

**THE ROLE OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN EMPOWERING
WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS IN THE CITY OF MBOMBELA MUNICIPALITY IN
SOUTH AFRICA**

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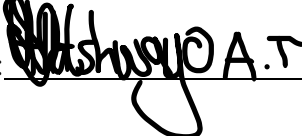
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DECLARATION

I, **Andile Titus Hlatshwayo** declare that this dissertation is my own work in design and execution for the Masters of Development Studies. This dissertation was executed under the supervision of Professor Vusi Gumede and Co-supervisor Dr Maria Eggink. Throughout the research writing processes, there was no ethical breach. Further, I declare that this work is original and under no circumstances has been used for any academic purposes prior to this submission. Thus, it is the product of my own endeavours for the past twenty-four months. The materials included herein have been duly consulted and were acknowledged as such.

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Philippians 1:6 “Being confident of this, that he who began the good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my rock, my sweet mother, Ms. Thandeka Thembi Gungqwa and all the women out there!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the role of Local Economic Development (LED) in empowering women in the rural areas surrounding City of Mbombela (CoM) in Mpumalanga province in South Africa. LED is used as a catalyst to enhance employment and business opportunities and ignite economic growth. The CoM municipality is located in Ehlanzeni region and most under its jurisdiction are rural based municipalities, namely Bushbuckridge, Thaba Chweu and Nkomazi local municipalities. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2016), the population of CoM was 695 913. The study was motivated by the high unemployment rate affecting rural women. The CoM must implement viable LED programmes and strive to empower women in resource-constrained rural areas through these LED programmes.

The study adopted a qualitative approach and it was informed by the interpretivism paradigm. The researcher used face-to-face in-depth interviews to elicit the views of rural women, CoM officials and traditional leaders. In addition, focus groups discussions (FGDs) were conducted with ward councillors. The study was informed by the feminism theory, Rural Development Framework (RDF), and the modernisation theory. These theories sought to reflect on why women are not empowered and why they are underrepresented. Data was thematically analysed.

Findings revealed that the implementation of LED programmes in rural areas is lacking, as many rural women were not knowledgeable about it. Further, the LED strategy was not passed, which led to the failure to rollout proactive LED programmes. Awareness about LED programmes in rural areas was lacking as most women were not knowledgeable about such programmes. Patriarchy is perpetuated by societal factors and cultural norms pitied against women. The findings also revealed that women were faced with economic difficulties as opportunities were seldom or not given at all to this demographic group in the CoM. Women had little or no knowledge about LED. The study also found that there were no frameworks in place to empower women in the Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) sector. The study recommends that the CoM municipality must strive to provide opportunities to rural women and cooperate by providing solutions to the three bottom-line challenges; poverty, unemployment and inequality.

It is also recommended that ward councillors should inform communities about opportunities that are available in municipalities especially for women. Traditional leaders should enhance cooperation with ward councillors to ensure that opportunities are shared equally in various areas of jurisdiction. Furthermore, traditional leaders should assist change cultural beliefs and any other aspects that perpetuate patriarchy and promote stereotypes. The study makes an important contribution regarding the empowerment of women through LED opportunities in the CoM municipality.

KEY WORDS: Local Economic Development, Women empowerment, City of Mbombela Municipality, Poverty, Unemployment, Inequalities and Economic Growth

ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
COGTA	Cooperate Governance and Traditional Affairs
CoM	City of Mbombela Municipality
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
EDM	Ehlanzeni District Municipality
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme
GAD	Gender and Development
GANA	General Aviation Nelspruit Airport
GM	General Manager
HDI	Human Development Index
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
KMIA	Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport
LED	Local Economic Development
LEDT	Local Economic Development and Tourism
MM	Municipal Manager
MSA	Municipal System Act
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO	Non-Profitable Organisation
RDF	Rural Development Framework
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SALGA	South African Local Government Association

SMMEs	Small Medium and Micro Enterprises
WAD	Women and Development
WID	Women in Development
WPLG	White Paper on Local Governance
GEAR	Growth, Employment, and Redistribution
ILO	International Labour Organisations
DPLG	Department of Provincial Local government
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The study explored the role of Local Economic Development (LED) in empowering women in rural areas of the City of Mbombela (CoM) in South Africa. Research has shown that there is a gap globally in the empowerment of women in all aspects; socio-economic and political aspects (Dahlum, Knutsen & Machkova, 2022). Local Economic Development (LED) can help reduce poverty and improve people's quality of life by creating employment and business opportunities (Meyer, 2014). By implementing relevant strategies, municipalities can enhance economic development that would in turn guarantee financial in-flows to cash strapped rural communities (Pavel & Moldovan, 2019). South Africa's post-apartheid government inherited apartheid policies that promoted industrial production to the detriment of rural development (Seekings, 2020). That is, apartheid policies were informed by the need to enhance racial divisions and polarisations in the country. Consequently, Black people were excluded from owning formal businesses and participating in economic development.

Prior to 1994, South Africa's rural areas and their populations experienced high levels of poverty, inequalities, and stagnant economic growth (Francis & Webster, 2019). This led to high unemployment rates and a lack of skills development among the Black people. The result was the emergence of vulnerable groups such as Black rural women and youth (DBSA, 2006). Several studies conducted at the City of Mbombela and other municipalities in South Africa by scholars such as, *inter alia*, Malele (2018), Mashiteng (2017), Dyosi (2016), Mabogoane (2016), Masuku (2013), and Isaacs (2006) sought to address issues related to LED. However, these studies did not focus on rural women and youth's empowerment in the context of LED. In addition, these studies do not address issues such as how the Mbombela municipality's rural women and youth were deprived of opportunities to participate in economic development and growth during the apartheid era. In this regard, this study evaluates how LED addresses women's empowerment in the context of the past economic deprivations and exclusions.

South Africa's post-apartheid government formulated various policies that sought to address past economic imbalances in the context of job creation and poverty eradication by funding small businesses through the LED approach (DBSA, 2006). According to Mashiteng (2017),

LED has become an instrument of change in the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), and other countries such as Zambia, Uganda, and the United States of America.

LED is a process whereby the state and communities interact to enhance business activities and employment opportunities (Mashamaite, 2018). Meyer-Stammer (2008) defined LED as a way of attaining an accumulative income to better people's lives in local communities. The World Bank's Urban Development Unit (2003) considers LED as a process where the public, businesses, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) closely work together to ensure that conducive conditions for economic upliftment, and employment opportunities prevail in local communities. The above definitions articulate the idea of generating income and creating economic opportunities to change communities for the better.

In its approved final IDP 2020-2021, the City of Mbombela Municipality emphasised the need to enhance LED programmes that would assist in creating employment opportunities for women (City of Mbombela, 2020). According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2nd quarter of 2021), men are more dominant and benefit more from the labour market than women (Stats SA, 2021). Furthermore, men are paid more than women (Stats SA, 2021). Men's unemployment rate in South Africa is less than women's (Stats SA, 2021). Women's unemployment rate is 36.8% and men's are 32.4% (Stats SA, 2021). Although the unemployment rate had dropped in the 2022 Quarterly Labour Force Survey (1st quarter of 2022), 36.4 % were unemployed as compared to the 33.0% among men (Stats SA, 2022). In 2018, the poverty rate in the CoM was 41.1%, making it the tenth worst municipality in the .province (Mbombela, 2022). This helps to explain why the CoM is ranked very low in poverty percentages among other municipalities in the province. Thus, the CoM endeavours to eradicate inequalities by implementing programmes that seek to benefit everyone. It also works closely with various stakeholders such as the national and provincial governments, NGOs and NPOs to improve people's lives (Mbombela, 2020).

In the Southern African Regional Conference, it was emphasised that conducting LED awareness and research in rural areas and encouraging their capacity to fast-track LED (Wekwete, 2014). To ensure that LED is accelerated, research and scholarly documents should be published for various institutions to draw their attention to the problem. This would help address issues such as women's exclusion from participating in local economic activities. It is within this context that this study seeks to address the challenges inherent in women

empowerment in rural areas. This study examines the role of LED in helping to empower the CoM's women in rural areas.

1.2 Background of the study

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), Section 152(c) and 153(a), states that municipalities should enhance social and economic development and reconfigure their priorities to their communities' needs (RSA, 1996). The Constitution is clear that state organs should lead or be the agent of change to the citizen's livelihoods and hence promote sustainable economic development. Furthermore, South Africa's government, through related ministries such as the Ministry of Cooperate Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Trade and Industry, Local Economic Development and Tourism (LEDT), and municipalities, should enhance social and economic development through employment creation, and the funding of small businesses and improving people's livelihoods (Meyer, 2014). For example, Mpumalanga Office of the Premier (February 2021) advertised the availability of the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund to assist young people (both males and females) and encouraged them to develop business proposals that would help create sustainable job opportunities for community members and thus improve their livelihoods.

Municipalities across South Africa should focus on creation of employment opportunities and the equitable sharing of resources between males and females. Local governments should be at the forefront in enhancing LED programmes (Blakely & Bradshaw, 2002). The White Paper on Local Government is in line with the country's Constitution as it suggests that any province in South Africa should work together with its citizenry to enhance the social, economic, and resource needs for the betterment of people's lives (RSA, 1998).

The function of LED was placed in local municipalities to enhance and fast track the removal of economic barriers. There is a need, therefore, to check whether relevant stakeholders adhere to the constitutional mandates or deviate from it. This would help find solutions to the problems encountered by women in rural areas. The challenges to women's empowerment are apparent, by inequalities at workplace, politically and to the country's economy and hence should be addressed without delay. To address this problem (an assessment of LED's role in addressing challenges faced in rural women's empowerment), this study explored strategies put in place to implement LED programmes meant to facilitate empowerment.

1.3 Problem statement

The research problem that this study addresses is the role of LED in empowering women in the CoM municipality's rural areas. To date, women remain impoverished, discriminated against, subordinated, suppressed and patriarchy is at the centre stage. South Africa's Constitution (1996) Chapter 7, Section 152 (1) enhances and sustains the rights of people to accumulate income through engaging in the country's economic activities. The Constitution promotes people's economic involvement or participation regardless of colour or gender. This study is premised on the belief that all people should be free to participate in any economic activity of their choice. This study focuses on women's empowerment in CoM's rural areas through the LED. Not much has been written about the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas and how their lives could be changed for the better. LED enhances women's economic freedom and hence helps sustain their lives. There are not many studies that seek to find out whether women in CoM's rural areas benefit from the local economy through the LED approach.

Furthermore, it is not clear whether the White Paper on LED aims to benefit local women. There are unclear issues such as whether women in the CoM's rural areas economically benefit from LED initiatives. Meyer (2014) asserted that LED is meant to answer challenges such as employment, rooting out poverty, and enhancing people's lives through the establishment of small businesses. The challenges begin with the country's unaddressed triple bottom line challenges; of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. To date, municipalities seldom practise what the Constitution of the RSA spells out, supported by other policies and are strengthening economic based programmes that support LED. Budgets that are meant to be utilised for the purposes of LED are diverged to other directorates because the fiscal framework remains unused to execute what is expected from it. Hence, municipalities do not have sufficient skilled LED specialists to execute duties as expected. Consequently, it leads to the failure of LED-based programmes that seek to assist entrepreneurs to start-up businesses to improve their livelihoods. This could be in the form of funding through cooperatives to start-up sustainable businesses for better livelihoods. The twin challenges of corruption and nepotism remain topical to date, as LED is affected by the two aspects which need intervention so that the fiscal directed to communities reaches the ground. Furthermore, COGTA ensure that the resources distributed by municipalities does not benefit friends and family members but everyone that deserve the benefits of such interventions.

1.4 Significance of the study

This study's significance lies in the extend existing knowledge on the LED approach. That is, researchers have revealed that existing literature did not have much about women's empowerment in rural areas. This study sought to fill the gap in the literature regarding this phenomenon. According to the World Bank's Urban Development Unit Report (2003), LED is a process whereby the public, businesses, and NGOs work as partners to ensure that there are conditions for women's economic upliftment, and employment opportunities. The study sought to bring to light the availability of opportunities for women in rural areas and how LED sought to fulfil what the constitution promulgates to empower everyone equally. There have been several concerns about women's empowerment in rural areas, particularly in the CoM controlled areas. This study exposed how rural women are deprived of business opportunities in favour of men. Gumede (2021) noted that to date, women are still deprived of business opportunities and still live in poverty when compared to men. This study sought to reveal the inequalities that exist between men and women in the CoM. In addition, the subject of LED in local municipalities is topical among academics, this study sought to contribute to the debate of the phenomenon studied in assisting rural women to be given an opportunity to benefit in LED-based programmes however, not limited to women.

1.5 Study aim

The study aims to investigate and assess the role of LED in addressing women empowerment in rural areas of the CoM.

1.6 Objectives of the study

This study's objectives are:

- To explore and describe the role of LED and how it can be used as an empowerment tool to rural women.
- To explore and describe strategies used by the CoM in implementing its LED role in rural areas.
- To determine how the CoM assesses its LED programmes meant to empower women in rural areas.
- To explore and describe barriers that inhibit women's empowerment in the CoM's rural areas.

1.7 Research questions

The main research question is:

What is the role of LED in addressing women empowerment in CoM's rural areas?

In addition, the following questions informed the study:

- What are the strategies used by the CoM in implementing LED in rural areas?
- How does the CoM assess its LED programmes meant to empower women in rural areas?
- What are the factors that inhibit women's empowerment in the CoM's rural areas?

1.8 Defining key terms and concepts

(i) Local Economic Development: Meyer (2008) stated that LED refers to efforts by a particular area or region to assist its communities to make profits or income(s) to improve people's livelihoods. The profit-making activities or income-generating projects are provided through various opportunities put in place by local municipalities. These could be business initiatives or job opportunities.

(ii) Sustainable Development: A development that focuses on the present generation, the idea being not to compromise the next generation's opportunities to meet its needs (Smith, 2006). Sustainable development is not to benefit here and now but in the future. For example, an agricultural project was initiated in a community to benefit people by having a source of living. The future generation would equally benefit from the same community project if sustained.

(iii) Economic Freedom: Martin (1955) stated that economic freedom is the citizens' or communities' ability to participate in economic activities such as free enterprise, free trade, free markets, and private property. Economic freedom is allowing people to participate in the country's economy. This implies that all people should benefit from the country's economy.

(iv) Integrated Development Plan: The City of Mbombela Municipality (2020) defined IDP as a plan which instructs or channels the planning and development for service delivery in

municipalities. It also enables the municipal officials to make decisions based on the residents' needs. This is a five-year plan that provides a framework for development. It focuses on the work of municipalities, provincial, and national governments. The idea is to improve the people's livelihoods. For example, community members might raise water issues as affecting their lives through the IDP and committee meetings with the hope that their needs would be met (the bottom-up approach).

(v) **Women Empowerment:** Moyo, Francis, and Ndlovu (2012) defined women empowerment as the process that allows changes in power relations, giving an opportunity to the excluded to make formal decisions for the betterment of their lives.

1.9 Study layout

- *Chapter One* introduces this study, provides its background, and how an interest in this phenomenon developed. The problem statement, significance of the study, study's aim and objectives. The definition of key terms and concepts and lastly, study layout.
- *Chapter Two* is the review of relevant literature. The literature review consists of LED and women empowerment defined, the role players of LED, the implementation of LED: success and failures. The chapter further linked LED with poverty, women empowerment in LED, credit opportunities and finance to women, economic inequalities in South Africa, funders of LED in South Africa's municipalities and lastly LED in a global perspective.
- *Chapter Three* Outlined the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were utilised in line with the phenomenon studied herein.
- *Chapter Four* provides this study's research methodology and the inherent research design. In this chapter, the researcher begins with the location of the study, the targeted population, research paradigm, research design and research approach. The chapter further outlined other relevant sections included in the chapter; selection of participants, data collection instruments and methods were outlined in detail. The data analysis and lastly ethical considerations.
- *Chapter Five* is the presentation of the findings, analysed and discussed data collected for the study. The six thematic data analysis techniques that informed the study's data analysis procedure was outlined as well. The findings herein, are the responses from the rural women, CoM officials, ward councillors and traditional leaders.

- *Chapter Six* concluded this study which explored and described the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas of the CoM, South Africa by providing the study's findings, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter introduced and outlined the background of the phenomenon studied. The problem statement was articulated and the significance of the study therein. The study's aim and objectives and research questions were outlined, the definition of key terms and concepts and the study layout.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Women empowerment remains the subject of enquiry to date as women face several challenges, which are socio-economic and political in nature. In this chapter, the researcher reviews literature related to local economic development (LED) projects. Several concepts are discussed in this chapter, which include LED and women empowerment. Further, the chapter focuses on the history of LED in South Africa, LED stakeholders in South Africa. The study also reflects on the successes and failures recorded in implementing LED. The study further reviewed LED and poverty, opportunities to credit and finance to rural women, economic inequalities in South Africa, the funders of LED in South Africa and lastly reviewed LED in the global perspective.

2.2 Defining local economic development

Local economic development (LED) is the process where the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Not for Profit Organisations (NPOs) collaborate to open opportunities for community's economic growth and employment to improve their livelihoods (Khumbule & Gerwel-Proches, 2018). LED is the ability to provide or initiate growth and wealth for communities (Meyer, 2014). The World Bank dealt with the challenges of poverty and the lack of socio-economic opportunities from a rural development perspective (World Bank, 2003). However, the Khumbule and Gerwel-Proches (2018) failed to address the various challenges to women empowerment especially in rural areas.

For Helmsing and Eghzaibher (2005), LED is about enhancing cooperation to maintain the available resources, employment opportunities, and economic growth. Kritikos (2014) defined LED as a tool to unify local governments and other LED related fraternities to create job and business opportunities. These scholars focused on the opportunities that LED aims to create in municipalities and beyond. Various stakeholders participate in LED (Helmsing & Eghzaibher, 2005; Blakely, 1994). This study aimed to assess if women empowerment in rural areas prevails under the LED strategy. The said assessment sought to determine whether LED projects help maintain and build the economy for the betterment of the rural people's livelihoods.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2008) defined LED as an initial development process, which enhances collaboration between government and other partners such as NGOs,

NPOs, and communities in its jurisdiction. The ILO's (2008) definition is the same as that of Blakely (1994), and Helmsing and Eghzaibher (2005) as it focuses on communities and various stakeholders working together under the same vision of creating economic and employment opportunities for women. Hindson (2007) defined LED as an establishment that enhances those involved in LED to unify and improve the economy, access what needs to be attained, and encourage donors within its jurisdiction, and even beyond to form partnerships.

LED is the communities' willingness to find ways or alternatives to generate income to improve their livelihoods. LED as a pattern followed by rural communities to create employment opportunities and attain economic growth (Meyer-Stammer, 2008; Zulu & Mabangizi, 2014). The definitions provided above converge to a one idea. That is, they call for poverty eradication to improve livelihoods by creating income-generating opportunities.

Swinburn *et al.* (2006) defined LED as a systematic process where communities and private institutions such as NGOs and NPOs provide opportunities to uplift people's livelihoods. Helmsing (2010) added that LED is a process where municipalities, communities or local authorities, and private institutions are initiated to use the existing resources to create employment opportunities. By doing so ensures that economic opportunities are established for the current and future generations. The above definitions are people-centred as stakeholders are involved in enhancing employment and economic opportunities.

Globally, LED is dynamic, hence, challenging to define (Meyer-Stammer, 2003). In the South African context, LED is understood in various ways and this has led to confusion in policy formulation (Hoeyi & Makgari, 2021). However, consensus prevails among scholars regarding the definition of LED and what it entails. The scholars agree that LED assists in the growth of local economies and helps to address the improvement of people's livelihoods (Houghton *et al.*, 2013). Ogujiuba, Ndlovu and Agholor (2021) defined LED as the sensible process in which local communities through assistance from various institutions work together to develop the people's living conditions (economic or social). Oduro-Ofari (2016:1) stated that LED involves the working of citizens amongst themselves for a viable profitable progress that provides benefits and improves people's lives. LED is a planning tool that is territorial, usually practiced through employing wider population to avoid disputes with locals (Pose, 2001).

LED is when the local government, private sector, and the local community work together to accomplish and manage local economies and access internal resources to stimulate economic growth (Mashimaite, 2018). Initially, the main objective of LED was to develop a specific

location's economy. However, based on United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), economic growth is regarded as the immediate goal for poverty reduction as LED's main goal (Liu & Wang, 2015).

According to MacMillan and O'Connor (2022), LED mainly focuses on empowering vulnerable community members. That is, the unfavourable conditions have solutions not only for the present time but for the future generations as well. Therefore, the development of LED is informed by available local resources. The foreign investments are not excluded but rather the main focus is on the local investments' potential (Canzanelli, 2001).

There is a need to prioritise vulnerable groups particularly on the local economy's development (Kuran & Torpan, 2020). Prioritising vulnerable groups helps the poor to be independent rather than rely on government grants for a living. The focus of sustainable development on human development concept in several activities (UNDP, 2006). There is a need to include issues such as economic opportunities, decent work provisions, and the environmental bio-diversity LED programmes (ILO, 2001).

Properly implementing LED programmes helps to improve and increase economic growth for the current and near future (Peterson, 2017). LED implementation incorporates the evolution of society into equitable natural environmental wealth and cultural achievements conserved for future generations (EDA, 2007). There is need to have a sustainable environment that seeks financial, institutional, and social solutions to enhance the success of LED (Canzanelli, 2011). It is important to have institutions that fund LED in South Africa. The private funding of LED programmes assists the failing municipalities to fund LED projects and programmes (Soga & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2021).

There is a need for stakeholder participation, social dialogue, and empowerment to locally mobilize resources for competitive advantage (ILO, 2001). LED is endogenous in its structure and is sustainable to provide local people with long term economic future (EDA, 2007). LED entails indigenusness territory, identification of investment opportunities, improving competitiveness, and the living conditions of people's lives (Peterson, 2017).

2.3 Defining women empowerment

In economics, women empowerment is defined as the process where women gets opportunities to make personal choices given the cultural beliefs of man dominancy over women which then perpetuates patriarchy in the country's history (Bayeh, 2016). Women empowerment is defined

as a process that allows individuals or a group of people to achieve the best in their livelihoods in their communities (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; Maton, 2008; Porter, 2013). Women empowerment leans on expanding women's capabilities and granting them opportunities to make personal choices (Kurtis *et al.*, 2016; Budgeon, 2015).

Women empowerment utilises resources at the individual's disposal to reach certain economic goals (Kabeer, 1999). Coun, Peters, Blomme and Schaveling (2021) suggested that empowerment is the process of being unpowered to being empowered. Bali, Swain, and Wellentin (2009) defined women empowerment as a process where women fight against the existing norms, cultural beliefs, and values of society where they reside. Duvandack, Palmer and Vaessen (2014) considered women empowerment as a multifaceted process inclusive of a collective or individual beliefs and behaviour. For example, access to information and ideas to challenge beliefs and attitudes is critical. Women empowerment is a turning point to most women as in the olden days' society was socially constructed as it was believed that men must dominate the socio-economic and political sphere. Most policies that were implemented restricted women access to resources and reveals that they are actors and should not benefit (Jeckoniah, Nombo & Mdoe, 2012).

Mosedale (2005) defined women empowerment as a process where women do exceptionally well in terms of what can be done, and it is done in an unconducive environment where it is not permissible compared to men. Moyo *et al.* (2012) noted that women empowerment is a process that is inclusive and culminates in changes in power relations. Inclusive policies give an opportunity to the excluded when implemented to make formal decisions for the betterment of women's livelihoods. Fadeiye and Olanegan (2001) defined women empowerment as a process that allows women to realise their abilities, and that women are valuable assets to development. Women have a gift for the best outputs and they should be given an opportunity to advance to the fullest. For Noreen (2011), women empowerment as giving women opportunities to live better and increase their standard of living.

Women empowerment opens doors for new opportunities for women to provide services through execution and partake in decision making bodies (Noreen, 2011). Traditionally, this was a difficult because patriarchy was central to decision making (Lecoutere & Wuyts, 2021). White (2010) defined women empowerment as a liberal universal tradition that women are also entitled to opportunities and promote women empowerment for worldwide growth. The United Nations (1995) added that women empowerment is when,

“Women’s self-respect and dignity are included in encouragement, they can equally participate and have rights to gain different prospects and manage their own lives everywhere, uplifted public and economic aspects are developed by their ability to control and manage the social change”

The definitions of women empowerment are varied. Some scholars argued that women empowerment is defined by the cultural beliefs and norms (Duvandack *et al.*, 2014; Bali Swain & Wellentin, 2009; White, 2010). Africa and other parts of the world still hold to cultural beliefs that the woman’s duties are to fulfil rites as a woman (Msuya, 2019). For example, getting married, bearing children, looking after children, and cleaning the house. Besides that, there is nothing else for women to do in society (White, 2010). Yet, women empowerment is about giving women opportunities such as jobs and businesses, socio-economic, and political freedom (Noreen, 2011; Fadeiye & Olanegan, 2001; Moyo *et al.*, 2012; Mosedale, 2005; Jeckoniah *et al.*, 2012; Kabeer, 1999). There is a gap as far as women empowerment is concerned where women are still not empowered in workplaces, societies, and in the political space (Jeckoniah *et al.*, 2012). This study sought to fill the gap in literature concerning women’s inclusiveness in socio-economic and political spaces.

2.4 The history of LED in South Africa

The history of LED begins from the period before South Africa became independent in 1994. During this period, LED used the top-down approach (Pose, 2001). That is, the government was in charge and often came up with developments informed by apartheid policies that focused on White communities and their specific needs (Marais *et al.*, 2016c). Decentralisation and LED projects were implemented to enhance or grow the apartheid government’s economy (Tshishonga, 2021). In the early 1980s, initiatives were put in place to harness industries, investments and to promote marketing, infrastructure development, and land and tourism.

However, many initiatives that were transferred to new authorities were closed down (SACN, 2016). As a result, there were employment losses. There are some points that are not viable to LED, that is, the projects and programmes that were implemented pre-1994. The said projects and programmes were aimed at benefiting the apartheid government’s economy rather than sustaining the Black people’s livelihoods, the creation of employment, and business opportunities meant to address poverty and inequalities were closed for Black people (Turok, Vaasagie & Scheba, 2021).

The post-apartheid government introduced the 1996 Constitution to help correct the past economic and social imbalances (Heywood, 2021). The 1996 Constitution is not discriminatory when compared to the apartheid era constitution. Regardless of skin colour, policies to enhance development in municipalities were implemented (RSA, 1996). The introduction of the 1996 Constitution was a turning point for South Africa given that the new government aimed at economic reforms (SACN, 2016).

The new administration made efforts to protect the country's interests through the Constitution and ensured that the country's economy was emancipated through LED (Marais *et al.*, 2016c). Policies were implemented to accelerate the implementation of LED. The said policies included the RSA (1998) and the Municipal Systems' Act of 2000. Introducing such policies indicated that the new administration looked forward to all the citizens' economic emancipation and equality (SACN, 2016).

There are approaches that were introduced to stabilise LED. Examples are the city-based approach and the community-based one, *inter alia* (Nel, 2017). The funding of projects by donors and various other organisations emerged and the funds were allocated via the government (Nel, 1997). However, the community-based approach was not implemented and consequently, it failed (Nel, 2005).

The community-based approach is human centred, meaning that people have an input and everything is supposed to be done transparently. There were challenges in the early years of apartheid, that is, policies to advocate for community participation to development were not implemented (Meier, 2012). During that time, fewer studies were done to highlight such inequalities.

In South Africa, the LED fund was established in 1998 (Nel, 1997). The funds were meant to address poverty through development and sustainability, although the funded projects were not that effective (Marais & Botes, 2007). The projects' lack of effectiveness was caused by challenges such as the lack of knowledge in LED (Marais & Botes, 2007). This led to poor management, and the policies that were put in place were not viable enough to eradicate poverty and, create employment and business opportunities in local government (Singh, 2020).

Inner cities were developed and investments in tourism and shopping centres were prioritised (these were privately owned though) (Nel & Rogerson, 2007). Given the above, the government then was not yet ready for LED (Ramodula & Govender, 2021). That is, civil servants were not yet knowledgeable and experienced in LED implementation and the policies

that were put in place (Khambule, 2018). The ANC government had concerns that the inner cities, shopping centres, and tourism centres were privately owned (ANC, 2000). Those who owned private entities did not provide sustainable opportunities to locals to address their livelihoods and accelerate development through LED (Marais & Botes, 2007).

The LED fund stopped functioning, and the government had to come up with a new LED policy for the country (Nxumalo & Naidoo, 2018). The National LED Framework 2006-2012 DPLG (2006) was implemented between 2003 and 2011 (DPLG, 2011). The National LED Framework 2006-2011 was a five-year plan meant to accelerate sustainable local economic growth (Meyer, 2014). After 2011, LED looked at the municipalities' economies, LED challenges, and its benefits (Khambule, 2018). The challenges that were encountered included the lack of understanding of LED, poor administration, and less funds for the municipal economic development projects (Mlambo, Ndebele & Zubane, 2019). There was divergence in terms of the LED implementation plan and the lack of cooperation among municipalities, provincial, and national governments (Nel & Rogerson, 2007).

The National Framework for LED was adopted to fight poverty, inequality, employment, and to create business opportunities (Tackie, Chen & Ansah, 2022). The idea behind the National Framework implementation was to improve the people's livelihoods for the better, support those who sought opportunities to partake in the country's economy, and to increase knowledge about LED in communities (Tackie *et al.*, 2022).

Introducing the National Framework enabled rural women to participate in LED, and enhanced the cooperation of government and other stakeholders to achieve inclusive and economic goals (Pavel & Moldovan, 2018). In this way, LED helped grow the country's economy in the context of rural communities (Rogerson, 2010). In 2018, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) drafted the National Framework for municipalities (COGTA, 2018). The draft document supported LED agents and actors to develop local economies to address local needs, and add value to provincial and national governments' aim and objectives (Khambule, 2018).

2.5 LED role players in South Africa

There are a number of role players that contribute to the success of LED in South Africa. Those role players include, inter alia; Cooperate Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Non-Profitable Organisations (NPOs).

2.5.1 The Department of Cooperation, Governance, and Traditional Affairs

COGTA links the national government with provincial and local governments, oversees, and implements policies to enhance LED projects (COGTA, 2014). The LED projects are meant to accelerate economic growth, businesses, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, COGTA disburses funds to accelerate LED programmes, and projects such as the promotion of micro businesses and rural cooperatives (Boshoff, 2008). For example, in provincial government, the COGTA disburses funds to local municipalities to respond to its constitutional mandate in ensuring that LED programmes reach the length and breadth of its jurisdiction in the municipality. This is done therefore to ensure that communities are able to generate income to provide for their families instead of depending on social grants for survival.

2.5.2 The Department of Trade and Industry

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is the initiator and driver of LED in South Africa. It plays a significant role in sustainably funding projects, particularly those still in operation (Meyer, 2014a). Meyer (2014a) indicated that the DTI is a “must” to accelerate economic advancement and job opportunities through projects such as Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) and Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA), among others. The DTI was declared a role player not by mistake as most micro-businesses are funded through it in line with the LED policy framework (Patterson, 2008). It is of paramount importance that communities seek funding to start-up businesses in DTI because this will allow entrepreneurs get funding in order to start their own businesses and also hire the less privileged to earn an income and improve their livelihoods. The SETA and LEDA also play a significant role in the lives of citizens especially the youth. The youth can get sustainable skills through the trainings provided by SETA and SEDA. Many young people have benefited through these programmes and they are now able to use their skills in trades such as boiler making, pipefitting, carpentry and many more.

2.5.3 The Provincial and Local Governments

Ndlovu and Makoni (2014) pointed out that LED’s backbone includes the Provincial and Local governments (PLG). There are several programmes the PLG established to accelerate LED in South Africa. Its aim is to support provincial and local government initiatives (Lethoko, 2018). The PLG is also responsible for the allocation and managing of LED funds. This ensures that sufficient and sustainable projects are implemented, and opportunities are created.

The role players in promoting LED in South Africa include the district municipalities, metropolitan municipalities, NGOs, NPOs, and citizens. These role players assist in dealing with issues of poverty and under-development (Mashiteng, 2017). Meier, Pardue & London (2012) posits that stakeholders such as communities are LEDs' watchdogs in South Africa. The stakeholders also include business and labour. Their mandate is to improve the country's LED outcomes (Meir *et al.*, 2012).

2.6 The implementation of LED: Successes

There are a number of success stories in the implementation (Trousdale, 2005). The Municipal Management Team (MMT) prioritises local businesses and communities (Ramodula & Govender, 2021). MMT's role is to ensure that local businesses are taken care of and prioritised. Businesses create job opportunities to improve people's livelihoods (Cho, Robalino & Watson, 2016). LED is used as a tool to reduce poverty. Communities are prioritised to create employment opportunities and service skills programmes (Rogerson, 2009). For example, in Mpumalanga, the mine in Barberton, the CoM municipality, and the LED officers ensure that community members benefit from the mine (Mbombela, 2020). When businesses work with communities, they reduce poverty by improving people's livelihoods in the CoM (Singh & Chudasama, 2022). That is how the role of LED is determined, and establishing whether its objectives are realised.

LED initiatives promote a conducive economic environment (Waldt, 2018). LED is about creating opportunities to change people's situations or livelihoods for the better (Koma, 2014). Employment and business opportunities are sustainable to benefit communities through basic income accessibility (Horn & Lloyd, 2001). The municipality goes beyond its constitutional mandate that entails ensuring that everyone must have access to socio-economic development, fund people to start businesses that benefit communities, and increase municipal revenue.

The CoM lies on 41.1% given the 2018 data and is ranked tenth municipality in the province in terms of poverty (SERO Report, 2019). The 2011 Census statistics and SERO Report (2019) revealed that unemployed females are 29% (Socio-Economic Review and Outlook, 2019). This study questions the role of LED in the CoM because the unemployment rate keeps escalating while LED is meant to enhance people's livelihoods and decrease the unemployment rate (SERO Report, 2019).

The local youth participate in LED through youth development programmes (Trousdale, 2005). The CoM municipality has come up with programmes such as skills development, internships, and business venture programmes to add knowledge to youth's LED understanding (SERO Report, 2019). The youth also receive funding to start-up sustainable businesses given that the youth unemployment in South Africa is at its peak at 64.18 % (SERO Report, 2019). Municipalities should play a significant role in ensuring that people are given opportunities to embark on businesses to enhance their livelihoods. In some instances, municipalities allow people to form cooperatives then come up with a business plan so that they can acquire funding from municipalities.

The LED initiative helps to empower the youth to make a living without formal employment. Municipalities create sustainable jobs (Trousdale, 2015). Municipalities have powers to accelerate employment opportunities through industries such as mines and factories. It is the LED's role to advance people's livelihoods to eradicate poverty and inequalities (Saba, Ngepah & Ohonba, 2022).

The municipalities have means to root out poverty and create better lives for all (Kalonda & Govender, 2021). Through LED, municipalities ensure that poverty is eradicated. This is through employment and the creation of business opportunities. This only happens where municipalities work together with communities. If there are municipal projects taking place in communities, the municipality ensures that communities are the ones benefiting (Patience & Nel, 2021). In this way, the municipalities prioritise to its communities. Hence, funding meant to facilitate LED projects should not be used for any other programmes but those that which will benefit communities to start-up businesses.

2.7 LED implementation: Failures

Municipalities play a crucial role in coordinating and accelerating LED (Koma, 2014). South Africa's economy is controlled by large organisations and the public sector (Bosma & Levie, 2009). The creation of policies for SMMEs in 1995 in the form of White Paper on National Strategy for the development of local economic development are important in boosting the economy and women's inclusion therein. Horn and Lloyd (2001) added that local municipalities across the globe face challenges such as inequality, unemployment, the increase in poverty levels, and lack of service delivery to communities. These challenges are perpetuated by urbanisation, escalating levels of unemployment, and globalisation. Furthermore,

challenges that negatively impact LED are market failures, market imperfections, inefficiency, risks, and lack of business culture (Beaton & Kennedy, 2021).

The government of the Republic of South Africa emphasizes the importance of the development of SMMEs for the expansion of the economy (DTI, 2014). The government formulates policies and programmes to boost small and new businesses, especially in rural areas. This opens economic chances to women and other disadvantaged people (Aruleba & Jere, 2022). Regardless of the government's national guidelines, there is limited LED growth and SMMEs as a result of problems that delay growth (Ackah & Vuvor, 2011). Impediments to LED's growth in South Africa are related to access to finance, management skills, location, and investment in information technology and production costs (Olawale & Garwe, 2010).

2.7.1 Internal failures

- **Access to finance**

In South Africa, financial accessibility hinders economic development in rural areas, particularly among women. Lack of opportunities compounded by financial obstacles leads to LED problems (Lester, 2005). Financial opportunities are the gate way to economic development, once disadvantaged population are given opportunities they will be able to improve their livelihoods. Financial access should also provide opportunities to businesses that are sustainable and that will open opportunities to many and not individuals.

- **Management skills**

To improve local empowerment among women, management skills training is central for rural women (Musakwa, 2009). Low or lack of skills slows LED, particularly where there is no government and private sector support (Quinterno & Meredith, 2017). In most cases, women are not skilled about capital management that consequently result in businesses funded by public or public entities to close down. It is therefore, critical to include SETA, SEDA and the NYDA to provide management training to entrepreneurs to yield the desirable results.

- **Location**

Many people in rural areas experience slow economic development growth due to their location. This mainly affects women who have little or no opportunities (Piwowarczyk, 2019). Rural areas are seldom given attention by government when compared to urban areas that receive too much attention (Seretse, Chuwuere, Lubbe & Klopper, 2018). In many instances,

rural areas are the last to be provided with service deliverables due to their location. This is the reason why economic development is seldom visible in rural areas. Poverty, unemployment and inequality is prevalent, majority of the people living in the rural areas relies on social grants meanwhile opportunities are available however, they do not have access to the opportunities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of councillors to ensure that opportunities are brought to rural areas for accessibility.

- **Investment in information technology and cost of production**

Depending on one's location, many rural areas are deprived of investment opportunities as many businesses are largely located in urban and metropolitan areas. As a result, there is negligible rural area investments (Rogerson, 2014), causing artificial urban migration as people move there for supposed economic opportunities. The push factor of people leaving rural location is caused by inaccessible opportunities in rural areas. There is a need for government and private owned businesses to move down to rural areas and provide economic opportunities that can assist communities to gain access to improve their livelihoods.

2.7.2 External failures

- **Economic variables**

A number of economic variables are not available in developing countries which are; growth, production and expenditures resulting in pressure that hinders local economic growth (Paterson, 2017).

- **Crime and corruption**

Crime and corruption in South Africa have left local economic growth paralysed, especially in rural areas, significantly impacting women (Nel & Rogerson, 2005). That is, in an area rated high in corruption and crime, companies seldom invest there. As a result, communities suffer from unemployment and poverty. It is the responsibility of government to ensure that we live in crime and corruption free communities. That can be done by deploying more security agencies to high-risk areas to combat crime to attract investments and economic opportunities.

- **Limited participation**

The crucial tool to development is community participation, government availability, and positive response to grievances. Maxegwana *et al.* (2015) explained that the lack of

participation hinders the government from responding to development programmes. For example, community members are not given opportunities to participate in Integrated Development Plan (IDP) through IDP committees (Quick & Bryson, 2016). Limited community participation hinders transparency, accountability, and empowerment. Community participation is a mechanism for accessing information easily. Further, it is also a mechanism to disseminate information easily. For opportunities to be accessible local municipalities and entities should ensure that community participation is practiced through ward committees and ward councillors. Lack of literacy, basic education, skills development training, and business education limit rural women (De Villard, 2008). Further, the absence of provincial government weakens LED implementation (Houghton, 2014).

- **Urbanisation**

In most cases, urbanisation is as a result of inaccessibility of resources in rural areas. Most people living in urban areas are products of rural areas who went to seek for opportunities to improve their livelihoods. Hence, the study focused on rural women because people in rural areas are isolated or deprived of opportunities. This might be inaccessibility of data about opportunities or the government does not prioritise communities that are in the outskirts. For example, learners from rural areas are usually deprived of bursary opportunities when compared to those in urban areas. The World Bank (2016c) asserted that socio-economic challenges lead to urbanisation due to the triple challenges faced by South Africa, which are poverty, unemployment, and inequalities. Many people leave rural-based municipalities because of less opportunities there (Reddy & Wallis, 2012). They move to urban municipalities to seek for employment and other economic opportunities. For example, people from Bushbuckridge and Nkomazi municipalities move to the CoM to seek for employment opportunities. This is the case with other municipalities and metros. Opportunities in rural areas are seldom available given their backwardness (Dasgupta, Morton, Dodman & Karapinar, 2015). This study explored and described whether rural women are LED empowered. Many economic activities and the LED's implementation are done in urban areas instead of those in rural areas, and hence the gap in LED practices could not be rooted out (Pavel & Moldovan, 2019).

The strategies to enhance LED use the procurement process to accelerate LED (Mlambo *et al.*, 2019). Municipalities in South Africa adopt friendly approaches in rural communities, which entail the bottom-up approach (Sanders & Malomane, 2022). The LED processes'

implementation ensures that the rural based businesses benefit as well. This includes establishing watchdog committees against corruption and appointing experts and professionals qualified to oversee LED implementations (Pavel, 2019). It is crucial to ensure that rural women also benefit from municipalities and provincial government initiatives through the SMMEs, in order to improve their livelihoods for the better.

2.8 Linking LED to poverty

LED is not concentrated on economic development alone because it seeks to enhance the livelihoods of communities (Meyer, 2015). Basic services efficiencies can expand the level of poverty in communities and increase the socio-economic success (NRI, 2006; The Presidency, 2012; Smith, 2011). Local municipalities must play an important role in ensuring that poverty is eradicated (Nel & Rogerson, 2005). One of the sustainable ways to reduce the level of poverty in local municipalities is that they should reinforce LED, LEDA and SEDA programmes to ensure that they help to reduce poverty levels. The programmes are meant to create employment and business opportunities. The country's Millennium Development Goals Report (2015) revealed that for the last two decades, South Africa experienced unprecedented poverty levels due to unemployment and inequalities. The two are the root of poverty in the country. To address poverty, the country formulated a pro-poor policy, the RDP (Isaacs, 2006).

Despite the increased literature on LED, not much is studied on its implementation to address poverty (Isaacs, 2006). LED is used as a vehicle for change and it is a mechanism to improve people's livelihoods through the creation of economic opportunities. LED programmes also help to create employment opportunities in communities where they are implemented (Isaacs, 2006). Linking the economic and employment opportunities with sustainability ensures that the people's future is secured.

There are initiatives put in place by government to reduce poverty levels in South Africa, yet poverty is increasing (Gumede, 2021). Indications are that to date, the unemployment figures remain very high and the economy is poorly performing, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating unemployment (Gumede, 2021). The outbreak of COVID-19 led to job losses and the breadwinners' death. For this reason, poverty escalated as people lost their sources of income while families lost breadwinners.

Approximately half of South Africa's population is subjected to extreme poverty (MDG, 2015; Adelzadeh, 2006). Cheteni, Khamfula, and Mah (2019) gave an estimation of two million

people who live in abject poverty. South Africa is experiencing high levels of poverty, particularly among women in rural communities (Triegaardt, 2006). This view contributed to the current study in that he dealt with issues topical here. This study explored whether women in CoM's rural areas benefit from the LED initiatives meant to eradicate poverty.

According to Rogerson (2001), LED is a multi-disciplinary approach whose aim is to root out poverty. LED is one of the pro-poor economic growth policies that support the sustainable economic participation in local governments in economic initiatives.

The IDP's 2020-2021 Review Report stated that the CoM is the 10th in all the province's municipalities with poverty rated at 41.1% (Socio-Economic Review, 2019). This is an alarming percentage as there is LED in the CoM. There is a need for a turnaround strategy because LED seems to have failed to alleviate poverty in rural areas (Socio-Economic Review, 2019).

2.9 Women empowerment and LED

Since 1994, South Africa has been working tirelessly for women inclusivity and empowerment (Jeckoniah *et al.*, 2012). However, most women stay in informal settlements or rural areas where there is no economic freedom, characterised by poor infrastructure (Oberhauser & Pratt, 2004; Dlamini-Zuma, 2007). Women empowerment has been the country's focus since the 1980s (Cornwall, 2014). Stakeholders such as NGOs, the government, and multinational agencies, *inter alia*, are keen to empower women and girls, and enhance their skills and create opportunities (Cornwall, 2014). Providing women with opportunities would empower them economically and politically (Ali & Hatta, 2012). Women empowerment is championed as the strategic method to uplift economies and drive their growth.

The concept of women empowerment was topical between 1970 and 2000 as a means of social change (Cornwall, 2014). It was by then used as a radical approach; a tool to realise gender equity between men and women (Batliwala, 2007). Several authors emphasised women empowerment where the government and NGOs took a leading role to enhance women empowerment in various forms (Cornwall, 2014; Batliwala, 1993). Doing so helps to empower women economically and politically (Khan, Sajid and Rehman, 2011). Batliwala (1993) added that from the early 1980s to the 1990s, women empowerment was negotiated to ensure that they are inclusive. Women empowerment is still an ongoing process since then, though now it has eased a bit (Batliwala, 1993). This shows that there is still a lot to be done in as far as

women empowerment is concerned. Strong policies should be put in place to ensure that women in rural areas are empowered.

In the 1980s and 1990s writings, women empowerment was in the pipeline or an unfolding process that required women to stand firm and in unison to be empowered (Batliwala, 2007). Thus, women empowerment was not honoured or valued by many but rather a tool to trap the interests of economic and political inequalities (Batliwala, 1993; Kabeer, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997). The said scholars revealed that women empowerment is in theory, and hence is paid lip-service by politicians, thus is not implemented to reduce inequalities in South Africa, and even beyond.

Sen (1997) argued that giving women access to loans and business opportunities is the solution to their challenges, creating opportunities for making a living through a stable income. That might change women's lives for the better as they are mostly victimised and vulnerable to poverty and inequalities (Sen, 1997). This assertion compliments the current study as it illuminates women's struggles in rural areas. This study argued that if women are given opportunities through LED, their living conditions would change for the better. The LED initiative assists rural women in the CoM to attain socio-economic emancipation through business opportunities and loans to overcome poverty or deprivation in rural areas (Batliwala, 2007).

Ferguson (2004) argued that liberal empowerment is when people interact to have access to resources for their economic interests. He argued that economic, legal, and personal changes would be enough for women to be empowered. In this context, Ferguson (2004) promotes women's empowerment in all spheres of life. There is still a gap in knowledge to be filled in women empowerment since the 1980s and 1990s literature does not include the empowerment of rural women. In addition, less has been achieved as women empowerment remains a challenge even today (Simelane, 2020).

The subject of women empowerment deals with inequalities and this might be a win-win solution if women are included in the equal share of resources such as loans, business opportunities, holding of positions of power, and land entitlement. For example, in 2004, the African Union (AU) committed to women participation in matters of land, property, and inheritance rights (AU, 2004). However, the legislation remains a great concern as many women to date are relatively poor and do not have access to land (Simelane, 2020). At the turn of the millennium, about 13% of women to 36% men had access to land (World Bank, 2003).

Joshi *et al.* (2015) stated that for years, there has been debates and research papers written on gender equality across the world but it seems to be a scapegoat to many countries with nothing being done. Issues of inequalities in many societies are not taken seriously (World Bank, 2003). That is, the issues of inequalities are presented on papers with slightly or partially improvements but none is implemented to address such (FAO, 2012). In Africa and beyond, women in positions of power aim were achieved, with women holding bigger and strategic positions in higher institutions (Joshi *et al.*, 2015). Joshi *et al.* (2015) managed to address the challenges faced by women in most African societies and beyond.

Joshi *et al.* (2015) also managed to illuminate the inequalities faced by women and that despite their marginalisation, women managed to empower themselves in positions of power in different institutions (Madsen & Scriber, 2017). For example, in South Africa, many women today lead certain ministries, one is the Speaker of Parliament, and some are heads of provinces (Premiers) such as Mrs. Refilwe Tshweni-Tsipane in Mpumalanga and Mrs. Sefora Ntombela in the Free State, an indication that women empowerment is on track in South Africa (Simelane, 2020).

Other countries such as Brazil have done exceptionally well in terms of women empowerment, particularly through economic growth and improved technology (Bruschini, 2017; IPEA, 2016). Women involvement in labour market grew to a positive rate of 44% in 2016 (Bruschini, 2017). In Brazil, there are a number of achievements as far as LED is concerned where there is an overwhelming growth of 44% compared to the early 1990s. Women empowerment is central in Brazil (Bruschini, 2017). Women empowerment is important as Brazil had its first female president in Mrs. Dilma Rousseff in 2011.

However, women still face challenges in workplaces where they are deprived of equality with their male counterparts and work uneven hours than men (IBGE, 2016). IPEA (2016) emphasised those women have a dominant responsibility at home such as cleaning, cooking, child bearing, and raising them. Araujo and Lombardi (2013) acknowledged that at home women go through informal jobs and trading. In India, employed married women from the age of 15 to 49 are 43%, revealing employment inequalities (Sundari, 2020). About 75% of men work and 11% of women are employed, with 20% of women not paid but work under hard and difficult conditions (Badisha *et al.*, 2009). Singh (2020) show that Indian women were still not empowered as they were still not liberated in workplaces and had a larger burden of

responsibilities at home than men. Patriarchy dominates in India, given the above observations where men dominate women (Pandian, 2020).

Women's movements from one place to another for reasons such as market or health visits are limited in India, where about 38% of women are allowed to travel beyond the villages' jurisdictions (Badisha, 2009). However, not all women in rural areas are permitted to travel. A large number of women do not have permission while others have. Women in rural areas have less travel allowance than women in urban areas Alsawalqa (2021) due to their inferior status and gender, educational levels, and marital status. In India, literate women stand greater chances of movements (Mehta & Sai, 2021). Employed women have more access to movement in India while women in rural areas are deprived of similar movement opportunities (Mehta & Sai, 2021).

Between 2000 and 2013, there were improvements in empowering women across the globe in terms of educational outcomes at various levels (World Bank, 2016). Due to LED, South Africa has seen a net enrollment of 81 to 88 % at primary and 60 to 70 % at secondary level with an improved literacy rate of between 84 and 89 % (Berlinski, Sebastian & Patrick, 2011). Looking at these measures, local economic empowerment has made progress in women than men, thereby reducing the gender gap (Vyas, Jessie & Lori, 2015).

On health indicators, women have significantly experienced improved and better standards of living through LED (FAO, 2011). The provision of various support initiatives by the government through Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has seen a number of improvements in local economies benefiting women, resulting in improved prenatal care from 86 to 95 % (Gerxhani, 2004).

However, there is a distinctive portion of women that remains disadvantaged regardless of LED initiatives in rural and urban areas (Vyas & Charlotte, 2009). Many women in rural areas remain unnoticed and unpaid especially in domestic work and for their contributions in family farms or businesses (Bloom, Tobias & Patrick, 2011). There are major gaps in gender segregation across South Africa, especially in rural areas where these situations are widely prevalent (Buvinic, Rebecca & Gayatri, 2014). Different monitoring and implementation strategies on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can assist to improve the quality and empowerment of women in rural areas. The existing data illustrate the major areas that need improvements, especially in rural areas (Marc *et al.*, 2016). Rural women remain impoverished because there are seldom opportunities to them because they are women. LED seems to be the

mechanism to empower women and reduce poverty levels. It is the tool to improve the livelihoods of women in rural areas.

2.10 Access to credit and finance for rural women

During the 1950s, the credit programmes in South Africa did not succeed in reaching out people whom they were established for. The credit programmes did not focus on the element of women empowerment, which left the poor poorer and inequalities in society escalated (Sabharwal, nd). Access to credit is part of economic empowerment because it improves the livelihoods of women in society (Rakowski, 2010). Micro finance programmes, which emerged in the 1980s aimed at addressing the challenges of women empowerment by means of eradicating poverty and creating employment opportunities (Mayoux, 1999). The micro finance initiative is telescoped by various bodies, this includes the government and researchers as a prominent strategy that does not specifically focuses on the benefiting women alone; however, also inclusive to the development processes (Ali & Hatta, 2012).

Credit finance promotes women's quality of life and ensuring they are inclusive in socio and politically in society (Khan, Sajid & Rehman, 2011). Giving women credit is a prominent pure reflection of empowering them and improving their economic livelihoods (Mayoux, 2012). Furthermore, Ali and Hatta (2012) stated that women are targeted population for micro finance or micro credit because most women are facing abject poverty than men. Access to credit is considered prominent to empowerment because it gives women opportunities to fulfil socio-economic and political roles (Norwood, 2014).

Gender inequality and women empowerment are the UNDP's tasks and its approach to development (Buvinic *et al.*, 2014). Several organisations such as inter alia, NGOs, World Bank, the African Union, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the USAID support women empowerment policies and legislation (World Bank, 2020). The gender unit and the inclusive growth portfolio give support through various stakeholders on funding of the women owned SMMEs in South Africa (Vyas *et al.*, 2015).

Women are given credit opportunities and other financial services, particularly those in rural areas (Jackson, 2016). South Africa has sound policies and legislation, coupled with a well-regulated and well-governed financial sector (Jackson, 2016). There are a number of donors who fund women to address their needs yet the women capacitating initiatives to own

businesses face difficulties when accessing financial services (Roy & Patro, 2022). Braun (2017) observed that women who are entrepreneurs face several challenges and injustices. That is, even though women have better credit score records than men, it is still harder for them to access funding than men (Andres & Gimeno, 2021). Braun (2017) added that challenges to opportunities were found to include less financial knowledge and discriminatory attitude by banks, and that the BEE code targets did not include women in their financial services. Women are subordinated to date; hence, they have less opportunities than men. This is as a result of cultural beliefs that men are more powerful than women and that men are the heads and providers for families.

Consequently, there is lack of awareness of development finance in businesswomen, lack of financial confidence, and lack of appropriate financial products (Iram, Bisil & Latif, 2021). Mashapure *et al.* (2022) noted that Black entrepreneurs and rural women have opportunities to borrow money if they have the right business support. The focus is on advice and mentoring as this could also be a challenge to the prospective financier (Dickens, 2015).

However, the Business Development Services (BDS) statistics reveal that many agencies show a male-female client ratio of 70:30 (Dickens, 2015). Mutereko (2020) indicated that women are not supported in their entrepreneurial initiatives despite being the dominant entrepreneurs in South Africa. South Africa's 2013 small business survey showed that 58.2% of small business owners were using the borrowing technique, either formal or informal, for business purposes (Stats SA, 2013). Roughly, 6.7% relied on private money such as burial societies, savings clubs, stokvels, and stores for credit and savings (Gibson, 2013).

Moreover, 41.8 % of small business owners do not use formal or informal finances but rather rely on family and friends for borrowing, and personal savings (Nguyen & Canh, 2021). Female small business owners were found to be significantly more likely to be financial excluded, that is, 43.7% of female business owners compared to 39.2% of male business owners (Blackden, 2015). Female small business owners are less likely to bank, that is, 43.1% of the females banked compared with 52.1% of the males (Andres, Gimeno & Cabo, 2020).

Entrepreneurship and commercial banking in South Africa view entrepreneurs who do not have formal records for their business such as being registered and paying tax may not be borrowed money by the financial institutions (Blackden, 2015). The lack of formal records, therefore, impacts youth and rural women who want to start small businesses. In the absence of proper infrastructure, market opportunities and, business and management skills, there is no way there

can be a growing number of successful businesses (Adam & Alarifi, 2021). The challenge of accessibility to financial resources has a negative impact on rural women. Financial impediments reduce opportunities for women to partake in development projects, and this has a negative impact on women in rural areas (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008).

2.11 Economic inequalities in South Africa

There are nine provinces in South Africa. Mpumalanga, Gauteng, and the Western Cape Provinces are the highest in the inequality rankings (Sartorius, 2015). Bhorat *et al.* (2012) acknowledged that the percentage of men and women employed in government and the private sector are not the same. Thus, more men are given opportunities than women in this regard. For example, South Africa is yet to have a female President, compared to countries like Malawi, Brazil, Australia, the Philippines, Britain (twice so far), Germany, Tanzania, and Liberia. The only time South Africa had a female Deputy President was during former President Mbeki's tenure when Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka served in that capacity. In informal sectors such as domestic work and the hospitality industry such as restaurants, hotels, motels, and lodges, women dominate men. During apartheid, White men were given opportunities on a silver platter than women (Frederick & Yu, 2017).

In 2015 and 2016, investigations done under the Employment Equity Act 55 of (1998) discovered that women were deprived of opportunities at work and in political spaces (Espí *et al.*, 2019). Such opportunities included the remuneration packages between men and women. Espí *et al.* (2019) claimed that there is a gap as far as women empowerment is concerned. Several authors focused on the remuneration packages between men and women and found that there is a gap between men and women (Bhorat & Goga, 2013; Rogan & Alfors, 2019; Mosomi, 2019). Mosomi (2019) found that the pay gap is at an average of 23% and 25%. Bezuidenhout *et al.* (2019) also discovered that the remuneration package is determined by the company one works for. In the mining sector, women are discriminated against in terms of attaining positions of power (Kaggwa, 2020). Silva and Klasen (2021) added that women are not included in decision making bodies and employment growth. Thus, women's non-inclusiveness in decision making bodies portrays inequalities between men and women (Gumede, 2021). Women are still subordinated in the work space and general access to economic opportunities. To date, men are still leading in positions of power and women are disregarded. For example, in the nine provinces in South Africa, only two females are premiers

and the rest are male. However, in the nine provinces, executive council positions are dominated by women.

2.12 The funders of LED in South Africa's municipalities

LED has no specific funding as municipalities continuously seek for funding (Patterson, 2008). Municipal funding is in the form of collected rates and taxes from residents or grants from the national and provincial governments (Gotze & Hartmann, 2021). Municipalities also seek for financial assistance from private entities, NGOs, and local business people (Bergh, Erlingsson & Wittberg, 2021). LED funding depends on several well-wishers (Mashamaite, 2010). There are weaknesses with Patterson's observations here.

According to Patterson (2008), there is no specific LED funding and that any organisation can fund this programme, meaning that LED is less valued. The budget assists in eradicating poverty through employment opportunity creation and economic growth, and NGOs, NPOs, and the state make a difference by funding municipals' LED programmes (Bertik, 2020).

2.13 LED in South Africa

LED is central in South Africa's rural development even though it is not popular among the rich South Africans (Nel & Humphry, 1999). During the apartheid era, black people had insurmountable socio-economic and development challenges due to marginalisation, segregation, and discrimination. Digby (2013) asserted that South Africa's Black population mostly lives in poverty, are uneducated, live in extremely harsh conditions, and are largely unemployed. The wealthy people become richer and the poor get poorer (Bratanova, Loughnan, Klein & Wood, 2016). Khambule (2018) asserted that the strategies intended for LED would fail if the government does not provide the mechanisms to guard against corruption. The said strategies usually fail because poor people are used as instruments of election campaigns (Stetka, Surowiec & Mazak, 2018). To date, most people believe that corruption is at the centre stage in South Africa and believe that to have access to opportunities, one must be close to political tycoons or related to a government official.

Drastic changes are needed, changes involving local businesses and community members recognising where municipalities can make businesses run smoothly and ensure sustainability even on employment opportunities (van der Waldt & Fourie, 2022). Not much has been researched about LED in rural areas. The World Bank and the United Nations believe that public participations in LED are for a good course (Baxter, Barnes, Lee, Mead & Clowe,

2022). LED was introduced to support or equip local communities by funding projects to reduce unemployment, eradicate poverty, create opportunities through businesses, and stimulate industries (Rackie, Chen, Ahakwa, Atingabilli, Absah & Baku, 2020).

Most South Africans live in marginalised townships (Spjeldnas, 2021). The apartheid system controlled the central government and the local government was controlled by the national government with no access to its own municipalities (Strauss, 2019). When the country became free in 1994, municipalities were considered as crucial for job creation and poverty reduction. Mlambo, Ndebele and Zubane (2019) stated that LED is seen as a gate to economic emancipation, however, it is not used as an instrument of change in local municipalities.

The democratic South Africa inherited apartheid's economic burdens that needed drastic attention to untangle (Gwedla & Shackleton, 2020). The term LED is new to rural South Africans and this creates confusion to LED's implementation (Juta, 2023). South Africa today is in the third phase of LED where its focus is on service delivery, social and economic growth, and accelerating LED strategies that are suitable to produce viable local businesses and enhance unison (Mashamaite & Lethoko, 2018).

LED has been an undergoing process in South Africa from the early 1900s (Pavel & Moldovan, 2019). The LED projects were in the Witwatersrand, Eastern Cape, and Port Elizabeth during the apartheid administration that focused on industrial growth (Pierre, 2013). South Africa was categorised among the hardworking and committed countries as it performed exceptionally well on its macro-economic sector. However, there were shortfalls such as less skilled personnel, fewer NGOs, and NPOs to implement LED (Nel, 2001). One of the aspects that led to socio-economic gap between the Black majority and the White minority is the extreme poverty and inequalities because the apartheid government was racially biased towards the latter. That is, Asians, Coloureds, and Blacks were paid far less than Whites, and had low-income growth as a result (UNDP's Human Development Report, 2003). In dealing with the apartheid's historic incidents of inequalities, David (2003) suggested that the government implemented the people centred approach to economic redistribution. Theron (2005) stated that the people centred mechanism focuses on community development.

The establishment of LED after 1994 was hand in glove with the municipalities' transition (Nel, 2001). In 1996, when the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was drafted, the local municipalities were given a huge role to play. The Constitution further alludes to the fact that the local municipalities' objective is to promote their residents' socio-economic

development (South Africa's Constitution, 1996). LED was established to fight against extreme poverty and unemployment (Van Wyk, 2004).

LED strategies should enhance businesses for local consumption and export for profit (Julien & Ramangalahy, 2017). South Africa is confronted by the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (ANC, 2007). LED sought to bring sustainable economic development for all, only if there is cooperation in the country. In South Africa, LED is experienced in various forms, that is, from urban entrepreneurialism to rural survival strategies (Wekwete, 2014). LED is supported through the formation and implementation of policies meant to enhance rural development (Wekwete, 2014). Increased responsibilities and accountability among community members through various programmes enable women empowerment and skills development in rural communities (Nel, 2001).

2.14 LED in other countries

This section discusses LED in other countries, focusing on Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, Botswana, Namibia and Canada, respectively.

2.14.1 LED in Zimbabwe

Africa's LED network is meant to provide assistance to cities and governments. The objective is to build strong local economic growth. In Zimbabwe, LED is a national development policy aimed at supporting the marginalised people (Institute Research Triangle, 2009). The Zimbabwean state created an enabling environment by removing unwanted bureaucratic barriers and costs to promote knowledge symmetries. Similarly, the private sector provides the much-needed capital and know-how, bringing in needed employment opportunities to local citizens (Institute Research Triangle, 2009). Furthermore, the civic society plays a crucial role of checks and balances, ensuring the improved quality of life for the community. The concept of LED is highly recognised in Zimbabwe. It is at the centre of government's rural development initiatives. It is vibrant at the local government level.

The Zimbabwe government has partially redressed the structurally embedded causes of marginalisation and poverty in local communities through different legislation and policies. Some of those policies include the 1990-1993 Land Resettlement Scheme, the 1996 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), The 2008 Land Reform Programme, and the 2018 Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-economic Transformation (ZIM-ASSET) (COGTA, 2018).

Zimbabwe's LED saw a negative growth between 1998 and 2008 as the country went through its worst economic meltdown (Madimu, 2019). Many enterprises closed down as a result of hyperinflation. This led to LED's disappearance, and hence increased women's struggles in Zimbabwe (Munangwagwa, 2009). The LED initiatives suffocated, leaving many sectors unable to support local people (Ngundu, 2010). In general, Southern Africa exhibited positive LED impact and these are well documented. In Tanzania, for example, Pallangyo and Rees (2010) indicated that the government initiated local government programmes to develop human resources and institutional, and organisational aspects. It provided more opportunities for women, especially the vulnerable and marginalised. There are few opportunities for women empowerment in Zimbabwe, which may be caused by economic imbalances and inequalities in that country. The economy of Zimbabwe to date remains questionable, as there are seldom opportunities for women to be assisted by government to start-up businesses and improve their livelihoods. In most cases, the push factor is at the centre stage, and men and women leave the country to other countries to improve their standard of living. Precisely, because the standard of living in Zimbabwe is dire and there are seldom opportunities.

2.14.2 LED in Nigeria

Improving rural women's livelihoods in Nigeria is considered crucial if the country is to root out the socio-economic impediments in poor communities (Zaid & Popolla, 2010). There are several initiatives that were established in Nigeria that were supported by global agencies and the state. The intention was to better the rural areas' living standards. Policies were put in place to this effect but the rural women's standard of living is still dire compared to men (Fabiya & Akande, 2015). This might be because of their lack of education, financial resources, and access to credit.

The Nigerian state constitutes three spheres of government, namely the federal, the state, and the local (Ibietan & Ndukwe, 2014). Nigeria's local government is considered to be close to communities. This means that the local government comes up with policies and programmes to create employment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship through LED to develop communities. Communities in Nigeria come up with initiatives supported and financed by the state (Michael, 2014).

2.14.3 LED in Ghana

Among sub-Saharan African countries, Ghana was the first country to be independent, after its colonisation by Britain (Adom & Zogbator, 2015). After Ghana's independence, the local

municipalities did not consider LED, thereby created challenges such as the lack of job opportunities, high unemployment rates, and economic development (Oduro-Ofori, 2016). In 1987, the local government system was established to enhance development in rural areas. The Local Government Act (Act 462) empowered the government to promote and encourage social development and economic activities to ensure that rural development challenges are rooted out (Oduro-Ofori, 2016).

The Ghana Statistics Services (2017) shows that Ghana's rural women are literate but their percentage is less than that of men. Ghana's literate women make up 29% of those in informal settlements with lower primary grades (Ghana Statistics Services, 2016). Women headed households in rural areas are steadily increasing and their dependency rate also rises. Ghana's LED processes are dependent on international development agencies (Akuduku, 2018). These agencies include the International Labour Organisations (ILO), GIZ, and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Subrahmanya (2022)). The UNDP enhances the rural communities' financial support in business start-ups. The UNDP policies in Ghana were tailor-made to provide opportunities to women to help fight against the country's development predicaments (UNDP, 2002).

2.14.4 LED in Botswana

Botswana's LED programmes have improved the livelihoods of people in villages such as Mabele, Kavimba, and Satau (Denkler, 2009). The implementation of the LED programmes and government support provide jobs for the marginalised people in the country's peripheral areas. The LED also protects traditional culture, sacred areas, and environments through women empowerment in rural areas (Jabeenet *et al.*, 2020). LED programmes are visible through extensive support from traditional leaders, government, and the private sector (Eiseb, Shifokotoka & Kamwi, 2014). More than a decade ago, Botswana's women headed homes were about 50% (Mohammad, Khosravi, Ziapour & Irandoost, 2020). However, they are not entitled to the land and in cases where the husband dies, the land automatically becomes the male children's property (Fombad, 2014). Women seldom have opportunities to access land for commercial purposes because they are categorised as unfit because they are women and men are regarded as heads of families. Hence, when their husbands pass on, the inheritance is transferred to the male child, which remains a challenge. In Mozambique women suffer because of inequalities (Eiseb *et al.*, 2014). Even after the equality statutes were included in

the Constitution in Botswana, women remained deprived such as the case in South Africa and Malawi (Mutangadura, 2004).

2.14.5 LED in Namibia

In Namibia, the public and private dialogue implementation strengthened the LED (Hipondoka, Uiseb, 2015). The said dialogue allowed the government to diagnose problems and assess various opportunities where the government could improve its LED process. The dialogue assisted Namibia's economic development, thereby creating job opportunities for the country's poor people. The dialogue increased the economic growth and development paces in local areas and reduced migration (Thomson, Kentikelenis & Stubbs, 2017). As stated, the purpose of LED is eradicate poverty by providing opportunities that would allow communities to be economically liberated. Community members should therefore, be assisted in terms of initiating businesses and exploring job opportunities. By providing these LED opportunities, it therefore restricts communities to move to urban areas.

2.14.6 LED in Canada

In Canada, the local municipalities are controlled by local authorities. However, the provincial government's functions converge to municipal activities. No matters of proposed municipality legislation proceed without consulting the municipality first (Pretorius, 2017). Canada comprises twenty municipalities, twenty cities, six regional municipalities, and a single metropolitan municipality (Subramanyam & Marais, 2022). These municipalities are under the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) (Rogerson, 1994). The FCM Quality of Life Report (2005) shows that Canada's urbanisation is central to development as it has grown by 50% from 16 million in 1971 to 64 million in 2001. This led to population increase in cities and the economic growth (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Annual Report, 2003).

The OECD Annual Report (2003) stated that the Canadian government still benefits its people with development such as positive economic growth, institutions of higher learning, arts, culture, and leisure. However, the benefits on education, culture, and leisure in a growing city result in poor livelihoods (Gebre & Gebremedhin, 2019). This leads to lesser chances to motivate business people, and consequently, the number of employees declines. In this case, suitable development is compromised (OECD Annual Report, 2003). The challenges encountered by Canada's local municipalities are the population expansion and growth.

Municipalities are expected to bring interchange such that projects are run according to economic development expectations (Mohale, 2016).

There are LED programmes that take place in Canada. There is also the blueprint put in place to address summons encountered by locals (Felsky, 2021). The intention is to address different municipalities' Individual Development Accounts (IDA) (OECD, 2003). Canada has two local-based develop programmes in Calgary and Kitchener-Waterloo, which were progressive and a success. There was an initiative for a five-year learn or save that targeted 3 675 poorer community members who benefitted from the IDA accounts (OECD, 2003; Rogerson, 1994). The initiative was inclusive to local communities, local government, management of the LED Fund, and the Management of Technical Support for Nodal Economic Development Planning (OECD, 2003).

2.15 Conclusion

LED is an instrument to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment. Its aim is to open business opportunities in rural areas. The reviewed literature uncovered crucial aspects regarding the importance of LED in Africa and elsewhere. Information obtained here was used to address this study's aim and objectives, and answer the research questions. This study focused on the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas. The relevant developmental theories to assist this study were reviewed. The extent to which LED propels and improves poverty situations varies with the approaches implemented by individual governments in terms of their support and empowerment programmes.

Given the reviewed works above, it is clear that LED is one of the vehicles governments use to develop rural areas to empower women and improve their socio-economic and political livelihoods. Different factors need to be considered in providing the best possible ways to improve the rural economic development. This could be through addressing the obstacles to economic growth, government intervention, women empowerment policy development and, financial and management assistance from both the government and private sectors.

CHAPTER 3

THEORIES AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical frameworks that were utilised to achieve the aim and objectives of the study, and answer the research questions are presented in this chapter. Further, in the study the legislations that are used in crafting local economic development (LED) policies in municipalities were discussed. This study consists of three conceptual frameworks; feminism theory, which constitutes of; liberal, radical, and socialist feminism. Furthermore, the study presented the Rural Development Framework (RDF), and lastly focused on the three approaches of modernisation theory; Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and, Gender and Development (GAD) approach. However, the study leans towards liberal feminism, Rural Development Framework and GAD approach.

The chapter further elaborates on LED policies and the legislative frameworks, which includes the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), White Paper on Local Government (1998), National LED Framework (2007), the policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa, and the Local Government Municipal System Act (21 of 2000). Furthermore, the chapter reflects on the Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy, Extended Public Works Programme, Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme, Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy and Reconstruction and Development Programme. The policies and legislations utilised are enhancing economic growth and they were implemented to address the triple bottom challenges in the country, which are poverty, unemployment, and inequalities.

3.2 Feminism theory

According to Hook (2015:14) feminism is “a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression”. The feminist theory was developed to help challenge traditions associated with how communities perceive women (Biana, 2020). It provides an overview of the socially constructed human behaviour. The feminist theory is a turning point for inequalities between men and women; whether in socio-economic and political (Hooks, 2000). It helps to bring to light those challenges women encounter daily. The feminist theory was used in this study to reflect on women’s empowerment in rural areas. This study added value to rural women’s

empowerment as it sought to address the challenges faced in trying to empower them. According to the phenomenon studied herein, the feminist theory simplifies that challenges encountered by women can be mitigated once the feminist theory is utilised to deal with challenges of women empowerment. Hartmann (2003) asserted that the feminist theory stands on the notion that there are inequalities between men and women hence, there is a need to encourage for justice and freedom to women in any form.

According to the feminist theory, women are deprived, and hence the need to seek mutual benefits like men (Dhatt, Theobald & Jackson, 2017). A feminist is an individual who is against the societal traditions that recognise women as male subordinates, promotes, and supports the notion that men's dominance is biological (Garrett, 1987). The feminist theory posits that women have a natural worth in society. Ritzer (1988) claimed that the feminist theory tries to answer the global question, 'what about women'? This is an important question because the theory seeks to ensure that women get a fair share of resources and opportunities. It is assumed that if women could be given equal treatment and access to resources as men that could yield positive outcomes to the empowerment of women (Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006). There was a need for the application of the feminism theory because it seeks to answer to the challenges of women disempowerment to empowerment by providing equal share to resources as well as same treatment and not as subordinates.

Chinn and Wheeler (1985) viewed feminism as how women are valued in society and expose inequalities between men and women. The unequal opportunities between men and women are perpetuated by cultural backgrounds which leads to women inferiority (Chancer & Walkins, 2006). Andermahr, Lovell & Wolkowitz (1997) averred that the feminist theory is about women inclusiveness because it takes note of their rights. Furthermore, the feminist theory allows women to think outside the box, come up with perspectives and knowledge to their benefits (Tong, 1992).

The feminist theory underpins this study because it seeks to unravel issues to do with women's empowerment in rural areas. Despite that we are currently living in modern times where the rights approach is dominant, the trend is such that most women are excluded from economic participation. In addition, the world's social structure has not changed much in this regard. Patriarchy is at the centre of women's exclusion and their domination by men. Saltana (2007) noted that the feminist theory was propounded to help address this phenomenon. Sandra, Turner, Tina and Maschi (2015) opined that the feminist theory is based on powers over a

group of individuals due to gender and subordination. The feminist theory does not support masculine behaviour, including patriarchy.

Feminist theory rejects the cultural behaviour and reasons that women are not powerful and intelligent (Engelbrecht, 1996). Men's dominance in various institutions such as government and the private sector is a challenge. Msuya (2019) claimed that feminist theory rejects the cultural behaviour that is informed by societal constructs. For example, only men are expected to participate in economic activities. This example portrays the level of male dominance despite the feminist theory's supposition that women are equal to the task. Women have proven beyond societal perspectives that they are capacitated. To date, universities in South Africa are dominated by women, and women are leading in terms of qualifications. In both public and private institutions, many women are in leadership positions. For example, some are chief executive officers in hospitals and their performance is on the par. This precisely indicates that women have the potential to excel and should benefit equally as men.

Feminist theory includes aspects such as expectations, status, and power (Utz & Nordmeyer, 2007). Gender empowerment focuses on women empowerment so that they, for example, hold similar positions in society such as their male counterparts. That is, the idea behind women empowerment is to see women at par with men socially, politically, economically, and religiously. Women should, through merit, be given opportunities to hold top posts in various organisations (Osituyo, 2018). Empowerment must be on top of the agenda in both private and government institutions and its focus should be on women (Carr, 2003; Grosz, 2010). Feminist theory focuses on the significance of the socio-political and economic arrangements. Gender should not be used to side-line women from holding leadership roles in society (Wu, Fuller, Shi & Wilkens, 2020).

Culturally, women have been dominated by men in all aspects of life, that is, political, social, and economic. For example, in tribal authorities to date, women are still suppressed and they are seldom allowed to make decisions about tribal authority resolutions and consequently lead to inferiority. This is perpetuated by how society is socially constructed. The feminist theory claims that women's inferiority is socially constructed, and inequalities between women and men underline that relationship (Radtke, 2017). The theory advocates for women's advancement in equal access to life endeavours (Benschop, 2021). Empowerment strives to assist women break the glass window and understand that they are not emancipated however, dominated. This theory advocates for change on women's perspective regarding how the

society is socially constructed. In societies across the world, there is gender favouritism (Jayachandran, 2015).

There are six feminist theories, which are liberal, cultural, socialist, radical feminism, existentialist, and psychoanalytic feminism (Kaylee, DeFelice & Diller, 2019). This study focuses on liberal feminism, radical feminism, and socialist/Marxist feminism. This is because these theories outline the challenges women encounter in life and provides solutions to them. The idea here is for women's total emancipation; socio-economic and political.

3.2.1 Liberal feminism (Theory of unequal opportunities)

Liberal feminism is one of the influential branches that advance the feminist theory's agenda. Liberal feminism was initiated by democratic philosophers, John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. The theory's main objective is to give women the same socio-economic and political opportunities as men. Women must be given opportunities that are equal to men (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The belief is that women and men have equal capacity, and they are both rational and innovative.

Liberal feminism advocates for women's emancipation (Kortweg & Yurdakul, 2020). Liberal feminism calls for society to take women's issues seriously by rooting out how societies perceive them as deficient citizens (Connel, 1990). In the 20th century, scholars such as Grimke (1970) and Wollstonecraft (1975) argued that women are equal to men and their rights are the same, and hence no one's rights should be infringed. Liberal feminism is centred on equal opportunities between men and women in all hierarchical societies (Brodin & Paterson, 2019). It focuses on how societies perceive women, which this includes sex roles and sex stereotypes.

Women are deprived of social, political, and economic development (Hartmann, 2003). Acker (1994) reasoned that liberal feminism focuses on discrimination, injustices, unfairness, and rights. The strategy for drastic change is to restructure the implemented and existing policies to cover women in the economic, political, and social spheres of life. According to Manzi (2019), women are discriminated against in many aspects of life, especially in economic and political spheres.

Consequently, this study sought to investigate women's daily challenges and how men dominate them in LED projects using the case of CoM. The Liberal theory is useful to the study because it encourages that women should benefit equally as men in LED projects that are meant to benefit everyone eligible. It is therefore, important to explore and gain insights about

inclusion of women in developmental projects. The unequal opportunities between men and women should be mitigated, as the objective of liberal feminism is to ensure that there is equal distribution of benefits between men and women. Schwanke (2013) states that despite the increasing number of women dominating in middle management positions, men still dominate in executive positions. There has been a positive response in employment; however, women are still experiencing a significant challenge of under-representation in workplaces (Latchanah & Singh, 2016). According to the World Economic Forum (2022), the statistics on women in senior positions has been immovable globally in the last five years (2017-2022), which is at 42.7% and questionable.

3.2.2 Radical feminism

Radical feminists largely criticise liberal feminists. The latter believe that the way life issues are handled in society are fair and effective. This includes the socio-economic and political aspects. In contrast, radical feminism argues that equal opportunities between men and women are undoable because how society is socially constructed promotes patriarchy (Armstrong, 2020). The liberal theory has managed to make sure that women's rights are considered and has managed to discourage the idea that women are second class citizens to men (Tillmar, Ahl, Berglund & Pettersson, 2022) . This theory enforces that we change how societies are socially constructed, precisely by reiterating that women are equal to men in the socio-political and economic spheres of life. Hence, the idea should be infused even in schools so that communities adapt to the radical feminism theory.

The radical feminism theory helps us to understand the difficulties faced by those who advocate for women empowerment in rural areas through LED (Daphna-Tekoah & Sharaby, 2019). The theory posits that society is socially constructed such that men are considered superior to women (Burrell & Flood, 2019). In societies where men are considered socially powerful and leaders, such societies are still stuck with cultural beliefs where men are in control and the economic structure benefits them (Banaji, Fiske & Massey, 2021). This study explored and described whether men's dominance still exists and whether there is a need for women empowerment in rural areas using the case of CoM.

Patriarchy is central to women's oppression and economic exploitation (Pierik, 2022). Biana (2020) argued that the radical feminist theory is not women inclusive as they do not provide support or access to women's socio-political and economic expressions. The feminist theory is an instrument used to provide support for women at all costs (Carastathis, 2014). In this regard,

the feminist theory provides support to women as a positive initiative, the idea is to break barriers to women's empowerment.

3.2.3 Marxist/socialist feminism

Marxist/socialist feminism brought ideas about women deprived of opportunities and undergoing oppression from classical feminism. Marxist feminism focuses on how women are treated and their status in society. According to Armstrong (2020), Marxist feminists believe that both males and females are equally important. Olsson & Martiny (2018) noted that Marxist/socialist feminists focus on stereotypes such as women being biologically gifted for home responsibilities. The Marxist/socialist feminist theory argues that equality between men and women cannot succeed in the midst of capitalist systems of production (Miner, 1993). That is, traditionally, men own the means of production, control the economic levers, and hence women would struggle to empower themselves economically (Ferrant, Pasando & Nowacka, 2014). Rural women are seldom empowered by government through various interventions. One of these is to provide financial support for women to start-up businesses, and provide employment opportunities for both men and women equally and allow women to practise commercial agriculture to sustain their livelihoods.

3.3 Rural Development Framework

During former President Jacob Zuma's tenure, rural development was South Africa's development priority. The Rural Development Framework (RDF) included robust policies and legislation to enhance rural development (Torre & Wallet, 2020). The RDF was the initial framework towards mitigating the socio-economic development challenges faced by rural communities in South Africa. The RDF outlines how the government, together with rural communities, aim to eradicate poverty in rural areas by establishing projects that assist women to acquire financial support. The aim of LED was to eradicate poverty and enhance the livelihoods of the previously disadvantaged groups (Meyer-Stammer, 2003).

The RDF noted that three quarters of South Africa's population are poor (World Bank Group, 2020). Included here are the elderly, youth, and women. The number of women living in poverty is higher than that of men (UN Women, 2022). One would suggest that communities are still informed by cultural practices that perpetuate patriarchy (Msuya, 2019). The men's economic involvement is enhanced while side-lining women (Oppong & Bannor, 2022). The RDF helps to mitigate the socio-economic challenges faced by women in rural areas (COGTA,

2016). One of the RDF's strengths is its advocacy for the fully funded programmes meant to support rural women's economic endeavours (Lesetedi, 2018).

In this regard, the RDF considers women as the most vulnerable in rural areas. That is the reason RDF initiates well-informed programmes to help eradicate poverty (COGTA, 2016). One of these programmes is to accelerate financial support and programmes to empower women in rural areas (Ramaphakela, 2015). RDF promotes women empowerment by encouraging them to be part of rural development processes (Thabethe & Mathe, 2010). The RDF concept posits that women in rural areas are not considered for any economic development programmes due to their vulnerability (Jaka & Shava, 2018). The RDF theory is in line with the phenomenon of the study because the study sought to address challenges of women empowerment in rural areas which is in line with the theory. The theory seeks to address challenges faced by women in rural areas. It furthermore, posits that the development of women in rural areas needs interventions of government as financial resources are dire. The theory further posits that for LED programmes to be a success in rural areas the government should intervene for women to acquire resources for the betterment of their livelihoods.

3.4 The Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and the Gender and Development (GAD) approaches

Over the past three decades, programmes that are not inclusive to gender roles and the consequences of not including women in developmental roles were denounced (Munyaradzi, nd). Integrating women into development programmes with a belief that it will end poverty and socio-economic and political status is ongoing (Memorial University, 2013). The three approaches; WID, WAD, and GAD, have made society to disregard how the societies are socially constructed in the economic sector (FAO, 2012). The conceptual framework is discussed below.

3.4.1 Women in Development

WID is a concept that sprang up during the 1950s to the 1970s on the modernization agenda that sought to incorporate women in the world's economic development (Tinker, 1990). The WID looks at women's productive roles in terms of their beliefs. WID helps increase women's chances to access basic education, credit facilities, and technology (Maseno & Kilonzo, 2011; Wilson, 2015). The approach furthermore, states that communities can eliminate the cultural expectations by providing access to opportunities for women (Connell, 2011). At first, the WID

approach experienced some challenges. The main challenge was the inherited patriarchal structures that interfered with the WID's programmes (Lesetedi, 2018).

The priority of WID is on more equal participation by women in job opportunities and economic activities. Bayeh (2016) asserted that the WID approach is influential such that it enhances people's understanding of developmental needs, more especially on job opportunities as other interesting elements. The WID approach's disadvantage is that it did not consider the rural social settings and other aspects informed by culture, which perpetuates major constraints to women (Sarah, 2013).

Consequently, the WID perpetuated challenges faced by women in rural areas instead of helping them to develop economically through self-help projects. Major policies needed to be implemented to deal with such challenges if women inclusiveness was to be realised (Asya, 2015). Due to the WID approach's weakness, the WAD approach was introduced by the United Nations in the second half of 1970's in its associated women's conferences to help address the former's shortcomings in enhancing women empowerment.

3.4.2 Women and Development

The latter part of the 1970s saw the birth of the Women and Development (WAD) concept. This was after WID was criticised for not focusing on developmental approaches and discarding patriarchy. The objective of WAD is that women should be given equal opportunities as men and they should be stripped off from the triple bottom challenges; poverty, unemployment, and inequalities and also contribute to the developmental processes (Bayeh, 2016).

From a WAD perspective, as much as women are inclusive in developmental activities; employment and business opportunities, they are still overlooked and impoverished in donor development place (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). The WAD concept dealt with the relationship between women and developmental processes than focusing on viable strategies for empowering women in development. The WID and the WAD concepts focused on empowering women to be self-reliant through ownership of small and medium scale businesses in rural areas instead of being confined to household chores such as cooking, cleaning, and child bearing.

It is concluded that the WAD approach is women centred, its interest is on women creating opportunities which are centric to women and engineered for women's interest (Moyo, 2022).

According to Moyoyetta (2004), WAD considers both men and women as not getting opportunities from the global economic structures because of how class and wealth are shared. The WID and WAD conceptual challenges led to the GAD approach (Maseno & Kilonzo, 2011).

3.4.3 Gender and Development

The failures of WID and WAD were the key influence to the birth of Gender and Development (GAD) in the 1980s. It was influenced by the organisational experiences and writings of the underdeveloped countries. The reason to the failure with the WID and WAD approaches in making women's lives better by attracting more developmental goals (Rathgeber, 1994). The GAD approach identifies women empowerment as a critical element of societal change. The GAD approach considers participation as a crucial element that promotes women's empowerment.

The GAD approach promotes or markets the bottom-up approach to advancement (Tickamy, 2020). In the 1990s, the GAD approach was introduced after serious lobbying by feminist scholars. These included the WID, which advocated for women's inclusion in the development domain. The development domain was not male dominated but rather controlled by cultural practices that perpetuated patriarchy (Mannell, 2012).

According to Olonade et al. (2021), GAD approach treats women as engines to development. The approach maintains that gender relations can be ran smoothly if men and women are inclusive to the process of development. The GAD approach replaced the WID approach. The former posits that men and women should both participate in developmental processes including decision-making. The GAD approach posits that women are critical elements in the development process's success (Moyo, 2014).

According to Mannell (2012), instead of regarding women as being less important, society should see them as equal partners in the development process. For example, the LED programme plays a critical role in rural women's empowerment. The RDF asserts that women are the most impoverished in South Africa. Therefore, the GAD approach promotes women's participation in development processes to end poverty and inequality.

3.5 Conceptual framework

The GAD approach is relevant to this study in that it promotes equality between men and women. It promotes women empowerment as it advocates that they should be included in all

processes of development. The concept of GAD is appropriate to addressing issues to do with women empowerment in rural areas (Moyo, 2014). In this study, it is believed that including men and women in the development matrix can lead to a more sustainable developmental society. The relevancy of the concept in the current study is that rural women in all hierarchies are given similar opportunities to those enjoyed by men. Furthermore, they equally benefit in all the development processes as their male counterparts. The liberal feminism is also relevant to the study as it promotes women's political, social, and economic empowerment. Liberal feminism focuses on injustices, fairness, and discrimination of women in all the spheres (Acker, 1994). Policies in favour of women were implemented to address economic, political, and social injustices. The liberal feminist theory is interlinked with this study in that the latter explored and described the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas. This theory expresses women's empowerment and their socio-economic and political gains thereafter. Liberal theories seek to demystify the patriarchy and cultural beliefs that men dominate women, which can be linked to the scenario of rural women. This theory was relevant to the current study as it advocates for rural women to benefit from LED in the CoM.

RDF is promoting the enhancement of rural disadvantaged women (Kunene, 2020). Its notion is that this can be done through the use of the Rural Development Framework (RDF) to understand how women are side lined from rural development and empowerment programmes. The RDF focuses on the challenges faced by women in rural areas. That is, women live in poverty and this study investigated how challenges faced by rural women are mitigated. Therefore, the study is relevant because it seeks to emancipate women from the three bottom-line challenges poverty, unemployment, and the various forms of inequality faced by rural women. The theory was used to fight against the dire conditions that characterise the lives of rural women. The phenomenon under investigation seeks to liberate rural women by bringing resources closer to them to enhance their livelihoods.

3.6 Policies for LED in South Africa

This section discusses insights of policies and legislations that conceptualise local economic development (LED). After 1994, there were policies and legislations put in place to address the economic crisis faced by the citizens of South Africa regardless of sex, race and tribe. LED policy implementations does not depend on the availability of financial resources; however, required are professionals with experience in the field of LED (Koma, 2014). It is further

articulated that policies and legislations should be people-centred because LED is specifically designed for communities (Cloete, 2012). Therefore, the policies and legislations must ensure that the bottom-up approach is practised. The LED policies for South Africa stated critical aspects that would contribute to the study's outcomes, by enforcing that LED programmes are accessed by everyone in the communities regardless of their economic status. This is to allow the disadvantaged to benefit from programmes that are LED funded.

3.6.1 The Republic of South Africa's 1996 Constitution

Section 152 of the South Africa's Constitution (1996) details the local government's main priority. The priority is to oversee a well-functioning, democratic, and accountable administration for local communities in their respective municipalities (RSA, 1996). Local government also helps enhance service delivery as the main feature of the local municipalities' responsibilities, enhance social and economic development and the promotion of community participation in local government (RSA, 1996). Section 152 (e) of the Constitution further obliges local communities to enhance the community inclusiveness and community organisations in matters of local governance. Section 153 of the Constitution further states that without feasible structures, financial, and planning, basic community needs are difficult to meet.

Consequently, social and economic development is blocked (SA Constitution, 1996). When constitutional amendments are made or legislation passed, issues of women empowerment are raised (RSA, 1996). The Constitution promotes economic freedom to every citizen, thereby backing the LED policy framework (COGTA, 2018). However, the Constitution does not help fill the gap that exists in literature concerning women empowerment in informal settlements.

3.6.2 The 1998 White Paper on Local Government

The White Paper on Local Government is in line with the Republic of South Africa's Constitution (1996), particularly Sections 152 and 153. Local governments are expected to enhance communities and groups to establish their socio-economic material needs to accelerate their livelihoods (Rogerson, 2014). The White Paper enhances the local government's optimum social development and economic growth (RSA, 1998). The White Paper encourages that communities should be financially assisted to start-up businesses to improve their livelihoods. This could be done by ensuring that LED-funded programmes are accessible to communities to deal with the socio-economic injustices.

The White Paper on Local Government was formulated to “development local government” (RSA, 1998). The local municipalities must be in cooperation with their local communities in order to meet their social, economic, and material needs to enhance quality life (Makoti & Odeku, 2018). Further, the White paper stated that the local government must play a significant role in ensuring that the interests of communities are advocated for and provide basic needs. Furthermore, they must strive to provide resources for the betterment of the marginalised populations such as rural women (Dhlodlo, 2010).

Furthermore, the White Paper on Local Government promotes active community participation in the planning and implementation of municipal strategies (RSA, 1998). The Integrated Development Plan (IDP) is among the key tools for local municipalities to enhance development (Molefane & Mashokoe, 2008; Reddy, 2014). The IDP tool could be used to allow communities to have access to resources. Further, it allows municipalities to consider an appropriate fiscal framework for communities to startup LED based programmes.

The White Paper on Local Government promotes LED in that the possibilities of the betterment of the citizens’ livelihoods rely on job creation to boost local economies, for example, small businesses (Molefane & Mashokoe, 2008). The White Paper on Local Government helps address LED aspects required to accelerate the communities’ livelihoods through various strategies (RSA, 1998). RSA (2008) stressed the relevance of making efforts and providing resources to enhance people’s lives, especially those deprived of opportunities, including the marginalised rural women. However, it failed to address the challenges related to women’s empowerment. This study sought to help address this gap in literature.

3.6.3 The 2007 National LED Framework in South Africa

South Africa’s National LED Framework prioritised enhancing an increasingly and inclusively local economy (PLG, 2007). The National LED Framework objectives were to enhance good administration, deliverables and, public and market confidence in municipalities through the three spheres of government, which are local, provincial, and national (PLG, 2007).

There was a shift by the national government towards a strategic approach in the development of local economies to deal with the impediments faced, where municipalities come up with project start-ups (COGTA, 2018). The said shift helped to support those who wanted to start businesses in realising their potentials and getting communities economically active (Makhubo, 2015). Doing so enhanced the beneficiation from local opportunities and the

prioritisation of local communities according to how COGTA want it to be (COGTA, 2018). South Africa's LED National Framework policy was revised in 2011.

There are challenges in the National LED Framework, particularly with its implementation phase at the local government level (Economic Development Policy Frameworks, 2016). There were a number of municipalities that did not have resources to enhance LED, as a result, poverty became endemic (COGTA, 2020). Furthermore, there was a decline of skilled personnel in the country due to the decline in their employment, and the National Development Plan (NDP) does not help to promote LED but rather its framework (Economic Policy Frameworks, 2016).

3.6.4 The New Growth Path Framework

The New Growth Path Framework (NGPF) focused on the eradication of poverty in South Africa post 1994 (RSA, 1996). It aimed at helping to address the inequalities amongst races and to support the creation of decent jobs (RSA, 1996). The NGPF further emphasizes that the government should create employment through direct absorption schemes, targeted subsidies and expansionary micro-economic packages (NDP, 2013). The NGPF was crafted with the aim of eradicating issues of inequality amongst sex in the beneficiation of LED.

However, the NGPF did not implement policies on women empowerment to LED. (RSA, 1996). The LED's aim in the NGPF was not achieved as it focused on eradicating poverty and the promotion of decent jobs in both public and private sectors (Economic Development Policy Framework, 2016). The above policies had similar mandates, that is, to enhance LED's practices or implementation in local governments by all municipalities in South Africa. The aim was to improve people's livelihoods and create equal opportunities for men and women in rural areas.

3.6.5 The policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa

The policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa (2004) reveal that LED implementation should positively influence the government to succeed in accelerating South Africa's economy to benefit everyone in the country, that is, men, women, and the youth. The government's plan is to develop and increase municipal economies' support through National Spatial Development Perspective (NSDP), Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDS), district municipalities, and metropolitans' IDP (COGTA, 2014).

The policy guidelines for implementing LED (2005) stated that LED's success relies on three spheres of government, which are national, provincial, and local. The National Medium Strategies Framework is the strategic planning initiative that allows the strategic government order that looks at growth and development (Bekink, 2006). The national government ensures that the work of municipalities and provincial governments is linked to the national framework to enhance development and growth (DPLG, 2007).

3.6.6 Local Government Municipal System Act (32 of 2000)

The Municipal System Act is the IDP's key constituent. For example, Section 26 of the Local Government Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 states that the IDP incorporates the LED strategy (Meyer & Venter, 2013). Piet (2011) claimed that the LED programmes to be implemented must be included in every municipality's IDP to ensure that there is budget set aside to support the LED initiatives.

3.6.7 Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR)

South Africa's economy remains disjointed with most of the impoverished Black people at the bottom of the economic ladder (Gumede, 2021). The Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Strategy (GEARS) was introduced to help improve the public sector and building a sustainable economy and accelerate investments from various organisations (Bekink, 2006). GEARS was meant to rebuild and configure the country's economy by following the RDP goals (Bekink, 2006). GEARS failed to enhance jobs, reduce poverty, inequality, and other socio-economic ills (RSA, 1996).

3.6.8 Extended Public Works Programme

The state introduced the EPWP in 2003 as a tool to reduce unemployment and poverty (Jili, 2019). The extended public works programme (EPWP) is one of the many projects the South African government initiated to reduce poverty through basic income (RSA, 2017). The former president of the republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki stated that the programme is a temporal work for the skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled citizens, that is, women, the youth, and men (Zulu, Nyawo & Mashau, 2017). The EPWP was meant to improve people's livelihoods and root out poverty (Zulu *et al.*, 2017). Initially, the EPWP programme targeted one million employment opportunities from 2004-2009. In 2010 to 2012 it created more than 1.5 million work opportunities, the programme targeted on improving work experience and skills training (Public Works, 2012).

3.6.9 Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme

The Municipal Infrastructure Grant Programme (MIGP) was established in 2004 to reduce poverty levels in South Africa and to marshal resources (National Treasury, 2012). The MIGP focused on rooting out poverty and enhancing underlying service delivery levels by 2013. This meant giving financial infrastructural backlogs to the impoverished communities (COGTA, 2015). For example, building dams, community halls, roads, and houses.

3.6.10 Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy

The Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) was developed to bring rural communities together with productive stakeholders and sustainable economies (ISRDS, 2000). The strategy was meant to harness skilled and knowledgeable people, particularly those ready to contribute to the communities' growth and development. Local economies encourage LED programmes to expand rural communities for the community members' economic prosperity (Kirsten & Fourie, 2021).

3.6.11 Reconstruction and Development Programme of 1994

The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was established as an initiative to deal with our people's socio-economic challenges, especially black people (Malemana & Yingi, 2016). Knight (2001) asserted that RDP is a policy that focuses on addressing basic needs, education, health care services, and housing. The RDP policy was introduced with the aim to root out inequalities between Blacks and Whites (Malemana & Yingi, 2016). The RDP policy sought to help Black people access business and job opportunities.

Malemana (2013) asserted that the RDP was not meant for everyone in the country but rather for certain individuals. Introducing the RDP policy was aimed at eradicating social ills such as unemployment, poverty, and inequalities perpetuated by the apartheid government, and enhance development (ANC, 1994). The RDP was meant for the active inclusiveness and empowerment which combines public and private sector and community-based organisations (Mpengu, 2010).

The RDP was geared towards reducing inequalities and poverty through the integrated and sustainable programmes (Mpengu, 2010). The RDP policy was meant to help facilitate the eradication of the legacy of apartheid in the country. The RDP is the consolidated coherent socio-economic approach, which marshals communities and the country's resources to root out apartheid and establish a non-sexist and non-racial South Africa (Van Rensburg, 2014).

The ANC (1994) argued that the tangible goals of the RDP can be attained by decentralising powers to local government for development. The local government is viewed as the initial democratic representation in South Africa and elsewhere. The RDP encompasses various policy programmes such as meeting basic needs, building the economy, liberating the state and society, and implementing RDP initiatives (ANC, 1994).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted how the challenge of women empowerment in rural areas can be addressed through LED initiatives. The chapter further articulates how the theoretical framework can be put into good use to address the challenges of women's empowerment in rural areas. Despite theories put in place, women remain subordinated in socio-political and economic spheres to date as research topics on women empowerment are still ongoing.

There are several policies and legislations put in place to address women empowerment. However, there is little or no progress in terms of implementing LED programmes to uplift women and rural communities. The policies and legislations are utilised to address the socio-economic challenges faced by the citizens.

Feminism theory was utilised to address the challenges of the phenomenon under investigation; Marxist theory was utilised to answer to the phenomenon of the study. The Marxist theory reiterates that men and woman should benefit equally; socio-politically and economically. Therefore, the theory tried to fill the gap in women empowerment, as it seeks to ensure that women are empowered through LED projects. The chapter further focused other theories that could assist in understanding the phenomenon in question.

The Rural Development Framework was adopted to address the key research questions. The rural development framework focused on geographical challenges faced in rural areas. The theory aims at scrapping the socio-economic ills faced by rural communities. It is appropriate for illuminating the strategies and programmes that seek to eradicate poverty in rural areas. The RDF, is suitable because it promotes initiatives to assist rural based communities and provide financial support.

Furthermore, the study utilised the Gender and Development (GAD) approach to answer the phenomenon of the study. The GAD approach focused on equal access of resources between men and women to enhance the socio-economic livelihoods. The GAD approach promotes

empowerment as it strives for the inclusion of women in community development projects. Thus, in this study women are sought to be empowered through LED projects.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology that guided the study and it provides a detailed description of the geographical setting of the City of Mbombela (CoM) Municipality in Mpumalanga province, which is the study area. The chapter also describes the target population and, the research paradigm. The research examined the role of local economic development (LED) in empowering women in rural areas of the CoM in South Africa. This chapter also presents the research design and research approach that were adopted in this study, as well as the selection of the study participants. Data collection methods and instruments are also described in detail, including the pilot study, the data collection procedure and data analysis. The chapter also reflects on research ethics adhered to.

4.2 Study location

The City of Mbombela (CoM) Municipality, which was established in 2000, falls under the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. The CoM is composed of Hazyview, Nelspruit (now Mbombela), and White River. These areas were merged to form one local council, thereby extending the boundaries of the CoM Municipality. The CoM is located in the Lowveld areas in Mpumalanga Province. The urban centres of the CoM are White River, Nelspruit, Hazyview, Kabokweni (Ngodini), Tekwane, KaNyamazane (Lekazi), Matsulu, and Pienaar. The CoM has become Mpumalanga Province's sphere of influence and centre of growth, development, and tourism. It is the gateway to other countries, such as Eswatini and Mozambique, for trade purposes and more.

The CoM has two airports, namely KMIA and GANA, which have become Mpumalanga Province's tourist attraction (Mbombela Local Municipality, 2010-2011). In addition to its flourishing tourism industry, the CoM has mineral deposits such as gold and coal. Gold was first discovered in Barberton and since then the region has become popular for its employment creation opportunities. According to the 2011-2030 Mbombela Development Framework, the CoM has upgraded infrastructure and good land for commercial and subsistence farming purposes (Mbombela SDF, 2011).

Furthermore, the City of Mbombela has various sectors that contribute to the country's gross domestic products (GDP). These include trade, real estates, agriculture, catering forestry and

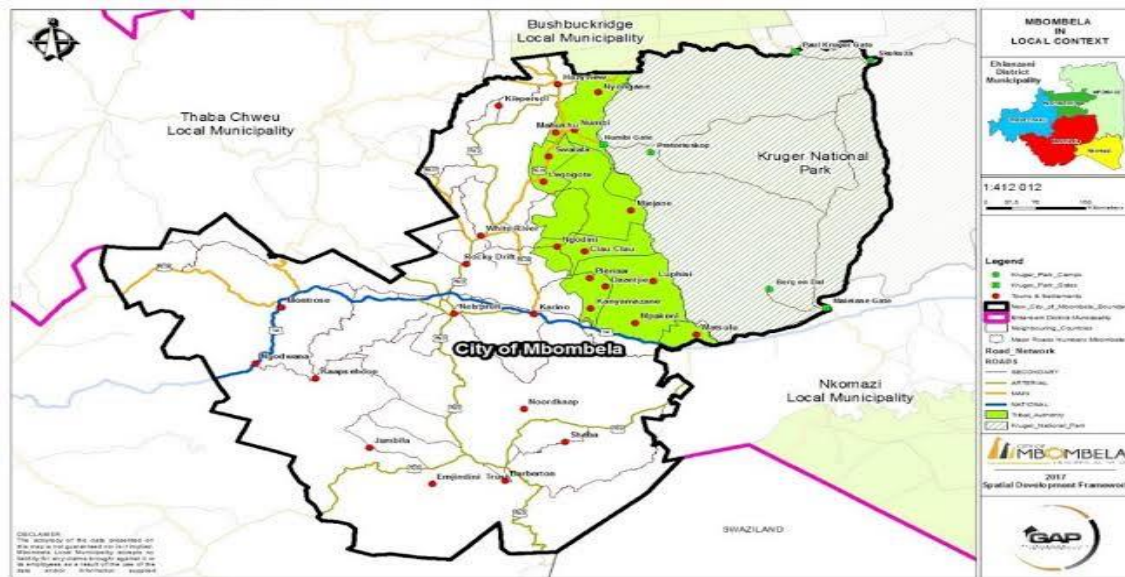
finance (Mbombela IDP, 2015-16). The CoM was merged with Umjindi mine and tourist attractions, which further enhanced the municipality's economy. However, there were vast challenges that the municipality was facing, including the Malthusian dilemma. The demand for services is high, whilst the resources are limited due to increasing population.

Figure 4.1: The typical rural areas of the City of Mbombela



Source: City of Mbombela Municipality (2022)

Figure 4.2: City of Mbombela Municipality map



Source: City of Mbombela Municipality Atlas (2020)

4.3 Target population

The 2016 Community Survey estimated the CoM’s population to be 695 913 (Stats SA, 2016). In this research, the study population were women residing in the rural areas of the CoM, particularly those aged between 18 and 50 years. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), population refers to all the elements that are part of the subject of the study. In most cases, population is wide ranging and not everyone can be reached. Thus, a sample was drawn from the CoM’s population. The 18-50 years’ age range was chosen because individuals in this group were knowledgeable and familiar to the phenomenon being studied. They were also the active citizens and well-equipped to head households. Also, this group of women suffers the most in terms of local economic empowerment deprivations, has a high unemployment rate, and is segregated due to cultural and gender-informed beliefs (CoM, 2020; Draft IDP Review, 2021-2022). The World Bank’s Southern Africa Report (2010) noted that before 1994, Black women were deprived of economic independence.

The study population also included all officials of the CoM responsible for LED, including ward councillors and traditional leaders. This population was considered because the municipal officials and management were knowledgeable and experienced in dealing with LED initiatives in the context of challenges, implementations, and benefits. Ward councillors were included

because they were the leading political figures in areas where LED was implemented and were responsible for various LED initiatives. Traditional leaders were selected because they had knowledge on issues that affect women in rural areas, where patriarchy was still prevalent.

Table 4.1: Table of the selected study participants

Municipal Officials	No. of Participants
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Department of Local Economic Development and Tourism and 2. Municipal management 	7
Municipal Council Representatives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ward Councilors (undisclosed wards) 	7
Traditional Council Representatives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tribal authority number one 2. Tribal authority number two 	7
Community Participants <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women from rural areas of the CoM; Clau-Clau; Khumbula; Louise Kreek; Msholozzi; Sand River; Mathafeni and Hazyview 	12

Source: The researcher's contribution

4.4 Research paradigm

The research paradigm is one of the crucial aspects of research methodology, when extracting data from participants using a holistic approach. A paradigm guides the researcher's perception on how knowledge is established. A paradigm refers to how the study is done and analysed (O'Neil & Koekemoer, 2016). The current study utilised the interpretivist paradigm. There are three research approaches which include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research approach (Henning *et al.*, 2004; Oates, 2006). The research paradigm adopted for this study is consistent with the qualitative research approach.

The interpretivist paradigm is human-centred and relies on people's knowledge and experiences. Myers (1997) asserts that the interpretivist paradigm lies on the understanding of individuals or research participants, and seeks to unveil their understanding of the phenomenon being studied. This study sought to explore the barriers that inhibit women's empowerment in

the rural areas of the CoM. Interpretivism dwells much on people's understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Mc Arthur, 2015). The interpretivist approach takes the researcher's assumptions into consideration (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

As Omodan (2022) posits, there is no formula in the interpretivism paradigm. There is no data that is wrong or right, since it depends on the interests of the researcher. In the interpretivist approach, researchers prefer to exercise the word-of-mouth strategy, whereby the researcher holds an interactive dialogue with the participants to obtain in-depth data (Wahyuni, 2012). During the interviews, the researcher and participant's perceptions, knowledge and opinions are improved to suit the needs of the study phenomenon (Meyer, 2009). In this study, the researcher obtained data from the municipal officials. The interpretivist paradigm therefore informed the research questions, research objectives, and the research aim.

4.5 Research design

This study adopted a case study design because it is appropriate when dealing with in-depth and multi-faceted challenges in society. This means that the case study design is informed by human knowledge, experiences, and perceptions to acquire data. In other words, a case study design relies on data gathered from the study participants. A research design refers to steps that are followed when conducting the study (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018) . It outlines how data is obtained from the study participants (Tomaszewski, Zarestky and Gonzalez, 2020). The case study design helps affected individuals to seek intervention from various stakeholders in government or otherwise (Sibbald, Paciocco, Fournie, Asseldonk & Scurr, 2021). In this study, the case study helps vulnerable women community to seek intervention from the CoM municipality about service delivery. The participants' responses shows that there is a need for intervention by the CoM municipality in order to address women empowerment in rural areas. Thus, the research design was informed by the research objectives (Asenabahabi, 2019). The case study research design enabled the researcher to obtain information that led to the formulation of intervention strategies on women empowerment in the CoM rural areas.

Priya (2020) argued that the case study design allows for the collection of ideas from individuals, groups, and institutions for validity. It provides an opportunity to liaise with the participants and obtain rich data on their lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied. In this study, various participants including rural women, municipal officials, traditional leaders and ward councillors were interviewed. The study sought the participants' perceptions regarding LED and its empowerment initiatives in rural areas. This study examined the

challenges faced in LED and women empowerment, as well as strategies utilised in the implementation of LED.

As Rashid and Warraich (2019) explained, the case study design helps describe, interpret and analyse collected data. The study sample was obtained from women who resided in the CoM rural areas, the municipal management, and municipal officials in the department of LED and tourism, as well as traditional leaders and ward councillors. According to Ngwenya (2017), the case study is a multi-disciplinary technique that involves various stakeholders and more participants or a group of people, which is practised in an open platform where one can express him/herself, and speak about the voiceless, powerless and marginalised communities. Thus, the technique has an added value in this study as marginalised women in the CoM rural areas were given the platform to voice their feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and experiences about empowerment. The case study design also increases awareness on how women in rural areas can be empowered through LED. As Ngwenya (2017) further observes, a case study design is very crucial as it generates in-depth data and vast information about the phenomenon under study. It therefore gave the current researcher an opportunity to gather immense data pertaining to LED and women empowerment.

According to Mzohajan (2018), a case study research design permits the researcher to focus on socio-economic matters. In this study, the technique helped the researcher to focus on the role of LED in women empowerment. As Collins and Stockton (2018) observed, the case study research design is closely intertwined with the qualitative study methodology and is used in describing community groups. Hence, the case study design is human-centred because it utilises much descriptive data that focus on socio-economic factors. Thus, the case study research design allowed the researcher to provide the full context of LED and women empowerment in the CoM. It permitted the researcher to examine the role of LED and women empowerment in rural areas, since the aim was to make an in-depth analysis of this phenomenon.

4.6 Research approach

This study utilised the qualitative research methodology. The data for this study was obtained in form of human perceptions, knowledge, past experiences, and opinions. There are three varieties of research approaches which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011) emphasised that the qualitative study does not use numerical data. It is opposed to quantitative research approach where

numbers, graphs, percentages and pie charts are utilised (Evid, 2019). The qualitative research approach was used since the study is people-centred. Therefore, the understanding of concepts and theories was of paramount importance in order to suit the needs of the study (Flick, 2015).

As Hammarberg, Kirkman and de Lacey (2016) observes, qualitative research deals with the how and why questions. Such questions require participants to showcase their full understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the qualitative approach gave the participants the opportunity to express their knowledge, opinions, perceptions, and past experiences as befits the research aims and objectives. In this study, the qualitative methodology helped to determine the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas of the CoM and allowed the female participants to share their economic experiences in rural areas. It was utilised to ascertain people's perceptions of the role of LED in empowering rural women in the CoM's communities. According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative research seeks to acquire in-depth knowledge, and is commonly used to observe human behaviour and culture. Hence, qualitative research is utilised to determine people's feelings and the reasons behind how they feel.

According to Fox and Bayat (2007), the qualitative research approach is used to answer challenges that occur on daily basis in rural communities. As Malele (2018) added, there are four reasons why the qualitative research methodology is used. Hence, it permits visits to the study areas, observation, interviews with specific and relevant participants, and it helps analyse participants' responses. Thus, the researcher was able to conduct in-depth interviews in order to amass immense data on the role of LED in empowering women in the CoM rural areas. Participants were interviewed in order to extract reliable and authentic data pertaining to the challenges experienced by rural women in the CoM communities. The approach allowed the researcher to obtain a regional and international perspective of the challenges, strategies, and solutions on the role of LED in empowering rural women.

4.7 Selection of participants

The selection procedure enabled the researcher to select participants who were able to contribute to the to the phenomenon being studied. The researcher carefully considered the research participants by weighing their contribution in relation to the study's aim, objectives, and research questions. As Creswell (2007) observes, it is not obligatory to interview everyone in the study area. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain the views of the whole study population and so individuals who fulfilled the researcher's needs in terms of contributing

positively to the study were selected. According to Campbell *et al.* (2020), samples are selected because they have specialised knowledge about the phenomenon being studied. In this study, the Department of Local Economic Development and Tourism was chosen because the officials have specialised knowledge about the phenomenon being studied and had relevant experience in the field. This was done to ensure that their in-depth data would contribute positively to the study outcomes. Women were also chosen because they were the main participants who were suffering from poverty in spite of municipal resources available.

The researcher utilised purposive sampling in the selection of participants. According to De Vos (2005), purposive sampling is utilised because it portrays interest of the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, as Machaka (2012) articulates, purposive sampling allows the collection of data from highly informed participants. In this study, immense data was collected from experts in the department of LED and tourism in the CoM communities, the municipal management, rural women, traditional leaders, and ward councillors. The participants provided much information on the CoM municipality's strategies and programmes concerning women empowerment, and the resultant challenges and solutions.

Through purposive sampling, the study sample was obtained. It consisted of individuals who were selected in accordance with their specific expertise. As Bowen (2005) observes, purposive sampling usually applies when participants are selected for their knowledge and expertise to be part of a study. According to Koma (2012), purposive sampling is selecting participants who would provide well-informed data with in-depth knowledge. In order to access participants at the City of Mbombela municipality, the researcher had to follow the standard procedure which was in line with ethical principles. Permission to conduct the study was sought in writing and granted. For traditional authorities who were interviewed, the request for permission to conduct the study was submitted to the secretaries of tribal councils and permission was granted. Furthermore, the ward councillors were provided with the letters and permission was granted.

Thirty-two (n=32) participants were selected in this study. These participants include the following:

- The municipal officials including the department of LED and Tourism,
- The municipal management
- Rural women of the CoM
- Traditional leaders and ward councillors.

The researcher conducted interviews until the saturation point. Data saturation was reached when the researcher was satisfied with the in-depth interviews; that no additional insights could further be found in additional interviews. According to Burmeister and Aitken (2012), data saturation is attaining rich and quality data, considering that no new data is produced by further techniques. In this study, the researcher reached data saturation after the selected participants were interviewed. The participants enabled the researcher to obtain in-depth data in order to address the study aim, objectives and research questions.

The selection of sampling techniques depends on the methodology utilised in the study. According to Saunders and Lewis (2012), there are two types of sampling strategies used in social research, which are probability and non-probability sampling.

4.7.1 Non-probability sampling

Without considering experience and knowledge of the participants, the study may produce non-realistic and inconsistent data in the absence of proper sampling. Sampling also helps solve the constraints of time, accessibility and costs. In this study, the researcher employed non-probability random sampling. Non-probability sampling is flexible and allows the researcher to select relevant participants during data collection. Thus, purposive sampling permitted the researcher to select participants in accordance with their experience and knowledge of the phenomenon. The technique enabled the researcher to gather in-depth data on LED and women empowerment in the CoM's communities. It was utilised to provide insight into the phenomenon being studied. According to Edmonds and Kennedy (2013), purposive sampling is utilised in qualitative studies. In-depth interviews were carried out with municipal officials and the managerial staff as the research participants. These participants had vast experience in the field and were well informed on LED programmes. Women from rural areas, who were also the main participants in the study, were included. Traditional leaders, as well as ward councilors, were also included in the study, since they play a crucial role of leadership in rural communities.

According to Babbie (2013), purposive sampling does not give individuals in the population equal chance of being selected but it targets participants that yield the best results. It is therefore suitable in this study which is purposive, since it targets individuals with known attributes in order to yield more accurate findings. The sample was drawn in accordance with the researcher's knowledge pertaining to the municipality's organogram and the study methodology.

The study had a sample size of 32 participants. These consisted of seven municipal officials which constituted the municipal management, seven ward councillors, six traditional leaders, and twelve community members which were rural women. These participants produced in-depth knowledge on the phenomenon being studied. Thus, the purposive sampling technique helped the researcher to select in-depth data from relevant participants. This quality, trustworthy and authentic data immensely contributed to the study outcomes.

4.8 Data collection methods

There are two data collection methods that were utilised to generate relevant data in this study, namely in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The in-depth interviews were conducted with rural women from the CoM, municipal officials, and traditional leaders. Furthermore, focus group discussion participants were ward councillors in the CoM.

4.8.1 In-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews were semi-structured. Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to give in-depth information about what was being investigated. The in-depth interviews also enabled follow-up questions (Maree, 2010). As Malele (2018) observed, data collected through in-depth interviews come directly from the participant's word of mouth. In this case, data was obtained from women in the CoM rural areas. According to Cohen (2011), in-depth interviews allow participants to give their full knowledge. As De Vos *et al.* (2011) observe, in-depth interviews are open ended. In this study, the researcher prepared and tabled the interview questions. In-depth interviews allow clarity to the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Thus, the researcher was able to seek clarity on the phenomenon being studied. The researcher interviewed twelve (12) rural women, seven (7) traditional leaders and seven (7) municipal officials and participants of the pilot study were not included.

Examples of the interview questions in the study were as follows;

- How is LED addressing women empowerment in rural areas?
- Briefly explain what you understand about LED?

Each interview session took a maximum duration of sixty minutes. According to Seiden (1998), an hour is the standard time for an interview session. The researcher did not take more than an hour during each interview session, because participants had other commitments regardless of the fact that appointments were made. Rural women have more responsibilities in their households and others may need to generate income in their small-scale enterprises. Moreover,

the municipal officials were at work as well, and the aim was not to waste time. Thus, the researcher was cognisant of the fact that they were also supposed to attend to their workplace responsibilities.

Efforts were made to ensure that the researcher is straight to the point and questions had to be short and precise in order to be fully addressed. As Flick (2006) asserts, productive interviews are based on the researcher's ability and skill to ask questions, taking into consideration that the duration of the interview should not go beyond an hour. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were utilised to address the research questions and objectives of the phenomenon being studied. Semi-structured interviews permitted the researcher to seek clarity from participants on unclear issues.

The interviews were recorded (with the participants' permission) in order to accurately capture the information. Interviews were flexible and allowed participants to freely express themselves. The justification to conduct face-to-face interviews was that some officials seldom want to express themselves telephonically. This may be due to trust issues and the status quo of politics in the province that is punctuated by factionalism. However, when the officials were met physically it was easier and much convenient as consent forms were completed and the researcher's assurances were made.

Another important aspect in data collection is the body language. It provides the full expression of how deep the challenges are and the eagerness to fix the challenge. During the in-depth interviews, the researcher was very attentive and also considered the body language. There were discomforts during the interview sessions, especially among municipal officials, which were interpreted as exposing incompetency. The ethical aspects were also taken into consideration. Even though interviews are time-consuming, they were conducted in such a way that the time allocated for each interview appointment was met. Extra care was taken to ensure that the environment was safe and conducive for interviewing each participant, given the dangers posed by COVID-19. Proper planning was done to reduce travelling costs.

4.8.2 Focus group discussions

Focus groups are usually small but they represent the entire population (Krueger, 2014). According to Richard, Sivo and Witta (2020), focus groups are meant to obtain in-depth data that would contribute to the study outcomes. A focus group is a group of people who discuss a topical issue under the guidance of the researcher who facilitates and guides the discussions. It is a group interview where participants help each other recall issues being raised. The focus

group discussion helps the participants to provide more data that contribute to the research output and address issues of concern to the study (Creswell *et al.*, 2010). Only ward councillors were involved in focus group discussions, because this enabled them to discuss LED collectively and comparatively based on their respective wards' experiences. In this study, seven (n=7) participants were involved in the focus group discussions.

When conducting interviews and focus group discussions, COVID-19 protocols were observed at all times. The focus group discussions were done through the zoom platform to avoid overcrowding. Participants who failed to observe and adhere to COVID-19 regulations during the interview sessions were to be withdrawn from any further participation. None of the participants failed to stick to the COVID-19 protocols. The country had been moved to level one by the Cabinet, since the infection rates had dropped down and many people especially public servants had been fully vaccinated.

In this study, the focus group discussions were done in two groups. According to Poliandri, Perazzolo, Pollera and Giampietro (2023), focus group discussions require a few participants of about six to eight individuals. However, in focus group discussions there is no guarantee that all participants are going to be available during sessions, while some may arrive late due to various reasons. The focus groups were done with seven ward councillors of Khumbula, Sand River, Hazyview, Msholozhi, Mathafeni, and Low's Creek wards. However, the ward councillors were not mentioned by name to maintain the ethical aspects of the research.

The councillors were combined to form two groups who had separate focus group discussions. Ward councillors from the rural areas of the CoM were divided into two groups which was then a ratio of 4:3. This precisely indicates that one group had one more ward councillor, ward councillors were not equal. The Clau-Clau ward was merged with the Khumbula ward since these areas were close to each other. Letters of invitation were distributed to the councillors through their official representative. Tracing them was done through the relevant office in the CoM council and a suitable time for focus group discussions was set after consultations with various councillors. As Thomas, Mulnick, Krucien and Marsh (2022) suggested, participants in the study must have similar characteristics and this was the case with the ward councillors in this study.

Examples of the focus groups discussion questions in the study were as follows:

- What measures have you taken as leaders to strengthen women empowerment in your ward?
- How do you ensure community members especially women are familiar with LED?

According to Xu, Baysari and Carland (1998), participants who have never met or are not familiar with one another provide honest and clear views. As Morgan (1998) observed, purposive sampling is a good initiative since the focus group facilitator expects participants to give necessary or relevant data. Haven, Pasman, Widdershoven, Bouter and Tjldink (2020) alluded to the fact that there must be a conducive environment for group discussion, including the consideration of the participants' availability and flexibility. In this study, focus group discussions were done on Zoom because there was great distance between the areas. However, this disadvantage was mainly due to the current COVID-19 pandemic which required minimum interaction. Thus, the discussions were done through Zoom, a financially costly exercise meant to accommodate disagreements or differences in political opinions.

4.9 Data collection instruments

In this study, there were two instruments, which are the interview guide for in-depth interviews and topic guide for the FGD. In qualitative studies, the researcher is regarded as the key instrument of the study (Collins & Stockton, 2018). The researcher is also included in the study and cannot be separated in anyway (Jackson, 1990). In this study, the researcher was the main facilitator/moderator during the data collection processes. However, there was an assistant in administering consent forms. The researcher prepared enough in-depth interview questions by consulting the supervisors and the co-researcher as to how the interview questions were structured until a consensus was reached. Aspects such as ethical consideration were also noted. The researcher was also prepared emotionally as dealing with different characters of participants can be strenuous sometimes. The pilot study helped to prepare the researcher by reconfiguring research questions to suite the research aim, objectives and interview questions. During focus group discussions, anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, although it was not an easy task because some ward councillors were not familiar with how Zoom is operated. Hence, to maintain confidentiality, the participants were taken through the consent form and they were advised that the data contributed was not to be used for anything that is not related to the study. The participants were confident and signed the consent form, although they were given the choice to withdraw from the study if in anyway they felt uncomfortable. The participants were asked to rename their gadgets and remove pictures displayed in the Zoom application. They were further advised to rather use pseudonyms to remain anonymous to other

participants to protect themselves after the study. Ward numbers were therefore not disclosed. However, the researcher knew the ward representatives that participated in the study.

During the focus group discussion, there was a co-researcher whose role was to take field notes, as well as assisting throughout the process, since it requires manpower to avoid missing crucial or key points. The co-researcher also assisted in maintaining order and to liaise with the main researcher. The co-researcher holds a master's degree in international relations with the Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University. The research aim, objectives and interview questions were thoroughly discussed until understood, and they were further adjusted where it was not understood. Through rehearsals and trainings were made by the researcher and co-researcher, as well as the pilot study, in order to produce quality and trustworthy data.

4.9.1 Interview guide

An interview guide was utilised as the data collection tool (Appendix B, C, & D). The data gathered in this study was intended to answer the research interview questions. A thorough research was done through the literature to establish the study gap. It served as a memory aid, reminding the researcher about the main topics to be covered. Furthermore, using an interview guide helped to standardise the questions across all the participants.

4.9.2 Focus group guide

The researcher used a focus group guide or topic guide (Appendix E). As the name suggests, the topic guide helped the researcher to ensure that participants' discussions were limited to the topic of interest. While the discussions could cover several sub-topics, the ones on the topic guide helped to ensure that the discussions were relevant and covered the key areas of interest.

4.10 Pilot study

The researcher conducted a pilot study, which is critical in research design (Kim, 2010; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). It is of paramount importance for the researcher to carry out a pilot study prior to the actual study, since this provides an opportunity to realise mistakes, and be informed of the characteristics that are expected in the field. Furthermore, a pilot study assists the researcher to try other approaches of posing interview questions so as to boost confidence. The pilot study enhances the quality of the research (Gudmunds dottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Thus, prior to the actual research, the researcher conducted some interviews with individuals that had similar characteristics with the research participants and this was done to improve the research instruments in order to make them clearer, and to ensure that relevant questions are asked in a holistic approach. It was also done to ensure that the interview questions are improved to suit the research aim and objectives. As Johnson, Adkins and Chavin (2020) observes, the pilot study assures that aspects such as trustworthiness in research are covered to suit the study outcomes. The pilot study was necessary because it assisted the researcher to enhance and modify the interview questions, and to find out if the methods used and the research questions posed to the participants were going to collect in-depth data to suit the needs of the phenomenon being studied (Gudmunds dottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; Kim, 2010).

Therefore, prior to the actual interview sessions, preliminary interviews were carried out with rural women, municipal officials and management, traditional leaders and ward councillors. This assisted the researcher to improve on how research questions were structured in line with the research aim and objectives. Pre-interviews were important, since they fully prepared the researcher on what to expect in the fieldwork and to further enhance trustworthiness (Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2003). They assisted the researcher consider humbleness and flexibility, and to seek assistance from other researchers in the same field.

Ethical aspects of research were also considered. The researcher made sure that the participants were informed about the study, and the participants' expectations were articulated, as well as the researcher's expectations. The researcher explained that participation was voluntary and that participants were not going to be compensated or rewarded. Anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed, as a strategy of protecting participants from being victimised or preventing problems at their workplace and in the community. Thus, rural women, traditional leaders and ward councillors were protected, as well as municipal officials, municipal management, and ward councillors. The researcher informed the participants of their right to withdraw from the study if they wished to, in case they felt unsafe or felt it was unnecessary to contribute to the study.

In this study, rural women with similar characteristics in the CoM communities were asked to participate in the pilot interview prior to the actual in-depth interviews. Furthermore, two participants and two municipal members of the management in the CoM were included in the pilot survey. One traditional leader from each tribal authority were also included in the pilot study, as well as three ward councillors.

4.11 Data collection process

There are three data collection methods in qualitative studies which are in-depth interviews, observations, and focus group discussions. This study utilised two data collection methods which are in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. These data collection methods provided an open platform for the participants to freely share their knowledge, opinions, past experiences, and perceptions with the researcher. The data was collected through tape recordings, and the researcher as the main facilitator chaired the interviews for both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. The tape recording was used during data collection after permission was granted from the participants. The CoM municipality officials and managerial staff were interviewed, as well as the rural women in the CoM communities, traditional leaders, and ward councillors.

The researcher followed ethical practices during data collection. The informed consent of the study participants was sought and consent forms were signed. The rights of participants were fully explained, as well as their right to voluntarily participation, and confidentiality and anonymity issues. Thus, the participants' right to withdraw from the study was guaranteed. The ethical aspects of the research helped the researcher gain participants' trust, which in turn resulted in an effective relationship between the researcher and the study participants. All this was done to attain a comprehensive view of the phenomenon being studied.

4.12 Data analysis

In this study, thematic data analysis was utilised. This was done in six phases which are data familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and report production. See table 5.2

- **Familiarising with the data:** Braun and Clarke (2006) noted that this is the first phase in data analysis, which requires a clear understanding of data and the research topic. In this phase, the researcher wrote down all the data that were crucial and relevant to the study. For example, the researcher collected data through audio-recordings and then listened to those audios before transcribing.
- **Generating initial codes:** Boyatzis (1997) advised that data collected from various participants about their experiences should be coded in accordance with the researcher's interest after transcribing. Furthermore, only data relevant to this study and that contributed positively to it was coded.

- **Searching for themes:** As Braun & Wilkinson (2003) observed, data should be collected from various participants. Thus, the participants' data was categorised. Interesting codes were chosen and used accordingly. The themes were expected to 'talk to each other' until the end. This was meant to provide clarity about the data collected. Therefore, three (n=3) themes emerged in this study with seventeen (n=17) sub-themes.
- **Reviewing themes:** This is the fourth phase in systematic data analysis. There were introspections as to whether the data collected, transcribed, and the generated initial codes complemented each other. Also, attention was paid to ensure that the data extracted meet the trustworthiness standards. This was determined by reviewing themes (Patton, 1990). In this case, it was important to revisit phase three of the data analysis.
- **Defining and naming themes:** After generating themes with data from various participants, those themes were coded accordingly (named) so that the reader understands the text (Braun & Wilkinson, 2003). In this case, there were no description of themes but disclosure of their interests to complement the phenomenon studied. For example, three themes emerged in this study.
- **Producing the report:** In this phase, the researcher questioned the data collected to ensure that they answer the research questions. The data analysed were then blended with that from the literature review to produce a convincing and compelling argument about what was studied (Braun & Wilkinson, 2003). This is the last phase of the study.

According to Ngwenya (2017), data analysis is a method by which the data from participants is divided into groups of themes for smooth interpretation. Creswell (2014) noted that data analysis is completed once the ongoing study is done. Data was analysed by regrouping, minimising, and sorting out data and hence understanding the key points that are closely intertwined with the phenomenon under study (Schwandt, 2007). The data analysis process was transparent in order to ensure trustworthiness.

4.13 Trustworthiness

In this study, the trustworthiness and authenticity of the findings were ensured to address the aim, objectives and research questions of the phenomenon being studied. As Lincoln and Guba (2011) observe, qualitative research is considered as the best to determine the trustworthiness and authenticity of the phenomenon being studied. According to Sandelowki (1986), a qualitative study is thought to be credible because it includes human perceptions, experiences, and knowledge. Qualitative research has the following aspects that determine the

trustworthiness and authenticity of the study: credibility, dependability, transferability and conformability (Kumar, 2011).

- **Credibility**

The research findings were established from the participants' knowledge, opinions, beliefs and experiences with regards to the phenomenon being studied. The participants were, therefore, the judges to the research findings (Tronchim & Donnely, 2007). As Sandelowki (1986) asserted, credibility relies on the phenomenon being studied and is not determined by the researcher. However, the findings should be convincing and believable (Durrheim & Wassenaar, 1999). In order to acquire data from participants, in-depth interviews were conducted. In this process, the researcher opened a room for participants to produce in-depth data and the credibility was determined by the participants' results, which reflected their opinions, knowledge and experiences.

- **Transferability**

Transferability is weighed by obtaining similar research finding in case the study phenomenon is done more than once (Kumar, 2011). In this study, the transferability was guaranteed, because the participants were producing the same content in the research findings. Furthermore, conformability was weighed by comparing and contrasting the research findings authenticated by other participants. When data are counterfeit or fake, the study outputs would not be clear (only meant to fulfil the researcher's desire) (Bonnie, 2013). In most cases, the researcher has power or authority over the study results. Thus, another element of trustworthiness is conformability (Sadowski, 1986).

- **Dependability**

Dependability is defined as unchanging results which are utilised in research to obtain accurate data (Babbie & Mouton, 2007). Dependability seeks to find out if the findings portray what they should be (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). In this study, various participants participated for dependability. Hammarberg, Kirkman and Lacey (2016) stated that dependability seeks to ask if confidence is displayed by the participants and that can only be determined by the researcher. Hence, the researcher should ensure that the reader is convinced. Dependability is concerned with whether the in-depth data produced would produce the same content in case the study was repeated.

- **Confirmability**

In this study, confirmability focused on the written data through familiarising with the data process under data analysis and linking it with the phenomenon being studied. As DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019) posited, confirmability is when the exact findings extracted through in-depth interviews from participants confirm to the phenomenon being studied. The contents of the findings were the same regardless of the fact that the participants had deviating personalities.

In this study, the researcher avoided being biased by including rural women, municipal officials, traditional leaders and ward councilors to get in-depth data about the phenomenon studied. Therefore, all sides of the story were outlined. The researcher made sure that the data collection methods were not biased. During the research interviews, leading questions were avoided, for example, the yes or no questions.

4.14 Ethical considerations

This study took into account the professional code of ethics during fieldwork. This was done to ensure that the study does not deteriorate into an abusive exercise of the participants emotionally, physically, and mentally. Ethics is a professional approach to undertaking research given that human beings and animals might be involved in that study (Ferreira, 2011). As Suri (2019) state, there are four critical elements in ethical consideration, which are permission to conduct research, informed consent, confidentiality, protection from harm, and voluntary participation.

4.14.1 Permission to conduct research

Before the study is conducted, the researcher must be granted permission to proceed. A letter from the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) to proceed with the study was granted, as soon as the research proposal was approved by the university's committee of higher degrees (see Appendix F). The approval process involved the supervisor's consultations with the Post Graduate Studies Committee (PGSC), the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) (for ethical clearance), and the UMP Research Ethics Committee (REC) (for final clearance to proceed with the study). In various government institutions, before conducting a study, a request in writing stating the purpose, context and intended aim, and study objectives is required. This was done immediately after the research project was approved by the university.

4.14.2 Informed consent

The researcher informed participants on what the study entails. The South African Law states that everyone has to be given an opportunity to correct and present credible information. Informed consent is when the interviewer gives the background of what the study would be about and the study outcomes (Klykken, 2021).

In this study, the researcher provided consent forms (Appendix A) to rural women of the CoM, municipal officials, traditional leaders, and ward councillors. Informed consent form is a form whereby crucial information about the study is provided by the researcher to participants (Hugman & Bartolomel, 2015). This form allows the participants to make informed decisions on whether to take part in the study or not. The researcher explained how the results were to benefit and improve the economic status of rural women in the CoM. The participants were also allowed to exercise their right to withdraw from the study. This step allowed participants to seek clarity about the phenomenon that was studied. However, no one withdrew from the study.

4.14.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality refers to intimate information obtained by the facilitator from the participants voluntarily, which contributes to the study output and feasibility (Walsh, 2001). Vigilance was considered at all times and the researcher did not reveal any information entrusted to inform the study. Under no circumstances would the information obtained be disclosed to anyone outside of this study. For example, documents or tape recorders with participants' information were kept safely locked in, out of reach of those not involved in the study. No one was allowed to disclose any information related to the participants. In other words, the information obtained from the study would not be used for purposes other than that of the study. Furthermore, for confidentiality purposes, the participants' titles, names, residence, cell phone numbers, and the positions they held were not divulged. For example, the LED and Tourism officials, ward councillors and traditional leaders were not disclosed. Furthermore, codes were used to name participants for example, municipal official one (1).

4.14.4 Protection from harm

This aspect of ethics is used to ensure that participants are not harmed. The harm involves asking personal questions that might haunt the participants during or after the study (Xu *et al.*, 2020). Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.* (2014) emphasised that one needs to be hands-on in ensuring

that the participants are protected and their rights are not infringed. Stated that it is the responsibility of the researcher to consider critical elements of research ethics. This includes asking about age specifics and health-related matters.

Furthermore, the researcher had to make sure that the setting where in-depth interviews were taking place is conducive and safe. For example, when researching on the Marikana Massacre that took place in 2012, questioning family members and close friends about the incident would cause an emotional breakdown. However, there should be a way of deviating from such research topics and questions but striving to attain well and feasible data. The priority should not be to inflict physical and emotional harm to participants at any point in the research. The supervisors were consulted about the study question formulation to avoid harm to participants during interviews, as well as other researchers in the faculty. This was also assessed during the pilot study.

4.14.5 Voluntary participation

Participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary. As such, they should not expect financial gains or any form of gifts from the researcher (Western Cape Department of Social Development, 2013). Voluntary participation in this study was not compromised and participants participated knowing that they would not be rewarded at the end of the interviews. Furthermore, participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any given time, if ever they felt that their responses were going to compromise their socio-economic livelihoods or otherwise.

4.15 Limitations of the study

Limitations are critical aspects that must be considered during the course of the study. However, they are beyond the researchers' control (Collins & Stockton, 2020). There are several aspects that limited this study. The challenge of women empowerment in LED is not experienced by the CoM rural women alone however, by most municipalities in the country. This study was limited because it only covered the CoM rural areas respectively due to time and financial constraints.

4.16 Conclusion

The role of LED in empowering women in rural areas of the CoM has provided positive outputs to the study, as not much is known about the phenomenon being studied at the CoM municipality. This chapter outlined verifiable and empirical data which justified the omnipotence of the study, the study location, research paradigm, research design and research approach. This chapter also outlined the selection of participants, data collection methods and its instruments. This chapter further outlined how the pilot study was conducted, the data collection methods, and how the data analysis was done, as well as the trustworthiness and authenticity of the study, ethical considerations during data collection, and the limitations of the study. This chapter also considered the ethical principles of research thoroughly to ensure that the study is worthwhile, as the University of Mpumalanga research ethics has approved it in the first phase of this study. The next chapter focused on data presentation, analysis, and data interpretation. The participants' responses which include the mayor, municipal manager, senior manager, manager and LED coordinator, as well as women in rural areas, traditional leaders and ward councillors would be presented and discussed. Thus, the next chapter would present the discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings and discusses the strategies to implement LED, the dynamics of rural empowerment using the LED strategy, and the role of LED in community development and sustainable development. The findings are presented and discussed in relation to related literature and the study's theoretical framework.

Below is the Table that capture the biographical information of the participants

Table 5.1: Participants' biographical data

Municipal officials' biography data				
No. of forms received	7	No.		No.
Sex of participants	Males	5	Females	2
Residential status	South African	7	Other	
Educational level	None		Secondary School	
	Primary school		Diploma	3
	Degree	4	Other	
Employment status	Employed	7	Unemployed	
Rural women biography data				
No. of forms received	11	No.		No.
Sex of participants	Males	0	Females	11
Residential status	South Africans	11	Other	
Educational level	None	3	Secondary School	8
	Primary school		Diploma	
	Degree		Other	
Employment status	Employed		Unemployed	11
Traditional leaders' biography data				

No. of forms received	7	No.		No.
Sex of participants	Males	5	Females	2
Residential status	South African	7	Other	
Educational level	None	6	Secondary School	1
	Primary school		Diploma	
	Degree		Other	
Employment status	Employed	0	Unemployed	7
Ward councillors' biography data				
No. of forms received	8	No.		No.
Sex of participants	Males	5	Females	2
Residential status	South African	7	Other	
Educational level	None		Secondary School	
	Primary school		Diploma	3
	Degree	4	Other	
Employment status	Employed	7	Unemployed	

Source: The researcher's compilation

The table above is the biographical data of the participants. The crucial aspects of the overall participants were outlined. The CoM municipal officials that participated were as follows males (n=5) and (n=2) females. The educational levels are as follows (n=4) were in possession of degrees and (n=3) had diplomas in various areas. Majority of women (n=11) also played a significant role by providing data to assist to the outputs of the study. The women's educational levels were minority (n=3) did not go to school. Moreover, (n=8) completed their secondary school level (matric). Majority of women who participated in this study (n=11) were not employed.

Traditional leaders' biographical data reflected that majority of them (n=5) were males and minority (n=2) were females. Majority of the traditional leaders (n=6) did not go to school, and (n=1) had completed secondary school or matric. A majority of the traditional leaders (n=7) were employed. There were also seven ward councilors and majority (n=5) were men and a minority (n=2) were females. Majority of rural councilors (n=4) were in possession of degree qualifications and minority (n=3) were in possession of diplomas in various areas.

Below is the Table that outlines themes and Sub-themes of the study.

Table 5.2: Presents themes and Sub-themes that presents data analysis

In this study, three themes and seventeen subthemes emerged during the data analysis.

<p>Theme 1:</p> <p>Strategies to implement LED.</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The strengths of LED strategies for empowering women in SMME's. ▪ Plans to implement the LED strategy in the 2022/23 financial year. ▪ Addressing women empowerment in rural areas through SMME's. ▪ LED strategies to enhance women empowerment in CoM villages. ▪ The current strategies to empower rural women.
<p>Theme 2:</p> <p>Dynamics of rural women empowerment using the LED strategy.</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflections on the empowerment of rural women through LED. ▪ Rural women's participation in LED programmes. ▪ Challenges to women empowerment through LED. ▪ Enhancement of women empowerment through LED by ward councilors.

<p>Theme 3:</p> <p>The role of LED in community development and sustainable livelihoods.</p>	<p>Sub-themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women empowerment: perspectives from traditional leadership. ▪ Constraints facing women empowerment through LED and traditional leaders. ▪ Empowerment through the LED strategy. ▪ Strategies designed to accelerate women empowerment in rural areas. ▪ Ward councilors' understanding of LED. ▪ Ward councilors' understanding of women empowerment. ▪ Strengthening women empowerment. ▪ Women empowerment through LED: efforts by ward councilors.
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Source: researcher's compilatio

5.2 Strategies to implement LED

Objective 2: To explore and describe strategies used by the CoM in implementing its LED role in rural areas

The first theme deals with strategies to implement LED. There are several subthemes that fall under this theme. The first subtheme explored the City of Mbombela (CoM) officials' understanding of LED. The study aim was to establish whether the municipal officials understand LED or not, given that their mandate was to implement the concept. Seven CoM officials were interviewed. Given that there were no visible LED initiatives in the CoM rural areas, the study assumption was that the municipal officials have no proper understanding about LED. The five (n=5) CoM participants were not experts in LED as they did not have qualifications in it. Thornhill (2009) pointed out that the government in all spheres must ensure that administrative positions are given to capacitated officials to ensure that desired results are produced. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the Com officials understand LED. The participants expressed their perceptions and understanding of LED in full. The participants intimated that LED is about providing employment and business opportunities, so that communities are able to improve their livelihoods. Hence, it is also about providing an environment that is conducive for businesses. One participant shared the following:

“LED is derived from the country’s Constitution. It states that we should create an enabling environment for businesses to thrive, as well as employment opportunities. That is what our mandate is” (Municipal official Six).

Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. The World Bank (2003) defined LED as a mechanism whereby the government and private institutions converge to provide socio-economic and political opportunities to underdeveloped communities. This includes employment and business opportunities for economic growth. This concurs with Rogerson (2014) who stated that local municipalities are expected to support communities to establish their socio-economic material needs to accelerate their livelihoods. Furthermore, the RSA (1998) posited that municipalities must advocate for the interests of locals and ensure that they are provided with basic needs. It is indeed a constitutional mandate to ensure that there are opportunities to enhance the lives of the people through employment creation and business opportunities. Furthermore, Makhubo (2014) asserted that the national

framework called for the implementation of new strategies in 2011. People are eager to initiate businesses to make local communities economically active. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“LED has to do with developing local economies so that people are economically stable, and be able to provide for themselves and their families. Whatever means they use, whether business or being employed, the idea is to help them sustain their livelihoods” (Municipal official number Six).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. LED is about coming up with opportunities to generate economic growth for communities (Bertik, 2008). The World Bank (2003) defined LED as communities coming together to accumulate profit for their benefit. According to Blakely (1994), LED is a strategy to incorporate local municipalities and other stakeholders to create employment and business opportunities. Local economic development is about advancing from pro-poor to better living conditions. For communities to have better standards of living, business and employment opportunities must be available. Some reasons why LED is devalued in municipalities is because there are no sufficient and capacitated staff to enhance it, and hence it is hard to implement its strategies (Mahlawe, 2010). It is, therefore, critical that LED officials in municipalities be knowledgeable about LED so that the implementation processes are strengthened. The CoM officials understand the LED, but define it differently.

5.2.1 The strengths of LED strategies for empowering women in SMMEs

This study also sought to explore the effectiveness of LED strategies in empowering the CoM women in the SMMEs. The intention to obtain in-depth knowledge on whether the CoM strategies were inclusive of women in the SMMEs. Women in the CoM still live under difficult conditions due to government policies that do not champion their empowerment programmes. Most women in South Africa are not employed, and most of them rely on a paltry government grant to make a living. Therefore, it would be very helpful if the government can come up with policies that support women’s initiatives to get access to resources and be able to put food on the table. This is supported by the following response from an in-depth interview:

“Basically, the CoM does not have any LED strategy. LED programmes are integrated with Umjindi Local Municipality where they recently developed a strategy, which is due for approval in the coming weeks. In terms of empowering women, there are projects directly attributed to them. Under LED, we have

project plans that are directly targeted at empowering women and those living with disabilities” (Municipal official Five).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. Ali and Hatta (2012) stated that giving women equal opportunities with men could change their socio-economic and political status. According to Moyo (2014), women are lucrative to developmental processes. Furthermore, the GAD approach enhances participation as a major element in women empowerment. WAD approach is women-based as it focuses on developing women in any way to better their livelihoods. According to Jeckoniah *et al.* (2012), the post 1994 South Africa strives to empowerment women. This is because women are impoverished and live in deep rural areas. Consequently, such women must be socio-economically and politically liberated (Oberhauser & Pratt, 2004; Dlamini-Zuma, 2007). Since women are not exposed to opportunities and live in dire situations, it is critical to provide them with opportunities for improving their livelihoods. Research has shown that women empowerment is not practised as a policy in most of the country’s government departments (Rowlands, 1997; Sen, 1997).

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the LED strategy was not approved by the council. This was indeed a challenge since the city’s LED and tourism officials could not execute their duties without the LED strategy. Thus, opportunities and services were not provided by the municipality until the strategy was approved by council, which is unfair to communities of the city at large. The responses further indicated that other municipal officials were eager to assist women so that they benefit from LED programmes or initiatives. There are strategies that were put in place to benefit rural women through LED and only await its approved by the city council. One participant shared the following;

“The LED strategy has not been approved. However, we have strategic activities aimed at empowering women in SMMEs. There is immense support for emerging women in agriculture co-operatives, support for local bakeries, support for women with accommodation establishments, and support for women’s recycling projects and saloons. We also hire women in community works programmes” (Municipal official One).

Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. According to Ferguson (2004) assertion that, liberal empowerment is through the interaction to acquire resources for economic growth. The liberal empowerment is utilised because the

CoM has various plans in place to empower women through co-operatives. The CoM officials intimated that at present they do not have LED strategies, specifically meant to empower women. Moreover, the CoM does not have the directorate of local economic development and tourism and therefore lacks a specific department to deal with LED challenges. Consequently, women continue to languish in poverty, despite the government's LED initiatives and the potential that the programme has towards women empowerment. This is supported by the following response from in-depth interviews:

“Mbombela’s LED programmes are structured differently from other municipalities. The issue of women does not necessarily fall under the LED department. There is a department called transversal services. They are the ones that deal with women issues where they engage women on economic matters. However, not all women per se are under transversal services because we only intervene if there are economic issues that need urgent attention”
(Municipal official Four).

There was a micro-finance programme initiated in the 1980s to enhance women empowerment with a view to eradicate poverty and create employment and business opportunities (Mayoux, 1999). Furthermore, Mayoux (2012) asserted that providing women with opportunities is an indication that they are empowered to improve their livelihoods. It is not always the case that transversal services transfer women to LED and tourism department for assistance. Instead, the department should include the economic empowerment of women. As Musakwa (2009) observes, it is important to advance women empowerment, as long as skills-training is promoted among rural women.

Prioritising in women has always been a challenge in many government institutions because the officials are male and women are under-represented in rural areas. Thus, women remain impoverished and are denied access to economic opportunities. However, other officials of the CoM have intimated that they are devising strategies to empower women in rural areas but more work needs to be done. The findings from in-depth interviews have therefore shown that women are not a key priority in the LED department in the CoM because the municipality only assists them if there are economic issues that need urgent attention. Thus, the issue of women's economic empowerment should need to be addressed. The following response from an in-depth interviews help support this point:

“We do not focus on gender sensitivity but I think the only way to empower women is to train them and monitor the processes and facilitate the programmes, in order to assist them become entrepreneurs” (LED coordinator One).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. According to Mahlawe (2010), LED initiatives in municipalities remains a major challenge because there is no standard approach to implement LED in municipal structures. Furthermore, the fact that LED is a unit instead of being a department on its own decreases the chances of its progress. For example, the CoM’s LED and tourism are one a department but LED used to belong to the CoM as an independent unit all along.

5.2.2 Plans to implement the LED strategy in the 2022/23 financial year

This theme explored the plans which were put in place by the CoM management to implement the LED strategy in the 2022-2023 financial year. The idea was to obtain in-depth data from experienced employees and the LED experts. After interviewing seven CoM officials, the researcher realised that their views were similar, and then sampled a few that represented the views of the rest.

As already observed, there is no LED strategy that was put in place in the CoM. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the White Paper on Local Government stipulate that the LED strategy is the engine of development in municipalities. The participants have intimated that no LED strategy was in place in the CoM, and the department was waiting for the council’s approval to start addressing the LED issues as directed by the Constitution and the White Paper on Local Government of 1998. One participant shared the following;

“As the municipality, we are required to have an LED strategy that guides or drive LED within the city. So, we currently do not have the approved LED strategy yet. However, the council is in the process of approving one. We currently got the draft, once the draft is approved it is the one that guides economic activities in the city” (Municipal official Four).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. According to Houghton *et al.*, (2013), LED as a development strategy is important in local government. Moreover, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the White Paper on Local Government (1998) observe that municipalities through LED can enhance employment

and business opportunities to reduce poverty (RSA, 1997;98). However, despite these recommendations, rural South African women still languish in poverty and with high level of unemployment (Gumede, 2021).

Municipalities are the closest sphere of influence of the government to communities. Municipalities are strategically placed to pinpoint, pilot, and implement programmes with an objective to eradicate poverty, enhance economic growth, and developmental challenges that impede Black people's empowerment in South Africa (Koma, 2014). Scholars concur that LED is a constitutional obligation to municipalities to enhance the socio-economic advancements (Scheepers & Monchusi, 2002; Tomlinson, 2003).

Thus, municipalities cannot operate without LED strategies. Since the CoM is still waiting for council approval before LED programmes/projects can be rolled out, there is no budget allocated for the directorate of LED and tourism. This is supported by the following response:

“LED is implemented in two phases. First, we place strategies for five years. For this financial year, we have about twelve projects aimed at seeing development in our local municipalities. However, our LED strategy is yet to be approved, and hence I cannot mention those projects at the moment because they are not yet approved” (Municipal official Five).

The results indicate the changes or adjustments in the CoM's organogram, where the LED and tourism cluster are now a department. The newly created department would be allocated funds to deal with the LED programmes. Generally, LED has no specific funding and has been relying on donations and public grants for its running (Patterson, 2008). However, the new department is expected to fulfil the LED obligations given the new funding model. This is supported by the following response:

“We have approved the LED strategy. What we need to do now is to develop an internally action plan; the general manager would follow in the strategy's implementation. We have established a mayoral LED forum. We have our own local economic development forum internally that we need to ensure is very effective and efficient. We need to provide support to our locally based companies through participation and support” (Municipal management Two).

The aim of the LED is to assist with economic empowerment of vulnerable community members, through the creation of employment and business opportunities (Canzanelli, 2001).

The vulnerable group are women, and hence one of the study's objectives is to understand how the CoM assesses its LED programmes which are meant to empower women in rural areas. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that there are programmes in place meant to address women empowerment issues in the CoM. This is consistent with Noreen's (2011) view that women empowerment is providing opportunities to women through employment and business opportunities to enhance their livelihoods. Women are the most vulnerable group and should be included in the LED strategy in order to improve their livelihoods. Braun (2017) observed that women who are into business encounter numerous difficulties and unfairness.

5.2.3 Addressing women empowerment in rural areas through SMMEs

This theme explored how the CoM addresses women empowerment in rural areas through the SMMEs. It is really crucial that women participate in economic growth, because the government is biased on programmes or initiatives that benefit men. Instead, programmes should be inclusive of both men and women. In today's world, many women are single parents who have the same responsibilities as that of men. Therefore, they should also benefit from municipal resources. One participant shared the following:

“That's tricky! Ehhh...The issue with LED is that it has no targeted mandate. LED is about creating an enabling environment. We do not specifically target women. It is a case of identifying SMMEs or a cooperative that constitutes women. So, we assist in that but, as with most projects, we create a space where women are included. However, we do not target women per se. Previously the council supported SMMEs that had more women than men” (Municipal official Five).

According to Van Wyk (2004), LED strategies should promote business opportunities for profit which help reduce poverty and improve people's livelihoods. This concurs with Nel's (2001) view that community members should be watchdogs and accountable through programmes that enhance women empowerment and skills development in informal settlements. Thus, Nel's assertion is contrary to what transpires in the CoM, given that women empowerment in rural areas through SMMEs is not supported. Hence, programmes that are in place do not specifically fund women. Thus, findings have shown that there are no programmes that are specifically designed for women at the moment. As Kaggwa (2020) observes, this is due to the fact that women are not part of the decision-making body in the CoM municipality.

LED officials were reluctant to shoulder the blame pertaining to the lack of women empowerment in the CoM. Hence, the transversal services should deal with issues of women empowerment. They that each directorate should develop policies that would assist women through employment, business opportunities or career advancements, and many more. Therefore, it makes little sense for the directorate of LED and tourism to shift the blame of women's economic empowerment through LED to transversal services. The findings from in-depth interviews have therefore revealed that the failure of women empowerment through LED is a question of accountability. Clusters that deal with the empowerment of communities in order to reduce poverty, unemployment, and to promote economic growth suggest that programmes that are specifically designed for women come through the transversal services, but the problem is that men are assisted without going through the transversal services unit. The participant shared the following:

“It has been a while but we used to arrange. The last one I remember was not specifically for women but everyone and stakeholders like SEDA. For now, we never did anything like that. We have not done so much due to COVID-19 and financial constraints. That is, programmes were put on hold” (LED officer One).

Espi *et al.*, (2019) claimed that the investigations of the employment Equity Act in 2015/16 found that women were deprived of opportunities such as business and employment. They elaborated that there were women who needed assistance but due funding issues, the LED section failed to assist those women in rural areas. Furthermore, they relied on stakeholders such as Ehlanzeni District Municipality, SEDA, SETA, and NYDA. According to the Commission for Gender Equality, municipalities should establish policies that enhance gender equality and women empowerment (Moleko, 2021). Furthermore, the commission for gender equality asserted that gender mainstreaming should be implemented as an approach in the following manner; planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation on municipalities across South Africa (Moleko, 2021). The Commission added that municipalities fail on gender equality because of lack of motivation, not having enough resources and inclination to enhance mainstreaming in municipalities, lack of representation of women in decision making body, and male dominancy in the workplace (Moleko, 2021). Thus, women suffer the most when entering the workforce, since there are no proper policies or strategies to enhance women empowerment, and failure to adhere to the national gender policy framework.

The Commission for Gender Equality are meant to address challenges that women encounter in municipalities, and hence come up with solutions that enhance their empowerment in municipalities. These policies are meant to strengthen how municipalities handle the subject of women empowerment to make it functional. The LED and Tourism cluster in the CoM does not prioritise women since the cluster has never focused on women alone although the new LED strategy aims to target more women in their programmes. Second, the findings have revealed that the cluster for LED and Tourism does not focus on women empowerment only, since the transversal services is expected to deal with that issue. Third, the findings have revealed that programmes that involve women have been seldom done due to financial constraints and the COVID-19 pandemic although there are programmes meant to address women empowerment in rural areas through the SMMEs in the LED strategy awaiting the council's approval. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“Most programmes to be implemented through the strategy target women SMMEs in rural areas, for example, farmers’ support programme, recycling programme, township economy through support to spaza shops, township tourism route initiative, and rural development support programme” (LED officer One).

Bertik (2003) stated that LED is about coming up with opportunities to generate profit for economic growth in rural communities. The World Bank (2003) defined LED as communities coming together to accumulate income for the beneficiation of the livelihoods of communities. However, women's participation is absent and this makes them unable to access resources. Hoghton (2014) observed that there is limited access to information in rural areas due to problems of accessibility of information. Musakwa (2009) pointed out that rural areas are not given much time and attention as compared to urban areas. Furthermore, lack of skills and training hinders LED (Quinterno & Meredith, 2017). LED's primary purpose is to enhance economic opportunities and accelerate economic growth and income generation (Reza-Maleki et al., 2014). However, there are concerns on the increasing rates of employment and dwindling economic prospects (Anderson, 2002; Batyk, 2011; Sharpley, 2002).

The rationale of public participation allows for accountability, transparency, and empowerment (Dosner, 2004). The country's Constitution promulgates that contingency of sustainable basic services should be community inclusive, through participation and consultations. Enabling

training is an educational process that allows people to acquire new knowledge and skills to assist perform efficiently in business (Samacenko *et al.*, 2016).

5.2.4 LED strategies to enhance women empowerment in CoM villages

There are efforts to enhance women empowerment in rural areas through the CoM's LED strategies. It must be noted that the LED projects do not target women per se but the entire population strata in the CoM must benefit from it. The participants have intimated that there must be programmes that specifically focus on women. The CoM officials are keen to develop strategies that are meant to address women empowerment. Therefore, there should be a strategy that enhances LED and economic growth. Partnerships with various stakeholders should be formed in order to find suitable ways of enhancing people's livelihoods. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“We have forty-five wards in Mbombela and I think we can go to each ward to identify women within those wards and check if they have resources. For example, women in agriculture can be assisted in terms of tools of trade and liaise with traditional authorities like the Chief in terms of land to carry on with their business” (Municipal official Six).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. According to the World Food Organization (2021), women empowerment is a ladder to eradicating poverty and hunger, and most importantly fulfil all sustainable development goals. Opportunities are seldom given to women to make a living and to lead. According to Gumede (2012), South African women remain the most impoverished group facing the challenge of unemployment and underdevelopment regardless of the policies placed by the government. Before 1994, the apartheid laws favoured males in public and private institutions, leading to biasness between men and women (Barker, 1997). Men dominate women on access to economic opportunities and there are no projects that are meant to fund women. Gumede (2012) asserted that the unequal representation of women in highest decision-making structures portrays gender inequality. There are financial institutions that fund women to manage their financial needs. However, women face difficulties to own businesses because of limited access to (Jackson, 2016). According to McCool (2010), community participation promotes accountability in municipalities. McCool further noted that communities should be notified of decisions taken by municipalities in council sittings.

The findings from in-depth interviews have suggested that the CoM municipality promotes community participation. Municipalities first consult communities about the strategy, assess what they want and work around that and that is the bottom-up approach. However, LED programmes seldom comprise women. The programmes are inclusive on paper but men end up getting more than women. One participant shared the following:

“Ideally, when one develops a strategy, one needs to engage with all stakeholders needed in the development of the economy of the city. It does not matter whether it is the CoM or the City of Cape Town. When we develop strategies, we consult all the people concerned. The vulnerable group is not only women, we have women with disability and the youth” (Municipal official Four).

Community participation is important in development. It is the best approach for local communities to express their grievances. Maxegwana *et al.*, (2015) stated that lack of participation can be a barrier to developmental programmes. Maxegwana further stated that the lack of participation can result in or hinder accountability, transparency, and women empowerment. The Municipal Act 32 of 2000 states that community participation in local spheres of government reign supreme. Communities remain watchdogs and organs of change to development in municipalities (RSA, 2000). The Municipal Structures Act 177 of 1998, subsection 19 (2) a-e and (3), state that municipalities should at all costs ensure that communities participate in the affairs of municipal development to promote transparency (RSA, 1998). The Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 (2) subsection 5(c) says the community members must be informed of the decisions of the municipal council. Subsection (c) calls for the regular disclosure of the state of affairs of local municipalities (RSA, 2000).

These findings further suggest that rural women should be given a platform to voice out their needs and desires about LED. In this sense, the CoM should create platforms where opportunities are discussed and questions that arise attended to so that women understand the LED processes and how they can be empowered. The CoM management are keen to empower women, and hence programmes in the LED strategy are geared towards women empowerment. One participant shared the following:

“By law, the municipal’s system Act requires the municipality to go and consult the community when they compile their IDPs. We believe that when we create a platform where they can raise issues they have, we have to be specific with

women. I think we have to have information sessions where we call for meetings in community halls and engage with transversal services” (Municipal management Two).

The Municipality Act, Chapter 4, Section 16, Subsection 1(a) stipulates that municipalities should create conditions that are conducive for local communities to participate in their affairs and (ii) states that ward councillors and the municipality’s officials should foster community participation (RSA, 2000). The Municipal Act 32 of 2000 is consistent with CoM A004’s results that suggest the promotion of interaction between the municipalities and communities, where officials get community inputs on their needs (RSA, 2000).

5.2.5 Current strategies to empower rural women

This section unearthed the strategies the CoM use to ensure that rural women are empowered. The participants revealed certain strategies would possibly assist in empowering rural women, with the potential to alleviate poverty, unemployment, and inequalities in rural areas. Thus, the strategies are meant to improve the livelihoods of women in rural areas. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed the importance of enhancing women’s competencies to run projects or programmes that change their standard of living. The International Development Agencies and the World Bank (2021) stated that women economic inclusiveness is important in attaining human development and sustainable economic growth. Hence, the government’s attempts to reach its 50% target representation in senior management positions is impossible (Gumede, 2012). Therefore, the only way the CoM officials can establish what women want in rural areas is to apply the friendly approach, which is the bottom-up approach. In this way, the municipal officials are assisted in finding out which projects women in rural areas prefer. One participant shared the following:

“What is critical in these programmes would be the implementation of capacity and skills programmes to ensure that women have adequate competencies to manage the programmes or projects awarded to them” (Municipal management One).

The findings from in-depth interviews are thus consistent with related literature. Quinterno & Meredith (2017) stated that insufficient skills results in slow LED implementation, especially when there is still little support from government and private institutions. De Villard (2008) asserted that illiteracy, basic education, skills development and training, and lack of business

education limits rural women. The municipality's friendly approach assists rural communities to develop economically through the bottom-up approach (Hoghton, 2014). This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

We need to identify women who are willing to be involved in business or economic activities and know what they want to do so that we are able to develop programmes suitable for their economic needs (LED officer One).

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that the CoM's LED projects are currently suspended. No projects or programmes would be implemented before the council's approval of the LED strategy. After the council's approval, a budget would be allocated to the relevant department for services to be rendered. In addition, LED and Tourism are a section of the municipality, not a directorate and therefore the budget to be allocated would prioritise many sections of the Department of City Planning and Development. Now that LED and Tourism fall under a single directorate, the budget would be specifically for programmes that would prioritise the triple bottom challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities. One participant shared the following:

“Well, we want to make sure that they participate in the thirty percent benefit. We have a contract they must be part of. Second, we want to encourage them to initiate cooperatives where women do maintenance of pavements if they are strong enough because the council has made a resolution to resurface tarred roads and integrate pavements. They can approach NEF and IDC for funding and accreditation and manufacture bricks. As the municipality, we would buy those bricks. The idea is to make women participate in economic growth endeavours” (Municipal management Two).

Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. As Sheena (2019) observes, the empowerment of rural women can be achieved through microcredit movements. Thus, lack of opportunities and purported unwillingness result from the fact that women are not given the platform to showcase their skills.

5.3 Dynamics of rural women empowerment using the LED strategy

Objective 3: To determine how the CoM assesses its LED programmes meant to empower women in rural areas

Objective 4: To explore and describe barriers that inhibit women's empowerment in the CoM's rural areas

The second theme focused on the dynamics of rural women empowerment using the LED strategy. This theme provides the participants' responses to the question: How do women benefit from the LED initiatives in the CoM rural areas? The aim here was to find out how LED initiatives benefit rural women. Rural women are denied access to resources because they are excluded from the municipality and have no one who puts their interests at heart. Rural women have been deprived in many ways which include lack of access to land, and unequal opportunities to financial resources because of patriarchy. Most participants were less knowledgeable about LED and how they could benefit from it. Therefore, there is need for the CoM officials to go down to rural women and teach about LED and how they can benefit from it. Moreover, even those who are knowledgeable about LED do not benefit from its initiatives or programmes and therefore need enlightenment on problems pertaining to LED implementation. The following responses from in-depth interviews help illustrate this point:

“As women, we do not benefit anything from LED initiatives. I am unemployed and have five children who depend on me. Women are not empowered in anyway here. No markets are built for us and the government does not make any initiative that benefits us” (Woman respondent One).

Local municipalities have a role of ensuring that LED initiatives are included in the integrated development plan (IDP) (Piet, 2011). Khambule (2018) stated that LED is seen as a tool to address the socio-economic ills, as it provides solutions through jobs. LED is viewed as a source of benefits through employment opportunities. LED programmes are used as strategies for economic growth (Meyer & Venter, 2013). It has been a decade since LED was introduced in local municipalities (Rogerson, 2014). There are countless challenges in communities that hinder the rural women's livelihoods. Women still live in difficult conditions and are relatively poor (Bower, 2014; Laughlin *et al.*, 2013).

The white paper on local governance (1998) asserted that local governments are expected to enhance communities and groups to start-up their socio-economic material needs to accelerate

their livelihood initiatives (RSA, 1998). The Municipal Act 32 of 2000, Chapter 4, Section 16, subsection 1 (a) encourages an environment where communities are inclusive through participation in the affairs of the municipality. Furthermore, part (ii) outlines that ward councillors and the municipal officials should work hand-in-hand to enhance community participation (RSA, 2000). Community participation is the only mechanism of close contact with the municipal officials, and it is the platform that enable rural women to voice out their grievances.

Most participants intimated that they were less knowledgeable about LED. This gives an impression that LED awareness campaigns are not done by LED officials because if there were LED awareness campaigns, rural women and people in general would know about it. This is supported by the following response:

“I do not know what LED is. Our failure to know anything about LED in rural areas shows that we are not taken seriously by the local authorities. The municipality does not care about us” (Woman respondent Six).

Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that there are LED challenges in rural areas of the CoM. There is lack of public participation and awareness about LED in the CoM rural areas, and that hinders the economic emancipation of women. Therefore, there is need to ensure that women are not deprived of opportunities to economically empower themselves in rural areas. The 2007 National LED framework in South Africa prioritised the enhancement of inclusive local economy (RSA, 2007). The findings from in-depth interview suggest that rural women do not know what LED is about and how it is supposed to assist them as rural women. Thus, inclusivity in local economy is not promoted since most people do not know about the poverty reduction programme called LED.

The policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa (2004) provides for women’s inclusivity where LED implementation should be driven by government departments, in order to succeed in enhancing the country’s economy to benefit everyone (RSA, 2004). The policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa (2004) reveal that the country’s economy is for everyone, regardless of gender and ethnicity. Based on the rural women’s responses, the local municipality has not done much to educate them about LED initiatives. Rural women are not knowledgeable about LED and its benefits given that LED is set to reduce poverty by bringing business and employment opportunities to rural areas (Helmsing & Eghzaibher, 2005).

5.3.1 Reflections on the empowerment of rural women through LED

The participants were asked to provide their suggestions on how the CoM management can assist rural women empowerment through LED. The CoM rural women were eager to know more about LED, as the majority of them called for the municipal management to delegate LED officials to visit them and impart them with the knowledge and awareness of LED. Rural women were dissatisfied with the municipality's work on LED initiatives in rural areas. It is quite clear that there is a need for the CoM to enhance public or community participation, to ensure that rural women are taught about LED programmes or initiatives. Furthermore, ward councillors are supposed to be at the forefront of imparting knowledge about LED and how women and residents in general can access funding. Moreover, one of the reasons why the LED officials do not disseminate awareness to community members about LED is that they themselves do not have sufficient knowledge on the LED. This is supported by the following response:

“I think the CoM should delegate designed personnel dealing with LED to convene a meeting with women and come and teach us or do awareness about LED. Also, they should inform us on how LED projects would assist us to improve our livelihoods. We live in dire conditions; we are not working and neither our children do. I think if we are exposed to LED there would be solutions to our problems” (Woman respondent Nine).

Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews are consistent with related literature. Binza (2010) stated that municipal officials are not knowledgeable about local government policies and legislations, which are the engine of municipalities. Furthermore, Binza (2010) asserted that LED is allocated limited budget, which is a constraint to LED officials' endeavour to deliver services to communities. Shortages of skilled and experienced employees has contributed to the failure of LED's implementation in municipalities (Koma, 2014). According to Rondinelli and Theron (2008), incapacitated management and officials can result to LED's policy failures. Municipalities are supposed to interact with communities in order to keep them updated on matters pertaining to their development.

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that there is need for municipalities to be guided by community participation. Theron (2008) stated that municipal directorates initiate projects and implement them through the top-down approach. Therefore, it is recommended that local communities should be part and parcel of LED projects meant to accommodate them.

It is recommended that officials use the people-centred approach when dealing with LED processes. Therefore, there is need for a bottom-up approach to guard against negative sentiments that the municipality's officials should let them understand what LED is about, and how they can benefit from its programmes. LED is a tool used by rural communities to attain economic and employment liberation (Meyer-stammer, 2008; Zulu & Mubangizi, 2014). LED precisely stipulates that it is the solution to rural communities' dire condition, especially where women are concerned. In this case, the municipality should make efforts to ensure that they leave no stone unturned in enhancing LED awareness or education in remote areas within its jurisdictions, so that everyone is aware of opportunities that could improve their livelihoods. Canzanelli (2009) pointed out that the LED's priority is on vulnerable communities (rural areas) to assist in reducing poverty. This is done through employment opportunities, for example, the EPWP programmes and venture capital.

Therefore, the responses from in-depth interviews have revealed that rural based women are eager to meet the municipal officials to give them a broader understanding of LED and its benefits. This concurs with Manyaka and Madzivhandila (2013) view that in democratic South Africa, development and services provisioned to communities are monitored and coordinated by relevant officials. Furthermore, Patterson (2008) acknowledged that local government is the development driver in eradicating poverty, improving infrastructure, and enhancing economic development. LED is thus a major tool to eradicate poverty, and help create employment and business opportunities. However, the success of LED depends on the availability of officials on the ground who impart relevant knowledge. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interview:

“The municipality must give us land and sponsor us with equipment to cultivate and produce crops/vegetables for sale for us to put food on the table. For example, I have four children and I am not working and neither is my husband. We depend on the child support grant and it is not enough” (Woman respondent Seven).

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that a few women are aware of the LED programme but they have never benefitted from it. This concurs with Maxegwana *et al.* (2005) observation that the lack of interaction with government is an obstacle to the success of developmental programmes in rural areas. Also, De Villard (2008) posited that entrepreneurial education can be a constraint to rural women's development through LED. According to Sen

(1997), women should be given financial resources to start business in order to improve their livelihoods. For example, loans and donations can go a long way in economically empowering women. Accessing financial help would help rural based women to fight against poverty. In this way, those who dependent on child support grant would be empowered to support themselves through small business initiatives.

5.3.2 Rural women's participation in LED programmes

This section focused on the role that rural women play to ensure their participation in LED programmes in the CoM. The theme explored women's initiatives that are intended to supplement the economic support they receive from the CoM's LED programmes. The majority of the participants (seven) have intimated that they did not take initiatives to ensure that they participate in LED programmes. However, four participants provided different views. It is the role of communities to ensure that they also play a role in developing themselves economically since the government's financial resources are scarce. Thus, community members should make initiatives that are intended to access national resources. However, the challenge is that most women are less knowledgeable about LED. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“We have not tried anything because the municipality does not give us the opportunity to empower ourselves as women. The municipality must assist us with opportunities to help us better our lives” (Woman respondent One).

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that rural women have a gap in LED knowledge. This concurs with Nel and Humphry's (1999) observation that LED is not popular in many areas of South Africa. Both the World Bank and the United Nations believe that public involvement and community participation is the best mechanism to ensure that communities are knowledgeable about LED. Hence, the government should focus on implementing the bottom-up approach to LED implementation programmes (David, 2003). The bottom-up approach focuses on the voices of the people in communities (Theron, 2005). Consequently, there is a need for local municipalities to provide mechanisms that promote LED in rural areas. Such mechanisms can be in the form of awareness campaigns for public participation so that community members and rural women have in-depth knowledge about LED.

The findings from in-depth interviews have further revealed that rural women in the CoM municipality were disgruntled with LED programmes. Some of these participants have the knowledge of the LED programme but have never benefitted from it. This may be due to

misappropriation of funds as in most municipalities, the budget meant for LED initiatives is transferred to other departments for other use. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“In our area, we tried as women to form groups to start up cooperatives. The CoM promised to assist us with seeds to start-up commercial farming but nothing came of that promise. We tried to get land for cultivation but we were not successful. We also mobilised women who to sew clothes and asked for funding to buy sewing machines but we did not succeed” (Women respondent Three).

The results contradict Jackson’s (2016) observation that rural women are provided with funding and credit opportunities to start-up businesses. In contrast, Braun (2017) observed that to date women still face injustices in rural areas. Women are not financially well-equipped and rural women still face financial difficulties even today. The BDS’ statistics prove that many cooperatives project a male-female ratio of 70:30 (Dickens, 2015). Simelane (2020) stated that women are still poor and deprived of the right to land, property and inheritance. The World Bank (2013) observed that the percentage between men and women is questionable, with a thirteen percent of women and over thirty-six percent of men owning small-scale business.

5.3.3 Challenges to women empowerment through LED

In this theme, the researcher explored how women empowerment through LED challenges were addressed. Rural women are still undergoing difficult conditions to acquire resources than men and this may be caused by how societies are socially constructed. The patriarchal order in South African society ensures that women are subordinate to men. Women are therefore prevented to own land to start businesses because traditional leaders consider men, heads of families, to have the right to landownership. The participants have also intimated that they received no assistance from the CoM since the municipality is dominated by males. This is supported by the following responses from in-depth interviews:

“The municipality is doing absolutely nothing to help economically empower us. I suggest that the municipality should at least gives us an opportunity to participate in the EPWP programmes so that we can be able to put food on the table” (Woman respondent One).

The United Nations (2016) stated that goal five of its sustainable development goals (SDGs) enhances gender equality between men and women as an intervention strategy to empower women and girls. Scholars also define women empowerment as providing opportunities to individuals or a group to make their livelihoods better in communities (Bandura, 1986; Maton, 2008). Also, as Lawal *et al.* (2016) observe, women undergo various challenges in the business space that include inadequate access to finance. Reddy (2014) suggested that there should be a gender-based budget set aside to assist prospective women entrepreneurs. This suggests a gap on how the CoM addresses women empowerment challenges in rural areas.

The findings from in-depth interviews thus confirm that there is lack of bottom-up approach in terms of planning and community consultative processes in the CoM (Heydenrych, 2012). Moreover, members of parliament ensure that gender mainstreaming is enhanced in dealing with business opportunities and providing available credit and tenders (Madzivhandila & Asha, 2012). As Reddy (2014) observes, the government budget ought to be gender-based to ensure that women's needs are catered for. There is a need for municipalities to utilise the bottom-up approach and be on the ground as far as women empowerment is concerned. Doing so would lead to women empowerment through LED in rural areas.

5.3.4 Enhancement of women empowerment through LED by ward councillors

This section focused on how ward councillors enhance women empowerment through LED in rural areas. The participants indicated that there is a serious challenge between the communities and ward councillors when it comes to interaction. Women participants reiterated that they never liaised with ward councillors after they were elected into that position of power. The participants' responses are that they do not know their ward councillors and they are never called to community meetings. Given the participants' lamentations, there was need, therefore, to explore whether the ward councillors do anything about women empowerment in rural areas. Women are the most vulnerable people in rural areas given that some head their families as single parents. The participants' responses reflect that women are not empowered in rural areas through LED.

“Never! Since I voted in 1994, I never heard any ward councillor promoting women empowerment and teaching or explaining anything about LED. The late councillor we had in our ward once tried but his efforts did not benefit us. Like I said, LED benefits those closer to the ward councillors only” (Woman respondent Three).

According to the Constitution (2003), the ward councillors' responsibility is to enhance public participation in communities or wards they are entrusted to serve in order to advocate for their interest in the council (RSA, 2003). Mzelemu (2019) noted that it is the responsibility of the ward councillors to constantly contact their community members through public participation. Furthermore, the ward councillors have a huge role to play to improve people's lives and enhance economic growth (Mzelemu, 2019). Zaid and Popolla (2010) stated that to enhance the living conditions in Nigeria's rural women, government must first deal with the socio-economic ills. Rural women's situations are dire and require government and other private stakeholders' immediate attention.

The EPWP was meant to address challenges of poverty, unemployment, and its priority are women (Zulu *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, the question remains: "Is the EPWP doing enough to tackle challenges facing women such as poverty and unemployment?" According to Maxegwana *et al.* (2015) the key to development can only be attained through public participation with the aid from provincial and national governments. Furthermore, Maxegwana *et al.* (2015) stated that lack of participation can be a stumbling block for the government to respond to challenges faced by communities. Hoghton (2014) also noted that, in the absence of the provincial government, LED implementation would never succeed. Isaacs (2006) observed that the LED programmes assist in employment and business opportunities in communities where they are carried out. Thus, it is wrong not to address women empowerment in rural areas because women are the most vulnerable in those areas. This concurs with Triegaardt's (2006) view that South Africa experiences exponential levels of poverty, particularly among women living in rural areas.

5.4 The role of LED in community development and sustainable livelihoods

Objective 1: To explore and describe the role of LED and how it can be used as an empowerment tool

The third theme focused on the role of LED in community development and sustainable livelihoods. The participants (traditional leaders) were asked to explain their understanding of LED with a view of determining their understanding of the concept. The aim of LED is to reduce levels of poverty, provide equal opportunities to citizens, and reduce unemployment by enhancing standards of living in communities. In this case, LED relates to economic growth, employment creation and enhancing business opportunities through SMMEs. LED focuses on addressing injustices in order to improve people's livelihoods. The initiative is meant to

empower the Black ethnic group by improving the living conditions in rural areas where Black people live by creating economic opportunities that benefit local communities. LED is the national government's initiative to economically interact with ordinary rural people through the provision of economic opportunities that accelerate economic growth in local municipalities. Employment creation and better living standards are crucial developmental issues in the developing world.

Regarding LED, Traditional Leader One stated that:

“It is a strategy the Government came up with to empower Black people, especially in rural areas. The idea is to employ local people in projects and also for local people to come up with business opportunities.”

Furthermore, Traditional Leader Two stated that:

“LED is a way in which the government of the Republic of South Africa tries to get closer to municipalities and areas under traditional authorities working together with municipalities to bring services to assist communities. For example, there is a programme themed; “Masibuyele Emasimini” whose aim is to empower women in rural areas to better their living standards.”

LED has been defined by Sebola and Fourie (2007) as the dispersing of resources and opportunities, be it socio-economic and political endeavours, to benefit local residents. The opportunities provided by local government are meant to assist communities eradicate economic imbalances. Swinburn *et al.* (2006) have defined LED as an initiative meant to provide opportunities to accelerate economic growth. Overall, the perspectives of the respondents were common. Precisely, LED aims to empower women and disadvantaged groups in rural areas (Fado S.A., 2018).

5.4.1 Women empowerment: Perspectives from traditional leadership

Under this theme, the traditional leaders were asked to express their understanding of women empowerment. In this study, women who were traditional leaders contributed to the outcomes of this study from the perspectives of two different traditional councils. The participants held similar views about women empowerment by advocating for the provision of equal opportunities for both men and women. The creation of opportunities such as employment, business ownership through SMMEs and participating in decision-making bodies, which was previously seldom, is set to benefit both men and women.

Traditional Leader One explained women empowerment, thus:

“Women empowerment is such that if there are projects in communities, even if men can be employed, women must also be considered. Before 1994, women were side-lined.”

Bali, Swain, and Wellentin (2009) defined women empowerment as a process of eradicating traditional and gender insensitive norms and cultural beliefs installed in the early ages where traditional councils were predominant in modern society. The modern society is an environment that allows women to participate in socio-economic and political endeavours to maintain their livelihoods. White (2010) defined women empowerment as a liberal universal tradition that exempts women to opportunities such as economic growth. Traditionally, women were considered inferior to men, and hence were excluded from platforms where they could prove their abilities by participating in decision-making bodies in rural areas (Mireku, 2010). The concept of women empowerment is understood as allowing women to have access to developmental opportunities, including land and power. According to Africa Agenda 2063, women, including those residing in rural areas, would be fully empowered and exposed to opportunities if they have access to assets, land, and financial credit.

Traditional Leader Three added that:

“Women empowerment gives women a wide array of opportunities. We must not close opportunities for women as they must participate in economic development. If there are positions and women have the capacity to lead, they must be given that opportunity. For example, in schools and churches women hold positions as principals and pastors, respectively. Women should be capacitated and not suppressed.”

According to Africa Agenda 2063, women must be fully empowered and exposed to an array of opportunities in all aspects of life; this includes rural women having access to assets, land, and loan facilities. Women are considered the key bestowal of the world economy, and hence play a crucial role in the development of communities. Furthermore, the Africa Agenda 2063 stipulates that in political offices, women must occupy fifty per cent of political positions. Women are the most vulnerable group and face challenges related to land ownership rights due to cultural traditions, beliefs, and norms (Kleinbooi & Lahiff, 2007; Daley, 2011). Land ownership by women is below two per cent globally (Dorf, 2007). Osabuohein (2014) stated

that in rural areas, land is a source of livelihood as it assists in income generation for better standards of living. Poor women living in rural areas rely on land for a living.

One of the programmes implemented by the Government to reduce poverty in households and to empower both the unemployed and women from disadvantaged settlements is the Extended Public Works programme (Zulu, Nyawo & Mashau, 2017). Rathgeber (1989) asserted that the gender and development approach show that women are the engineers of development. This implies that socio-economic development and political endeavours can be attained through gender parity encapsulated in the fifty-fifty rule. Mannel (2012) stated that the developmental processes are suppressed by cultural practices instilled by patriarchy.

5.4.2 Constraints facing women empowerment through LED and traditional leaders

Traditional leaders were asked to deliberate on the constraints that hinder women empowerment in their traditional constituencies. Section 20 (1) of the Traditional and Governance Framework Act of 2003 provides that traditional leaders are entrusted with the virtue to enhance women's socio-economic development. The idea here was to get in-depth knowledge about the traditional leaders past experiences concerning women empowerment. There were different perspectives from the participants. For example, women professed lack of awareness of the programmes meant to better their livelihoods. Furthermore, the programmes proposed by municipalities, as well as provincial, and national governments to enhance women's livelihoods are not available to women residing in rural areas. There are few community outreach programmes in rural areas.

Traditional Leader One responded, thus:

“Many women are not knowledgeable about local projects meant to assist them. In rural areas, there are communication barriers and women still believe men should benefit in most cases. It is important to encourage women to participate in socio-economic and political endeavours.”

Amongst other issues, the financial issue specifically hinders the empowerment of uneducated women. Illiteracy and limited business opportunities limit the empowerment of rural women (De Villard, 2008). Lack of community participation hinders women's empowerment. Furthermore, women seldom participate in community projects, thus hindering developmental programmes (Maxegwana *et al.*, 2015). Musakwa (2009) described the management skills training initiative for informal settlements as vital since it enhances women's empowerment.

Quintero and Meredith (2007) pointed out that lack of skills hinders LED and development in general. Opportunities are seldom availed for women living in rural areas (Piwowarczyk, 2019). Musakwa (2009) mentioned that the government does not pay much attention to the needs of rural areas, yet urban settlements receive adequate attention. Consequently, municipalities hardly consider the needs of informal dwellers. The Local Governance Framework Act of 2003 allows the traditional leadership to promote socio-economic development. Traditional leaders are expected to ensure that communities are empowered without discrimination.

One participant mentioned projects that were at the implementation phase in the communities, though they have not yet been presented to them and have not been consulted about them. However, traditional leaders expressed knowledge about women who live in poverty and must benefit from those projects for their livelihoods to improve.

Traditional Leader Six said that:

“The constraints that women have been encountering are that if there are projects, the contractors are not introduced to us as traditional leaders, and they hire men. They do not consult us so that we identify needy women and those that are heading families. Consulting us would lead to deserving women benefiting from such projects.”

Rural areas that are still under the traditional authorities today must participate in the development strategies and processes informed by the LED initiative. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) mandates traditional leaders to be in charge of rural areas under their jurisdiction. Despite the fact that the country’s Constitution guarantees equal rights, and fair practices, societies still hold on to patriarchal values and norms. However, the inequalities evident in the construction industry are at the centre stage in this context. Despite the exponential increase in the number of women in the labour force, women still hold junior posts (Cross & Linehan, 2006). The 1996 Constitution in South Africa opened doors for women to participate or be equally employed in various industries. However, women are still not given that opportunity. The focal point for feminism is to fight infringement on right, unfairness, and inequalities (Acker, 1994). Friedman, Metelerkamp, and Posel (1987) stated that societies that still consider women inferior to men due to how they are socially constructed are not modernised, but are still stuck in old traditions.

Chinn and Wheeler (1985) claimed that feminism is how women are regarded or valued in societies in which they live. These authors further exposed the inequalities between men and women. Post-modern day societies still consider women as childbearing objects, wives, and shoulder the burden of house chores (Evans, 1975). Naidoo (2007) asserted that the post-apartheid government in South Africa has been promoting the empowerment of women but little has been achieved to date. Gale (1994) stated that construction industries' cultural values cannot change abruptly with regard to how women are perceived in the labour market when one considers the patriarchal experiences they have to go through. It is only undoable if men and women would abandon stereotypical values and advocate for gender parity in both private and public organisations.

5.4.3 Empowerment through the LED strategy

The traditional leaders were asked about the projects constituting the LED strategy in the CoM. The objective here was to solicit the traditional leaders' views about the types of projects being implemented in their communities as part of the LED strategies meant to empower women living in rural areas. The functions of traditional leadership include convening meetings meant to determine the needs of communities. Two participants answered this question while five did not. Those who did not answer it did not know of such projects or never heard of them, given their level of education. Some projects were part of the LED strategy, though they were limited.

Traditional Leader One claimed that:

“There is a woman practising sand-mining around here. However, the project is difficult for her because she is a woman and she needs our assistance. However, there is a woman who once benefited from the LED unit.”

Rural areas that are still under the jurisdiction of traditional authorities should develop strategies that allow traditional leaders to participate in LED initiatives (Meyer & Venter, 2013). Furthermore, Section 211 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa obliges traditional leaders to take charge of the development of rural areas (Constitution, 1996). The White Paper on Local Government (1996) stated that traditional leadership should cooperate with local government for the development of the people's livelihoods in rural areas. The Rural Development Framework (RDF) is aimed at eradicating poverty by championing socio-economic development in rural areas. The LED projects are meant to enhance the living conditions for rural women through financial support from the government (Meyer-Stammer, 2003). In South Africa, more women live in poverty than men (Ramaphakela, 2015).

Ramaphakela (2015) further asserted that the involvement of rural people in economic issues leans towards men than women. COGTA (2016) stated that the RDF seeks to address the socio-economic burdens encountered by women in rural areas. The framework advocates for programmes that prioritise rural women when it comes to start-up business funding meant to improve their livelihoods (Lesetedi, 2018).

Traditional Leader Two stated that:

“There are projects that are funded by the CoM’s LED unit. However, no follow-ups are done after the funding of those projects.”

Chapter 7 of the Local Government Objectives, Section 152 (a), stipulates that local government must ensure accountability among its officials (Constitution, 1996). Accountability ensures that the challenges, such as those raised above, are not encountered because they hinder development in rural areas. The Local Government Objective 152 (b) states that local government should ensure that services provisioned should last and benefit future generations. In the absence of follow-up programmes implemented by municipal officials, the LED projects deteriorate and the future generation will have nothing to sustain their livelihoods (Constitution, 1996).

5.4.4 Strategies designed to accelerate women empowerment in rural areas

In an effort to accelerate the empowerment of women in rural areas, women are offered land for commercial use. They grow vegetables and rear animals to better their living standards. Communities are willing to generate income through agriculture and other forms of sustainable businesses instead of depending on government for employment and funding which might take even years for one to be employed.

Traditional Leader Six said:

“We usually have imimemo (community gatherings) in our traditional council where we ask unemployed women to teach young girls and boys traditional dances. Women who participate in such programmes are given stipends to help feed their children. We also give women places to sew traditional mats and other handmade items for sell. Such places were built by the government and women have access to them to maintain their livelihoods.”

Danayi (2017) stated that traditional leaders are informative influencers in channelling traditional and cultural norms in an equitable and inclusive manner. In South Africa, the Commission for Gender Equity (2018) argued that traditional leaders are found wanting when it comes to enhancing gender mainstreaming and equality; consequently, women are deprived of the socio-economic resources needed to better their livelihoods. Danayi (2017) stated that men dominate the ownership of land and enjoy resources more than women do. He further stated that the major element that limits rural women empowerment is land ownership. According to the World Bank Report (2007), the international development community conceded that agricultural productivity leads to the reduction of poverty in poor countries. Provision of land is one of the strategies that traditional leaders use to ensure the empowerment of rural women. Nowadays, land is not easily accessible, and if provided, it must be used sustainably because it also determines the livelihoods of future generations.

The empowerment of women through economic involvement is in line with the Women in Development (WID) approach. The approach seeks to promote economic growth, but women's economic growth seems to be constantly marked by male dominance. Poverty, unemployment, and inequality are the primary cause of the dilemma here. LED is a systematic process whereby communities, in partnership with civil society organisations, create opportunities that better people's livelihoods (Meyer-Stemmer, 2008; Zulu & Mabangizi, 2014).

5.4.5 Ward councillors' understanding of LED

The study explored ward councillors' understanding of LED. Ward councillors have a say and play a huge role in the policy-making processes of the municipalities (Constitution, 1996). Ward councillors have an input in LED programmes being implemented in their wards. They have also contributed resolutions in council-represented constituencies for the betterment of the communities' livelihoods (Mzelemu, 2019). Therefore, having little or no knowledge about LED becomes a challenge impeding the councillors' community development endeavour. It is the responsibility of ward councillors to better the lives of the citizens and contribute towards economic growth.

Participant Number 1 in focus group one (1), (henceforth) stated that:

“What I understand about LED is that it ensures provision of resources to local people. To ensure that we promote SMMEs, we should create small businesses such as hair salon, carwash, ‘spaza’ shops, or butcheries within the community.

Bringing malls to the local communities may also create employment opportunities.”

Sebola and Fourie (2007) defined LED as a process of availing resources and opportunities to local people so that they improve their livelihoods. Fray (2010) defined LED as an approach that develops communities, with stakeholders such as NPOs, NGOs and other institutions working to enhance sustainable economic growth in local communities, thus enhancing the livelihoods of local people. Koma (2016) defined LED as a prominent strategy that enhances economic growth to eliminate the triple bottom-line challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities. LED looks at strategies of growing the economy within local communities for the betterment of their livelihoods (Oduro-Ofori, 2016).

Rogerson (2014) stated that municipalities should co-operate with local communities in order to meet their socio-economic obligations and be able to allocate resources for the betterment of people's livelihoods in local communities. Furthermore, the White Paper (1998) asserted that local municipalities should play a paramount role in championing the interests of local communities by provisioning services. The 2007 National LED Framework in South Africa focused on enhancing and promoting an inclusive local economy (PLG, 2007). LED focuses on developing strategies that stimulate economic growth within local communities for the betterment of people's livelihoods (Oduro-Ofori, 2016).

5.4.6 Ward councillors' understanding of women empowerment

The researcher sought to determine the ward councillors' understanding of women empowerment in their respective wards. The essence of the inquiry was to have in-depth knowledge of the ward councillors' capabilities in terms of spearheading women empowerment in their constituencies, given that they were elected to facilitate developmental projects and other initiatives. Under this theme, ward councillors' ideas, knowledge, and perceptions were explored because they are leaders and custodians of community development in society. This theme further explored the ward councillors' developmental priorities as they place women empowerment in their wards, given the socio-economic ills faced by rural women in the post-1994 era.

Participant Number Six, in focus group Two, provided that:

“The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa clearly states that men and women are equal, and hence they must be given equal tasks. Women must work towards enhancing their livelihoods.”

Despite policy and legislative frameworks developed to address gender inequalities, women still face predicaments in the labour sector as well as in the country’s socio-economic and political spheres (Maseko, 2003). Noreen (2011) defined women empowerment as a strategy designed to provide opportunities to women in order to improve their livelihoods. Generally, women are the most vulnerable group socially, economically, politically, and religiously, given their exponential levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to business opportunities (Javad, Yoosefi & Lebni, 2017). Indeed, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) confirms that women are equal to men in every aspect of life. Furthermore, women should benefit equally as men during the distribution of resources. Yang (2012) stated that developmental institutions need to enhance women empowerment; therefore, women empowerment must be on top of the developmental agenda.

The above findings are consistent with those of Fodo (2018) who observed that women empowerment can be obtained by allowing women to undergo business training and skills development in order to fully partake in development processes. The UN (2012) emphasised that providing an opportunity for education and training for rural women could be to their advantage in terms of resource acquisition and use. Fodo (2018) added that enhancing LED resources would help empower women. That means that failure to champion women’s interests and create an environment with vast opportunities for women and their inclusivity can be a huge stumbling block impeding the development of women. He also stated that without women empowerment in local municipalities, development would not be attained. Both men and women should be made to contribute positively to developmental programmes (Bayeh, 2016).

Bayeh (2016) opined that women empowerment rescues women from the glass ceiling of not making personal choices that were seldom provided due to lack of empowerment. Previously, women were instruments of cleaning, cooking, and children bearing. They would maintain homes while husbands would go out to work to support the family. The less representation of women in decision-making processes portrays the inequalities between men and women in democratic South Africa (Gumede, 2012).

According to Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2017), Sustainable Development Goal Number 5, gender equality is synonymous with eradicating discrimination against women, ensuring that women have equal rights as men in terms of access to economic resources, ensuring that women partake in decision-making bodies and for leadership positions, and ensuring that they participate in socio-economic and political endeavours. To enhance women empowerment, Bayeh (2016) asserted that for Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved, women should be included in all the developmental processes, which shows that they are being empowered.

5.4.7 Strengthening women empowerment

The study sought to identify the measures ward councillors would take to strengthen the women empowerment programmes in their wards. The idea was to establish how women empowerment is being strengthened in rural areas. The system of local government has little or no support for women's inclusivity and this has impeded women's participation in women empowerment programmes.

Participant Number Four, in focus group One, explained that:

“In my ward, we believe in gender equality. All the projects we have are equally accessible to both men and women. In the branch leadership, men and women are equally represented. We have female ward committee members and we believe in women empowerment.”

The AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2018-2028) (GEWE Strategy) was introduced to eliminate challenges inhibiting gender equality and to enable women to participate in economic development and socio-economic and political endeavours (AU, 2021). Cultural values and the patriarchal system are still dominant in societies, and women seldom express their grievances and views on matters affecting their empowerment (Williamson & Todes, 2006). Women are recessive in community meetings as there is limited participation. During the apartheid administration in South Africa, resources were not distributed and shared equally (Gibson, 2013; More, 2011). This perpetuated economic inequalities, hence the recurrent inequality affecting the current government (Mashele & Qobo, 2014).

In the CoM, there are controversial gender challenges where women are excluded from efficient participation in development processes (Mukhopadhyay, 2005). De Villard (2008) mentioned that illiteracy, lack of skills development, and training is a challenge affecting rural women. These challenges hinder women from obtaining resources needed to enhance their livelihoods. According to Rathgeber (1989), the GAD approach perceives women from different points of view as it states that women are capable of nourishing development. Similarly, Moyo (2014) posits that women play a significant role in fostering developmental processes. The GAD approach is paramount to women empowerment, particularly in rural areas (Moyo, 2014).

5.4.8 Women empowerment through LED: Efforts by ward councillors

Ward councillors were asked to explain how they ensured that women were familiar with the LED initiative. The idea here was to gauge the extent to which ward councillors disseminated LED programmes and awareness campaigns. This idea was born out of the assumption that community members are not knowledgeable about LED and related programmes that should benefit them.

Participant Number One, in focus group One, admitted that:

“We ensure that almost in every quarter there are workshops held at the Mbombela Stadium to make women know about the opportunities available to them. Some of the women are part of the “Sakhabakhi” Programme, while others are part of the “Basadi” Programme in the province. Most of them attend empowerment seminars as well.”

The institutionalisation of participation is important as it persuades communities to be part of LED awareness campaigns and it also encourages the participatory approach to the betterment of women’s livelihoods (Khambule, 2015). For LED processes to be effective, municipalities should encourage public participation involving community members and stakeholders (DPLG, 2008). According to the International Labour Organization (2014), local municipalities and other relevant institutions, such as NGOs, NPOs, and other public sector fora, can empower women through holding training workshops, teaching the about development, and providing LED-related information to rural women.

The concept of LED is a global phenomenon that has spread to South Africa as well (DEDEA, 2013; SALGA, 2014; DPLG, 2008, 2002). Institutional arrangements should be enhanced in

communities and other stakeholders such as NGOs and NPOs. For example, partnerships must be forged with relevant stakeholders to enhance developmental programmes and promote inclusiveness in policy formulation and access to LED developmental initiatives (Anyonge *et al.*, 2013). The results of this study point to the need to empower women through workshops and *Imbizo* where women are taught about LED initiatives and how they could benefit from them. Nkuna (2010) stated that LED training is infused with community programmes for them to be knowledgeable about it, what it constitutes, as well as its approaches and strategies.

Masuku *et al.* (2016) added that municipalities should enhance skills training and develop strategies that reduce the level of illiteracy among women. This may assist women understand the LED initiative and its strategies through participation. The participation of women in decision-making bodies improves their livelihoods and this is determined by the level of their literacy (Takayanagi, 2016). The Sustainable Development Goal Number Four envisions universal access to inclusive education by 2030; this encompasses the provision of opportunities to ensure development and better livelihoods in local communities. Adebisi *et al.* (2017) stated that women should be provided with basic education to empower them economically. The skills training initiative is important, as it enhances women's participation (Jie, Chen & Chindarkar, 2017).

Monitoring and coaching women is essential. Makhado (2015) stated that providing mentorship can enhance the development of women and their participation in programmes that would assist them attain economic growth. Such initiatives would stimulate women's eagerness to adopt lifestyles that improve their livelihoods. Mentorship is the basis of achievement and local municipalities must ensure that they enhance that aspect to improve people's livelihoods (Meyer & Rogerson, 2012). There is a variety of methods that can be used to share public information within communities (Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel & Sanchez, 2015). Data on LED is very important in the planning and monitoring phases of development programmes (Masuku *et al.*, 2013). Furnishing communities with LED data is important for a successful LED strategy.

According to Vyas and Charlotte (2009), despite the LED programmes being brought on board, both rural and urban women still face serious challenges. Women still live in difficult conditions and they are not being noticed (Bloom, Tobias & Patrick, 2011). Braun (2017) stated that women still face more difficulties accessing funding than men and lack of financial

knowledge is a barrier to women empowerment. Further, lack of market opportunities and business management skills limits women empowerment in rural areas.

5.5 Conclusion

It emerged that LED is a tool designed to eradicate the three bottom-line challenges faced by women in South Africa; unemployment, poverty and inequalities (Baird, 2011). The initiative advocates inclusivity and the inclusiveness of various stakeholders to achieve its primary goal, which is, “economic freedom”. LED plays a critical role in bettering the lives of many, although there were pros and cons outlined during the data presentation and analysis phases. However, solutions and recommendations have been proffered to enhance the LED trajectory. In this chapter three themes emerged. Literature was integrated and merged with data elicited from the participants. Data were compared and contrasted to produce the best outcomes for the study. The next chapter summarises the findings, outlines the conclusion and proffers recommendations based on the findings in order to assist the relevant institutions to improve on LED matters in the context of rural communities. Recommendations are also made to influence future studies.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The chapter presents the main conclusion based on the integration of research findings and literature on local economic development (LED). This conclusion is based on the role of local economic development in empowering women living in rural areas outlying the City of Mbombela (CoM) in Mpumalanga Province. Furthermore, the chapter presents the recommendations based on the phenomenon under study to address the gap in literature. It further makes suggestions for future improvements for researchers who wish to do further research on the topic or similar topics.

6.2 Conclusion

Prior to 1994, during the era of the apartheid administration, development programmes were meant for the minority. The majority of South Africans, especially the Black populace, were excluded from the developmental programmes. The Black, Indian and Coloured populations were denied equal rights to socio-economic and political freedom. The triple bottom-line challenges, which are; poverty, unemployment and inequalities, were the worst challenges facing women in every day. The Black populace was denied the right to the sense of belonging. The post-1994 democratic government in South Africa, led by the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), was committed to redressing the triple challenges.

Policy and legislative frameworks were developed to address economic disparities as well as socio-political ills that were experienced by the Black populace in South Africa. Disparities and inequalities had been increasing amongst races and between genders. The policies were also meant to address living conditions for the previously marginalised populace. Policies, such as the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) which was initiated by the ANC-led government, were meant to address the socio-economic challenges confronting the marginalised groups, especially Black people. Further, the New Growth Path Framework (NGPF) was initiated to reduce poverty amongst South Africans; the NGPF policy guidelines for implementing LED in South Africa aimed at enhancing the country's economy and the

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which advocated for equitable socio-economic development.

Despite the policies and pieces of legislation promulgated since the democratic dispensation, South Africa is still grappling with immense developmental challenges that include lack of funding and opportunities for the vast majority of Black South Africans. Unemployment levels are rising at an exponential rate; hence, the poor are becoming poorer as the rich are becoming richer.

The advent of LED in South Africa saw intensification in the fight against the triple bottom challenges, which are; poverty, unemployment and inequalities. The LED programmes or initiatives were meant to address economic disparities as well. Furthermore, LED has been viewed as a tool designed to address socio-economic disparities and encourage economic growth. Policies and pieces of legislation have been promulgated to address issues of women empowerment in South Africa and beyond. Policies such as the Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD), the agenda 2063 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and many other policies have been promulgated to enhance women empowerment and expedite the fight against patriarchy and inequalities.

Through these LED programmes or initiatives, women can be able to improve their livelihoods and living conditions as they access employment opportunities through the Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWP) and business opportunities through the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME's) among many other crucial opportunities. The findings exposed that the CoM Municipality, the directorate of LED and Tourism lag behind as far as LED programmes or initiatives are concerned. Furthermore, LED programmes are beneficial to rural women in the CoM. The communication barriers between political players (ward councillors) and traditional leaders (Tindvuna) have resulted in LED programmes being stalled.

Furthermore, the study found that women in the CoM are still living in dire conditions. Women in this rural locality still experience poverty, unemployment and economic disparities. The majority of women are not knowledgeable about LED, how it operates and who stands to benefit from its programmes. Moreover, there is seldom awareness about the term LED in communities. The majority of rural women are not employed and are dependent on the social grant to sustain a living. The Liberal Feminism Theory holds that men and women should be afforded equal opportunities in socio-economic and political spaces. Furthermore, the theory

stresses that societies are socially constructed, with women being inferior to men. Instead, women empowerment should be infused in all stakeholders in South Africa to enhance equal participation and beneficiation. Against all odds, the women empowerment initiative should be the business of the day in terms of enhancing development and ensuring the livelihoods of women.

6.3 Recommendations

The recommendations herein are based on the findings of the study. Further recommendations have been disseminated to assist the CoM Municipality, the Department of LED and Tourism, the CoM Municipality management, traditional leaders, ward councillors and rural women.

6.3.1 Recommendation one (1)

Implementation of LED fiscal plan, specifically for women in rural women

The study recommends that the CoM Municipality should set aside a budget specifically meant for women to ensure that they benefit equally as their male counterparts in LED programmes or initiatives. These should be a fifty-fifty share between men and women because nowadays women are also heading families. This will also ensure that they are also able to provide for their families and to improve their livelihoods.

6.3.2 Recommendation two (2)

Encouraging the promotion of LED in communities

It is recommended that the CoM Municipality should ensure that it enhances LED initiatives in all communities within its jurisdiction and ensures that no stone is left unturned in this regard. The Municipality should ensure the following:

- **LED awareness and *indaba***

The Directorate of LED and Tourism in the CoM should, through community participation, ensure that it does oversight visits and infuse knowledge about LED, its benefits, eligibility and many other crucial aspects encapsulated in the LED initiative.

- **Formation of cooperatives for women**

It is recommended that the Directorate of LED and Tourism should promote the formation of cooperatives in all rural areas under the jurisdiction of the CoM according to their business interests.

6.3.3 Recommendation three (3)

Ensuring the fiscal plan for the Directorate of LED and Tourism is used for LED programmes

The study recommended that the Directorate of LED and Tourism should ensure that the budget allocated for that financial year is utilised for the purpose of LED and Tourism programmes. Thus, the budgetary allocation should not be transferred to other needy departments as LED is included in the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Municipality, whereas economic growth and development should be maintained.

6.3.4 Recommendation four (4)

Enhancing the empowerment of women in the various directorates in the municipality

It is recommended that the CoM Municipality should promote the empowerment of women when it comes to deliverables that would enhance women's livelihoods in the form of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

6.3.5 Recommendation five (5)

Co-operation between rural communities, ward councillors, traditional leaders and municipal officials

- **Communities and councillors**

The study recommends that communication between the communities and ward councillors should be mutually beneficial; in that way, ward councillors should liaise with community members on economic development and employment opportunities to improve their living conditions.

- **Ward councillors and traditional leaders**

It is further recommended that ward councillors and traditional leaders should work together when there are opportunities that should benefit communities. They should jointly identify

needy community members as traditional leaders are primarily closer to community members than ward councillors in rural settlements.

6.3.6 Recommendation six (6)

Ward councillors' involvement in promoting LED programmes in communities

The study recommends that ward councillors should primarily inform communities in their respective wards about LED and how they can benefit through it. Ward councillors should further call upon the LED and Tourism officials on a quarterly basis to inform communities about what LED incorporates in the CoM Municipality.

6.3.7 Recommendation eight (8)

Resource allocation to rural women

Rural women's experiences in terms of accessing resources in municipalities seem to be strenuous. Therefore, the study has revealed that local governments cannot be able to assist a large volume of women in the city; therefore, it is suggested that rural women should seek opportunities or funding from other stakeholders such as the Department of Finance, Economic Development and Tourism.

6.4 Suggestions for future improvements on research

Based on the study's objectives, the following suggestions are brought forward:

- The challenges impeding LED and women empowerment programmes in the CoM replicate the challenges affecting many municipalities across South Africa; therefore, prospective study should not be based on one geographical location, precisely the villages under the CoM Municipality. However, research should be conducted across all municipalities in the Republic of South Africa.
- When academics and researchers do this kind of research, they should consider expanding the research topic.
- Academics and researchers should not only consider women; however, future studies should be inclusive of male counterparts.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has summarised conclusions drawn from the entire study. It further proffered recommendations that would be beneficial for the study and the CoM Municipality. The study made further suggestions for improvements in future studies to be conducted by other researchers who might be interested in broadening the phenomenon studied herein: “The role of LED in empowering women in rural areas of the CoM, South Africa”. The recommendations therein are for the CoM Municipality to consider and implement to assist in curbing the challenges confronting LED in rural areas and therefore strengthen their services and prioritise the development of rural women. Suggestions for future improvements were also outlined to influence researchers who may develop interest in examining the studied phenomenon further.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Research Ethics Clearance Letter

UMP



RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

Ref: UMP/AT Hlatshwayo/MDev/2022

Date: 3 June 2022

Name of Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo

Student number: 220160740

Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede

Co-supervisor: Dr M. Eggink

School / Department: School of Development Studies

Faculty: Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences

RE: APPROVAL FOR ETHICAL CLEARANCE FOR THE STUDY:

The role of Local Economic Development (LED) in empowering women in rural areas in Mbombela municipality in South Africa.

Reference is made to the above heading.

I am pleased to inform you that the Chairperson has on behalf of the University of Mpumalanga's Research Ethics Committee, approved ethical clearance of the above mentioned study.

The approval letter from the Management of the Directorate of City Planning and Development, as well as the letter of approval from the Faculty Post-Graduate Studies Committee should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee for Human Sciences before data collection by the student can be undertaken.



Please note:

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interviews Schedule, Informed Consent form, Title of the project, Location of the study, Research Approach and methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/ modification prior to its implementation.



Prof Estelle Boshoff

Chairperson: University of Mpumalanga's Research Ethics Committee.

Date: 3 June 2022

APPENDIX B: GATEKEEPERS LETTER

Civic Centre
1 Nel Street
Mbombela 1201
Republic of South Africa



P O Box 45
Mbombela 1200
Republic of South Africa
Tel: +27 (0) 13 759-9111
Fax: +27 (0) 13 759-2070

OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Tel: 0137592041
Enq: Ms. Busi Sithole

17 June 2022

P O Box 752
Kabokweni
Ngodini
1245

Attention: Mr Andile Titus Hlatshwayo

Dear Sir,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY AT THE CITY OF MBOMBELA MUNICIPALITY

Your letter dated 10 June 2022 on the abovementioned subject has reference.

The City of Mbombela hereby grants you permission to conduct a research study titled " *The role of Local Economic Development in empowering women in rural areas in the City of Mbombela, South Africa*".

Please take note that the municipality will not be liable for any financial responsibility on this study. Kindly ensure that the work of employees is not interrupted and consent is obtained from each participant before the actual research is conducted. The municipality strictly adheres to COVID-19 regulations, therefore COVID-19 health protocols must be maintained namely; observing at least 1,5 metres from each other, wearing of masks at all time, washing and sanitizing of hands regularly.

We wish you all the best with your research and would appreciate if you share with us the research outcomes and recommendations.

Regards,

W J KHUMALO
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORMS

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA

Faculty of Economics, Development and Business Sciences

MDEV Research Project

Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)

Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)

Co-supervisor: Dr. M. Eggink (PhD)

The Role of Local Economic Development (LED) in empowering women in rural areas in the City of Mbombela Municipality, in South Africa

DECLARATION OF THE RESEARCHER TO PARTICIPANTS

I, **Andile Titus Hlatshwayo**, student number: 220160740, currently studying for the Masters in Development Studies (MDEV) degree at the University of Mpumalanga (UMP) would like to make the following declaration:

Upon completion, the research findings will be reported in the form of a dissertation. Your participation in this study will contribute to the output of the study. I envisage that the results will lead to improved awareness of local economic development (LED), its importance, LED policies and projects or programmes regarding women's empowerment in rural areas such as Mbombela.

During the interviews confidentiality will be prioritised as it is part of the ethical principles. No personal details and voice recordings will be disclosed to third parties. Information collected will be for the purpose of the study only, and if participants wishes to withdraw from the study, they have the right to do so.

Kindly note that participants in this study will not be compensated but partaking voluntarily.

**UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES**

**MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink (PhD)**

Dear Mr, Ms, Mrs.

1. INTRODUCTION

Before undergoing this study, participants must fully understand what the study is about, raise questions or clarifications if there are any. If the participant does not understand anything with regards to the study, right is granted to seek clarity from the researcher.

2. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore and describe the role of LED in empowering women in rural areas of the City of Mbombela.

3. EXPLANATION OF WHAT WILL BE EXPECTED FROM PARTICIPANTS

This study involves answering semi-structured questions on the phenomenon of the study. The role of LED in empowering women in rural areas in the City of Mbombela (CoM) in South Africa.

4. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS INVOLVED

Participants should note the following:

- No medical risks are associated with this study.
- No blood tests will be drawn from participants in this study.
- Emotional and psychological stress will not be tampered with.

5. POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The study will not benefit participants directly. However, the results or output of the study will assist improve women empowerment in the rural areas of the CoM through LED.

6. COMPENSATION

Participants must note that they will not be compensated financially for participating in this study. However, the results of the study will be shared with participants once the study is completed.

7. RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS

Participation in this study is voluntary. The participant can agree or disagree to participate in this study without discrimination. Participant have a right to withdraw from the study before the results are produced.

8. ETHICAL APPROVAL

The ethics application will be submitted to the Faculty of Economics, Development and Management Research Ethics Committee, University of Mpumalanga. Telephone number **(013 002 0230)**. Ethics committee written approval will be granted in line with their academic guidelines. A copy of the ethical clearance will be presented to participants should they wish to review.

9. INFORMATION

If participants need information pertaining the study, please contact (supervisor) Professor V. Gumede, Tel: 082 336 7462 and Dr. M. Eggink (Co-supervisor), Tel: 013 002 0197

10. CONFIDENTIALITY

The information provided by the participants during the study and its confidentiality. Each participant will be given an alphanumeric code. For example, participant 1. This is to make sure that all the data is safe and not a threat to the participants and institutions. The alphanumeric codes only the researcher will be able to go through it. The results of the study will be presented in such a way that participants will be protected.

**UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCE**

**MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-Supervisor: Eggink (PhD)**

CONSENT

I, the designed, confirm that (Please tick a box as appropriate with an X):

I understand the nature of the study, articulated to me about the study and clarified.	
I understand that I am partaking in this study voluntarily, with no expectations of compensation. However, I understand will be shared to participants.	
I understand that the participation is anonymously and only for the purpose of the study.	
I understand that all the information and data will be treated with confidentiality.	
I understand that the signed consent form and recordings will be stored safely until the results of the study are confirmed.	
I understand that I am allowed to contact the supervisor at any given time and seek clarity.	
I understand that I can withdraw from the study anytime I wish without being questions or threatened.	

I hereby (circle) do/do not consent to undertake in the interview questions.

I..... (CODES OF RESPONDENTS) read and understood the consents of this research project and the nature of the study.

Participant's signature.....

Date.....

Researcher's signature.....

**UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES**

**MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink (PhD)**

Topic: The role of LED in empowering women in rural areas in the City of Mbombela, Mpumalanga Province.

Questionnaire number	
Participant's code	

Fieldworker

Surname	Names

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

SECTION A: PARTICIPANTS HOUSEHOLD DATA

1. Age group (Mark the appropriate box)

1. >18-20	3. 31-35	5. 41-45
2. 21-30	4. 36-40	6. 46-50

2. Sex (Mark the appropriate box)

Tick with an (x)	
1. Male	
2. Female	
3. Other	

3. Marital status

Tick with an (x)	
1. Married	
2. Cohabiting	
3. Single	
4. Separated	
5. Divorced	

4. Livelihood

Tick with an (x)		
1. Are you a South African citizen?	1. Yes	
	2. No	

Tick with an (x)		
2. Are you a permanent residence of Mbombela Municipality?	1. Yes	
	2. No	

Tick with an (x)				
3. No. of people living in the household?	One		Five	
	Two		Six	
	Three		Seven	
	Four		Eight>	

Tick with an (x)		
4. How are the living conditions in your area within the following?	1. Good	
	2. Better	
	3. Bad	

		Tick with an (x)	
5. Are you satisfied with the basic municipal services?		1. Yes	
		2. No	

6. Education

		Tick with an (x)	
1. Highest level of education		1. None	
		2. Primary School	
		3. Secondary School	
		4. Matric	
		5. Diploma	
		6. Degree	

7. Employment and Economic Activities

				Tick with an (x)	
1. Unemployed		4. Entrepreneur		7. Pensioner	
2. Domestic worker		5. Manager		8. Other	
3. Labourer		6. Professional			

		Tick with an (x)	
1. Do you receive any grant (Child support)?		1. Yes	
		2. No	

		Tick with an (x)	
1. How much does your remuneration ranging from?		1. R <500	
		2. R 600-R 1000	
		3. R 1100-R 2000	
		3. R 2100-R 3000	
		4. R 3100-R 4000>	

SECTION B: CITY OF MBOMBELA AND LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Local Economic Development (LED) at the City of Mbombela

Tick with an (x)		
1. Does the CoM's LED officials visit your communities for awareness/ programmes?	1. Yes	
	2. No	
	3. Don't know	

Tick with an (x)		
2. Are you satisfied with how LED is implemented by the CoM?	1. Yes	
	2. No	
	3. Don't know	

Tick with an (x)		
3. Are women from rural areas prioritised by the CoM with opportunities?	1. Yes	
	2. No	
	3. Don't know	

Tick with an (x)		
4. Are rural communities of the CoM provided with basic deliverables? E.g., Provision of water and waste removal	1. Yes	
	2. No	
	3. Don't know	

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THE MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES

MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink (PhD)

1. Briefly explain what do you understand about LED?
2. How is the CoM ensuring the effectiveness of LED strategies in empowering women in the Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's)?
3. What are the plans in place to implement the current LED strategy for this financial year?
4. How is LED addressing women empowerment in rural areas through SMMEs?
5. How do you think LED strategies can enhance women empowerment in the villages under CoM?
6. What are the strategies put in place to address women empowerment at CoM? Discuss.
7. How are the programmes put in place through LED strategies enhancing the empowerment of women in rural areas?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS (CoM)

UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES

MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink (PhD)

1. What do you understand about women empowerment?
2. How are you benefiting from LED strategy as rural women under the CoM?
3. What do you think should be done by the CoM management to empower women in rural areas through LED?
4. What have you done as women to ensure that you partake in LED programmes under the CoM?
5. How is the CoM addressing challenges of women empowerment in rural areas?
6. How is the ward councillor and the CoM municipality management enhancing women LED in communities?

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TRADITIONAL LEADERS

**UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES**

**MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink (PhD)**

1. Briefly explain what you understand about LED?
2. What do you understand about women empowerment?
3. As traditional leadership, what are the constraints that hinder women empowerment?
4. Are there projects that are part of the LED strategies? Briefly explain.
5. What are strategies are in place to accelerate women empowerment area/village?
6. How are you tackling the issues of women empowerment in your village or area?

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR WARD COUNCILLORS (CoM)

**UNIVERSITY OF MPUMALANGA
FACULTY OF ECONOMICS, DEVELOPMENT AND BUSINESS SCIENCES**

**MDEV Research Project
Researcher: Andile Titus Hlatshwayo (082 502 6295)
Supervisor: Professor V. Gumede (PhD)
Co-supervisor: M. Eggink PhD)**

1. As a ward councillor what do you know about LED?
2. Briefly explain your understanding about women empowerment?
3. How are women benefiting from LED in the rural areas of the CoM?
4. What measures have you taken as a community leader to strengthen women empowerment at the ward level?
5. How are you ensuring that community members especially women are familiar with LED?
6. How do you think LED programmes can bring about empowerment in rural areas in the CoM?

APPENDIX H: TURNITIN REPORT

MA Doc			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
17%	16%	5%	4%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	3%	
2	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	2%	
3	ulspace.ul.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
4	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	1%	
5	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
6	repository.up.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
7	core.ac.uk Internet Source	1%	

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF EDITING



Mufasa Research Consultancy

SERVING WITH DISTINCTION

14 March 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Editor's Letter

The role of Local Economic Development in empowering women in rural areas in the City of Mbombela Municipality in South Africa

Below is the scope considered during language editing of the above titled doctoral thesis:

- Grammar check
- Sentence construction
- Spelling check
- Punctuation
- In-text referencing
- Formatting/document layout

As a professional editor, I pledge that the above aspects of the master's dissertation were, to the best of my knowledge, meticulously and correctly done at the time the work was sent to the candidate. However, I am not responsible for any corrections that were made after the editing process finalised.

Yours faithfully,

Kemist Shumba (PhD)

PhD in Health Promotion: University of KwaZulu-Natal [UKZN]
Master of Social Science in Health Promotion (Caw Jaad): UKZN
Bachelor of Social Science Honours in Cultural & Media Studies: UKZN
Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Great Zimbabwe University
Bachelor of Arts (English): University of Zimbabwe

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Address: 7 Chatham House, 180 Brand Road, Glenwood 4001, Durban, South Africa