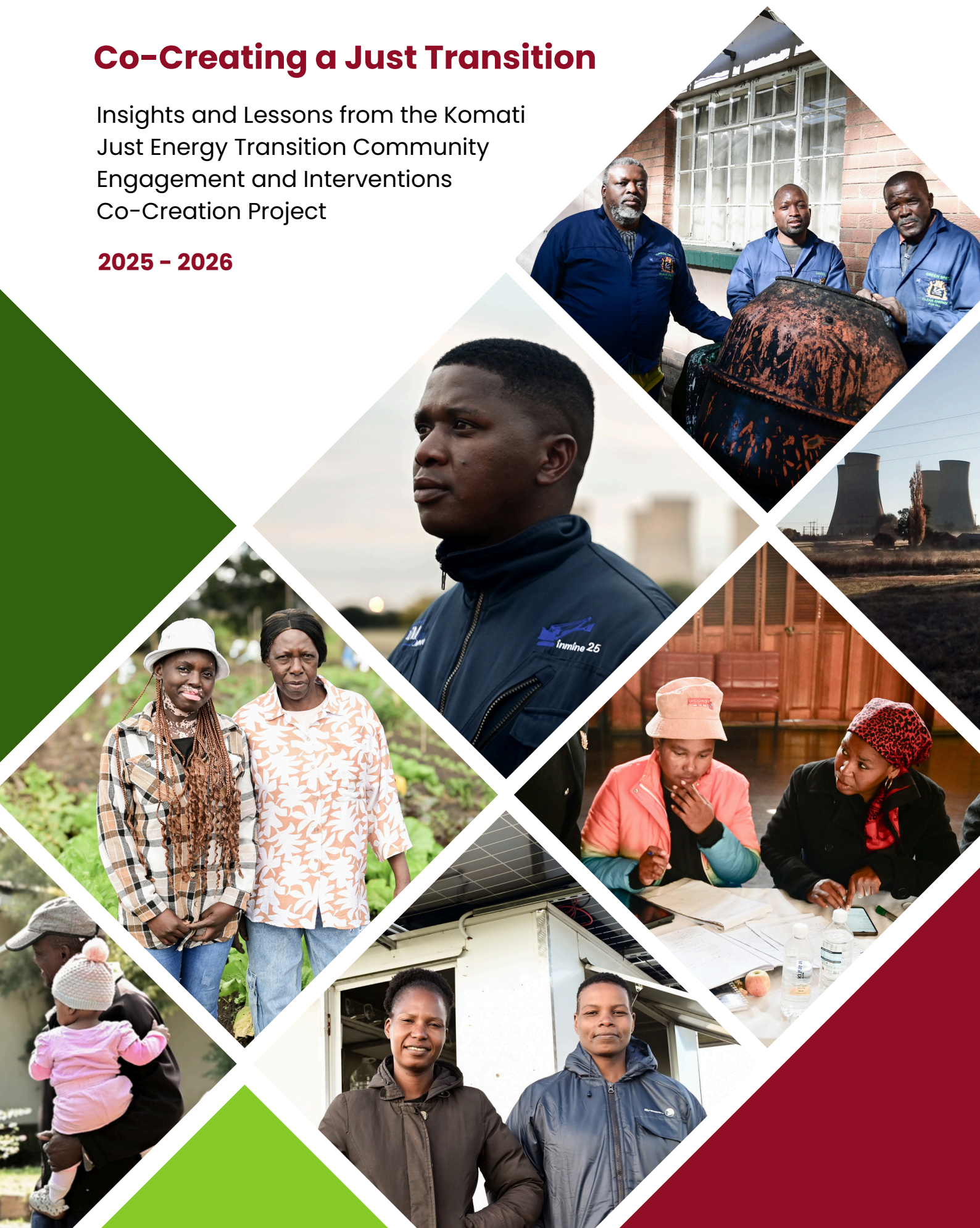


# Co-Creating a Just Transition

Insights and Lessons from the Komati  
Just Energy Transition Community  
Engagement and Interventions  
Co-Creation Project

**2025 – 2026**



On behalf of:

Federal Ministry  
for the Environment, Climate Action,  
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

IKI INTERNATIONAL  
CLIMATE  
INITIATIVE

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Most importantly, we thank the Komati Local Steering Committee and the community members, innovators and entrepreneurs of Ward 4, whose leadership, participation and commitment were central to the project's achievements and the lessons captured in this case study.

## PREPARED BY

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*Bio-briquettes produced by Lemo Pty Ltd using reclaimed coal waste and invasive biomass*





## INTRODUCTION

South Africa is making progress towards a lower-carbon future as part of the global response to climate change. But for communities whose economies and livelihoods have long depended on coal, this transition brings uncertainty and important questions about the future. Ward 4 in Steve Tshwete Local Municipality, Mpumalanga, is experiencing this change directly. The closure of the Komati Power Station, South Africa's oldest coal-fired power station, and the ongoing repurposing of the site have had a significant impact on workers, families, small businesses and the wider local economy. For many residents, these changes were not only economic, but deeply personal, affecting household stability, future plans and people's sense of belonging and security.

While the closure was largely linked to aging infrastructure and financial challenges, it has also become part of the country's broader energy transition and plans to expand renewable energy.

For many people in Ward 4, the transition has raised difficult concerns about jobs, inclusion, local development, and whether communities will genuinely benefit from the changes taking place around them. During previous engagements facilitated by the Presidential Climate Commission, many residents expressed frustration about poor communication, limited consultation, and feeling excluded from decisions that would directly affect their lives. The Komati Just Energy Transition Community Engagement and Interventions Co-Creation (K-JET CEICC) Project was developed in response to these concerns.



The project aimed to create more meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in conversations about climate change, the just transition, and local development. It also sought to support communities in identifying practical solutions and opportunities that respond to local needs and realities.

Through awareness workshops, community dialogues, focus group discussions, surveys, innovation bootcamps, and enterprise support, the project created spaces for community members to share their experiences, voice concerns, and help shape ideas for the future.

This case study documents that journey and the outcomes that emerged through the process. It highlights both the challenges communities face during the transition and the resilience, creativity, and leadership that already exist within Ward 4.

It begins by exploring the local context and the impact of the transition on communities. It then shares the perspectives of different groups, the solutions and enterprise opportunities that emerged through the co-creation process, and concludes with the key lessons for supporting a more inclusive and community-led just transition.

More importantly, it shows that a just transition is not only about energy or infrastructure. It is also about people, whether communities are informed, included, listened to, and able to participate meaningfully in shaping their own futures.







## THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

The K-JET CEICC Project was designed around the idea that communities should not only be informed about the just transition, but should also have meaningful opportunities to participate in shaping it.

From the beginning, the project aimed to create spaces where community members could share their experiences, raise concerns, identify priorities, and contribute ideas for local solutions.

This approach was particularly important in Ward 4, where many residents had previously expressed frustration about poor communication, limited consultation, and feeling excluded from decisions affecting their future.

The project was implemented over a 16-month period, from December 2024 to March 2026.

**Before activities were rolled out, more than 170 stakeholders were engaged through inception meetings and consultations.** These engagements included community leaders, local government representatives, community structures, and other local stakeholders. The purpose was to introduce the project, gather local insights, and ensure that the design and implementation approach responded to community realities and priorities.

A strong emphasis was placed on inclusion and accessibility throughout the process. Community members highlighted the importance of clear communication, transparency, translation into local languages, and regular feedback. They also stressed the need for engagement processes that considered different levels of education, access to information, and barriers to participation.



To respond to these concerns, the project used a combination of workshops, surveys, focus group discussions, and community dialogues across Komati, Koornfontein, Blinkpan and Lesedi Villages. Dedicated spaces were created where different groups, including women, youth, men, and older adults, could speak openly about their experiences and priorities.

**In February 2025, climate awareness workshops were held across the three communities, reaching 178 participants.**

These sessions focused on climate change, the just transition, and how environmental and economic changes were already affecting local communities. A community perception survey was also conducted during this phase to better understand local views, concerns, and levels of awareness.

**In March 2025, the project moved into a co-creation phase, with workshops involving 184 participants.**

During these sessions, community members worked together to identify key social, economic, and environmental challenges affecting their communities and proposed practical ideas and interventions in response. Rather than introducing pre-determined solutions, the process encouraged participants to draw from their own lived realities, experiences, and local knowledge.

To ensure broader inclusion, focus group discussions and anonymous questionnaires were also used to explore how the transition was affecting different groups in different ways. Separate engagements with women, men, youth, and non-youth participants helped create safer and more comfortable spaces for discussion, while also highlighting the unequal impacts of transition across the community.

**As ideas and priorities began emerging from the workshops, over 30 community representatives participated in the IndaloVator Innovation Bootcamp in April 2025.**

The bootcamp provided practical support to help participants refine community-led ideas into potential enterprises and local innovations.

**Following the bootcamp, participants pitched their ideas to nearly 300 stakeholders at the Indalo Symposium.**

Selected enterprises were awarded seed grants to begin developing proof-of-concept projects and testing the viability of their ideas within their local communities.

Support for the enterprises continued beyond the symposium. Participating groups received extensive training on business development, governance, and corporate structures, with a particular focus on community ownership and community benefit models.



Enterprises were also supported through business registration and formalisation processes, while ongoing mentorship helped teams test their ideas within the local market and further strengthen their concepts.

Where possible, enterprises were linked to sector-specific technical mentors and existing operational models that could be adapted or replicated locally. For some enterprises, this “plug-and-play” approach helped accelerate implementation by allowing them to build on tested systems and practical examples, rather than starting entirely from scratch. This enabled some enterprises to become operational much more quickly while still adapting solutions to local realities and opportunities. **Five community-based enterprises emerged through this process.**

Throughout the process, trust-building remained an important priority. This included ongoing communication with communities, creating opportunities for feedback, and recognising that meaningful participation requires more than once-off consultation. The project aimed to support a more inclusive process where communities could move beyond simply discussing problems and begin shaping practical solutions for their future.







## WHAT COMMUNITIES TOLD US

### **Communities Want Meaningful and Inclusive Participation**

One of the clearest messages that emerged throughout the project was that communities want to be included meaningfully in conversations about the future of Ward 4. Community members repeatedly emphasised that participation should go beyond once-off meetings or information-sharing sessions. People wanted engagement processes that were transparent, respectful, accessible, and responsive to local realities.

During the project inception meetings, community members were asked what inclusive and participatory engagement should look like in practice.

Across the different communities, people highlighted the importance of clear communication, regular feedback, and honest engagement. Many participants said they were tired of consultations that did not lead to visible action or where information was not shared back with the community afterwards.

Community members also stressed the importance of using local languages, simplifying technical information, and ensuring that people from different educational backgrounds could participate comfortably. Some participants highlighted the need for verbal engagement methods instead of relying heavily on written materials, while others emphasised the importance of transport support, accessible venues, advance notice for meetings, and ongoing communication with the broader community, not only selected stakeholders.



Trust and transparency emerged as major themes throughout the engagement process. Many participants felt that previous development or transition-related engagements had excluded ordinary community members or failed to communicate clearly about opportunities, plans, and outcomes. As a result, there was strong support for more community-centred engagement structures, regular reporting back, and better communication between implementing organisations and local residents.

### **Communities Are Experiencing Climate Change, Even Where Understanding Remains Limited**

Although levels of understanding varied, climate concern across the communities was high. More than 75% of respondents said climate change was already affecting their lives and communities, while over 64% said addressing climate change was either “very important” or “extremely important.”

Community members linked climate change to experiences such as extreme heat, irregular rainfall, water challenges, environmental degradation, and growing health and economic pressures. Many participants described these changes through lived experience rather than technical climate language.

At the same time, understanding of climate change itself remained uneven. While 28.6% of respondents reported having a good understanding of climate change, nearly half indicated either limited understanding or no understanding at all. This highlighted an important reality within the community: people are already experiencing the impacts of climate change even where technical understanding remains limited.

The findings suggest that communities are not disconnected from climate realities. Instead, there is a need for more accessible, locally relevant information that connects climate issues to people’s daily experiences and livelihoods.

### **The Just Transition Remains Uncertain for Many Communities**

The concept of a “just transition” was less understood than climate change itself. More than a third of respondents (33.7%) said they had no understanding of the just transition, while only a small percentage described themselves as having expert knowledge of the concept.

Community discussions revealed that many people were not necessarily opposed to transition or renewable energy. Instead, uncertainty centred around practical concerns such as jobs, livelihoods, fairness, and whether local communities would genuinely benefit from new opportunities emerging through the transition.





### **Mixed Perspectives on the Just Transition**

Community perspectives on the just transition were mixed. While some participants expressed optimism and support, others remained uncertain or sceptical, often influenced by previous experiences of exclusion, poor communication, or lack of visible local benefits.

### **Building Trust Through Participation**

Trust also emerged as both important and fragile. Although nearly half of respondents expressed some level of trust that the just transition could benefit their communities, many stressed that trust would depend on transparency, visible action, and meaningful participation over time.

### **A Strong Desire to Be Included**

Across discussions, one issue remained clear: communities wanted to be part of shaping the transition, not simply informed about decisions after they had already been made.

### **Communities Began Co-Creating Their Vision for the Future**

As discussions around climate change and the just transition deepened, community members moved beyond immediate concerns and began reflecting on the kind of future they wanted for their communities.

Rather than focusing only on energy or coal, participants connected the transition to broader environmental, social, and economic realities affecting everyday life in Ward 4. Many participants explained that these challenges are deeply interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation. Across the workshops, communities identified a number of priority concerns affecting local wellbeing, livelihoods, and future opportunities.

### **Key Environmental Concerns**

- Water pollution
- Climate change impacts
- Air pollution
- Soil erosion
- Poor waste management

### **Key Social Concerns**

- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Crime and gender-based violence
- Lack of access to quality education
- Lack of recreational and community facilities
- Community exclusion from decision-making

### **Key Economic Concerns**

- Unemployment/job loss;
- Limited economic opportunities;
- Declining local economic activity;
- Lack of funding;
- Lack of business support;
- Skills gaps.

As communities reflected on these challenges, discussions also shifted toward possible solutions and opportunities that could strengthen local resilience and create more inclusive forms of development.

The engagement process highlighted the importance of ensuring that future interventions should create practical opportunities for local people, particularly young people, women, and unemployed residents. There was also strong support for initiatives that could strengthen local participation, improve livelihoods, and support longer-term economic and environmental sustainability. Several priority intervention areas emerged across the different communities and are summarised below.

### **Skills Development and Education**

- FET colleges and artisan training
- Digital literacy and career readiness workshops
- Entrepreneurial skills development
- Vocational centres and ICT access

### **Food Security and Agriculture**

- Community and school vegetable gardens
- Poultry and livestock farming
- Hydroponics and solar-powered farming
- Compost and fertiliser production

### **Renewable Energy and Green Economy Opportunities**

- Solar assembly projects
- LED sales and charging stations
- Waste recycling initiatives
- Greenhouse and climate awareness projects

### **Infrastructure and Community**

#### **Services**

- Clinics, libraries, schools, and community halls
- Taxi ranks and shopping facilities
- Safer parks and recreational facilities
- Improved roads, lighting, and public infrastructure

### **Social Development and Community**

#### **Safety**

- Rehabilitation centres and sports outreach programmes
- Youth creative programmes
- Community policing initiatives
- Motivational speaking and peer support programmes

### **Local Economic Development and**

#### **Participation**

- Business hubs and incubators
- Funding support for local enterprises
- Community-based markets
- Community forums, youth councils, and leadership development

***Importantly, these discussions showed that communities do not see the just transition only as an energy transition. For many participants, a just transition means building communities that are more inclusive, economically diverse, environmentally sustainable, and responsive to local needs and aspirations.***





## **UNEQUAL IMPACTS OF THE TRANSITION**

### **Transition Is Experienced Differently Across Communities**

The co-creation workshops revealed that the impacts of climate change and the transition away from coal are not experienced equally across communities. Women, men, young people, and older adults often described very different pressures, fears, responsibilities, and barriers to participation.

To better understand these experiences, focus group discussions were held between May and June 2025 with women, men, youth, and adults over 36 in Ward 4.

These discussions explored how people understood climate change and the just transition, how the changes were affecting their daily lives and livelihoods, and whether they felt included in decisions about the future of their communities.

***Across all groups, participants described uncertainty about the future, frustration with exclusion from decision-making, and concern about the long-term social and economic impacts of transition. At the same time, many participants also shared ideas, aspirations, and practical solutions rooted in their lived realities.***

## **Women Are Carrying Invisible Economic and Social Burdens**

Women's discussions revealed how deeply the social and economic impacts of transition are being felt within households and communities.

Although many women described experiencing climate impacts such as extreme heat, health problems, and difficult working conditions, the closure of Komati Power Station was more often discussed through its effects on family income, household stability, and emotional wellbeing.

Many women spoke about the pressure of trying to hold households together after job losses affected partners or family members. Participants described increased reliance on social grants, rising unpaid care responsibilities, emotional stress, and growing financial insecurity.

***"When my husband lost his job at Komati, we lost our home. I started baking to survive."***

Women also linked unemployment and economic pressure to rising levels of depression, substance abuse, and gender-based violence within communities. Some participants described how they had become primary providers and caregivers while still struggling to access training, funding, or economic opportunities themselves.

The discussions also highlighted how women are often excluded from information and decision-making processes. Many participants explained that they were unaware of opportunities, programmes, or community discussions because information was shared through platforms they could not easily access.

Despite these challenges, women consistently proposed practical and community-driven solutions, including small businesses, agriculture, recycling, catering, sewing, and renewable energy-related opportunities. Many saw themselves not only as caregivers, but also as entrepreneurs, organisers, and leaders capable of contributing to local development if given proper support.

## **Men Spoke About Job Loss, Identity, and Emotional Strain**

For many men, the transition was closely tied to fears around unemployment, loss of identity, and changing family roles.

There was a broad understanding of the just transition and the need to move towards cleaner forms of energy. However, many men also expressed uncertainty about where they fit within this changing economy, particularly as coal-related jobs disappear and new opportunities require skills they do not currently have.

Unemployment was described not only as an economic challenge, but also as an emotional and psychological one.



Discussions highlighted experiences of stress, anxiety, loss of dignity, family conflict, and feelings of rejection linked to an inability to provide for households.

Some men described the transition as creating a "double burden", losing existing jobs while also struggling to access the skills needed for new forms of work.

***"Losing my job makes me feel lost and like I have no purpose."***

Discussions also highlighted frustration about limited consultation and inaccessible communication processes. Information about the just transition was often seen as overly technical, poorly communicated, or disconnected from local realities. Alongside concerns about job losses, many called for practical support, including reskilling opportunities, counselling services, community training centres, and better access to information in local languages.

### **Youth Feel Excluded From Decisions About Their Future**

Young people across the communities expressed a strong sense of frustration, uncertainty, and exclusion. Although many youth participants understood climate change through everyday experiences such as extreme weather, pollution, and economic hardship, they often felt disconnected from formal discussions about the just transition and the future of their communities.

A recurring concern was that young people were invited into meetings but rarely listened to in meaningful ways.

***"We are always in meetings, but nothing changes for us."***

***"Older people don't take us seriously. They think we know nothing."***

Many youth people described feeling anxious about the future, particularly because of unemployment, lack of opportunities, poor access to skills development, and limited career guidance. Concerns about the cost of mobile data, lack of internet access, and exclusion from digital platforms were also raised frequently. Some participants worried that continued unemployment and lack of support could push more young people toward crime, substance abuse, and hopelessness.

At the same time, discussions revealed strong creativity and entrepreneurial thinking. Young people proposed a wide range of locally grounded ideas, including recycling businesses, hydroponics, online businesses, beauty services, manufacturing projects, and community-based enterprises.

Youth participants also strongly advocated for formal youth representation structures that would allow them to participate more directly in local transition planning and decision-making.





### **Older Adults Fear Being Left Behind**

Older adults and non-youth participants often described the transition through feelings of loss, exclusion, and uncertainty.

Many spoke about the closure of coal-related industries as disrupting not only jobs, but also long-standing social networks, daily routines, and community identity. Some described losing a sense of dignity, status, or purpose following unemployment or retrenchment.

#### ***"I feel like I've lost my place in the community."***

Many also raised concerns about age discrimination, limited retraining opportunities, health challenges, and difficulties adapting to new technologies associated with the green economy. There was a shared concern that older adults could be overlooked in future employment opportunities and transition planning processes.

At the same time, many identified practical opportunities linked to agriculture, childcare services, recycling, sewing, and local markets. There was also strong support for accessible retraining programmes and more inclusive consultation approaches that recognise the different needs, knowledge, and experiences of older adults.

### **Across All Groups, Communities Called for Inclusion, Respect, and Better Communication**

Although experiences differed across groups, several themes emerged consistently throughout the discussions. Many participants expressed frustration with consultation processes that felt tokenistic, inconsistent, or disconnected from local realities. Communities repeatedly called for more respectful engagement, stronger feedback processes, and greater transparency about opportunities and decision-making. Information inequality also emerged as a major concern. Participants explained that lack of smartphones, internet access, mobile data, transport, and inclusive communication methods often prevented people from accessing important information about transition-related opportunities and programmes.

#### **Across all groups, there was strong support for:**

- youth and women's forums,
- multilingual communication,
- face-to-face engagement,
- and more community-led participation structures.

Importantly, the discussions showed that communities do not simply want to be consulted occasionally. People want ongoing involvement in shaping the future of their communities and meaningful participation in decisions that directly affect their lives and livelihoods.



## FROM IDEAS TO ACTION

Following the co-creation workshops, selected community participants took part in the IndaloVator Innovation Bootcamp, Indalo's starter-level enterprise incubation programme designed to help early-stage entrepreneurs develop, test, and strengthen their business ideas. The bootcamp marked an important shift in the process.

Community members moved beyond identifying challenges and began exploring how local ideas could become practical, community-led enterprises and long-term livelihood opportunities.

Participants developed and refined ideas linked to the agriculture, water, energy and sustainable textiles sectors.

The process continued beyond the bootcamp. During the Indalo Symposium, participating groups presented their ideas publicly and pitched their innovations to a wider audience. Selected groups then received seed grant funding to help develop proof-of-concept projects and begin testing the viability of their ideas within local communities.

From August 2025 to February 2026, participating groups also received ongoing support, including:

- business development and formalisation support,
- mentorship and technical guidance,
- governance and community ownership training,
- and assistance with testing and refining their business models.



Seven innovation groups were initially formed through the process. While some groups faced challenges continuing beyond the early stages, five community-led enterprises remained active. By early 2026, four of these enterprises were already operating and testing their ideas within local communities, while continuing to receive support to strengthen and grow their activities over time.

***Together, these enterprises provide an early glimpse into what community-led transition initiatives can look like in practice within Ward 4.***







## ENTERPRISE CASE STUDIES

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# CASE STUDY 1: LEMO PTY LTD



*After spending years without work following mine and power station closures, the founders of Lemo Pty Ltd joined the Indalo programme in search of new opportunities. They received training, mentorship, and a R50 000 grant through the Indalo programme to establish an enterprise that turns coal dust and invasive biomass into fuel briquettes.*

## BACKGROUND

For many of the founders of Lemo Pty Ltd, the closure of mines and the Komati power station marked the beginning of long periods of unemployment and uncertainty.

Before starting the business, Eric Ntshangase had worked for 20 years as a diesel mechanic at the mine supplying the power station before the mine eventually closed. At the same mine, Elliot Mashia had worked as a plant operator before being retrenched and remaining unemployed for nearly ten years.

Patrick Mmotong had worked as a subcontractor linked to the power station before becoming unemployed for five years following the closure.

The team first heard about the Indalo programme through a community WhatsApp group. According to Patrick Mmotong, they were initially sceptical because many organisations had previously entered the area promising support that never materialised. *"I thought it was a scam. Many companies come here claiming to assist the community of Komati."*

Despite this initial uncertainty, the group eventually joined the programme. According to Patrick, one of the most valuable aspects of the programme was the financial management training. He reflected on a previous business opportunity but lacked the financial discipline and planning skills needed to manage the income sustainably.

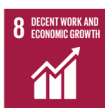
## BUSINESS MODEL

Lemo Pty Ltd produces fuel briquettes using discarded coal dust from local mines and biomass from invasive black wattle trees found in the surrounding area. The founders saw an opportunity to turn these materials that were often treated as waste, into a valuable product while creating jobs in their community. The materials are combined with a binding agent and moulded into briquettes, which are sold in Komati, Hendrina, and Middelburg.

## TRIPLE IMPACT



THE GLOBAL GOALS



### Environmental Impact

**80%**

lower carbon intensity than  
raw coal based on  
laboratory testing



### Social Impact

**3**

households now benefit  
from improved income.



### Economic Impact

**6**

jobs currently supported  
(3 full-time; 3 part-time)

## GROWTH OPPORTUNITY

The enterprise's biggest challenge is its production equipment. The current briquette press frequently breaks down, disrupting production and limiting the business's ability to meet demand. According to the team, securing a hydraulic pressing machine is their biggest priority. The machine would increase production to approximately one tonne of briquettes per day, or 250 bags daily, while creating an additional six permanent jobs. The team estimates that increased production could generate an annual turnover of approximately R2.4 million, helping the business grow its impact within the local economy.

## PERSONAL IMPACT

For Patrick, the business has helped restore a sense of dignity and responsibility after years of unemployment.

***"It was difficult being a man without any income at home, but now I am able to provide."***

Patrick explained that becoming an entrepreneur has changed how both the community and his family see him.

***"Even my kids at school can say my father is an entrepreneur."***

The founders explained that income generated through the business is already making a difference within their households.







## LOOKING AHEAD

Patrick's hope for the future is to see Lemo Pty Ltd grow beyond Komati and create opportunities for others who have been affected by mine closures and unemployment.

***"I believe our business in three years will have three branches in Nkangala. We want to create jobs and make sure our success benefits the community."***



## CASE STUDY 2: iSPRING WATER SOLUTIONS



*When Eneya Sibambo and her team began exploring business opportunities through the Indalo programme, they were encouraged to look beyond ideas and identify a real need within their community. What they found was a growing concern around water access in the farming communities in Ward 4. Through training, mentorship, and a R150 000 grant, the team established iSpring Water Solutions to provide treated drinking water to households and businesses in the area.*

### BACKGROUND

The team first heard about the Indalo programme through members of the local steering committee who encouraged them to participate. At the time, founders Eneya Sibambo and Phindile Mncina were looking for employment opportunities, while Lerato Ngomane had completed university but remained unemployed.

Before joining the programme, Eneya had spent more than seven years unemployed after previously working in the mining sector. She explained that unemployment and mine closures had affected many families in the area, including her own. Her father had worked at a local mine before losing his job when the mine closed, and the experience left a lasting impression on how she understood the challenges facing her community. *"I was interested in business, but I didn't have capital or the heart to start."*

According to Eneya, one of the most valuable lessons from the programme was learning that a successful business must respond to a real community need. *"We learned that you don't just open a business because it is in your mind. You must test the idea and understand whether it works."*



## BUSINESS MODEL

The idea for iSpring Water Solutions emerged after the team identified water access as one of the most pressing challenges affecting farms in Ward 4. Many households experienced unreliable water supply, poor water quality, and long periods without water, while existing boreholes had not been maintained for several years.

***“We started falling in love with the idea because we were solving a real problem.”***

Using the Kusini Water model, iSpring Water Solutions provides treated and affordable drinking water to communities within Ward 4. The model uses a specialised filtration system that removes bacteria and parasites from water, making it safer for consumption. Because the system can be powered by solar energy and does not require complex infrastructure, it is well suited to rural communities with limited access to reliable services.

The enterprise operates on a local farm, where water is treated before being supplied to households, businesses, and community organisations. Alongside its enterprise activities, it also provides free water access to households on surrounding farms as part of its community benefit model.

## TRIPLE IMPACT



### Environmental Impact

**99.9%**

**of bacteria and parasites removed through a solar powered water filtration system.**



### Social Impact

**17**

**households benefit from daily access to free water**



### Economic Impact

**100%**

**youth-owned enterprise creating 4 jobs.  
(3 fulltime; 1 part-time)**

## PERSONAL IMPACT

For Eneya, the enterprise represents more than simply starting a business.

After years of unemployment and seeing the impact of mine closures within her own family and community, the opportunity to build something meaningful has given her a renewed sense of direction and purpose.

Eneya explained that the programme helped her gain confidence in herself and her ability to contribute positively within her community. ***“If you love what you do, you will do it nicely, and you will protect it.”***



***“I feel proud. We can feel that we are part of something big.”***

**-Eneya Sibambo**



## **CHALLENGES FACING THE ENTERPRISE**

One of the biggest challenges facing the enterprise has been winter weather conditions affecting the solar-powered pumping system, which disrupts production and makes it difficult to fulfil larger orders consistently.

The team explained that they recently struggled to fulfil a large order of 800 bottles because of disruptions linked to weather conditions affecting the solar-powered system.

The enterprise also operates from a very small working space, limiting production and storage capacity.

Transport also remains a challenge, with the team currently relying on Lerato's mother's vehicle for deliveries and using money from sales to cover fuel costs.



## **VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

Eneya said the team hopes to grow iSpring Water Solutions beyond Ward 4 and expand into other communities across South Africa.

***"Our hope is for the business to grow across South Africa and even outside South Africa."***

For the team, the long-term vision is to continue building a business that responds to real community needs while creating opportunities for young people within their area.





# CASE STUDY 3: SIPHAKAMISENI ENTERPRISE



*What started as a small backyard garden to help put food on the table has grown into Siphakamiseni Enterprise, an integrated farming business producing vegetables and poultry in the Koorfontein area. Through the Indalo programme, the enterprise received training, mentorship, and a R100 000 grant to expand its operations and create employment opportunities within the community.*

## BACKGROUND

Farming was already part of Jane Maluma's life while she was employed at Koorfontein Mine, where she worked in the warehouse issuing equipment. At the time, she maintained a small garden at home alongside her job.

When the mine closed and Jane lost her job, the garden became an important source of support for her household.

*"When the mine closed, I was sitting at home. That is when I started working hard on the garden so we could survive."*

As the garden expanded, the team moved from a backyard plot to larger farming spaces within the community. By the time they joined the Indalo programme, all members of the enterprise were unemployed and looking for ways to strengthen and grow their farming activities.

According to Jane, the training helped the team better understand financial management, business planning, and how to run the enterprise more effectively.



## BUSINESS MODEL

Siphakamiseni Enterprise was developed in response to growing food insecurity within Ward 4. Following mine and power station closures, many households experienced unemployment and reduced incomes, while fresh produce and everyday food items such as eggs were often expensive and difficult to access locally. To help address these challenges, the enterprise operates an integrated farming model that combines crop production and poultry farming. Prior to joining the programme, the team was already producing a range of vegetables and had supplied spinach and other produce to local customers.

A R100 000 grant enabled the enterprise to construct a poultry structure, allowing the business to expand beyond crop production.

During a field trip, the team was introduced to Benica Fruits & Veggies, an integrated farming enterprise that now provides technical mentorship and guidance. Based on this support, the enterprise has expanded its chilli production and introduced okra as a new crop.

The team is also exploring opportunities in agro-processing and has already started producing its own atchaar.

For Jane and her team, farming is not only about growing food, but also about creating a reliable source of income while making affordable food more accessible within the community.

## TRIPLE IMPACT



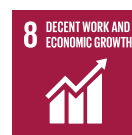
THE GLOBAL GOALS



2 ZERO HUNGER



13 CLIMATE ACTION



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



### Environmental Impact

**Integrated farming model supporting local food production.**



### Social Impact

**86%**  
**women employed through the enterprise.**



### Economic Impact

**7**  
**fulltime jobs currently supported through the enterprise.**





## PERSONAL IMPACT

For Jane, the enterprise represents more than just a source of income. After losing her job when the mine closed, farming became a way to support her household and remain active within her community.

***“The programme is helping me a lot because I was sitting at home and doing nothing. Through the programme I work every day.”***

Jane explained that the enterprise has given her a renewed sense of purpose and motivation. It has also encouraged her to continue learning and exploring new opportunities within agriculture.

## HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

Jane hopes to see Siphakamiseni Enterprise continue growing into a reliable supplier of agricultural products while creating opportunities for others within the community.

***“In three years, I want to be a supplier. I want to make a lot of money and I believe its possible.”***

Beyond growing the business, Jane also hopes the enterprise can contribute to greater food security in the area, particularly for households that have struggled since the closure of the mines and power station.



# PROJECT OUTCOMES IN NUMBERS



# 170

Stakeholders engaged to tailor the project design to the local context

# 184

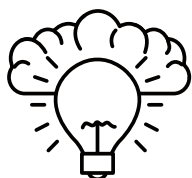
Community Members Engaged in Climate and JET Awareness Workshops

# 93%

Reported a More Positive Outlook on Climate Change and the Just Transition

# 90%

Felt Motivated to Take Action Within Their Communities



# 178

Community Members Participated in the Co-Creation Workshops

# 88%

Felt They Contributed to Developing Solutions and Would Support Their Implementation



# 21

Jobs Created and Supported

👩 67% Women | 👧 52% Youth | ♿ 5% Persons with Disabilities



# 5

Community Benefit Models Established





## **KEY LESSONS FROM THE KOMATI EXPERIENCE**

### **PROJECT DESIGN AND PARTICIPATION**

#### **Participation and Inclusion Must Be Embedded from the Beginning, Not Added Later**

One of the most important success factors was the deliberate effort to embed participation and inclusion from the earliest stages of the project. Communities were not only asked what challenges they faced, but also how they wished to participate and what meaningful engagement would look like from their perspective. This helped establish trust, strengthen ownership and create a foundation that supported participation throughout the project lifecycle.

#### **Understanding Local Context Before Designing Interventions Improves Relevance**

The project reinforced the importance of investing time in understanding local realities before introducing interventions. Inception meetings and field visits helped the project team avoid making assumptions about community priorities and ensured that enterprise opportunities reflected locally identified challenges and opportunities. The experience demonstrated that communities are often best positioned to identify which challenges matter most and which opportunities are most likely to succeed.

#### **Communities Need Space to Move from Discussing Challenges to Identifying Opportunities**

At the outset of the project, discussions were often dominated by concerns relating to unemployment, economic decline and uncertainty about the future.

Over time, participants shifted from discussing challenges towards identifying opportunities and developing practical solutions. This demonstrated the value of creating spaces where communities can move beyond problem identification and begin exploring pathways for local development.

### **Local Structures Can Become Implementation Partners, Not Just Beneficiaries**

The active involvement of the Komati Steering Committee proved critical throughout implementation. Members supported mobilisation, communication, problem-solving and ongoing engagement within the community. The experience demonstrated that local structures should not be viewed solely as beneficiaries or advisory bodies. When meaningfully engaged, they can become implementation partners that significantly strengthen project delivery and sustainability.

### **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships Strengthen Delivery and Legitimacy**

The project benefited significantly from a diverse network of partners operating at local, provincial and national levels. These partnerships strengthened implementation, improved alignment with broader Just Transition initiatives and created opportunities for project lessons to be shared across multiple platforms.

Community-led initiatives are often strongest when supported by partners that contribute complementary expertise, resources and opportunities.

## **ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Sequencing of Activities Matters**

One of the clearest lessons emerging from the project is the importance of sequencing activities in a way that gradually builds participant understanding, confidence and capability. Participants moved through awareness raising, business exposure, co-creation, hypothesis testing, incubation, governance development and proof-of-concept implementation. Each stage built on the previous one and prepared participants for the next phase of the journey.

### **Exposure Changes How People Think About Entrepreneurship**

Exposure was not simply inspirational, it changed how participants thought about enterprise development. Exposure visits and entrepreneur showcases provided practical insights into business models, production systems, markets and operational realities. In several cases, these experiences directly influenced enterprise design and encouraged participants to adapt proven business models to their own context.



## **Enterprise Opportunities Should Align with Participant Skills and Experience**

The project demonstrated that strong business ideas do not automatically translate into successful enterprises if participants lack the skills required to implement them. Greater emphasis on participant experience, interests and capabilities helped ensure that enterprise opportunities were practical, achievable and better positioned for implementation.

## **Developing the Entrepreneur Is as Important as Developing the Enterprise**

Enterprise development extends beyond business development support. Establishing an enterprise from scratch requires participants to navigate uncertainty, work through challenges and remain committed over time. Confidence, leadership, communication and decision-making often proved just as important as technical knowledge, reinforcing the importance of developing the entrepreneur alongside the enterprise.

## **Enterprise Development Is a Learning Journey, Not Simply a Training Process**

The project highlighted an important distinction between training and learning. While training provides information and tools, learning is strengthened through feedback, reflection and opportunities for continuous improvement. Enterprise development should therefore be viewed as an ongoing learning journey rather than a once-off training intervention.

## **Enterprise Development Does Not Follow Project Timelines**

Building enterprises requires time. Participants need time to validate markets, establish partnerships, develop governance structures and gain confidence in their businesses. The experience reinforced the importance of long-term accompaniment and support beyond a single project cycle.

## **GOVERNANCE AND JUST TRANSITION**

### **Governance Should Be Developed Alongside the Business**

The project demonstrated that governance discussions are most valuable when they occur alongside enterprise development rather than after enterprises have already been established. Early discussions relating to ownership, accountability, decision-making and community benefit helped strengthen enterprise foundations and address potentially sensitive issues before conflicts emerged.

### **Community Ownership Models Are More Complex Than They Appear**

While participants generally supported the principle of community benefit, many expressed reservations regarding community ownership structures. The experience demonstrated that governance arrangements should be designed in response to local realities, trust dynamics and participant preferences rather than assuming that community ownership is always the most appropriate model.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTATION**

### **Adaptive Management Is Essential in Community-Led Development**

Implementation did not always unfold as originally planned. Participant needs evolved, new challenges emerged and additional support requirements became apparent over time. The project's ability to adapt approaches and introduce additional support mechanisms strengthened delivery and improved outcomes.

### **Enterprise Readiness Often Requires More Support Than Anticipated**

As implementation progressed, it became evident that enterprises required support beyond business planning and technical training. Governance, leadership, conflict management, compliance and operational planning all emerged as important areas requiring additional support.

### **Digital Literacy Can Be an Invisible Barrier to Enterprise Development**

The project highlighted the extent to which digital literacy influences participant progress. For some participants, activities such as developing presentations, participating in virtual meetings and sharing documents electronically represented entirely new experiences. As enterprise ecosystems become increasingly digital, these skills should be treated as foundational rather than optional.

## **Visibility and Showcasing Activities Can Become Enterprise Development Interventions**

The project demonstrated that communication and visibility activities can contribute directly to enterprise development outcomes. Showcasing opportunities created access to networks, partnerships, learning opportunities and increased confidence amongst participants. These activities should therefore be viewed as enterprise development interventions rather than communication exercises alone.

### **Enterprise Attrition Does Not Always Represent Failure**

The withdrawal of some enterprise concepts from the incubation process did not necessarily represent a negative outcome. In some cases, participants secured alternative livelihood opportunities, highlighting that entrepreneurship is only one pathway towards economic opportunity.

### **Transition Contexts Require Flexibility and Responsiveness**

The experience of working within a community affected by ongoing economic and social change reinforced the importance of flexibility. Community-led Just Transition initiatives must remain responsive to uncertainty while continuing to create opportunities for participation, innovation and local development.





## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The enterprise journeys highlighted that enterprise development does not end once an enterprise has been established. As enterprises become operational, new challenges, opportunities and support needs emerge, including access to markets, finance, technical expertise and ongoing mentorship. Building on the lessons emerging from the initial implementation of the project, additional support has been secured through the Africa Climate Foundation to continue working alongside the enterprises. This next stage will provide business development support, technical assistance, tailored mentorship and soft skills development, while helping enterprises identify and pursue future financing opportunities.

As the enterprises mature, the nature of support will continue to evolve. Long-term sustainability will increasingly depend on entrepreneurs taking ownership of their businesses, investing their own time and energy, and driving their own growth.

The project will also continue creating opportunities for visibility, networking and learning through platforms such as the annual Indalo Symposium, where enterprises will showcase their products and services and connect with potential partners.

At the same time, the lessons emerging from Komati will continue to inform Indalo's work and contribute to local, national and global Just Transition processes.

Building this evidence base is essential to ensuring that future programmes, partnerships and policy processes are informed by practical experience and community perspectives, rather than assumptions about what communities need. In doing so, the project aims to strengthen community-centred approaches to the Just Transition and support others seeking to build on these lessons.

The enterprises established through this project represent important milestones, but they are only one part of the story. Equally important is demonstrating to communities that their ideas, time and participation have value. Continuing to invest in the enterprises shows that participation did not end with consultation, it led to practical opportunities and ongoing support.

## CONCLUSION

The Komati experience reminds us that a Just Transition is not a single project, a single investment or a single solution. It is a long-term process that will continue to evolve as communities, industries and institutions respond to change. Along the way there will be successes, setbacks and new challenges that require people to adapt and learn together.

Throughout this case study, one message emerged consistently from community members. People want to be listened to.

They want honest communication, transparency and meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. They want to see that their participation leads to something tangible, whether that is a new enterprise, new skills, improved livelihoods or simply the confidence that their voices matter. The project demonstrated that there is no single community experience of the Just Transition. Different groups face different challenges and priorities, requiring approaches that recognise these diverse realities rather than applying one solution for everyone..

The enterprises featured in this case study are an important part of the story, but they are not its greatest achievement. Their greatest value lies in what they represent: practical evidence that communities can move from identifying challenges to creating solutions when they are trusted, supported and given the opportunity to do so.

***If there is one message that this case study leaves behind, it is this: never lose sight of the people. Community trust is built through listening, transparency and action, but it can quickly be lost when these are not sustained. Ultimately, the Just Transition will be experienced, and judged, by the people who live through it every day, through the trust they place in the process, the opportunities they can access, and the progress they see in their own lives and communities.***





***As South Africa's Just Transition continues, the experiences and voices emerging from communities such as Komati will remain essential in ensuring that the transition is not only just in principle, but also in practice.***

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To learn more about Indalo Inclusive's work on eco-inclusive entrepreneurship and community-led Just transitions, contact us:

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