural communities.

Figure 1: Phasing out poverty in Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi



Source: Authors (2022)

Phases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are further expounded in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Phasing out poverty in Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi

Project Phase	Actors	Activities
Phase 1 No business-as-usual (Municipal restructuring)	IEC, rural developmental experts, Local governance, Researchers in the field of Public Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructuring of the political landscape • Penalise all forms of unethical practices • Only resourceful and performance proven candidates with good track record are allowed to contest • Outsourcing of developmental projects to 'only' competent agents or firms • Promoting a 'to-do' attitude amongst municipal personnel
Phase 2 Electoral reform	IEC, SALGA Researchers in the field of Public Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate electorates on the need to vote competent candidates, and not cast votes based on bias • Structure a thorough vetting process for vying candidates • Debarring corrupt candidates from participating • Ensure the non-interference from businesses or cooperates from the electioneering process
Phase 3 Involvement	Local governance, community members Researchers, Private sector, Foreign investors, agronomist, bioinformatics scientist, infrastructural developers, financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve pertinent stakeholders • Systematic baseline data • Skills development for community members • Provide enabling and conducive business environment • Avoidance of red taps to persuade investors • Formation of partnership with International agricultural, tourism and manufacturing

	experts, rural developmental experts	<p>entities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of viable developmental proposals to national and international entities
Phase 4 Reinvigoration	Human Resources experts, Financial experts, Agricultural experts, rural developmental experts,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinvigoration of municipality structure • Employment opportunities based on merit • Entice highly skilled personnel to work with local municipalities • Capacitation for programme initiators • Infrastructural investment • Transform subsistence farming into commercial farming
Phase 5 Revenue generation, employment opportunities and sustainability	Infrastructural developers, Financial experts, agricultural experts, tourism experts, rural developmental experts, Researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully explore the potentials of the tourism, mining and agricultural sectors of these three communities • Promote a diversified and sustainable rural economy • Critical assessment of on-going developmental projects

PHASE 1 plays a highly cogent role in establishing a developmental society, one devoid of high rates of poverty amongst household members. This phase attempts to restructure and revamp the political and socio-economic landscape of the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi, where residents benefit from the gains of a true democratic dispensation. Hence, at this phase, a systemic, strategic and transparent approach is used while shortlisting potential candidates to run for the office of the Councillor. Similarly, a merit-based approach should be adopted in selecting municipal personnel. This is considered crucial as a way to doing away with the usual appointment of uncommitted political and inexperienced office bearers who usually intend to use the position of the Councillor to serve

as a stepping stone to national or provincial level politics. Another key concern at this phase is the need of change of attitude amongst municipal staff members. The system also should enforce heavy penalties and consequences on all forms of unethical practices. It is recommended that the activities proposed in Phase 1 are spearheaded by experienced IEC personnel, veteran technocrats within the local municipality structure, rural developmental experts, as well as seasoned researchers in the field of Public Administration.

PHASE 2 further builds upon precept of Phase 1, with the core aim of orchestrating an electoral reform. In achieving Phase 2, it will be essential to enlighten the electorates on how to identify a competent Councillor, and the need for those within the voting age bracket to actively participate in the electioneering process. As pointed out in a series of studies, several poor constituencies have either stopped registering to vote or decide not to participate during election at all. More importantly, it is highly crucial that political parties, alongside SALGA and IEC officers implement a thorough vetting process for vying candidates for Councillorship and other political positions. It will also be needful to debar all corrupt, underperforming and incompetent candidates who may want to run for the office of the Councillor/ other political positions. More so, due to the adverse consequences political interferences has caused over the years, it will be necessary to block all avenues of political interference. It is advised the IEC personnel, SALGA executives and, researchers in the field of Public Administration handle this second phase.

PHASE 3 advocates the involvement of pertinent stakeholders. It recommends the involvement of personnel with specific skill set, which includes technocrats within Local governance, Researchers, Private sector, foreign investors, agronomist, bioinformatics scientist, infrastructural developers, rural developmental experts and financial experts. It will also be needful to involve community members from the inception of planning to the accomplishment of intended developmental projects or initiatives. Hence, one of the key activities scheduled for Phase 3 is the need for a systematic baseline data, wherein bioinformatics scientist conduct surveys in order to obtain key information such as households' socio-economic data, basic communal needs, developmental needs, amongst other needs required to transform these poor communities into a developed and viable rural space. This phase also advocates the need to provide the community members with skills based on individuals prior abilities, competence and educational qualification. Importantly, it will be needful to provide an enabling business environment, whilst forming formidable partnerships with International agricultural institutions such as International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); established tourism institutions, as well as manufacturing organisations that may benefit from the resources

of these communities, in exchange for development and betterment of the communities being studied.

PHASE 4 which proposes a reinvigoration process; will require the expertise of personnel such as Human resources experts, rural developmental experts, financial experts, and Agricultural experts. This phase mainly focuses on the need to revamp the municipal structure, as opposed the outdated structure being used (Sebola 2015). In implementing this phase, it is essential to employ municipal staff based on merit, whilst enticing highly skilled personnel to work with the municipality either on contract or voluntary basis. Surmountable amounts of infrastructural investment will also be required at this phase. Such monies may be sourced from international entities mentioned in phase 3. Furthermore, it will be needful to transform and upgrade sectors within the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi. One of such transformation may come in form of transforming the age long subsistence farming into commercial farming.

PHASE 5 advocates the imperativeness of revenue generation, creation of employment opportunities and sustainability of developmental initiatives as a final move to phasing out poverty in Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi. This phase is considered as the actual anti-poverty driving scheme where the municipality generates the much needed revenue to drive the developmental agenda; whilst providing employment opportunities for household members of these communities. Revenue generation is often an arduous task; hence, few clues are given at this juncture. Firstly, rural communities often possess vast amount of land resources. Such land may be leased to foreign companies in exchange for funds, and employment opportunities for community members. More so, the untapped tourism sector in these communities can be a significant revenue generating opportunity. Though, tour sites such as the iSimangaliso Wetland Park (a UNESCO World Heritage site) and the Mfolozi Game Reserve in Mtubatuba Municipality, as well as the Kruger National Park situated by the Mgobodzi (Nkomazi Municipality) already generate funds for these municipalities. However, the full tourism potentials of these World Heritage destinations are yet to be fully explored. More so, the abundance of coal in Mtubatuba Municipality and surrounding areas is yet to be fully harnessed. Studies by Bond (2022) argue that should the Tendelecoal Mining (Pty) Ltd be in full operation, it will provide significant financial relief to the host community. Additional, the fertile soils of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi possess enormous agricultural potentials. Instead of the communal and unproductive farming carried out on some of these farm lands, it is highly recommended these farm lands are mostly converted to commercial farm lands, which has a potentiality to provide more employment opportunities and food security to the community members. More importantly, these initiatives will require a well thought

out sustainable agenda. To actualise Phase 5, the expertise of Infrastructural developers, financial experts, rural developmental experts, agricultural experts, tourism experts, and researchers will be imperative.

Though this study advocates the role of several stakeholders in actualising a developmental society which may drastically reduce the extent of poverty; notwithstanding, the emphasis here is placed on a competent and resourceful Councillor. The role of a competent Councillor cannot be overemphasised in this regards, as a variety of studies from China and India has proven the key roles orchestrated by local government officials (Councilors in this regards) in fighting poverty. Through these grassroots political authorities, alongside other developmental stakeholders, China was able to reduce the poverty stricken population by one-third. In the case of India, poverty declined from 55.1 percent to 16.4 percent between 2005 and 2021. This represents 415 million Indians exiting multidimensional poverty within a period of 16 years (Business Insider India 2022). Another remarkable feat was that achieved by the Chinese government who lifted 66 million Chinese citizens out of poverty in a space of five years (Weiping 2018). Though this feat was achieved by political authorities at national level, and grassroots, amongst several other stakeholders, the key lesson was that grassroots politicians in China played a vital role in this fight against poverty (Weiping 2018).

Phasing out poverty within the communities of Gunjaneni, Lusikisiki Mcobothini and Mgobodzi will invariably undergo a series of painstaking efforts, sacrifices, investments and strategic course which entails the participation of multiple stakeholders doing it right the first time and every time at a constant pace, whilst walking simultaneously in the same direction. Should such strategic developmental pathway be sustained over time, the developmental agenda may eventually gain traction thereby igniting a developmental phase. Hence, such developmental phase may be materialised in poor rural communities such as the ones being understudied herein where a highly proactive, resourceful and committed Councillor is being elected, alongside other key stakeholders who are able to think beyond the ordinary.

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