

SOCIAL IMPACT

1st Edition

August 2026



Investing in People, Partnerships and Prosperity

BUILDING TRUST THROUGH STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Sustainable development depends not only on investment but also on meaningful relationships. Regular stakeholder engagement promotes transparency, builds trust, and ensures that local communities remain active partners throughout the life of a project.

As part of its commitment to responsible corporate citizenship, the Social Impact Team recently welcomed members of the Community Stakeholder Forum on a guided visit to both the construction and operational facilities. The visit offered stakeholders valuable insight into project progress, operational activities, and the positive socio-economic contributions being made within surrounding communities.

The engagement created an open platform for discussion, allowing community representatives to ask questions, raise concerns, and gain a better understanding of the project's safety, environmental, employment, and community development initiatives. Transparent communication strengthens accountability, reduces misinformation, and reinforces partnerships built on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

During the engagement, stakeholders also highlighted growing concerns around drug and alcohol abuse, particularly among young people. Recognising the impact these challenges have on families, education, employment, and community safety, the project partnered with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Social Development to deliver substance abuse awareness sessions for employees.

These sessions focused on the physical, emotional, social, and legal consequences of substance abuse while encouraging employees to make responsible life choices and serve as positive role models within their families and communities. The initiative forms part of the project's broader commitment to employee wellness, occupational health and safety, and community development.

By working collaboratively with government departments, community organisations, and local stakeholders, the project continues to develop sustainable interventions that respond to evolving community needs. This collaborative approach demonstrates that lasting social impact is achieved through partnership, shared responsibility, and ongoing dialogue.



NGWATHE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY MAYOR,
COUNCILLORS AND OFFICIALS VISITING SITE

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

For the renewable energy sector, BBBEE presents a unique opportunity to leave a legacy that extends far beyond clean energy generation. By combining skills development, enterprise and supplier growth, socio-economic investment, and meaningful stakeholder engagement, renewable energy projects empower communities while creating long-term economic opportunities.

When organizations embrace BBBEE as a strategic driver rather than a compliance exercise, they create shared value for employees, entrepreneurs, local businesses, and communities alike. Through collaboration, transparency, and sustained investment, projects can help build resilient communities, stimulate inclusive economic growth, and contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future for South Africa.

BEYOND EMPLOYMENT:

ADDRESSING THE HIDDEN SOCIAL CHALLENGES
FACING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The development of renewable energy projects brings significant economic benefits to host communities. Employment opportunities, skills development and local procurement contribute to improved livelihoods and stimulate economic activity. However, periods of rapid social and economic change can also present new challenges that require proactive intervention and strong community partnerships.

Prior to the commencement of construction activities, unemployment levels within the local community were high. The introduction of employment opportunities provided much-needed income for many households and created renewed hope for families. While this positive impact remains significant, project stakeholders also recognised emerging social concerns that required immediate attention. During the construction phase, the project observed an increase in employees reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or drugs, resulting in failed alcohol and drug screening tests ("blowing red"). This not only posed a serious occupational health and safety risk but also highlighted broader substance abuse challenges affecting the surrounding communities.

Substance abuse is widely recognised as a contributing factor to a range of social problems. Alcohol and drug dependency can negatively affect family relationships, financial stability, workplace productivity and personal wellbeing. It is also frequently associated with higher incidences of domestic violence, assault, reckless behaviour and other forms of criminal activity. While these issues are complex and influenced by multiple socio-economic factors, they place considerable strain on families, communities and public services.

Recognising that these challenges extend beyond the workplace, the project's Social Impact Team adopted a collaborative and preventative approach. Rather than focusing solely on disciplinary measures, the project invested in education and awareness to promote healthier lifestyles, responsible decision-making and safer communities.

As part of this intervention, the project partnered with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and the Department of Social Development to facilitate awareness sessions for employees and members of the local community. These engagements focused on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse, the devastating impact of domestic violence, available support services, and the legal consequences associated with criminal behaviour.

The Speakers provided valuable insight into local crime trends, explaining how substance abuse often contributes to increases in assault, gender-based violence, domestic violence, theft and other offences. Employees were encouraged to report incidents, support victims and work together with law enforcement to build safer neighborhoods.



Damlaagte Plant Manager with the Speakers from SAPS and Department of Social Development Free State

Representatives from the Department of Social Development highlighted the emotional, psychological and social effects of substance abuse and domestic violence on individuals and families.

Participants were informed about counselling services, rehabilitation programmes, victim support initiatives and other resources available to those seeking assistance. Importantly, the sessions reinforced the message that asking for help is a sign of strength and that support systems exist for individuals and families affected by these challenges.



SAPS and Department of Social Department Free State Speakers addressing the Ilikwa PV Facility Employees

FROM COAL TO CLEAN ENERGY: LEADING SOUTH AFRICA'S RENEWABLE FUTURE

MEET THE WOMAN BEHIND DAMMLAAGTE PV FACILITY

From maintaining turbines at one of South Africa's largest coal-fired power stations to leading a utility-scale solar facility, the Solar Plant Manager at Damlaagte PV Facility has built an inspiring career defined by resilience, technical excellence, and visionary leadership.

After completing a National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering at Tshwane University of Technology in 2006, she began her career as a Trainee Technician at Eskom. Over the next 15 years, she steadily progressed through technical and maintenance leadership roles, ultimately becoming Turbine Maintenance Manager at Majuba Power Station. In 2022, she embraced anew challenge by joining the renewable energy sector as Plant Manager at Kangnas Wind Farm before taking up her current role with Damlaagte PV Facility.

Looking back, she says engineering appealed to her because of her analytical mindset and passion for solving complex problems. Although she never imagined her journey would take her from coal-fired power generation to renewable energy, she always knew she wanted to build a meaningful career in a challenging technical environment.

DRIVING SOUTH AFRICA'S ENERGY TRANSITION

Her move into renewable energy was driven by a desire to contribute to South Africa's energy future. "Moving into renewable energy felt like a natural evolution," she explains. "It allows me to contribute to clean energy production while helping build a sustainable future for generations to come. "Today, she is responsible for ensuring Damlaagte PV Facility operates safely, efficiently, and reliably. Her role involves monitoring plant performance, managing operations and maintenance contractors, overseeing contract governance, ensuring compliance with health, safety and environmental legislation, and maximising plant availability.

She particularly enjoys combining engineering with strategic business management. "Seeing improvements in plant performance while managing complex operational contracts is one of the most rewarding parts of my role."



INVESTING IN GROWTH

One of her proudest achievements has been completing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) while leading utility-scale renewable energy facilities. Balancing executive responsibilities, family life and postgraduate studies demanded discipline, sacrifice and exceptional time management. "It wasn't easy," she admits. "There were many sleepless nights, but completing my MBA has transformed how I lead." The qualification broadened her perspective beyond engineering, enabling her to view the plant as an integrated business where operational excellence, financial

sustainability, governance and people all work together to achieve long-term success. She has also earned her Government Certificate of Competency (GCC) for Factories in Mechanical Engineering, successfully transitioned from thermal power generation into wind and solar energy leadership, and continues to mentor young professionals entering the industry.

Leadership Through People

She believes the strongest organisations are built by empowering people. "Leadership is about creating an environment where people can perform at their best while taking accountability for overall success." Her leadership style is built on integrity, collaboration, continuous learning and recognising the unique strengths within every team member. She also believes teamwork is one of the greatest drivers of success. "When people work together, blind spots become opportunities for learning and improvement."

Inspiring the Next Generation of Women

Working in engineering has presented challenges, particularly as a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry. "Early in my career I had to work hard to establish technical credibility." Despite these challenges, she believes the future for women in renewable energy is brighter than ever. "When young women see female leaders managing power plants, they begin to believe that those opportunities are possible for them too."

Her message to aspiring female engineers is simple:

// Engineering is about solving problems—it knows no gender. Believe in yourself, stay curious, continue learning and never allow stereotypes to define your potential.



POWERING COMMUNITIES BEYOND ELECTRICITY

For her, renewable energy is about much more than generating electricity. She believes facilities such as Damlaagte PV Facility contribute meaningfully to South Africa through job creation, supplier development, local economic growth, skills development and community investment initiatives. She emphasises that investing in STEMi education, apprenticeships and technical training will be critical to ensuring South Africa has the skilled workforce needed to drive a successful energy transition.

Looking Ahead

Her long-term vision is to serve in executive operational leadership and non-executive board positions within the energy and infrastructure sectors, helping shape the future of South Africa's energy industry. More importantly, she hopes to leave a legacy of operational excellence while creating pathways for more women to thrive in technical leadership roles. Reflecting on her journey, she offers this advice to young engineers:

"Trust the process, remain patient with your growth and never underestimate the value of hard work. Every challenge you overcome today is preparing you for the leader you will become tomorrow."

As Damlaagte PV Facility continues generating clean, reliable electricity for homes, businesses and communities, her story serves as a powerful reminder that determination, continuous learning and courageous leadership can transform not only careers—but the future of South Africa's energy landscape.



Sharing a special moment with her Mentor

EMPOWERING ABILITY THROUGH INCLUSIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

INVESTING IN PEOPLE, BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Transformation is most meaningful when it creates opportunities for every member of society. As part of our commitment to inclusive socio-economic development, two disabled members from the local community have been enrolled in a 12-month National Certificate (NC): Business Administration NQF Level 3 Learnership.

This initiative reflects our belief that disability should never be a barrier to education, employment, or personal growth. By providing access to accredited skills development programmes, we are helping to equip learners with the knowledge, confidence, and practical workplace experience needed to participate meaningfully in South Africa's economy.

Beyond the classroom, both learners are completing the practical component of their learnership within the renewable energy sector, where they are gaining valuable hands-on experience in a professional working environment. This exposure not only strengthens their administrative competencies but also prepares them for future employment opportunities.

Advancing Transformation in South Africa

South Africa's transformation agenda is founded on the principles of equality, inclusion, and the creation of opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals. Inclusive skills development plays a vital role in achieving these objectives by ensuring that persons with disabilities are empowered to contribute their talents, participate in the economy, and build sustainable livelihoods.

True transformation goes beyond meeting compliance requirements—it is about recognising the potential within every individual and removing barriers that prevent equal participation. By investing in people of all abilities, organisations contribute to a more diverse, equitable, and productive workforce while strengthening the social and economic resilience of local communities.

Creating Lasting Impact

The learnership programme represents more than an educational qualification; it is an investment in dignity, independence, and long-term employability. Through mentorship, workplace exposure, and accredited training, these learners are developing the skills required to pursue rewarding careers while contributing to the growth of South Africa's renewable energy industry.

As we continue to champion inclusive development, we remain committed to creating opportunities that transform lives, strengthen communities, and demonstrate that when everyone is given the opportunity to succeed, society as a whole benefits.

Transforming Lives Through Education

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods, and driving economic transformation. Recognising this, our organisation is committed to investing in the future of local communities through bursary programmes that provide deserving students with the opportunity to pursue higher education in fields that are critical to South Africa's economic growth.

In 2025, two bursaries were awarded to promising students from the local community:

- **One female student pursuing a National Diploma in Chemical Engineering**
- **One male student pursuing a National Diploma in Operations Management**

These bursaries represent more than financial assistance—they are investments in human capital, future leaders, and the long-term sustainability of our communities.

Building Sustainable Livelihoods Through Education

For many young people in rural and underserved communities, access to tertiary education is often limited by financial constraints rather than academic potential. Bursary programmes remove these barriers, enabling talented students to achieve qualifications that open doors to meaningful careers and economic independence.

By supporting higher education, organisations help to:

- Improve employability among local youth.
- Create pathways to skilled and sustainable employment.
- Reduce poverty through increased household income.
- Develop future professionals who can contribute to local economic growth.
- Inspire younger learners to pursue higher education and careers in science and technology.

The impact of a bursary extends far beyond the individual recipient. Graduates often become role models within their communities, uplifting families, mentoring future students, and contributing to the local economy through employment and entrepreneurship.

Study Trust is doing a Bursary Drive with Damlaagte and Ilikwa at the Ngwathe Local Municipality Schools.
3-7 August 2026



ADDRESSING SOUTH AFRICA'S CRITICAL SKILLS GAP

South Africa continues to face a shortage of skilled professionals in engineering, science, technology, mathematics, and innovation (STEMi) disciplines. As the country expands infrastructure development, industrialisation, manufacturing, and renewable energy projects, the demand for qualified engineers, technical specialists, and operational professionals continues to outpace supply.

Similarly, skilled Operations Management professionals play a vital role in improving organisational efficiency, managing resources, enhancing productivity, and ensuring sustainable business performance across both the public and private sectors.

Investing in STEMi education helps address these shortages while strengthening South Africa's capacity to compete in a rapidly evolving global economy.

Empowering Women in Engineering

The bursary awarded to a female student studying Chemical Engineering also supports greater gender transformation within the engineering profession. Women remain underrepresented in many engineering disciplines, and increasing female participation contributes to a more diverse, innovative, and inclusive workforce.

By encouraging young women to pursue careers in STEMi fields, organisations help challenge traditional barriers and create equal opportunities for future generations.

Investing in People, Strengthening Communities

Our bursary programme reflects our commitment to developing local talent and creating opportunities that extend beyond the lifespan of a project. By investing in education today, we are building a pipeline of skilled professionals who will drive innovation, strengthen local economies, and contribute to South Africa's long-term development.

Supporting higher education is one of the most effective ways to transform lives. It equips individuals with the knowledge and confidence to build successful careers, enables families to achieve greater financial security, and empowers communities to become active participants in the country's economic future.

Education is not simply an investment in individuals—it is an investment in a stronger, more inclusive, and more prosperous South Africa.



ANNUAL CAREER EXPO



Damlaagte Solar invites you to the upcoming community Career Expo under the theme "Navigating Your Future".

JOIN if YOU are:

- A **high school learner** exploring study and career opportunities.
- A **young professional** seeking to upskill or reskill.
- A **student** from an institution of higher learning (universities and TVET colleges) seeking career guidance and opportunities.
- An **unemployed graduate** navigating the shift into the workplace.

16 April 2026
8am
Phehellang
Secondary School

located within the Ngwathe Local Municipality is the 97.5MW Damlaagte Solar Farm. The plant reached commercial operation on 23 August 2021.





From the 1.4-kilometre Rail Trail to approximately five kilometres of scenic routes, the Parys Wetland Park restoration is transforming the community. Substance abuse awareness events and the annual Career Expo – with 1,424 attendees and 12 exhibitors – continue to inspire and empower.



EMPOWERING

FUTURES THROUGH EDUCATION: CAREER EXPO INSPIRES OVER 1,400 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

16 April 2026 marked a significant milestone in promoting education and career development as a Career Expo was successfully hosted at one of the local high schools, bringing together learners, parents, educators and members of the broader community. The event attracted an impressive 1,424 attendees, while 12 exhibitors from the education, training and employment sectors showcased a wide range of opportunities available to young people pursuing their future careers.

The Career Expo was designed to bridge the gap between secondary education and the world of higher learning and employment by exposing learners to the diverse educational pathways, career choices and financial support available to them. Through interactive exhibitions, one-on-one engagements and information sessions, attendees gained valuable insights into tertiary education, vocational training, apprenticeships, bursaries, scholarships, learnerships and workplace-based learning opportunities. Access to reliable career information remains one of the most important factors influencing informed decision-making among young people. Many learners, particularly those from rural and underserved communities, are often unaware of the numerous opportunities available after completing Grade 12. Events such as this Career Expo play a vital role in broadening learners' perspectives, helping them align their academic subjects with future career aspirations while encouraging them to remain committed to their education.

South Africa continues to place significant emphasis on expanding access to higher education and skills development as part of the country's broader socio-economic development agenda. Through the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges, Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs), and various industry partners, increasing efforts are being made to equip young people with the knowledge and skills required in a rapidly changing economy.

The country's Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system offers multiple pathways beyond traditional university education, recognising that success can be achieved through vocational qualifications, occupational training, artisan development, internships and entrepreneurship. Government-funded initiatives such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), bursary programmes, learnerships and skills development initiatives continue to create opportunities for academically deserving and financially disadvantaged students to access quality education and training.

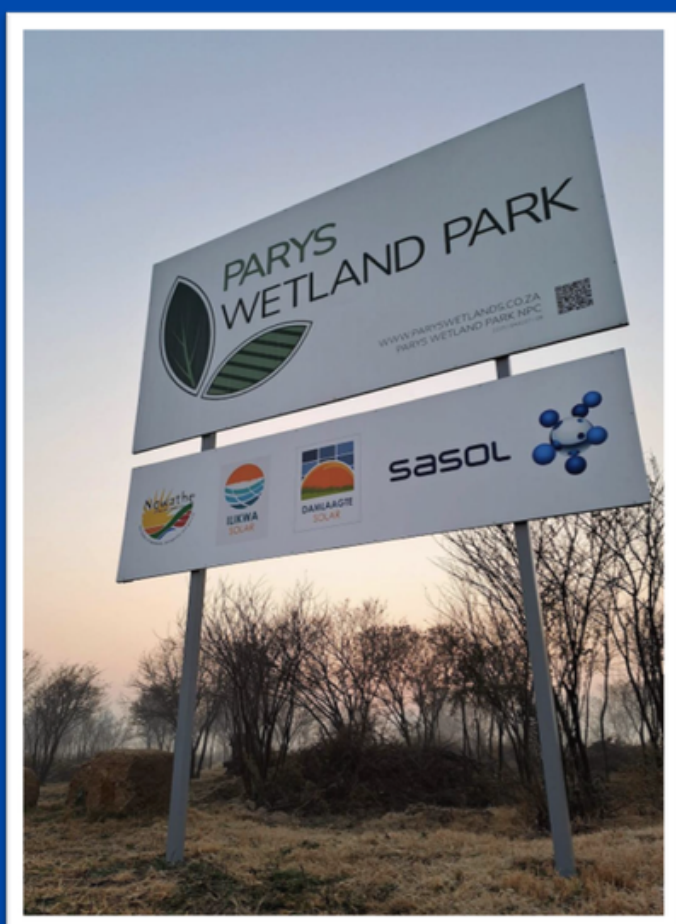
As South Africa responds to the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the green economy and the growing digital landscape, there is an increasing focus on careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), renewable energy, digital technologies, healthcare, agriculture and skilled trades. Career guidance initiatives are therefore becoming increasingly important in ensuring that learners understand not only the careers of today but also the occupations that will shape the future workforce.

The success of the Career Expo demonstrates the value of collaboration between educational institutions, industry, government and community stakeholders. By bringing together education providers, funding organisations and employers under one roof, learners were able to engage directly with experts, ask questions and obtain practical guidance on admission requirements, application processes and available funding opportunities.

Beyond providing information, the event inspired hope and ambition among young people by demonstrating that financial circumstances need not become barriers to achieving their dreams. Access to education funding, career guidance and mentorship empowers learners to make informed decisions that can positively influence their future and contribute to the long-term development of their communities.

The participation of 12 exhibitors and the attendance of 1,424 community members reflect the growing demand for accessible career guidance and education awareness initiatives. The overwhelming response highlights the importance of continuing to invest in programmes that connect learners with opportunities, build confidence and prepare the next generation for meaningful participation in South Africa's economy.

As communities continue working together to invest in education, career development and skills training, initiatives such as this Career Expo serve as catalysts for creating a more informed, skilled and economically active generation. Through partnerships that promote learning, innovation and opportunity, young people are empowered to realise their full potential while contributing to the sustainable growth and prosperity of South Africa.



RESTORING NATURE, EMPOWERING PEOPLE: THE PARYS WETLAND PARK STORY

"The greatest strength of a community is not found in the resources it lacks, but in the passion, knowledge, and commitment of the people who choose to make a difference."

The story of the Parys Wetland Park is not one of funding creating a project—it is a story of a community creating a vision long before funding existed. It is a powerful example of how local leadership, volunteerism, and collaboration can transform neglected spaces into valued community assets.

Driven by a dedicated group of professional volunteers, the initiative began with a simple but ambitious vision: to restore and protect the degraded wetland connecting Tumahole, Schonkenville, the industrial area, and the town of Parys, while creating a safe, accessible, and environmentally significant public space for the people of Ngwathe.

Without funding, equipment, or formal structures, the volunteers invested their time, expertise, and unwavering commitment because they believed the wetland represented one of the community's greatest untapped assets.

Today, that vision is becoming a reality.

An Asset-Based Community Development Success Story

The Parys Wetland Park perfectly illustrates the principles of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD).

Rather than beginning by asking, "What does our community need?", the project asked a far more powerful question:

"What assets do we already have, and how can we build on them?"

The answers were already present:

- A unique wetland ecosystem.
- Passionate environmental professionals willing to volunteer their expertise.
- Local schools eager to participate.
- Community members wanting a cleaner and safer environment.

- Local organisations willing to collaborate.
- Municipal partners prepared to support a shared vision.

The project demonstrates that sustainable development begins with people who recognise the strengths within their own community and work together to unlock them.

Funding did not create the vision—it accelerated a vision that already existed.

From Vision to Visible Transformation

During the reporting period, the initiative progressed from planning and establishment into a project delivering measurable environmental and social impact.

Areas that were once characterised by illegal dumping, invasive vegetation, and neglect are steadily being transformed into an attractive public environmental space where people can walk, learn, exercise, and reconnect with nature.

One of the project's most significant achievements has been the development of the 1.4-kilometre Rail Trail, providing a safe, elevated, all-weather route linking communities while supporting walking, running, recreation, commuting, and environmental education. Additional scenic routes extending approximately five kilometres have further enhanced public accessibility and recreational opportunities.

The visible transformation has changed public perception of the wetland from a neglected dumping ground into an emerging community park that residents increasingly value and enjoy.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITY ASSETS

Recognising the value and momentum of the volunteer-led initiative, Damlaagte Solar and Sasol provided funding to support implementation and expand the project's impact.

Rather than starting a new programme, the funding strengthened an existing community initiative by supporting agreed key performance areas, including:

- Environmental rehabilitation.
- Community clean-up campaigns.
- Rail Trail development.
- Alien invasive plant clearing.
- Environmental education and awareness.
- Worker training.
- Equipment procurement.
- Community participation.

The financial support provided the catalyst needed to convert years of volunteer effort into a structured programme capable of delivering long-term environmental and social benefits.

BUILDING STRONG GOVERNANCE

As the initiative matured, governance structures were established to ensure accountability, transparency, and long-term sustainability.

The Parys Wetland Park NPC was registered as a non-profit company, creating a formal legal platform for the initiative under the leadership of local directors committed to environmental stewardship.

Robust financial controls, expenditure approval processes, monitoring systems, and reporting mechanisms were introduced to ensure responsible management of project resources and measurable delivery against project objectives.

One of the project's most significant achievements has been the development of the 1.4-kilometre Rail Trail, providing a safe, elevated, all-weather route linking communities while supporting walking, running, recreation, commuting, and environmental education. Additional scenic routes extending approximately five kilometres have further enhanced public accessibility and recreational opportunities.

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PARYS WETLANDS PARK LAUNCH



Bird Watching



Running/Walking



Cycling



Environmental Education Awareness



Parys Wetlands Park Ribbon Cutting

This transition from an informal volunteer initiative to a professionally governed organisation significantly strengthened the project's credibility and long-term sustainability.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The rehabilitation of the wetland has never been viewed solely as an environmental project. It is equally a community development initiative that places local people at the centre of environmental restoration.

Throughout the reporting period:

- Local unemployed residents participated in clean-up campaigns, trail construction, and rehabilitation activities.
- Women and young people benefited from temporary employment opportunities.
- Local suppliers and service providers were prioritised wherever practical.
- Community volunteers contributed to clean-up campaigns and ongoing maintenance.

This approach reflects one of the core principles of Asset-Based Community Development—that communities should actively participate in creating the future they wish to see rather than simply benefiting from externally driven interventions.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CREATING FUTURE STEWARDS

Protecting ecosystems begins with education. The Parys Wetland Park has become an outdoor classroom where learners experience environmental conservation in a practical and engaging way.

Working in partnership with schools, educational institutions, and environmental specialists, the project delivered environmental awareness activities, guided excursions, and place-based learning experiences that connected young people directly with their local environment.

During the reporting period:

- More than 1,000 learners participated in environmental education activities.
- Teachers integrated wetland learning into educational programmes.

Church groups and community organisations also participated in awareness initiatives



CLASSROOM



ON SITE

Environmental Education Awareness Sessions

These experiences are helping develop a new generation of environmental stewards who understand the importance of protecting biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

PARTNERSHIPS DRIVING SUSTAINABLE IMPACT

The project's success demonstrates what can be achieved through collaboration.

Strategic partnerships were established with:

- Ngwathe Local Municipality.
- Vaal University of Technology.
- WADER.
- Department of Education.
- Local schools.
- Community organisations.
- Environmental specialists.
- Local businesses.

Formal Memoranda of Understanding strengthened these relationships while creating opportunities for research, environmental monitoring, community education, and future project expansion.

The partnership with Vaal University of Technology has further enhanced scientific monitoring through ongoing water and soil assessments, ensuring that environmental improvements can be measured against baseline conditions.

RAIL TRAIL DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENT

BEFORE



AFTER



WETLANDS PARK CLEAN UP



BEFORE



AFTER

ALIEN CLEARING/VEGETATION MANAGEMENT



BEFORE



AFTER

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS THAT EXTEND BEYOND CONSERVATION

The initiative has delivered outcomes that extend beyond ecological restoration.

Visible achievements include:

- Significant waste removal.
- Clearing of invasive alien vegetation.
- Improved biodiversity.
- Safer public access.
- Local employment opportunities.
- Environmental education.
- Community pride and ownership.
- Increased public awareness.
- Institutional credibility through strong governance and partnerships.

An unexpected but meaningful benefit has also emerged through the responsible use of cleared alien vegetation, with households collecting firewood generated during rehabilitation activities—ensuring that environmental management also provides practical value to local families.

A LEGACY BUILT BY VOLUNTEERS



Community Volunteers

The Parys Wetland Park reminds us that the most sustainable development often begins long before funding arrives.

It begins with individuals who are willing to volunteer their expertise, share a common purpose, and believe that meaningful change is possible.

The professional volunteers who initiated this project saw possibility where others saw neglect. They recognised that the wetland was not a problem to be solved, but a community asset waiting to be restored.

Today, supported by strategic partnerships, sound governance, and investment from Damlaagte Solar and Sasol, that vision continues to flourish.

The Parys Wetland Park stands as a living demonstration of the Asset-Based Community Development approach in action—showing that when communities build on their existing strengths, unite around a shared vision, and invest in both people and nature, they create lasting environmental, social, and economic value.

More than a rehabilitated wetland, the project has become a symbol of community pride, environmental stewardship, and collective action. It is proof that sustainable transformation does not begin with funding—it begins with people who care enough to take the first step.



BUILDING STRONGER BUSINESSES: EMPOWERING LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

Through Capacity Building and Compliance Training

"Thriving local businesses are the foundation of thriving communities. When entrepreneurs are equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and support, they become catalysts for economic transformation, job creation, and sustainable local development."

Small businesses are the backbone of South Africa's economy. They create employment, stimulate innovation, strengthen local supply chains, and contribute significantly to economic growth. Yet many entrepreneurs, particularly those operating as **Exempted Micro Enterprises (EMEs) and Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSEs)**, face challenges that extend beyond access to finance. Limited business knowledge, governance structures, compliance requirements, and strategic planning often hinder their ability to grow and compete in formal markets.

Recognising these challenges, an exciting **Entrepreneur Capacity Building and Compliance Training Programme** has been launched in Parys to strengthen the capabilities of local businesses and equip entrepreneurs with the practical skills needed to build resilient and sustainable enterprises

Investing in People Before Profit

The first phase of the programme has already welcomed nearly 40 local entrepreneurs, the majority of whom are emerging start-up business owners taking part in formal business training for the very first time.

For many participants, this represents a significant milestone in their entrepreneurial journey. While they possess the passion, determination, and innovative ideas to build successful businesses, they have had limited opportunities to access structured business development support.

By investing in entrepreneurial knowledge and capability, the programme is laying the foundation for long-term business sustainability and economic participation.

Why Capacity Building Matters

Capacity building is one of the most powerful investments that can be made in small businesses. While financial assistance provides valuable resources, knowledge enables entrepreneurs to make informed decisions, manage risk, identify opportunities, and confidently navigate the challenges of running a business.

Training programmes such as this empower entrepreneurs to:

- Strengthen business management skills.
- Improve financial planning and budgeting

- Understand legal and regulatory requirements.
- Build sustainable business systems.
- Access new markets and procurement opportunities.
- Increase business resilience and competitiveness.

Knowledge creates confidence, and confident entrepreneurs build stronger businesses.

Strengthening Compliance for Business Growth

Compliance is often viewed as an administrative burden, yet it is one of the key building blocks of a successful enterprise. Through dedicated compliance workshops, participants are gaining practical knowledge on the systems and documentation required to operate professionally and position themselves for future growth.

Topics include:

- Business registration and formalisation.
- Tax and regulatory compliance.
- Financial record keeping.
- Governance and business administration.
- Business planning.
- Tender readiness.
- Good business practices.

By understanding these requirements, entrepreneurs improve their credibility with customers, financial institutions, government departments, and corporate supply chains. Compliance not only reduces business risk but also opens doors to procurement opportunities, funding, partnerships, and long-term sustainability.

EMPOWERING *Local Entrepreneurs*

Transforming EMEs and QSEs

South Africa's Exempted Micro Enterprises (EMEs) and Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSEs) play a critical role in achieving inclusive economic transformation.

These businesses create employment within local communities, promote entrepreneurship, and contribute to the country's economic resilience. However, many operate informally or lack the systems needed to grow beyond survival.

Capacity building provides the bridge between informal trading and sustainable enterprise development.

As entrepreneurs strengthen their management capabilities and compliance systems, they become better positioned to:

- Expand their operations.
- Employ additional staff.
- Deliver higher-quality products and services.
- Access larger commercial opportunities.
- Participate in corporate and public sector supply chains.
- Build financially sustainable businesses.

In doing so, they contribute directly to local economic development and community prosperity.

BUILDING *Competitive Local Businesses*

A competitive local business sector benefits everyone.

Well-managed businesses are more likely to secure contracts, attract investment, retain customers, and create employment opportunities within their communities.

By equipping entrepreneurs with practical business knowledge, the programme helps build enterprises to compete in increasingly demanding markets while contributing to stronger local supply chains.

This investment also aligns with South Africa's broader transformation agenda by promoting inclusive economic participation and empowering historically disadvantaged entrepreneurs to participate meaningfully in the formal economy.



Compliance Session in progress

LOOKING AHEAD

The enthusiasm and commitment shown by participants during the first phase of the programme demonstrates the strong appetite for business development within the Parys community.

Building on this momentum, a second phase of the programme is scheduled to take place later this year, offering more advanced and in-depth business development training. This next phase will further strengthen participants' capabilities in key areas of enterprise growth, strategic planning, financial management, and business sustainability.

By providing ongoing mentorship and practical learning opportunities, the programme aims to support entrepreneurs beyond the classroom and into long-term business success.

CREATING A CULTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Enterprise development is most successful when it empowers people with knowledge that lasts a lifetime. Every entrepreneur who gains the confidence to manage finances, understand compliance, secure new opportunities, and grow a sustainable business becomes an agent of change within their community.

Today's start-up businesses have the potential to become tomorrow's employers, suppliers, innovators, and community leaders.

Through continued investment in entrepreneur capacity building, local businesses are not only strengthening their own futures—they are helping to build a more inclusive, resilient, and prosperous local economy. By equipping EMEs and QSEs with the skills, systems, and confidence to succeed, this programme is fostering sustainable transformation that will benefit businesses, families, and communities for generations to come.

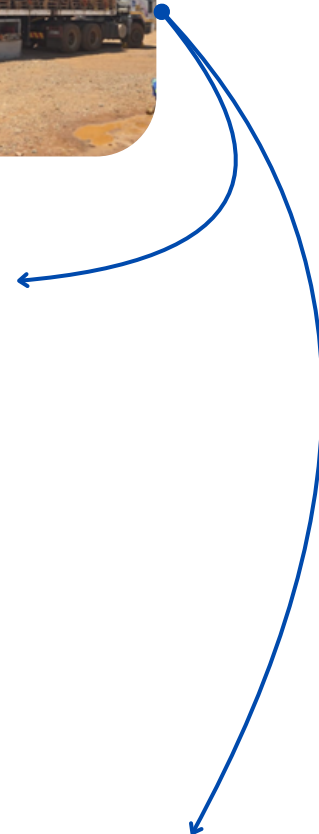


FROM WASTE TO WORTH: EMPOWERING A LOCAL CARPENTER THROUGH SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

"One person's waste can become another person's opportunity. When local entrepreneurs are empowered with the right tools and support, they don't just build businesses—they build stronger, more sustainable communities."

Sustainable development is about recognising the potential that already exists within a community and providing the resources needed to unlock it. This philosophy lies at the heart of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach, which focuses on identifying local talents, skills, and opportunities to create lasting economic and social impact.

This approach is exemplified by a local entrepreneur who has transformed discarded wooden pallets into high-quality furniture while creating environmental and economic value for his community.



INVESTING IN LOCAL POTENTIAL

As part of its Enterprise Development Programme, grant funding was provided to a local carpenter to purchase specialised woodworking equipment, enabling him to expand his carpentry business and increase production capacity. The entrepreneur had already demonstrated exceptional craftsmanship and entrepreneurial spirit. Rather than starting a business for him, the funding invested in an existing community asset—his skills, experience, and determination—to help build a sustainable enterprise capable of serving the growing needs of the local community. This is the essence of the Asset-Based Community Development approach: empowering local people by building on their existing strengths rather than focusing on limitations.

GIVING NEW LIFE TO WASTE

Innovation often begins by seeing opportunity where others see waste. During the construction of the solar plant, large quantities of wooden pallets were used to transport equipment and materials. Instead of allowing these pallets to be discarded or sent to landfill, the entrepreneur recognised their potential as a valuable raw material. By carefully dismantling, restoring, and repurposing the pallet wood, he transforms discarded timber into beautifully crafted furniture, demonstrating how circular economy principles can create both environmental and economic benefits. Every piece of furniture tells a story of sustainability—reducing waste, conserving natural resources, and giving new life to materials that would otherwise have little value.



SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH UPCYCLING

Upcycling goes beyond recycling. While recycling often requires breaking materials down into new products, upcycling preserves the integrity of the original material while increasing its value.

Through his carpentry business, the entrepreneur contributes to environmental sustainability by:

- Diverting wooden pallets from landfill.
- Reducing demand for newly harvested timber.
- Promoting responsible resource utilisation.
- Supporting circular economy principles.
- Creating environmentally sustainable products with long-term value.

This innovative approach aligns closely with the renewable energy sector's commitment to sustainable development by ensuring that environmental responsibility extends beyond energy generation to the responsible management of construction materials and resources.

BUILDING COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The impact of this investment extends beyond business growth. As his enterprise expands, the entrepreneur will also manufacture custom furniture for the Project Office and the Skills Development Centre within the local community.

These facilities will serve as important spaces for community engagement, education, and development, and the furniture produced by the local carpenter will become a lasting symbol of community participation and local economic empowerment. This creates a powerful legacy—community infrastructure built not only for the community but also by the community.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT THAT CREATES SHARED VALUE

Supporting local entrepreneurs creates benefits that extend far beyond individual businesses.

By investing in local enterprise, organisations help to:

- Stimulate local economic growth.
- Create sustainable livelihoods.
- Strengthen local supply chains.
- Encourage innovation.
- Retain economic value within the community.
- Build resilient local businesses capable of supporting future development.

This investment demonstrates how enterprise development can simultaneously deliver economic, environmental, and social returns.

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES THROUGH ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Asset-Based Community Development approach recognises that every community possesses valuable assets—people, skills, relationships, and natural resources—that can become the foundation for sustainable development.

This entrepreneur's success illustrates exactly how this principle works in practice.

His craftsmanship became the asset. Discarded pallet wood became the opportunity.

Grant funding became the catalyst. Together, these elements have created a business that not only generates income but also contributes to environmental sustainability, supports local infrastructure, and strengthens community resilience.

CREATING A LASTING LEGACY

This story is about more than furniture. It is about transforming waste into opportunity, investment into enterprise, and local talent into lasting community impact. By empowering local entrepreneurs to build on their existing strengths, organisations create businesses that continue generating value long after initial funding has been spent. Every table, chair, desk, and cabinet produced from reclaimed pallet wood represents more than skilled craftsmanship—it represents innovation, environmental responsibility, economic inclusion, and the belief that sustainable development begins with the assets already present within a community. Through strategic investment in local enterprise and a commitment to sustainable practices, this initiative demonstrates that when communities are empowered to build from within, they create solutions that benefit both people and the planet for generations to come.

FROM CONSTRUCTION WASTE TO CORPORATE ART: GIVING SOLAR WIRE A SECOND LIFE



Turning Waste into Opportunity Through Recycling and Enterprise Development

Sustainability is about more than generating clean energy—it is about finding innovative ways to create lasting value for both the environment and local communities. At the solar construction site, this commitment is being demonstrated through a unique initiative that transforms wire into handcrafted works of art while creating meaningful economic opportunities for a local entrepreneur. During the construction phase of the solar plant, wire that would traditionally be discarded were identified as a valuable resource with the potential for reuse. Rather than allowing these materials to become waste, the project partnered



with a talented local artist who upcycles the wire into distinctive sculptures, decorative pieces and bespoke corporate gifts

Each handcrafted item tells a story of innovation, sustainability and community empowerment. The finished products not only showcase remarkable creativity and craftsmanship but also serve as meaningful corporate gifts that reflect the project's commitment to environmental stewardship and responsible business practices. The initiative extends far beyond recycling. Recognising the artisan's talent and entrepreneurial potential, the solar project supported him in taking an important step towards business sustainability by assisting with the formal registration of his small business. Formal registration opens doors to new opportunities, enabling the business to operate professionally, access funding opportunities, participate in procurement processes and establish credibility with potential clients.



Environmental Awareness Classroom Session

CREATING ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS FOR TOMORROW

Environmental sustainability depends not only on technology and infrastructure but also on education. By equipping young people with environmental knowledge, communities cultivate future leaders who understand the importance of protecting natural resources and adopting sustainable practices.

Through partnerships with local schools, the entrepreneur delivers engaging environmental education programmes that encourage learners to become active custodians of their environment.

Her initiatives include:

- Partnerships with local schools
- Interactive learner engagement programmes
- Educational on-site excursions
- Environmental awareness campaigns
- Community outreach activities promoting responsible environmental practices

These programmes move beyond classroom learning by creating practical experiences that inspire curiosity, responsibility, and action.

INVESTING IN EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS

The Asset-Based Community Development approach recognises that sustainable development begins with local people who possess the passion, skills, relationships, and commitment to create positive change. Instead of waiting for external solutions, this entrepreneur identified an opportunity to educate young people about environmental responsibility and acted on it using the resources she had.

Recognising both her dedication and the impact she was already making, funding was provided to purchase essential equipment that would strengthen and expand her environmental education business. Rather than creating a new initiative from scratch, the investment enabled an existing community asset to grow, increasing its reach, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability.



Learners presenting what they learned

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A Growing Impact

The results of this community-driven initiative demonstrate the far-reaching benefits of investing in local entrepreneurs.

To date, the programme has successfully reached:

19

Schools

6,238

Learners

140

Teachers

Each learner reached represents another environmental ambassador equipped with the knowledge to make informed decisions about conservation, waste management, biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable living.

Teachers, in turn, continue reinforcing these lessons long after each programme has concluded, multiplying the impact across future generations.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL LIVELIHOODS THROUGH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Supporting local entrepreneurs creates a ripple effect that extends well beyond individual business success.

The funding provided for specialised equipment has enabled the entrepreneur to strengthen her service offering, improve operational efficiency, and expand her educational programmes to reach more schools and communities.

This investment not only supports business sustainability but also contributes to local economic development by creating opportunities for future growth, collaboration, and employment.

Enterprise development initiatives such as these demonstrate how investing in local businesses can simultaneously generate economic and social returns while strengthening community resilience.



Environmental Awareness session in the Wetlands

GROWING CHANGE FROM WITHIN: EMPOWERING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ENTREPRENEUR THROUGH COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

"When communities invest in their own people, they unlock the greatest resource they possess—the potential of local entrepreneurs to create lasting change."

At the heart of every thriving community is someone who sees opportunity where others see obstacles. This is the story of a local entrepreneur whose passion for environmental education has inspired thousands of young people and demonstrated the transformative power of investing in local talent. Long before funding became available, she had already begun making a difference. Armed with determination, knowledge, and an unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship, she visited schools, engaged learners, and encouraged communities to care for their natural environment. Despite having limited equipment and resources, she refused to allow these challenges to limit her vision. Her journey exemplifies one of the core principles of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach—recognising and building on the strengths, talents, and assets that already exist within a community rather than focusing solely on its needs or deficiencies.

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Environmental education is about more than teaching facts—it is about fostering a culture of stewardship. Through school partnerships, learner engagement, educational excursions, and community awareness activities, this entrepreneur is nurturing a generation that understands the importance of protecting the environment for future generations.

By encouraging learners to become active participants in environmental conservation, the programme is helping to build communities that are better equipped to manage natural resources responsibly and contribute to South Africa's sustainable development goals.



Environmental/Water Awareness Session with Vaal University of Technology

UNLOCKING COMMUNITY POTENTIAL

This success story highlights the true value of the Asset-Based Community Development approach. Rather than focusing on what a community lacks, it demonstrates what is possible when existing strengths are recognised, supported, and empowered. The entrepreneur's journey—from delivering environmental training with little more than passion and determination to leading a thriving educational enterprise—illustrates how strategic investment in local talent can create lasting social, environmental, and economic impact.

Her story reminds us that sustainable development begins with people. When communities invest in their own entrepreneurs, they do more than support a business—they cultivate leadership, inspire future generations, strengthen local economies, and build a legacy of environmental stewardship that will benefit communities for years to come.



Parys Poultry's Chicken Coops

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE RURAL ENTERPRISES: STRENGTHENING THE PARYS POULTRY COOPERATIVE THROUGH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT



"Sustainable enterprise development is not achieved through funding alone—it is realised when businesses are equipped with the governance, skills, systems, and strategic direction needed to thrive independently."

Strong local businesses are the cornerstone of resilient communities. They create employment, stimulate local economies, strengthen food security, and provide opportunities for long-term economic participation. However, many emerging enterprises possess the passion and determination to succeed but lack the governance structures, compliance systems, and strategic support necessary for sustainable growth.

Recognising this need, Damlaagte Solar, through its Enterprise Development Programme, partnered with Blue Sky Impact Investments to implement a comprehensive business support programme for the Parys Poultry Farm Cooperative, helping transform the cooperative into a sustainable and bankable enterprise.

INVESTING BEYOND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Enterprise Development is about far more than providing financial assistance. It is about building the capabilities that enable businesses to become self-sufficient, resilient, and competitive.

The Parys Poultry Farm Cooperative, situated approximately five kilometres outside Parys in the Free State, is a six-member cooperative whose members are actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the business.

Although the cooperative had received significant infrastructure support—including three fully constructed broiler houses from the Department of Agriculture—the business lacked the accompanying governance systems, operational management structures, financial controls, and compliance frameworks needed to maximise the value of this investment.

Recognising these challenges, cooperative members initially approached Blue Sky Impact Investments for assistance in stabilising and turning the business around. Following this engagement, Blue Sky was formally appointed by Damlaagte Solar to deliver a structured Enterprise Development Programme designed to strengthen the cooperative's operational performance and position it for long-term sustainability.

BUILDING BUSINESSES THROUGH AN ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

The intervention reflects the principles of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach, which focuses on identifying and strengthening the assets that already exist within communities.

Rather than creating a new business, the programme recognised the cooperative itself as an existing community asset—with committed members, valuable agricultural infrastructure, and a shared vision for success.

The focus therefore shifted from addressing deficiencies to unlocking potential by strengthening the cooperative's internal capacity and providing the tools required for long-term independence.

This approach empowers communities to build on their own strengths, creating businesses that are capable of driving local economic development from within.

A HOLISTIC ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The support programme extends beyond traditional business consulting by addressing every critical component required for a successful and sustainable agricultural enterprise.

Key areas of support include:

FORMALISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE COMPLIANCE

Strong governance begins with people. The programme supports the cooperative in establishing appropriate organisational structures, employment practices, human resource systems, and workplace compliance to ensure professional and accountable business operations.

GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE

Effective financial management is fundamental to business sustainability. The programme strengthens financial reporting systems, governance structures, accounting practices, record management, and compliance processes, enabling informed decision-making and improved financial accountability.

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT

Operational excellence is essential in commercial poultry production.

Technical management support focuses on improving production planning, operational efficiency, flock management, and overall business performance to maximise productivity and profitability.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

Responsible farming practices contribute to both environmental sustainability and business resilience.

The programme assists the cooperative in implementing environmental compliance measures that promote responsible waste management, resource efficiency, biosecurity, and sustainable agricultural practices while ensuring alignment with relevant environmental legislation.

BANKABILITY AND GROWTH STRATEGY

One of the programme's primary objectives is to position the cooperative as a financially credible and investment-ready business. Through improved governance, financial systems, operational performance, and strategic planning, the cooperative is being prepared to access future funding opportunities, expand its operations, and pursue sustainable business growth.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT, TRAINING AND REPORTING

Continuous mentoring, structured training, performance monitoring, and reporting ensure that knowledge is transferred to cooperative members while progress is measured against clearly defined development objectives.

This hands-on support equips members with the practical skills needed to manage and grow the business independently.

CREATING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Agricultural cooperatives play an essential role in rural economic development by creating employment, strengthening food security, and stimulating local economies. By investing in governance, compliance, business systems, and leadership capacity, the Enterprise Development Programme helps ensure that the cooperative can continue creating sustainable livelihoods for its members while contributing to broader economic development within the local community.

The programme also demonstrates that successful enterprise development is achieved not simply by providing infrastructure, but by investing in the systems, knowledge, and capabilities required to sustain that infrastructure over the long term.

A PARTNERSHIP FOR LONG- TERM SUCCESS

The collaboration between Damlaagte Solar, Blue Sky Impact Investments, and the Parys Poultry Farm Cooperative illustrates the value of strategic partnerships in community development.

By combining financial investment with expert business support, governance strengthening, technical mentoring, and strategic planning, the programme is laying the foundation for a resilient enterprise capable of operating independently and contributing to the local economy for years to come.

GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER

The journey of the Parys Poultry Farm Cooperative demonstrates that sustainable development is built on more than infrastructure—it is built on people, partnerships, and the willingness to invest in long-term capacity.

Through structured enterprise development, governance support, compliance, and strategic mentoring, the cooperative is evolving into a stronger, more resilient business that is better positioned to secure future investment, expand its operations, and create lasting socio-economic impact.

This initiative is a powerful example of how Enterprise Development, guided by the principles of Asset-Based Community Development, can unlock the full potential of local businesses—transforming community assets into thriving enterprises that generate opportunity, strengthen local economies, and create a legacy of sustainable growth for future generations.



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