



**UNIVERSITY** *of the*  
**WESTERN CAPE**

**Rethinking local economic development (LED) in the COVID-19 era: A case study of Worcester, Western Cape.**

**Mini-thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for  
Masters in Public Administration in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences,  
University of the Western Cape**

**By**

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 crisis has invited a radical rethinking of how we plan our lives, produce food and work, and how we think and act in the world and across various scales, specifically cities. South Africa has an extremely large vulnerable population consisting of concentrated masses of poverty-stricken citizens living in dense settlements, rural areas, and small towns. The lockdown hit poor communities the hardest, while the rich were able to work from home and stock up on food and essentials. But how have municipalities responded to this challenge in terms of their local economic plans? This mini-thesis is about how Worcester, the capital of the Breede Valley Municipality (BVM) in the Cape Winelands District, dealt with the crisis, how it understood the crisis, and how Local Economic Development (LED) after the COVID-19 period was conceptualised and undertaken. The thesis examines how local economic development was reconfigured to address old and new challenges and if there was a rethink of old ways of doing development and reducing poverty. I also investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected various socio-economic strata in different wards in Worcester specifically Zwelethemba. The data was collected from primary materials (largely municipal documents) interviews with councillors and a small-scale survey of citizens in different wards. My findings are that the municipality has not been able to structurally rethink urban (local) development and has been relatively unsuccessful given its historical legacies of uneven development.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT AND IMPLEMENTATION	pg 1
Introduction	pg 1
The case study area	pg 6
Aims and rationale	pg 9
Methodology and case study	pg 9
Outline of chapters	pg 11
CHAPTER 2: LED DEBATES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT	pg 12
Introduction	pg 12
Introduction to LED	pg 12
Policy Frameworks	pg 24
New District Development Model 2019: One District, One Plan and One Budget	pg 29
Western Cape Province and LED	pg 29
Conclusion	pg 32
CHAPTER 3: THE CASE STUDY: WORCESTER IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF COVID	pg 33
Introduction	pg 33
Economic profile of the Breede Valley Municipality	pg 38
Social Profile	pg 40
Municipal Services and Free Basic Services (FBS) in Breede Valley Municipality	pg 43

Impact of the lockdown	pg 46
Spending Focus and Additional Responsibilities of COVID-19: Budget Shifts	pg 50
Politics - Administration contradiction	pg 51
IDP and LED Projects	pg 52
Conclusion	pg 57

#### CHAPTER 4: LED STRATEGY POST-COVID AND TOWNSHIP ECONOMY: A FOCUS ON

ZWELETHEMBA	pg 58
Township Economies	pg 59
Economic Relief Measures During COVID-19	pg 60
Service delivery in terms of electricity and roads	pg 72
Conclusion	pg 74

#### CHAPTER 5: LED AFTER COVID-19 IN THE BREEDE VALLEY MUNICIPALITY AND

ZWELETHEMBA	pg 75
Introduction	pg 75
Breede Valley Municipality and LED potential	pg 75
Budgets and Priorities	pg 78
The Green Economy	pg 80
“Township Economy”: Zwelethemba	pg 82
District Development Model (DDM)	pg 88

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: WHAT CAN BE DONE?	pg 92
Information and Communication Technologies / the 4 <sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution	pg 94
Infrastructure Maintenance	pg 95
Public participation	pg 95
Local economic development as the basis for sustainable development	pg 95
Climate Change / Building a Green Economy	pg 97
Future budget planning	pg 101
Back to Basics: Good Governance	pg 103
Rethinking LED	pg 105
Conclusion	pg 105
References	pg 111

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Figure 1.1</b> Geographical area of the Cape Winelands District	pg 7
<b>Figure 1.2</b> Shack settlement in Zwelethemba	pg 10
<b>Figure 2.1</b> Pillars driving the implementation of LED	pg 25
<b>Figure 2.2</b> Notice of the Breede Valley Municipality IDP/Budget Public Engagements	pg 27
<b>Figure 2.3</b> Municipal financial Management and MFMA implementation	pg 28
<b>Figure 3.1</b> Breede Valley Municipality: main economic contributors	pg 39
<b>Figure 3.2</b> Breede Valley Municipality Dwellings	pg 42
<b>Figure 3.3</b> Dwellings contributing to BVM municipal revenue base	pg 43
<b>Figure 3.4</b> Influence of tariffs on domestic households	pg 45
<b>Figure 3.5</b> Job losses during COVID-19	pg 55
<b>Figure 3.6:</b> Residents' sample indicating whether they continued to receive a full salary during COVID-19	pg 56
<b>Figure 3.7</b> Breede Valley Municipality Development Challenges	pg 56
<b>Figure 4.1</b> 2021 Local Government Election Results	pg 64
<b>Figure 4.2</b> Zwelethemba Economy corridor	pg 68
<b>Figure 4.3</b> Zwelethemba Economy corridor	pg 68
<b>Figure 4.4</b> Zwelethemba Economy corridor	pg 69
<b>Figure 6.1</b> The relationship of stakeholders in the Consequence Management and Accountability Framework	pg 103

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 4.2</b> Ward 6 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections	pg 65
<b>Table 4.3</b> Ward 7 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections	pg 66
<b>Table 4.4</b> Ward 11 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections	pg 66
<b>Table 4.5</b> Zweletemba Ward 16 voter turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections	pg 66

# CHAPTER 1: LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT AND IMPLEMENTATION

## Introduction

In 1994, the ANC won the first inclusive election. It inherited an array of deep problems from the white colonial system which under any conditions would be extremely challenging. However, it was persuaded to follow business-friendly policies and fiscal responsibility, moving away from central planning and nationalisation.

After 1994, the South African government introduced Local Economic Development (LED) as a mandated activity for municipalities. South Africa became one of the global regions for pioneering LED (Bateman 2014). In South Africa, LED was promoted as a tool to achieve sustainable local government, and it became a legal requirement through the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. The LED fund was set up in 1998 with a pro-poor focus (SACN 2019). Each municipality had to include in its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) its strategic approach to LED within the municipal area. More recently, IDPs need to be coordinated with the District Municipalities.

Since then, several models often funded by external agencies were attempted until 2018, when the Ministry of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) introduced the draft National Framework for LED 2018 – 2028. The vision of this Framework for LED in South Africa is for LED to be innovative, competitive, sustainable, and inclusive (SACN 2019). The government has also moved more co-ordination power to the district level. This may have implications for LED.

Ideally, a municipality's Integrated Development Plan (IDP) provides the opportunity to integrate sustainability into its long-term strategic planning. Empirical evidence and studies show that most LED projects collapse within a few years. LED projects were found to be unsustainable, the ugly head of corruption, patronage and mismanagement started to show,

and there was a lack of capacity in local authorities and generally no spinoffs of the expected development and employment creation. Most strikingly, though, is the issue of geographical differentiation regarding LED practices across the country. Rogerson (2011) further concedes that for LED to improve its success rate, the national government needs to play a proactive and more prominent role in terms of capacitating local authorities, enabling them to facilitate LED, as well as provide clarity on the implementation of LED to avoid the general confusion which was characteristic of the initial implementation phase. The confusion about the LED strategy and its implementation related to a lack of clarity and a lack of a uniform central policy with government departments supporting either a pro-market or pro-poor approach to LED (Nel and Rogerson 2016).

A more critical scholarship on LED and its success rate in South Africa is provided by authors such as Patrick Bond. Bond (1998) notes that LED has been neither pro-poor nor transformative. In his research focus on LED in Stutterheim (Bond 1998), a small town in the Eastern Cape, critiques the idea that a holistic approach alone cannot successfully harness LED to alleviate poverty and drive growth. A stronger social compact is needed between the political, social, and institutional foundations to bring about meaningful local economic development. Critical scholarship has pointed out that private capital and technocratic elites both tend to prevent other alternative politico-ecological transitions from taking root in urban systems.

In South Africa, LED is seen as a tool to achieve sustainable local government. It was made a legal requirement through the Municipal Systems Act of 2000. Each municipality is, therefore, legally bound to have included in their Integrated Development Plan (IDP) their strategic approach to implementing LED within the municipal area. Local government within a specific municipal area must, therefore, have a good understanding of the social and economic factors within its region that can drive the goal of sustainable development. The Municipal Economic Review and Outlook (MERO), for example, is an annual research publication of the Western Cape Provincial government with its focus on informing policymakers at the municipality level on key economic issues that affect policymaking, LED and IDP planning, and budgeting processes.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, protests in South African municipalities were already widespread; for instance, in 2005, 90% of the 136 municipalities reported protest actions, which in most cases were violent. The dissatisfaction among citizens that led to these protests related to the inability of municipalities to provide basic services, corruption, the culture of self-enrichment on the part of municipal councillors, and also, in some instances, demarcation within the cross-border municipalities (Atkinson 2007). Despite the increased funding to local government specifically for infrastructure programs, the sheer scale of the expectations for local government to be developmental was, it has been argued, too overwhelming (Atkinson 2007). These municipalities failed to fulfill their mandate of implementing LED developmentally.

The post-COVID economic development plan for municipalities *per se*, will demand a rethinking of development in relation to social, economic, and environmental being in balance and also rethinking the policies that regulate how we do business to ensure a better quality of life, fairness, and equity, participation, and partnership and having concern for the environment (Newby 1999). Sustainable local economic development is about ensuring that economic development is not an end in itself but rather the means of reaching the end i.e. sustainable improvement of the quality of life. It is about establishing and prioritizing an approach that would balance social, economic, and environmental benefits and not achieve one benefit at the expense of the other (Newby 1999). This research thus aims to establish to what extent the BVM drives the principles of sustainability in their approach to economic development.

Another issue in LED is the onerous compliance required. There is tension between should municipalities continue to focus on compliance and participation in compiling an IDP/LED plan instead of meaningfully engaging in its content, the opportunity to create a better life for all post-COVID-19 would be missed (Zondo 2020).

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus in China and its rapid spread across the globe, the death toll has been devastating, particularly amongst vulnerable populations, frontline workers, and

countries with already weakened economies. It has also become a truism that the COVID-19 crisis (like the energy and wider climate crisis) has invited a radical rethinking of how we plan our lives, produce food and work, and think and act globally and across various scales. The South African government declared a total lockdown in March 2020 after the virus outbreak was a pandemic under the Disaster Management Act. The lockdown meant restrictions on movement (between provinces) and the closure of most places of employment, schools, shops, universities, beaches, and places of worship. People, except for some essential workers, were asked to stay home. The unemployment rate increased dramatically as small to medium enterprises could not survive the extended lockdown periods with little or no business being conducted. According to STATSSA survey results released in September 2020, the South African economy shed 2.2 million jobs in the second quarter of 2020 when COVID-19 lockdowns were hardest (Statistics South Africa 2020). The lockdown hit the communities at the lowest end of the economic scale the hardest. Chetty (2021) expressed the view that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated poverty, insecurity, hunger, and unemployment.

The central question of this research is whether municipalities under these conditions might rethink Local Economic Development (LED) in light of COVID-19 and its aftermath.

South Africa, being an extremely unevenly developed and unequal country, the impact of the pandemic differed between classes and places depending on their economic resilience and the strength of their institutions. Smaller towns relying on tourism would be more vulnerable to the crisis than a metro with a diverse economy (Visagie & Turok 2021). In terms of resilience, many smaller municipalities suffered great revenue losses between April and June 2020 (Department of Treasury 2020).

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the government opted for a hard approach and declared a total lockdown under the Disaster Management Act. It meant restricting the movement of people through curfew restrictions, social distance distancing, and the wearing of masks. The lockdown restrictions resulted in the closure of most places of employment, which meant the unemployment rate increased drastically as the lockdown robbed people of their livelihoods.

Some unintended consequences resulting from the lockdown approach included:

- Increased violence, especially gender-based violence;
- Delays in municipal service delivery as municipalities had to adapt to new ways of making sure services continue;
- Damage to municipal infrastructure increased (electricity substations, sewerage systems, etc);
- Illegal dumping of rubble.

It was clear that social distancing during lockdown was not possible in the densely populated poverty-stricken areas, squatter camps, overcrowded houses/blocks of flats/locations, and backyard dwellings where space is significantly restricted. The lack of sufficient water and sanitation in these areas was problematic regarding hygiene. The indigent families in these areas do not necessarily have the means to buy food supplies in bulk and, in most cases, have to venture out to find employment to buy food daily.

Furthermore, access to clinics and healthcare was challenging regarding distances to these facilities, which were equipped to provide the service effectively to large numbers of patients who needed care. Hospitals were overflowing; generally, the sense in communities was that once you went to the hospital, the likelihood of returning was small. Most indigent people did not go to the hospital due to insufficient services and also the 'fear of not returning'. Chetty (2021) believes that the number of deaths due to COVID-19 is underreported if one considers the rise in the number of natural deaths reported during the COVID-19 period as it far exceeds the number of deaths reported due to COVID-19. Statistics show that a greater number of people (especially elderly people) died from comorbidities related to the COVID-19 virus between 2020 and 2021 (Chetty 2021). The state refused to provide data about how different racial groups lost lives.

The normalized deep divides between the rich elite and the impoverished masses were exposed and exacerbated during and after the lockdown periods. The rich could cope, work from home, secure bulk foods, and stock up. Chetty (2021) states that the inequality that persisted in South Africa from the Apartheid era resulted in the country having the highest

levels of income inequality, which is closely aligned to racial and cultural demographics, which causes tension in the country.

This research question focuses on how municipalities responded to this challenge concerning LED. The strategic goal of LED in municipalities is to create employment, for the municipality to have a strong tax base, to improve the quality of life of the citizens, and to strive towards social equity whilst the approach should be conscious of environmental sustainability. However, in considering the most appropriate approach to LED, the municipality is often faced with contrasting viewpoints, priorities, and struggles, i.e., employment creation versus real estate development, the concerns of the rich and powerful versus the poor and marginalized, top-down approach favouring business corporates or bottom-up approach being more developmental with slower and longer-term benefits (Bond 1998).

## The case study area

This study will look at the conceptualization of LED in Worcester in the BVM. It is a B2 municipality in the Cape Winelands District and its capital town. The greater municipal area includes the towns of Worcester, Touws River, Rawsonville, and De Doorns, as well as the rural areas adjacent to and between these towns.

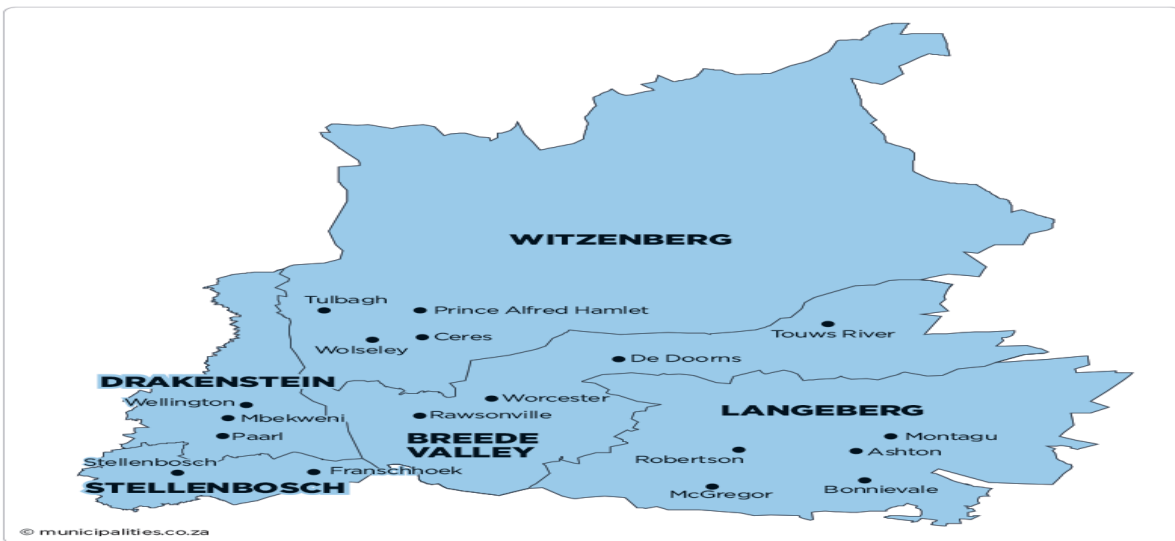
My reasons for opting to research local economic development in this particular municipality are the potential of development brought about by its location and rich agriculture sector. Second, I see the BVM to be more representative of the Western Cape secondary cities than the tourist-led City of Cape Town. The mix of farms and industrial areas and a secondary city shows potential for economic development and has not been the focus of many studies.

Worcester, the largest town in the municipal district, was formally established in 1820 and named after Lord Charles Somerset's nephew, the Marquis de Worcester (Breede Valley Municipality 2019). Before establishing the town in 1820, the area of the Breede River Valley was teeming with game and wild birds. The San hunters and the Khoi farmers took the area by force. The indigenous people at the time included the Gainou and the Korannas.

The European settlers who came to the area to trade and farm after being given farms brought with them the smallpox virus, which wiped out most of the San and Khoi people and left the remaining San people to be enslaved by the European settlers (Eigelaar-Meets, Louw & Poole 2012). This early contact with Europeans irreparably changed the lifestyle of the San and Khoi people from previously being traders who refused to be enslaved, to now having no choice but to be enslaved by the European settlers. During the time that the San and Khoi people refused to work for the white man, the settlers opted to buy in their workforce from other countries. Worcester now has a large percentage Indian population and they too were enslaved and ended up in this region as farm workers to the few farms claimed/owned by Europeans at the time.

The Khoi and eventually the so-called free Khoi settled on the farms as labourers. By 1830, 329 farms were cultivated in the Breede River Valley district, and by 1832 the town of Worcester became a frontier town with the Market Square used for stock sales.

**Figure 1.1:** Geographical area of the Cape Winelands District



(Municipalities of South Africa (2024)).

The municipal area covers approximately 3 833 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 193 104 with several dense informal settlements with vulnerable populations (Western Cape Government (2020) Breede Valley Municipality Socio-Economic Profile). Compared to the other

municipalities in the Cape Winelands District, the BVM has the second largest population of 193 104 in 2020 with an estimated growth of 1.2% by 2024 (Western Cape Government (2020) Breede Valley Municipality Socio-Economic Profile).

This research will focus geographically on a few wards in this medium-sized town. The Democratic Alliance has been the dominant party since 1999, winning 59.5% in the last elections (Electoral Commission of South Africa 2021).

The BVM has thriving manufacturing, tourism, and commercial sectors. However, the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors have been the most vulnerable due to environmental challenges, which have resulted in a decline in employment and increased job losses (Breede Valley Municipality 2019).

The town is well developed in terms of a central business district, shopping mall, and casino and is considered to be one of the largest wine-producing regions in South Africa (Breede Valley Municipality 2021. IDP 2017 - 2021). The town of Worcester had an unemployment rate of 14.4% according to the 2011 census figures released by STATSSA, with the youth unemployment rate being 20,25. With the impact of COVID-19 on the town's economy, unemployment is expected to increase, as per the results of the STATSSA survey done in September 2020.

According to STATSSA, there are 68,607 economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) people, and of these, 14,4% are unemployed. 20,2% of the municipality's 33 515 economically active youth (15 – 34 years) is unemployed (RSA Statistics South Africa 2011).

According to Dr Mkhululi Ncube, Programme Manager of the Local Government Unit at the Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), the IDPs of many municipalities were “thrown off course” during the pandemic. Also, infrastructure repairs and maintenance, a hugely important factor for successful LED projects, were either deferred or postponed (Dullah Omar Institute 2021).

This research intends to look at the application of LED in South Africa broadly, specifically the Western Cape, and to what extent the South African approach has the potential for sustainable

economic growth while alleviating poverty. With municipalities already struggling to fulfil their mandate in terms of service delivery, the central question is whether municipalities might rethink LED in light of COVID-19 and its aftermath. Does the COVID-19 crisis grant a window of opportunity for municipalities to reconfigure their developmental mandate in their approach to alleviating inequality and being transformative in service delivery?

## Aims and rationale

The study will have a narrow geographical focus of a few contrasting wards in Worcester rather than the entire area.

The sub-questions to be investigated are:

1. What is the standard narrative about LED, and how has this been localized in the Worcester municipality before and since COVID-19?
2. How has LED been rethought in the small-town context, and what new ideas should be considered?
3. How do issues of climate disasters and the “township” economy impact LED thinking and practices?

A key rationale for this mini-thesis is that the literature on LED, dominated by economic geographers such as Etienne Nel, Chris Rogerson, and Tony Binns, has not sufficiently incorporated disasters and crisis avoidance and mitigation that affect the poor into their thinking. Together with the government’s framework document and the World Bank and Department for International Development (DFID), this makes up the “standard narrative” focused on traditional economic growth. Much is also a “how to do it” literature reflected in courses taught in management schools, guidelines by external funding agencies, government guidelines and other sources.

## Methodology and case study

This study is based on interviews and a small survey administered to 27 citizens residing in the Breede Valley local municipality in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. The focus area for the research is mainly the largest town in the municipality, i.e., Worcester. The broader

research study focused on the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on the South African economy and the need to rethink strategies in economic development that would create a more socially just society that would benefit all citizens. To this end, I interviewed key role players in the municipal council, listed below.

January, C. (Breede Valley Municipality *Local Economic Development Manager*) 2023.

Interviewed by Jeftha, H. on Tuesday, 18 April 2023 at 8:15 via Zoom.

Malgas, C. (Breede Valley *Municipal Manager IDP/SDBIP/PMS*) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. on 26 April 2023 at 09:30 via Teams.

Mangali, M. (Ward 16 Councillor) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. telephonically on 2 May 2023 at 11:45.

Keega, P. (Ward 16 ex-Councillor) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. telephonically on 2 May 2023 at 11:45.

Gwala, Z. (SALGA LED Project Leader) 2023. Interviewed by H. Jeftha on 20 June 2023 via Teams.

I did two extended key informant interviews in Ward 16. I focused on Ward 16 (a section of the extremely dense Zwelethemba), which is 97% Black African and where 5% of voters in 2016 voted for the DA. Here, 81% of households live in shacks (RSA Statistics South Africa 2011), and the area is a mere 0.6 km square, leading to a density of over 11000 people per square km.

**Figure 1.2** Shack settlement in Zwelethemba.



(Worcester Standard 2023).

This research study was approved by the University of the Western Cape Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The study's protocol reference number is HS21/10/62.

The survey questionnaire (27 in total) focused on demographic information, socio-economic data, the impact of COVID-19, and government support for the recovery and development of local economies post-COVID-19. The data were collected and captured using Google Forms, an online survey data collection tool, and hard copies of the questionnaire were physically completed. The data was collected virtually in a face-to-face format using digital devices, i.e., Teams, Zoom, and telephonically via WhatsApp.

In line with this ethics approval, the study maintained the highest ethical compliance regarding social distancing with the completion of the questionnaires to limit the spread of COVID.

## Outline of chapters

Chapter 2 explores the standard narrative on local economic development and how it has been localized in the BVM and Worcester before and since COVID-19.

Chapter 3 focuses on how the COVID pandemic affected various socio-economic strata in the different wards in Worcester.

Chapter 4 focuses on LED Strategy Post-COVID and Township Economy with its focus on Zwelethemba.

Chapter 5 reflects on how COVID-19 impacted the thinking around local economic development in a small-town context and initiatives to build back better cooperatively and sustainably in the new district model.

Chapter 6 provides a conclusion based on the knowledge gained from the BVM's experience developing its local economy post-COVID-19 and recommendations regarding an approach to building a better world for all.

## CHAPTER 2: LED DEBATES IN SOUTH AFRICA AND THE LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

### Introduction

This chapter aims to engage with the literature and mission of LED and consider the legislative context and mandates of local government. LED implementation must be considered within the South African historical context as it will directly influence how we rebuild a more inclusive economy going forth. One, therefore, needs to engage with the different approaches of LED, its purpose within the historical and geographical context of a region, and the legislation meant to pave the way for its effective implementation. With the impact of COVID-19, one will have to consider whether LED can contribute to revitalizing the local economy through innovative businesses, community-based self-help services, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

This chapter thus focuses on the different approaches to LED as well as the relevant legislation that governs and impacts the application of LED. Our municipalities are facing multidimensional challenges, which require an upscaled intergovernmental approach to economic development and employment creation, thus improving the lives of citizens. The chapter thus reflects on the new District Development Model launched in 2019 and the design of LED within municipalities.

By narrowing the focus to the Western Cape Province, its strategic approach to LED, and the broad, varied, and multi-dimensional challenges it experiences within its geographical and social context, the research starts to engage with the realities faced by the province, which in turn impacts the district and local municipalities within the province.

### Introduction to LED

Bateman (2014: 13) suggests that LED was a 'new paradigm' invented by the Thatcher government in 1979 to respond to the UK's "worst concentrations of industrial and economic decline" thanks to an extreme neoliberal 'monetarist' experiment introduced by the new

Thatcher government. LED is based on competition to sell a specific area and its unique offerings to investors, tourists and consumers. Local agencies might be formed to do this.

The International Links and Services for Local Economic Development Agency) ILS LEDA (a global network) noted that,

Territorial Marketing as a strategy, aims to guide the stakeholders in local economic development, to improve its placement at national and international level, through the identification and strengthening of its demographical identity and an effective marketing and communications policy, in order to improve the quality of life, the social equality, the environmental protection and the dissemination of its own culture. It promotes and implements interventions for increasing the demographical value and seeks to attract people and activities that can promote the development of local resources. This strategy seeks to promote its unique opportunities and thereby improve the living conditions of the community. ILS LEDA set up specific methodology and tools for elaborating a participatory strategy for territorial marketing (TEMA), which includes an historical, geographic and cultural framework.

(<https://www.ilsleda.org/en/services/territorial-marketing.html>)

Canzanelli (2010, 4) in Bateman (2014) define Local Economic Development Agencies as, "legal, non-profit structures, generally owned by the public and private entities of the territory" which act as a mechanism through which "local actors plan and activate, in a shared way, initiatives for territorial economic development; identify the most convenient instruments for their realisation; and enhance a coherent system for their technical and financial support" (Bateman 2014).

Bateman (2014) is of the view that the original idea of LEDA adopted post-1950 to assist with post-war reconstruction and recovery (with proven success in Germany, Portugal, and Italy, amongst others) was captured and transformed by the UNDP to impose a local neoliberal policy framework.

The 1990s saw the rise of LEDA (Local Economic Development Agency) strongly supported by the United National Development Programme as the new “best practice” as an effective means to respond to poverty and underdevelopment. The post-neoliberal era also dictates less involvement of the state and thereby less political and ideological influence.

2008 saw the global collapse of financial markets, yet the drive to reconstruct LED in the same zombie-like global and local neoliberalism format as before the meltdown persisted as the global financial elite protected capitalism by claiming ignorance of the reasons for the failure of LED and the collapse of the global economy. The very same destructive mixture of neoliberal concepts was making a comeback. The aim of this comeback was twofold, i.e. (1) the private sector to be leading the response to market forces on behalf of communities (capitalism), and (2) LED institutions/initiatives to become business ventures aimed at becoming financially self-sustaining.

This new paradigm of zombie-like local neoliberalism “best practice” advocated by LEDA was rolled out to developing countries as “best practice” by the international donor community to ensure that no other LED modules are given the thought of the day.

Bateman notes that, in theory, this new post-2008 LEDA model was meant to be better at sustainable LED practices by emphasizing private sector participation and the need to achieve financial self-sustainability. It, however, appears that the main problem with the failure of this LEDA new paradigm is its inability to achieve economic self-sustainability. South Africa, where this new LEDA paradigm was implemented in partnership with the Department of Trade and Industry, failed because it could not generate fees from its business model services offered to local businesses, the competitive consultancy and project management arena, and a lack of funding.

With this new paradigm, the focus is clearly on privatization and consultancies instead of state—and community-driven economic development, which is developmental and more likely to bring about sustainability in local economic development. LEDAs are effectively seen as private consultancies.

The standard South African view is that LED is a “participatory development process that encourages partnership arrangements between the main private and public stakeholders of a defined territory, enabling the joint design and implementation of a common development strategy by making use of the local resources and competitive advantage in a global context, with the final objective of creating decent jobs and stimulating economic activity” (Nel and John 2006: 209).

LED is a key strategic tool in municipal integrated development plans. It aims to achieve sustainable development in a strategic, coordinated, and inclusive manner to realize a municipality's vision of social and economic upliftment (Abrahams 2003). With the adoption of the new South African Constitution in 1996, the concept of developmental local government was introduced, which aimed to reinforce the importance of economic planning at the local government level.

In the municipal planning process, the idea is that the municipality plays a developmental, facilitating, and coordinating role in establishing partnerships that will support its local economy. The challenge, however, is whether these partnerships should be geared towards economic development (increase in gross national product, i.e. market-related / business geared) or whether they should be pro-poor (alleviating poverty in an inward focused approach of human capital development, public-private partnerships, support to SMME's etc.) (Abrahams 2003).

A few major issues are: what is LED, what is economic versus social policy and do municipalities have capacity for LED? How do the poor benefit, and is it a trickle-down model? The more traditional and formal approach to economic development favouring the private sector greatly influenced LED in South Africa. This traditional neoliberal approach, which South Africa's European advisors inevitably influenced, favours place-led marketing or what is also referred to as local boosterism, and inter-urban competition, which is meant to lure big investments. This is seen as a top-down approach with significant involvement of higher levels of government and the formal business sector. This competitive approach of marketing a specific town to outside investors is contrasted to a later, more inward-looking developmental approach to LED driving

social objectives of poverty alleviation. This latter approach favours a more bottom-up approach, encouraging local entrepreneurship, skills, training, self-reliance, and the involvement of community-based organizations and improving local infrastructure for community use (Nel 2001, 1006). There are, however, different understandings of LED and, therefore, different approaches to the implementation of LED strategies. It can either be pro-growth, the traditional idea of “development,” or it could be pro-poor, i.e., developmental. For example, meeting basic needs such as sufficient water and energy could stimulate economic development and small business. In that sense, LED and service delivery are integrally linked. In fact, much of what some local governments do is deeply anti-developmental (building houses for the poor on the margins of the city and exacerbating spatial injustice), goes against the spirit of the Constitution, and reduces human emancipation (Ruiters 2021).

One must also accept that a *defacto* form of LED existed, i.e., the informal sector that came about as a means of survival for most of the South African population. However, this informal application (called “township economies”) had to be formalized in some way that would enable economic growth whilst alleviating poverty through job creation. Thus, there is a need for the implementation of a formal approach to LED that is developmental whilst also sustainably driving the local economy of a municipality. This dualism is evident in the two economies as referred to by Thabo Mbeki referring to the contrast in the South African economic landscape of one municipality where the economy is thriving compared to a municipality where the mostly illiterate poor population is trapped not being able to break through to be a more thriving economy due to an unskilled workforce and lack of infrastructure, amongst other factors (Pressly 2003).

From the literature reviewed, there seem to be three phases of LED thinking in SA.

The White Paper invoked the concept of 'developmental local government', which differs from the narrow focus of local government activity on service and infrastructure provision. The Local Government White paper sees 'Developmental local government' as 'local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and improve the quality of their lives' (RSA 1998: 17).

The early phase of LED started with the White Paper and the establishment of municipalities in 2000. Within the South African context, the LED had to consider the abilities and challenges of the different new municipalities, i.e., abilities and challenges experienced in bigger metropolises and cities are vastly different from those experienced in rural municipalities (Nel 2001:1015). Etienne Nel (2001: 1012-1013) refers to four variants of LED in South Africa, i.e.

- Formal local government initiatives
- Community-based / small-town initiatives
- Section 21 Development Corporations
- Top-down LED

As explained by Rogerson (2011), the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG) tried to strike a balance in the period 2000 - 2009 between a pro-poor LED focus, taking the needs of the communities into account and a pro-growth focus bearing in mind the macro-economic policy as well. The approach of LED in South Africa aimed to encourage local people within a municipal area to work together to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. The municipal area can then reap the economic benefits and enjoy an improved quality of life. The approach tied in with South Africa's macroeconomic ASGISA, spearheaded by President Thabo Mbeki at the time, which was aimed at creating a single integrated economy whilst reducing unemployment and poverty.

Although the Constitution has a clear mandate for local governments to be *developmental* and it should exercise their powers and functions in a way that maximizes social development and economic growth within its municipal area, it was only with the enactment of the Municipal Systems Act (32) in 2000 that institutional arrangements and guidelines for LED were put in place. This era, therefore, sees LED in its policy formation stage, which this thesis will examine.

2010 – 2018 follows with a more critical look at LED and its implementation challenges and failures.

The New Growth Plan, as the adopted macro-economic policy in 2010, aimed to accelerate the growth in the South African economy by rapidly reducing poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This highlighted the need for LED initiatives to be successfully implemented in order to bring about this change. Koma (2012) observed that synchronizing the national spatial development strategy with the provincial growth and development strategies and LED on the local government level became integral for successful policy implementation and called for a coordinated effort between all spheres of government. It became clear that skills development, administrative capacity, planning, and implementation of LED projects on the local government level were imperative.

Judd and Parkinson (1990) point out that the traditional approach to LED, as practiced in the North, is focused on investment, big-business support, and large project development undertaken by relatively well-resourced local agencies (Judd & Parkinson (1990) cited in Binns & Nel (1999)). This approach to LED was thus also practiced in South Africa before 1994 when the aim was to attract industries, promote place marketing, and develop infrastructure and planned places (SACN 2019). For example, Botshabelo and Mdantsane were created by the Apartheid regime to establish big townships to accommodate the workforce.

The introduction of the LED Fund in 1998 was intended to establish projects that were meant to be pro-poor and alleviate poverty. These projects, however, did not fare very well as the public sector poorly planned them, and the administration did not have the appropriate technical skills to support such projects (SACN 2019). In rethinking LED, Rogerson (2011) concedes that though South Africa was seen to be the leading country however, there is/was a consensus that its achievements in terms of LED were disappointing and had, at best, been modest, especially in the rural areas and small towns. Nel and Rogerson (2016) found that only 10.4% of municipalities stated that they had an explicit LED strategy and that there were many instances where municipalities had LED interventions without a definite LED strategy.

The most robust critique of LED comes from Bateman (2014: 5) who suggests that “one of the more esoteric aspects of the ‘local neoliberalism’ agenda has been a drive to ‘neoliberalise’ the local economic development infrastructure as well. By the local economic development

(hereafter LED) infrastructure we mean the full panoply of local economic development units, business incubators, financial institutions for enterprise development, business support centres, SME Agencies, technology parks, industrial and agricultural extension services, Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), vocational education and training organisations, and so on”.

All of this impacts the success rate of local economic development initiatives within a municipality. Also, the inability of municipalities to maintain and repair infrastructure directly impacts service delivery and, ultimately, whether LED projects can be successful. Nel and Rogerson (2016) point out that the fate of LED in South Africa was fuelled by a combination of corruption and poor governance on a local government level, chronic power outages, and the dire drought conditions of recent years.

In 2020, LED took a new turn for the worse as the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the global economy. The pandemic came two years into the Ramaphosa administration, which has had to steer the country through harsh lockdown restrictions to save lives and keep people working. The lockdown implemented on 26 March 2020 greatly impacted the country’s economic activities. The pandemic, therefore, posed a threat to all South Africans in terms of job losses, the economy, and the ability of the health system to respond to the crisis.

Much of the practical implementation of the government’s response to COVID-19 was laid at the door of provincial and local government - arguably the weakest spheres of the state. Huge obligations were placed on municipalities but were not necessarily supported by additional funding. The impact of the pandemic on local governments is the worst felt in a major drop in rates revenue for municipalities whilst having to provide additional COVID-19 specific services, e.g. monitoring and controlling social distancing, providing quarantine areas, drastic increase of funerals and cremations, housing the homeless, provision of water and food parcels, etc. Municipalities were therefore forced to take on new responsibilities whilst their revenue has come under pressure in the face of a fast-shrinking national fiscal budget, bearing in mind that municipalities face the unique challenge of being responsible for monthly expenditure and generating their own income (Dullah Omar Institute 2021).

Authors like Song & Zhou (2020) explore the possibilities of post-COVID-19 reforms that can boost productivity and growth and how this pandemic can become the catalyst for globally creating a more equal and integrated society if we grasp the opportunity to think more deeply about the choices we make in terms of policy reform and innovation. March (2018) suggests focusing on ecologically centered “degrowth” strategies. The post-COVID era can allow for the rethinking of values and democracy to explore alternative strategies from the continual drive for economic growth. The degrowth strategies of achieving socio-environmental justice.

Bond (2020: 9) agrees that the pandemic poses an opportunity for ‘a social transformation everywhere on earth’ and that globally, we take account of the ecological stresses we as humans have placed on the earth. However, he remains skeptical of South Africa’s ability to grasp this opportunity. O’Sullivan & Jackson (2002) distinguish between development focussed on economic growth and development that shows a greater consideration for socio-economic and environmental variables, i.e. sustainable local economic development. She rightly points out that even though there is development and economic growth, it can occur in the same space while increased poverty, unemployment, and inequality exist. Sustainable local economic development is focussed on the longer-term effects of decisions made and seeks to build capacity and find the balance between social, economic and environmental factors (O’Sullivan & Jackson 2002). Therefore, sustainable local economic development is expected to lead to a better quality of life as envisioned by the constitution.

Bond (1998) contrasts the more orthodox approaches to LED as dictated by the IMF and World Bank with a people-centered approach focused on addressing not only underdevelopment but also uneven development. There is a need to transition to a more balanced approach laying the foundation for a stronger moral commitment to sustainable development. How this commitment translates into practice within the South African context is where it can be useful whilst considering also the pitfalls of past experiences of foreign direct investment, which was more exploitative than it was developmental and uplifting. Regarding the community-based strategy, he finds it imperative that the government support the community organizations driving the local economies. He describes this approach as explicitly aimed at lining "profitable growth and redistributive development" (Bond 2002, 9).

In summary, Bond highlights that the continued reliance on the orthodox approaches to LED "further perpetuates the traditional"- i.e., in layman's terms, the 'rich will get richer whilst the poor get poorer.'

Bond highlights two issues in particular: underdevelopment and uneven development. While much focus is placed on underdevelopment, there is an urgency to address the challenges that hamper uneven development. Apart from the economic impact of infrastructure investment, development should lead to improved public health, lower levels of racial segregation, improved social capital, and greater gender equality.

The unaffordability of services such as water and electricity is a key factor in local development and a burden on poor households' budgets. It is also the most important reason why people living in the metros are dissatisfied with their local municipality (Ledger 2021).

Bond (2002) proposes an alternative to the traditional top-down approach, that is more people-centered. He proposes that the varied aspects of human and social conditions can be positively impacted through access to infrastructure and municipal services. This alternative approach is especially important / required considering the constitutional rights of all South Africans for which local government is responsible, i.e., free services to the masses of indigent people, i.e., water and electricity (Bond 2002).

Ledger (2021) notes that although the 1998 White Paper on Local Government (RSA 1998) repeatedly states the importance of affordable services in a developmental state, no clear benchmark for assessing affordability has ever been set. Instead, the focus has been on enforcing a cost-recovery model for basic services; the users of services must be charged the full cost of supplying that service. This model does allow for cross-subsidization (the wealthier users pay higher tariffs so that poorer users pay lower tariffs), but it is clear that the resulting "lower" tariffs are still well beyond the affordability threshold of millions of households. Without affordability, universal access to services – and all the positive socio-economic implications that go with it – simply cannot materialise.

Bond (2002), however, also states that progress made by municipalities in terms of demand-side management is being hampered by the growing trend towards privatizing municipal

services. Due to the lack of capacity in municipalities, the impact of privatization of services leads to loss of public control, job losses in the municipality, increased costs for users, reduced accountability of the municipality and decreased transparency.

Bond places particular emphasis on the economic benefits of infrastructure-related employment creation opportunities in the field of construction. The impact and economic benefits of investing and prioritizing infrastructure in the municipality spread over several stakeholders.

- Infrastructure establishment and development directly impact job creation as the construction sector requires skills spanning over a wide range of industries and income groups;
- It also requires and enhances the literacy levels of the workforce. In terms of education, the benefits of such investment and the return on such investment are substantial;
- Bond also highlights the positive spin-offs of electrification, especially concerning social relationships, and that it ensures economic spin-offs in terms of education, increased productivity and income generation, improved health, improved opportunities for SMEs, etc.

Bond emphasizes, however, that any alternative strategy is reliant on an integrated development planning approach (Bond 2002: 26). He recognizes the growing recognition of the importance of integrated planning “to link physical and socio-economic interests” (Bond 2002, 26).

Bond concludes that municipalities must, “reverse the worsening patterns of uneven development,” i.e., narrow the economic gap between the ‘have’s’ and the ‘have nots.’ Bond stipulates that (1) it is time to shift the focus to pro-poor sustainable development that is community-focussed, and (2) introduce “public good” aspects of municipal services as an explicit strategic orientation” (Bond 2002, 27). Spending on economic infrastructure is crucial to stimulate economic growth.

The reality is that the traditional approach to LED is not relevant to and cannot bring relief to the marginalized and poorest of the poor in the South nor can it address the scale of the South African crisis (a triple crisis of unemployment, apartheid spatiality and climate injustices heaped on the poor). The ecological gap between the rich and poor has increased with no positive impact on the poor (Binns & Nel 1999; Ruiters 2001, Turok 2021).

The debates on LED also include the issue of community self-provisioning through local action including “theft” of services or reclaiming services through self- reconnections (Ruiters 2006, Ngwane 2014). Through the years, the masses of marginalized people began to look inward for a solution and, through self-reliance, found their own very basic form of economic development as a survival strategy. In these informal economic structures, they have come to rely on their own skills, indigenous knowledge, livelihoods, and production systems (Binns & Nel 1999) as the form of economic development to self-subsidize the social wage and put services and food on the table in their day to day hustle for survival.

Pre-COVID-19, there was a heavy reliance on local government to be the driving force of LED. Because of the approach that LED is to create the environment that would facilitate LED within the municipal area, it means less involvement of national and provincial spheres of government, apart from policies that require coordination across all three spheres of government.

This thesis aims to demonstrate that there is a need for greater central state involvement to achieve the developmental outcomes and economic growth envisioned through LED. According to Bénassy-Qiéré and di Mauro (2020), history has shown that governments tend to stabilize the economy when there is a threat to it. They then implement policies that would counteract these adverse fluctuations in the economy (Khambule & Mdlalose 2022). COVID-19 presented the opportunity for the State not just to adopt counter-cyclical policies to mitigate economic crisis or volatilities, but rather to adopt policies that regulate social, political, and economic activities that have the potential to diminish the negative economic impact of future pandemics. In Khambule & Mdlalose (2022), Ricz (2021, 2) also claims that every crisis period provides an opportunity for a developmental state-led approach to emerge, allowing

governments to build institutions that promote infrastructural transformation and inclusive growth (and not be reliant on local government to be 'developmental' in its approach to LED).

## Policy Frameworks

South Africa's policy approach vastly underestimates the gravity and scope of the problems of inequality, unemployment and spatial legacies (Mohammed 2024; Makhubu and Ruiters 2020, Ruiters and Bond 2017). What is needed, I argue is concerted national action on the scale of a Marshall Plan. National and local economic planning needs to be aligned and the private sector needs to be much more directed in terms of prescribed assets (Bond 1998).

The National Framework for LED 2018 – 2028 aims to support local economies through an integrated governmental approach. This support is in the form of strategic guidance to the different LED stakeholders and their activities to achieve innovative, competitive, sustainable local economies and maximize opportunities to address the community's needs. Through this strategy, local government, therefore, contributes to the national and provincial development objectives (SANC 2019).

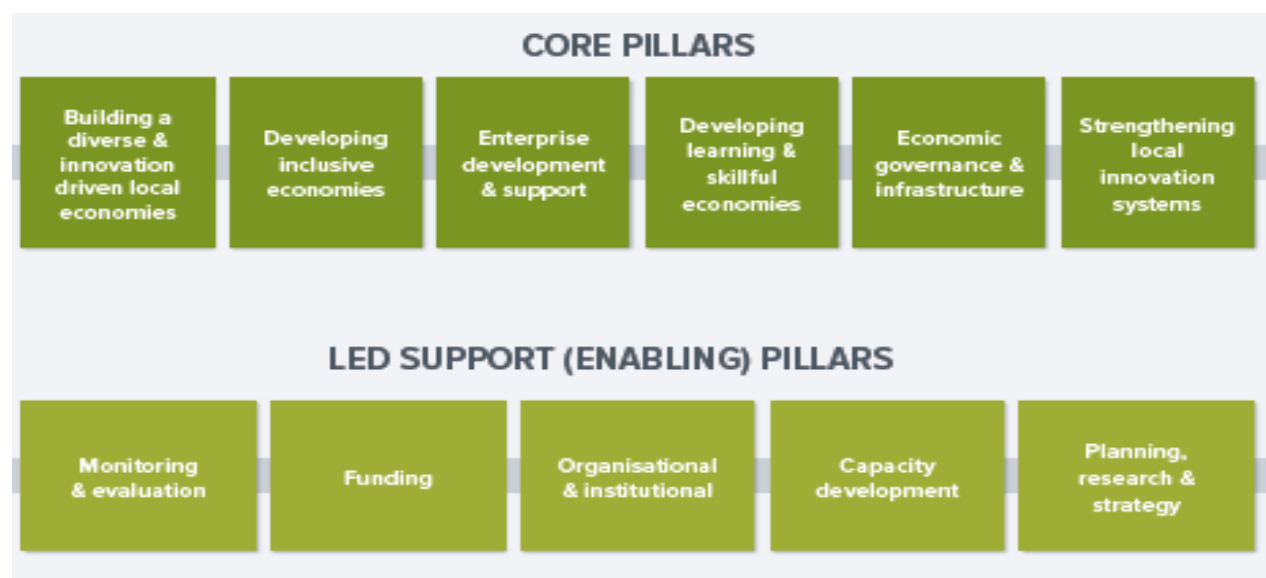
But any policy on local economic development should get the basics right firstly, i.e., it must reduce and empower those in poverty and address key drivers of inequality (low wages, casualisation, spatial exclusion, high transport costs, high food costs and bad health facilities etc). It must promote the development of skills and quality education by unifying the school system ultimately leading to more structural change. To add to this, the expectation must be that LED be implemented in an environmentally friendly manner, conscious of the impact of global warming and, with the specific focus of this research, how we do all of this.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Local Economic Development (LED) was guided by the LED Framework (2006–2011), which aimed to promote and grow local economies through the efforts and initiatives of each local government. The framework aimed to establish a shared understanding of effective LED practices. One of its primary goals was to reduce poverty by creating employment opportunities and, in turn, addressing economic inequalities within

communities. The Framework underscored the need for LED to be developmental in that local government has the responsibility of creating an environment that is conducive for successful LED implementation. For such initiatives to be successful, it was reliant on good governance and the integration and coordination of policies across all spheres of government. Added to this was the reliance on local resources, skills and knowledge development that would stimulate sustainable economic activities able to withstand possible shocks to the economy. This Framework was tested by the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the literature on LED prior to COVID-19 was focused on local government, as the sphere closest to the people, and its role in bringing socio-economic relief during a crisis. On the other hand, post-COVID-19, the literature tends to focus on the responses to emergencies such as COVID-19, also placing the emphasis on national governments' stimulus packages, where the aim was to stabilize the economy, protect workers' income, protect businesses, given that the vast majority are marginalized South Africans who are without social security.

The National LED Framework 2018-2028 is built on six core pillars and five enabling pillars that drive the implementation of the core pillars (see below). However, it does not address key drivers of underdevelopment and uneven development.

**Figure 2.1** Pillars driving the implementation of LED



Draft National Framework for Local Economic Development (2018 – 2028, 34).

The starting point of the White Paper on Local Government is to emphasize the need to rebuild local communities and the environment within which it exists to remedy the damages caused by apartheid in terms of spatial, social, and economic development. It proposes a holistic approach to development built on principles of affordability, accountability, accessibility, and quality goods and services as outlined in the municipality's integrated development plan facilitated by an integrated approach of all spheres of government. The approach of working with the local communities to find sustainable ways of service delivery to them is emphasized.

It prompts municipalities to place their focus on the developmental outcomes of:

- Provision of household infrastructure and services by exercising powers and functions in such a way that it maximizes effectiveness, social development, and economic growth;
- the creation of liveable, integrated cities, towns, and rural areas – it needs to provide leadership and vision in facilitating the alignment and the integration of public and private institutions; and
- The promotion of local economic development and community empowerment and redistribution, as well as the empowerment of marginalized and excluded groups in the community (White Paper on Local Government 1998: 8).

The Municipal Systems Act 2000 S26(c) ensures that local municipalities prioritize LED by making it compulsory for local municipalities to adopt an integrated development plan (Strategic plan for the implementation of an LED within their annual five-year Integrated Development Plan (IDP). Through the Municipal Systems Act, the IDP is a legislative requirement with a legal status. It, therefore, supersedes all other plans that guide development at the local government level (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform: IDP Template: 2012, 28).

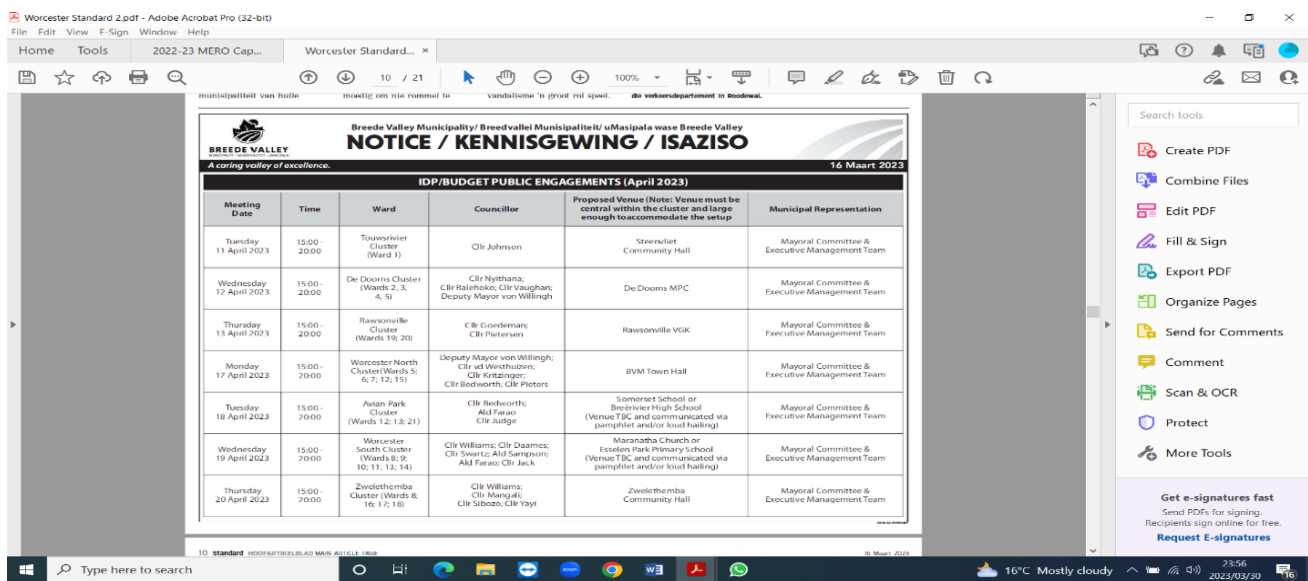
The Act (32 of 2000) further states that the municipality must have a developmental-focused planning process to achieve its objectives and to give effect to the developmental duties as determined by the Constitution (S23).

Practically, the Municipality is obliged to adopt the IDP immediately after the start of its term (S25). The Plan must be reviewed and adapted annually until the new council is elected. The Act (S25(3) (a) further stipulated that the new municipal council has the choice of adopting the IDP of their predecessor subject to a public consultation process.

The Integrated Development Plan is the municipality's integral policy document to operationalize local economic development. It lays the foundation for the subsequent laws that strengthen the developmental responsibilities of such municipalities.

A municipality's IDP must be adopted by its Council within one year of the municipal election and remain in force for the term (5 years) of the elected Council. The adopted IDP must be reviewed or amended annually after consultation with the local community and other stakeholders. The figure below shows an example of the formal approach with little evidence any special effort.

**Figure 2.2** Notice of the Breede Valley Municipality IDP/Budget Public Engagements



Worcester Standard 2023, 16 March: 9.

The key role of local governments in terms of the LED process broadly includes:

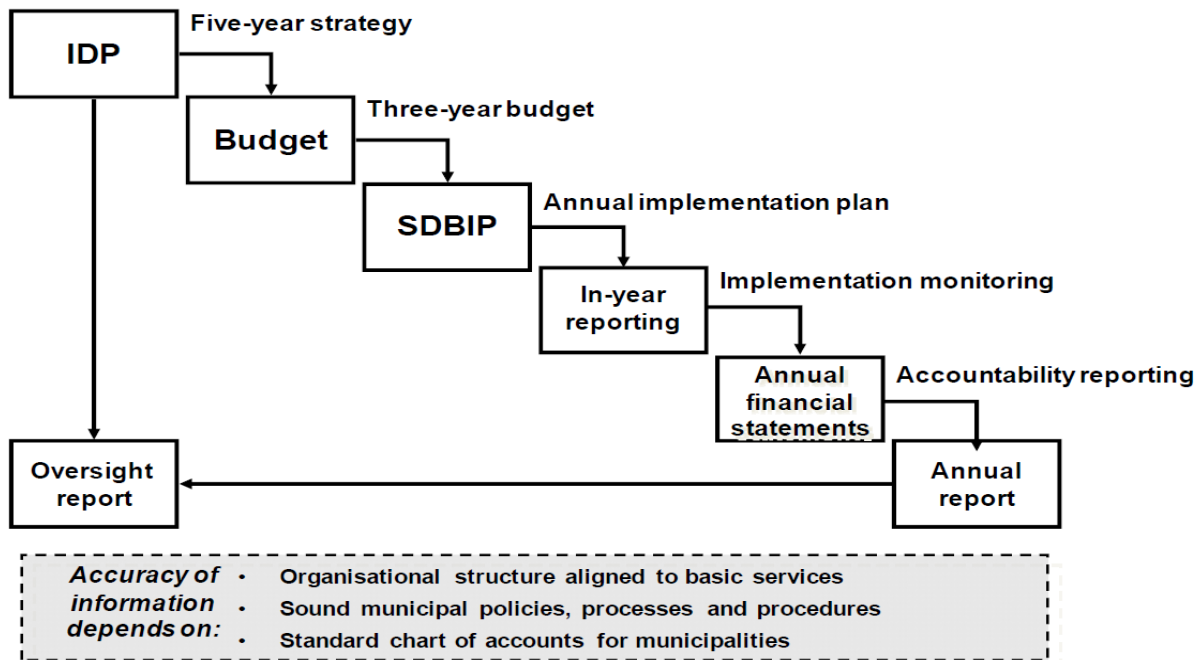
- Leadership and direction in policy making (eg, municipal by-laws and processes);

- Administer policies i.r.o. LED ensuring proper coordination and effective impact in respect of growth and development; and
- To be the main initiator of LED programmes through public spending, regulatory powers, small business development, and social enterprises and cooperatives.

The MFMA requires the municipality to table its draft budgets and IDP by the end of March. The MFMA also deals with the applicable process should a municipality be in a position that they will not be able to comply with the provisions of the Act. The MFMA also requires the municipality to publish its budget and annual reports on its website to promote public accountability and good governance (Treasury Circular Mun. No. 5/2023).

The main components of financial management as required by the MFMA and the alignments of the components with the accountability cycle are reflected in the diagram below:

**Figure 2.3** Municipal financial Management and MFMA implementation



National Treasury cited in 2011 Local Government Budgets and Expenditure Review: 76.

The municipality's success relies on the council and municipal employees with the correct skills, expertise, and mindset and external support. A new scalar approach has been advocated.

## New District Development Model 2019: One District, One Plan and One Budget

On 5 March 2019, before the COVID-19 lockdown took into effect, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, introduced a new vehicle, i.e., the District Development Model (DDM), through which budget and development plans are to be coordinated to mobilize resources from all spheres of government and civil society to stimulate economic growth and create employment.

The DDM, in its collaborative approach, aims to break down the silos within which the spheres of government and departments are seen to operate, which results in a lack of coherence in planning and implementation and negatively impacts monitoring and evaluation. The DDM is included in Chapters 3 and 7 of the Constitution on Co-operative Government and Local Government, respectively. It is based on Section 41 (h) (i-vi) and Section 154 (1) of the Constitution, 1996.

Cooperative Government, and Local Government Section 41 (1) principles of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations, (1) All spheres of government and all organs of state within each sphere must (h) cooperate in mutual trust and good faith by (i) fostering friendly relations; (ii) assisting and supporting one another; (iii) informing one another of, and consulting one another on, matters of common interest; (iv) coordinating their actions and legislation with one another; (v) adhering to agreed procedures; and (vi) avoiding legal proceedings against one another. Partly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic the recently adopted District Development Model (DDM) has refocused policy towards enhanced intergovernmental coordination.

## Western Cape Province and LED

The Western Cape province as the fourth largest province in South Africa, stretches over 129 462 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 6 279 730. In terms of its economy, the province is rich in agriculture and fisheries, it has a well-established industrial business base, finance, ICT, and retail sector, and its natural beauty ensures a thriving tourism industry across the province. The province is divided into a metropolitan municipality, i.e., the City of Cape Town Metropole, and five district municipalities, one of which is the Cape Winelands district municipality. This district

municipality is again divided into 5 local municipalities, of which the BVM is one (Western Cape Government Provincial Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024).

The province's vision is to have a vibrant, innovative and sustainable economy characterised by economic growth and employment. The province's approach to economic development is to identify economic opportunities and potential to ultimately contribute to economic priorities as listed in the Provincial Strategic Plan (PSP). 5 Vision inspired priorities (VIPs) are listed in the PSP, which include:

1. Safe and Cohesive Communities
2. Growth and Jobs
3. Empowering People
4. Mobility and Spatial Transformation
5. Innovation and Culture

For the purpose of my research, VIP 2, namely Growth and Jobs, is of interest as it captures the goal of growing the economy and employment creation over five years, i.e. 2019 – 2024. This Priority is strategically driven by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. It must be understood that departments across provincial government, inter alia Social Development, Education, Cultural Affairs and Sports, and Health, all have to work in an integrated and goal-driven manner as this VIP is focussed on economic growth and development that encompasses families and children, education, youth, and skills development and health. As a strategic priority, the department contributes to employment growth by making the province more competitive, which will unlock its investment potential, job opportunities, and economic growth. Bearing in mind the province's strategic location, its focus, therefore, also includes investing in infrastructure to grow exports, which will enable growth. The focus is thus on boosting private sector investment, enterprise development, and building economic resilience (Provincial Government of South Africa 2024).

Further, in terms of intergovernmental relations, the province also relies on the national government's strategic priorities and successes, as they directly impact the province's ability to grow the economy. Factors such as the credit rating downgrade, a weak economy, the energy crisis, national disasters, and the bailout of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) all impact the ability of provinces to navigate the landscape of building and developing the local economy strategically.

Challenges faced within the provinces include:

- Population growth, urbanization, and associated unemployment impact service delivery and increase poverty.
- Political and administrative instability, which makes some councils dysfunctional and impacts service delivery.
- Lack of capacity and skills in municipalities.
- Corruption, fraud, and maladministration in municipalities.
- The need for governance transformation.
- Protest actions which impact on service delivery and damage to facilities and infrastructure.
- Social ills, which include, inter alia, substance abuse, gender-based crimes, and crime in general impacts on economic prosperity and socio-economic development.
- Inadequate public transport.
- Poor communities far from social and economic opportunities.
- Infrastructure backlogs.
- Climate change, the need and urgency to protect biodiversity and ecosystems, water and food security, the oceans, and waste management.
- The frequency and severity of weather-related disasters are increasing (particularly fire, drought, and floods).

- As a coastal province, there are vulnerable areas due to global warming, resulting in rising sea levels and ocean warming (Provincial Government of South Africa 2024).

## Conclusion

This chapter's focus is on debates by various authors on LED also seen within the context of legislature and policy frameworks.

Navigating the LED landscape within this South African context is met with many challenges as municipalities attempt to support their local/district economies. The debates highlight the different focus areas, i.e. pro-poor alleviating poverty or developing the local economy geared to business. The chapter, therefore, aims to critically analyse the literature and mission of LED within the South African historical context. The impact of COVID-19 brought further challenges and aspects to consider whether LED can contribute to revitalizing the local economy through innovative businesses, community-based self-help services, and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Municipalities are, therefore, facing multidimensional challenges, which require a whole of government approach to be able to improve the lives of the citizens. The focus in the chapter is thus also on the new District Development Model and whether its implementation has been successful. In narrowing the focus to the Western Cape Province, the research starts to engage with the realities faced by the province, which in turn impacts the district and local municipalities within the province.

The new paradigm of local neoliberalism has not been successful in South Africa. The literature relies extensively on the writings of authors criticizing this approach in that it is unable to achieve economic self-sustainability as it does not speak to the fact that LED in South Africa can only be successful if it addresses inequality and underdevelopment in our economies and our people. The review finds that the focus of this new paradigm is on privatization and consultancies instead of state- and community-driven economic development, which is of a developmental and sustainable nature.

## CHAPTER 3: THE CASE STUDY: WORCESTER IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF COVID

### Introduction

The Worcester area was conquered and occupied by white Dutch colonists in the 1700s, and the original inhabitants were forced out. The colonial forces came with their own slaves who were forced to work on the white-owned farms. By the 1820s, the farmers owned over 3200 slaves (most second-generation slaves), making up about 10% of the cape slaves (37000). Apart from land, slave wealth was the most important asset class for many at the Cape. This chapter aims to give insight into the municipality's situational demographics and LED strategy before the COVID-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, the human development index of the municipal area was high, but it dropped considerably thereafter. The chapter also focuses on the municipal area's economic profile and considers whether the economy was sufficiently resilient to withstand an onslaught such as this devastating pandemic. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the community's reflections on the type of government interventions to safeguard the community during the COVID-19 pandemic and whether they were seen to be sufficiently effective in protecting and servicing the community. This is done by examining the municipality's spending focus (concerning COVID-19) as per its mandate during the pandemic period. To illustrate the municipalities' LED strategy, focus is placed on some of the LED initiatives and the experiences of the communities (especially the most impoverished) in terms of LED.

Being a more liquid asset than land, the slaves were frequently used as collateral, as the mortgage records show. Because slaves were so widely owned, their distribution across the Colony provides a useful indication of the wealth inequality in the Colony (Ekama et al. 2021).

Being the largest town in the Western Cape's interior region, it is a regional center for most central and Provincial Government Departments. Its mayor is the DA party's, Antoinette Steyn. Worcester also has a black township named Zwelethemba. In 1985, students here protested

over Afrikaans being a dominant language at school. Riots broke out, and police shot several students. A student named Nkosana Nation Bahumi was killed due to the protests.

In 2021, the Breede Valley municipal area employed 75,389 people, 19.2 percent of whom were informally employed. The Breede Valley economy is securely invested in grape farming, whether by cultivating fresh grapes for the local and international markets or producing wine. This leads to a labour force skewed towards low-skilled (33.1 percent) and semi-skilled (31.5 percent) workers. The local wine industry also contributes to tourism, as the area is popular for weekend getaways, sporting events, and festivals. Worcester serves as the commercial hub of the municipal area, resulting in the finance sector being the largest in terms of GDP. The finance sector had a GDP of R4.1 billion (25.2 percent of GDP) in 2021 and predominantly comprises business services such as those provided by bookkeepers, insurers, lawyers, and security specialists. This sector was also the leading source of economic growth in 2022. In addition, Worcester is a center for public administration (Western Cape Government 2023. Municipal Review and Economic Outlook (MERO), CWD, 70).

The leading manufacturers in the Breede Valley municipal area are the 22 wineries in the Rawsonville, Slanghoek, Goudini, and Breede River areas and the 11 wineries in the Worcester and De Doorns areas. Other manufacturing includes agro-processing (Safari Dried Fruit & Nuts, Sasko Bakery, RCL Foods, and Breede River Valley Bottling) and the production of packaging materials for fruit growers. The latter reflects the prevalence of the well-developed grape-growing value chain in the area. In addition to encompassing a substantial number of agro-processing industries, the area is also home to Hextex, a local fabric producer that reopened in 2022 after being closed in 2020 and 2021.

In implementing the LED strategy, the BVM has taken the approach of coordinating and integrating all stakeholders, public, private, and civil society. All these stakeholders work together to identify, develop, and utilize an economic opportunity that will benefit local businesses. The municipality thus plays an enabling role.

Broadly, the LED strategy aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Supporting the green economy;
- Promoting tourism;
- Invest in infrastructure that will allow for further investment opportunities and economic development;
- Invest in business improvement zones;
- Branding the BVM as a care capital;
- Complete industrial development at Uitvlucht;
- Reduce red tape to ease business, with the goal of allowing the BVM to make informed decisions promptly when considering potential business development.
- Improve existing business zones and create new ones.

(Breede Valley Municipality 2022, LED Strategy 2017 – 2022).

In implementing the strategy, the role of the municipality's LED department during COVID-19 was to collaborate with the regional and provincial clusters to:

- Assist businesses to access working capital as the value chains were disrupted;
- Assist with information and establishing best practices to ensure businesses remain relevant post-COVID-19;
- Research, assist, and support businesses with compliance with amended legislation due to COVID-19;
- Assist and support businesses in obtaining financial support, which was introduced to mitigate the effect of the pandemic. (Breede Valley Municipality 2021. IDP 2020-2021).

In general, the BVM's key role in terms of LED during COVID-19 was to support the private sector by creating conducive conditions for them to stay operative and thus continue to contribute to the economic growth and development of the region (Breede Valley Municipality 2021. IDP 2020-2021).

The BVM, however, has a large informal trade sector, which increased as the unemployment rate during COVID-19 increased. As Khambule points out, the informal economy has generally been regarded as an employment shock absorber during times of economic crisis as there are limited to no barriers to entering this sector (Khambule 2020: 92). Shapiro (2015) generally

defines the informal economy as an economic sector where “firms and workers produce legal, market-based goods and services but circumvent government regulations” (Shapiro 2015 cited in Khambule 2020: 93).

Government interventions to stimulate the economy and prevent job losses during the COVID-19 lockdown were possibly not inclusive enough, as the large sector of informally employed workers was not included. The pandemic more than likely impacted and impoverished them to a greater extent.

In the more impoverished low-income households, keeping sufficient stock of foodstuffs at home is often impossible. During the lockdown, there was clearly also a need for non-food-related needs, e.g., clothing, matches, utensils, light bulbs, etc. With informal traders lacking stock in hand or lacking permission to trade as such, there was a need for some intervention to ensure the informal trade economy continues to some extent as well as making sure that these basic needs of what they see to be essential for survival, are provided for.

When interviewed, the Cllr Mangali, stated that in terms of the BVM assisting small businesses in the township during the COVID-19 lockdown, Ward 16, Zwelethemba, such support was not forthcoming from the municipality. Those who lost their jobs and salaries were abruptly stopped with no payment from the unemployment fund. Food parcels from the Department of Social Services were minimal and infrequently distributed. The Councillor went as far as to say that people came to his house in numbers for assistance from his own pocket.

In Mandela lodge (in Zwelethemba) they share one toilet for six families, that is plus minus 30 people share 1 toilet. It felt like the municipality wanted COVID-19 to spread to their ward. It was painful, really. Nothing was forthcoming from the municipality, across the wards in Zwelethemba and some others where there are informal settlements. This municipality do nothing for us. Cape Winelands did nothing for us (Mangali, 2023).

To boost SMME’s post-COVID-19 is the 2023 SMME Booster Fund, an initiative of the Western Cape Provincial Government that can be facilitated through the municipality to boost the local economy. Based on applying through submission of proposals, the fund is aimed at providing

development support to SMMEs, which includes aspects such as training, coaching, mentoring, financial planning assistance with facilitating access to funding, assisting with compliance, technical support such as equipment, software, and licensing, etc. The fund aims to support SMMEs in export, women-owned, youth-owned, and township-based businesses (Western Cape Government 2023).

In response to assistance for informal traders during COVID-19 in the BVM:

They [the community of Zwelethemba] were also suffering. They used their small business during that period. They had to use their profit until COVID-19 was done but after that they did not get anything. The municipality did not assist with accessing funds. Those who applied did not receive anything. Not all were aware about that. The one or two who tried, did not receive the money. The municipality issued a letter to small businesses indicating the times they must close. They regulated the times they could operate. They were good with that (Mangali, 2023).

In addition, the Economic Recovery Plan indicates that working capital loans will be available as start-up funds to SMMEs at 0-2% interest (SA Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan 2020). Further to this, the programme will be linked to what is referred to as the programme for industrialization and localization which aims to achieve strategic objectives of:

- Reducing the reliance on imported goods;
- Improving the productivity of local producers; and
- Develop and improve local produce of export quality that is competitive enough to increase the sales of South African products internationally (SA Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan 2020).

In addition to supporting SMME, the BVM also encourages potential businesses to grow through the Cape Winelands Seed Fund Programme. Small and micro businesses that qualify can apply and will participate in a mentoring programme to better equip them to be successful. Some of these opportunities include (1) the small farmer support programme, (2) the

entrepreneurial seed fund programme, especially for SMME and (3) funding for tourism events and festivals (Breede Valley Municipality 2020. CW Seedfund).

In response to the municipality's efforts to facilitate skills development programmes, the Ward Councillor responded:

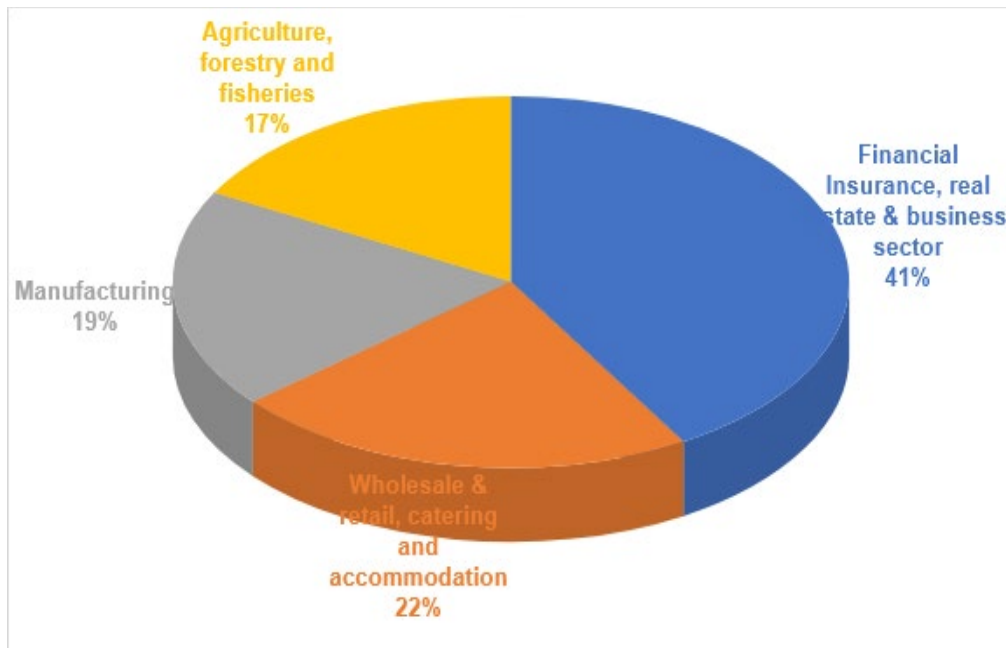
There is no training opportunities. We are always trying to get that but don't know where to go to get answers for that. The municipality is supposed to help with funding to start own small business but they don't do that in our area. They are doing it in other areas (Mangali, 2023).

### Economic profile of the Breede Valley Municipality

The economic profile of the BVM is mainly made up of financial and insurance, real estate, and business services, which are the biggest contributors to the economy. Further economic contributors include the wholesale and retail trade, tourism, and associated sectors (Breede Valley IDP 2027). The municipality is blessed with conditions conducive to agriculture and tourism which, under normal circumstances, are strong contributors to revenue. In terms of agriculture, the job losses due to COVID-10 were lesser than the job losses due to drought, especially in the northern region of the municipality, i.e., Touwsriver. The BVM itself, though, with poultry farming and livestock production domination, including vegetable farming around Worcester, was affected by COVID-19 to a lesser extent. Linked to agriculture are the wine farms in the municipal area, which produce export quality wines and contribute largely to employment in the region, extending into wine routes, which create employment opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industry; these were badly affected by COVID-19 with great losses.

Agricultural products from the region include a variety of fruits, vegetables, and animal products. Animal products include cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, and poultry. The third largest poultry broiler, County Fair, is in Worcester. These, amongst others, are the main contributors to the economy and form the backbone of the municipality's economy.

**Figure 3.1:** Breede Valley Municipality: main economic contributors



The highest socio-economic risks identified include job losses, low learner retention, and a low skills base for labor purposes (Western Cape Government, 2022). The drought, load-shedding, and economic recession greatly contribute to the high unemployment rate.

Youth unemployment is very high, so BVM has the challenge of creating employment opportunities to attract youth. In the field research done, several responses indicated that children did not attend school during lockdown, and there were dropouts and teenage pregnancies (some 14% of all babies were delivered to under 18-year-old mothers in 2022/3). The Draft Review of the IDP 2023-2024 shows that there is a decline in the 2022 pass rates, which can be attributed to many socio-economic factors, i.e., teenage pregnancies, high levels of poverty, and no to very low-income households. This is a challenge to be addressed as it affects the future local labor market and will exacerbate poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

The slight increase in jobs across all categories did not match the increase in population and new entrants into the labour force.

The reality in Zwelethemba according to ex-Councillor, Keega (2023):

“The biggest challenge is the unemployment. People depend on child support grants.

Says Mr. Mangali (2023) “Young people do not find work. 90% Of them don’t have work. We have the challenge of grade 12’s that did not get help to go to universities.

Yes, they get the opportunity to go to university but they need assistance to get there”.

## Social Profile

In 2019, the Cape Winelands District Municipality's population consisted of 27.85% African (251 000), 10.85% White (97 900), 60.83% Coloured (549 000), and 0.47% Asian (4 250) people (COGTA, 2020).

Breede Valley Local Municipality had 37% women-headed households. Breede Valley has displayed the same trend as the District’s trajectory, with inequality levels worsening from 0.59 in 2015 to 0.62 in 2021 (ibid). In 2021, 57.23% of Breede Valley’s population fell below the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL).

Between 2014 and 2020, income inequality has worsened in the Breede Valley area, with the Gini coefficient increasing from 0.58 in 2014 to 0.61 in 2020. Worsening income inequality could also be seen across the Cape Winelands District (0.59 in 2014 and 0.61 in 2020) and the Western Cape Province (0.60 in 2014 and 0.62 in 2020) (Western Cape Government BVM Socio-Economic Profile 2021).

The population's well-being in the Breede Valley Municipal District can be measured using the Human Development Index (HDI). A decent, long, and healthy life means sufficient education, work, medical facilities, decent housing, and basic services, e.g. water, electricity, food, etc.

The HDI is represented by a number between 0 and 1, where 1 indicates a high level of human development, and 0 represents no human development (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024).

The higher HDI in 2018 compared to 2015 shows increased economic growth, with employment opportunities, access to education, health, etc. The devastating impact of COVID-19 and the

subsequent lockdown in March 2020 negatively impacted the socioeconomic well-being of the population, and it is noticeable in the sudden drop in HDI between 2018 and 2021.

Urbanization predominantly occurred in Zwelethemba, De Doorns, and Rawsonville during the same period. De Doorns, especially, are known to be a significant entry point to possibilities of employment. This meant a significant increase in the stream of workers migrating to this town looking for employment. The neighbouring towns and farms in the Piketberg, Ceres, Wolseley, Tulbach, and Robertson use De Doorns as the labor reservoir (Eigelaar-Meets et al 2012).

In contrast, Worcester experienced the most significant decline in its urban population share among all the towns in Breede Valley. Zweletemba also displayed a high population density and saw an increase in population density from 2001 to 2021, (MERO 2022-2023).

Avian Park gangsterism caused people to fled to Zwelethemba. They now push a heavy budget for water and sanitation in Ward 16. The people in Ward 16 struggle to get a job in EPWP. They say the people from Ward 16 comes from the Eastern Cape. The community say you come from Eastern Cape you cannot get a job. Those from here must first get jobs (Mangali, 2023).

The number of schools within the Breede Valley area remained unchanged at 58 between 2017 and 2020. Given the gradual increase in learner enrolment, this could negatively impact the learner-teacher ratio and education outcomes in the future.

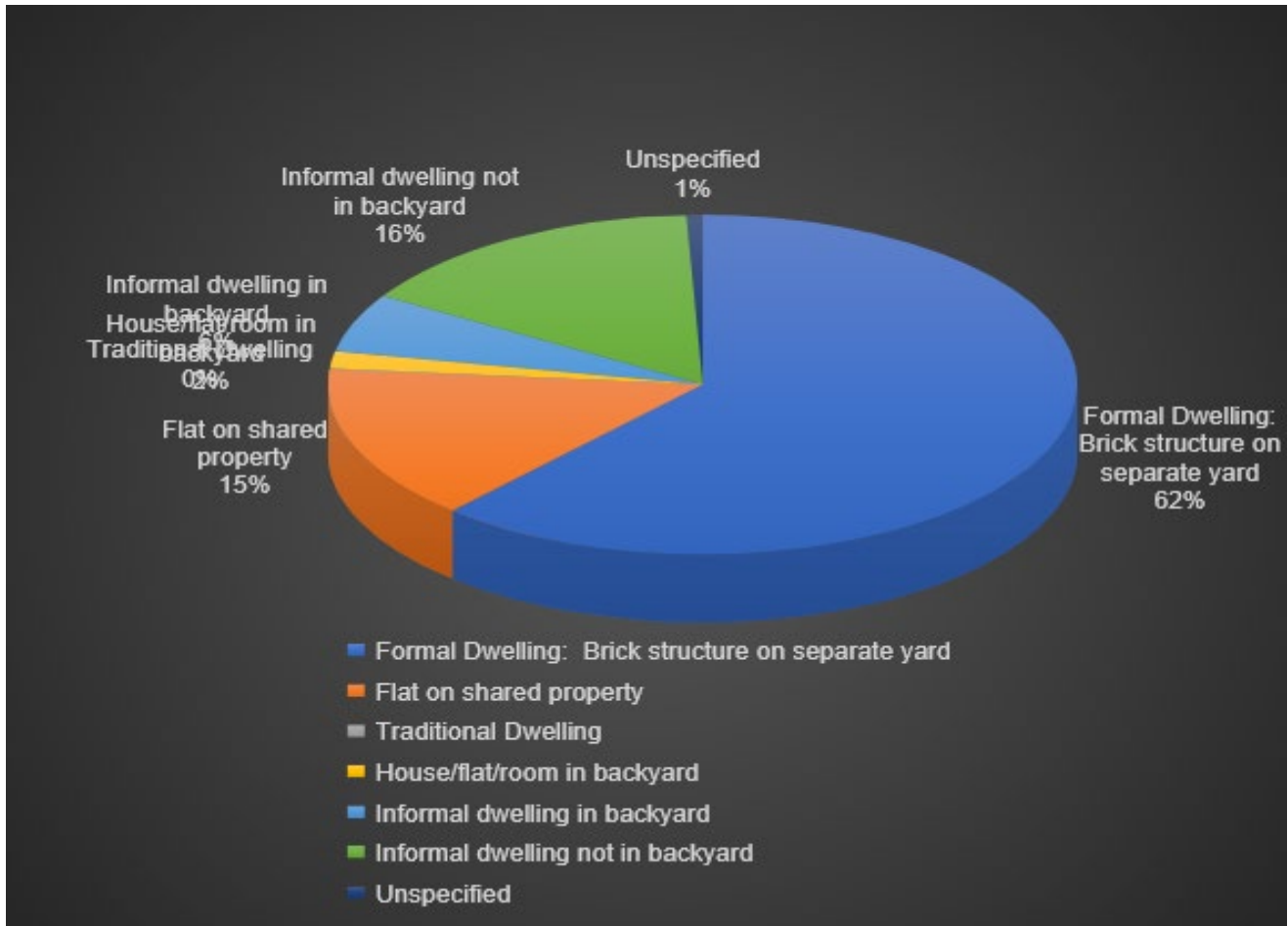
With a retention rate of 68.9 in the Breede Valley area, school drop-outs in the area remain a grave concern. The retention rate is influenced by a wide array of economic factors, including unemployment, poverty and teenage pregnancies.

Almost 79 percent of the schools in Breede Valley are registered with the Western Cape Department of Education as no-fee schools.

The matric pass rate within Breede Valley dropped from 84.2% in 2016 to 80.2% in 2018; in 2019, it dropped even further to 77.1% and even further to 72.5% in 2020 (Western Cape Government BVM Socio-Economic Profile 2021: 7).

In terms of housing, in 2022, the BVM had a total of 52 967 households in the municipal area, of which 78% were formal housing and 21.2% were informal dwellings. The percentage of informal dwellings is substantially higher than that of the CWD average of 16.9% (Western Cape Government BVM Socio-Economic Profile 2022).

**Figure 3.2** Breede Valley Municipality Dwellings



(#KnowYourMunicipality: The 2022 Socio Economic Profile Breede Valley Municipality:17)

**Figure 3.3:** Dwellings contributing to BVM municipal revenue base

BVM Dwellings		
	%	%
Formal Dwelling: Brick structure on separate yard	61,7	
Flat on shared property	14,8	76,5
Traditional Dwelling	0,1	
House/flat/room in backyard	1,6	
Informal dwelling in backyard	5,6	
Informal dwelling not in backyard	15,6	
Unspecified	0,7	23,6

For the BVM, this means a large percentage of households must be provided with basic services, i.e. water, sanitation, electricity, refuse removal, etc.

### Municipal Services and Free Basic Services (FBS) in Breede Valley Municipality

Free basic services, while minimal do offer some relief to struggling households. In the BVM, an indigent household typically lives in a house valued at less than R350 000 and uses less than 350kWh of electricity and 20kl of water. Residents must register with the municipality. The municipality received R147 million in equitable share (BVM Municipal money).

Evaluating the scope and effectiveness of the BVM's services in supporting the poor in townships is crucial. While the municipality offers various services, the impact and quality of these services may vary. To assess the effectiveness of these services, the following factors can be considered:

1. Access to services: In this instance, it depends on which ward within the municipal area is being considered. There are serious challenges in access to municipal services in informal areas and in Rawsonville, Zwelethemba and De Doorns.
2. Quality of services: Whether municipal services are blocked by bureaucratic hurdles such as means tests and whether are they delivered efficiently and reliably given the needs of the ward. Zwelethemba lags far behind the rest in terms of effective and efficient service delivery from the municipality.

3. Are services affordable to the community? Research has shown that the unemployment rate is high, poor communities struggle to pay for basic services.

4. The question of equity in service delivery should then also be considered, i.e. whether municipal services are distributed fairly and inclusively. Here too, the research has shown that the input from the community reflects that inclusivity and equity are still a challenge in bridging the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

5. Whether the expected outcomes and impact positively address the community's needs. Below is a reflection of some challenges in this regard, i.e., whether the municipality's endeavours are successful in uplifting the community in a meaningful and developmental way.

**Figure 3.4:** Influence of tariffs on domestic households

<b>INFLUENCE OF TARIFFS ON DOMESTIC HOUSEHOLDS</b>				
<b>SMALL HOUSEHOLDS (Indigent)</b>				
		2017/2018	2018/2019	R
Rates (162 000)	<b>162 000</b>	50,11	53,12	3,01
Electricity ( 300 Kwh)		317,87	339,61	21,74
Water (20 Kl)		91,92	98,95	7,03
Sewerage		245,61	260,87	15,25
Refuse		155,26	165,22	9,95
		<b>860,77</b>	<b>917,76</b>	<b>56,98</b>
Less:				
Indigent rebate (Pensioner)		512,03	544,78	32,76
Total payable		<b>348,75</b>	<b>372,98</b>	<b>24,23</b>
<b>MEDIUM HOUSEHOLD</b>				
		2017/2018	2018/2019	R
Rates (970 000)	<b>970 000</b>	575,91	610,50	34,59
Electricity ( 750 Kwh)		1 033,58	1 104,28	70,70
Water (50 Kl)		372,45	428,32	55,87
Sewerage		245,61	260,87	15,25
Refuse		155,26	165,22	9,95
		<b>2 382,82</b>	<b>2 569,18</b>	<b>186,36</b>
<b>LARGE HOUSEHOLD</b>				
		2017/2018	2018/2019	R
Rates (2 226 000)	<b>2 226 000</b>	1 393,26	1 476,93	83,68
Electricity ( 1 600 Kwh)		2 583,73	2 760,42	176,69
Water (100 Kl)		1 126,45	1 242,63	116,18
Sewerage		245,61	260,87	15,25
Refuse		155,26	165,22	9,95
		<b>5 504,31</b>	<b>5 906,07</b>	<b>401,75</b>

Breede Valley Municipality. Tariffs for the year 1 July 2018 – 30 June 2019.

After dropping in 2015, the Breede Valley municipal area again experienced a rise in the number of indigents between 2015 and 2016, implying an increased burden on municipal financial resources. The overall number of indigent households has increased to 7611 from

5943 in 2015. According to the Budget and Treasury Office of BVM, 6,500 indigents were registered in the 2008/09 financial year (Breede Valley Municipality 2011).

There is a large gap between the reported indigent households (registered) and households that are poor. The Breede Valley has a total of 31,921 households (Statistics SA Census 2001). Over half of these households, at least 21, 724 households, are poor and qualify for a government housing subsidy, with the greatest majority falling into the lowest subsidy group, requiring no contribution. Two-thirds of the poor receive no FBS.

The ability of all South African households to access sufficient quantities of affordable, clean (i.e. non-polluting) and safe energy is critical for household resilience and human development. Affordable access can enhance multiple livelihood strategies, safe energy reduces the risk of house fires and also high levels of indoor air pollution caused by coal, and firewood.

## Impact of the lockdown

A local councillor Mr. M. Mangali (2023) provided an overview of services in the poorest wards:

“Service delivery in our wards was poor. I.t.o. food parcels, people were sitting at home without any income. They never received any food parcels from the municipality. Only sanitise. It was difficult and painful. As a councillor, it was a hard time and difficult; you had to use your own salary to assist some of the houses. You had to wash hands all the time but Emakwaleni, and some of Mandela Park had no water. Mandela Park use chemical toilets, 6 families share one toilet, which means plus-minus 30 people use one toilet. It’s a wonder COVID did not spread too much in our ward; it seemed the municipality wanted COVID to spread to our wards, the informal settlements. It was painful. I don’t want to dwell on that too much (gets emotional). The municipality did nothing for us, nothing! District municipality did nothing for us! Municipal offices were open, but there was a limit. People had to make appointments and talk outside and

they only took a certain number. But at the houses, as a Ward Councillor there is no office. People came to the house, in their numbers, because they needed assistance.”

The alignment and composition of the local economy greatly impact the economy's resilience, i.e., the agriculture sector, and those reliant on it find themselves in a better position than those in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Huge losses in wine production and the embargo on selling wine during the lockdown period gave this industry a heavy financial blow and job losses, with a large part of these affecting unskilled workers. Compared to the skilled workers in the financial services sector, who were much more resilient, these workers could take advantage of working from home (Ajam et al., 2022:7).

The unemployment rate increased with the majority of job losses in the primary sector, i.e. agriculture, although not so much due to the lockdown as this sector could mostly continue, but the job losses were mostly due to the drought, which lasted from 2015 - 2018 (Breede Valley Municipality IDP). However, manufacturing relied on agriculture and suffered a blow due to the lockdown. Factories such as Ashton Canning (in the Langeberg municipality) closed down, with many job losses in the community. The tertiary sector, i.e. retail trade and catering and accommodation, was affected predominantly by unskilled or semi-skilled labourers. So too, the wine industry, which is a contributor to the BVM economy, suffered tremendously due to the lockdown as it impacted tourism, drop in the sale of wines, and farmers not able to harvest as the sale of wines being prohibited means there is a surplus and they cannot produce more wines. Responses to the questionnaires indicated that wines could not be exported and that lots of wines had to be either kept behind or discarded. Many farmers made the decision not to harvest due to the expenses involved. This meant that farmers employed fewer people. Also, the impact was felt on the entire value chain, i.e. transport and restaurants.

The restrictions during the lockdown period meant that many companies, ranging from tour operators to transport, accommodation, etc, were negatively impacted in terms of work opportunities in this sector. The embargo on selling wines was also severely detrimental to the two wine routes in the municipality, i.e. the Breedekloof Wine Route and the Worcester Wine

Route. No fewer than 10 tourism events were reported in the 2019/2020 annual report as being either canceled or postponed during 2020 (Breede Valley Municipality 2020).

When businesses close down, there are inevitable job losses as a result of the weak economy. This negatively impacts revenue collection (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024) as there simply is no money to pay for services and the reliance on support from the state increases. Post-COVID-19, the BVM must work towards economic recovery and stability (Breede Valley Municipality 2020).

The lockdown restrictions followed when the government recognised the pandemic as a national disaster under the Disaster Management Act (57 of 2002). The restrictions had a significant effect, especially on the vulnerable communities in the informal settlements. Schools closed, and with that closure, their access to a daily meal was cut off. The closure of schools also impacted the educational levels, school dropouts, skilled/unskilled labour force, teenage pregnancies etc. The restrictions on movement meant the closure of places of work, increased unemployment, increased poverty, domestic violence, inability to pay rent for housing, access to food, etc.

The pandemic: The manufacturing sector was dealt a hard blow with the closure of Hex Tex in 2020 after 74 years. Trading was especially difficult due to the economic climate, resulting in the company closing its doors in July 2020. The national lockdown during COVID-19 placed the viability of the company in question. During level 5 in lockdown, the ramifications of the pandemic on the business saw them closing down, leaving 180 people unemployed (Jantjies 2020).

Climate change and excessive drought were experienced right throughout the country, with some provinces approaching point zero quite fast. It thus remains imperative for any municipality to develop and implement water management strategies that would secure water security in the future (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024). Climate change, failing infrastructure and load-shedding greatly impact the quality and quantity of water for use in a rapidly increasing community due to urbanisation. As water scarcity is a real threat to agriculture and livelihoods and the health of water consumers, municipalities must prioritise

and ensure that they have risk reduction measures in place to manage future droughts effectively (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024).

Selling electricity at a markup is an important source of revenue for the municipality. With load shedding, the revenue made from selling electricity is expected to be significantly less. Many of the wealthier residents will opt to install solar panels to provide them with electricity, for which they can now claim a rebate on income tax for the 2023/24 tax year. Their reliance on alternative sources of energy to provide electricity will further reduce electricity demand and sales. Municipalities will also have to ensure that they prioritise the maintenance and refurbishment of electricity networks to not add to the disruptions in electricity supply in addition to loadshedding. Loadshedding further impacts the water supply network, which is another aspect the municipality will have to prioritise in maintaining their infrastructure for water supply. In his interview, Zamo Gwala (2023) emphasised that the impact of loadshedding on municipalities is huge. Apart from infrastructure damage, there is also the element of criminality during load shedding that poses another challenge. He is of the view that the national government is not taking responsibility for load shedding and its effects; instead, municipalities are expected to deal with these challenges and face the wrath of the public.

The impact of the lockdown from an economic perspective was huge considering all these factors. One must, however, bear in mind that the drought, which impacted the agriculture sector in the area, also impacted the increased unemployment rate. Unemployment also impacts the ability of the municipality in terms of revenue collection and a higher dependence on the government to provide and sustain social services. For example, unemployment increased from 12.3% in 2020 to 15.3% in 2021. The unemployment rate means many households cannot pay for services provided by the municipality.

From 2019 – 2021, the BVM's number of indigent households increased from 16.8% to 18% (Western Cape Government MERO 2022 – 2023). Yet many more households are poor.

Rates and user charges were not as badly affected, but smaller revenue sources were impacted substantially. These include revenue income from fines, penalties, licences, rental of municipal

properties etc. Like other municipalities, the BVM recognized that due to the challenges of the COVID-19 lockdown, the revenue generated from households would decrease. Citizens were encouraged to continue paying for services rendered or to make the necessary arrangements with the municipality in terms of payment. In the research questionnaires, it also became apparent that most residents had no need to physically consult the municipal offices as payments could continue to be made online. The indigent households were assisted by removing all blocks of electricity to these clients during the lockdown period.

In feedback to the research questions, residents felt that although they had access to municipal facilities, they had to endure long queues, which was especially problematic for the elderly. Also, most PPE was received from their workplaces and not the municipality.

Further problematic issues raised include the de-densification of shacks, which residents feel the BVM does not have control over and that there is a great need for housing. Alongside the building of shacks are the illegal electricity connections, which must be addressed with non-paying residences being blocked.

Regarding the distribution of food parcels, the view was expressed that it should have been the duty of ward councillors to keep an up-to-date list of the needy and unemployed people in their respective wards who should receive food parcels. However, food parcels fall within the social development domain and not municipalities, which causes great frustration and unhappiness in communities.

### Spending Focus and Additional Responsibilities of COVID-19: Budget Shifts

Having to manage the impact of COVID-19 in the municipalities came with additional responsibilities. These included the provision of water in areas where required, e.g., informal settlements, cleaning and sanitizing taxi ranks, providing food parcels to the vulnerable, running quarantine centers, providing accommodation for the homeless, and also enforcing all the lockdown regulations. These additional responsibilities were not funded but had to be done, and municipalities were once again required to be creative in their approach. It is important to be cognizant of the fact that the revenue base of the municipality also declined during COVID-19 (as mentioned previously) (De Visser & Chigwata n.d.).

Some of the unfunded mandates highlighted in the research sample include the procurement and distribution of face masks, distribution of information on preventative measures (flyers etc); frequent sanitation and cleansing of municipal wards, linking with NGOs to provide food relief, promotion and advertising of the vaccination initiative and the distribution of information on funding opportunities for businesses in distress. Also important is the response that many of the measures implemented were only temporary and, unfortunately, cannot be sustained indefinitely.

### Politics - Administration contradiction

According to former township Councillor, Mr. Keega (2023)

During his time as Councillor in 2011, there was no road, no infrastructure it was just a bush. During 2006 they managed to improve the infrastructure. Later on, there was water, electricity and roads, but no tarred roads. The municipality was busy putting up infrastructure for electricity but in the middle, they stopped it as they said that the people were not within municipal boundaries. They did promise people electricity but at the last hour they stopped. The biggest challenge is sewerage – being spilled all over the streets daily basis The municipality is not controlled by politicians but by directors with political agendas. The issue of chemical toilets are not being serviced – people complain about the stench and the spills.

Also, Zwelethemba is not being prioritized by the BVM. Avian park (adjacent to Zwelethemba) has tarred roads but in Ward 16 (Zwelethemba) there is not a single tarred road. They (Ward Councillors) do place these matters on the agenda but nothing happens. The directors prioritise, not the councillors. Incompetence of directors is the problem. The municipality does not have the political will to help the ANC councillors. Attention is given to the DA councillors and wards and not the ANC councillors and wards. LED office exist in name only. The official is incompetent. Not a single person from Zwelethemba has benefited. Nothing is being done practically but they are good only on paper. The IDP meeting turns into a jamboree session.

In his interview (2023), Gwala expressed a further view: " Local economic development officers in municipalities are seen to be the dumping ground for those without skills or passion for economic growth."

It is evident that the political connections influence the performance of public institutions irrespective of the sphere of government and this applies to the BVM as well. Political affiliation also influences the appointment processes of public institutions and the level of skill and performance of such appointed public officials. These elected officials have a political mandate to manage and control the public service. This, by implication, means that there is no difference between state and party or politics and administration (Masuku & Jili 2019). Masuku et al. further state that political influences erode and hamper the performance of municipal officials because the municipal council decides on appointments. The legislative and executive authority of the municipality is seated in the Municipal Council, of which the members are elected representatives of political parties. The current state of the party-state thus erodes the ability of municipalities to be effective and efficient in outcomes of administration and policies. In my interview with Gwala (2023), he highlights challenges with this politics-administration interface: "Political parties look after their own, there is a lot of infighting. In one instance it was so bad that the Council could not even get to a point where the budget could be approved".

## IDP and LED Projects

According to Mr. P. Keega (2023), "The municipality is not controlled by politicians but by directors with a political agenda. It is the directors who decide who gets prioritised. Avian Park came after Zwelethemba, but they have tarred roads, whilst not a single tarred road in Zwelethemba. The budget doesn't speak to the needs of the impoverished people. Incompetence of the directors and the municipality not having the political will to help the councillors, especially ANC councillors, so it depends on political affiliation. DA wards are better serviced than ANC wards."

The BVM's approach to LED is that the municipality's role is to facilitate and coordinate activities with NGOs and the private sector that allow for meaningful participation for all in the local economy. The municipality is responsible for implementing/maintaining bylaws and introducing new policies and interventions that will enable entrepreneurs to participate

meaningfully and sustainably participation in the economy. The needs of SMMEs and informal traders are more challenging and intricate, in which case the BVM undertakes to play more of a leading role.

For the municipality to navigate the complexities of local and regional economies, they need to be conscious and knowledgeable of the constantly changing demand and supply needs in the market to ensure that proper thought is given to entrepreneurial initiatives that would achieve a competitive advantage and that would be beneficial to a broad base of stakeholders as they (the municipality) need to direct budgets and resources towards economic development outcomes.

Their approach to LED therefore requires a collaboration between various stakeholders, i.e. municipal, governmental, public and private sectors). Strategic objectives are therefore interrelated and interdependent and require methodical planning and implementation of activities leading to successful implementation of LED goals.

With the Democratic Alliance being at the helm of the BVM, the region's economic development leans more towards business as its strategy is to bring about longer-term benefits and employment for the region's people. Economic zones and pipeline projects requiring infrastructure development in an integrated and coordinated approach with other spheres of government include the Uitvlugt project, the Titan investment in Touwsrivier, Drosdy Park and the Worcester Hills business park.

Investors, however, are concerned with the crime rate in the area. When companies/investors must incur huge expenses to continue running their business, they start looking elsewhere or close down the moment their expenses exceed profits. With load shedding, the crime rate increased. For example, Rainbow Chickens, operating in the municipality and a big chicken supplier to huge retailers, uses shift workers. The factory is only closed for 4 hours at night when they have to clean the factory as they are working with meat. When transporting their workers back home, the workers are attacked and robbed. Rainbow Chickens is looking to take the production elsewhere. This will have dire consequences for the municipality as unemployment will increase dramatically (Malgas, 2023).

In terms of LED projects reported on in the 2019 – 2020 IDP period, it is evident that due to serious resource constraints together with the impact of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown posed significant challenges in the implementation of LED activities that contribute to the strategic objectives. Despite these constraints the BVM saw whatever progress was possible under these constraints to be highlighted within the context of COVID-19. Towards the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> term in 2020, the Breede Valley Municipality was still on track working towards its strategic objectives as set out in the IDP 2017 – 2022. The municipality submitted the draft third review of the 4th generation Integrated Development Plan to the Council covering the period 2020 – 2021. These strategic objectives included:

- Focussing on opportunities for growth and service excellence;
- Creating a safe and healthy environment;
- Creating an enabling environment for employment and poverty eradication through proactive economic development and tourism;
- Growing its revenue base, sound financial systems, corporate governance, and risk management ensure sustainability for the future.

The minutes (2020-03-26) argues that they have made “good progress”, especially in terms of fighting service delivery backlogs (Breede Valley Municipality 2020. Special Council Meeting 2020 ref no.2/1/4/4/2).

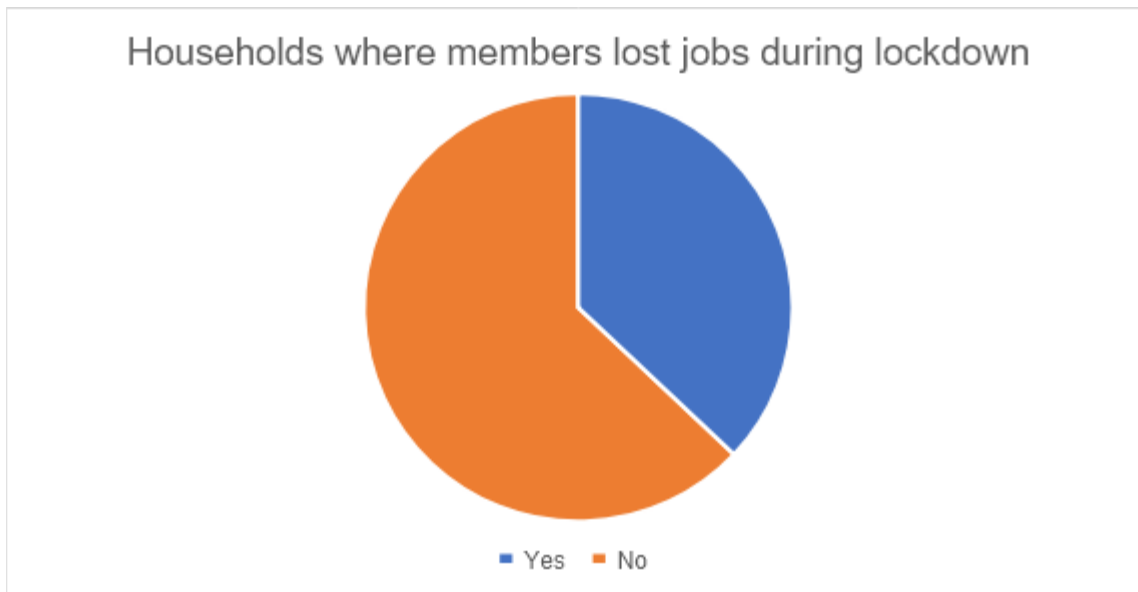
Their main challenges at this time included, inter alia:

- Climate change and water security: The water crisis is due to the drought and its effect on revenue generation.
- The crisis with load shedding and electricity supply and its effect on revenue generation. Consumers started to look elsewhere for energy sources, thus using less municipal electricity.
- The state of the economy and the effect it had on municipalities;
- Aging infrastructure and the increasing service delivery backlogs.

- Increasing population and demand for services;
- Stagnating economic growth. (Breede Valley Municipality AR 2020)

From my research conducted in 14 of the municipal Wards in the BVM, it is apparent that COVID-19 had quite severe impacts on the municipality's ordinary citizens. The table below reflects the responses to how COVID-19 impacted their lives.

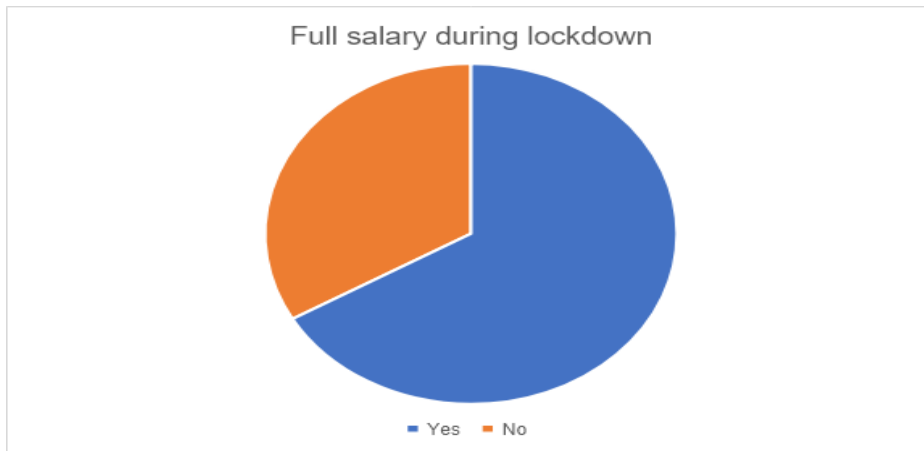
**Figure 3.5** Job losses during COVID-19



Research conducted August 2022

Almost one-third of households reported job losses.

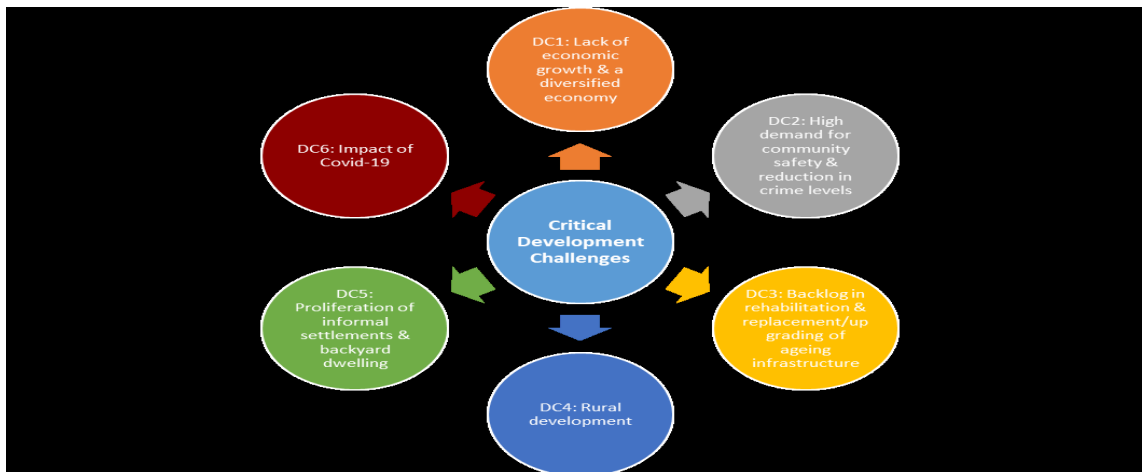
**Figure 3.6:** Residents' sample indicating whether they continued to receive a full salary during COVID-19



Research conducted August 2022

The Municipality remains focussed on five development challenges as depicted below, whilst adding the additional challenge to deal with the impact of the pandemic and the war between Ukraine and Russia (DC 6 below):

**Figure 3.7** Breede Valley Municipality Development Challenges



(Breede Valley Municipality 2021). 3<sup>rd</sup> Review of the 4<sup>th</sup> Generation IDP 2020-2021: 40)

## Conclusion

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 hurt the ability of the general population in this municipality to fend for themselves in a sustainable manner. This is clear when one considers the feedback from the most impoverished ward in the municipality, i.e., Ward 16, Zwelethemba. It is clear that they struggled to survive during COVID-19; they are dealing with social ills in the community, some of which stem from crime, urbanization, lack of investment in the youth, lack of education, etc.

What is also clear is that there is no trust in the municipality and the political will to bring about real change that would address the lack of development in these communities. Without serious efforts to address the under- and uneven development between these communities, the tensions between neighbouring suburbs, the dire needs of the thousands of impoverished people, and the lack of trust in the municipality is a boiling pot that often erupts into violent protests.

It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint a particular aspect that needs to be addressed; rather, the whole institution of government and governance needs to function in order to address the lack of service delivery in a sustainable manner from which all in the community can benefit.

It is also evident that the municipality is engaging with interventions that would safeguard the municipality during such disasters, but the progress is slow; it lacks consistency and the buy-in from everyone. The municipality needs strong leadership committed to bringing about real change for everyone and the capacity to implement long-term projects that would benefit this municipality and the whole region. Post-COVID, there seems to be hopelessness in the future of those most in need of development and support, i.e. those in Zwelethemba, seemingly the forgotten ward 16 of the BVM.

## CHAPTER 4: LED STRATEGY POST-COVID AND TOWNSHIP ECONOMY: A FOCUS ON ZWELETHEMBA

Mr. Keega in response to informal trade and challenges faced by small businesses in Zwelethemba said, “The issue of sewerage is a big challenge. Sewerage is all over the street every day. The engineers don’t fix the problem, only temporarily, but the next day, the very same problem. Chemical toilets is a problem, it is not serviced daily, people complain. Water is a challenge. Because of gangster violence, people from Avian Park fled to Zwelethemba which pushed a heavy burden for the ward councillor. All of those people are now demarcated to ward 16. Gangsterism created the issues of illegal fire arms, drugs and crime (the imparaparas break into the houses and steal). Zwelethemba has a satellite police station”.

As seen from the above quotation, the pandemic inevitably unequally affected different social groups in different ways. Thus, the chapter starts by reflecting on specific township economies – those most neglected and excluded historically such as Zwelethemba. The focus is placed on the economic and social services, support, and relief measures available to the citizens, especially the indigent communities, to buffer the pandemic's impact on the local economy. The chapter also focuses on COVID-19 support funds made available to municipalities, the process, and reporting on such expenditures. Specific LED projects such as the tarring of the roads,

Several challenges were experienced in relation to reporting specifically, as well as the effectiveness of the application of such funds and measures, as was experienced especially by the indigent communities within the municipality. The chapter interrogates the municipal election results to understand whether there is support/dissatisfaction towards the political parties.

## Township Economies

Townships are generally known to supply labour to white-owned industries and farms and lack formal large-scale investment and industries and be the place for the informal sector, i.e., the entrepreneurial activities in townships, which include, spaza shops, side-walk “pop-up” vegetable and fruit stalls, pop-up braai stalls, cleaning products, taxi ranks, mechanical workshops, hair salons, shebeens, etc. These entrepreneurial activities within informal settlements and formal townships aim to meet the needs of the people living in the townships. These pop-up stalls are seldom supported in terms of infrastructure, ablution facilities, water, or electricity. The townships established during the apartheid era were never supported by infrastructure to support a thriving economy. The townships are normally located on the outskirts of a town with one entry and exit road. People living in townships normally have to commute far to places of work, shopping facilities, and all other amenities they might require. Tshabalala and Ntshangase express the view that the intention of creating a township was never that it must be a “place of potential for revitalization” (Tshabalala 2021: 3).

Crime in the area is one of the factors impacting township development and unlocking the huge potential that townships have in creating employment, especially informal employment, developing townships by bringing businesses to the townships, thereby alleviating poverty.

The previous Ward Councillor to Ward 16, Keega, indicated that when his term as Councillor started in 2006, the area was just “bushes”. Since then, some infrastructure has provided water, sanitation, electricity, and dirt roads. People, however, were mostly unemployed and dependent on social services. Ward 16 councilors complained that certain directors control the municipality. They feel that other areas, i.e. neighbouring Avian Park is mushrooming, whilst in Zwelethemba, there are large areas with no street lights, no access to water, and serious housing challenges. According to them, Ward 16 does not have a single tarred road. Their view is that whatever budget there is, it does not speak to the needs of the impoverished people, and the municipality does not have the political will to help the ANC councillors.

One of the challenges relates to the availability of land for human settlements and the increasing density of shack areas. With the influx of people to the region hoping to find

employment, especially its agricultural and tourism industries, this has become a huge challenge as most of the land is in the hands of private owners.

### Economic Relief Measures During COVID-19

The debt relief finance scheme is a soft loan facility aimed at assisting existing SMMEs to keep them afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic for six months from April 2020.

The COVID-19 Agricultural Disaster Support Fund for smallholder and communal farmers was aimed at smallholder/communal farmers with a minimum turnover of R20,000 but not exceeding R1 million per annum, South African citizens who have already been farming for at least 12 months. Support packages are available to Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in the Western Cape that are directly impacted by COVID-19.

During COVID, Spaza shops, as locals' convenient access to basic goods, were also targeted for support, facilitating bulk buying opportunities and realising the potential for Spaza shops to serve as a market for locally manufactured goods.

Assessing the impact of these interventions is problematic as reports on the impact are not readily available from the municipality. It is also concerning that very few of the informal trade vendors in Ward 16 of the BVM took up the opportunity to support their spaza shops.

According to Cllr. Mangali was interviewed on 2 May 2023; those who managed to apply without assistance from the BVM were unsuccessful in their application.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many relief measures were made available by the national government to absorb the shock to the economy. The South African government announced that R500 billion in COVID-19 support funding will be available in 2020. Direct budget allocations amounted to R142 billion, and the balance was provided through tax measures and a loan guarantee scheme supported by the Unemployment Insurance Fund (RSA Department of National Treasury, 2020).

Projects funded by the national government, i.e., the Extended Public Works Programmes (EPWP), provide employment opportunities for mostly unskilled workers on an annual contract basis. The BVM takes in approximately 400+ employees in various programmes and departments across the municipality. They assisted, especially during COVID-19, with cleaning and sanitizing, are employed at the recycling plant, and are employed across different departments within the municipality. The challenge in this regard is that (a) the need for employment is so great compared to the number of positions available and (b) the lack of skills in the appointees, which results in limitations in their allocation to departments where specific skills are needed. The huge demand for these positions has the unintended consequence of the community, in their desperation, coming into direct protest against the municipality. These positions are also not of a permanent nature and thus do little to the quality of life and living conditions of many impoverished people. They receive no benefits apart from claiming unemployment once they exit the programme. Some could be skilled in the BVM and were taken up in the municipality for low-skilled positions. However, it is clear that these temporary pro-poor solutions do not bring about a better quality of life, nor do they alleviate poverty. In the informal settlements, however, the need for employment is so great that the competition for EPWP positions is extremely high. Here, too, the Councillor highlighted that the people from his ward (16) struggle to get employment in the EPWP programme.

It appears that reports on the expenditure of funding granted to municipalities to financially support the strategy of dealing with the challenges posed by the pandemic are problematic. Financial reporting, i.r.o. funds granted to serve this purpose are not separate from the normal financial reporting structures, nor is there documented proof available to assess the impact of these relief measures.

Furthermore, it was not possible to identify expenditures related to COVID-19 as the payments were part of regular transfers made and recorded as part of provincial expenditures to local government; thus, they could not be identified separately. Local Government expenditures regarding COVID-19 are reported in Section 71 of the Municipal Finance Management Act (No. 56 of 2003) of their Section 71 report on overall expenditure.

According to a mediate statement issued on 3 March 2021 on the local government revenue and expenditure covering the period 1 July 2020 – 31 December 2020, as a starting point, the 2020 Division of Revenue Act (DORA 2020) approved a special national adjustment to the budget for municipalities to be able to deal with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Funds had to be reprioritized, and conditional grants released to the effect of R11 billion added to the equitable share received by municipalities. These funds ensured that the municipalities continued to provide their normal services despite the decline in their revenue collections (RSA Department National Treasury 2021).

Municipalities are to report on their finances via the mSCOA, an accounting system enforcing accounting standards to ensure uniformity and prevent inconsistencies, irregular reporting and poor data integration in municipal financial reports (RSA Department Statistics South Africa 2022). National Treasury, however, found the data contained in mSCOA to be lacking in credibility because the municipalities do not understand the use of the system and thus use it incorrectly (RSA Department Statistics South Africa 2022).

To achieve this and as a starting point, the consultation process in establishing an IDP is especially important for a community to have buy-in, trust, and thrive working in union with the municipality. Municipalities must continuously engage with the community because the people are ultimately at the heart of the economy; the people buy and sell; they produce, create, and consume within the boundaries of their community and, if successful, go beyond their initial community boundaries. For the municipality to be in tune with the heartbeat of a township, it must learn from its history; it must be aware of who lives and works there and what their needs are.

An interview with the previous and current Ward 16 Councillors in the BVM paints a picture of a municipality out of touch with their community's needs and what they perceive to be leaving them to their own devices. For example, during COVID-19, Cllr. Mangali, in an interview on 2 May 2023, states that they did receive food parcels, received extremely limited sanitizer (a box of 100 for a community of approximately 15 000), had no water, struggled with chemical toilets shared by several families per chemical toilet (1 toilet shared by 6 families), they had limited to

no municipal services and no streetlights apart from one road. Drugs and gangsterism are rife, and the number of people living in the township increases dramatically as people from the neighbouring Avian Park move into Ward 16 to get away from fighting gangs.

For the BVM to effectively deliver service, it needs to understand the township reality in Ward 16, Zwelethemba. The public consultative process that feeds into the IDP and its proposed interventions should focus on building and instilling confidence in service delivery and the longer-term view of sustainability in developing the township's economy.

Local government elections were held in November 2021, and a new council for BVM was elected for a five-year period, 2022 – 2027. The polarised results for the main political parties who participated in the elections in wards 6, 7, 11, and 16 (the main focus wards for research purposes) are reflected below.

Selected Ward profiles show that voting and turnout are racially based.

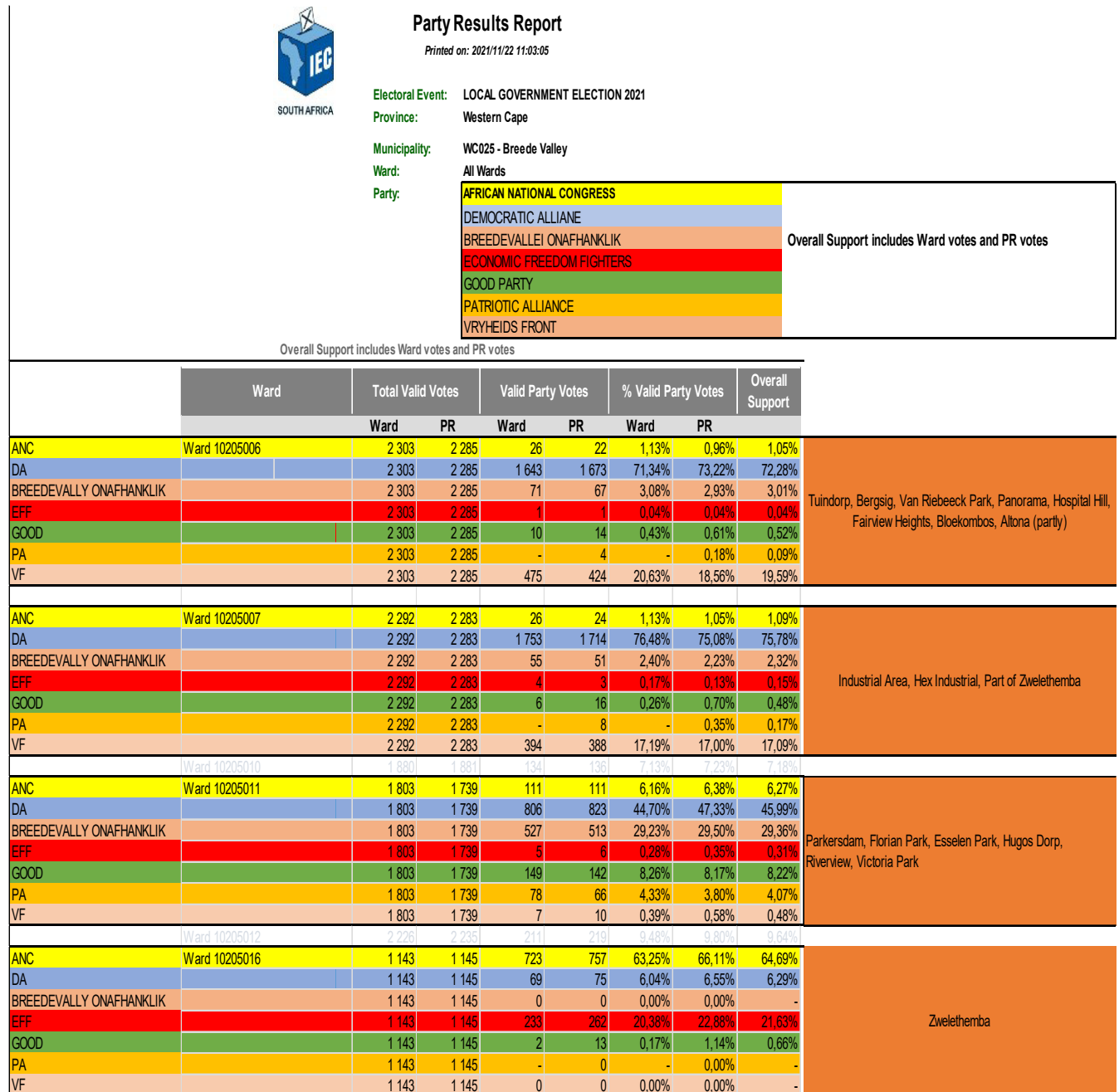
**Ward 6** consists of predominantly former White areas: N1 Worcester entrance, Tuindorp, Bergsig, Van Riebeeck Park, Panorama and Hospital Hill. It is Afrikaans speaking with employment mostly in the formal sector. 3.8% of the population have bachelor degrees and the population is 5 348 with the DA having 91% voter support.

**Ward 7** consists of areas such as the Industrial Area; Hex Industrial and is predominantly White and Afrikaans speaking. The population of 6 188 mostly support the DA (75.78%). Employment is mostly in the formal sector and 3.2% of population has Bachelor degrees.

**Ward 11** consists of predominantly Afrikaans speaking Coloured areas: Parkersdam, Florian Park, Parts of Esselen Park; Hugosdorp, Riverview, Victoria Park. The majority of the 6 693 population supports the DA. Employment is mostly in the formal sector with 2% of the population not having an education whilst 1.8% of population has Bachelor degrees

**Ward 16** consists of Zwelethemba and is IsiXhosa speaking. 7% have no education and 0.1% of population have Bachelor degrees. With a population of 7 938, most vote ANC (64.69%) and most are Black (Statistics SA 2011).

**Figure 4.1: 2021 Local Government Election Results**



<https://results.elections.org.za/home/Downloads/ME-Results>

The elections results reflects overall support for the DA in the traditionally White and Coloured areas. These people in these areas also have a higher education level compared to Ward 16, i.e. Zwelethemba, where the education level is low. The compared education level reflects the

reality of education facilities lacking in Zwelethemba compared to the other wards, as advocated by the Councillor from Zwelethemba.

Ward 11, which is mainly Coloured, reflects stronger election support for the smaller parties, other than ANC or DA. This could possibly be interpreted that the 'Coloured voice' is wanting to surface and not siding with either ANC or DA who were the main parties in the political arena. These areas are closer to the central business district in comparison to Zwelethemba, though unemployment and crime is high and education levels remain low. Since democracy in 1991, not much has changed under the leadership of either ANC or DA.

The EFF, however, has minimal to no support in the traditional white and coloured areas, though in Ward 11, Zwelethemba, they are a stronger competition to the traditional ANC than the DA. The ANC Councillors were interviewed and complained that their representations in Council are not being considered and have little impact that would bring about real and faster transformation. The election results show that they are losing support to the more radical EFF. People in Zwelethemba are yearning for change and a better life and putting their hopes in the more radical EFF.

The voter turnout for the selected wards is reflected below, possibly reflecting a voter-frustrated society no longer interested in political parties coming to the rescue.

**Table 4.2:** Ward 6 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections

VOTING DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT	% VOTER TURNOUT
97520047	1 541	988	63.33%
97520148	1 960	1 315	66.56%
TOTAL	3 501	2 303	62.15%

<https://results.elections.org.za/home/Downloads/ME-Results>

**Table 4.3:** Ward 7 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections

VOTING DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT	% VOTER TURNOUT
97520036	936	538	57.48%
97520070	2 554	1 756	68.75%
TOTAL	3 490	2 294	65,73%

<https://results.elections.org.za/home/Downloads/ME-Results>

**Table 4.4:** Ward 11 Voter Turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections

VOTING DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT	% VOTER TURNOUT
97520069	802	376	46.88%
97520250	1 244	635	51.05%
97520261	1 796	804	44.52%
TOTAL	3 842	1 815	47.12%

<https://results.elections.org.za/home/Downloads/ME-Results>

**Table 4.5** Zweletemba Ward 16 voter turnout: 2021 Local Government Elections

VOTING DISTRICT	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTER TURNOUT	% VOTER TURNOUT
97520160	2 226	770	34.31%
97520339	1 031	393	38.12%
TOTAL	3 257	1 163	35.51%

<https://results.elections.org.za/home/Downloads/ME-Results>

The tables above reflect a below 40% voter turnout in Wards 11 and 16, which has a predominantly Coloured Afrikaans speaking and Black isiXhosa speaking population. The lower voter turnout can be reflective of communities losing hope in the political parties being able to bring about change in their daily lives. Compared to wards 6 and 7, wards 11 and 16 also have the lowest percentage of educated population in terms. This can be indicative that the greater percentage of uneducated and unskilled citizens lose faith in political leadership if one follows a voter turnout of less than 40%.

From an IDP perspective, regulations provide options of (1) developing a new 5th generation plan linked to the new council or (2) adopting the predecessor's plan as the new 5th general plan and taking the 1<sup>st</sup> year to review and implement an adopted plan. The new council opted for the 2<sup>nd</sup> option, i.e. adopt the predecessor's plan and then bring in amended principles that will inform their vision. Most councillors were active in the previous term.

With a coalition of parties in the council, there can be a lot of challenges, i.e., the vision and the operational plan to achieve such a vision. A change of political leadership can derail projects as they might not be prioritised under the new leadership. The electoral system is based on proportionality and is not designed to produce an outright winner; rather, democratic leadership is based on proportional representation. Any policies born out of such a democratic government should thus be based on compromise and consensus reached on such compromises. One would expect that such a system will bring about stability and not the chaos currently evident in local municipalities, resulting in poor or no service delivery and an electorate constitution giving up hope for the future. De Visser believes that the chaos stems from the smaller parties forming negotiated coalitions which is not reflective of the will of the people as per the votes obtained. These negotiated power coalitions mean compromising on party ideology to suit the coalition's demands, which clearly undermines the voice of the voters who voted based on a specific party's ideology policies (De Visser 2023).

In an interview conducted on 26 April 2023 with the Manager: IDP/SDBIP/PMS, Mr Malgas, the BVM's current council elected in 2021 was allowed to engage, especially concerning local economic development, to assess and adopt a new 5th generation IDP in terms of developing its strategy, aligning such strategy to the vision, and obtaining the necessary buy-in from all stakeholders.

The view from people on the ground, i.e., Ward 16, the focus ward for this research, is that participation in the IDP consultation process is almost non-existent due to language problems. It is alleged that if and when meetings are conducted, they are conducted in Afrikaans to a Xhosa-speaking community, and Ward meetings turn into a session of accusations of non-

service delivery (Cllr. Mangali, 2023). This, however, is disputed by the municipality. Only Council meetings are assisted by a translator (Malgas, 2023).

During COVID-19, the consultation process was done online, but this community, consisting of mostly poor informal settlement people, had no way of participating due to not having data or equipment to connect online. The Library where wifi is available, is far. (Cllr. Mangali, 2023) A previous councillor for Ward 16, P. Keega, interviewed on 2 May 2023, mentioned that since 2011, nothing has happened in terms of service delivery, no IDP participation and that the IDP has had the same priorities since 2011 (Keega, 2023).

From the municipality's side, the role of the BVM, as per the constitution, is to create a conducive environment for businesses to ultimately stimulate economic growth and development. Examples of LED being pro-poor in the BVM were also highlighted, eg. The Zwelethemba Regional Socio-Economic Project (RSEP). A project to upgrade Mtwazi street (main street into township) through RSEP was approved for some infrastructural, recreational upgrades, sports facilities, play parks, etc., to ensure that there are attractive spaces for locals to thrive, to create a safe space and to encourage the economy in the corridor.

**Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4** Zwelethemba Economy corridor

**Figure 4.2**



**Figure 4.3**





**Figure 4.4**

**Figures 4.2 – 4.4** Zwelethemba Corridor Project Regional Socio-Economic Project 2019 (Western Cape Government, 2024).

In the next generation budget, the request is also to improve places of informal trading by establishing more formalised structures in Zwelethemba, Rawsonville and Touwsriver. Vendors are trading along the gravel road which was not feasible and healthy during winter when the road is muddy. In the case of Rawsonville, a clinic will also be built in addition to the informal trading ecosystem. It was, however, made clear that these projects supporting the informal sector are dependent on the Spatial Development Framework context and whether the BVM has the necessary funds to support the informal sector. In the interview, it was highlighted that COVID-19 and load-shedding resulted in a decline in revenue (Malgas, 2023). Being at the tail end of the budget is, unfortunately, not an economic strategy that focuses on the people.

The Cape Winelands Seed Fund Programme aims to assist small businesses that have the potential to grow. Any small and micro business that qualifies for this type of financial assistance is encouraged to apply. In addition, the Cape Winelands District Municipality has a structured business mentorship programme that is central to the seed funding scheme, which is beneficial in all aspects of the business (Cape Winelands District Municipality 2023). Interviews with the Ward Councillors of the impoverished Zwelethemba area, where informal trade has become the backbone of this township economy, show that people are not aware of this

possibility of funding. Although it appears on the BVM website, the poorest of the poor do not necessarily have access to data and websites. Alternative means of communication will have to be used to make people aware of the possibilities on offer.

From the municipality's perspective, it was emphasized that the municipality in itself does not have business specialists but rather provides interim support to entrepreneurs and advises and directs them to places where they can get the necessary assistance, i.e. linking the entrepreneur with the organisation. The seed funding project in the BVM allows small businesses (SMME) and small-scale farmers to apply for seed funding based on a formal project proposal they need to submit, taking them through screening and evaluation. Those who meet the criteria are assisted with a funding allocation invested in their business but also assist with a mentoring process taking their hand for a period of time to ensure their sustainability (Malgas, 2023). Small-scale pig farming in Touwsriver is an example. The problem is that the people engage in pig farming in the townships, which is a health risk. To mitigate the health risk, the municipality is now engaging with different stakeholders to relocate these small-scale pig farmers to a space of land that is suitable for this purpose, a dedicated space not within residential areas.

This is an example of the municipality unlocking several initiatives to assist and develop, whether it be training by linking the entrepreneur with the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), Small Enterprise Funding Agency (SEFA), etc, in support of the informal sector and SMME's. The municipality, therefore, thinks that they are giving the required support, through their partnership networks, to SMMEs by giving entrepreneurial support, training, i.t.o. business acumen, care and guidance to ensure their sustainability (Malgas, 2023).

During COVID-19, two middle and larger companies were in danger of closing down. These types of established companies do not necessarily approach the municipality for assistance as they have taken off and established themselves. From the municipality's perspective, it was important to prevent further job losses. The municipality facilitated and enabled them through engagement with Wesgro, who has the necessary technical expertise, to support them and make them more resilient. The municipality chose to assist as the unemployment rate would

have increased dramatically, i.e. they act within their mandate when they see that it is necessary to act (Malgas, 2023).

The Uitvlucht project is looking at bigger projects with a greater impact on the local economy through the creation of sustainable employment for locals. The urban vision framework sets out the BVM's vision for an industrial park on 78 hectares where several industries can be accommodated. The BVM has the competitive advantage in respect of its location, i.e. very close to the city of Cape Town (70-90km) from where not much expansion is possible) and the BVM has great possibilities in terms of vacant land that can be repurposed for industrial development. Worcester is situated between two primary corridors, N1 and the R60 to N2, which makes the town attractive to bigger investors if the municipality's social services can be improved and constant. There is interest from businesses currently in the north of SA to move to the Western Cape. The BVM intends to seize the opportunity to capture some of these businesses. The Uitvlucht Industrial Park has been on the agenda for about 5 years and is now on the agenda of both provincial and national governments. The biggest challenge at the moment is from a transport perspective, i.e. an access road. A key requirement for the project is for an eastern bypass to connect the N1 with the R60 leading to the N2. It would not be feasible for large truck traffic flow to go through the town as it is currently the only access point to the national roads, the R60 and the N2. These roads are the responsibility of national and provincial governments, i.e. SANRAL and the Provincial Department of Transport and Public Works. Once approved at these higher levels, the Uitvlucht industrial park can become a reality as both government and private investors are prepared to be co-responsible for the costs involved (January and Malgas, 2023).

Another piece of land that presents an opportunity on a shorter scale but more immediately is the land on the R43 next to South African Breweries and adjacent to one of the poorest communities in the suburb, Avian Park. This piece of land is already in the planning process of being serviced. Usage of the land will be geared towards micro industries that do not have a high requirement for water. The choice of industries must be carefully managed regarding environmental impact and sustainability, as the land is close to the Breede River, which is the lifeline for farmers in the valley along the river. With South African Breweries (SAB) already

indicating an interest in expanding, the project can come to fruition much sooner with the benefits of a readily available workforce in the high number of unemployed people in the socio-economically challenged area of Avian Park. This project is at a stage where it can materialise within the next 5 years (Malgas, 2023).

The continuous development and maintenance of infrastructure is an important component of economic growth to alleviate poverty in a municipality. Infrastructure for transport, power, water, sewage and communication forms the backbone of any economic development. To attract investors, it is also important that the municipality provide services in a sustainable manner and that the service is reliable and constant. Revenue generated from water and electricity supply is seen as a game changer in the administration of municipalities. It is important for the BVM to constantly engage with the business sector to ensure that the municipality can respond to their needs.

### Service delivery in terms of electricity and roads

Loadshedding is a challenge for all municipalities, especially because it is out of their control as the electricity provision falls in the national government and energy provider's domain. Loadshedding has a severe negative impact on industries and the society as a whole. For industries, it can destroy economic value chains and livelihoods. Industries have already approached the BVM for assistance to ensure that their operations continue, which the municipality has taken up with the relevant authorities. In the interim, the municipality is assisting by creating opportunities for small-scale electricity generation to be used, encouraging businesses to go the route of solar panels, and implementing a tariff structure to feed additional supply back into the grid. These concessions and initiatives are created to the detriment of the municipality as they negatively impact revenue collection, with the sale of electricity being one of its primary revenue sources. However, on a scale of balances, it is more important to ensure industries are maintained to prevent closure and job losses (Malgas, 2023).

Service delivery in terms of water: The BVM experienced drought, but the municipality is fortunate in that the primary source of water that services Worcester as the large economic

hub in the district, gets water from the Stettynskloof Dam, which is situated at high up in the Stettyns Mountain close to Rawsonville. With the steep gradient, the water runs almost naturally downwards, assisted by infrastructure to fill up the reservoirs, providing water to Worcester for household and industry use. Municipal wards in the Hexrivier valley have mostly farmland for which the farmers take care of water provision. Touwsriver, being on the northern boundary of the BVM, does not have big industries reliant on water. Rainfall patterns are also favourable in that the area where the dam is located receives more rain than Worcester. It is, therefore, highly unlikely that BVM will have challenges about water supply to industries. Instead, it is another advantage for the BVM to attract industries to relocate to BVM (Malgas, 2023).

In its planning with the view of preparing for Uitvlugt, the municipality has already proactively begun to ensure continuous and sufficient water by raising the dam wall, which will increase the capacity of the Stettynskloof dam. The municipality is of the view that these aspects are critical to local economic development, i.e. to plan holistically and cross-cutting in the current challenging environment to ensure the long-term sustainability of business and industry, which will translate into employment creation (Malgas, 2023).

Service delivery road infrastructure: Road infrastructure and the maintenance of roads plays a critical role in sustainable economic development. The road arteries make it possible to transport goods, services and people. For BVM, being centrally located, its road infrastructure is all about bringing people and investors to the opportunities in the region. It is therefore important that all roads be tarred and sealed. As indicated above, for the Uitvlugt project to be attained, an integrated approach involving all three spheres of government is required to ensure access to the opportunity for development. It seems that the dependency on another stakeholder to fulfil a requirement is hampering the successful attainment of a vision and shifting the responsibility to another stakeholder. Change in the plight of many unemployed people in the region will therefore not be immediate. Should it stay on the agenda and budget of the different stakeholders, bearing in mind changes in the political field at the different levels, it can take up to 10 – 15 years to have this project completed (Malgas, 2023).

Road infrastructure also improves the living conditions of the municipality's residents. The gravel roads in Ward 16, for instance, are not conducive to developing a thriving township economy. In the municipal budget, which leans towards a pro-business approach to economic development, the thousands of impoverished people in townships will again take a back seat in terms of infrastructure provision.

The provision of infrastructure also takes on an interrelated approach with the other municipalities in the Cape Winelands District. This is done in terms of the Joint District and Metro Approach (JDMA) using inter-governmental relations engagements to collaborate on projects that would benefit the whole region. A collaborative approach requires an integration of IDP's to a certain extent where these projects are concerned. This in itself is challenging for a municipality as it would require a coordinating plan between local, provincial and national governments together with the private sector, expanding capacity and resources to give practical application to the concept and a shared approach in terms of operationalising the vision. Municipalities have different challenges and councils that they need to respond to whilst the political environment is ever-changing / fluid (Clark, Dexter & Parnell 2007).

## Conclusion

These are some of the harsh realities faced by the BVM. How best to recover from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the impact of the chosen approach of a hard lockdown to protect the very fragile South African health system and the economy, highlighted the fact that we will start to think differently about how we want to share our future. It might just need a joint approach for local economies to recover beyond COVID-19 and move away from municipalities working in silos, each being plagued by corrupt and incapable political leadership lacking the required vision of building a more just society post-COVID-19.

## CHAPTER 5: LED AFTER COVID-19 IN THE BREEDE VALLEY MUNICIPALITY AND ZWELETHEMBA

### Introduction

This chapter reviews what the BVM has done in LED since the pandemic in order to assess whether there has been rethinking and reprioritisation along the “build-back better” ideas. The issue of climate justice has also become more pronounced since the pandemic. A key issue is whether the most impoverished section of the population living in Zwelethemba (Ward 16) has been prioritised and how the questionable notion of “township” economy has been deployed.

Building Back Better also requires the municipality’s internal capacity to be improved. The ability of the BVM economy to recover after a shock like the COVID-19 pandemic and its ability to withstand or avoid any possible shocks. Apart from having to recover from the pandemic, the recent floods in the area will be another shock to the economy as the agriculture sector (a big part of the BVM economy) was affected. With global warming, environmental shocks like floods greatly impact the economy of any municipality.

### Breede Valley Municipality and LED potential

Bond (2002) lists 6 catalytic developmental LED strategies in SA supporting the developmental approach. In this research, only isolated pockets of these ideas in the Breede Vally Municipality were identified. However, they do not add up to a structured transformative programme at scale.

- 1) Community economic development within the context of environment management:  
This research found the BVM supporting small-scale pig farming in Touwsriver as an example of the municipality attempting to mitigate the health risks by facilitating the relocation of these small-scale pig farmers to land that is more suitable for this purpose.

Also, especially worth mentioning are the hydroponics in Touwsriver and De Doorns as the municipality's attempt to fight hunger.

- 2) To link profitable growth to redistributive development/financing: In simple terms in the planning phases of land zoning for big business opportunities, municipalities can make it compulsory for these businesses to locate in and invest in the poorer communities. In the case of the BVM, the planned industrial park adjacent to one of the most indigent communities with a high unemployment rate, i.e. Avian Park. One possibility mentioned in the interviews is that SAB has shown interest in expanding, which in turn will create employment opportunities for the community of Avian Park. A holistic approach is, however, required considering the environment (impact on the river, which is a lifeline for the region), skills development and security aspects (gangsterism is rife in Avian Park).
- 3) LED must be explicitly linked to human capital investment and productivity: The Breede Valley Municipalities facilitates skills development training through the SETA's. Post-COVID-19, skills development has become especially important as a means to address the high dropout rate from schools during COVID-19.
- 4) Development and maintenance of infrastructure and services: The BVM has come to realize that its location is ideal as an access point to the north (N1 highway) etc. Investment in economic infrastructure is essential, i.e. the Eastern Bypass road project which will lead to greater investment in the district. So, too, is trading services infrastructure important as part of a people centres approach in unlocking the economic potential within townships.
- 5) Plugging the leaks in the local economy: Initiatives to support local SMEs / brands, for example, branding the municipality as the Caring Valley of Excellence. Markets/festivals and events branding the region as such are focussed on what the region has to offer. Post-COVID, these initiatives picked up, e.g. the Nekkies Music Festival, the traditional Worcester Easter Bazaar (spanning across religions), and the Wacky Wine Festival.

- 6) Retention and expansion of existing businesses: The energy crisis, in particular, is a major challenge for the BVM. It recognizes the loss in income, but they are more concerned about the retention of especially large business conglomerates, as the impact on unemployment will be huge should it not be able to retain the businesses in the region. They are, therefore, willing to assist these businesses by considering and exploring alternative energy sources that would assist in retaining these businesses.

Looking to the future, the BVM identified a number of LED strategic objectives, what I regard as micro-projects i.e.:

- Supporting SMMEs and the informal Sector by providing general business support, access to markets and funding, training, and mentorship.
- Unlocking the green economy: economic activities that underpin sustainability and striking a healthy balance between economic activities, environmental sensitivity, and sustainability.
- Promoting innovative tourism by tapping into the rich history and heritage that presents opportunities for cultural heritage tourism.
- Investing in infrastructure to unlock economic development: The municipality recognize that businesses gravitate towards localities that are well-serviced in terms of infrastructure, eg. roads, water, etc
- the municipality recognizes the fact that impoverished communities have numerous barriers that bar them from actively participating in economic activities which directly affects their quality of life and social well-being.
- Branding the BVM as the “care capital”, the town of Worcester tries to ensure that the disabled vulnerable citizens are adequately integrated in society with equal access to opportunities. The town is the home to a number of institutions that care for the disabled.

- Continuous prioritisation of the disposal of Uitvlugt vacant land: as an industrial park, Uitvlugt has the potential to unlock economic opportunity, development, and growth for the local economy.
- Continually pursuing and implementing red tape reduction initiatives: As a strategy to attract business by proactively removing red tape and instil business confidence in the locality.
- Using smart procurement as a catalyst to effect LED: Through basic principle encouraging SMME's to provide in the needs of the municipality and the municipality procuring from local markets can contribute to a healthy economy.
- Improving business zones: as a means of attracting businesses and creating employment (Breede Valley Municipality Annual Report 2021/2022).

## Budgets and Priorities

In preparing the next budget the main challenges experienced with the compilation of the 2024/25 MTREF were listed as follows:

- Loadshedding implemented by Eskom and associated disruptions (revenue generation and economic activity);
- Consequences of COVID-19 Pandemic;
- Amendments to the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (MSCOA);
- Consumers exploring alternative energy sources and using less municipal electricity;
- Direct effect of the current state of the economy on larger municipalities relying on progressive economic activity;
- Vandalism to strategic infrastructure assets;
- Ageing infrastructure and increasing service delivery backlogs;

- Increasing cost of bulk purchases versus the electricity tariff increases, resulting in pressure to maintain a balance between sustainability, growth and affordability of services (Breede Valley Municipality Draft Budget 2024).

There is no effort to ensure that free basic services reach the poor. In fact, there is a massive gap between those receiving services and those who ought to be receiving them. The municipality, like most, sees the poor as a burden.

BVM with its 5<sup>th</sup> generation IDP has continued with longer-term projects that seek to achieve the vision of the current leadership (Malgas, 2023). They are, however, not free from political-administration friction on the Council level as many of the smaller political parties. Councillors believe that their views are being disregarded and the growth and service delivery are not geared towards the poorer communities in the municipality (Mangali, 2023).

One of the biggest challenges for small businesses and young entrepreneurs is access to finance at affordable interest rates. Municipalities should be playing a facilitating role in terms of them accessing credit, grants and financial and skills development programmes to promote economic growth. In the case of BVM some COVID-19 interventions and relief packages, announced in the 2020 Supplementary Budget were highlighted in the previous chapter in terms of how funds were made available, through municipalities, allowing for local economies to recover after the pandemic through support to small businesses and industries.

This cocktail of arguably external issues threatens resilience to the core. However, of importance is what scope there is for municipalities to exercise agency within external constraints.

Building Back Better for a municipality unavoidably requires a focus on infrastructure development. The BVM realised if they were to attract and retain business to the area they would have to prioritize investment in infrastructure and maintenance of such infrastructure as it contributes to economic growth, social development and environmental sustainability (Malgas, 2023).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure Investment: Investment in digital infrastructure and skills development is important for digitizing the municipal systems, business in general and online business which has the potential to create employment opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Improved and reliable connectivity and access to digital services are therefore essential within the municipality else it can be catastrophic for businesses within the municipality that are dependent on ICT. The BVM ICT department therefore attempts to provide reliable systems for telephone and internet services.

## The Green Economy

Sustainable development is as defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 as cited in Musango et al (2015: 2), ie. *“development that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”*. With the multiple crisis faced by society today due to climate vulnerability, energy supply, food insecurity and water shortages, the concept of a green economy is seen to be the new economic paradigm where material wealth is not created at the expense of placing environmental risk (Musango et al, 2015).

Building a green economy is seen in the SA Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan as a means of, not only addressing the challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty, but also the opportunity to drive economic competitiveness as it offers sustainable solutions to the effects of climate change. The search for a green future is important in addressing the persistent challenges faced by the South African society of inequality, poverty and unemployment. Green industrialization accordingly will, in South Africa’s economic reconstruction and recovery effort post-COVID-19 include a significant green component. This will help in creating new green jobs, industries and firms (SA Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan 2020).

Municipalities, being closest to the people, are increasingly forced to take on an active role in planning and responding to climate change. The expectance to transition to more sustainable green economies comes with the municipality’s challenge and inability to predict possible

future conditions to which they need to adapt, limited to no skills and capacity and having to draw on limited funds at their disposal. (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024). Municipalities are required to integrate climate change adaptation and attempts at mitigating the effects of climate change, into their planning processes to develop resilience to climate-related risks.

The BVM identified the following key focus areas to help with the impact of climate change:

- a) Renewable Energy
- b) Waste Management
- c) Sustainable Transport
- d) Water Security and Efficiency
- e) Biodiversity Conservation
- f) Agriculture and Food Security
- g) Healthy communities

(Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024).

To combat the impact of load-shedding, the BVM is currently busy with initial investigations exploring alternative sources of energy and is encouraging businesses to find alternative sources of energy despite it having a negative impact on the municipality's income generation sources. As per the IDP, the BVM Municipal Council approved the Policy on Small Scale Embedded Generation (SSEG), the purpose of which is to guide the BVM with requirements and application processes for connecting all forms of small-scale renewable energy systems to the municipality's electricity network (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024).

The BVM, with winter rainfall, as is most of the Western Cape Province, is vulnerable to climate change. With agriculture being a large sector in the region, the climate projections indicate that the sector is at risk with longer periods of dry months and intense rainfall during winter. The region is thus exceptionally vulnerable to droughts, floods and fire. The municipality needs to act in terms of planning to limit the damage and socio-economic costs for the foreseeable

future. Examples of such initiatives of sustainable projects to protect especially the impoverished communities of Touwsriver and De Doorns is the hydroponics projects launched as a means of addressing the complex challenges faced by these towns. These are isolated examples of government, private security and the community collaborating to assist the community with food security especially within the context of climate change. The privately owned Touwsrivier Commercial Hydroponics Farm (TCHF) (Bonthuys 2023) and the Department of Local Government funded Unobuntu Thusong Service Centre (UTSC) project to be launched shortly in De Doorns (Breede Valley Municipality, n.d.).

Parts of the area are annually affected by floods which destroys the homes of the mostly impoverished community of the informal settlement Spookiesdorp. June 2023 saw the worst floods in the area which once again destroyed infrastructure, farmland and the homes of those living in the area. The community of Spookiesdorp then had enough and lodged a complaint at the Human Rights Commission to assist with their plight to be relocated due to the ongoing threat of floods as they live below the flood line and, the lack of basic services for the past five years. (SAHRC 2023). The Breede Valley Local Municipality has offered a relocation plan to Avian Park, Worcester, which is situated 20 kilometres from Spookiesdorp. The residents of Spookiesdorp find this option unacceptable due to the distance and that Avian Park is a gang-ridden area and dangerous as gang shootings makes it unsafe especially for children growing up in these gang-ridden areas and it will impact on their schooling. The BVM is now engaging with two farmers in the Rawsonville area to explore alternatives (SAHRC 2024). This land is mostly in the hands of private farm owners with whom negotiations for land must be entered into.

### “Township Economy”: Zwelethemba

The pandemic and subsequent lockdown regulations had a detrimental effect on many businesses due to the shutdown of many economic activities. The blow was especially felt by those who are dependent on the informal sector for income. According to the BVM IDP, the estimated number of job losses because of the impact of COVID-19 in 2020 was 6,751 formal and informal jobs. Most jobs were lost in the informal, low-skilled and semi-skilled workforce,

while 231 jobs were lost for skilled workers (Breede Valley Municipality IDP 2024). The result of job losses meant that the unemployment figures increased, and many of these people in townships turned to the informal sector to generate income.

The spatial design of townships internally, the distance between the townships and the town, combined with the higher demand and buying power outside of the townships, greatly impacts consumer activity in townships. With apartheid spatial design, townships were never designed to be a place of potential and to have developed a culture of entrepreneurship among those living there (Tshabalala 2021).

Zwelethemba, a Xhosa word meaning “Nation of Hope”, one of the oldest townships in the current Western Cape, was a direct result of the Slum Clearance Act of 1934, which allowed municipalities to demolish any area that was considered to be a slum. Worcester’s previous African township was situated where Riverview Flats today stands. It was called “Sakkiesdorp” and was de-proclaimed under this Act in 1950 due to overcrowding. Like District 6 in Cape Town, African people moved from Sakkiesdorp to Zwelethemba. It is home to Dumile Feni and David Hlongwane and is famous for its ANC and PAC political activity (Worcester Standard 2023).

Townships developed as a spatial control strategy of apartheid and as labour reserves with the framework of conditions being:

- “• The site should be an adequate distance from the white town.
- It should adjoin an existing African township to decrease the number of areas for Africans.
- It should be surrounded by open buffer areas.
- It should be separated from the white area by a buffer such as an industrial area.
- It should have land to expand away from white areas.

- It should be within easy distance of the town for transport purposes, by rail rather than road.
- It should have one road that connects it to the town.
- It should be a considerable distance from main and national roads.
- Housing with certain defined minimum standards should be built and allocated in areas for different ethnic groupings (Mahajan 2014: 4).

Post-apartheid in the new democratic South Africa, these are still the characteristics that shape South African townships. Developing township economies can thus present a number of challenges in order to encourage sustainable growth and development. South African townships generally lacks infrastructure that supports reliable electricity and water supply, sanitation systems and road infrastructure. The lack of proper infrastructure hampers business operations and investors are reluctant to venture into townships. With the high unemployment rate in townships, the buying power of consumers are low and limited which further impacts on the ability for businesses to thrive. Apart from this, with the mostly inadequate education and vocational training facilities in townships, there is a serious lack of educated and skilled workforce. Bearing these challenges in mind, townships therefore generally struggle to attract businesses and the ability to create market opportunities.

Further to this, social challenges such as unemployment, poverty and crime limits the development of the township economy. An integrated approach involving all stakeholders, i.e. all spheres of government, the private sector as well as the local communities are necessary to address all of these challenges in a holistic way that embraces the principles of sustainable development.

In the BVM, Zwelethemba is the former black township on the outskirts of Worcester. It is separated from the town's central business area by an industrial area, the railway line and the R60 provincial road (Breede Valley Municipality 2024). As is the case in other former black

townships, one road is the entrance and exit point of Zwelethemba. To unlock the currently isolated economy in Zwelethemba and allow for development, inclusivity and growth, the municipality will have to address the spatial shortcomings within the broader town spatial planning. Planning for inclusivity and development must include infrastructure for water and electricity, innovation-, transport systems and financial support. A coordinated approach is thus required to unlock the economic capabilities within the township which spills over into employment creation and skills development.

The BVM intends to identify and enter into partnerships to unlock entrepreneurial capacity in Touwsrivier, De Doorns and Worcester (Breede Valley Municipality 2024). In terms of the IDP, the following initiatives are identified in terms of a multi-year implementation plan, depending on finances being available:

- a) A precinct plan to build trade facilities;
- b) Construct facilities and pave various areas to promote informal trade zones;
- c) Developed an informal trade bylaw;
- d) Provide support to businesses as possible partners;
- e) Construct facilities in Rawsonville, De Doorns and Zwelethemba. (Breede Valley Municipality 2024).

Research shows that Zwelethemba councillors (ANC) are strongly sceptical of the support promised based on how their perceived experiences with the DA municipality in Worcester. Once again, an approach of building trust through consultation, collaboration and consistently ethical behaviour is essential in the planning process of projects in the IDP.

With the increased unemployment rate, it is expected that the informal trade sector will increase – hence township trade plays a significant role and contributes to employment and the economy of a municipality. The BVM says it is taking the approach of creating an “enabling” environment for this sector to grow in a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach where many

stakeholders are involved. These include government, non-governmental and private sectors to ensure the integration of value chains to ensure the growth of the sector. Targeted areas in the 2023 – 2027 IDP include developing entrepreneurial capacity in Touwsrivier, De Doorns as well as Worcester. The implementation plan includes the development of an informal trade bylaw and to construction facilities to promote informal trade zones in Rawsonville, De Doorns and Zwelethemba, etc.

The community of Zwelethemba however is yet to see investment in the informal trade of this township. The ward 16 councillor advised that:

“At Shoprite and at High Street there is a place where they (informal traders) can trade. But it is not comfortable for them to sit there like other places in Stellenbosch where they have centres. Here there are no centres. When it’s raining they don’t have shelters and they must take their stuff (products) and go because they don’t have a place to store and protect their stuff. There is no electricity and no water. There is no structure. They just stand next to the road and put their stand there. Now it is a paved road” (Mangali, 2023).

Khambule (2020) cautions that in the reconstruction and development of especially townships which mostly house the informal economy, the government should no longer treat the informal economy as a safety net for those who find them unemployed. Instead, they should be proactive in ensuring that this sector too is protected from vulnerabilities by looking into a social security net for the informal sector (Khambule 2020).

My research in Zweletemba reflects that Councillors were not aware of anyone in the informal sector having benefited from government support to small businesses during COVID-19. Also, if the BVM wishes to change the culture of township entrepreneurship, such commitment should be reflected in their integrated planning processes and budget provisions be made accordingly.

Feedback from the ward citizens in the BVM seems that these members from the community have never seen a copy of their municipal IDP, have not participated in the drafting of the IDP nor are they aware of any strategies to achieve IDP goals or its budget processes. This is despite most responses indicating that they do have access to computer facilities and the internet,

whether at work or home. In this instance, it appears that despite having access to the platforms where the consultation processes took place, no meaningful participation took place. The issue of available data to citizens should however be borne in mind as a factor that contributed to the lack of engagement with the IDP and budget process. The Ward 16 Councillor indicated that participation in municipal consultation processes in the informal sector during COVID-19 lockdown was non-existent. He indicated that 98% of the people living in the informal settlements are poor and could not participate. The meetings were held at the library which is problematic in terms of distance and data is also an issue should they wish to participate online. This councillor went so far to state that the municipality had the same IDP priorities since 2011. Also, there is never a budget allocated for his ward, i.e. ward 16. With frustration in his voice he expressed his view that with no budget allocated, there is no need for a meeting in which to participate. The lack of public consultation will in all probability become a bone of contention between the community and the municipality at the stage of project implementation.

The Township and Rural Entrepreneurship Programme (TREP) was established to transform and integrate informal businesses in townships into small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME). As an apartheid legacy, townships have been excluded from economic development, and there is a dire need to create an environment conducive to entrepreneurship and to support such businesses. Through the TREP, the following support is available to unlock the economic potential within townships:

- Small-Scale Bakeries and confectioneries
- Autobody repairers and mechanics
- Butcheries
- Clothing, leather and textiles
- Personal care e.g. hairdressing salons
- Spaza shops

- Tshisanyama eateries (RSA Department Small Business Development n.d.)

Facilitating the process of connecting township entrepreneurs with the funding opportunities made available through the TREP, should be much more than mere creating an awareness.

Addressing the education challenge would ensure the establishment of a skilled.

Furthermore, addressing the challenges of spatial planning means an investment in infrastructure, not just for the benefit of existing businesses or to attract investment, but also to unlock the township economy. The Zwelethemba and Rawsonville townships lacks infrastructure conducive to business establishment and entrepreneurship. Electricity, water and sanitation networks are not reliable and therefore hinder these areas from developing to the full potential and creating employment for the many unemployed, low-skilled people residing in these areas.

### District Development Model (DDM)

The South African government adopted the District Development Model in 2019 as an operational model to have better coherence in terms of economic development and more effective service delivery. The model requires collaboration in terms of planning and implementation from all three spheres of government and government departments to strengthen local government in specific by breaking down the silos within which planning, budgeting and implementation of IDPs are done. This collaboration should develop One Plan for district municipalities through their IDPs. (RSA Department Cooperative Government 2021).

The revised Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan post-COVID-19 introduced the concept of Building Back Better and as part of this plan, the concept of the District Development Model (DDM) as an approach to governance in shaping and developing the new South Africa. The DDM is specifically aimed at the local government level aiming to improve collaboration not only between spheres of government but also municipalities and all stakeholders who should contribute to a sustainable approach to development and service delivery. For example, building the Eastern Bypass in Worcester requires cooperation between different levels of

government, i.e. SANRAL or national government level, the neighbouring Langeberg municipality as it would impact on and benefit Robertson-Bonnievale-Ashton wine valley, the different departments in the BVM (spatial development, budget, etc), private stakeholders as investors in the area, the local community etc. It once again introduces the concept of social compact as it requires the input of community organizations to get buy-in in making sure that interventions such as these will have a positive effect on the community and ultimately the economy of the region. The DDM requires community engagement which also came afore in the field research interviews to be challenging and problematic, especially in the marginalized community of Zwelethemba. This community felt the platforms for community consultation are inadequate and it limits their access to information. This impacts on their engagement with the municipality in a meaningful way and does not promote inclusivity.

In the field research, an interview conducted with the Manager of the BVM Local Economic Development department, there is scepticism on the effectiveness of this approach due to what is seen to be unnecessary bureaucracy (he indicated things happened faster previously) and their preference to implement and manage their own initiatives as each district/local municipality has their unique priorities and challenges to deal with. Breaking down the silos might therefore be more difficult than anticipated in the DDM approach.

Another challenge that was mentioned in the field research is the change in leadership and shifting / abandoning of priorities with the change in political leadership. Municipalities in a region can have different political leadership driving different priorities. This can impact the long-term implementation of projects where the objectives of different municipalities within a region / district might differ. Municipalities must therefore adopt the DDM approach in their planning phase and should not be limited in their planning and cooperation across boundaries. Municipal leadership should thus not just be concerned with their own municipal area but consider the impact of project and development across the whole region.

With reference to the field research again, the interview conducted with a SALGA representative who shared his views on the DDM, is that “We started the wrong way around – first set boundaries and then say work within the boundaries but come up with a product that is

regional in approach.” In his view, the success of the DDM requires a total mind shift on all levels of government, starting on national level with projects that require commitment from all spheres and stakeholders.

Another aspect highlighted in the research, from a SALGA perspective, is the challenge of capacity and skills in municipalities. The perception is that there is a serious lack of adequate skills required to perform in terms of what is required to effectively deliver in terms of what is required in achieving the national development plan on a municipal level. There is a need for specialized education which requires collaboration and coordination between government (in terms of what is required), education institutions (effective learning that speaks to the needs) and the private sector (mentoring internships), in order to build the skills required for the job. It requires a collective effort.

The BVM IDP advised that reprioritisation (in line with DDM) was undertaken in the 2021 Budget which allowed for the revisit of current plans, interventions and targets. A realignment and reprioritisation of interventions and targets must account for lessons learnt thus far, but also propose ways to move beyond the crises. Implementation plans must support integrated development across the three spheres of government and will be facilitated by the District Development Model (DDM).

A number of structural challenges were identified in this research, but also possibilities for addressing some of these challenges by developing a people-centred development model. The BVM is not unique in terms of its challenges but they have advantages in terms of location, capacity, trade possibilities and strong governance.

This thesis posed the question whether the application of LED in the post-pandemic era will be a catalyst for a rebirth of PRO-POOR economic development in municipalities. What have municipalities learnt from the COVID-19 experience, if anything at all?

What is clear is that municipalities cannot continue with pre-covid strategies of community economic development. By sticking to the traditional way of doing things will not bring about meaningful and sustainable change to improve lives nor will it address the uneven and unequal development of communities. COVID-19 was not the last disaster to be faced by mankind. The

governing structures will have to adapt to new ways of dealing with these disasters and the impact it has on society, that is, they need to build resilient governments and communities able to absorb the shocks posed by any future disaster. COVID-19 and its impact was a hard lesson to learn for the whole of society and especially governments who carry the responsibility of building a sustainable future for all.

Local government, being closest to the people, must be steered by strong leaders free from self-interest, corruption, and lawlessness. Those in National government must lead with integrity and by example when implementing decisions, as government as a collective works towards achieving the national and global sustainable goals.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

This research has shown that since the first democratic election in 1994, South Africa's ANC-led government inherited complex socio-economic challenges of uneven and unequal (under)development. The government adopted business-friendly, fiscally responsible policies while mandating that municipalities implement LED "sustainably". Within these legal requirements, municipalities struggled with LED implementation primarily due to inadequate capacity, policy confusion, and a lack of sustained pro-poor programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed structural weaknesses, worsening unemployment, and inequality, particularly in smaller, tourism-dependent towns.

The research further explored the various approaches to LED, ranging from pro-poor to pro-business, within the context of policy frameworks guiding implementation. Against the backdrop of complex, multidimensional municipal challenges, the research evaluated the effectiveness of the latest attempt at coordinating and integrating the spheres of government, specifically the District Development Model introduced just before the pandemic in 2019. It is proposed that, as South Africa faces the post-pandemic era, there is an opportunity to rethink LED with a stronger emphasis on equity, environmental balance, institutional capacity, and meaningful community participation.

The research has provided an in-depth analysis of the Breede Valley Municipality's (BVM) demographic and economic landscape before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting its initial strengths and thereafter the significant challenges that emerged in the aftermath of the pandemic. While certain agricultural sectors were less affected, the tourism and hospitality industries suffered major setbacks, exacerbating unemployment and economic vulnerability. The research assesses the effectiveness of municipal services, particularly for indigent households, and reveals significant inequalities in access, affordability, and the quality of service delivery, especially in underdeveloped areas such as Zwelethemba. Community

feedback points to a lack of trust in the municipality and dissatisfaction with its pandemic response and overall developmental impact.

The BVM's LED strategy emphasizes collaboration with the public and private sectors to enable entrepreneurship and SMME growth, but this is undermined by issues such as high crime, load shedding, and weak implementation capacity. Despite some planned infrastructure projects and economic initiatives, the municipality faces a critical need for strong, visionary leadership and systemic reform to rebuild trust, ensure equitable development, and address the long-standing socio-economic disparities heightened by the pandemic. In building back better, it is recognized that there is a growing need for climate justice and improved municipal capacity to withstand future crises, considering the recent environmental shocks that one can expect will be the reality of the future.

It is further argued that post-COVID strategies cannot replicate pre-pandemic approaches. It calls for a pro-poor, people-centered model of development driven by ethical leadership, intersectoral cooperation, and resilience-building to ensure sustainable and equitable growth.

Municipalities across South Africa are generally struggling to deliver on their basic developmental mandates and service delivery and develop their people and local economies. They are in crisis management mode (Ledger 2020). The COVID-19 lockdown put even more strain on the local government governance institutions and economies. Overall, local and national development are intertwined and there are major issues around forcing capital to invest in productive activity as opposed to easy money in financial speculation.

At a local level, political divisions and patronage also play a role as some areas seem to be punished for not voting for the winning party. This seems to be the case with Zwelethemba. Although this municipality has achieved clean audits for a number of years and its governance institutions are regarded as stable, which means it has yet to adopt a transformative programme that will address equitable spatial change from the apartheid model. Palliative projects, often with political/clientelist undertones, are in evidence. The councilors from the poorest wards who are ANC-aligned are uniformly critical of the municipality.

From the interviews conducted, it is evident that the outcome of power struggles and political interference has resulted in projects being derailed.

### Information and Communication Technologies / the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution

The COVID-19 pandemic increased online communication systems. Online trade has become the order of the day, with a host of companies able to deliver services, TakeAlot and Amazon.com being household names by now. Municipalities will have to rethink service provision to expand on ICS and offer stable, uninterrupted, high-speed internet.

The fact that the skilled workforce can now work from home means the home can be anywhere with the current trend of moving to the tranquillity and peacefulness of small-town living. Municipalities want to sell themselves to the middle class and should promote their offerings to include this aspect of constant, fast, and stable bandwidth for internet access that can have a positive effect on the local economy. The public sector will have to rethink and upskill their employees to be able to use these platforms in the movement to the online world. The technology could also be used in pro-poor ways, e.g., having free internet at all public offices and free wifi in townships. This could promote online access to education and study.

Thus, there is a general need for citizens and state officials to develop skills in information and communication democracy.

A stable ICT network can unlock this potential of attracting professionals to the area. The region has to enhance its attractiveness and market itself to professionals who might want to relocate from the busy city to the tranquillity of small-town living. These households are able to relocate and thus contribute to the municipal tax base. Internet-supported work-from-home practices have the potential to make rural municipalities more attractive for high-income telecommuters.

## Infrastructure Maintenance

The municipality's own funding for infrastructure development and/or maintenance projects is limited bearing in mind the host of other societal needs eg water, housing, sanitation, electricity and health services. This municipality has realized that its road infrastructure is especially important as the town of Worcester is the gateway to the north and links with the N2. The potential in terms of trade for them is huge, but they must work with other spheres of government and, through public partnerships, unlock this potential for the district.

Maintenance of infrastructure, which includes roads, water, sanitation, and municipal buildings, should be taken seriously as the municipality's responsibility.

## Public participation

Kamara (2022) lists the barriers to citizens, which include power relations, political will, consultative structure, lack of accessibility, and lack of trust. The BVM is not exempted from these barriers, as is evident from the interviews conducted in the community, as some explicitly mentioned that the community is not involved in the initial project plans and only gets involved towards the tail end of a project. They complain about the political agendas of those in charge of the municipality and that the budget is not geared toward the needs of the impoverished people. There is also a low level of trust in the municipality and they expressed the view that there is no accountability from the municipality to the people they serve.

## Local economic development as the basis for sustainable development

In the economic model of public-private relationships, this municipality is working hard to build and maintain relationships with the formal private sector for the eventual benefits it can bring to the broader society. This is generally referred to as the "trickle-down theory," where the municipality assumes that tax breaks, less bureaucracy, and benefits to big corporations will

eventually trickle down benefits to the broader community. It is an optimism that empirically is unfounded.

The IDP of municipalities is seen as the driving tool for this kind of development, i.e., social and economic development. In this process, the focus is largely on compliance with the processes to follow than it is on the content of the IDP as the means of driving social and economic development in a sustainable manner (Zondo 2020). The process of public participation in drafting the IDP involves collective decisions between politicians in government, business, and the community. These decisions impact the likelihood of the community achieving sustainable outcomes as the decisions, although focussed on enhancing social welfare, must, at the same time, drive investment and development. The challenge is that the mix of private and public decision-making evolves together whilst in the process, the priorities for both public and private can change (Zondo 2020).

In the pursuit of a business-oriented approach to development, the voice of the community is often lost. From a sustainability perspective, the exclusion of the local community's voice is problematic in that the indigenous knowledge of the locals is a source of knowledge beneficial to sustainable development. It would thus be in the best interest of all stakeholders to maintain a balance between the formally institutionalized influences with the local traditional forms of knowledge and influences, whether cultural, social, or economic (Zondo 2020).

From municipal audit outcomes over several years, it is evident the regression in the audit opinions points to a number of challenges on a local government level, i.e., political and administrative leadership challenges, financial and oversight challenges, lack of consequence management, and ineffective interventions (RSA Department National Treasury 2022). These challenges must be addressed if we wish to have some level of success in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals to which we are committed. COVID-19 might just be the catalyst that forces us in the direction of building a society that is just and restoring the dignity of our people.

Municipalities in the post-COVID-19 era are required to align their recovery plans with that of the World Bank's Crisis Response Approach aimed at advancing critical economic reforms (see

chapter 5). These reforms are also aligned with the National Development Goals and, ultimately, South Africa's commitment to the National Union's Sustainable Development Goals. Broadly speaking, the SDGs are focussed on:

- alleviating poverty, food security, creating a health system that benefits all, education, and skills development.
- Sustainable energy, economic growth, infrastructure, and industrialization and addressing inequality.
- Addressing climate change, protecting the oceans, forests, biodiversity and desertification.

From a local government level, municipalities contribute to achieving the National Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals through their respective IDPs, a social contract between the municipality and the people it serves. This social contract implies that rights and duties are placed on both the municipality and its leaders as well as the individual citizens of the region.

A recommendation to better deal with the impact of natural disasters or pandemics requires an intergovernmental approach and a rethinking of how best to serve not just a municipality but a region in terms of the district development model.

### Climate Change / Building a Green Economy

Climate change impacts greatly on the region. The municipality, thus has to be proactive in its planning and be innovative and adaptive to ensure they are prepared for the impact of changes in the climate. Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, the region suffered an extended drought period. The drought affected all aspects of life and economic activities in the region. It is thus important that the municipality adopt an approach to policies that either mitigate the effects of climate change or adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change and plan accordingly.

Climate change will inevitably affect economic growth and will have an impact on the socio-economic conditions of the citizens.

South Africa already adopted the National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP) in 2011, which prioritizes both climate change mitigation and adaptation in moving towards climate resilience and lower carbon economies. The NCCAS objectives include:

- (1) building climate resilience (human, economic, and infrastructure) and adaptive capacity allowing a response to risks and vulnerability;
- (2) Integration of climate change responses into policies and implementation (by-laws in the case of municipalities, engagement with businesses regarding climate risks and hazardous materials);
- (3) Create awareness and understanding of the impact of climate change and build capacity to be able to respond to climate change impacts (training programmes and saving methodologies);
- (4) Ensure resources are in place allowing for the implementation of such climate change responses (quality climate resilient infrastructure, stormwater, waste control, road infrastructure) (RSA Department of Environmental Affairs (2017) Cape Winelands Climate Change Adaptation Summary Report).

The common understanding is that climate change impacts a broad range of sectors and thus requires an integrated approach in terms of policies and plans to find the most effective way to respond to its challenges.

As a local municipality within the Cape Winelands District Municipality (CWDM), the BVM, in conjunction with the other local municipalities within the district, work together in an integrated approach when dealing with local disasters. The CWDM however has the broader responsibility of disaster management in terms of regional planning, roads and transportation, water, electricity and economic development (Cape Winelands District Municipality, 2023). The

CWDM identified key climate change vulnerability indicators that are regarded as high risk for climate change impact. These include:

- **Agriculture:** Project plans include, inter alia, educating farmers, commissioning research, and sharing indigenous knowledge that could help in mitigating challenges or adapting to changes. The BVM collaborated with the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and farmers to promote conservation agriculture and enhance biodiversity (South African National Biodiversity Institute 2018).
- **Human Settlements – Infrastructure** to support communities in informal settlements, on flood plains, and in remote areas. The floods in De Doorns in December 2022 and Rawsonville in June 2023 can be mentioned where communities live on flood plains. These communities must be relocated, which delays the municipality in achieving its goals. Both these towns/wards are situated in the midst of farming land. The BVM must first procure land from private landowners before these communities can be relocated. In addition, communities in rural areas that depend on subsistence farming may be unable to grow crops that they have grown in the past due to the changing climate. It is, therefore, predicted that there will be an increase in rates of rural-urban migration. Urbanization impacts the already large housing backlog, lack of infrastructure, i.t.o. stormwater, waste, and energy.
- **Water:** Damage to infrastructure impacts on water quality and availability. Within the context of climate change, it is worthy to note that the Waterkloof dam, which supplies water to Touwsrivier, and the Grootkloof dam, which supplies water to De Doorns, currently do not yield enough water to surpass the future demand for water from these dams (Breede Valley Municipality 2023).
- **Biodiversity and environment:** An approach to building resilience in the economy has the possibility of unlocking new markets and economic growth opportunities. Developing programmes to diversify community livelihood strategies that can generate income from activities such as ecotourism and other non-farming activities. Also, to incentivize small-scale farmers to practice sustainable and conservation agriculture (eg pig farming in Touwsriver mentioned previously).

Acting to mitigate the challenges posed by climate change is important for any municipality to address if it is to have a competitive edge and attract investors to the region. In order to do so, the municipality needs to build a research network with different stakeholders who can assist in mitigating the impact of climate change in the region. The BVM is connecting with different stakeholders, i.e., the local communities, the University of the Western Cape, the University of Stellenbosch, Early Childhood Development practitioners, the Western Cape Government's Departments of Agriculture and Health, as well as representatives of the Cape Winelands District Municipality. The research network aims to collectively reflect on how food security and sustainability can be improved in the town of Worcester, where "one in five children are malnourished, and many adults eat nutritionally poor diets, despite the town being located within a valley known for its food production" (Sebopetsa n.d.: 28).

The urgency of dealing with climate change's negative impacts is enhanced as it threatens the quantity and quality of food and the availability of jobs in the region, especially in the agriculture sector (Sebopetsa n.d.).

Agriculture is a big contributor to the region's economy. The municipality must, therefore, manage its national resources in terms of sustainable practices. Vast areas of farming land are in the hands of private owners. These farms provide employment to locals but also attract large numbers of seasonal migration workers. This influx of migration workers puts pressure on the municipality's ability to deliver on its mandate. Land for housing development is one of the biggest problems in the region. This is not just the case on the farms but also in the town. One of the wards in this research has serious housing challenges, which resulted in shacks rising up and spilling over into private land outside of the urban edge. The municipality's approach to solving the problem was to break down these shacks and remove the people from this privately owned land. Solving these issues requires the political will to use local labour. Apart from engaging with the private owner of this land, one Manager within the municipality highlighted the fact that adjusting the formal edge of the town falls within the ambit of National and Provincial levels of government, and an intergovernmental coordinated approach is required. The municipality is still struggling to address the challenges of previous spatial planning.

Addressing these challenges requires political will and a people-centered approach to development that would be sustainable in the long run and is not an overnight solution.

### Future budget planning

The financial implications of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic were huge. They caught the government unprepared and left the national budget unprepared for a disaster of this magnitude. As previously indicated, South Africa entered into a loan agreement with the World Bank to soften the socio-economic impact of the pandemic through financial relief measures and to cushion the blow on the fiscus.

With natural disasters happening more frequently due to climate change, it has become necessary to have a different approach to budgeting as it has become essential to make provision in the national budget for a rainy day. Ngwakwe (2020) believes that it is time in the budget planning processes of the government to assume a pre-emptive budget forecasting approach as a separate line item and integrate it into the annual budget. Ngwakwe proposes the following:

- a) Use the mean difference between the 2019 and 2020 budgets to get to a fixed amount to make provision for in the budget;
- b) Local government, being at the grassroots level and responsible for service delivery, is generally under-budgeted by the national government to be able to deal with shocks of this magnitude. It is proposed that the equitable share of local governments should be revised and adjusted to ensure continuous service delivery during a natural disaster (disaster relief fund);
- c) Introduce a food bank system funded by government, business, and philanthropic organizations (e.g. Gift of the Givers) to feed the masses of impoverished and starving people who are hit the hardest during natural disasters;

- d) Employment creation through supporting local manufacturers and becoming less reliant on imports, especially textiles.
- e) Prevent illegal imports and tax avoidance by companies. (Ngwake 2020)

A further option to explore in relation to the need to do more with less funding at the municipality's disposal. The concepts of braiding and blending can possibly be explored in how they can be implemented within the accountability and reporting systems as a means for municipalities to access funding for specific projects. Braiding in this context refers to accessing funds from multiple programmes whilst keeping track of the funding within the source programme fund. Blending, on the other hand, refers to collating resources from different programmes into one pot of money from which to fund a project. Currently, municipalities are mostly reliant on grant funding from the national budget, which restricts their use. This requires a change in approach to public funds where one community issue can be funded by different departments to create a comprehensive programme to address the issue. Both strategies aim to use public resources optimally, especially when different government levels/agencies must work together to address a complex issue that cuts across their respective boundaries.

Regarding future budget planning on a local government level, it would be advisable to plan for any future shocks to the local economy. Natural disasters have become a reality to happen more frequently due to climate change. Those who suffer most are those in the informal sector who make a living from hand to mouth on a daily basis. From a budgeting and social security perspective, the possibility of creating a social security net for the young township entrepreneurs would be beneficial to the municipality and society at large as it will cushion the impact of future pandemics or shocks to the economy.

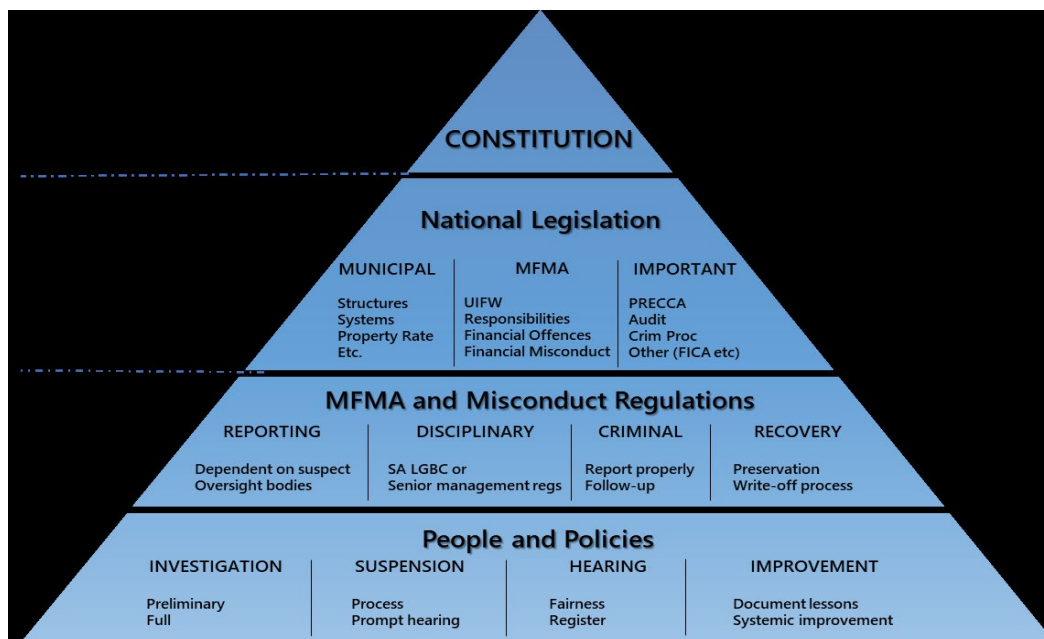
The lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic are that the key to effectiveness requires non-traditional and creative ways of accessing funds while still being compliant in terms of transparency and accountability. Futuristic budgeting can also assist in cushioning the shocks caused by natural disasters and pandemics as they have become a reality (Butler 2020).

## Back to Basics: Good Governance

The Municipal Finance Management Act (Public Finance Management Act (1999) No. 56 of 2003 (South Africa)) underpins the key principles of good governance, transparency, and accountability in public funds and resources management.

Consequence management within the municipal governing context is intended to be systemic, as corrective action to address challenges posed by municipal officials transgressing the laws and rules governing municipalities. Many rules, policies, and laws support the concept of consequence governance in local government (see Figure 6.1 below).

**Figure 6.1:** The relationship of stakeholders in the Consequence Management and Accountability Framework



(Department National Treasury 2022: 24).

The Consequence Management and Accountability Framework is meant to draw from all of these legislatures and clarify the roles to assist with the practical operational implementation of processes and procedures in instances of financial misconduct in the MFMA.

At the municipal level, the Mayor is responsible for driving CMA systems, assisted by the Municipal Manager, the Speaker, and Disciplinary Boards. These control measures to be implemented are meant to contain elements of:

- 1) Prevention through internal controls and external checks;
- 2) Constant systems improvements through regular reviews and amendments based on experiences;
- 3) Exposure and prevention through communications and legal repercussions for transgressions.

With corruption being a serious challenge for the future, local government officials should be capacitated to understand the various legislative rules governing public funds and that regular lifestyle audits as a means to address any concerns or allegations and thereby, through transparency, build a relationship of trust with the people they serve. Failure to do so, i.e., implement existing laws, will escalate crime and corruption because there are no consequences for those transgressing the law.

The National Treasury has general oversight and must implement measures that ensure transparency and expenditure control. Treasury carries out this responsibility by introducing generally recognized accounting practices, uniform expenditure classifications, and uniform treasury norms and standards. In this respect, the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (MSCOA) regulations took effect on 1 July 2017. Regarding MSCOA, the municipalities must submit their reports on the municipal budgets and reporting regulations in the format required by this framework. It has, however, been found that, although all municipalities have implemented mSCOA as their reporting framework, there are a number of municipalities that are not using the system fully due to the lack of capacity of the municipal officials, resistance to change from the old system, deliberate circumvention of internal controls amongst other reasons (RSA Department Statistics South Africa 2022).

It is, therefore, clear that, from a financial reporting perspective, there needs to be a drive to build capacity on a local government level. As indicated previously, the reporting on COVID-19 expenditure was challenging and in certain categories, did not happen. This can be attributed

to the challenges with respect to implementing MSCOA as the reporting platform. In addition, officials were working from home during COVID-19 and did not have access to all municipal systems. Municipalities need to address the challenges posed by lack of capacity (RSA Department Statistics South Africa 2022).

## Rethinking LED

This research explored many aspects impacting the post-pandemic world. Rethinking the development of a better future for all requires an analysis of the political-economic and power relations and issues of scale. In other words, we need to rethink the interaction between society, government, and the policies that govern that relationship. This change must encompass a stronger role for the central state and eradicating the structural inequalities highlighted by the pandemic, as the COVID-19 pandemic is not an isolated occurrence.

LED in South Africa has a “zombie-like” existence. “dead ideas (that) still walk among us” (Bateman, 2014: 1). This thesis concurs with Bateman (2014) who argues that there has been little rethinking of strategy in the face of a stubborn ideology. The reality of actually existing LED is one of failure but the state has doggedly pushed the model “largely because it supports certain neoliberal-oriented political and ideological imperatives held to be of critical importance to the wider international development community” (2014: 8).

## Conclusion

The BVM still has traces of the settler colonial legacy as well as political divides and racialised inequalities. The elections results reflect overall support for the DA in the traditionally White and Coloured areas.

Less than half its infrastructure budget is spent on infrastructure that can possibly reverse the uneven development inherited from the apartheid era, thereby linking society's physical and socio-economic interests as Bond proposed.

Part of a municipality's responsibility is to promote social and economic development. As a nation, South Africans need to grab the opportunity to forge a new dispensation by returning to the negotiating table, reflecting on and learning from past experiences, and engaging in ways to improve the quality of our democracy. As a polarised nation, our challenges are complex and require leaders with integrity, honesty, transparency, and vision.

What I took from the discussions with the members of the Breede Valley Community is that they are a community of hope. From a Councillor stating, I will be frank with you in the interview if it can bring about change in our community. From a knowledgeable, young leader in the municipality who believes in the potential of the municipality and the region as a whole. From non-governmental organizations who are willing to step up and take the lead, grounded in ethics and transparency, challenging those in leadership when called on to do so. Where there is hope, there is a great possibility of creating a framework for the future where the dignity of our people is restored, where there is sustainable self-reliance for food security, and a drive to protect our immediate environment and preserve the planet for future generations. The BVM, like all other municipalities, has complex challenges to deal with, but there is a sense of hope for a better future.

Local Economic Development in the BVM is implemented within the context and vision of the South African Constitution, i.e. to be developmental. The municipality is facing complex challenges that require the various role players in government (all levels), the private sector, and the community to work together to find sustainable solutions. The BVM is taking a step in this collaborative approach to finding solutions to these complex problems of employment creation, climate change, urbanization, and technology. COVID-19 has amplified these challenges about food security, which lies at the heart of the challenges mentioned. The BVM, through sustainable solutions of facilitating access to funding for projects mentioned, i.e., hydroponics, street vendors, and early childhood development projects, attempts to develop the local community, allowing for sustainable employment creation and good quality affordable foods at the community level. These, however, are not quick fixes to problems that have their roots in many years of unequal development now combined with challenges posed by natural

disasters, energy crises, war, and the political climate in South Africa, which impacts administration within municipalities.

Whether the municipality is prioritizing the poor in its approach to local economic development depends on who you are posing the question. As is evident in the research, they are engaging with business to a great extent as the solution to sustainable employment creation with long-term benefits as opposed to quick fixes like the EPWP, which has become a large percentage of the employment creation part of the municipality for the low skilled job requirements but these employment opportunities are of a short term nature. The requests for these quick fixes to the dire conditions that most impoverished people find themselves in greatly outweigh the availability of employment in the municipality. The BVM has not progressively attempted to unlock the economic potential within the townships. To do so, it needs to progressively and purposefully embed such projects in the budget, spatial development, infrastructure, transportation, and community development programmes.

Social justice must be at the forefront of the decision-making process in its quest to alleviate poverty and sustainably grow the local economy. COVID-19 has also taught us that quick-fix solutions do not solve challenges in inequality, nor do they contribute to sustainable futuristic solutions that would be beneficial to all. Municipalities need to work in partnership with society and businesses in their implementation of economic development initiatives. LED requires a progressive approach in terms of problem-solving and planning for the future. Municipalities can also not work in isolation. Urbanization is one of the biggest challenges faced by this municipality as it poses social, economic, and environmental implications. The municipality will have to work with other local municipalities in the region if it is to prevent or manage the challenges posed by the migration of people towards areas seen to be providing better possibilities for improving their lives. Sustainable and collaborative solutions to LED is what would ensure that future generations can reap the fruits of what the constitution envisions for all South Africans, i.e., 'improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person' (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 – Preamble). The BVM has taken steps in the direction of sustainable solutions to economic development, but the local government sphere is riddled with complex challenges for which there are no easy

answers. There needs to be a common understanding and political will to achieve the vision of a capable state, something that will remain a vision if the challenges posed by the political landscape and its impact on local government are not addressed.

SALGA is also promoting the District Development Model (DDM) which requires better collaboration between the spheres of government allowing for better coordination and integration of plans and budgets. (SALGA, 2023)

Also, De Doorns with its housing backlog of 5 800 (28.72%) of those living in the area (Breede Valley Municipality 2024). The Annual Report indicates that social infrastructure (which includes housing, health and education) lies primarily with Provincial Government. The BVM has 15.8% of their budget set aside to complement the Western Cape Government social infrastructure expenditure which did not include the De Doorns housing crisis. One glaring issue is the erosion of municipal revenue streams, compounded by the flight of affluent residents to self-sustaining alternatives like off-grid electricity. As the divide between the haves and have-nots widens, questions arise about the sustainability of current development models. Spatial planning, too, emerges as a critical concern, with the perpetuation of apartheid-era segregation patterns exacerbating poverty and hindering social integration.

It is accepted that the realization of the targets set against Vision 2030 have become more challenging by the COVID-19 crisis. The efforts to place the economy back on track must be renewed through the efforts of municipalities on the ground working collectively towards placing the economy back on track in its trajectory of Vision 2030.

South Africans, in general, are regarded to be a resilient nation and in such adversity often comes opportunity. South Africa now has the opportunity to reshape our economy to make it more inclusive and realise the vision of the South African Constitution. Building a capable state is regarded to be an important enabling factor to reviving the South African economy making it resilient and better prepared for future shocks. In order to do this, sustainability in our approach to economic development is essential.

Sustainable local economic development is about ensuring that economic development is not an end in itself. Instead, it is the means by which a sustainable improvement of the quality of life of the communities is reached. It is about establishing and prioritizing an approach that balances economic, environmental, and social benefits without any one particular aspect benefiting at the expense of the other.

There are recommendations stemming from this research that can contribute to sustainable local economic development, which can deliver on the promise of the constitution, i.e., a better quality of life. It can also build economies that can withstand future economic shocks and not destroy an economy, as happened in the case of COVID-19.

Ethical leadership and capacity building are not just important but essential in the context of sustainable local economic development. These factors play pivotal roles in successfully implementing strategies and policies aimed at sustainable economic growth. We need leaders who will ensure that our institutions are capable and willing to combat corruption at all levels and lead through consultation and cooperation to ensure inclusive growth. While we have good laws and policies, the lack of enforcement and consequence management is a significant challenge. The tendency to privatize municipal services is concerning and must be addressed by capacitating those in local government to take responsibility and do what they are employed to do.

Infrastructure development and maintenance are crucial for economic growth. Municipalities must be consistent in providing basic services to all communities, including townships. Regular, effective, and efficient waste management, streetlights and visible policing, road infrastructure, consistent and reliable energy and water supply, and free wifi are fundamental for unlocking economies, especially in townships. Trading services infrastructure is also important as part of a people-centered approach to unlocking the economic potential within townships.

Participating communities: Communities must be part of decision-making processes that directly impact their lives and their environment. Participative decision-making promotes ownership and commitment to achieve common goals that would benefit the community. South African communities are still struggling with under and uneven development between

racial and class groups. The government, particularly local government, has to implement an approach that would bridge this gap by addressing the challenges that hamper overall development.

Indigenous knowledge systems must be recognized and incorporated in the process of building and developing local economies for sustainability. Communities must become self-reliant and less dependent on external markets. Locally produced products must be supported. Local government needs to transition to a green economy in terms of water conservation, renewable energies, and sustainable public services.

Financial resilience must be built in a pre-emptive/anticipatory budget system to prevent future economic shocks. The informal economy must be recognized as part of the entire economy and not merely a cushion for the unemployed. The government should become proactive in ensuring that the informal economic sector is protected by a social security system that protects it from its vulnerabilities.

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INTERVIEWS:

January, C. (Breede Valley Municipality Local Economic Development Manager) 2023.

Interviewed by Jeftha, H. on Tuesday, 18 April 2023 at 8:15 via Zoom.

Malgas, C. (Breede Valley Municipality Manager IDP/SDBIP/PMS) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. on 26 April 2023 at 09:30 via Teams.

Mangali, M. (Ward 16 Councilor) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. telephonically on 2 May 2023 at 11:45

Keega, P. (Ward 16 ex-Councillor) 2023. Interviewed by Jeftha, H. telephonically on 2 May 2023 at 11:45.

Gwala, Z. (SALGA LED Project Leader) 2023. Interviewed by H. Jeftha on 20 June 2023 via Teams.