



Exploring Child and Youth Development: A Case Study of Development Projects Funded by Independent Power Producers (IPPs) in Sutherland, Northern Cape

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines the intersection of Independent Power Producers' (IPPs) contributions to local community development, with the development of children and school-going youth in the small town of Sutherland, in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. Sutherland, despite being a hub for scientific endeavours like the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and the Southern Africa Large Telescope (SALT), grapples with persistent structural constraints, notably poverty, which fuel pervasive social issues such as high rates of teenage pregnancy and school dropouts. The town has recently become a hub for renewable energy, hosting five REIPPs. This research employed a qualitative case study design, recruiting participants through purposive and snowball sampling based on the criterion that all participants were 18 years or older. Observations took place around the town, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers from the high school, primary school, school governing body members, a healthcare representative, and IPP officials. Focus group discussions were also held with residents, including parents, teachers, and members of the South African Police Service (SAPS). Documents such as the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM), the Auditor-General of South Africa reports on the KHM, and the Independent Power Producer's (IPP) Office documents were analysed as well. The inclusion of educators, IPP representatives, and community stakeholders enabled the triangulation of perspectives from actors closely involved in children's upbringing and education. The research primarily focuses on education, as it is the main vehicle for IPP-mandated development aimed at children. This criterion also serves as the fundamental basis on which children develop their abilities, enabling them to lead lives they have reason to value. As such, my findings reveal that current development efforts are two-fold. In a context like this, where poverty prevails, development efforts such as donations to the school help address the current, visible challenges where learners do not have the necessary supplies to engage in meaningful learning. However, practical challenges, such as children not bringing donated supplies to school, parents wearing clothes meant for them, or technological challenges arising, suggest that real development has not occurred. Instead, these efforts can be understood as 'band-aids', providing temporary fixes without addressing

the underlying structural issues. From this perspective, socio-economic development is driven by charismatic technologies and meantime projects to meet the IPPs scorecard requirements. This top-down approach thus leads to development that does not align with the local community's context. Additionally, the influx of construction workers living temporarily in the town not only increases inequality but also deepens young girls' vulnerability, as seen in the rise of transactional relationships between these men and the town's women. This study concludes that a significant disjuncture exists between prevailing development strategies and the community's actual needs and challenges. It calls on Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and policymakers to critically reassess their approach, advocating for strategic, context-sensitive development and robust accountability frameworks to ensure that such initiatives promote genuine empowerment rather than entrench further marginalisation.

Key words: Sutherland; Youth development; Education; Independent Power Producer (IPP); Renewable Energy; Capabilities

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die kruising van Onafhanklike Kragprodusente (OKP's) se bydraes tot plaaslike gemeenskapsontwikkeling, met die ontwikkeling van kinders en skoolgaande jeug in die klein dorpie Sutherland, in die Noord-Kaap provinsie van Suid-Afrika. Alhoewel die dorp 'n sentrum is vir wetenskaplike projekte soos die Suid-Afrikaanse Astronomiese Observatorium (SAAO) en die Southern Africa Large Telescope (SALT), sukkel dit met volgehoue strukturele beperkinge, veral armoede, wat aanleiding gee tot deurdringende sosiale probleme soos hoë koerse van tiener-swangerskappe en skool-uitval. Die dorp het onlangs ook 'n sentrum vir hernubare energie geword, en huisves vyf Hernubare Energie Onafhanklike Kragprodusente (HEOKP's). Hierdie navorsing het 'n kwalitatiewe gevallestudie-ontwerp gebruik, met deelnemers wat geworf is deur doelgerigte en sneeubal-steekproefneming, gebaseer op die maatstaf dat alle deelnemers 18 jaar of ouer was. Waarnemings is in die dorp gedoen, en semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is gevoer met onderwysers van die hoërskool en laerskool, lede van die skoolbeheerliggaam, 'n gesondheidsorgverteenwoordiger, en OKP-amptenare. Fokusgroepe is ook gehou met inwoners, insluitend ouers, onderwysers en lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens (SAPD). Dokumente soos die Geïntegreerde Ontwikkelingsplan (GOP) van die Karoo Hoogland Munisipaliteit (KHM), die verslae van die Ouditeur-generaal van Suid-Afrika oor die KHM, en amptelike dokumentasie van die Onafhanklike Kragprodusente-kantoor (IPP) is ook ontleed. Die insluiting van opvoeders, IPP-verteenwoordigers en gemeenskapsbelanghebbendes het die triangulering van perspektiewe moontlik gemaak van rolspelers wat nou betrokke is by kinders se opvoeding en onderwys. Die navorsing fokus hoofsaaklik op opvoeding, aangesien dit die hoofvoertuig is vir OKP-geleide ontwikkeling wat op kinders gerig is. Hierdie kriterium dien ook as die fundamentele basis waarop kinders hul vermoëns ontwikkel, wat hulle in staat stel om lewens te lei wat hulle rede het om te waardeer. My bevindinge onthul dat huidige ontwikkelingspogings tweeledig is. In 'n konteks soos hierdie, waar armoede heers, help ontwikkelingspogings soos skenkings aan die skole om die huidige, sigbare uitdagings aan te spreek waar leerders nie die nodige voorraad het om aan betekenisvolle leer deel

te neem nie. Praktiese uitdagings, soos kinders wat nie geskenkte voorraad skool toe bring nie, ouers wat klere dra wat vir hulle bedoel is, of tegnologiese uitdagings wat opduik, dui egter daarop dat werklike ontwikkeling nie plaasgevind het nie. In plaas daarvan kan hierdie pogings as 'pleisters' verstaan word, wat tydelike oplossings bied sonder om die onderliggende strukturele probleme aan te spreek. Vanuit hierdie perspektief word sosio-ekonomiese ontwikkeling gedryf deur charismatiese tegnologieë en tussentydse projekte om aan die OKP se telkaartvereistes te voldoen. Hierdie bo-na-onder-benadering lei dus tot ontwikkeling wat nie by die plaaslike gemeenskap se konteks pas nie. Daarbenewens verhoog die instroming van konstruksiewerkers wat tydelik in die dorp woon nie net ongelykheid nie, maar verdiep dit ook die kwesbaarheid van jong meisies, soos gesien in die toename van transaksionele verhoudings tussen hierdie mans en die dorp se vroue. Hierdie studie kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat daar 'n beduidende gaping bestaan tussen die heersende ontwikkelingstrategieë en die gemeenskap se werklike behoeftes. Dit rig 'n beroep op OKP's en beleidmakers om hul benaderings krities te herevalueer, en pleit vir strategiese, konteks-sensitiewe ontwikkeling benewens robuuste aanspreeklikheidsraamwerke. Só kan verseker word dat hierdie inisiatiewe werklike bemagtiging bevorder, eerder as om bestaande marginalisering te verdiep.

Sleutelwoorde: Sutherland; Jeugontwikkeling; Onderwys; Onafhanklike Kragprodusent (OKP); Hernubare Energie; Vermoëns

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Table of Contents

DECLARATION	I
ABSTRACT	II
OPSOMMING	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
LIST OF FIGURES	X
LIST OF TABLES	XI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	XIII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 South Africa's Energy Landscape and the Rise of REIPPPP	5
1.1.1 The Monopoly and the Crisis.....	7
1.1.2 The Integrated Resource Plan (IRP 2010).....	9
1.2. South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme	10
1.2.1 Socio-economic Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED)	14
1.2.2 REIPPPP in the Northern Cape: A Hub of Renewable Energy	18
1.3 Development as Freedom? The Capabilities Approach (Sen, 1999)	21
1.4 The establishment of Sutherland	22
1.4.1 The Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM)	27
1.4.2 South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and SALT	29
1.4.3 Present-day Sutherland (2011-2025): Social and Economic Context.....	30
1.4.4 Governance and Accountability Failures: Political Instability in the Karoo Hoogland Municipality.....	34
1.4.5 IPPs in the Karoo Hoogland Municipality	36
1.5 Research rationale and research questions	37
1.6 Chapter outline.....	39
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH PARADIGM AND DESIGN	41
2.1 Research Paradigm	41
2.1.1 Interpretivism	42
2.2 Method.....	43
2.2.1 A Case Study Research Design	45
2.3 Study area and sampling	46
2.3.1 Sutherland.....	46
2.3.2 Study population	47
2.3.3 Purposive and snowball sampling	48
2.4 Fieldwork	49
2.5 Data collection methods	56
2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews.....	56
2.5.2 Focus groups	57

2.5.3 Observations	59
2.5.4 Document analysis.....	60
2.6 Data analysis	61
2.7 Ethical considerations	64
2.8 Limitations of the study.....	65
2.9 Researcher Reflection and Positionality	66
 CHAPTER THREE: CHARISMA WITHOUT CAPABILITY: WHY TECHNOLOGY DONATIONS FAIL TO CREATE SUBSTANTIVE FREEDOM.....	 68
3.1 Intersecting Pathways: Education, Development, and Historical Inequality	68
3.2 Different approaches to development	71
3.2.1 Human Development: The Capabilities Approach	72
3.2.2 Freedom and Development.....	75
3.3 Key Concepts: Values and Agency	77
3.3.1 Values.....	77
3.3.2 Agency.....	78
3.4 Application to Child and School-going Youth Development and Education	80
3.4.1 Education as a Key Capability.....	81
3.5 Conceptualising Development Interventions: Band-Aids, Meantime, and Charismatic Technology	83
3.5.1 'Band-Aid' and 'Magic Bullets' Interventions	83
3.5.2 Meantime Donations.....	84
3.5.3 Charismatic Technology and the Allure of the 'Good' Intervention.....	85
3.6 How do SED Contributions from IPPS intersect with Child and School-going Youth Development?	88
3.7 Conclusion	92
 CHAPTER FOUR: WHEN DEVELOPMENT MEETS DAILY LIFE.	 94
4.1 Introduction	94
4.2. The Realities of Education and School-Related Challenges in Sutherland.....	95
4.2.1 School infrastructure and resources.....	96
4.2.2 From fields to courts: Sport and the illusion of development.....	106
4.2.3 Academic Performance.....	109
4.3 Everyday Challenges to Youth Development	113
4.3.1 Marked from birth: Understanding the Impact of Perceived Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Sutherland.....	113
4.3.2 Living in constraint: A Lack of Safe Spaces.....	118
4.3.3 Substance abuse	120
4.3.4 Deviant behaviours	121

4.3.5 Gendered vulnerabilities.....	122
4.3.6 Teenage pregnancies	124
4.3.7 Bullying	126
4.3.8 Dropping out of school.....	128
4.3.9 Social Services: A Gap in the Safety Net.....	131
4.4 Contributions of IPPs and Their Alignment with Local Needs.....	134
4.4.1 Symbolic vs Context-specific Efforts Towards Development.....	136
4.4.2 Gratitude and Grievance: Teachers' ambivalent views on IPP contributions.....	144
4.4.3 Beyond resources: Parents and residents on the unaddressed structural constraints.....	146
4.5 Discussion	147
4.6 Conclusion	152
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION.....	154
5.1. Recommendations	155
5.1.1 Strategic considerations for the IPP Programme	156
5.1.2 The proposed trajectory for research in Sutherland.....	156
5.1.3 Policy recommendations	157
5.2 Concluding remarks.....	158
REFERENCE LIST	161
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE	173
APPENDIX B: FOCUS GROUP GUIDE	174
APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION GUIDE	175
APPENDIX D: RESEARCH ETHICAL CLEARANCE (2024-2025).....	176
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH	177
APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM IN ENGLISH	180

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Map indicating Sutherland's position in the Northern Cape and its proximity to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT).....	1
Figure 1.2: Educational levels achieved.....	3
Figure 1.3: Evolution of CO ² emission by fossil fuels in South Africa between 2000 to 2022	8
Figure 1.4: Map of Independent Power Producers Across South Africa, April 2025	13
Figure 1.5: IPP projects around South Africa, 2025	14
Figure 1.6: Projects spent from March 2025 as a percentage of the total	16
Figure 1.7: Independent Power Producer (IPP) Contributions to Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development by Province, 2025	17
Figure 1.8: National Gross Domestic Product (GDP).....	20
Figure 1.9: Energy potential in the Northern Cape.....	21
Figure 1.10: The Roggeveld Mountain Range in the Northern Cape.....	23
Figure 1.11: Facial reconstruction presented from frontal screenshots of 3D models	25
Figure 1.12: The Sutherland nine, reburied at the Sutherland Historic Cemetery, 2025	26
Figure 1.13: This map highlights the Namaqua District Municipality, along with its associated local municipalities	27
Figure 1.14: Satellite Image of Sutherland, Northern Cape.....	31
Figure 1.15: Sutherland population per age cohort.....	33
Figure 2.1: Sutherland High School.....	50
Figure 2.2: Roggeveld Primary School in Sutherland.....	50
Figure 2.3: Roggeveld Primary School and its wind farm mural.....	51
Figure 2.4: Thematic mapping of Structural Unfreedoms, Lived Challenges, and IPP Development Responses in Sutherland.....	62
Figure 4.1: A foundation phase classroom at Roggeveld Primary School, Sutherland	98
Figure 4.2: Exterior view of the burned Sutherland High School building.....	99
Figure 4.3: Interior view of the burned Sutherland High School building.....	100
Figure 4.4: Exterior view of Container Classrooms	102
Figure 4.5: Main Road in Sutherland, date unknown.....	103

Figure 4.6: Bathroom door at Sutherland High School	104
Figure 4.7: Sutherland High School rugby field.....	106
Figure 4.8: Roggeveld Primary School's rugby field with a view of the school in the background.....	107
Figure 4.9: Netball Court at Sutherland High School	108
Figure 4.10: Tennis court at Sutherland High School.	108
Figure 4.11: A group of SARA0 bursary recipients from Carnarvon High School visiting SALT in Sutherland, May 2023	110
Figure 4.12: Learner Age and Grade Alignment (Ages 7–18), Sutherland (2024).	111
Figure 4.13: Swing at the Artist Cottage.....	119
Figure 4.14: Distribution of First Pregnancies by Age of Mother (Sutherland, 2024) ...	124
Figure 4.15: Picture of Flourish poster in Sutherland's Hospital, 2024	133
Figure 4.16: Murals painted by one of the IPPs on the Primary school walls, Sutherland	135
Figure 4.17: Smart White Board at the Sutherland High School, 2024.....	136
Figure 4.18: Foundation Phase E-Learning Tablets in Safety Storage, 2025	139
Figure 4.19: E-learning tablet applications.....	140

List of Tables

Table 1.1: IPPs Bid Windows from 2011 until 2025	11
Table 1.2: Elements of the economic development criteria (as at BW 4)	16
Table 2.1: Research Paradigm for the Study	44
Table 2.2: Semi-structured interviews with teachers from the Primary School in August 2024	52
Table 2.3: Semi-structured interviews with members from the High School in August 2024	52
Table 2.4: Semi-structured interview with a representative of an IPP company in Sutherland in August 2024.....	52
Table 2.5: Sutherland respondents in semi-structured interviews in November 2024 ..	53
Table 2.6: Sutherland respondents in focus groups in November 2024	53
Table 2.7: Sutherland respondents in semi-structured interviews in April 2025.....	55

Table 2.8: Sutherland respondents in focus groups in April 2025	55
Table 2.9: Semi-structured interviews with residents in August 2025	56
Table 4.1: Sutherland High School's 2024 matriculation results	101
Table 4.2: FASD diagnostic criteria	115
Table 4.3: Number of Primary School Learners Who Dropped Out or Transferred at Roggeveld Primary School (January–July 2025)	129
Table 4.4: Perceived benefits of IPPs to households in Sutherland, 2024.....	144

List of Abbreviations

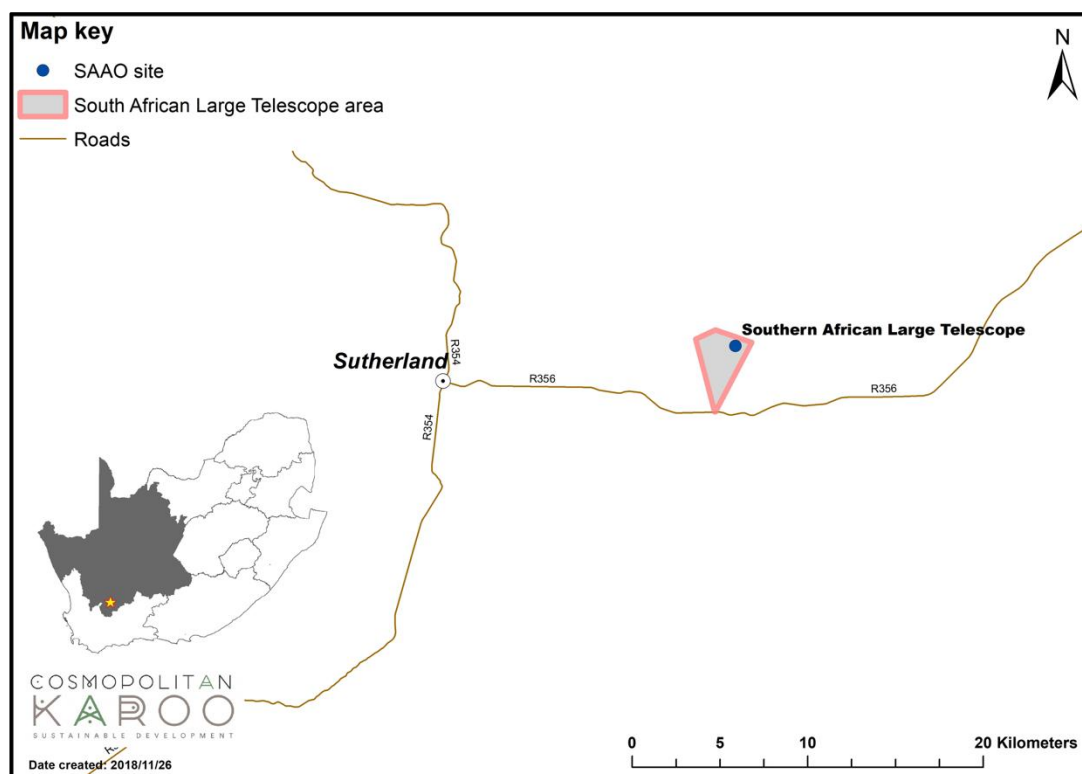
AGSA	Auditor General of South Africa
ANC	African National Congress
ANT	Actor Network Theory
ARND	Alcohol related neurodevelopmental disorder
B BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
B&B	Bed & Breakfast
CoGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSL	Contributor Status Level
CSP	Concentrated Solar Power
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CW	Corruption Watch
DA	Democratic Alliance
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DESC	Departmental Ethics Screening Committee
DME	Department of Minerals and Energy
DMRE	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
DOE	Department of Energy
ECD	Early Childhood Education
ED	Enterprise Development
FAS	Foetal Alcohol Syndrome
FASD	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment, and Redistribution
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HH	Household
IPP	Independent Power Producers
IPPPP	Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
ISA	International Sociological Association

ISRDS	Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy
KHM	Karoo Hoogland Local Municipality
KPA	Key Performance Areas
NCDoE	Northern Cape Department of Education
NCEDA	Northern Cape Economic Development, Trade & Investment Promotion Agency
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
OLPC	One Laptop Per Child
FAS	Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
PPA	Power Purchase Agreement
PSA	Public Servants Association
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
REC	Research Ethics Committee
REIPPPP	Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme
SAAO	South African Astronomical Observatory
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SALT	Southern Africa Large Telescope
SAPS	South African Police Service
SARAO	South African Radio Astronomy Observatory
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative
SCBP	SALT Collateral Benefits Programme
SED	Socio-economic Development
SGB	School Governing Body
SKA	Square Kilometre Array
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCT	University of Cape Town
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Chapter One: Introduction

Sutherland, a small town situated in the Karoo Hoogland Local Municipality (KHM) in the Northern Cape Province, is part of the greater Karoo region, which has long been marginalised within the broader political economy (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019). The small town stands at a curious intersection of global innovation and persistent local hardships. It draws tourists and astronomers from around the world to its renowned South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). More recently, it has attracted renewable energy companies, shifting much of the livestock farming land into a 'green' economy (Department of Energy (DoE), 2021:11; Karoo Hoogland Municipality, 2022). While the green economy promises a just future through alternative sources of energy, job creation and equity, its local benefits towards the needs of small towns, like Sutherland, remain contested, as the social ills are complex and continuously overlooked in mandated development efforts.

Figure 1.1: Map indicating Sutherland's position in the Northern Cape and its proximity to the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT).



Source: SARChI, the Sociology of Land, Environment and Sustainable Development (2018)

Sutherland has a population of 2,836, with 29% aged 14 and under (StatsSA, 2011; Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019). The town's demographic is predominantly classified as 'coloured'¹, (95%), with the remainder primarily white, and very few black African or Indian residents (StatsSA, 2011). A 2017 Socio-economic Household (HH) Survey by the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) highlighted persistent challenges, including high levels of poverty, unemployment, alcohol abuse, and social inequality (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019).

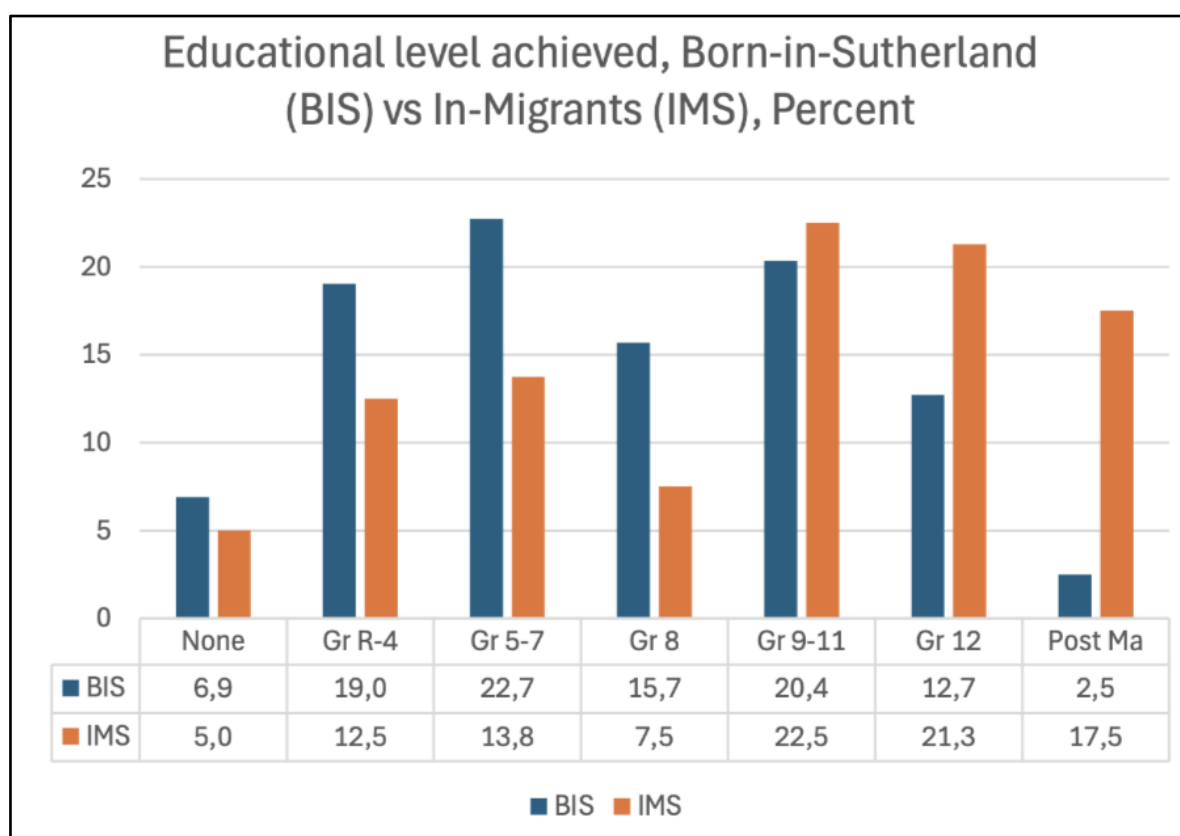
While the 2011 national census reported that many residents under 30 were leaving Sutherland in search of work, the 2017 HH Survey noted a decline in out-migration, attributing this to limited employment opportunities elsewhere and financial constraints that hinder mobility (StatsSA, 2011; Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019). A follow-up HH Survey in 2024² found that 14% of residents had migrated to Sutherland from other areas, a shift linked to the transformative impact of the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) facility, inaugurated in 2005 (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:15).

These in-migrants, mostly coloured, tend to have fewer children and higher levels of education, particularly Grade 12 and post-school qualifications, compared to those born in Sutherland (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:15). They are also more likely to earn an income, often through the town's expanding tourism sector, which has seen a rise in guest houses and small businesses (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:121). Nonetheless, both the 2017 and 2024 HH Surveys report low overall education levels and a high dropout rate among the local population, a concern explored further in this chapter (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:4; Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:68).

¹ I acknowledge these are politically contested and value-laden terms to describe very broad categories of people. They continue to be used in government and official documents, making it difficult to avoid using them in certain contexts.

² This research was conducted by the SARChI Chair in the Sociology of Land, Environment and Sustainable Development in February 2024.

Figure 1.2: Educational levels achieved.



Source: Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald (2025:68)

With the arrival of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) in the local municipality, the surrounding landscape has seen increasing development. Yet, the town itself remains stagnant, marked by decaying infrastructure, a lack of service delivery and limited job opportunities (KHM, 2022). IPPs are companies that bid to construct and operate various types of power plants, including solar photovoltaic, wind, biogas, biomass, landfill gas, and small hydro facilities, among others (Department of Mineral Resources and Energy [DMRE], 2023:23). The IPP Office was established to increase private sector involvement in electricity generation capacity within the nation, all the while supporting broader national development goals (DMRE, 2023:7). IPPs are therefore mandated to contribute to the local development. In the local municipality, and around Sutherland, there are currently five wind farms, namely Roggeveld, Karusa, Soetwater, Brandvalley and Rietkloof (KHM, 2022:169; Enel Green Power, n.d; Red Rocket Energy, n.d).

This thesis investigates the complex relationship between these new development initiatives, specifically those driven by Independent Power Producers (IPPs), and how their contributions to local community development intersect with the lives of Sutherland's children and school-going youth. Despite its scientific fame, Sutherland remains marginalised by the broader political economy, where deep-seated poverty fuels pervasive social issues like high teenage pregnancy and school dropout rates. By exploring how these top-down development projects intersect with the daily realities of a vulnerable, youthful population, this study aims to uncover the gaps between well-intentioned corporate scorecards and the genuine, on-the-ground needs of children.

To explore this, I conducted qualitative interviews with staff members at the primary and high school in Sutherland to better understand the values they attach to projects and donations, and with parents to examine their perceptions of how such initiatives are valued and by whom. In addition, I interviewed the community liaison officer (CLO) of one independent power producer (IPP) to gain insight into the developer's perspective. This study adopts a qualitative case study research design and is guided by Amartya Sen's (1999) Capabilities Approach as an analytical framework for assessing development in terms of people's substantive freedoms and opportunities, rather than solely in terms of material or economic outcomes.

This introductory chapter begins with an overview of South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (REIPPPP), highlighting its role in addressing energy challenges and promoting Socio-economic and Enterprise Development (SED and ED) in host towns. I then introduce Sen's (1999) Capabilities Approach as the conceptual framework guiding this study, focusing on how it informs the measurement of children's development in Sutherland, with education as a key enabler of valued life outcomes. The chapter proceeds with a historical overview of Sutherland within the Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM), transitions to its current role in hosting SALT, SAAO, and IPPs, and concludes with the research rationale and a roadmap of the thesis.

1.1 South Africa's Energy Landscape and the Rise of REIPPPP

Following the end of apartheid, South Africa underwent major policy reforms, including a reassessment of its energy framework. In 1994, the newly elected government³ released its '*Reconstruction and Development Programme*' (RDP) manifesto outlining six principles that would address the injustices of the apartheid era:

- 1) Integration and sustainability
- 2) People-driven
- 3) Peace and security
- 4) Nation-building
- 5) Meeting basic needs and building the infrastructure
- 6) Democratisation (Government of South Africa⁴, 1994:8-9)

These reforms were essential in addressing the systemic marginalisation entrenched by apartheid (Government of South Africa, 1994:7). However, by late 1995, it was clear that the RDP, which prioritised poverty eradication and economic growth, would be insufficient given South Africa's growing economy; thus, a new macro-economic strategy called *Growth, Employment, and Redistribution* (GEAR) was introduced to Parliament in 1996 (ANC, 1997). Gear has two core strategies: 1) to achieve economic growth by fostering exports and investment, and 2) to realise redistribution by creating employment opportunities and redirecting government expenditure (ANC, 1997).

Both the RDP and GEAR strategies addressed energy needs, recognising that many low-income households lacked access to electricity and relied on wood or paraffin for lighting and cooking, or were simply unable to afford it (Government of South Africa, 1994:71; ANC, 1997:23). What followed then was the Department of Minerals and Energy's (DME) 1998 *White Paper on Energy*, which aimed to create a more inclusive, equitable, and diverse energy sector (DME, 1998:3). The RDP's framework, while broad, highlighted the need to review existing energy policies. Considering that the energy sector serves both

³ South Africa's first democratic election was won by the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994

⁴ Government Gazette No.16085

economic and social functions, it has the potential to foster economic growth, create employment opportunities, and expand social infrastructure, aligning with the goal of economic growth and social transformation outlined by both the RDP and the GEAR strategy (DME, 1998:21-22).

Furthermore, although South Africa possessed abundant coal-based energy resources, international energy crises and growing environmental concerns underscored the urgency of diversifying the energy mix and investing in renewable sources (DME, 1998:7). In response, the 1998 *White Paper on Energy* set out the following policy objectives:

- 1) Increasing access to affordable energy services
- 2) Improving energy governance
- 3) Stimulating economic development
- 4) Managing energy-related environmental impacts
- 5) Securing supply through diversity (DME, 1998:23-27)

In 2000, the government introduced the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy (ISRDS) (Republic of South Africa, 2000:12). This strategy, specifically focused on the socio-economic characteristics of rural communities, aimed to transform them and integrate them into the nation's GDP (Republic of South Africa, 2000:19).

While these policy objectives reflected the government's commitment to broadening access and promoting sustainability, the structure of South Africa's energy industry remained largely unchanged. The sector continued to be dominated by a single state-owned utility, Eskom, whose monopoly over electricity generation and distribution would later expose the vulnerabilities of a coal-dependent system.

Between 1991 and 2005, South Africa achieved a significant milestone by electrifying approximately 4.9 million households. This positive social momentum was further reinforced in 2000 when the government introduced a policy to combat energy poverty by providing free basic services (including water, sanitation, and energy) to low-income households (Greenberg as cited in Essex & de Groot, 2019; DME, 2003; Bekker, Eberhard, Gaunt and Marquard, 2008:3132). Highlighting this period of success, Eskom was named

the *Financial Times* Power Company of the Year at the Global Energy Awards in New York in 2001 (Dlamini, 2019).

Despite this successful push for universal access, the foundation of the national energy system was inherently fragile. The state-owned utility's dominance, supplying up to 95% of the country's electricity needs, resulted in an industry overwhelmingly reliant on coal-fired power (75%) (Lamidi & Juta, 2024:5).

1.1.1 The Monopoly and the Crisis

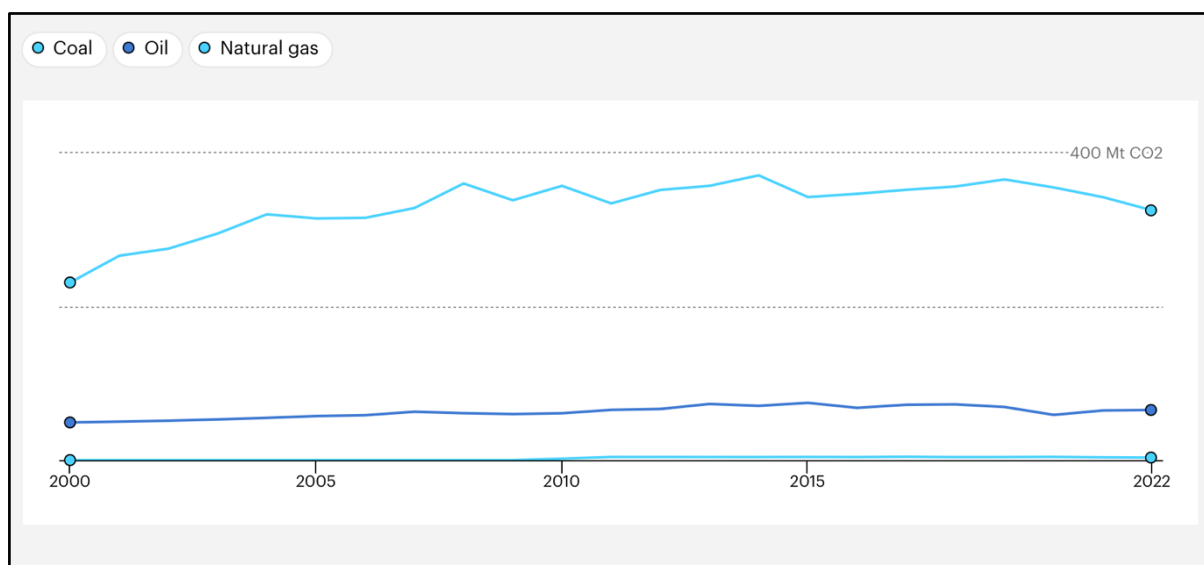
The current strain on South Africa's electricity supply is rooted in a prolonged energy crisis driven by factors such as mismanagement, corruption, and a continued reliance on coal over investment in alternative sources (Lamidi & Juta, 2024). These failures have severely hampered Eskom's ability to efficiently maintain existing infrastructure and invest in new capacity, necessitating an urgent, catch-up effort to build sufficient supply for both present and future demand. This section provides a brief contextual overview of South Africa's energy crisis and the policy shifts that paved the way for the introduction of Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

While South Africa's energy transition was shaped by domestic priorities, it was also influenced by international climate commitments, most notably the Kyoto Protocol of 1997, which called on industrialised nations to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (DME, 2003:10). Although not obligated to participate as a developing country, South Africa joined the protocol in 2002, signalling its alignment with global climate efforts (DME, 2003:10).

Between 2007 and 2008, Eskom faced capacity shortages in energy generation and distribution, leading to frequent rolling blackouts, highlighting the need for secure, affordable, and sustainable electricity amid climate challenges (Inglesi, 2010:197; Joffe, 2012:32; Nhleko & Inambo, 2020:2815; Lamidi & Juta, 2024). Eskom thus introduced loadshedding as a measure to manage the shortfall and stabilise the grid, followed by the

construction of two new coal-power stations⁵, despite the significant sustainable, financial, and environmental challenges they presented (Dlamini, 2019; Nhleko & Inambo, 2020:2815). Although construction began in 2007 and 2008, they were not completed until 2023, with costs having more than doubled (Dlamini, 2019; Lamidi & Juta, 2024:514-515).

Figure 1.3: Evolution of CO₂ emission by fossil fuels in South Africa between 2000 to 2022



Source: International Energy Agency (online: <https://www.iea.org/countries/south-africa/emissions>)

The country's heavy reliance on fossil fuels has placed significant strain on the environment, prompting a strategic shift toward renewable energy, supported in part by international funding (DME, 2003:11; Baker & Wlokas, 2015). However, Eskom's longstanding monopoly over electricity generation delayed the development of a policy and regulatory framework that would enable private sector participation (Joffe, 2012:32; Kamanzi, 2021:21). To diversify the energy sector, it became necessary to open the market to independent power producers (IPPs) capable of contributing to national energy generation (DME, 1998:9, 26–27; Kamanzi, 2021:21). In 2011, the Department of Energy (DoE) released the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to both diversify and forecast

⁵ Medupi and Kusile

electricity demand from 2010 to 2030, aiming to optimise the energy sector's capacity to meet the country's growing demand. Its framework provides detailed projections on generation capacity and mix, including electricity prices, regional development, carbon and emissions, and implementation timeframes and costs (Joffe, 2012:34; DoE, 2011; Martin, 2016).

This IRP signalled a shift in policy and was considered a “major step towards building local industry clusters and assists in fulfilling South Africa's commitments to mitigating climate change” (DoE, 2011:6). A core objective is the commitment to generate 42% of the national energy capacity from renewable sources during the plan's timeframe (DoE, 2011; Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014).

To understand the roots of South Africa's energy crisis, it is essential to consider factors such as mismanagement, corruption, reliance on coal, and a lack of investment in alternative energy sources (Lamidi & Juta, 2024). Eskom's failure to maintain infrastructure, invest in new capacity, and run operations efficiently has not only worsened the strain on the country's electricity supply, but also forced the utility to catch up in building sufficient energy capacity that meet both current and future demand.

1.1.2 The Integrated Resource Plan (IRP 2010)

As previously noted, the 1998 *White Paper on Energy* sought to diversify South Africa's energy sector by opening it to private developers and introducing an Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) to assess future supply options (DME, 1998). In 2011, the Department of Energy (DoE) released the IRP to both diversify and forecast electricity demand from 2010 to 2030, aiming to optimise the energy sector's capacity to meet the country's growing demand. Its framework provides detailed projections on generation capacity and mix, including electricity prices, regional development, carbon and emissions, and implementation timeframes and costs (Joffe, 2012:34; DoE, 2011; Martin, 2016).

This IRP was considered a “major step towards building local industry clusters and assists in fulfilling South Africa's commitments to mitigating climate change” (DoE, 2011:6). It outlines that 42% of energy capacity will be generated by renewable energy

sources throughout its pre-determined timeframe (DoE, 2011; Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014). From there, procurement mechanisms needed to be developed to clarify the renewable energy demand and the procurement to take place during this timeframe (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014).

1.2. South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme

Addressing South Africa's electricity challenges, its rising demand, high dependence on coal, and ways to reduce carbon emissions became a primary concern. As such, between 2007 and 2008, various procurement frameworks were developed to procure power from IPPs, and through trial and error, a bidder system was adopted (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014:509).

In August 2011, the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) was launched by the South African Government (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014:509). According to the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE)⁶ (2025:14), it was introduced as a competitive bidding process to attract private investment in grid-connected renewable energy. The programme's innovative design supports South Africa's shift toward a sustainable, low-carbon economy while promoting social development (DMRE, 2025:14). Independent Power Producers (IPPs) are privately owned companies formed by various shareholders to bid for the construction and operation of an independent power plant (DMRE, 2025:9).

⁶ South Africa's energy government department underwent various name changes. In 1997 it was named Department of Minerals and Energy (DME), followed by Department of Energy (DoE) and Department of Mineral Resources (DMR) in 2009. From 2019, it is now known as the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE).

To facilitate the effective implementation of the Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (IPPPP), particularly given that not all companies pursue renewable energy, the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE), National Treasury, and the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) established the IPP Office.

Governed by a tripartite Memorandum of Agreement, the IPP Office is tasked with expanding private sector participation in electricity generation while advancing broader national development goals. These goals align with the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), which outlines generation capacity targets for both renewable and non-renewable energy sources (DMRE, 2025:7-10).

REIPPPP was designed to allocate energy capacity across multiple bid windows, fostering private-sector competition (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014). Through competitive rounds, IPPs must meet DMRE's evaluation criteria, assessed after each window closes based on market conditions and local capacity (Montmasson-Clair & Ryan, 2014:516). Between 2011 and 2025, seven bid windows have been completed, as shown in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: IPPs Bid Windows from 2011 until 2025

Bid Windows	Submission date	Megawatts (MW) contracted
1	4 November 2011	1415 MW
2	5 March 2012	1033 MW
3	19 August 2013	1428 MW
3.5	31 March 2014	200 MW
4	18 August 2014	2205 MW
5	16 August 2021	1159 MW
6	3 October 2022	1000 MW
7	15 August 2024	1760 MW

Source: IPP Office (Online: <https://www.ipp-projects.co.za/media-archives/>)

The programme employs a competitive bidding process where Independent Power Producers (IPPs) are selected based on two primary factors: the price of the electricity and their economic development contributions. This fierce competition has driven down the cost of renewable energy projects, often making them cheaper than the national utility (Eberhard and Naude, 2016:2). According to the DMRE (2024:20), the government utilizes "bid obligations and minimum thresholds" as the mechanisms to "capture a share of value/prosperity from the programme for South Africans and local communities". Consequently, successful IPPs allocate a portion of their revenue, derived from a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Eskom, to fulfilling their contractual promises regarding Socio-economic Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED) contributions (DoE, 2015; Wlokas, 2015; DMRE, 2025:25). Thus, the REIPPPP serves a dual purpose: diversifying energy supply and tackling climate change, all while simultaneously advancing local social development.

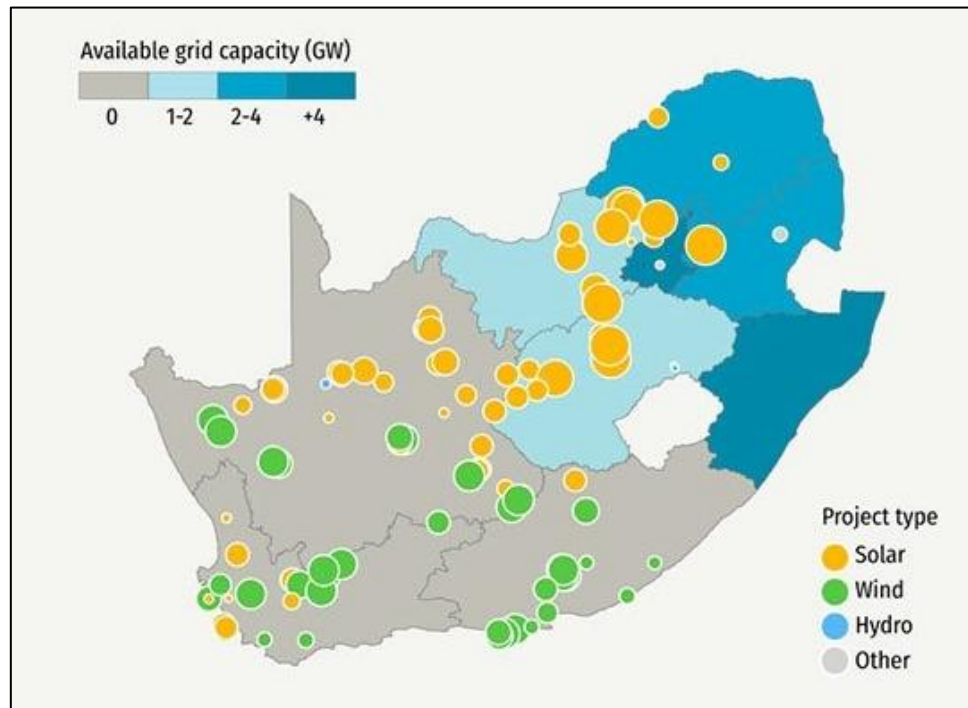
As seen on the IPP Office home page (IPP Office⁷, n.d), the IPPPPP status as of October 2025, shows that between REIPPPP bid windows 1-7, 508 bid responses were received, of which 122 were preferred bidders. The various renewable energy sources submitted to be procured include solar photovoltaic, wind power, concentrated solar power (CSP), biogas, biomass, landfill gas and small hydro. However, the DMRE's REIPPPP overview has not been updated since March 2025 (at the time of writing this) and shows that 457 bid responses were received, with 104 of them being preferred bidders and 90 operational, which I have taken into consideration when situating renewable energy IPPs within provinces in this paper (DMRE, 2025:15).

Furthermore, according to Eberhard and Naude (2016:6), IPP plants are localised by bidders who are responsible for securing land through ownership or leasing agreements. According to Eberhard and Naude (2016:3), the government's decision to delegate key responsibilities to bidders, rather than retaining them, as is common practice in international renewable energy tendering, introduced significant risks to the

⁷ The IPP Office webpage can be found here: <https://www.ipp-projects.co.za>

programme. Nonetheless, these IPP projects are therefore distributed across all nine provinces of South Africa (see Figure 1.4 below), where energy is generated and sold to the national parastatal Eskom (DMRE, 2025:12).

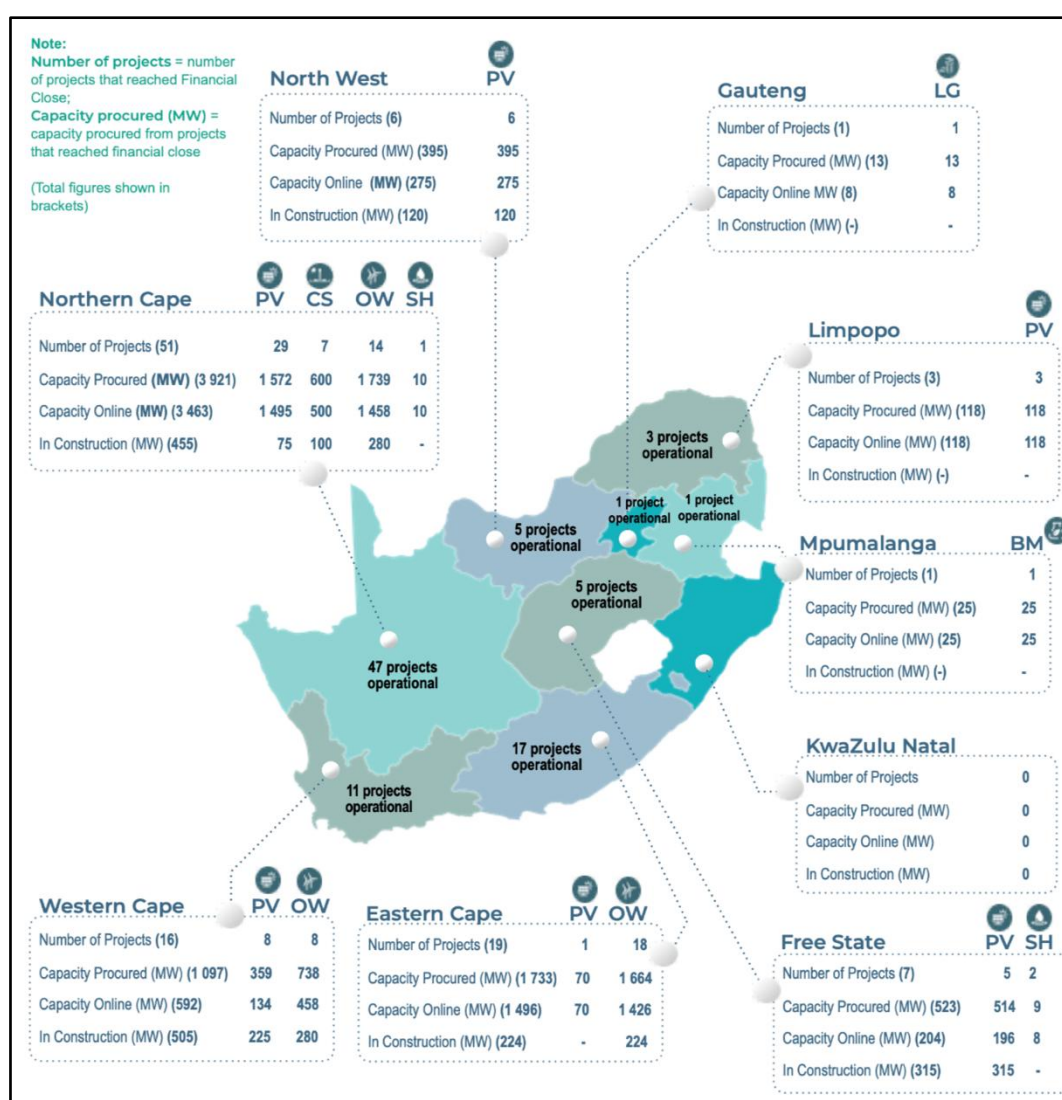
Figure 1.4: Map of Independent Power Producers Across South Africa, April 2025



Source: Engineering News (Online: <https://www.engineeringnews.co.za/article/no-space-on-the-grid-2025-04-18>)

Although the IPP Office homepage displays the current figures, it is also essential to reference the figures outlined in the *IPPPP overview* to facilitate a comparison across various provinces and the number of IPPs they host. As illustrated in Figure 1.5 below, the Northern Cape accommodates the greatest number of operational IPPs, totalling 47 out of 90. This highlights the province's strategic importance for renewable energy development, a theme I will explore further later in the chapter. Its appealing landscapes have attracted Independent Power Producers (IPPs), resulting in significant transformations to the region, changes that might have been mitigated had the government designated specific sites for tender allocations.

Figure 1.5: IPP projects around South Africa, 2025



Source: DMRE (2025:17)

1.2.1 Socio-economic Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED)

As the post-apartheid government sought to re-examine, redraft and reform “nearly every aspect of social and economic policy in South Africa”, addressing contemporary inequalities in South Africa meant to confront the political, economic and social legacies left behind after the collapse of the apartheid regime (DME, 1998:20). This transformation was driven by government-led socio-economic policies aimed at reintegrating the country into the global market while ensuring the inclusion of historically disadvantaged individuals and communities. As a result, Socio-economic

Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED) became key objectives to develop the country (Eberhard & Naude, 2016:3).

To advance the economic empowerment of historically disadvantaged groups, the government introduced the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act No. 53 of 2003. As outlined in Government Gazette No. 25899 (2004:5–7), the Act promotes economic transformation by increasing black ownership and management, expanding access to skills and infrastructure, supporting black women and community participation, encouraging sustainable investment, and improving access to finance. In 2007, the B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice were introduced to guide businesses in meeting these obligations and to monitor their contribution to transformation (Babarinde & Wright, 2023:102).

As previously noted, one of REIPPPP's core aims is to foster local development. In response to South Africa's pressing socio-economic challenges at the time of its design, the government required bidders to comply with Socio-economic Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED) commitments, extending B-BBEE's transformative goals to the local level (DMRE, 2025:25; Eberhard & Naude, 2016:8). While IPPs were primarily established to build and operate energy projects, they also play a key role in driving local economic development (DMRE, 2025:9).

To assess bidders on their SED and ED commitments, REIPPPP uses a scorecard based on the B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice, evaluating each IPP's contribution across seven areas (see Table 1.2 below): job creation, local content, ownership, management control, preferential procurement, enterprise development, and socio-economic development (Eberhard & Naude, 2016:8–9). This assessment helps determine whether a bidder qualifies for the procurement programme, where “four of these requirements score most points if implemented within a 50km radius of project sites” (DMRE, 2024:20).

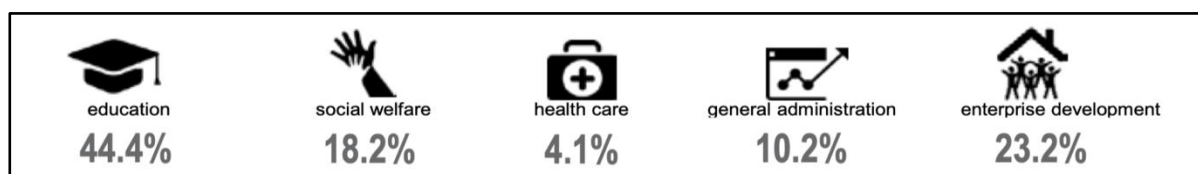
Table 1.2: Elements of the economic development criteria (as at BW 4)

Economic Development Criteria	Weighing in percentage (%)
Job creation	25
Local content	25
Ownership	15
Management control	5
Preferential procurement	10
Enterprise development	5
Socio-economic development	15

Source: Department of Energy (DoE) as cited in Eberhard & Naude (2016:9)

According to the DMRE (2025:24), SED and ED commitments are then made towards education, skills development, social welfare, healthcare, general administration and enterprise development within the host towns (Figure 1.6 outlines the categories and the percentage of SED and ED commitments made to each).

Figure 1.6: Projects spent from March 2025 as a percentage of the total



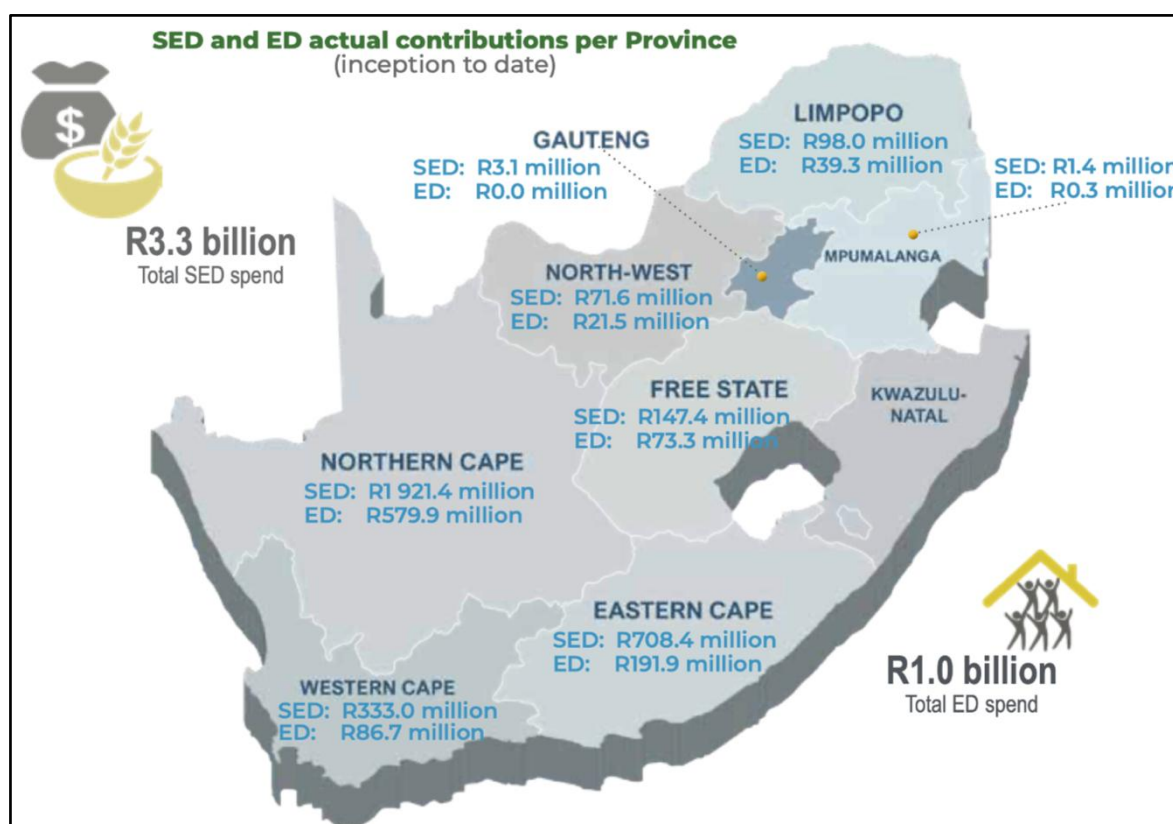
Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (2025:25)

As REIPPPP attracts financial investment into the economy, with a portion directed to economic development, the bids are therefore evaluated based on two components. In the first four bid windows (BWs), the REIPPPP scorecard allocated 70% of the evaluation to price and 30% to economic development (DMRE, 2024:20).

This framework evolved in bid windows 5 to 7 as the IPP Office updated it to build on the socio-economic transformation successes of previous rounds. According to DMRE (2024:20), the economic development elements were revised to align closer with the amended B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice. For this reason, bid windows 5 to 7 were evaluated on a 90% price and 10% Contributor Status Level (CSL) assessment.

While the elements on the scorecard remained the same, enterprise development now includes supplier development (DMRE, 2024:20). This has therefore resulted in lower economic development commitments than before; however, IPPs are still expected to report to the IPP office on their achievements once a quarter. Figure 1.7 below is based on the March 2025 *Independent Power Producers Procurement Programme (IPPPP) Overview* and outlines the actual contributions made in each province by various IPPs.

Figure 1.7: Independent Power Producer (IPP) Contributions to Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development by Province, 2025



Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (2025:25)

Nevertheless, this programme faces various challenges when it comes to implementing its SED in host towns. According to Baker and Wlokas (2015:6), South African companies forming joint ventures or establishing subsidiaries with foreign companies make it difficult to discern project ownership. What emerges is increased competition during bid windows, leaving very little room for local owners (Baker & Wlokas, 2015).

Challenges arise when companies unfamiliar with South Africa's landscapes and communities are tasked with selecting beneficiary communities for development (Wlokas, Boyd, & Andolfi, 2012:47; Eberhard & Naude, 2016). This often leads to unclear geographical boundaries, poorly defined target communities, and unmanaged expectations (Wlokas, Boyd, & Andolfi, 2012:47). In such contexts, development policy and implementation are shaped by a mix of theoretical traditions and practical approaches, ranging from participatory models promoted by NGOs to conventional welfare strategies that, while longstanding, often yield limited impact (Wlokas, Westoby & Soal, 2017:36).

In addition, IPPs Socio-economic Development (SED) efforts overlap in ways that are misaligned or duplicative (Nzo, 2021:63). As Nzo (2021:26) notes, policy frameworks that exclude local government risk reinforcing structural disempowerment rather than addressing it. In regions like the Northern Cape, where the vast geographic footprint attracts multiple energy projects, the likelihood of overlapping and uncoordinated SED contributions is particularly high.

1.2.2 REIPPPP in the Northern Cape: A Hub of Renewable Energy

Scholars such as Penn (2005) and Chinigò and Walker (2025) have examined the Northern Cape and broader Karoo through the lenses of “forgotten” and “knowledge” frontiers. The latter refers to the evolving spaces where science and technology shape Africa's emerging knowledge society, sites where visions of the continent's future, and the power dynamics they entail, are actively negotiated (Chinigò & Walker, 2025).

In earlier work, Chinigò and Walker (2020) explored the promises of scientific progress and local development linked to the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), arguing that, given the disconnect between investment priorities and local needs, “the farmlands and small towns around the SKA core site be better understood not as sites for ‘development’, but rather, as astronomy's ‘sacrifice zone’” (Chinigò & Walker, 2020:5). Both studies underscore the importance of grounding development initiatives in the historical context of place, a theme central to Penn's *The Forgotten Frontier* (2005).

To contextualise the Northern Cape, Penn (2005) offers a detailed historical account that sheds light on the province's demographic and social formation. At the start of the eighteenth century, the northern frontier opened as different societies such as the Khoikhoi, San and Trekboers⁸, competed for land and resources (Penn, 2005:12). By the mid-nineteenth century, colonial expansion intensified land competition among white settlers, prompting authorities to regulate "the presence of independent groups" (Walker & Hoffman, 2024:71). The few historical archival records Penn came across of the Northern Cape in the eighteenth century depict groups such as the Khoikhoi as victims and slaves to colonial oppression, whose authentic voices were furthermore replaced with those of the Dutch, obscuring a fuller understanding of their traditions and lived experiences in the region (Penn, 2005:2-4).

For the San of the Northern Cape, rich oral traditions, including folklore, myths, and storytelling, have long preserved their way of life (Penn, 2005:5). As Penn (2005:7-9) explains, the San and Khoikhoi were distinct groups: the Khoikhoi were primarily pastoralists who could revert to a hunter-gatherer lifestyle, while the San were predominantly hunter-gatherers. In cases where an individual's identity was unclear, the term "Khoisan" was often used as a catch-all label. Over time, however, the dominance of white settlers profoundly reshaped the lives of both groups.

Primitive accumulation, as defined by Penn (2005:14), refers to the extraction of production from colonised groups "without them receiving an equal value in return". In the Northern Cape, pastoralism was the dominant mode of production among most indigenous groups and the trekboers, with the exception of the hunter-gatherer San. However, livestock held different meanings: for the Khoikhoi, it was a medium of trade and exchange, while for the trekboers, it symbolised self-sufficiency (Penn, 2005:15). This divergence contributed to the rapid influx of trekboers into the region, escalating

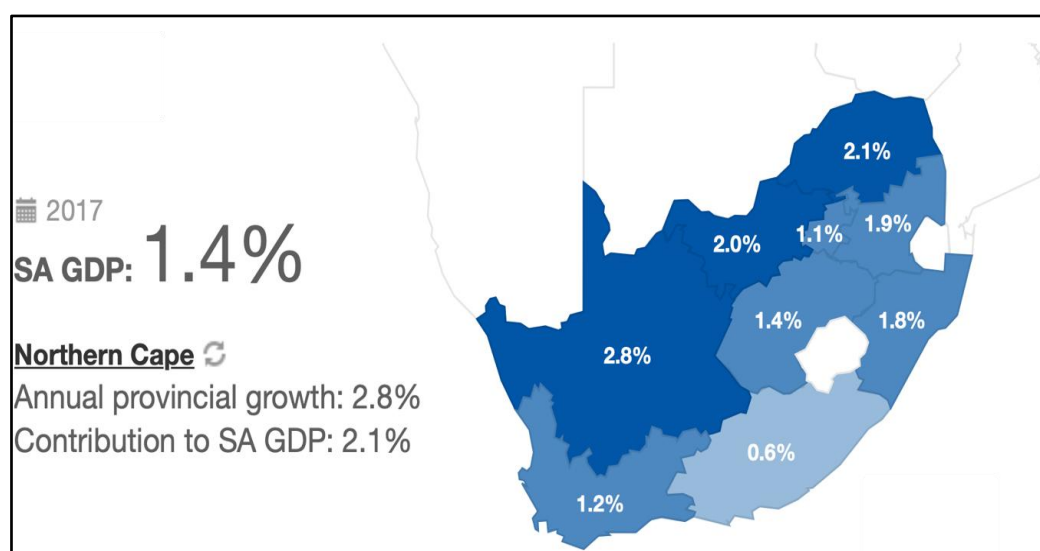
⁸ Trekboers are white settlers who migrated inward from the Cape Colony (Penn, 2005:13).

resource scarcity and tensions with indigenous communities, ultimately leading to the destruction of Khoisan society.

The legacy of land dispossession and unequal resource access continues to shape the Northern Cape's development trajectory. Historical patterns of exclusion, rooted in colonial expansion and the destruction of indigenous livelihoods, have left lasting structural inequalities. These are evident in the province's limited land ownership among historically disadvantaged groups, which constrains opportunities for commercial farming and broader economic participation. As a result, the region faces persistent socio-economic challenges that mirror its colonial past.

According to Statistics South Africa (2025:8), the province's unemployment rate (32.7%) is almost as high as the national average for South Africa (33.2%), emphasising the need for intervention. Furthermore, the Northern Cape has an annual provincial growth of 2.8% and only contributes 2.1% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (see Figure 1.8 below) (DMRE, 2021:7; StatsSA, 2022).

Figure 1.8: National Gross Domestic Product (GDP)



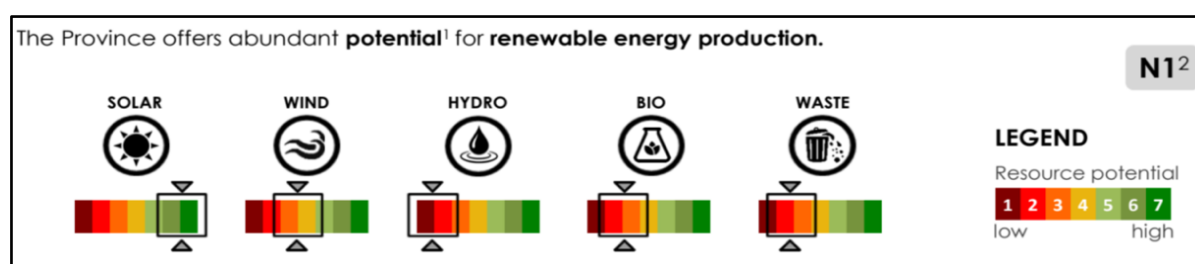
Source: Statistics South Africa (online: <https://www.statssa.gov.za/>)

Activities in mining, agriculture, and community services sectors are the primary contributors to the province's economy (DMRE, 2021:7). As outlined by the Global African Network (2025:36), the Northern Cape played a crucial role in mining due to its critical mineral resources such as diamonds, asbestos, limestone, iron ore, and

manganese. This role became even more vital as the shift to green energy relies on minerals such as copper and zinc. In addition, with 36 million hectares, the Northern Cape, while predominantly semi-arid, contributes 6.8% to South Africa's agriculture (Global African Network, 2025:27). Its agriculture sector employs about 45,000 people, highlighting its pivotal role in the Northern Cape's broader economy (Global African Network, 2025:27).

According to the DMRE (2021:6), "the large surface area, low population density, limited agriculture potential (concentrated in the Orange River Valley) and exceptionally high radiation levels", make the province well suited for renewable energy production (Figure 1.9 below provides an overview of the potential each energy source has in the Northern Cape).

Figure 1.9: Energy potential in the Northern Cape



Source: Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (2021:6)

According to DoE (2021:11-13), these projects contribute "to the Northern Cape's provincial objective of achieving accelerated sustainable economic growth and development", seeing as they benefit from substantial SED in the form of employment opportunities that come from the construction and operations of IPPs.

1.3 Development as Freedom? The Capabilities Approach (Sen, 1999)

According to Nel, Binns, and Motteux (2001:3), bottom-up development is widely supported due to the government's limited capacity to provide meaningful support to marginalised areas. However, its emphasis on self-reliance becomes difficult to realise when communities face deep poverty (Nel, Binns & Motteux, 2001:3). Conversely, top-

down development, where external bodies drive interventions, can foster dependency and overlook local agency (Nel, Binns & Motteux, 2001:3).

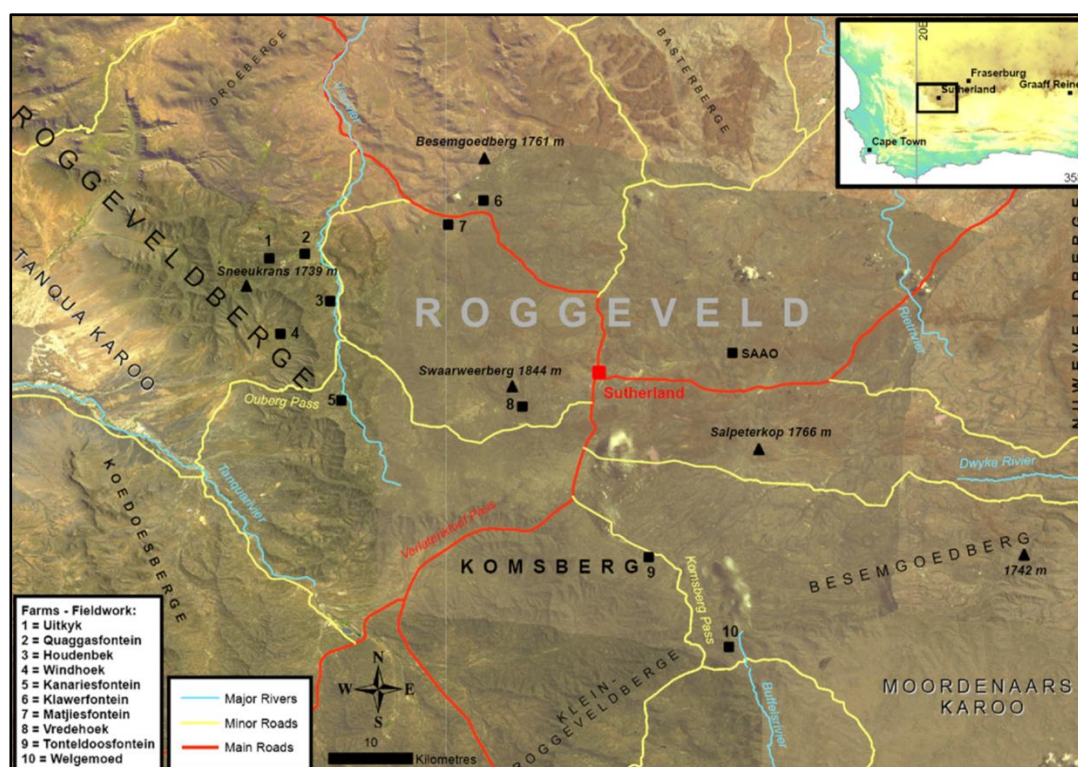
To move beyond this binary, Sen's (1999) Capabilities Approach offers a more nuanced framework by shifting the focus from economic structures to individual freedoms and opportunities. Rather than prescribing a fixed set of development indicators, Sen (1999:33) argues that development cannot be universally ranked, as it is experienced differently by each person. When certain capabilities or functionings are prioritised, this results in what he terms "partial ordering" (Sen, 1999:78), a concept explored further in Chapter 3. This approach centres on the diverse ways people pursue and achieve well-being (Sen, 1999; Clark, 2005; Jacobson, 2016).

For this reason, this study adopts Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* (1999) framework, arguing that development should enable people to live lives they have reason to value.

1.4 The establishment of Sutherland

This section offers a layered portrait of Sutherland, tracing its historical roots, situating it within the Karoo Hoogland Municipality, and unpacking the defining traits of rural Karoo towns. I then shift to contemporary Sutherland, spotlighting the global significance of the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). The section concludes with an analysis of the town's political dynamics and the growing presence of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) shaping its development landscape.

Figure 1.10: The Roggeveld Mountain Range in the Northern Cape



Source: Clark, Baker, Mucina (2011)

Around the mid-eighteenth century, farms in and around the Roggeveld Mountains (see Figure 1.10 above) were gradually populated by European settlers from the Worcester district and Dutch-speaking trekboers, with land permits issued starting in 1747 (Walker & Hoffman, 2024). The religious well-being of European settlers in the region was overseen by Reverend Henry Sutherland, himself from the Worcester District (Schoeman, 2013). It was during this period of colonial expansion into the Karoo, under the governance of the Dutch East India Company, that the town of Sutherland began to take shape (Walker & Hoffman, 2024:48).

The government arranged for the Dutch Reformed Church to be established in Sutherland, which later purchased De List Farm to serve the settlers as a church farm within the Roggeveld area (Schoeman, 2013). Until 1855, the town of Fraserburg held legal jurisdiction; thereafter, measures were taken to establish self-governance, including the construction of a large stone jail and the planning of a hospital in Sutherland (Walker & Hoffman, 2024; Schoeman, 2013). Following instructions from the Worcester Municipal Council, De List was then divided into properties and sold to private

individuals who established the town and named it in honour of Reverend Sutherland, officially declaring Sutherland a white church town in the mid-19th century (Schoemam, 2013).

During the colonial era, skeletons were illegally and unethically acquired for study and display by various institutions. According to Gibbon et al. (2023:2), the human remains of San and Khoikhoi individuals were collected and exchanged among museums and universities worldwide between 1850 and 1930. These exchanges were not solely driven by a fascination with human anatomical differences but also aimed to establish racial superiority by displaying San and Khoikhoi people for entertainment and profit (Gibbon et al., 2023:2).

Between 1925 and 1927, Carel Gert Coetzee, then a medical student at the University of Cape Town (UCT), donated the skeletal remains of nine Khoisan⁹ individuals to the university, people who had been buried on his family's farm (Gibbon et al., 2023:3). These were not anonymous or distant figures, but individuals who had lived and worked on the farm, known personally to the donor's family. Figure 1.11 below presents facial reconstructions of some of these individuals, based on frontal screenshots of 3D models.

⁹ As the initial grave styles could be associated with both Khoikhoi and San, it was uncertain.

Figure 1.11: Facial reconstruction presented from frontal screenshots of 3D models



Source: Gibbon et al. (2023)

In 2017, these skeletons, which came from the farm Kruisrivier near Sutherland, were identified amongst 11 unethically acquired skeletons, and are colloquially referred to as the Sutherland nine. To redress the unjust exhumation of the skeletal remains, the descendants of the remains were contacted and found to be living in Sutherland. On the 26th of November 2023, the remains of these individuals were finally laid to rest in Sutherland's Historic Cemetery (see Figure 1.12 below) (UCT, 2023).

Figure 1.12: The Sutherland nine, reburied at the Sutherland Historic Cemetery, 2025



Photograph by C. Rickers, April 2025

The treatment of these individuals as scientific specimens, used to advance racial hierarchies, entertain, and generate profit, reflects the broader historical context of the Northern Cape. While skeletal remains are inanimate and no longer engage with their surroundings, they once belonged to people who, despite living under conditions of conquest, left enduring legacies that continue to shape collective memory across generations.

1.4.1 The Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM)

Established in 2000 as a category B municipality¹⁰ The Karoo Hoogland municipality is situated in the most Southern part of the Northern Cape and encompasses three towns: Fraserburg, Williston and Sutherland. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Namaqua District Municipality, along with five other local municipalities, with the headquarters based in Springbok (see Figure 1.13 below). The district has the largest land surface compared to others in the district; however, its population size remains the smallest, where it decreased from 116,230 residents in 2004 to 115,952 in 2014 (KHM, 2022:15).

Figure 1.13: This map highlights the Namaqua District Municipality, along with its associated local municipalities



Source: Municipalities.co.za (Online: <https://municipalities.co.za/map/136/namakwa-district-municipality>)

¹⁰ There are three different municipalities being namely, A – the metropolitan municipality, B – the local municipality and C – the district municipality

The Karoo Hoogland is mainly rural, has a population of 12,588 people according to the 2011¹¹ National census, and is characterised by a high unemployment (14,6%) rate that contributes to significant poverty levels (KHM, 2022; StatsSA, 2011). In 2011, over 75% of the KHM population identified as Coloured, 20% as White, 0.7% as Black, and Indians and Asians together made up the remaining 0.3%. (KHM, 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2011). The distribution of the total population by age showed that a significant proportion of the population consists of children and youth (KHM, 2022:21). The highest level of education for persons aged 20 years and above in 2011 showed that out of 10 663 people, 1 337 finished matric while 659 had higher education, highlighting the already existing educational challenges (KHM, 2022:26).

These challenges are not unique to the KHM but reflect broader patterns across Karoo towns. To contextualise this, I draw on Walker and Vorster's (2024) chapter in *Contested Karoo*, which examines the social conditions of Loeriesfontein, Vanwyksvlei, and Sutherland. Since this study focuses on Sutherland, I will briefly discuss the other two. Like much of the Northern Cape, these towns "developed as service centres for the sheep farming sector, which by the end of the nineteenth century had been wrestled into white hands" (Walker & Vorster, 2024:93).

Research conducted in Vanwyksvlei in 2016 and Loeriesfontein in 2019, respectively, shows that both towns, while at different periods, are grappling with significant social and economic challenges, including high levels of poverty, unemployment, and social issues. Based on surveys by SARChI and StatsSA, households in these towns commonly have informal backyard structures and pit latrines, along with limited access to piped water (Walker & Vorster, 2024:107). The average household size is also notably different between the two towns: 3.5 in Loeriesfontein and a higher 5.7 in Vanwyksvlei, compared to the national average of 3.3 (Walker & Vorster, 2024:109). Education levels in both towns are concerning, with less than half of the population having completed matric, and

¹¹ It is important to note that although the 2022 South African census was released in 2023, various issues and concerns were identified in this data, such as the balance equation and comparisons with previous census results (Moultrie & Dorrington, 2024). I therefore mostly relied on the 2011 census data.

over 30% of 15-18-year-olds not attending school, indicating high dropout rates (Walker & Vorster, 2024:110). Teenage pregnancy remains a prevalent issue, with 33% of women in Loeriesfontein and 37% in Vanwyksvlei experiencing their first pregnancy before age 20 (Walker & Vorster, 2024:111).

Economic hardship is further reflected in hunger rates, 20% of households in Loeriesfontein and 15% in Vanwyksvlei, and heavy reliance on state grants: 64% and 80%, respectively (Walker & Vorster, 2024:113). Despite these challenges, both towns have seen new investments in astronomy and renewable energy, offering potential for development (Walker & Vorster, 2024:93). Yet residents often perceive these projects as serving national interests rather than addressing local needs, revealing a disconnect between external development initiatives and community priorities (Walker & Vorster, 2024:93).

1.4.2 South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and SALT

Sutherland's most notable distinction today is undoubtedly the Southern African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) and Southern African Large Telescope (SALT). Observations of the skies took place in cities like Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Cape Town, where colonial masters from London controlled the then-named Royal Observatory Cape of Good Hope (Mantungwa, 2021; Schoemam, 2013; SAAO, 2024:11). However, from the 1970s, observations of the skies in these places became difficult due to the atmospheric light and air pollution.

A quest for darker, clearer, and less polluted skies led to the establishment of SAAO, formed by merging the Republic Observatory in Johannesburg and the Royal Observatory Cape of Good Hope (SAAO, 2019). Built in 1972, 15 kilometres from Sutherland, it became the new site for research observations (SAAO, 2024:11). It houses 24 telescopes of different sizes, with some owned by NRF-SAAO and others hosted for international research organizations (SAAO, 2024:11). This infrastructure allows SAAO's major accomplishments, such as identifying a unique white dwarf systems and monitoring the changing material around Centaur (2060) Chiron, highlighting the NRF-SAAO's vital role

in advancing our understanding of the universe and the importance of these telescopes (SAAO, 2024:25).

The year 2005 was a pivotal moment for South African astronomy as the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) was inaugurated in Sutherland. During the construction of SALT, the SALT Collateral Benefits Programme (SCBP) was established to ensure societal benefits from this large telescope (SAAO, 2019).

According to SAAO (2024:37), the SCBP has improved astronomy awareness by working with the NRF-SAAO staff to develop diverse programmes. This initiative engages groups like students, teachers, women, media, indigenous knowledge holders, science centres, and the public through activities such as training, curriculum and extracurricular activities, job shadowing, outreach, tours, capacity-building, open nights, stargazing, and public lessons (SAAO, 2024:37). This focus aims to cultivate a new generation of scientists and astronomers. Additionally, they have played a role in fostering community development and supporting various initiatives in Sutherland.

Astronomy put Sutherland on the map, where the astro-tourism boom sparked an influx of guesthouses, self-catering units, and Bed & Breakfasts (B&B). As such, in 2017, locals felt that the benefit of astro-tourism had not extended beyond a select few businesses, as 78% of households state that they did not benefit from SALT (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets 2019:55). Some of these benefits can be ascribed to the local community computer centre, as well as a math teacher shared between the high school and primary school (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:55; Mantungwa & Theo, 2023). Although this is not a focus of my study, this will be drawn on in chapter three to help situate my study in the broader development context that has taken place in the town.

1.4.3 Present-day Sutherland (2011-2025): Social and Economic Context

In 2017, the South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) in the Sociology of Land, Environment, and Sustainable Development conducted its first HH surveys in Sutherland, followed by a second round in 2024. While my research initially referenced the first survey report, I have updated it to include data from the second for a more recent

overview of the town. The recent survey was based on a sample of 304 households and 1,160 individuals (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:13). Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald (2025:13) estimate that the current population of residents is approximately 2,767, with around 724 households. Proportionate stratification sampling was used to select plots as sampling units, with the number of plots in each residential area determined by its size relative to the larger town (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:32).

The four residential areas in Sutherland are Town (see Figure 1.14 below), Skema (Scheme), Hopland/Hop, and Kerkgronde (church grounds).

Figure 1.14: Satellite Image of Sutherland, Northern Cape



Source: Google Earth, 2023

Across the four areas surveyed, 85% of households are formal structures, while 15% consist of backyard dwellings (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:86). Nearly all households have access to piped water, either inside the home (39.3%) or on the plot (59.1%). However, in Skema, 0.7% of households lack water access entirely and rely on

neighbours or other sources (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:87). Sanitation access also varies: 33.4% of households use flush toilets (inside or outside), 64.6% rely on pit latrines, and 0.7% have no toilet facilities, resorting to the *veld* (field) (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:87).

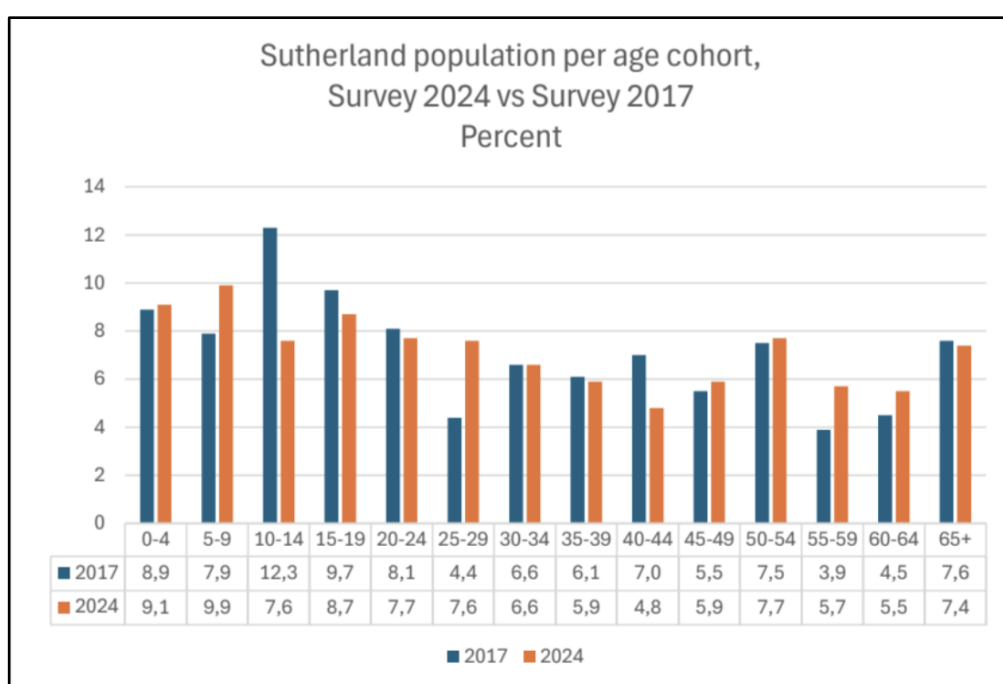
Most households have access to electricity, primarily through prepaid services (83,4%), 6,3% are billed directly by Eskom, 7.6% pay the main household to buy or use solar power, and 2,6% have no access to electricity at all (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:89). In the absence of electricity, 39.3% of residents purchase wood for heating, 6.9% for water heating, and 41.6% for cooking, while 32% use gas (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:93–94).

Economically, 34.3% of households receive government social grants, and 55.4% earn a salary. Yet 2.6% report no income at all, 20.6% of residents are unemployed, and half of those earning an income just over ZAR 2,000 per month (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:103, 111, 119). These conditions are further exacerbated by food insecurity, with 22.5% of respondents reporting that their households had gone without food in the past year (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:116).

Demographically, Sutherland is predominantly Coloured (94,6%), with 3,3% identifying as White, and the rest identifying as Black, Indian and other (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:13). Women make up 54,2% of the population, with 68,4% of all households being female-headed (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:46,55). According to Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald (2025:60), 14,5% of the population are not originally from Sutherland and migrated for employment opportunities in the tourism sector (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:14).

Since this research is focused on children and school-going youth, Figure 1.15 below showcases the change in the number of each age cohort as observed by the 2017 and 2024 SARChI HH surveys, highlighting Sutherland's youthful population.

Figure 1.15: Sutherland population per age cohort



Source: Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald (2025:47)

The recent Sutherland survey paints a picture of the socio-economic challenges faced by Sutherland's youth. The data from the *Sutherland Socio-economic HH Survey 2024* reveal that 60% of children aged 0-4 are not enrolled in any early childhood education (ECD) facility. This amounts to 104 children from the surveyed sample (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:15). For children aged 5 and older, 24.1% were attending an educational institution, while 17% of learners reported experiencing interrupted schooling (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:11,16). Additionally, the survey highlights a significant issue with teenage pregnancy, with 40% of first pregnancies occurring within the 13-19 age cohort (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:16). These statistics underscore the profound poverty, unemployment, and other social and economic challenges prevalent in Sutherland. This is a stark contrast to the town's international reputation as a hub for advanced technology and infrastructure.

1.4.4 Governance and Accountability Failures: Political Instability in the Karoo Hoogland Municipality

Sutherland, like many other small towns, has a contested political nature, and this can be traced back to the 18th century. According to archival resources¹² spanning from 8 September 1924 to 22 September 1933, Sutherland had what was then called native locations made up of indigenous residents. These locations today are known as Skema, Kerkgronde and Hop. Records show that in 1924, they accounted for 249 of the total population, consisting of 44 families and 54 dwellings made of stone and clay (Locations Collections A112/64, Sutherland Municipality L100/c/5). They are described as pure-bred natives; kaffirs, hottentots and bushmen, with an earning average of £1 per month, which in the present currency, is a mere ZAR22. Furthermore, they had to pay £50 in “Hut Tax” annually, of which a portion would be used to maintain the locations.

While the rest of the town appeared well-maintained, archival records reveal the poor conditions in the designated native locations, marked by inadequate housing, unhygienic environments, and limited access to clean water. These conditions raised concerns about potential disease outbreaks and cast doubt on the municipality’s commitment to using Hut Tax revenue for maintenance (Locations Collections A112/64, Sutherland Municipality L100/c/5). Notably, the records indicate that the municipality “looked upon the revenues from the Hut Tax as a source of income” rather than a dedicated fund for public welfare (Locations Collections A112/64, Sutherland Municipality L100/c/5). Such discrepancies underscore the need for robust and responsive development frameworks, ones that not only guide national and local governments in fulfilling their obligations but also enable measurable and context-sensitive progress

The Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM), as I previously mentioned, has an IDP to guide its municipal council and administration throughout the political term, ensuring it meets its development milestones. However, while aligning these objectives with national

¹² Archival material from the Western Cape Archive Library in Cape Town: Locations collections. A112/64. Sutherland Municipality (L100/c/5)

standards creates barriers to achieving meaningful development, there have been numerous political disputes over corruption within the Municipality. In 2017, according to TMG Digital (2017),

a former municipal manager and chief financial official at the Karoo Hoogland Municipality, and another person were found guilty... on nine charges of fraud, corruption, money laundering, and contravention of section 173 (1) of the Municipal Finance Management Act no 53 of 2003.

But this was not the first time. In 2011 and 2012, two KHM officials conducted transactions with an unregistered company that allegedly promised to deliver and install solar geysers to households in Williston, leading to similar charges as above (TMG Digital, 2017).

During the process of appointing a new municipal manager in 2017, more problems arose. Of the four candidates expected to be interviewed for the position, three “excused themselves from the process,” ultimately leading to the “supposedly satisfactory competence screening” of the individual who did show up (Dlamini, 2022). This led to a series of political disputes up until 2021, yet in 2024, another municipal manager was accused of corruption (Marriah-Maharaj, 2024).

In addition to all the above-mentioned points, it is important to note that the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) (2024) reports for the 2023-24 period show that the KHM’s overall audit outcomes regressed from ‘unqualified with findings’ to ‘qualified’. According to the AGSA’s audit terminology, this suggests that the financial statements contained material misstatements or provided insufficient evidence to prove otherwise (AGSA, n.d.). Furthermore, their financial and performance reporting were poor (AGSA, 2024). When evaluating their compliance with legislation, their closing balances indicate the following expenditures: ZAR172,11 million unauthorised, ZAR3,04 million fruitless and wasteful, and ZAR51,20 million irregular expenditure (AGSA, 2024). This affects their financial health, as 87% of municipal debt is unlikely to be recovered, and they have already spent more than 10% of the next year's budget (AGSA, 2023).

Considering that the Northern Cape is an ideal location for renewable energy sources and receives significant contributions from SED and ED to support local communities, local governments, while dealing with their own political disputes, not only need to meet the development objectives they set out for the communities but also play a crucial role in realising the potential of the support from SED and ED contributions.

1.4.5 IPPs in the Karoo Hoogland Municipality

Close to Sutherland, there are currently five wind farms operated by two IPPs, Red Rocket and Enel. Red Rocket¹³, as of 2020, is a “fully integrated African Independent Power Producer” whose mission is “to create clean energy across the continent by harnessing the power of nature’s technologies – sun, water, wind, and earth” (Red Rocket Energy, n.d.). It is owned by a variety of shareholders, such as Inspired Evolution, and its headquarters are in Cape Town (Red Rocket Energy, n.d.).

Enel Green Power¹⁴, otherwise just referred to as Enel, was founded in 2008 as a subsidiary of the Enel Group (Enel Green Power, n.d.). They have renewable energy projects across the world and are working “to set new standards in energy sustainability, constantly pushing the boundaries of technology and raising stakeholder awareness” (Enel Green Power, n.d.). Their headquarters are in Johannesburg.

The IPPs began constructing wind farms around Sutherland in 2019. Since 2022, the five IPP projects have become operational: Roggeveld, Brandvalley, and Rietkloof operated by RedRocket, as well as Soetwater and Karusa operated by Enel. Roggeveld wind farm has an operational capacity of 147 MW and generates 613 GWh per year, while Brandvalley and Rietkloof have capacities of 144 MW each and are expected to generate around 600 GWh per year. Soetwater and Karus wind farms are also 147 MW IPPs that can generate over 500 GWh per year.

¹³ Their website can be found here: <https://redrocket.energy>

¹⁴ Website link: <https://www.enelgreenpower.com/countries/africa/south-africa>.

As I mentioned in section 1.2, REIPPPP has an element of economic development, and the IPP Office aims to boost private sector electricity generation and support national development goals. IPPs' contributions thus go beyond CSR, fulfilling a government mandate to benefit host towns within a 50km radius. Limited academic research links these commitments specifically to youth development.

The Roggeveld wind farm, operated by Red Rocket, has contributed to several small towns, including Matjiesfontein, Laingsburg¹⁵, and Sutherland. According to their website (Red Rocket Energy, n.d), they have provided educator support and winter school uniforms for these communities. The wind farm supports all three towns, as its operations span both the Karoo Hoogland Municipality in the Northern Cape and the Laingsburg Local Municipality in the Western Cape.

Enel has outlined the contributions of both the Soetwater and Karusa wind farms to their host towns. According to the Soetwater project page (Enel Green Power, n.d.), in Sutherland, they implemented an educational support programme that involved installing interactive smart boards at Roggeveld Primary School and Sutherland High School. Karusa wind farm¹⁶ also made contributions towards Laingsburg, which does not fall within the scope of this study.

1.5 Research rationale and research questions

In February of 2024, I conducted fieldwork in Sutherland, serving as a fieldwork enumerator and data quality checker within the SARChI Research Chair. By conducting interviews and reviewing the data quality of HH surveys, I gained valuable insight into the current social ills the residents are confronted with. This fieldwork marks the continuation of a longitudinal study were according to the first report from HH surveys

¹⁵ Matjiesfontein and Laingsburg are located in the Western Cape Province.

¹⁶ Website link: <https://www.enelgreenpower.com/our-projects/operating/karusa-wind-farm>

conducted in 2017, findings “revealed significant problems of poverty, unemployment and social inequality”, as well as that school dropouts were on the rise (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019: 57). It was not until being in this environment that I was able to grasp the reality of its living conditions, and all that had to be unveiled by the people themselves. This essentially served as my scoping trip.

As I previously mentioned, Sutherland hosts SALT, SAAO, and now IPPs. Unlike SALT and SAAO, who has a CSR to invest in the development of Sutherland, IPPs are mandated by the government. According to Mantungwa (2021:33), SALT and SAAO have been working to improve education in Sutherland, particularly in the realm of science education. However, individuals need to possess a certain level of scientific literacy to effectively engage with scientific concepts and information, creating within this intervention a level of inequality regardless of it enhancing capabilities through the exposure of science (Mantungwa, 2021:34). Therefore, before any educational interventions can be implemented, it is crucial to comprehend the underlying social realities of the learners from towns like Sutherland who grapple with various and complex social ills.

Sen’s (1999) Capability approach is therefore well-suited for this. When looking at development as a process that expands freedoms, we begin to unpack the various underlying challenges that often hinder genuine development. These social realities depend on the schools, the broader town, and household dynamics. Despite these efforts from SALT and SAAO, the lack of research on IPPs contributions to Sutherland, and more particularly, their connection to child and school-going youth development, provided a gap that my study explored. While the 2019 and 2025 HH survey reports offer valuable insight into the characteristics and conditions of Sutherland’s residents at each time, respectively, their scope did not comprehensively analyse the reasons for the findings.

This study, therefore, aims to identify the unfreedoms and challenges that hinder the development of children and school-going youth, as well as the development of education in Sutherland, using a Capabilities Approach as its analytical lens. It critically examines how donations from IPPs, rather than consistently advancing capabilities, often intersect with these persistent (socio-economic) issues. It does not seek to explain why the education system in Sutherland is structurally weak. Rather, it examines how IPP

investments enter this already-fragile system and how they are experienced by learners, teachers and caregivers.

My overarching question thus sought to understand how SED contributions from renewable energy companies intersect with child and school-going youth development in Sutherland. My subsidiary questions were therefore as follows:

- What are the development and educational support needs of Roggeveld Primary School and Sutherland High School?
- What education and youth development programmes are the IPP funding?
- What is the rationale for funding these programmes?
- What contributions are the educational and youth development programmes making, according to the teachers, the development practitioners, and the parents of the youth?

However, most of my findings after the scoping trip indicate that the IPPs are primarily providing donations rather than implementing many development projects, leading me to refine my subsidiary questions as follows:

- What is the current state of child and school-going youth development?
- What are the development and educational support needs of Roggeveld Primary School and Sutherland High School?
- What are the IPP youth SED objectives?
- How do community members perceive these contributions in relation to child and school-going youth development?

1.6 Chapter outline

In the next four chapters, I will discuss the research methodology I used to conduct this study, review relevant literature, present the findings and analysis, and conclude by summarising the key findings. Chapter 2 details my research methodology, explaining the qualitative research design, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and study limitations. I will also discuss how I maintained trustworthiness and validity throughout

the study. In Chapter 3, I will review relevant literature, examining key debates on development, corporate social responsibility, and the role of IPPs in community development. This chapter also situates my study within broader academic and policy discussions. Chapter 4 will present the findings and analysis, drawing on participant perspectives to explore whether and how IPPs contribute to educational development, I will critically examine the extent to which their interventions align with the needs of children and school-going youth. Finally, I will conclude my study in Chapter 5 by summarising my key findings, discussing their implications, and offering recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Chapter Two: Research Paradigm and Design

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology that guided my study. In the first section, I situate my research within an interpretivist paradigm, highlighting the importance of understanding people's lived experiences. In Section 2.2, I discuss the qualitative, inductive research approach that guides my study, followed by providing an overview of my study area, Sutherland, in Section 2.3. Section 2.4 then explores the field work I carried out over five trips during 2024 and 2025, while sections 2.5 and 2.6 discuss the data collection methods I employed, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis and how I used thematic analysis to interpret this data. In section 2.7, I discuss the ethical considerations that guided my research, ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines. Lastly, I reflect on my study's limitations and challenges and conclude the chapter by setting the stage for the next phase of the research in section 2.8.

2.1 Research Paradigm

As I mentioned in chapter 1, I worked for the SARChI Research Chair, conducting interviews and verifying survey data from fellow fieldworkers. During that time, I gained valuable insight into the pervasive social ills and challenges confronting residents.

This survey builds on a 2017 socio-economic household survey that highlighted issues of poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, with rising school dropout rates (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:57). While both reports offer valuable statistical insights into the characteristics of Sutherlands residents, their scope does not comprehensively analyse the underlying reasons for the findings. In other words, it did not explore the lived experiences and perspectives of those directly affected.

Furthermore, the 2017 survey was conducted before Independent Power Producers (IPPs) established a presence in Sutherland, a shift that, when I started my study,

required investigation. The 2024 survey report was released mid-2025, and while it did include scope on their presence in the town, it also emphasised how, regardless of all these development efforts taking place, the residents are still facing various challenges (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025). This underscores the existing, yet unaddressed, need for a deeper investigation into the specific development needs of children and school-going youth themselves.

It was not until I was immersed in this environment that I fully grasped the reality of its living conditions. This firsthand realisation reinforces the imperative for a qualitative case-study approach that prioritises contextual understanding and direct, on-the-ground engagement to truly unpack the challenges to children's and school-going youth's development.

2.1.1 Interpretivism

I became deeply interested in understanding the social realities of the residents of Sutherland through an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises the subjective interpretation of social phenomena (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, as cited in Yong, Husin and Kamarudin, 2021:5858). Paradigm choices are informed by components such as “Ontology, Epistemology, Methodology and Methods” (Pius as cited in Yong et al., 2021:5858). Ontology concerns the nature of reality; what exists and how it can be understood, defined by objectivism and constructivism (Weber as cited in Yong et al., 2021; Clark, Foster, Sloan, & Bryman, 2021). Constructivism is an ontological perspective that sees social phenomena as constantly evolving, while interpretivism focuses on understanding how individuals perceive and interpret experiences, emphasising that knowledge is socially constructed, not fixed or solely created through social interaction (Clark et al., 2021; Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020; Yong et al., 2021; Clark et al., 2021).

The interpretivist paradigm furthermore seeks to understand social realities by exploring “how experiences and meanings are understood by others and why they are interpreted in such ways” (Clark et al., 2021). This approach is relevant to my research, which explores how different stakeholders such as teachers, parents and officials

perceive the contributions from IPPs and their impact on youth development in Sutherland, highlighting their interactions with the environment.

A paradigm influences a researcher by highlighting key issues in a discipline, guiding model and theory development to address these challenges, establishing criteria for research tools like methodology and data collection, and providing principles and methods for solving similar problems in the future (Yong et al., 2021:5858)

My decision to adopt an interpretivist lens emerged from my first-hand fieldwork experience, connecting me closely to the research process. I noticed that learners drop out of school, and while I could not solve this, I expanded the scope to understand their broader reality. Using Sen's (1999) framework, I asked questions like 'how' and 'why', which strengthened my choice of a qualitative, interpretivist approach. Understanding a constructed reality meant that I could not remain detached; I had to engage with participants through interviews and focus groups, relying on my presence in the research site (Yong et al., 2021:5860).

2.2 Method

Recognising the complex and situational nature of my research questions, I adopted a flexible, participatory method, emphasising physical presence in Sutherland to observe minor details that might be invisible to the naked eye. Guided by an interpretivist paradigm that values subjective meaning and context, I used an inductive approach that evolved from my field experiences rather than starting with a fixed hypothesis (Yong et al., 2021:5861).

In other words, in inductive research and specifically the *fully theory-informed inductive study design*, the conceptual framework evolves when new insights emerge and are refined based on the data collected or the researchers' understanding (Varpio et al., 2020:991). This approach enabled me to engage deeply with community members' perspectives, uncovering patterns and themes not immediately visible through

predefined frameworks (Varpio et al., 2020:992). It ensured that concepts and theories could naturally emerge from the data throughout the research process (Bryman, 2016).

Using Sen's (1999) Capability Approach as a lens, I reframed my research question to focus on the broader structural and social factors impacting children and school-going youth in Sutherland. Instead of solely examining school dropout rates, I aimed to understand whether these young people can lead lives they have reason to value. This perspective guided my selection of qualitative methods as I aimed to capture individuals lived experiences.

Table 2.1: Research Paradigm for the Study

Dimension	Characteristics chosen for this research
Research Orientation	Qualitative
Typical role of theory	Inductive (Theory generation)
Epistemological orientation	Interpretivism
Ontological orientation	Constructivism

Source: adapted from Clark et al. (2021:149)

My methodological approach focused less on numbers and needed to be broad and flexible enough to capture minor details during data collection, details that might not be immediately observable and could be influenced by social actors. Therefore, I prioritised a research strategy that emphasises words, images, and objects over quantitative methods, which concentrate on numerical data to explain social phenomena (Clark et al., 2021). However, my research also drew on findings from surveys from a 2017 and 2024 study on the socio-economic household characteristics in Sutherland, conducted by the Research Chair that my MA falls under¹⁷. These surveys, based on representative samples, provided valuable statistical insights into education levels, school dropout rates, and development needs.

¹⁷ DSTI/NRF South African Research Chair in the Sociology of Land, Environment, and Sustainable Development

Qualitative research, on the other hand, seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of specific topics by actively engaging with both the people and the environments connected to them (Clark et al., 2021). It explores aspects of phenomena that are difficult to measure quantitatively, such as the 'what', 'why', and 'how' (Tuffour, 2017:1). This aligns with my interpretative paradigm, where the researcher's subjective interpretation shapes the findings. It helps uncover patterns, interpret data, and provide meaningful explanations (Yong et al., 5858:2021). By using this approach, I immersed myself in my research site and engaged with the residents to gain a richer understanding of their social reality.

2.2.1 A Case Study Research Design

This qualitative research employed a case study design to explore child and school-going youth development in Sutherland. Chosen for its ability to answer 'how' and 'why' questions within real-world contexts, this approach captures the complexity of social issues without controlling behaviour events (Yin, 2018). Development being ongoing and dynamic, this design facilitated observing processes as they unfold, rather than as a static or isolated event.

Yin (2018) describes case studies as a holistic method integrating multiple data sources to deepen understanding of complex phenomena, such as IPPs youth development efforts, in its context, Sutherland's socio-economic conditions (Brown, 2008:2). The methodological choice to focus on Sutherland is therefore intentional and theoretically grounded. Sutherland is not approached as a "representative" case of renewable energy development in South Africa, but as an analytically rich site where multiple dynamics intersect: long-standing structural poverty, weak local institutional capacity, and the recent influx of renewable energy projects under the REIPPPP. These overlapping conditions make Sutherland a strategically important site for examining how development initiatives are translated into practice and how they are experienced locally. The town's dual positioning, both as a peripheral, resource-constrained rural locality and as a host to nationally significant scientific and renewable energy infrastructure, further sharpens its analytical value. This juxtaposition allows the study to trace the disjuncture's between ambitious development narratives and everyday socio-economic realities, and

to examine how children and youth become positioned within these development imaginaries. In this sense, the case is selected not for statistical generalisation, but for its capacity to generate theoretical and analytical insight into broader tensions around infrastructure-led development and social reproduction.

By adopting this design, I was able to investigate how development efforts are unfolding in Sutherland, influenced by broader social conditions, and perceived by a diverse group of stakeholders, including teachers, community members, and the community liaison officer. This approach provided the depth and flexibility needed to analyse both individual experiences and structural influences.

2.3 Study area and sampling

2.3.1 Sutherland

My case study is based in the arid Karoo region of South Africa's Northern Cape province, specifically within the Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM), which includes the towns of Fraserburg, Williston, and Sutherland. Demographically, the KHM population is predominantly Coloured (75%, or 9,934 people), followed by White residents (20%, or 1,832 people), with Black and Indian/Asian residents constituting small minorities (StatsSA 2011; KHM, 2022). According to the KHM (2022:12), youth¹⁸ make up a significant portion of the municipality's residents. The region faces substantial educational challenges, as evidenced by census data showing that of 10,663 people aged 20 and older, only 1,337 had completed high school, and just 659 had attained higher education degrees (KHM, 2022:26).

The town is internationally renowned for its exceptional astronomical conditions as it hosts SAAO and SALT. Since 2018, its economic and social landscape has further been diversified by the presence of renewable energy IPPs. Sutherland is known for its clear,

¹⁸ This group consists of everyone between the ages of 15 and 34 (StatsSA, 2025)

dark skies, snowy winters, and peaceful environment, which have successfully been developed into a tourist destination, as evidenced by the 43 guesthouses in town (IDP, 2022). The town's physical layout, however, reflects the significant socio-economic and infrastructural disparities across its four main areas.

First and where all the tourists come to stay is the town area. Here you find your local grocery store, OK grocer, a PEP clothing store, a standard bank, the high school and about three restaurants. Furthermore, there is one heritage house and one tarred road going through the town (IDP, 2022). The other three areas are native locations named Skema, Hop and Kerkgronde. Here, the plots are much smaller, and you find structures in the backyards that the owners rent out. Many of these houses make use of pit latrines. The primary school is between the town area and Kerkgronde¹⁹.

2.3.2 Study population

The study population consisted of adult residents of Sutherland who possessed direct knowledge and insight into the lives and experiences of children and school-going youth. Due to ethical considerations regarding consent and engagement with minors, I was unable to directly interview children and youth under the age of 18. Therefore, while their development remained the central focus of the study, firsthand insights were gathered exclusively from key adults closely involved in their upbringing and education.

The final sample for interviews and focus groups included:

- Teachers and school staff (primary and high school).
- Parents of school-going youth
- Past learners
- Community members
- Development practitioners
- Municipal officials

¹⁹ See Figure 1.14, on page 31.

- IPP community liaison officer

These participants provided firsthand perspectives on the developmental challenges, educational needs, and the perceived impacts of IPPs contributions on children and school-going youth in Sutherland.

2.3.3 Purposive and snowball sampling

As discussed above, a specific criterion for inclusion was established to ensure participants could provide relevant insight into the study's research area. To select individuals meeting this criterion, purposive sampling was employed (Clark et al., 2021). This non-probability method strategically selects a sample because of its specific relevance to the research objectives (Blackstone, 2012:171). Since my study was based in Sutherland and had specific objectives in mind, purposive sampling was used to select ten participants for individual interviews, ensuring diverse representation from key stakeholder groups, including:

- Teachers from both the primary and high schools
- The IPP community liaison officer
- Members of the School Governing Body
- Early Childhood Education (ECD) practitioners

Access to individuals was initially secured through gatekeepers in management or executive roles, such as school principals and contacts listed on the IPPs websites, whose approval was required (Clark et al., 2021). A brief study overview was emailed to obtain permission. I contacted ECD practitioners to organise focus groups or interviews based on their preference. However, all participants cancelled and did not respond to rescheduling attempts.

Following initial interviews, snowball sampling was used to expand the sample. This method helps access participants when the researcher is new to the area. The initial participants identified parents of schoolchildren, individuals knowledgeable about the education system and youth development, and those familiar with IPPs, to participate in focus groups during my second field trip.

The goal was to hold at least five focus groups, each with a target of five participants, to achieve data saturation (Blackstone, 2012:172). While this target was met in terms of the number of groups facilitated, the number of participants per focus group varied depending on availability and interest, with some groups having fewer and others having more than five participants (see section 2.5.2).

2.4 Fieldwork

The following section will explore the fieldwork that informs my study. This was carried out over five trips during 2024 and 2025. In February 2024, I did a scoping trip, followed by my first fieldwork trip in August 2024 to conduct interviews, which also enabled me to organise participants for my focus groups, held in November 2024. In April 2025, I carried out my third fieldwork trip for observation purposes, as well as some additional interviews and focus groups. In August 2025, this fourth and final trip was used for follow-up interviews and to finalise my work.

A key part of my study involved staff members from both the high school and primary school, as they not only play a critical role in shaping the educational and social development of children and school-going youth in Sutherland but also have first-hand experience engaging with this group. Sutherland has one primary school with over 400 learners and one high school with just over 100. These institutions are crucial sites where formal education intersects with broader community realities, such as poverty and external development initiatives. The opportunity to interview school staff at their respective schools provided an invaluable opportunity to observe the physical infrastructure and the general environment of each school (see Figures 2.1 to 2.3 below of the school surroundings).

Figure 2.1: Sutherland High School



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

Figure 2.2: Roggeveld Primary School in Sutherland



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

Figure 2.3: Roggeveld Primary School and its wind farm mural



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

My initial five-day fieldwork trip took place from the 19th to the 23rd of August 2024. During this time, I conducted interviews with staff members from both the high school and the primary school, as well as with a community liaison officer appointed by one of the IPPs. While I interviewed the school staff at their respective schools, the community liaison officer was interviewed in her office at the municipal office in the town²⁰.

The tables below set out my interview respondents' details as well as the date the interview was conducted. In accordance with my consent form, their names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

²⁰ During my last fieldwork trip in August 2025, I found that she no longer has this office.

Table 2.2: Semi-structured interviews with teachers from the Primary School in August 2024

Roggeveld Primary School Interviewees					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of interview
Hendrick	Principal and teacher	54	Male	Coloured	20/08/2024
Alison	Teacher	30	Female	White	20/08/2024
James	Teacher	30	Male	Coloured	20/08/2024

Table 2.3: Semi-structured interviews with members from the High School in August 2024

Sutherland High School Interviewees					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of Interview
Naiomi	Acting Principal ²¹	Mid 60s	Female	White	22/08/2024
Jane	SGB ²²	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	22/08/2024
Kelly	Teacher	58	Female	White	22/08/2024
Paulette	Teacher	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	22/08/2024

Table 2.4: Semi-structured interview with a representative of an IPP company in Sutherland in August 2024

Community Liaison Official				
Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race	Date of Interview
Jennifer	33	Female	Coloured	21/08/2024

My second fieldwork trip spanned over 6 days from the 23rd of November 2024 until the 28th of November 2024. During this time, I held focus groups and had 2 interviews. I was fortunate enough to be able to use a classroom at the high school with permission from

²¹ Naiomi is a teacher, but at that time, she had been appointed as the acting Principal of Sutherland High School

²² Member of the high school's school governing body (SGB)

the acting principal, where I conducted most of these sessions. The number of respondents in each focus group varied, as organising a suitable time for participants was challenging.

Tables 2.5 to 2.9 below present the details of the research respondents, including the dates of their interviews and focus group participation. All names have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Table 2.5: Sutherland respondents in semi-structured interviews in November 2024

Local Resident Interviewees					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of Interview
Janine	Adult College Coordinator	Mid 50s	Female	Coloured	25/08/2024
Emma	University Student	Mid 20s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024

Table 2.6: Sutherland respondents in focus groups in November 2024

Focus Groups with Local Residents					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of Interview
Focus group one					
Enrique	Past learner	18	Male	Coloured	25/08/2024
Andre	Past learner	18	Male	Coloured	25/08/2024
Jenny	Past learner	18	Female	Coloured	25/08/2024
Ulrich	Past learner	19	Male	Coloured	25/08/2024
Focus group two					
Rose	Parent	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Amy	Parent	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Sunnette	Parent	Mid 50s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Focus group three					
Ann	Parent	Mid 30s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Julia	Parent	Mid 50s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024

Sophie	Parent	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Mary	Parent	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Nita	Parent	Mid 30s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Carol	Parent	Mid 50s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Lisa	Parent	Mid 30s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Janet	Parent	Mid 30s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Maria	Parent	Mid 50s	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Focus group four					
Katrina	Parent	33	Female	Coloured	26/08/2024
Emile	SAPS officer	Mid 40s	Male	Black	26/08/2024
Focus group five					
Steve	Past learner	18	Male	Coloured	27/08/2024
Tamsin	Past learner	18	Female	Coloured	27/08/2024
Roxanne	Past learner	18	Female	Coloured	27/08/2024
Ava	Past learner	19	Female	Coloured	27/08/2024
Mia	Past learner	18	Female	Coloured	27/08/2024

I conducted a third fieldwork visit between the 3rd and the 10th of April 2025. During this period, my focus was largely on observing the social fabric of the town, particularly how residents experienced the weekend when SASSA grants were distributed, as well as the return to school on the 7th of April.

I engaged in several informal conversations and conducted a few additional as well as follow-up (FU) interviews and focus groups where possible. However, it became apparent that many community members were experiencing fatigue due to my repeated presence in the area, which limited further engagement. When I approached individuals, some expressed interest and provided their contact information to inform me of their availability. However, I did not receive any follow-up from them subsequently. Others disengaged swiftly from the conversation, and one individual gave me a non-functional contact number.

The tables below outline the details of my respondents as well as the dates of the interviews and focus groups. Their names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Table 2.7: Sutherland respondents in semi-structured interviews in April 2025

Local Residents Interviews					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of interviews
John	Teacher	Mid 50s	Male	Coloured	09/04/2025
Leigh	Teacher	50s	Female	Black	09/04/2025
Adam	Teacher	58	Male	Coloured	10/04/2025
Derek	Withheld	Mid 40s	Male	Coloured	10/04/2025

Table 2.8: Sutherland respondents in focus groups in April 2025

Focus Groups with Local Residents					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of interviews
Focus group 6					
Jack	Parent	70	Male	Coloured	06/04/2025
Nancy	Parent & past SGB member	72	Female	Coloured	06/04/2025
Focus group 7					
Mary	Teacher	Mid 60s	Female	Coloured	09/04/2025
Sam	Teacher	Mid 30s	Male	Coloured	09/04/2025
Focus group 8					
Andrea	Parent	Mid 40s	Female	Coloured	10/04/2025
Elain	Parent	Mid 30s	Female	Coloured	10/04/2025

Between the 25th and the 29th of August 2025, I conducted my fourth and final fieldwork visit to finalise my work. This involved assessing whether anything had changed in the town since I last visited, leading to informal conversations and interviews with the new principal of Sutherland High School, who was appointed at the start of the year in place of the acting principal of 2024, as well as the school's social worker, who was appointed since I had last been in the town.

Table 2.9: Semi-structured interviews with residents in August 2025

Local Residents Interviews					
Pseudonym	Position	Age	Gender	Race	Date of interviews
Arlene	Social Worker	Late 20's	Female	Coloured	26/08/2025
Jared	New Principal at Sutherland High School	Mid 40's	Male	Coloured	26/08/2025
Sophia	Parent	Late 30's	Female	Coloured	28/08/2025

2.5 Data collection methods

This section explores the qualitative data collection methods used to conduct my study. Since qualitative research seeks to develop an in-depth understanding of specific topics, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis were essential to this study.

2.5.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are guided by a list of questions or themes²³, with the researcher framing each question openly to allow and encourage the interviewee to articulate or respond to each question as they see fit (Clark et al., 2021). This allowed me to ask open-ended questions in a relaxed manner and smoothly steer the interview back on track. As previously mentioned, I had outlined a criterion for selecting participants in my initial sample, which was especially important as my interview guide consisted of themes from which multiple questions could be asked or drawn. They therefore needed to have some knowledge of the topics.

Interviews were carried out over four fieldwork trips. Although the target was 10 interviews, I conducted an additional 7 to ensure data saturation, as some interviews

²³ See Appendix A

were cut short due to participants' work commitments. At the same time, one of my interviewees did not make a significant contribution to this study, a new principal was appointed at the high school, and a social worker was finally employed towards the end of my fieldwork period. Furthermore, I also had a few informal discussions with people in the town, such as the hospital staff, police, guesthouse owners, and shopkeepers.

- First Field Trip (19th to 23rd August 2024): 8 interviews were conducted
- Second Field Trip (23rd to 28th November 2024): 2 interviews were conducted, completing the target sample size of 10 interviews.
- Third Field Trip (3rd to 10th April 2025): 4 Interviews were conducted
- Fourth Field Trip (25th to 29th August 2025): 3 interviews were conducted

Additionally, I had initially planned for each interview to last no more than 45 minutes. While some rarely reached 30 minutes, a few interviews spontaneously spanned up to two hours. Before each interview, interviewees were informed of the expected timeframe, their right to withdraw at any point during the discussion and to agree to have the interview recorded or not. The unexpected depth and duration of these interviews, as well as the additional interviews, contributed richly and were valuable to the study's data.

2.5.2 Focus groups

Focus groups are essentially group discussions facilitated by a researcher on specific topics or issues with at least four other people (Clark et al., 2021). Here, the researcher provides a setting where the participants, who are selected based on their insight into the topic, can freely express their perspectives (Clark et al., 2021). Considering I had already conducted interviews during my first field trip, these initial participants directed me to additional participants who joined my focus groups during my second field trip from the 23rd until the 28th of November 2024, as well as my third field trip, which took place between the 3rd and 10th of April 2025.

Recruitment and Practical Challenges

The criteria for participation required individuals to be:

- Aged 18 and older.
- In direct contact with children (e.g., teachers, social workers, youth development practitioners, or parents) or possess expert knowledge of the current state of child/youth development and the education system in Sutherland.
- Knowledgeable about the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and their activities in the town.

Organising the focus groups proved challenging due to the participants' extensive daily commitments. Attempts to schedule groups after hours were often met with participants feeling too tired or needing to attend to domestic responsibilities (such as preparing dinner). Scheduling on weekends was also difficult, as participants often cited church attendance, family obligations (like preparing lunch), planned social events, or simply needing their only available rest time.

Despite these logistical obstacles, I facilitated eight focus group discussions (FGD), exceeding the sample size target.

- Second Field Trip (23rd to 28th November 2024): 5 FGD facilitated, reaching the sample target.
- Third Field Trip (3rd to 10th April 2025): 3 FGD facilitated.

The composition of these groups varied in size, ranging from a minimum of two participants in one group to a maximum of nine participants in another. Additional focus groups were thus conducted for the instances where discussions proved challenging to facilitate, such as in larger groups where participants tended to conform to the opinions of one or two speakers.

To facilitate these discussions, I employed a semi-structured approach to maintain focus when conversations deviated, using a list of themes²⁴. I encouraged participants to share their perspectives, opinions and experiences, and reminded them that this is a discussion among us all and not just me with each individual. With their consent, all discussions were recorded and notes taken throughout. Similar to the interviews, each focus group was expected to last no more than 45 minutes, but some groups went on for nearly twice as long, offering a richer understanding of how participants collectively experience and perceive the various challenges that affect the town.

2.5.3 Observations

By being present, I was able to explore the town, its infrastructure and observe the social interaction between residents, generating data by mere observation. I therefore adopted the *non-participating observer with interaction* role, which involves a researcher not participating in daily activities but merely observing until having to interact with group members through interviews or focus groups (Clark et al., 2021).

It is important to acknowledge the contested nature of observations within the social sciences research domain. While it can be said to be the foundation of research methodology, as following Angrosino & Rosenberg as cited in Denzine & Lincoln (2018), today, it is more complexly characterised as surveillance and as a means of monitoring and controlling. There is thus a fine line between whether observation is natural as a research method or merely an institutional form of power (Denzine & Lincoln, 2018). But this has come to depend on the reflectiveness of the researcher themselves and how they situate themselves within the environment observed. I thus adopted an overt research style, which means the researcher is transparent about their research (Clark et al., 2021).

Considering the town's social fabric changes over time and my presence across different periods, my observations varied but remained goal-oriented through specific

²⁴ See Appendix B

objectives²⁵. It was therefore important that I take field notes, detailed summaries based on initial reflections, including information on the school's infrastructure and IPP donations to name a few (Clark et al., 2021).

I did not wander with notebooks and pens openly, but documented observations when alone. This prevented residents from feeling self-conscious and helped me reflect on interviews (Clark et al., 2021). Ethically, I did not directly observe children and youth, as they could not give informed consent. When I conducted interviews or focus groups on school grounds, principals provided a private office away from students.

2.5.4 Document analysis

To triangulate my findings, I also analysed documents like the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of the Karoo Hoogland Municipality (KHM), the Auditor-General of South Africa reports on the KHM, the Independent Power Producer's (IPP) Office official documents, and each Independent Power Producer's company websites.

Clark et al. (2021) suggest documents reflect an organisation's culture and offer insights into its realities. However, some argue they represent a separate reality, emphasising the importance of considering their creation context and intended audience (Coffey as cited in Clark et al., 2021). What this means is that while they are valuable for understanding official policies, documents may not accurately depict how plans are implemented or experienced.

Analysing these documents helped fill gaps when I couldn't reach certain participants and provided a broader understanding of development efforts in Sutherland. It also allowed me to compare official narratives with participants' experiences, enriching my data and enabling triangulation of findings.

²⁵ See Appendix C.

To better understand Sutherland's current situation, I reviewed historical records at the Western Cape Archive Library in Cape Town. However, these sources offered limited information on the town's social or demographic changes, which slightly constrained the depth of my analysis.

2.6 Data analysis

Considering the broad scope of qualitative data collected from interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis, I employed a thematic approach that would help identify emergent and recurring themes. Furthermore, I chose this approach based on its flexibility when interpreting the patterns within my data, as well as because it allowed me to explore the depth and complexity of participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and behaviours in a structured yet adaptable way.

Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2017:297), “is a method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (“themes”) within qualitative data”. Themes can be uncovered by repetitions, indigenous typologies, metaphors, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data and theory-related material (Ryan and Bernard as cited in Clark et al., 2021).

I choose to follow Braun and Clarke’s method involving a 6-step process: familiarisation, initial coding, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining themes and evidencing themes (Clark et al., 2021). After transcribing my interviews and focus groups, I re-read the transcripts, field notes, and analysed documents, noting recurring issues. I then coded the data by identifying patterns and categorising key concepts, which I grouped into broader themes and subthemes to create a structured framework.

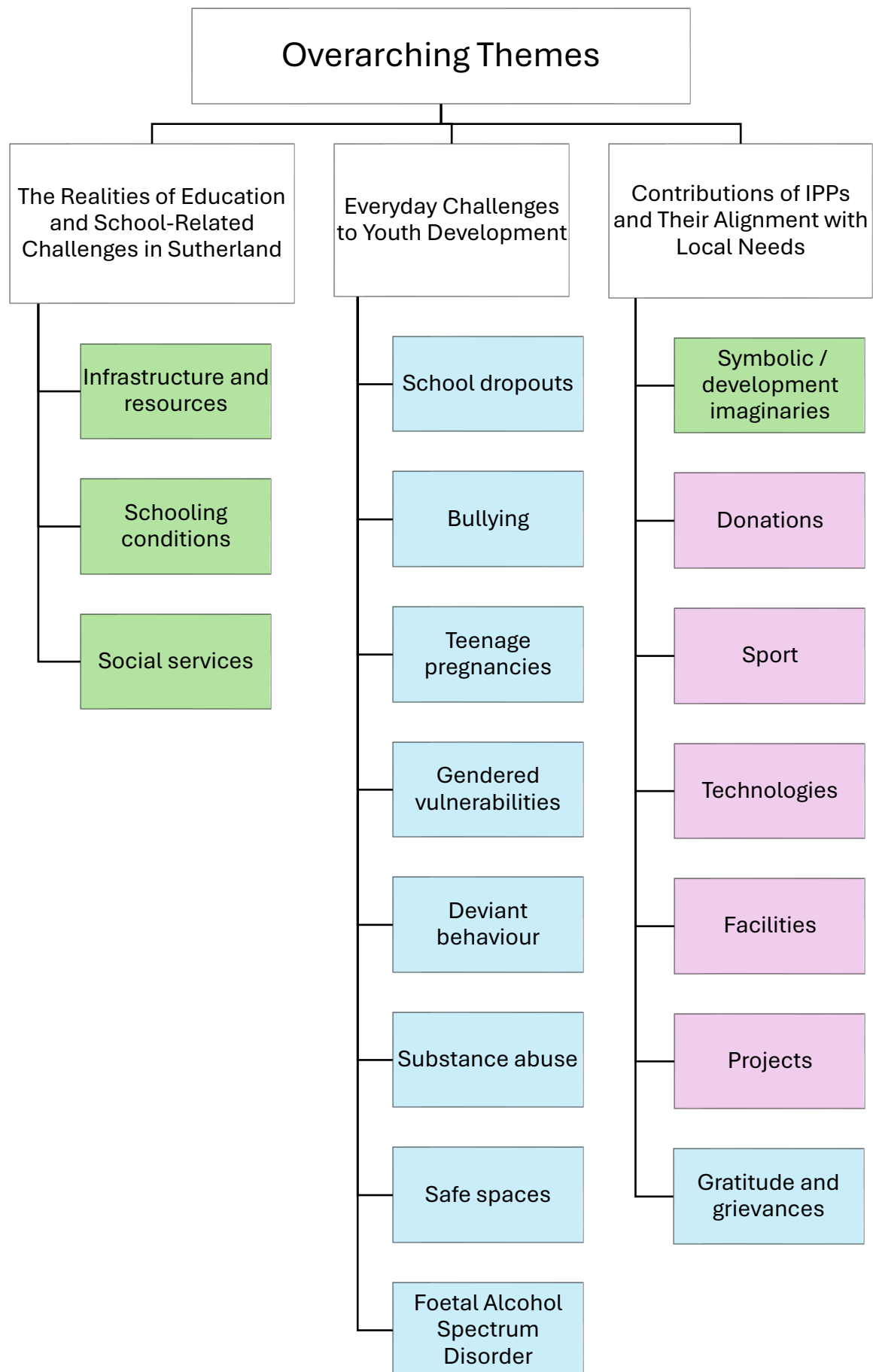
Figure 2.4 visualises the thematic structure of the analysis by organising the findings across three analytically distinct but interrelated domains. The first cluster, *The Realities of Education and School-Related Challenges in Sutherland*, captures the structural and institutional conditions that shape the local field of possibility, including infrastructure

and resources, schooling conditions, and social services (coded in green). The second cluster, *Everyday Challenges to Youth Development*, brings together participants' accounts of lived vulnerability and constraint, including school dropouts, bullying, teenage pregnancies, gendered vulnerabilities, deviant behaviour, substance abuse, limited after-school spaces, and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder. The third cluster, *Contributions of IPPs and Their Alignment with Local Needs*, groups project-based development interventions and local responses, including symbolic development imaginaries, donations, sport, technologies, facilities, projects, and expressions of gratitude and grievance.

While these three domains are analytically distinct, the figure highlights their interdependence in practice. Interventions are predominantly concentrated in the third domain, where visible needs and acute crises are addressed through projects, donations, and facilities. By contrast, the deeper structural-institutional conditions represented in the first domain, such as enduring constraints in infrastructure, schooling conditions, and social services, remain largely unchanged. This imbalance means that many of the problems articulated in the second domain, which capture the everyday manifestations of vulnerability and constrained capabilities among young people, are not fundamentally resolved. Instead, they are repeatedly managed through symbolic, “meantime,” or band-aid interventions that offer temporary relief without altering the underlying conditions that reproduce these challenges. Chapter 4 unpacks this dynamic in detail, tracing how project-based interventions come to substitute for, rather than catalyse, structural transformation.

Figure 2.4: Thematic mapping of Structural Unfreedoms, Lived Challenges, and IPP Development Responses in Sutherland

Key	
	Structural-institutional conditions (systemic unfreedoms)
	Everyday manifestations of constrained capabilities
	Project-based development interventions (band-aids/meantime fixes)



2.7 Ethical considerations

This research was conducted following both Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) Guidelines and the standards for ethical research as set out by the International Sociological Association (ISA). Before my research commenced, I submitted my research proposal on the 19th of June 2024 to the Departmental Ethics Screening Committee (DESC) and the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University, who, on the 8th of July 2024, granted ethical clearance based on my study (Project number: 30725) being classified as low risk²⁶.

Upon receiving ethical clearance, arrangements were made with the principals of the high school and primary school, as well as municipal officials, to ensure they are aware of my conducting research in the area. Written informed consent²⁷ was obtained after participants were fully briefed on my study's purpose. This was also translated into Afrikaans. While this study focused on child and school-going youth development and education, no minors (i.e., individuals under 18) were involved. Participants retained autonomy throughout the study, with the option to agree or decline to have interviews or focus group discussions recorded, including the right to refuse participation in the study at any time. All collected data remained confidential to protect participants' dignity. To ensure confidentiality, participants' names were replaced with pseudonyms, and only I, as the researcher, have access to this data. All transcriptions and related materials, such as the informed consent forms, were destroyed after being scanned and securely stored on Stellenbosch University's OneDrive for data protection.

Potential risks primarily included minor discomfort or inconvenience due to circumstantial situations, but these were minimised by scheduling interviews and focus groups at times and locations convenient for participants. Participants were also allowed to refrain from answering questions they found uncomfortable and to withdraw from the discussions at any point.

²⁶ See Appendix D

²⁷ See Appendix E and F

2.8 Limitations of the study

Despite generating rich empirical data through extended fieldwork, the research encountered several notable limitations. One key challenge was the limited availability of detailed historical records on Sutherland's social and demographic evolution. While not the central focus of the study, such context would have provided valuable insight into the historical forces shaping present-day socio-economic conditions. In addition, accessing municipal officials and development practitioners also proved challenging. Despite multiple attempts, including repeated emails and visits to the municipal office, I was unable to secure an interview or obtain first-hand information regarding their challenges and future planning.

The absence of extensive IPP perspectives is a limitation, and this is acknowledged. However, this thesis deliberately privileges the perspectives of those most affected by these interventions rather than those who design them. The analysis advances a critique of the model of IPP development objectives, not of individual actors. Accordingly, the conclusions do not rest on the subjective accounts of IPP representatives, but on the structural characteristics of how these investments are governed.

Nonetheless, I conducted an interview with an IPP community liaison officer (CLO) based in the town at the outset of the research (noting that no CLO exists for the other renewable energy company), and a substantial portion of the analysis draws on secondary sources, including public documents from the IPP Office and company websites, to assess development contributions, priorities, and strategies. It is important to note that the difficulties I encountered in obtaining direct information from IPPs as a researcher suggest that access to such information is likely to be even more constrained for local stakeholders who do not occupy positions of power.

IPP development contributions are not communicated to the broader public, and awareness of these initiatives remains limited (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025). Instead, information about these projects appears to circulate primarily among a small group of actors in positions of authority, pointing to a governance arrangement

characterised by limited transparency, weak engagement, and a selective communication strategy in relation to local development.

2.9 Researcher Reflection and Positionality

My research necessitated significant physical presence in Sutherland, involving multiple trips and extended stays. This immersion offered valuable opportunities for daily observation, walking the streets, and organic interaction with residents, which ultimately built crucial trust and significantly enriched the data. However, the continuous presence in the town led to an unexpected and profound depth of involvement: not long after my first visit, I became emotionally invested in the people and the place. While this personal connection was instrumental in encouraging participants to open up and share profound insights, it simultaneously made it challenging to maintain the traditional emotional distance often advised for researchers.

On three separate occasions during fieldwork, I experienced an emotional release, privately shedding tears after long days of interviews and focus groups, alone in the guest house where I stayed. Several participants shared deeply personal accounts that not only weighed heavily on me but also prompted critical introspection regarding my own positionality. The emotional intensity of the community's lived realities, coupled with the depth of relationships formed, necessitated ongoing reflection on my role within a small and closely-knit setting. This included ethical considerations around representation, responsibility, and the imperative to convey community narratives with accuracy, respect, and care in this academic work.

During my time in the field, I never felt unsafe, but I did experience moments of discomfort. On every visit, I observed men stumbling along the main road near the liquor store, and while walking between destinations, I was frequently approached by intoxicated individuals who persistently attempted to engage in conversation.

These encounters, though distinct from the lived experiences shared by participants, added to the emotional weight of the narratives I was entrusted with. While I do not claim to personally understand the depth of these experiences, such moments underscore how the town's physical and social environment actively shapes its broader social fabric.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology, anchoring the study within an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative, inductive approach. The case study design was adopted as the most suitable framework for an in-depth, contextual investigation of child and youth development in Sutherland.

The chapter detailed the fieldwork strategy, covering the use of purposive and snowball sampling to recruit key adult stakeholders. Data collection relied on multiple methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation, and document analysis, with interpretation guided by thematic and content analysis. Throughout the process, strict ethical considerations were maintained. Having established this methodological foundation, the thesis now proceeds to the conceptual phase. The following chapter, Chapter 3, will introduce the theoretical tool, specifically Sen's Capability Approach, to guide the analysis of how the SED contributions of IPPs intersect with child and school-going youth development in Sutherland.

Chapter Three: Charisma Without Capability: Why Technology Donations Fail to Create Substantive Freedom

This chapter presents the conceptual framework that guides this study. It outlines the theoretical and conceptual tools used to analyse how Independent Power Producers (IPPs) Socio-economic Development (SED) and Enterprise Development (ED) contributions intersect with learners' development in Sutherland. Sen's (1999) Capability Approach serves as my overarching theoretical lens. This approach highlights the significance of freedom, defined as the ability to pursue lives one has reason to value, as a crucial element for sustainable and genuine development. Through this lens, I situate the reality of children of Sutherland and consider the role of education in expanding their capabilities.

In addition, I draw on Redfield's (2018) *Band-Aids and Magic Bullets*, Fischer's (2018) *Anthropology in the Meantime*, and Ames' (2015) concept of *Charismatic Technology* to critically engage with the types of contributions made by IPPs. The goal is not to judge the success or failure of these interventions, but to explore the mechanisms by which value is assigned to specific donations or objects. The following chapter will provide a deeper engagement with the local narratives and perspectives that shape this research.

3.1 Intersecting Pathways: Education, Development, and Historical Inequality

To understand how SED and ED contributions from IPPs intersect with child development, this study drew on literature about development, human capabilities, and education. Considering that the Karoo is a marginalised space, discussions of development in the area are not new. While development is often framed in terms of poverty reduction and economic growth, it is equally important to recognise the central role of education in alleviating poverty, as a tool for addressing political disparities, and

expanding the capabilities necessary for doing so (Cassie, 2014; Martin, 2016; Hoffmann, 2006). In South Africa, however, education and development must be understood in relation to access, quality, and the structural inequalities that continue to shape children's learning environments, all of which stem from a history of oppression and systematic marginalisation (Martin, 2016; Chisholm, 2012).

School development, therefore, extends beyond infrastructure and classroom quality to include targeted school development programmes, learner support initiatives, leadership strengthening, and psychosocial wellbeing, all of which are essential for improving learner outcomes (NCDoE, 2022). Any analysis of school development must, however, be situated within South Africa's broader educational history. Under colonial and apartheid rule, education was deliberately used to reproduce class, gender, and racial inequalities (Martin, 2016:1; Chisholm, 2012).

Schooling was initially established in the early twentieth century for white learners, while black learners were educated through mission schools that eventually struggled to accommodate the growing number of pupils (Chisholm, 2012:85). Seeing this "as the breeding ground of African nationalism", the state took control of education from the missions and imposed new systems of regulation (Chisholm, 2012:85).

Scholars like Chisholm (2012) and Martin (2016) explain that this process resulted in racially segregated systems such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953²⁸, which entrenched disparities between well-resourced white schools, and underfunded and poorly supported schools designated for Black and Coloured learners. With the turn of a new democratic government in 1994, education reforms sought to redress this legacy by addressing the inequalities of racially divided schooling (Chisholm, 2012:89). The post-apartheid education system was thus restructured and integrated into one national and nine provincial departments: each province tasked with implementing education policies. The national department became responsible for the overall policy design and

²⁸ For more on the Bantu Education Act, see: <https://sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files2/leg19531009.028.020.047.pdf>

framework, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of each department to highlight their successes and challenges in implementing the policies (Chisholm, 2012:92).

Over time, however, the Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDoE) has encountered persistent challenges that have outweighed its successes, manifesting in community protests and significant disruptions to learners' education (Martin, 2016:2-3). For example, according to the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) (2025), the NCDoE failed to fulfil the commitments they made in December 2024 that schools would open smoothly at the start of the following year. At the start of the 2025 academic year, schools did not receive "their Section 21 and National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) allocations" needed to run the schools (SADTU, 2025). Some Northern Cape schools received only 27% of the expected allocation, which, as outlined by Rahim (2025), is not enough to meet even a tenth of the stationery requirements. As a result, learners did not have basic stationery, feeding schemes were not operational, and schools could not pay their utility bills.

The Democratic Alliance (DA) has accused the NCDoE of poor financial decisions, citing ZAR3.9 billion in "unauthorised, irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure", though the NCDoE refutes these specific allegations (van der Lith, 2025). Regardless of the dispute, operational failures remain evident. Providing meaningful education, then, especially in the context of a history of oppression, becomes challenging when the provincial department fails to deliver on its promises.

While this may not be a direct consequence of the dynamics discussed here, the Northern Cape Department of Education (NCDoE) is also confronting persistently high dropout rates, with over 4,000 learners between Grades 8 and 10 leaving school in the first quarter of 2025 alone (Kgafane, 2025). Kgafane (2025) further notes that, due to a shortage of qualified teachers in the province, at least 18 high schools are unable to offer pure Mathematics. A more detailed analysis of education governance would undoubtedly enrich the contextual framing of this study. However, the absence of a full policy genealogy does not undermine the central empirical finding that IPP investments continue to operate largely in isolation from public sector planning and institutional capacity.

3.2 Different approaches to development

3.2 Different approaches to development

While institutional reforms may have reshaped the governance of education, they also highlight a broader question central to this study: how development should be approached in marginalised contexts like the Karoo. The tension between external (top-down) interventions and community-driven (bottom-up) initiatives is particularly relevant when considering how education and youth development intersect with socio-economic development contributions from external actors, such as IPPs.

According to Nel, Binns, and Motteux (2001:3), bottom-up development approaches are widely favoured in South Africa, particularly given the state's limited capacity to provide sustained support to marginalised areas, as discussed in the previous section. This approach emphasises self-reliance and local economic initiatives. However, achieving meaningful bottom-up development can be difficult where poverty is widespread, social ills prevail, and the local government neglects the community's needs.

Conversely, top-down development involving external actors such as private companies faces challenges of its own. These include the risk of fostering dependency, the limited number of capable individuals in the area, insufficient research on the targeted area, and failure to acknowledge the complex, deeply embedded social ills that could hinder development (Nel, Binns & Motteux, 2001:3; Hall-Blanco, 2016). Moreover, projects imposed without a sufficient understanding of local dynamics may ultimately alienate communities, reinforcing a sense of unfulfilled promises. However, this need not always be the case.

Top-down development can support bottom-up initiatives when it aligns with the local context, meaningfully engages community members, and promotes caring relationships. In such cases, communities become better prepared to participate actively in their own development, reducing reliance.

While these development approaches contribute to understanding the broader role of IPPs and their SED, this study argues that a deeper analysis of their contributions that

intersects with child and school-going youth development requires an overarching conceptual framework that focuses on human development.

3.2.1 Human Development: The Capabilities Approach

Amartya Sen (1999), an Indian philosopher and economist, extended his work beyond economics into the fields of human rights and justice. His Capabilities Approach shifts the focus away from the dysfunctions of economic systems and instead, focuses on the individuals within a society, examining the various ways people can achieve things and the ways they choose to achieve them (Sen, 1999). In *Development as Freedom*, Sen (1999) argues that development should not be measured only by material wealth or economic growth, but by the substantive freedoms – such as avoiding deprivations – individuals have to live lives *they have reason*²⁹ to value. These values, he notes, are not imposed externally but are formed through self-reflection, public discussion, and engagement with social, cultural, and ideological norms (Sen, 1999:78-79).

Central to this approach is the distinction between functionings and capabilities. Functionings refer to achievements, such as attending school, while the latter refers to opportunities or freedoms to achieve these functionings through agency, such as being part of a support group (Sen, 1999:75; Sen as cited in Saito, 2003:18; Unterhalter, 2003:666; Robeyns, 2017:39). In contrast to freedoms which generally focuses on the quality of life, are unfreedoms, that being structural constraints limiting access to a variety of sectors and basic needs, otherwise referred to as a deprivation of capabilities (Sen, 1999:15,20). For example, a learner who does not attend school (functioning) can be viewed from two perspectives: they can attend school (freedom) or they cannot (unfreedom), depending on the capabilities available to them.

To expand freedoms, Sen (1999:36) proposes that we view it as “primary end and principal means of development”, that is, as Robeyns (2017:47) puts it, valuing something

²⁹ Italics for emphasis. People find value in things after self-reflection therefore need the freedom for self-reflections to be broad enough to make valued choices.

“as an end in itself, or as a means to a valuable end”. According to Sen (1999:72), means (education/income) help promote the ends (freedom/well-being). But while income and resources can expand a person’s freedom and opportunities to make life choices, Sen (1999:36) highlights that freedoms like education, healthcare and other forms of social support are equally essential for enhancing capabilities that lead to valued beings. When these freedoms do not accompany means, then it is valued as an end in itself. Having access to these, in accordance with Sen (1999:xii), eliminates unfreedoms “that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency”.

The position on resources can therefore be contrasted with Rawls’s *A Theory of Justice* (1999), which focuses on distributive justice. According to Rawls (1999:21), when institutions maximise the satisfaction of a society, that society becomes properly arranged, much like when an individual’s desires are fulfilled. In other words, Rawls assumes that equal access to goods and resources ensures fairness, such as simply providing free access to schooling or school supplies. Sen (1999:72-73) critiques this view, arguing that resources alone cannot attend to people’s doings and beings. He argues that perspectives such as Rawls’ overlook variations in how individuals convert resources into well-being, their health, which informs this process, their social position, and an individual’s mere environment (Sen, 1999).

The Capabilities Approach emphasises that individual freedoms are influenced not only by personal ability but also by social circumstances that shape opportunities for a fulfilling life (Sen, 1999). It concerns both basic rights and the genuine capacity and agency to go beyond survival, such as attending school or performing chores, and the varying capabilities that enable these functionings within different contexts.

Despite its influence, the Capability Approach has also faced criticism. One prominent critique is Sen’s deliberate refusal to provide a homogeneous list of core capabilities. While this preserves flexibility and allows for context-specific application, according to Nussbaum (2003:56), it makes the approach more difficult to inform social policy (Sen, 1999:77). Sen (1999:33) nonetheless emphasises in his work that there can be no single, precise criterion for development that applies universally as development experiences

are shaped by diverse societal contexts, making it difficult to directly compare or rank functionings and capabilities.

However, when specific capabilities or functionings are selected as significant, this results in what Sen (1999:78) terms “partial ordering” where some take precedence over others. Therefore, to select capabilities and functionings as significant, it requires us to assess both the factors that influence people’s capabilities and functionings, as well as whether enabling circumstances are in place for these capabilities (Sen, 1999; Robeyns, 2017:48)

To provide context, most societies generally favour morally acceptable functionings, such as all learners attending school. This achievement would therefore include a variety of capabilities, such as receiving support, having access to meaningful education, and the freedom to choose an educational setting that best meets learners' needs. Conversely, societies may have high rates of learners not attending school (functioning) due to capabilities deprivations when unfreedoms exist. Moreover, attending school might be broadly regarded as a valuable functioning, but it must be assessed from each learner's perspective, as they experience it uniquely.

Schools, in their effort to provide learners with nutrition where it is lacking in some households, and by offering strong structural systems that promote learning and participation in sport, demonstrate that these means (provisions), when accompanied by freedoms such as physical development, expand the end (attendance). However, on the other hand, when schools have structural and social constraints such as peer bullying, neglect from teachers, and infrastructural issues, the means (provisions) accompanied by capability constraints, do not expand the end (attendance) and instead position school attendance as an end in itself.

So, when functionings and capabilities like these are selected as significant within a context-specific case, situating values as a means in itself or as a means to an end can better inform the criteria for development and how they are applied to social policy. This is especially important in provinces such as the Northern Cape, with a history of

oppression and lingering legacies of apartheid (unfreedoms), to understand why so many learners with their own individual experiences drop out.

Building on this debate, Nussbaum (2003:41) sought to address the challenge of operationalising Sen's framework by proposing a specific list of central capabilities, including life, bodily health, bodily integrity, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, and control over one's environment. This list, while providing policymakers with a framework for assessing justice and development, draws on the practical side of the Capability Approach. It looks at which functionings and capabilities, through a singular lens that determines the expected outcome of the introduced policies, *can* lead people to live a life they have reason to value. These risks impose external or culturally specific ideas, which contrast with Sen's (1999) insistence on public reasoning and context-sensitive evaluation as mentioned above.

The aim of the Capability Approach, therefore, is not to create a fixed hierarchy of development outcomes, but to identify and emphasise the role functionings and capabilities play in people's lives, each of which holds value.

For this study, Sen's Capability Approach is particularly useful to understand the underlying factors that continue to hinder meaningful education in the Northern Cape, where various actors are contributing to its development. Unlike Rawls's resource-based framework or Nussbaum's prescriptive list, Sen emphasises the importance of self-reflection, public discussion, and engagement with social, cultural, and ideological norms. This flexibility allows the approach to capture the lived realities of communities without imposing predetermined outcomes. It is precisely this openness that makes the Capability Approach valuable for analysing how external interventions intersect with the development of learners, as it foregrounds the freedoms individuals must pursue lives they value rather than prescribing what those lives should involve.

3.2.2 Freedom and Development

In areas where poverty, high unemployment, and social inequality are prevalent, people often find their choices severely limited by their circumstances. Sen (1999) thus treats

freedom as the basic building blocks of genuine development, emphasising that the exercise of freedom is mediated by capabilities, values, and agency, and that these in turn are shaped by public discussions and social interactions, which themselves depend on participatory freedoms (Sen, 1999:9).

He identifies five distinct but interconnected types of freedom; political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security, all of which contribute to enhancing an individual's capabilities (Sen, 1999:10). By focusing on people's substantive freedoms rather than solely on their material possessions or income levels, Sen (1999) shifts attention to the *quality of life*. In other words, how people live their lives and pursue goals they value.

These different freedoms, therefore, should not be isolated from one another, as they can strengthen and support each other. Political freedoms, like the right to free speech and fair elections, help promote economic security. Similarly, access to education and healthcare, which Sen (1999) refers to as social opportunities, enhances capabilities such as enabling economic participation. Economic facilities, such as opportunities to engage in trade and production, help individuals accumulate personal wealth while generating public resources that can further support social services.

This becomes particularly useful when analysing development within the Northern Cape and the various sectors that influence how education is experienced by learners. The interconnection of these freedoms reinforces Sen's (1999) argument that freedom should be central when thinking about development. Unlike traditional views that regarded individuals primarily as passive recipients of aid, Sen's freedom-centred approach treats individuals as active agents where "with adequate social opportunities, individuals can effectively shape their destiny and help each other" move away from being "passive recipients of the benefits of cunning development programs" (Sen, 1999:11).

Sen (1999:35) also outlines two contrasting attitudes toward the development process. The first sees development as a strict and disciplinary process, emphasising toughness and self-reliance while discouraging supportive interventions like social safety nets. The second, more humane approach, views development as a supportive process where social

interventions like healthcare, education, and welfare enable individuals to participate more fully and productively in society. Sen (1999:31) further notes that individual freedom is fundamentally a social product, describing a two-way relationship: on the one hand, social arrangements expand individual freedoms, and on the other hand, the exercise of individual freedoms helps improve social arrangements, making them more appropriate and effective. Essentially, evaluating development should thus involve assessing how well it removes major 'unfreedoms', that being the constraints and deprivations from which people suffer (Sen, 1999:33).

3.3 Key Concepts: Values and Agency

To better understand Sen's Capability Approach and how it contributes to development thinking, it is useful to unpack the core elements that underpin it. As previously discussed; to achieve a functioning system, one needs a set of capabilities. However, converting these capabilities into an achievement requires agency. Yet to be an active agent in one's life, freedom determines one's values and consequently how they act as agents to achieve a life they can value. These foundational ideas help to translate Sen's philosophical vision into practical terms, especially in contexts where development remains stagnant.

3.3.1 Values

The term value is integral to understanding what constitutes a life worth living. Since functionings and capabilities are value-neutral, value does not refer solely to positive outcomes but also includes negative ones (Sen, 1999:9; Robeyns, 2017:41). The Capability Approach emphasises human diversity and heterogeneity, recognising that individuals convert opportunities into capabilities in different ways to achieve a functioning (Sen, 1999:77,32). Functionings and capabilities may therefore not carry any specific moral or value judgements, as values are subjective and depend on an individual's preferences, cultural context, and life circumstances (Sen, 1999).

While individuals' functioning and capabilities are valuable to them, some may not be of positive social value, such as learners not attending school. According to Sen (1999), values vary across individuals and communities - some prioritise material wealth, others prioritise family connections. However, it is important to consider that an individual's freedom can be influenced by society, as social institutions and their structures can either promote or restrict personal freedom, leading to a change in values.

Therefore, what an individual values should be assessed based on their means and ends, including access to healthcare, education, societal participation, and living conditions (Robeyns, 2017:48). This helps us uncover what is limiting their capabilities to act and influence their lives in ways that they value.

This interplay between individual values and collective norms demonstrates that the Capability Approach is not merely about expanding freedoms but also about critically examining which freedoms are enabled and legitimised in each context, seen through the values that shape their beings. In societies marked by structural inequalities, such as those shaped by poverty, gender norms, or histories of exclusion, like the Northern Cape, certain capabilities may be prioritised over others in ways that reproduce, rather than reduce, vulnerability, limiting them to act as active agents in their lives (Sen, 1999:87-88).

3.3.2 Agency

Agency refers to an individual's capacity to act on their capabilities and make meaningful decisions in their lives based on what they value. Sen (1999:19) employs the term "agent" not in the limited sense of a passive participant within a system, but as a person who acts, influences change, and shapes outcomes; in other words, the ability to be an active agent in the development process. The term agent thus emphasises the importance of individual autonomy and choice in shaping one's life trajectory and addressing any deprivations (Sen, 1999: xi).

As such, Sen (1999:4) does not commit to a particular type of agency. While capabilities represent the potential for well-being, agency reflects the exercise, whatever it may be,

of this potential (Sen, 1999:19; Robeyns, 2017:64). In this sense, agency challenges more structured models of development where external forces dictate what people should value or aspire to achieve. Sen's (1999:19) notion of agency, focuses not only on one's ability to pursue and realise their own goals and values, but also on their position within the public, social and economic sector, emphasising that agency cannot be overlooked when evaluations of capabilities and functionings take place (Sen, 1999:19; Robeyns, 2017:64). This is especially important in cases where people are at the bottom of the hierarchy may not be able to move up, like in the case of small towns within Northern Cape.

When people lack the freedom to engage in the labour market, face structural constraints such as class, age, and gender, to name a few, these issues reinforce their oppression and limits their agency (Sen, 1999:7; Robeyns, 2017:66). While circumstances may limit agency, the extent of this unfreedom may result in agency guided by 'necessity' to satisfy functionings like avoiding starvation (Sen, 1999:73). This underscores how the role of collective action, where communities work together to address shared challenges and promote collective well-being, can enhance people's capabilities and subsequently their ability to be active agents in their own lives.

However, the concept of agency becomes more complex when considering children who, at times, lack full autonomy and rely on others to advocate for their needs and rights. In households plagued by poverty or parents who have limited capabilities, children may be forced into various roles beyond their control, highlighting their limited agency within these conditions (Sen, 1999:115). This emphasises that the ability of children to attend school is not linear, as explored above. These household circumstances perpetuate a cycle where functionings and capabilities lead both parents and children to make choices that limit their capabilities.

But it is not just children who have limited agency (Sen, 1999). According to Nussbaum (1999:227), "human dignity is frequently violated on grounds of sex". Like children, women often encounter structural constraints on their agency. For them, being women results in unequal distribution in employment opportunities, body integrity, and education and political spaces (Nussbaum, 1999:228). As such, they are frequently

confined to domestic roles that restrict both their voice and decision-making power (Sen, 1999:196). This creates conditions in which women who are disempowered have families plagued by cycles of poverty and increased childbearing (Sen, 1999:192-195). But with the proper platforms to enhance capabilities, as in accordance with Sen (1999), women can break these generational cycles of dependency and reproduction. This is particularly important as adults must make careful decisions around balancing the needs and protections of children.

What this means is that men's and women's decision-making affect the overall family (Sen, 1999:192). When women have agency and voice guided by education and employment, that not only influences public discussions but also that of fertility and child mortality rates (Sen, 1999:193). Subsequently, it influences the "intrafamily division of food, health care and other provisions", and the economic means to cater to these provisions and various interests of individuals within the household (Sen, 1999:193). Thus, recognising people as responsible beings, men and women more specifically, is central to guiding the developing child's agency, where they may experience unfreedom. Individuals, as Sen (1999) notes, are not only passive recipients of circumstances, whether favourable or unfavourable, but also active decision-makers who can choose to act, to refrain from acting, or to pursue one course of action over another. In this sense, both men and women carry responsibility for their choices and actions, as well as for their inaction, which in turn can help foster children's agency, paving the way for their future well-being and capacity to act as empowered adults.

3.4 Application to Child and School-going Youth Development and Education

Drawing on Sen's above-mentioned framework, this section explores how education becomes the foundation on which learners can enhance their capabilities and expand their freedoms (Sen, 1999; Hoffmann, 2006; Cassie, 2014). It considers how more than mere access to education is needed to enhance their capabilities, enabling them to lead

lives they have reason to value. It also identifies the structural and social barriers that limit their agency, thereby affecting their opportunities for meaningful education.

3.4.1 Education as a Key Capability

As Sen (1999) argues, development should be about enhancing people's real freedoms to lead lives they have reason to value. But in regions such as the Karoo, where poverty, unemployment, and social inequality shape people's everyday experiences, capability sets may be limited. Freedoms like education, health care and social support are therefore especially significant, not only as a means to expand freedoms, honing the skills and health necessary for various employment opportunities, but also as a critical factor in broadening individual agency and life choices, offering benefits that reach far beyond the individual alone.

In this sense, access to *quality* education and its completion, when combined with supportive structures, can create the conditions for individuals to enhance their capabilities, agency, and, subsequently, valued ways of living. According to scholars such as Cassie (2014:1) and Desai, Magan, Ruiter, Reedy and Mercken (2024:2), completing school provides multiple advantages beyond mere skills acquisition; it enables improved job prospects, lower engagement in crime and risky behaviours, greater equality, better health outcomes, enhanced self-esteem, greater social participation, financial independence, all which are necessary for alleviating poverty. These benefits illustrate how education serves both as a capability and as a means of supporting others.

While basic literacy and numeracy are essential, they are often not enough to break cycles of poverty or support sustainable development (Hoffmann, 2006). For these reasons, education must be approached as an investment in human capability, one that enhances freedoms to help people avoid various forms of deprivation. This echoes the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) view that education serves as a fundamental shield against poverty, and that societies that prioritise education tend to withstand challenges better, achieve economic growth, uphold fairness, and maintain social harmony (UNESCO, 2024; UNESCO as cited in Cassie, 2014:1).

Yet, at the same time, it is also essential to recognise that access to education is influenced by various structural and social factors such as poverty, inequality, and prevailing norms, which often lead to high rates of dropout and perpetuate a cycle that undermines long-term progress (Cassie, 2014:6). The decision to leave school early, as discussed previously in relation to learners not attending school, is often not an individual decision but one influenced by social conditions (Cassie, 2014:9-10). In addition, gender itself plays a significant role in shaping educational experiences, as discussed regarding women receiving unequal educational opportunities.

In many households, girls, like women, may be expected to take on caregiving roles or domestic responsibilities that interfere with their schooling, speaking to the wider deprivation of agency for women as explored by Sen (1999) (Global Campaign for Education (GCE), 2005:37). Early pregnancies, marriages, and social stigmas, further impact their ability not only to complete their education, but to do so successfully (GCE, 2005:37). These factors, however, differ across schools, communities, and households and must be evaluated as such when attempting to improve educational outcomes.

In the Northern Cape, girls face a variety of challenges that hinder their ability to access meaningful education. For some, living in marginalised communities like those in the Karoo means they assume the responsibilities of their parents, who are consumed by substance abuse. For others, the unfreedoms in the town result in risky behaviour leading to pregnancy.

Education for girls, in particular, yields a wide array of benefits, both for the individual and for the broader economy. Completing their education positions girls for “higher earning potential, better protection from HIV and domestic violence, and greater political participation”, while their integration into the economy furthermore enables “faster economic growth, more productive farming, smaller and better-educated families, and reduced infant and child mortality” (Unterhalter, 2005:18).

While education provides the foundation to enhance capabilities, accessing meaningful education for many remains a capability constrained by external forces. So, if we look at

the role of education as both a capability that furthermore leads to the enhancement of other capabilities, it cannot simply be defined as the foundation for enhancing capabilities alone, but also as a key capability (Hoffmann, 2006).

3.5 Conceptualising Development Interventions: Band-Aids, Meantime, and Charismatic Technology

Peter Redfield's (2018) *Band-Aids and Magic Bullets*, Fischer's (2018) *Anthropology in the Meantime*, and Ames's (2015) *Charismatic Technologies* offer a useful lens for applying the Capability Approach to explore how children and school-going youth find value in interventions. Redfield's (2018) concept helps distinguish between initiatives that address underlying problems and those that provide only immediate, temporary relief. Building on the temporary nature of initiatives, Fischer (2018) highlights that they can function as 'meantime' solutions, occupying space while more permanent solutions are developed. Ames's (2015) notion of charismatic technologies, in turn, illuminates how objects or tools may be perceived as inherently transformative or beneficial, regardless of their actual effectiveness in addressing structural challenges. Together, these perspectives allow a nuanced understanding of how interventions are experienced, valued, and limited in the context of children and school-going youth development.

3.5.1 'Band-Aid' and 'Magic Bullets' Interventions

Band-Aid interventions, as Redfield (2018) notes, provide immediate, temporary relief for a visible problem while failing to address deeper, structural issues. Redfield (2018) links this logic to the idea of the "magic bullet", describing society's recurrent faith in technological solutions as a form of "magical thinking", in which complex social problems are reduced to technical fixes and broader realities are sidelined in favour of quick and seemingly efficient solutions.

Redfield (2018) illustrates this with the example of the Peepoo system, a technologically ingenious single-use toilet designed for individual use in poor urban environments and

emergency settings. The Peepoo did not emerge in isolation but was created as an alternative to the flying toilet method, the practice of using and discarding plastic bags for sanitation in informal settlements. Beyond merely disposing of waste, the Peepoo was designed to transform waste into fertiliser, positioning it as a ‘magic bullet’ solution addressing both sanitation and agricultural needs.

Despite this promise, difficulties with cultural acceptance and logistical implementation reveal the Peepoo’s more limited function as a band-aid rather than a transformative solution. It fails to address deeper structural issues such as poverty and the absence of municipal sanitation infrastructure, which constrain people’s capabilities and, ultimately, produce negative value outcomes (Redfield, 2018). This example demonstrates how well-intentioned interventions can fall short when they do not engage meaningfully with the broader social, economic, and cultural contexts in which they operate.

3.5.2 Meantime Donations

Shifting from band-aids and magic bullets, “anthropology in the meantime” focuses on the gaps between ambitious visions and their real-world implementation, paying attention to the uneven pace of social change (Fischer, 2018:4). It highlights the complexity and messiness that arises when theory meets practice, justice interacts with law, and experimental ideas confront established norms (Fischer, 2018:4).

In this sense, interventions that are treated as ‘magic bullets’ yet overlook the layered social dynamics, offering quick fixes that fail to engage with deeper, structural issues, may not only act as a band-aid, but also a means of intervention, placing emphasis on its temporary nature and how a more permanent solution can still take place. Meantime interventions therefore work in “slow time”, observing how interventions unfold, tracking changes, and assessing their wider social and cultural impacts (Fischer, 2018:4). This approach helps reveal gaps between development intentions and real outcomes, supporting more context-sensitive and effective interventions.

Take, for example, Redfield's (2021) *Shacktopia*. Drawing on the iShack project³⁰, he examines how informal settlements were modestly improved through the introduction of off-grid solar electricity. While the initiative sought to provide residents with electricity access while they wait for local municipal electricity connections, it ultimately functioned as a temporary solution. Residents remained in a state of limbo, dependent on a system that could not guarantee long-term integration into South Africa's overburdened electricity grid (Redfield, 2021:1).

Access to electricity did represent a meaningful shift. Yet a striking dissonance emerged between the futuristic promise of solar technology and the material realities of life in a shack (Redfield, 2021:1). For this reason, the iShack cannot be dismissed as a mere band-aid. It made a tangible difference in people's daily lives, enhancing their capabilities by offering a safer form of energy that reduced health risks associated with shack fires and burns, and expanding the conditions for well-being, even if only partially and provisionally

3.5.3 Charismatic Technology and the Allure of the 'Good' Intervention

The concept of Charismatic Technology, as defined by Ames (2015), offers a lens for examining the symbolic power of development interventions. Charismatic technologies do more than simply perform a function; they inspire intense emotional attachment, desire, or even obsessive enthusiasm (Ames, 2015:1). They play a role in shaping and sustaining dominant ideologies by offering utopian promises, promises that often endure even when the technology itself fails to meet expectations (Ames, 2015).

Drawing on Max Weber's sociological construct of charisma, which refers to an exceptional, and almost magical authority, Maria Stavrinaki (2010) and Anna Tsing (2000) extend this concept to nonhuman actors, illustrating its multiplicity and how both human and nonhuman actors can inspire attachments as well as influence social dynamics (Stavrinaki, 2010; Tsing, 2000). Tsing (2000:328-239) in *The Global Situation*

³⁰ For more see: <https://www.ishackproject.co.za/>

explores how globalisation challenged social scientists to understand how the development of modernisation instilled hopes and dreams that continue to shape our world.

Similarly, Stavrinaki (2010:89) expands on this idea by examining Breurer's African Chair. The African Chair, in its authentic early 1900s design, can be seen as a throne that exudes authority. According to her, the move towards modernisation condemned man to muteness, as reflected in objects of urban modernity such as the ordinary chair (Stavrinaki, 2010:95). The "source of creation" within modernity displayed an innocence of history, making the African chair "a charismatic subject under whose influence it was made" (Stavrinaki, 2010:95). To put this into context, the different time frames in history and their conditions bestowed upon the African Chair a power beyond its material form. Charisma, therefore, need not be limited to persons with authority, but can be attached to ideas, objects, technologies, and institutions where dreams and hopes are present.

These entities, however, only gain meaning and power through their relationships with others. So, as Ames (2015) used the actor-network theory (ANT) to understand how both human and non-human entities participate as actors in networks that shape technical realities, he found that it fell short when addressing how broader ideological frameworks give meaning to these technologies, leading to the concept of charismatic technology.

A technology's material form may hold some power, but a charismatic object gains influence through the experiences and symbolic possibilities it offers as its significance lies not in what it is, but in what it enables or promises to do (Ames, 2015:2). Its appeal reinforces existing cultural frameworks, often solidifying "prevailing stereotypes, institutional norms as well as power dynamics" (Ames, 2015:3). This is amplified by the media's promotion of a "utopian promise of action", the idea that something can easily solve complex problems (Ames, 2015:3).

However, this promise is misleading. Ideologies, according to Hall as cited in Ames (2015), mask contingent social relations as "fixed, inevitable, and natural", and obscure the sustained effort required for meaningful change. By treating technological

advancement as inevitable, we overlook the essential freedoms individuals need to use it for genuine development.

The One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) Example

Ames (2015) illustrates this phenomenon by exploring how Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professors constructed the charismatic image of the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project and its XO laptop. Proposed as a “knowledge machine”, the XO laptop was embedded with promises of radical transformation: eliminating geographical inequalities, simplifying bureaucratic structures, and offering a symbolic 'restart' for entire communities (Ames, 2015:6).

Ames (2015:4) observes that the noble intentions of the project's architects can be linked to those of the colonialist, imposing their own values, assumptions, and solutions onto others, without fully understanding local contexts and needs. Even so, and despite the OLPC project's promises remaining unfulfilled, the XO laptop remained praised, exuding charisma this time tied to ideas about childhood, schooling, and technology (Ames, 2015:4,5-6).

The OLPC project operated on the flawed assumption that technology would carry universal benefits, transformative for all children regardless of circumstance, as seen where it failed to account for the diversity of children's lives, their interests, abilities, household conditions, and the uneven quality of education they receive (Ames, 2015). These contextual differences shape how children engage with laptops, meaning that outcomes cannot be assumed to be the same everywhere.

By believing that the object, the XO laptop, holds transformative power, the project engaged in a form of ‘magical thinking’ where technology is envisioned as expanding opportunities equally. However, this focus on the laptop as a charismatic solution obscured a crucial truth: real development depends not only on access to material resources but on whether people have the substantive freedoms to use them in ways that matter to their lives (Sen, 1999). Ultimately, the charisma of the laptop diverted attention from deeper structural constraints, such as poverty, inequality, and poor schooling systems, that truly limit children's capabilities.

In the context of IPPs, these concepts are crucial for analysing how certain SED and ED contributions may be perceived as a charismatic solution, captivating recipients while masking the deeper structural issues that Band-Aids and Meantime interventions fail to address.

3.6 How do SED Contributions from IPPS intersect with Child and School-going Youth Development?

Sutherland is not new to development. To increase public engagement and connect with schools, SAAO established an astronomy outreach department to raise public awareness and community engagement around 'science' (Mantungwa, 2021:7-8). As part of its contributions, the SALT Collateral Benefit Programme (SCBP) has supported the community in various ways.

However, while these contributions can be seen as attempts to support socio-economic upliftment in Sutherland, residents continue to face significant challenges as reflected in the 2017 and 2024 Sutherland socio-economic survey reports (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019; Mantungwa, 2021; Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2024). Of the total population, only 14% of households noted that they had benefited from the SALT Observatory, while in comparison, 6% had someone in their household employed there (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:55). The benefits include the establishment of a computer centre, facilitated school tours of the observatory, and a mathematics teacher appointed to work for both the primary and high school.

Yet, as shown in the 2017 Household (HH) Survey report, only 37% of local households had a member who used the community computer centre (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:55). Furthermore, during my time in the town, I found that the facility was rarely open to the wider public, and that educational initiatives, such as organised tours for learners, had also been discontinued.

This decline in community resources is compounded by local educational challenges. Data gathered suggests that only one to three Grade 12 learners currently take Mathematics as a subject. This low enrolment figure raises the concern that the subject may be phased out, which presents a significant risk to a town otherwise known for its strong focus on science.

This form of top-down development can be criticised for its limited reach as it failed to consider the various capability constraints that limit people's ability to engage in meaningful. Nonetheless, it has, in some ways, contributed to capability expansion, particularly through the exposure of science and technology.

These findings raise important questions: Are learners losing interest because school tours and direct engagement have faded away? Or, as with many other charismatic interventions, has the initial excitement faded while deeper structural issues remain unaddressed? It prompts reflection on whether external efforts, however well-intentioned, have adequately accounted for the lived realities of the local community, or whether outside values and assumptions have been imposed.

As with many development efforts, the reality is that the period of receiving contributions is often short-lived. According to many residents, SALT and SAAO's investments in the community have slowly but surely come to an end (FGD 1, 4, 5, November 2024; FGD 6, April 2025). However, new forms of development are emerging around Sutherland and are expected to continue expanding, particularly due to the Northern Cape's vast geographic footprint and favourable climate, which makes it an ideal location for renewable energy projects.

As mentioned in chapter one, the IPP Office's mission is to increase private sector involvement in electricity generation while supporting broader national development goals (DMRE, 2025). IPPs are therefore mandated by the government to contribute to local SED and ED, but there is often a tension between quick, visible interventions and donations and deeper, long-term structural changes.

According to scholars like McEwan, Mawdsley, Banks, and Scheyvens, (2017:22) and Chawa and Grace (2019:155), private development is often done by companies, where it may not be considered a primary motive, for public relations through “tokenism gestures” instead of genuine development. IPPs are indeed progressive companies and have websites and reports that detail all of their milestones and technicalities, but one specific milestone includes the number of ‘job years’ they have provided in terms of their employment creation obligation. As highlighted by McDaid (2016:20), the IPP office report shows an estimate of 109,443 job years created during bid windows 1-4. However, this does not match provincial totals showing only 107,347 job years (McDaid, 2016:20).

Scholars such as Malope (2022) and Borchardt (2023) reflect on this issue within their case studies in two Karoo towns in the Northern Cape, namely Loeriesfontein and De Aar. Malope (2022), in his work, critiques the current development approach of IPPs in Loeriesfontein and, ultimately, the overall just transition. According to him, the use of the term “job years” does not accurately account for the number of people employed, but instead, the number of jobs they offer (Malope, 2022:161-162,175). This becomes especially complicated when some people work multiple jobs, including shorter-term jobs rather than the specified time detailed in contracts, thus inflating their actual number (Malope, 2022). In addition, these jobs, while advantageous in a marginalised community, do “not offer most workers opportunities to enhance their capabilities” (Malope, 2022:175). He notes that pressure on IPPs to allocate funds to SED and ED, combined with the need to submit quarterly reports to the IPP office, encourages favouritism toward once-off projects that have clear, measurable results, especially in education, healthcare, and social welfare sectors (Malope, 2022).

In her work on household energy poverty in De Aar, Borchardt (2023) similarly explores the employment opportunities by IPPs and notes that the measurement of job creations by job years needs to be adjusted to one that is standardised and transparent. According to her, a survey she conducted with a sample of one-third³¹ of the households in a low-

³¹ N=50

income residential area shows that only seven out of the lot had been employed by an IPP during the construction phase (Borchardt, 2023:211). This low number stands in contrast with the strikingly high amount of job years and the IPP's emphasis on employment creation, claims that may initially appeal to communities but often prove misleading once the reality emerges. As Borchardt observes, many residents expressed disappointment with the short-term nature of these jobs, having hoped for more permanent opportunities (Borchardt, 2023:211–212).

IPPs' job creations intersect with residents of these towns in ways where the means (jobs) do not expand the ends (well-being). Underlying unacknowledged unfreedoms became entangled with these means, resulting in temporary fixes that may not genuinely expand freedoms. These top-down development strategies often fail due to various reasons, such as the planners themselves, by investing in projects that may not provide holistic development, and their inability to know and interpret the relevant and necessary information about the community they are engaging with or simply community development at all (Hall-Blanco, 2016).

External development initiatives must be carefully designed to enhance a community's intrinsic capabilities and, subsequently, its capacity for self-driven development. When external assistance fails to achieve this outcome, bottom-up development, which fundamentally relies on internal community strength and agency, may remain unattainable.

This dynamic often results in a cycle of dependency on external organisations and their financial or social 'safety nets'. Over time, this dependency risks the perpetuation of existing social inequalities and the reinforcement of dominant external ideologies, which can become intergenerational.

Therefore, it is crucial that development efforts, particularly within a rapidly expanding sector like the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP), are explicitly focused on aligning with and strengthening local context and capabilities to ensure sustainable, independent growth. While some of these wind farms have contributed to the Sutherland community in various ways, to better

understand how their contributions intersect with child and school-going youth development, the lived realities with all their combinations of functionings, sets of capabilities (freedoms & unfreedoms), agency and values, need to be evaluated.

Education is central to empowerment for children and school-going youth, establishing the foundation for learning that can enhance their capabilities. This enables young people to become effective agents in their own lives (Sen, 1999; Hoffmann, 2006). As education is a primary focus of mandated Socio-Economic Development (SED) contributions (e.g., within REIPPPP), it serves as a critical lens for assessing youth development priorities.

However, many interventions, such as in-kind donations, yield only immediate, visible results that address surface-level needs and offer temporary relief. These solutions are often driven by the "charisma" of the item, its novelty and appeal, which frequently obscures the fundamental need for structural change to address deep, systemic social barriers.

For example, the charismatic appeal of donating tablets, promising modern learning, routinely overshadows practical and structural concerns. These include the long-term costs of maintenance and software, and the lack of reliable electricity and internet access necessary for their function.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the conceptual framework that underpins this study. Sen's (1999) Capability Approach provides a lens through which development is understood in terms of freedom, specifically, the real opportunities people have to live lives they have reason to value. Within this framework, education is treated as a key capability, providing a foundation for the expansion of other capabilities and for the exercise of agency.

By engaging with Redfield's (2018) concepts of *Band-Aids and Magic Bullets*, Fischer's (2018) notion of *Anthropology in the meantime*, and Ames' (2015) analysis of *Charismatic*

Technologies, this chapter has developed a set of analytical tools for examining how development interventions are imagined, implemented, and experienced. Importantly, these concepts are not mobilised as moral judgements of particular actors or initiatives. Rather, they are used to analyse the forms, temporalities, and assumptions that shape contemporary development practices, and to assess how these align, or fail to align, with local contexts, capabilities, and lived realities.

The next chapter turns to the voices and perspectives of participants, foregrounding their lived experiences of education, youth challenges, and the perceived role of development interventions in their community. Through thematic analysis of interviews, focus groups, and observations, I identify recurring patterns in how participants understand both constraints and possibilities, showing how local realities, aspirations, and meanings intersect with development initiatives. This approach illuminates how interventions are experienced, negotiated, and valued by learners and their families.

Chapter Four: When development meets daily life.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of how Independent Power Producers' (IPPs) contributions intersect with child and school-going youth development in Sutherland. Building on the conceptual tools introduced in Chapter 3, I now turn to my fieldwork material to explore how these ideas take shape in practice.

The analysis is guided by Sen's Capability Approach, which emphasises the importance of real freedoms and opportunities for people to pursue lives they have reason to value. In addition, I draw on Redfield's (2018) concept of *Band-Aids and magic bullets*, Fischer's (2021) *Anthropology in the meantime*, and Ames' (2015) notion of *Charismatic Technologies* to think critically about how development efforts by IPPs are perceived, valued, and experienced. These frameworks help illuminate how contributions, while often presented as meaningful and appreciated, may function more symbolically than structurally, especially in relation to the challenges young people face. This theoretical lens allows me to go beyond surface-level perceptions and examine the deeper impact – or lack thereof – of these initiatives.

To ground this discussion, I organise the analysis around three central themes that emerged during my fieldwork in Sutherland:

- **The Realities of Education and School-Related Challenges:** This section explores the state of education and the significant obstacles schools face (see section 4.2).
- **Everyday Challenges to Youth Development:** I examine the daily struggles affecting children and school-going youth, including substance abuse, dropping out of school, bullying, and teenage pregnancy (see section 4.3).

Contributions of IPPs and Their Alignment with Local Needs: The final section is dedicated to the contributions made by IPPs. I will illustrate how these initiatives are perceived, valued, and experienced by community members and how they align or misalign with the real needs of young people (see section 4.4).

These themes provide a way to examine how development is experienced, imagined, implemented, and perceived in Sutherland, and how these development initiatives are aligned, or misaligned, with young people's real needs.

Through this thematic analysis, I address my overarching research question: how do SED contributions from renewable energy companies intersect with child and school-going youth development in Sutherland? Each section engages with the sub-questions that guided the study:

- What are the development and educational support needs of Roggeveld Primary School and Sutherland High School?
- What is the current state of child and school-going youth development?
- What are the IPP youth SED objectives?
- How do community members perceive these contributions in relation to child and school-going youth development?

In this way, the chapter connects theory with lived experience, showing how development is both constrained and enabled by broader social, economic, and institutional conditions.

4.2. The Realities of Education and School-Related Challenges in Sutherland

Education, described as a key capability that can enhance other capabilities and expand freedoms, depends on a range of factors, as I discussed under section 3.4.1 in Chapter 3. These include the structural integrity of the schools and the quality of teaching provided, and social factors such as household-level poverty. But these, of course, vary across schools, communities, and households, and therefore must be evaluated contextually when aiming to improve educational outcomes to enhance capabilities and expand freedoms.

Through my time in Sutherland, it became increasingly clear that the schools, while central to the everyday lives of children and school-going youth, are also sites where

many of the town's broader social challenges play out. What follows is therefore an exploration of the realities of education and school-related challenges in Sutherland.

4.2.1 School infrastructure and resources

Sutherland has one primary school, one high school, and one early childhood development (ECD) centre. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to observe both the primary and high schools and conduct interviews with several teachers at each. Unfortunately, I was unable to engage with anyone from the ECD centre and therefore cannot provide any insight into its conditions³².

The primary school accommodates over 400 learners and is staffed by 11 teachers, including the principal, who teaches various subjects (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, August 2024). The teachers fall within a 30-60-year age group, with most identifying as Coloured and from Sutherland, with a few from the broader KHM. The average class size is roughly 40, and while the school offers seasonal after-school sports such as rugby, netball, athletics, and chess, which, according to their principal, has a fair participation rate, the extra mathematics classes provided by the teacher appointed by SALT³³, is poorly attended (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Paulette, high school teacher, August 2024).

Nevertheless, Sutherland has a relatively well-stocked library that the children can use, but their computers often do not work, as is the case with the computer centre implemented by SALT. The school also has a computer lab that is not functioning,

³² Initial recruitment efforts at the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centre presented significant challenges. My visit to the site, intended to arrange interviews and focus groups, revealed a chaotic and unorganised environment, characterised by a lack of clear entry protocols or accessible staff. Although one practitioner initially agreed to participate and facilitate a focus group, the subsequent appointments were cancelled on the day. Follow-up attempts to reschedule received no response, failing to recruit participants from this key institutional site.

³³ The residents conflated SALT with SAAO. The SAAO implemented the SALT Collateral Benefits Programme. The SAAO headquarters are based in Observatory in Cape Town, Western Cape.

underscoring the town's broader structural constraints. More promising, a science lab in a container on the premises where the foundation phase occasionally has classes can be found. Inside the container, there are posters, a human anatomy doll, and various tools used for science.

Yet, when I was inside this container, its small size made it feel quite warm and claustrophobic, emphasising its rather appreciated-but-inadequate, meantime nature. This initiative, although not implemented by the IPPs, provides learners with the opportunity to engage in science, providing hope and leaving room for more suitable development (Fischer, 2018).

The school building, however, is relatively large and well-maintained, and the foundation phase³⁴ classrooms are decorated with colourful, stimulating educational materials (see Figure 4.1). However, these positive learning environments are undermined by inadequate infrastructure, such as the poor condition of the school's bathrooms and the rugby field (see Figure 4.8).

³⁴ Foundational phase serves grade R to 3 learners

Figure 4.1: A foundation phase classroom at Roggeveld Primary School, Sutherland



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

The high school, by contrast, has just over 100 pupils and eight teachers, many of whom are employed temporarily. I interviewed 4 of its teachers, their acting principal for 2024, and their new principal for 2025, who is also teaching various subjects. They are all over 40 years old, predominantly Coloured, and mostly from the Western Cape, with some from the KHM.

Here, at the high school, they face significant infrastructural issues, such as inadequate bathrooms that welcome graffiti (see figure 4.6 below), a patchy rugby field (see figure 4.7 below), and classrooms that are scattered across the school grounds. In 2018, the school experienced a major infrastructural setback when a fire destroyed one of its main buildings. The NCDofE provides the extent of this damage (see Figures 4.2 and 4.3 below)

on the social media platform Twitter³⁵, a post in September 2018 stating that “7 classrooms, the administration block, staff room and the school hall were totally destroyed” (My Broadband Forum, 2022).

Figure 4.2: Exterior view of the burned Sutherland High School building.



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

³⁵ The link to the twitter post can be found here: <https://mybroadband.co.za/forum/threads/sutherland-high-school-that-burnt-down-4-years-ago-still-the-same.1191852/>

Figure 4.3: Interior view of the burned Sutherland High School building



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

Some residents quietly suggested this was linked to learners who no longer wanted to attend school. Yet, at the start of 2018 in January, as seen in Maako (2018), Sutherland High School maintained a 100% pass rate every year since 1989, when its first group matriculated. Furthermore, the school's principal at that time stated that the class of 2017 not only maintained the pass rate of 100% with "327 distinctions and 210 bachelor's degree access passes", but also simply loved their school (Maako, 2018). This 'suggestion' by residents, however, highlights how they perceive learners may interact with their environment when they do not find value in it.

Nonetheless, to accommodate the learners for the rest of the academic year, the four remaining classes and the hostel were used (Guest Writer, 2018). At that time, the school

had 137 learners, of whom 20 were matriculants, not much different from 2024's 111 learners and 18 matriculants (Guest Writer, 2018) (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, November 2024). But what is distinctly different from 2017 is the pass rate as seen in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Sutherland High School's 2024 matriculation results

Exam year	Pass rate	Total wrote	Total Pass
2024	61,1%	18	11

Source: Schools Digest (online: <https://schoolsdigest.co.za/matriculation/h-skool-sutherland-2024-matric-results/>)

Nevertheless, this setback highlights the importance of having the right services in place to avoid the deprivations that fires can cause. Sutherland's absence of a fire station placed the duty of firefighting on the residents, which, although necessary, risks their safety and serves as a stark reminder that the town lacks sufficient services.

As of the time of writing, the damaged school structure remains unrepaired. In its place, two temporary container classrooms have been installed by the NCDoe to be utilised alongside the remaining classrooms and hostel for teaching (see figure 4.4 below).

Figure 4.4: Exterior view of Container Classrooms



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2025

While these containers provide some relief by providing extra classroom space in a context where much of the infrastructure had been lost, they represent what Redfield (2018) might describe as a band-aid solution, a quick-fix, short-term, surface-level intervention that fails to engage with the structural issues at play. In addition, it could also be viewed as a meantime effort as it does provide the necessary space for teaching, but residents remain hopeful that the school will be rebuilt (Fischer, 2018). This can be attributed to the fact that it does not consider how cold and difficult Sutherland's winters can be. When it snows or rains, moving between classrooms and containers can become uncomfortable and, at times, unsafe, especially for learners who do not have the proper winter school clothing (see Figure 4.5 below for a photograph of what the town looks like during snowfall periods).

Figure 4.5: Main Road in Sutherland, date unknown



Source: Karoo Information (Online: <https://www.karoo-information.co.za/routes/town/534/sutherland>)

These kinds of infrastructural failures are not just inconveniences but are also actively disrupting learning, representing a constraint on the expansion of capabilities. When learners are placed in environments that are cold, undignified, or neglected, it limits their ability to concentrate, to participate, and to grow.

Learning is not simply about the presence of a classroom; it is about being situated in an environment that enables meaningful engagement with education. This includes feeling physically safe, emotionally supported, and socially valued, all of which stem from freedoms. A classroom alone cannot foster learning if the broader conditions are marked by instability, neglect, or exclusion. For education to be transformative, learners must experience a sense of belonging and dignity, with access to resources, infrastructure, and relationships that affirm their worth and potential.

have the option to take up. The pedagogical support, however, remains contested seen as teachers still feel unsupported.

While feeding schemes help ease the burden of hunger, financial constraints present a significant challenge to maintaining them. Receiving school fees remains an obstacle for both the primary and high schools, even when the costs are as low as R50 a month (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal; Hendrick, primary school principal, August 2024). This is likely tied to the reality that many households in Sutherland rely on a single income or even depend wholly on social grants (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025). For the primary school, classified as a quantile 4 institution, this becomes particularly problematic, as it receives only around R800 per learner annually to cover essentials like educational materials and food for the entire year. Additionally, their principal noted that the delay in funding from the NCDoe at the start of the 2025 academic year affected their ability to properly settle the school's electricity bill (Interview, Hendrick, April 2025).

Meanwhile, the high school was facing a mounting debt crisis at the start of my research, limiting its capacity to operate effectively (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024). However, when I visited at the start of 2025, a new principal had been appointed at the school. The new principal, together with one of the teachers, had successfully negotiated a deal with one of the wind farms that secured the school a favourable amount of funding, enough to cut their debt by 50% and pay it off almost entirely (Interview, John, high school teacher, April 2025; Jared, high school's new principal, August 2025).

Apart from the infrastructural and financial challenges faced by the high school, there have also been incidents of unauthorised access to its grounds. Residents have reportedly cut down trees on the property without permission, likely due to a need for accessible, affordable firewood (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024). I personally witnessed people cutting down and gathering wood at the hospital during my fourth field trip in August 2024. During an informal discussion with the hospital staff, they noted that this was a regular occurrence and did not seem to mind. In addition to the unauthorised access to the high school's grounds, a relatively new wire fence installed by

one of the IPPs around the high school's sports field has already been cut through (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024). These accounts reveal how the social conditions of the town can seep into these educational spaces.

4.2 2 From fields to courts: Sport and the illusion of development

Despite the schools' efforts to offer extracurricular activities such as rugby, netball, and athletics, learner participation in these sports remains relatively low (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, Alison, James, Paulette, Kelly, primary and high school teachers, August 2024). While both schools have rugby fields, their conditions vary and reflect wider patterns of infrastructural neglect. (See Figure 4.7 of the high school's rugby field and Figure 4.8 of the primary school's rugby field).

Figure 4.7: Sutherland High School rugby field.



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

Figure 4.8: Roggeveld Primary School's rugby field with a view of the school in the background.



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

The primary school rugby field is mostly sand, yet children are often seen playing rugby on it during break time (see figure 4.8 above). The high school's field, on the other hand, is a patchy mixture of grass and sand (see figure 4.8 above), visible remnants of an unfinished project initiated by one of the IPPs in 2023, who initially aimed to improve the sports facilities. By my first visit in August 2024, residents noted that this project had abruptly ended, attributing this to contractors hired by the IPP to implement this, leaving with half the funds (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, Paulette, high school teacher, August 2024).

Nonetheless, many residents expressed doubt about the project's longevity, citing the area's dry conditions as a factor and thus acknowledging its limited capacity. While the intention may have been development-oriented, teachers and parents alike see the failed initiative as yet another example of a project that appears transformative but ultimately fails to deliver meaningful, lasting impact, being seen as "empty promises" (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, Paulette, high school teacher, August 2024) (FGD 2-4, November 2024).

Figure 4.9: Netball Court at Sutherland High School



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

Figure 4.10: Tennis court at Sutherland High School.



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

Similarly, the netball court (see figure 4.9 above) and the tennis court (see figure 1.10 above) at the high school have both deteriorated over time. They are marked by large visible cracks, an uneven surface, and large clumps of grass growing and pushing through the tar. Like the rugby field, it stands as a quiet symbol of neglect.

Despite these issues, a few learners are reportedly participating in netball and rugby at the high school, while at the primary school, they offer many more options. This speaks to the different age groups, where the younger learners may still have some semblance of hope, while the high school learners, after years of neglect, become discouraged from engaging any further.

In essence, conditions like these may limit opportunities for physical development and recreation and send a subtle message: that learners' interests and environments are not considered worthy of sustained investment. This sense of neglect extends beyond physical infrastructure and into the academic domain.

4.2.3 Academic Performance

Academic performance emerged as another deeply concerning issue. While this subtheme could easily fit under the section 4.3, *challenges to youth development*, I have chosen to address it separately here for a specific reason: the future of Mathematics and Science at Sutherlands High School is increasingly uncertain.

According to several teachers, these subjects may be phased out due to persistently low enrolment, sometimes as few as one or two learners per subject (Interview, Paulette, Adam, John, high school teachers, April 2025). This is particularly troubling given that Sutherland is known for hosting SAAO and SALT, institutions that regularly host school tours from other regions to showcase the area's scientific significance (see figure 4.11 below).

Figure 4.11: A group of SARAo bursary recipients from Carnarvon High School visiting SALT in Sutherland, May 2023



Source: South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (online: <https://www.sarao.ac.za/news/sarao-school-bursary-holders-visit-salt-in-sutherland/>)

In fact, SALT has even hired a mathematics teacher to work across both the high school and the primary school, making this reality much more concerning. For many residents, losing these subjects would strip the high school of what makes it distinct from other schools in neighbouring Karoo towns (FGD 6, April 2025).

Furthermore, the potential closure of the high school is an alarming symptom of larger issues. Several teachers noted that high school enrolment was just over 100 learners, a striking contrast to the more than 400 at the primary school (Interview, Hendrick, Alison, James, Paulette, Kelly, primary and high school teachers, August 2024). A simple question

arose: *Where are the learners going?* According to the teachers and the social worker, most learners either relocate to other towns for high school, such as Calvinia or Fraserburgh, or simply do not continue their education (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal; Arelene, social worker, August 2025; John, high school teacher, April 2025) (FGD 7, April 2025). A more contrasting view by residents puts it this way: some fail repeatedly and give up, others altogether simply just drop out, which will be explored under section 4.3.8 (Interview, Frances, Adult College coordinator, November 2024) (FGD 2, November 2024).

The primary school specifically is grappling with a significant problem of grade repetition, as some learners are failing the same, if not multiple grades (Interview, Hendrick, Alison, James, teachers at the primary school, August 2024; FGD 7, April 2025). The SARChI 2024 Sutherland socio-economic survey confirms this trend: more learners are behind the expected grade for their age than those who are on track (see figure 4.12 below). In South Africa, children are expected to begin Grade 1 at the age of 7; progressing by one grade each year (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:75). The data reveal that only a few children in Sutherland are on track with this progression, even fewer are ahead, while the vast majority are falling behind. These patterns are likely linked to multiple factors, as will be addressed in Section 4.3 in this chapter.

Figure 4.12: Learner Age and Grade Alignment (Ages 7–18), Sutherland (2024).

Grade												
Age	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Gr. R	6	4	1									
Gr.1	12	8	1								1	
Gr.2	4	11	3	2				1				
Gr.3		10	8	6	4	1	2					
Gr.4			2	7	7	5	2	3	2	2		
Gr.5				2	2	5	3	1		1	1	1
Gr.6					2	4	5	3	2	3	4	
Gr.7						2	1	4	2	3	4	4
Gr.8					1	1		6	5	2	2	5
Gr.9								3	3	1	2	9
Gr.10					1				3	3	6	4
Gr.11											1	2
Gr.12												3
Totals	22	33	15	17	17	18	13	21	17	15	21	28
Key	Below			On par			Above					

Source: Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald (2025:76)

Figure 4.12 above has a few outliers, but the one reported on in my research was the 14-year-old in grade 2, double the expected age for that grade. According to the Department of Basic Education (DoBE, 2012:7), a learner who has spent four or more years in the initial phase without reaching the expected performance level and is at risk of remaining in the same phase for another four or more years should be provided with the necessary support to advance to the next grade. In addition, a learner who does not fulfil the criteria for promotion, may still be advanced to the next grade to avoid the learner being held back “for longer than four years” (DoBE, 2012:9). This suggests that not only can learners be significantly older than the expected age for each grade, but that they too may be progressed to avoid their repetitive failure.

Nevertheless, primary school teachers shared concern around progressing learners who continuously fail, noting that there is not much they can do for these learners (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, April 2025; FGD 6, April 2025). The burden of this academic deficit falls heavily on high school teachers, who receive learners with little to no foundational knowledge in key subjects like Mathematics and English (Interview, Adam, John, Paulette, high school teachers, April 2025). When asked about the reasons for this poor performance, residents and teachers offered contrasting views.

Residents believe learners are not receiving the individual attention necessary for meaningful learning, attributing this to a lack of motivation or passion among teachers (FGD 4-6, November 2024). Conversely, teachers argue that a lack of interest and a reluctance to complete homework from the learners make it difficult to identify areas where support is most needed (interview, Hendrick, Alison, James, primary school teachers, August 2024; interview, Adam, John, Paulette, high school teachers, April 2025) (FGD 7, April 2025). This creates a difficult cycle of blame, with each group pointing to the other as the root of the problem.

With uncertainty of whether the utility bills will be paid on time, inadequate infrastructure making learners feel that their spaces are not worth investing in, and tension between the reasons for their learners’ continuous failure of grades, education as a key capability to enhance capabilities in this context becomes challenging.

4.3 Everyday Challenges to Youth Development

While Sutherland is a small community of approximately 2,836 people, a significant portion of its population is youth. My study focuses specifically on children and school-going youth, individuals under the age of 18. This age cohort (0-19) makes up 35.3% of the population (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:47). Due to ethical considerations and the vulnerable nature of this group, as defined by the Research Ethics Committee of Stellenbosch University, my findings are based on interviews and focus groups with individuals 18 years and older.

Based on 17 interviews and eight focus groups, a prevalent theme that emerged was the everyday challenges to youth development in Sutherland. These emotional accounts revealed a range of intersecting challenges that prevent children and school-going youth from thriving. These issues can be understood as hindrances to child and school-going youth development, limiting their capabilities and their agency to live lives they have reason to value. While many of these may appear as personal or behavioural issues, they are better understood as context-specific structural and social constraints that limit young people's capabilities.

4.3.1 Marked from birth: Understanding the Impact of Perceived Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Sutherland

'They are broken...'

(Interview, Adam, Sutherland high school teacher, April 2025).

The sentiment that children are "broken", expressed by a teacher at Sutherland High School, Adam, serves as a powerful entry point into the challenges faced by youth in the community (Interview, Adam, high school teacher, April 2025)³⁶. The perception reflects not only the children's individual struggles but also the broader socio-economic

³⁶ In an interview conducted on April 4th, 2025, Adam, a resident, and teacher at Sutherland high school expressed his thoughts with regards to what the children and school-going youth are like.

conditions that impede their development. Sen's (1999) capability approach thus offers a valuable lens for understanding these challenges, not by focusing solely on access to resources or services, but by considering whether this group have the real freedoms, support systems, and agency to use it and live lives they have reason to value.

A recurring theme in my fieldwork was the perception that many children are afflicted with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). As one teacher put it, "Most of the children are Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) children" (Interview, Kelly, high school teacher, August 2024).

FAS is a specific diagnosis within the broader umbrella term Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which encompasses a range of conditions caused by prenatal alcohol exposure (see Figure 4.3). As Alabi and Jacob (2025:1) explain: "Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe the impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability".

Globally, South Africa has the highest reported rate of FASD (Louw, Broodryk, White, Acker, Viljoen & Olivier, 2024:867; Oliver, Broodryk & Louw, 2025, slide 2). In a study by Louw et al. (2024:875), 3,001 primary school children were screened for FASD across eight study sites in the Western Cape, the Northern Cape, the Free State, and the Eastern Cape. Of these participants, 395 were diagnosed with FASD, of which 309 were FAS cases, 50 were Partial Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS) cases, and 34 were alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND) (Louw et al., 2024:875). See Table 4.2 below for FASD diagnostic criteria.

Table 4.2: FASD diagnostic criteria

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)	Growth restriction ($\leq 10\%$ height and weight) Characteristic dysmorphic features (FAS <i>gestalt</i>) Deficient or abnormal brain growth (OFC $\leq 10\%$) Neurodevelopmental delays > 1.5 standard deviations below expected norms <i>Confirmed maternal alcohol use not required</i>
Partial fetal alcohol syndrome (pFAS)	Confirmed maternal alcohol use Characteristic facial features (partial FAS <i>gestalt</i>) Neurodevelopmental delays > 1.5 standard deviations below expected norms <i>Where alcohol use cannot be confirmed</i> Growth restriction ($\leq 10\%$ height and weight) or Deficient or abnormal brain growth (OFC $\leq 10\%$)
Alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND)	Confirmed maternal alcohol use Neurodevelopmental delays ≥ 1.5 standard deviations below expected norms
Alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD)	Confirmed maternal alcohol use Birth defects associated with prenatal alcohol exposure

Source: Louw et al. (2024:870)

The overall prevalence of FAS across the sampled communities in each province is as follows: three communities in the Northern Cape recorded rates of 15,71%, 19,59%, and 20,36%, one community in Free State recorded 11,02%, one in the Western Cape 8,18% and three communities in the Eastern Cape recorded 5,15%, 9,68%, and 7,16%, respectively (Louw et al., 2024:875). Collectively, these figures highlight the Northern Cape's significantly high and consistent prevalence rate of FAS across the various communities sampled.

Urban, Cherish, Fourie, Chetty, Olivier, and Viljoen (2008) similarly found during their screening of grade one learners in De Aar and Upington, Northern Cape, that a significant proportion exhibited growth delays: 66,5% were underweight, 48,3% were stunted, and 42,7% had low weight-for-height. Respectively, 66,4% of grade one learners in De Aar tested positive for FAS, and 57,4% in Upington (Urban et al., 2008).

Furthermore, one of FAS's significant side effects is mental disability, emphasising the importance of screening children, as high prevalence rates can indicate a serious issue for our country (Urban et al., 2008). Nonetheless, Urban et al. (2008) state that the high reported prevalence rate for FAS in South Africa is not clearly understood, as various

factors can increase the risk of FAS, such as maternal alcohol consumption³⁷, as well as personal, social, and genetic factors.

This recurring description of children and school-going youth in Sutherland was often voiced by teachers and residents, who framed learners' difficulties in terms of FAS. I have chosen my words carefully here, not to suggest that these children have clinically been diagnosed with FASD, but rather to reflect the perceptions of those I engaged with.

One such person was Alison, a teacher at the primary school who spoke about the challenges she faces in her classroom. She openly stated, 'some of these kids have low cognitive ability, due to mostly Foetal Alcohol Syndrome' (Interview, Alison, primary school teacher, August 2024). This comment highlights a common way educators make sense of the discipline and learning challenges they face, attributing them to a perceived underlying condition.

But when the term FAS was raised during interviews, I often responded by asking, "Was *this tested?*" or "*How can you tell?*". The responses from teachers across both schools consistently referenced observable traits and behaviours, rather than formal medical diagnoses (Interview, Hendrick, James, Jennifer, August 2024) (FGD 7, teachers, April 2025). In Alison's case, she anticipated my question and stated, "not diagnosed, but you can see" (Interview, primary school teacher, August 2024). This suggests that a child who simply cannot sit still may face prejudice and be unfairly labelled.

Alison then connected this issue to a significant burden on teachers, stating, "This is a problem because now you are stuck with this in your class" (Interview, primary school teacher, August 2024). She explicitly linked this frustration to the absence of specialists

³⁷ Oliver, Broodryk and Louw (2025, slide 24) combined the data of 545 interviews from multiple studies and found that 367 mothers reported alcohol use while only 200 reported reasons as to why they continued drinking. The reasons are thus as follows: negative emotions, social context, for positive impact, because of lack of knowledge or understanding the risks involved, and because of problematic behaviours such as habit or peer pressure (Oliver, Broodryk & Louw, 2025, slide 25)

who could conduct formal assessments and the lack of inclusive schools in the area. While the Northern Cape province has 12 special needs schools, the nearest one to Sutherland is in the neighbouring Western Cape province³⁸ (Northern Cape Department of Education, n.d.).

To understand how this unfolded, before my interview with Alison, another teacher took me to her classroom to introduce us. Alison, however, was busy managing her foundation phase of around 30 learners. Before agreeing to speak with me, she shouted at the class in Afrikaans, telling them to behave. The command did not appear to settle them, and for me, the force of her voice was jarring. I found myself trembling, not because of what she said, but how she said it. In that moment, I wondered whether I had chosen the wrong time to approach her. Yet for Alison, this was familiar territory; projecting authority through a loud, commanding voice was part of the everyday rhythm of her classroom.

But once we moved to a quieter room, the intensity of her voice receded, and she opened up immediately. Observing this shift in behaviour highlighted how this has become the norm for her, and possibly for other teachers as well, who described learners' behaviours as difficult and disrespectful. They become so accustomed to shouting and addressing their classes in this manner that this is what learners hear and experience every day. In that space, removed from the constant need to assert dominance, Alison reflected on the difficulties she faced, noting that "the personalities of these children are rude and without manners, and this makes it difficult because, as you saw now, I have to constantly assert dominance" she explained, 'they don't see you as an authority figure" (Interview, Alison, primary school teacher, August 2024).

These accounts reveal more about the narratives teachers and residents use to make sense of children's struggles than about the children themselves. For teachers who are already overburdened, in contexts where alcohol abuse is a well-known problem and professional diagnostic services are scarce or non-existent, it becomes easier to put

³⁸ The distance between Sutherland and the Western Cape special needs school is 276 km.

certain children into a 'manageable' FASD child box. It operates as an easy explanation for poor academic performance and behavioural difficulties. It is also a way of articulating frustration at systemic neglect: the absence of resources, specialised support, and inclusive schools, leaving teachers who are already overburdened to cope on their own.

Given the limited medical resources available in Sutherland, most children, if not all, have not been tested or formally diagnosed, as noted during an informal conversation with one of the nurses. The hospital itself has been described by residents as little more than a clinic, with insufficient staff, a shortage of medicines, and a doctor available once a week, amongst other deficiencies (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:128). Yet in this small, closely-knit community, where visibility is high and judgment circulates easily, many residents draw links between a child's behavioural difficulties or physical features and the visible drinking habits of pregnant women. As one participant explained: "They know they are pregnant, but they are still using alcohol. And even after they give birth, they are breastfeeding, but they are still drinking" (Interview, Jennifer, community liaison official, August 2024).

While I did not personally witness pregnant women drinking during my fieldwork, I frequently observed men displaying drunken behaviour at various times of the day. In some instances, the men were unable to remain upright, clinging to street poles close to the liquor stores, and eventually sitting down on the sidewalk after struggling to keep their balance, all of which children are continuously exposed to. These observations, combined with local perceptions of FASD, although not clinically verified, were repeatedly articulated in interviews and focus groups and circulate widely, becoming powerful narratives that shape how children and their families are perceived and treated

4.3.2 Living in constraint: A Lack of Safe Spaces

One of the guiding questions in both interviews and focus groups asked participants, 'What are the challenges children and school-going youth face in this town?'. In response, participants often emphasised the lack of safe and meaningful recreational spaces. As one participant explained, "*hier is nie entertainment nie* // here is no entertainment" (Speaker 2, FGD 1, past learner, November 2024).

During my fieldwork trip in August 2024, I stayed at the Little Artist Cottage. On the plot was a small steel swing (see Figure 4.13 below), along with various decorations, including a metal chicken sculpture. As I settled in, children were playing, laughing, and shouting around the area, something I rarely hear or see when staying at other guest houses in the town. Here, the children were playing on this swing: while one swung, the other waited nearby for their turn. As I moved away from that scene, I was then met with children sitting on the chicken and 'riding' it back and forth like an electric bull. Although I had not intended to observe this, informal conversations with residents later confirmed that such improvised play reflects the limited entertainment options available to children in the town. Indeed, the place where I was staying at the time appeared to be one of the few sources of amusement they could access. This scarcity can be attributed to the fact that the town's only existing park is gated and reserved exclusively for school-going children, specifically Grade R learners.

Figure 4.13: Swing at the Artist Cottage



Photograph by C. Rickerts, February 2024

The lack of safe, meaningful spaces and activities for children and school-going youth reflects a profound capability deprivation. While the town has not been described as dangerous by residents or experienced as such by me, children are regularly exposed to

adult substance abuse. Accounts gathered through informal conversations with residents suggest that, in the absence of safe and engaging activities, children may resort to breaking into restaurants and bars to steal alcohol. One local restaurant manager described this pattern, which subsequently manifests into two new challenges to their development, as will be explored.

4.3.3 Substance abuse

In a follow-up to no entertainment, I asked: 'What is here for the learners to do?'. Substance use was one of the most consistent responses across both interviews and focus groups. While the 2017 and 2024 Sutherland socio-economic HH survey reports had already identified substance abuse as a broader community-wide issue and found that the use amongst children is one of the least liked things about Sutherland, participants emphasised how early in life young people are experimenting with alcohol, marijuana, and cigarettes (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:54; Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:12,145).

For example, one resident reflected: "What makes it sad is that the children started smoking [cigarettes³⁹] at a younger age than we started smoking" (Speaker 3, FGD 1, past learner, November 2024). Another recalled seeing children as young as 10 smoking marijuana openly in the street, noting, "I would come out and chase them, but you can see they are not even scared anymore because this is how they are living even at home" (Speaker 2, FGD 4, police officer, November 2024). A teacher at the high school added that learners are far from discreet; some smoke cigarettes on the school property and come to class with the smell of these substances still clinging to their clothes (Interview, John, April 2025), while another teacher at the primary school teacher emphasised that he no longer attends sports events because learners openly smoke and drink nearby (Speaker 2, FGD 7, April 2025).

³⁹ Follow up question asked what they smoke.

Nevertheless, when I asked participants about the children's parents and if they were aware of their children's behaviour, these elicited responses that highlighted intergenerational cycles of substance misuse, with several participants emphasising that many parents were themselves consumed by alcohol abuse (Interview, Hendrick⁴⁰, Alison, James, Paulette, primary and high school teachers, Jennifer, community liaison official, August 2024)(Interview John, high school teacher, April 2025)(FGD 1-4, November 2024).

Considering 22,5% of households often have no food, and 47,6% have no work opportunity, I asked, 'Where do the children get the money for this?' (Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald, 2025:20,68). According to many residents, the children bully their parents to give them their child support grant, and you could find the children 'hustling on the street corners' (Interview, Hendrick, James, Paulette, primary and high school teachers, Jennifer, community liaison official, August 2024) (FGD 1-4, November 2024). I then asked, 'But how do they buy the alcohol?'. One resident stated, "There's a group, they put money together then they send a grown-up to buy wine for them, and the grown-ups do it because they also need money for wine" (Speaker 1, FGD 1, past learner, November 2024).

As participants shared these experiences and thoughts, the subtheme of substance abuse was not only reinforced but also linked to broader concerns around discipline, respect, and school performance. This early exposure to substances not only raises serious health concerns but can also be linked to behavioural difficulties and poor school performance. As Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald (2025:24) note, substance abuse leads to behavioural deviances, a feature of growing dissatisfaction among Sutherlands residents.

4.3.4 Deviant behaviours

Before I could follow up on the topic of substance abuse, residents shifted the conversation to another pressing issue: youth engaging in break-ins. They explained that

⁴⁰ Hendrick is both the principal of and a teacher at the primary school.

children were often breaking into people's houses (FGD 1-4, November 2024). When I asked what they were stealing, the responses were surprising: "They steal the simplest things like sugar and bread" (Speaker 4, FGD 1, past learner, November 2024).

Considering the town's small size, residents explained that news of such incidents circulates quickly (FGD 1-4, November 2024). Participants, nonetheless, had different opinions on the motivation behind these acts - shaped by their own personal values. Some say they are simply "naughty", reflecting these acts of theft as an individual's wrongdoing, while others, including members of the South African Police Service (SAPS), recognise it is a symptom of poverty and hunger because of structural failure (FGD 1-4, November 2024). When I inquired about the police response, an officer noted that their approach was to inform the children's parents, ensure the return of the stolen goods, and issue a warning (Speaker 2, FGD 4, November 2024).

4.3.5 Gendered vulnerabilities

A particularly troubling narrative that emerged during my fieldwork was the claim that young girls are engaging in transactional relationships⁴¹ with men employed on the construction sites of nearby wind farms. These men, who often reside in the town only temporarily, were said to reel them in with gifts or offering them alcohol in exchange for attention and intimacy, items and gestures that can feel novel and enticing to young girls with limited access to such resources in their daily lives (Interview, Jennifer, community liaison official, August 2024)(Interview, Emma, University student, November 2024)(FGD 4, November 2024). Marais, Wlokas, de Groot, Dube & Scheba (2018:26), in examining the mining industry, predicted that the construction periods of renewable energy projects will also cause social disruption.

Residents expressed both dissatisfaction and helplessness about the situation. When I asked how old these girls are, the general answer was that they are of high school age, with some noting "even primary school girls, but they don't look like (they are in) primary

⁴¹ Residents highlighted this as prostitution.

school” (Speaker 2, FGD 2, parent, November 2024). Residents furthermore stated how this has led to girls being out late at night, and when I asked, ‘Are their parents not worried about where they are?’, they stated “the parents know; they (the girls) bring money home” (Speaker 1, FGD 2, parent, November 2024). This prompted me to ask how they know all of this, and the collective response underscored the close-knit nature of the town. But for this particular focus group, the residents looked at each other, exchanged a smile, and answered almost in unison, “*ons almal ken almal*//we all know everyone”, appearing to normalise the presence of these transactional relationships as a shared, open secret (FGD 2, November 2024). Finally, I asked, ‘Why does nobody try to prevent it?’, and at this point, the tone of the group shifted as they all let out a sigh, and one resident remarked: “*n mens kan net so veel doen*// a person can only do so much” (Speaker 2, FGD 2, parent, November 2024). Although residents recognise the problem, they seem to feel powerless to intervene.

The focus group I had with SAPS members further elaborated on how regularly they see girls leave guest houses late at night while they are on patrol (FGD 4, November 2024). One incident stood out for them. After seeing a girl of high school age leave a guest house, they picked her up and took her home, and told her mother where she was, only to be told to let her (the girl) do her job (FGD 4, November 2024).

But these men, they are often older and married, of African descent from elsewhere in South Africa, who eventually leave back to their homes, abandoning the consequences of these encounters, which may include pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional trauma (Interview, Hendrick, Alison, James, Jennifer, Paulette, primary and high school teachers, August 2024)(Interview, Emma, university student, November 2024)(FGD 4, November 2024). In many cases, the girls do not come in for their routine check-up and medication once they are diagnosed with an STI (informal conversation with the hospital staff).

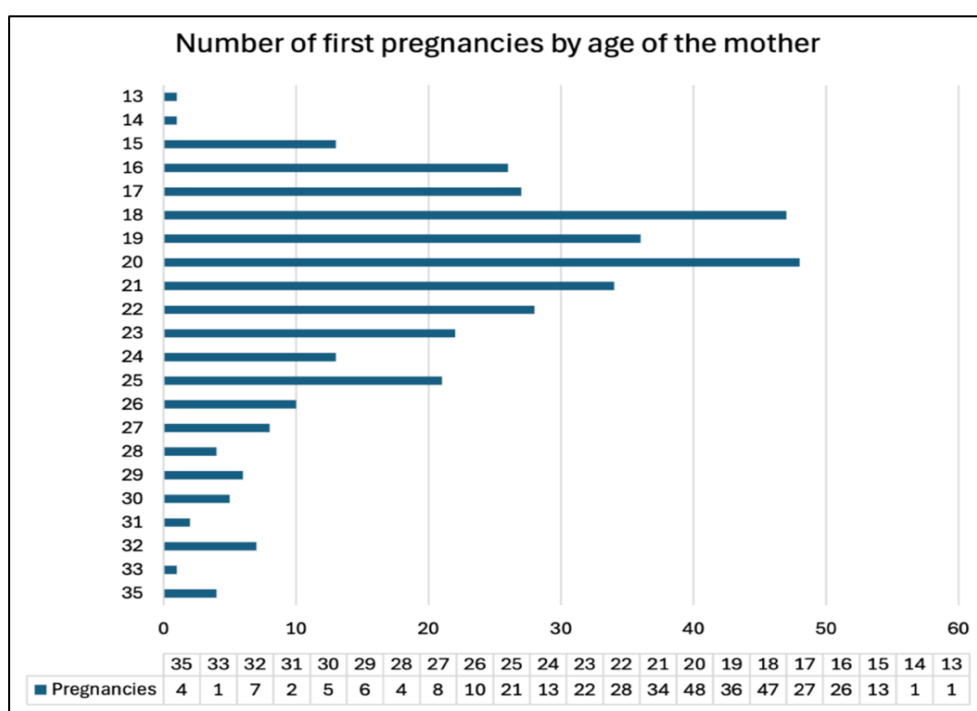
Residents furthermore voiced growing concerns about an increase in rape cases, but these are rarely reported to the police, suggesting a pervasive silence around sexual violence, and possibly, a lack of trust in the justice system (Interview, Jennifer, community liaison official, Paulette, high school teacher, August 2024) (FGD 2 and FGD 4,

November 2024). During my third field trip, all interviews and focus groups I held pointed to the pregnancy of a 14-year-old girl who, according to some, was raped (Interview, Paulette, Adam, Sam, high school teachers, April 2025). According to others, this was just another case of irresponsibility (FGD 6, April 2025).

4.3.6 Teenage pregnancies

In several of my interviews and focus groups, teenage pregnancy, like gendered vulnerability, emerged as a particularly complex and emotionally sensitive topic. According to Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald (2025:78), 41.5% of first pregnancies in Sutherland fell within the 13 to 19 age cohort (see figure 4.14 below), suggesting that teenage pregnancy was and possibly still is a relatively common occurrence.

Figure 4.14: Distribution of First Pregnancies by Age of Mother (Sutherland, 2024)



Source: Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald (2025:79)

But when I asked about adolescent pregnancy, some participants expressed limited awareness, suggesting these matters are often kept quiet within peer circles and rarely reach the attention of adults until the pregnancy is far along (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, August 2024)

Conversely, others offered a more resigned perspective, with one interviewee stating: “14, 15, 16, upward, sex is not an issue” (Interview, John, high school teacher, April 2025). A third group of participants spoke more critically, highlighting a case where one high school learner already had two children (Interview, Paulette, high school teacher, August 2024). They acknowledged that a few learners are parents and expressed concern that this trend could severely limit their opportunities and chances of living a fulfilling life if it continues. Given their vulnerability and the prevalence of pregnancy among young girls, gender emerged as a significant factor influencing the extent of one's freedom.

Teenage pregnancy refers to pregnancies occurring among girls aged 10 to 19 years old (Kassa, Arowojolu and Yalew, 2018:2). Scholars such as Kassa, Arowojolu, and Yalew (2018) and Mbongwa, Mpanza, and Mlambo (2024:20) emphasise how pregnancy within this age group has significant implications for young girls, including limiting future educational and employment opportunities, endangering their health, and perpetuating cycles of poverty. Similarly, Abrahams (2024) notes that “a 2021 report by the Department of Basic Education found that 33% of girls do not return to school after becoming pregnant, impacting their educational and employment prospects and reinforcing gender gaps”, while van Niekerk, Pretorius and Grant (2024) highlights that “close to one in five women between 15 and 24 who recently had a baby”, also have HIV. Nevertheless, over 10% of births worldwide are by women under 20, with developing countries like South Africa accounting for 90% of these births (Kassa, Arowojolu and Yalew, 2018:2).

According to Mbongwa, Mpanza, and Mlambo (2024:201), South Africa has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates in the world, driven by a variety of factors including poverty, transactional relationships with older men, limited access to reproductive health services, lack of parental guidance, peer pressure, and misinformation about contraception. Abrahams (2024) highlights this concerning reality as 122,000 teenagers became parents during the past financial year 23/24. Among them are 2,716 girls aged 10 to 14, and 119,587 teenagers aged 15 to 19, all of whom are still children themselves (Abrahams, 2024).

The Northern Cape, while having the lowest number of learners, is among the provinces with the highest teenage pregnancies (SABC News, 2023). According to Sobuwa (2023), births by 10 and 19-year-old teenagers in the Northern Cape “increased from 129 223 in 2019 to 139 361 in 2022”. The NCDDoE furthermore reported that every three months, 900 learners aged 15 to 19 and 20 learners aged 10 to 14 become pregnant (Sobuwa, 2023, NCDDoE, n.d.).

While becoming a young mother may affect her personal future trajectory, a country with a high rate of teenage pregnancies may consequently face development issues where these teenagers do not participate fully in the economy (van Niekerk et al., 2024). While these narratives cannot be verified in every instance, they speak to broader concerns about agency, capability, unfreedoms, and the social conditions in which decisions are made.

4.3.7 Bullying

Children inherently lack the necessary experience and resources needed to act as autonomous agents under certain conditions, making consistent adult guidance critical for expanding their freedoms (Alkire, 2000:8). When support is absent, insufficient, or inconsistent, children are left navigating complex environments on their own. On the other hand, support through coercive means could consequently yield the opposite expectation as values may then shift (Alkire, 2000:8). Bullying thus emerged as a key concern, manifesting in a complex, multidirectional pattern that highlights deep issues of power, frustration, and social breakdown.

The most vulnerable targets of peer aggression are often children who excelled academically, held positions on the Student Representative Council (SRC), or maintained consistently respectful behaviour. Participants explained that peers targeted these students in deliberate efforts to “break them down” (FGD 7, April 2025).

In one of the focus group discussions, the parents of a high school learner described how their daughter, who always excelled academically, was bullied to the point that they no longer recognised her (FGD 6, April 2025). According to them, she became withdrawn

from the family, quiet, and refuses to walk in the town and is no longer interested in anything she once enjoyed. Feeling unsupported by the school, they decided to transfer her to another school, as the high school did nothing to address the bullying. But as they waited to hear back from potential schools, she had to stay at home, underscoring how school years can be lost in this process. Similarly, a parent reflected on her son's prolonged trauma after being bullied at the primary school in Sutherland (Interview, Sophia, parent, August 2025).

Although the school expelled the perpetrators and they were transferred to another school elsewhere in the Northern Cape, her son continued to struggle. Despite multiple visits to a psychologist and social worker in Springbok, the difficulties persisted, and the family eventually felt they had no choice but to send him to live with his grandparents in the Western Cape. Because he and his brother were close, they did not want to break that bond and sent them both, highlighting the sacrifices parents need to make in conditions like these. Even years later, the mere sight of the children who once bullied him is enough to trigger a state of shock, forcing him to stay indoors during holiday visits (Interview, Sophia, parent, August 2025). While I had arranged this interview to find out more about a reading group the library hosts for the children, before we could get there, the conversation took a very emotional turn, and I decided to end it. However, this encounter underscores the extent to which bullying amongst peers not only affects the children but also the parents and their agency.

This crisis of authority, however, operates in both directions. Teachers attempting to maintain discipline also face verbal abuse and, in worst-case scenarios, physical resistance from learners (Interview, John, high school teacher, April 2025) (FGD 7, April 2025).

Conversely, residents commonly expressed how teachers themselves bully learners, breaking them down to the point where *“die kind wil later dan nie skool toe gaan nie//* the child would not want to go back to school” (FGD 1-5, November 2024; FGD 6, April 2025). The abuse reportedly takes several forms, including excessive disciplinary actions, unequal attention, and harshly singling out disruptive students (FGD 1-5, November 2024; FGD 6, April 2025). This multi-layered dynamic of aggression, among peers, against

teachers, and by teachers, demonstrates a structural failure in creating a safe, functional learning environment.

4.3.8 Dropping out of school.

As stated in the Chapter 1, in the introduction, this research topic was initially prompted by the concerning number of school dropouts, a trend highlighted in the 2017 Sutherland survey report (Vorster & Eigelaar-Meets, 2019:4). The 2024 survey further underscored this trend, revealing that a significant portion of the population does not complete their education: only 14.1% of residents finished Grade 12, a sharp drop from the 39.3% who completed Grade R to Grade 7 (Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald, 2025:80). This stark statistic led me to question the underlying conditions that compel so many learners to leave school prematurely.

School dropout is therefore not an isolated event but rather the cumulative effect of overlapping pressures. Residents frequently linked dropouts to challenges that had already surfaced in my fieldwork: substance abuse, pregnancy, bullying, and, in some cases, perceived FAS. However, the issue is not always straightforward. For example, while pregnancy is commonly assumed to derail girls' education, several teachers noted that most girls do return to school and complete matric, even those who have had more than one child during their school years (Interview, Naomi, high school's acting principal, Paulette, high school teacher, Kelly, SGB member, August 2024).

Similarly, bullying does not always lead to permanent dropout but may instead result in learners transferring to other schools. In some cases, a supposed "dropout" is simply a relocation, with the learner continuing their education elsewhere (FGD 7, April 2025). Between January and July 2025, the primary school recorded 18 dropouts, of which 4 were transfers (Interview, Arlene, social worker, August 2025). (Table 4.3 below outlines this with the corresponding grade).

Table 4.3: Number of Primary School Learners Who Dropped Out or Transferred at Roggeveld Primary School (January–July 2025)⁴²

Grade	Drop Out	Transfer
R	1	-
1	3	1
2	-	1
3	2	-
4	2	-
5	1	-
6	4	-
7	5	2
Total	18	4

Source: Interview, Arlene, Social worker, August 2025

Beyond individual challenges, several structural factors also contribute to learners leaving school. When I probed deeper about why they leave school, residents pointed to Sutherland's harsh winters. According to teachers at the high school and primary school, as well as various residents, the snowfall and freezing temperatures, while beautiful, make the walk to school difficult, especially for learners without adequate winter school clothing (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024) (FGD 1-5, November 2024).

Transport is also limited, as most families in Sutherland do not have access to a car. According to Eigelaar-meets and Groenewald (2025:99,18), only 17,3% of households have members with a legal driver's license. When asked if there were taxis or lift clubs, one resident shared a poignant observation: "You can see mothers walking in this cold (weather) with their little children, taking them to school", highlighting the absence thereof (Speaker 1, FGD 4, SAPS administrator/parent, November 2024). The other

⁴² Based on total enrolment figures, and accounting for learner transfers, the dropout rate at the primary school is estimated to be below 5%, indicating relatively high levels of retention at this school; however, this figure applies to the school as a whole rather than to specific grades or cohorts.

resident elaborated, "I am already cold sitting here in my office, now imagine how the children feel sitting in those classrooms" (Speaker 2, FGD 4, Police officer, November 2024). This comment brought into focus the physical environment of the schools themselves, particularly the high school, which uses container classrooms after its main building burned down.

Social issues, however, create a domino effect. Children using substances often begin to skip school or neglect homework (Interview, John, high school teacher, April 2025). When I asked about parental involvement, several residents explained that many parents are often unable to provide basic support, such as helping with homework, ensuring their children have food and clean clothes, or providing necessary school supplies (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024; interview, Leigh, John, Adam, primary and high school teachers, April 2025) (FGD 1-5, November 2024; FGD 6-7, April 2025). Furthermore, in most cases, this is due to the caregiver's own limited education and ongoing socio-economic struggles (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024). When I asked how children cope, a focus group participant shared a powerful anecdote: "When my mother receives the grant, I have to remind her to put food on the table before she spends it on alcohol. But she doesn't listen, so I stay most of the time by my aunty" (Speaker 4, FGD 5, past learner, November 2024).

What emerged from these discussions is that children often have limited agency and voice, are left to navigate their own means of sustenance, while also deprived of basic freedoms. Follow-up questions to teachers at the primary and high school about how these household conditions affect schooling highlighted repeated grade failure and disengagement entirely (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024) (FGD 7, April 2025). Residents also linked this to developmental challenges such as FASD, although undiagnosed, to them, the one-size-fits-all approach offered an easier answer than navigating the complexity surrounding many learners (FGD 2-4, November 2024; FGD 6-7, April 2025).

When I asked residents how learners themselves view schooling, one focus group responded that: *"skool is nie meer so interestant vir die kinders soos dit vir ons was*

nie//school is not so interesting for the children as it was for us” (Speaker 3, FGD 2, parent, November 2024). According to them, the school’s sports are not consistent enough to accommodate the learners who are more enthusiastic about sport than academics, noting that most boys only go to school for rugby sometimes. Furthermore, they emphasised that the teachers don’t reach out to the learners as they did back when they were in school, followed by giving an example of what learners might think: “*niks gebeur hier by die skole nie, so wat is die use ek gaan skool* // nothing happens here at the school, so what is the use I go to school” (Speaker 3, FGD 2, parent, November 2024). One teacher, similarly, quietly explained, teachers are supposed to be learners’ heroes, yet many of them belittle their learners, so: “if the hero makes me a zero, then why must I go to school?” (Interview, Leigh, primary school teacher, April 2025).

Leaving school has become so easy, as a teacher at the high school mentioned that at the start of the second term in 2025, “a grade 9 learner came by to drop off his textbooks”, underscoring how schooling for many is no longer a priority (Interview, Paulette, high school teacher, April 2025).

4.3.9 Social Services: A Gap in the Safety Net

Given the severe challenges discussed above, I probed into the availability of any psychosocial services. During my initial visit to Sutherland in August 2024, teachers reported that “a satellite service exists”; instead of having a permanent social worker always available in the town, they have a social worker from another town who visits on occasion (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school’s acting principal, August 2024). The consensus was that this arrangement was wholly inadequate for a community where children are constantly in need of psychosocial support (Interview, Kelly, Paulette, August 2024; Leigh, John, Adam, primary and high school teachers, April 2025).

The severity of this absence became starkly clear by my second visit in November 2024: residents noted that the social worker had passed away, and no replacement had been appointed, a situation that persisted through my third visit in April 2023 (FGD 4,

November 2024) (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, April 2025⁴³). This absence of a consistent social worker not only delays crucial interventions but also makes it impossible to build the trust necessary for effective, sustained care in cases of neglect, abuse, or emotional distress.

But this absence of social services does not exist in isolation. It intersects with and deepens other challenges already discussed. Without access to a reliable social worker or safe spaces to process their experiences and feelings, children are left to navigate complex and emotional realities on their own, stripped of the agency to seek help and the freedom to have supportive networks. This gap in care was something that both community members and teachers raised with concern, noting how much children carry silently and how little structured support there is to help them manage it.

However, by my fourth visit in August 2025, follow-up interviews expressed gratitude that an intern social worker was finally placed at the schools (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, August 2025). I was then able to interview the social worker directly and learned that before this role, she had been employed by *Flourish*, a subproject of the project *Grow Great*, which was funded by one of the IPPs.

⁴³ Follow-up interview

Figure 4.15: Picture of Flourish poster in Sutherland's Hospital, 2024



We are looking for a Coach!

An opportunity for you to Flourish

Flourish is a social franchise of mom & baby groups, supported by the Grow Great Campaign, a campaign aimed at galvanising South Africa towards achieving zero stunting by 2030. Flourish seeks to provide universal access to aspirational antenatal and postnatal groups that support and empowers pregnant mothers and their babies through the critical first 1000 days (from conception to the child's second birthday). Children who receive enough love, food and stimulation during this period of life tend to do better at school and get better jobs as a result. But often parents do not get enough support and information when they are pregnant or when the baby is very young. Flourish seeks to fill this gap by offering antenatal and postnatal support through groups.

We are currently recruiting for enthusiastic, self-starters and highly motivated Flourish Coaches to train, support and quality assure our franchisee network. Coaches will be required to travel extensively across the country, will often work on weekends and will require a driver's license.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES:

- To support Flourish franchisees and inspire a wider sense of belonging and loyalty to the franchise network.
- To recruit and train franchisees and provide ongoing development of the franchisees through coaching and quality assurance processes.
- To drive and monitor quality improvement among franchisees and franchisee clubs.
- Ensure the effective use of resources by Flourish franchisees
- Assist with Flourish Monitoring & Evaluation
- Support Flourish logistics
- Stakeholder engagement and management in communities where franchisees operate

SKILLS:

- Excellent administrative skills, including the ability to fulfil reporting, budgeting and other requirements.
- Strong networking abilities
- Strong interpersonal skills, reliable and non-judgemental.
- Innovative and entrepreneurial, creative and an outside the box thinker.
- Ability to maintain effective quality assurance systems, and to collect and manage qualitative and quantitative data.
- Ability to manage, motivate and facilitate personal and professional development in a supportive way.
- Ability to work independently, problem solve, be flexible and take initiative.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE:

- Any tertiary level qualification is essential, preferably in psychology, social work, business administration or communications.
- At least one year's experience in any of the following fields: coaching, mentoring, training, facilitation or teaching.
- Driver's license is essential.
- Knowledge or experience in community work across South Africa.
- Experience in the non-profit and/or development sector is preferable.

COMPETENCIES:

- Passionate about issues of women and children.
- Respectful, supportive, inclusive, empathetic and encouraging.
- Highly proactive with good self-leadership.
- Mature and responsible attitude towards work.
- Excellent time management and organisational skills.
- Entrepreneurial mindset.
- A skilled communicator with high levels of emotional intelligence.
- Geared towards working in a collaborative environment.
- Excellent interpersonal skills, with the ability to develop positive working relationships with individuals and teams.

To apply, please send a motivational cover letter, your CV and two recent work references to sthembile@growgreat.co.za by 8 March 2024. NB: Indicate the position title in the subject line.

flourish

NOTE: An applicant will not in itself entitle the applicant to an interview or appointment. Applicants who fail to meet the minimum requirements will be automatically disqualified from consideration. Applicants who do not receive a reply within two weeks of submission should deem their application to have been unsuccessful. We reserve the right not to fill the position.

www.flourishnetwork.org.za

Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

Flourish aims to provide pre- and post-natal training to mothers by empowering “them throughout the critical first 1,000 days of a child’s life” (Flourish, 2020). It hosts programmes in the Western Cape, Northern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga, with its head office being based in Midrand (Flourish, 2020). However, the initiative was short-lived. According to Arlene, when she worked for this programme in Sutherland, attendance was as low as 5 to 6 people at a time (Interview, social worker, August 2025). Furthermore, she did not have her own office space where she could accommodate mothers and instead had a fixed schedule at the library in the mornings, meaning that

mothers who were in school could not make use of this programme (Interview, Arlene, social worker, August 2025).

In her current position, she works more directly with children, including conducting home visits to those who have been absent from school for extended periods. She expressed deep concern for learners, noting that many face mental health difficulties in addition to their other challenges. This was the first time that mental health had been explicitly mentioned, highlighting both the often-overlooked dimensions of children's struggles and the critical importance of psychosocial services. These freedoms are necessary to provide an environment where children can enhance their capabilities, but in their absence, they instead further limit them.

The following section will examine the contributions of IPPs and how they align with the needs of local communities. It considers how the symbolic value of donations, rather than consistently advancing capabilities, often intersects with the various unfreedoms and challenges that hinder children and school-going youth development. Additionally, it explores how teachers, parents, and residents perceive these contributions in relation to children and school-going youth.

4.4 Contributions of IPPs and Their Alignment with Local Needs

As previously mentioned in section 4.2, IPPs have contributed to the schools in several ways. These initiatives started in 2023, a year after the IPPs became operationalised and are informed by meetings with stakeholders such as the principals of the schools, who, on behalf of the teachers and the school and its needs, present a wish list to the IPPs every quarter. The extent to which such contributions can be sustained, however, often depends on the nature of the project itself and on whether it enhances the capabilities of existing community organisations (Wlokas, Boyd & Andolfi, 2012:48). In other words, contributions that align with and strengthen existing structures (freedoms) are more likely to endure beyond the lifespan of the IPPs involvement, thus achieving development as freedom.

By contrast, once-off material donations, while valuable in the short term, may not be maintained or integrated into long-term development strategies if they are not rooted in community capability. To explore this further, I asked interviewees what initiatives or interventions already existed within the schools, for example, feeding schemes, health services, or school supply provisions, to name a few. Of all the possibilities, a feeding scheme, school supply provision in the form of textbooks and pedagogical support were in place before the IPPs' involvement (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, Naomi, high school's acting principal, August 2024). Nonetheless, with the arrival of the IPPs, schools have received additional inputs. Beyond planting grass on the high school's sports field and erecting a perimeter fence around their school, IPPs have donated a wide range of material goods, including stationery, books, paper, school uniforms (shoes, tracksuits, and jackets), sports equipment, painted murals, solar panels, water filtration systems, smart whiteboards, and e-learning tablets for the foundation phase.

Figure 4.16: Murals painted by one of the IPPs on the Primary school walls, Sutherland



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

These contributions represent a significant investment in the material and technological capacities of education, as it has the potential to enhance both learning and digital inclusion, particularly in a rural town surrounded by technological infrastructures like

SAAO, SALT and IPPs. Importantly, my aim here is not to evaluate these contributions as either successful or insufficient. Instead, I consider how they intersect with existing needs and how different groups value them. As demonstrated in sections 4.1 to 4.4, children and school-going youth are facing significant challenges. From this perspective, the value of support lies not only in the provision of resources (means) but also in whether there are substantive freedoms to convert this into well-being (ends). As such, IPPs' SED and ED investments alone cannot solve the problems of this small town, but they can, however, be guided to address specific issues.

4.4.1 Symbolic vs Context-specific Efforts Towards Development

Within this reality, it becomes clear that questions around sustainability and integration remain. For instance, technological tools such as smart whiteboards and e-learning tablets require ongoing maintenance but also adequate training and support for teachers who may, due to unfreedoms such as poverty, not have their own laptops to use the smart whiteboards effectively (see Figure 4.17 below) (Ames, 2018; Interview, John, high school teacher, April 2025).

Figure 4.17: Smart White Board at the Sutherland High School, 2024



Photograph by C. Rickerts, August 2024

Similarly, while infrastructure such as solar panels and filtration systems addresses essential needs, they too require maintenance over time. The maintenance, however, becomes the responsibility of the receiver, that being the schools (Interview, Hendrick, primary school principal, August 2024). In contexts like these, where schools face various structural unfreedoms, they lack the financial resources to maintain technologies, such as in the case of the e-learning tablets. Several of the 20 e-learning tablets donated for the foundation phase are no longer working, an issue the school cannot afford to fix.

Such challenges already underscore the difficulties of sustaining once-off donations, while also pointing to the reality that priorities for development interventions vary across communities and projects (Wlokas, Boyd & Andolfi, 2012:50). Nonetheless, these contributions may symbolically signal care and investment in children and school-going youth by addressing surface-level issues, but they also risk reinforcing forms of external dependency where capabilities are constrained.

These dynamics become visible in everyday school practices. Practical challenges arise when children often come to school in dirty uniforms or without the stationery and books that were initially provided to them, as well as when parents themselves wear the school jackets provided for their children (Interview, Hendrick, Alison, James, Roggeveld Primary School teachers, August 2024). During my last visit, it was noted that a learner had returned their textbooks and dropped out at the start of the new term. These cases suggest that despite the appeal of these tools and various donations provided, they do not consider the reasons for both poor educational outcomes and disinterest in school, reasons that often include social issues (unfreedoms) like poor household conditions, lack of support, or emotional distress.

As Redfield (2018) warns, there is a danger in mistaking such surface-level improvements for genuine, transformative change. When deeper causes of educational disengagement, such as perceived FAS, absence of meaningful spaces and social services, substance abuse, bullying, gendered vulnerability, or teenage pregnancy, remain unaddressed, then even the most well-intentioned interventions risk becoming what he refers to as "band-aids" - that being temporary fixes that do not treat the underlying wound. Structural change requires sustainable development efforts that dismantle these

systemic barriers, creating an environment where children can genuinely expand their capabilities and exercise their agency.

The intention here, therefore, is to understand how solutions to socially complex problems are often shaped by surface-level perceptions, and how deeper, less visible social realities and unfreedoms may challenge or complicate these efforts.

Material support, such as school clothes, shoes, and stationery, though undeniably important in impoverished areas like Sutherland, faces practical challenges that highlight the daily realities many families face. They point to the reality of how donations are used, and how it is shaped by the broader socio-economic constraints and structural unfreedoms. Where children have limited agency, it becomes a collective responsibility to ensure they receive the support needed to enhance their capabilities. But this responsibility becomes complicated when caregivers themselves are constrained by their own and often similar unfreedoms. In contexts like these, development efforts are most effective when they foster meaningful community agency, grounded in an understanding of their lived realities (McEwan, Mawdsley, Banks, & Scheyvens, 2017:2).

Smart whiteboards and tablets, charismatic in their promise to make education more engaging and to mirror the technological environment surrounding learners, are easily framed as magic-bullet solutions. Yet these donations are genuinely appreciated and valued by teachers. When the foundation phase teacher showed me the tablets, her pride was palpable. She walked me through their functions step by step, highlighting how they help create a fun and interactive learning space (Interview, Leigh, primary school teacher, April 2025). But this moment of promise is steeped in meantime-ness - a fragile, provisional sense of progress. Only 20 learners, at most, can use the tablets at a time, as that is the number donated by the IPPs. In practice, even fewer can access them, since several are broken. The devices stand as symbols of possibility, yet their limited availability and uneven functionality underscore the gap between gesture and sustained transformation.

Figure 4.18: Foundation Phase E-Learning Tablets in Safety Storage, 2025



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

Access is further rationed through a strict schedule that determines which classes and grades may use them. The various learning programmes (see Figure 4.19 below) track which learners are falling behind or moving ahead, not to ensure a shared educational journey, but to sort and separate. This reflects a *meantime intervention*: not the fulfilment of promised futures, nor their total absence, but something suspended in between. The e-learning tablets do not radically transform schooling, but they do create pockets of hope. Learners delight in them when it is their turn; teachers nurture pride in their presence; families imagine that such technologies might open new horizons. Yet these hopes remain suspended in the meantime, awaiting repair, expansion, or replacement.

Figure 4.19: E-learning tablet applications.



Photograph by C. Rickerts, April 2025

While efforts to improve educational infrastructure and quality are often necessary in impoverished settings, such contributions risk functioning as mere 'band-aids' if they do not align with local needs or the capabilities of children (Redfield, 2018). Structural change, therefore, requires sustainable development efforts that move beyond temporary fixes and work toward interventions that dismantle the unfreedoms, creating environments in which children and school-going youth can genuinely enhance their capabilities and exercise agency. The underlying question is thus: should structural change fall within the IPP's responsibility, or does it reflect the state outsourcing its mandate to corporate actors? The case of the container classrooms illustrates this tension well.

While these classrooms are not an IPP contribution and instead that of the state, they display a visible and undeniable band-aid response to the burned-down building, which, by my fourth visit, was still unrepaired. Although they provide a quick fix to the shortage of classrooms, they neglect other constraints; for instance, during snowfall periods, learners must move between classes in harsh conditions and due to other unfreedoms such as poverty, may not have the proper insulation to keep them warm. Therefore, given

that we cannot control the weather, band-aids like this function as a meantime placeholder for something potentially better that will address these capability constraints, creating a fragile sense of hope (Fischer, 2021).

In other words, in contexts where people cannot simply be tough and rely on themselves, whether due to limited employment opportunities or long-standing dependence on safety nets, development interventions must be approached with care. A more humane approach to development in line with Sen's (1999) capability approach would not only supply resources, but also create conditions where individuals, both children and caregivers, can genuinely exercise agency and envision a future they have reason to value. This means tackling the various challenges and constraints head-on and designing interventions that go beyond visibility and charisma and engage with the lived complexity of marginalised communities like Sutherland.

Building on McEwan, Mawdsley, Banks, and Scheyvens (2017:21), who examined the roles of both state and non-state actors in community development, private companies may be seen as magic bullets in these cases where state actors largely failed. This is linked to their "being asked to play a larger role" in community development (McEwan et al., 2017:8). But according to McEwan et al. (2017:14), these private companies outsource this responsibility to "developers", and even though developer's need does not conform to broader development goals, the private companies still control how SED and ED revenues are spent. Furthermore, when development is measured by a scorecard, genuine development becomes intertwined with representation and therefore with more sophisticated forms of development, such as technology (McEwan et al., 2017:9).

The REIPPPP's current compliance requirements for community development can risk prioritising formality over genuine impact. Although IPPs must submit quarterly accounts of their spending, this emphasis on formal compliance often limits the depth of engagement with local communities, reducing interventions to procedural obligations rather than opportunities to foster meaningful change (Malope, 2022:211-212). This emphasis makes tangible donations particularly attractive, as they are easily quantifiable and meet scorecard requirements (Borchardt, 2023:217). However, this focus on concrete, easily trackable contributions can ignore the complex social and relational

realities that ultimately determine a child's opportunities and freedoms. Consequently, successful development interventions require a shift in focus from providing mere resources or infrastructure to addressing the complex, deeper-seated issues that are unique to a community's context.

In April 2025, I attended one of the new IPPs communities' needs assessments with the primary school. There, I observed first-hand the interaction between the various stakeholders. The IPP representative began by introducing himself and outlining the project, emphasising that, in line with 'their obligations', they are here because they did not want to rely on a desktop review alone to understand Sutherland's local needs, an approach considered essential for development contributions that aim to genuinely expand community capabilities. The IPP representative then asked how they could strengthen education in the town.

The principal responded by detailing the social challenges learners face, explaining how these issues, ranging from poverty, substance abuse, lack of parental support, to absenteeism and limited psychosocial support, hinder meaningful educational engagement. The conversation continued with the IPP representative asking follow-up questions, and the principal consistently returned the focus to these broader social barriers rather than material or infrastructural needs alone. At one point, when the IPP representative asked, "How do we strengthen the school to ensure quality education is being delivered?", the principal replied, "try and address the social issues".

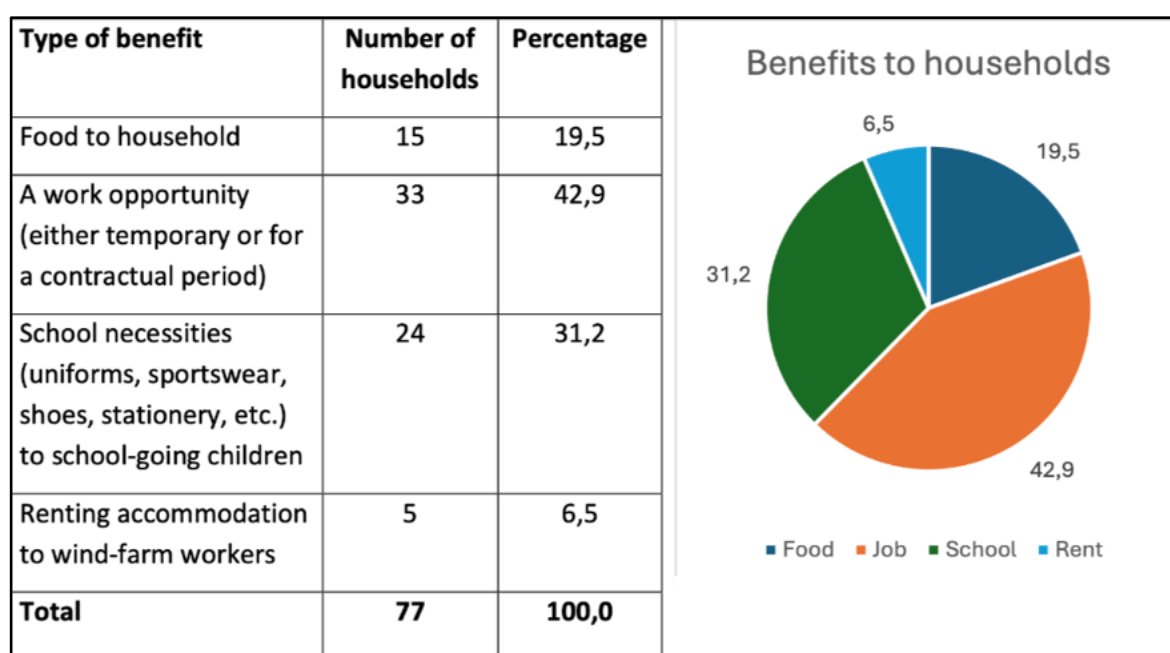
Although the discussion occasionally drifted off topic, the IPP representative gently redirected it, probing specifically about barriers to learning and providing examples such as improving reading comprehension or introducing more interactive teaching methods. This interaction highlighted a recurring theme in my research: while IPP contributions often focus on material or infrastructural support, the underlying social challenges and unfreedoms remain critical barriers to enhancing the capabilities of children and school-going youth.

The meeting thus illustrated the tension between easily visible, once-off interventions and the more complex, long-term social investments that genuinely enable learners to

exercise agency and achieve their educational potential. Regardless of how much private companies engage with local communities, they often do not have the necessary commitment or expertise to provide development assistance effectively and tailored to various communities' specific needs (McEwan, Mawdsley, Banks, & Scheyvens, 2017:22). But this could be addressed by defining development in terms of educating, mobilising, and empowering communities so that through collective action, they themselves can articulate, advocate for, and realise their own development goal and vision (McEwan et al., 2017:7). Considering this, I now turn to how community members perceive IPPs contributions in relation to child and school-going youth development.

On paper, IPPs are mandated to invest in SED and ED of local communities, and in Sutherland, particularly focusing on children and school-going youth, this included material donations to the schools. This was met with a general sense of appreciation from all the residents. However, these sentiments were often accompanied by concern, frustration, or ambivalence, shaped by the different roles residents hold within the community. According to Eigelaar-Meets and Groenewald (2025:157-158), 73,3% of respondents stated that Sutherland has benefited from the IPPs through endowments in areas of education, health, police, sport, for the elderly, the soup kitchen, through work and income, the development of businesses, the repair of infrastructure and upgrade of public services, as well as the houses in disadvantage areas; while only 26,4% of respondents stated that their household received one or more of the four types of benefits as outlined below in Table 4.4. This shows that the majority said that the town benefited, with only a few stating that their own household benefited. This alone underscores that perceptions will, of course, vary.

Table 4.4: Perceived benefits of IPPs to households in Sutherland, 2024



Source: Eigelaar-Meets & Groenewald (2025:161)

The following subsections will therefore discuss the perspectives of teachers and residents on the donations provided by the IPPs to the schools. This perspective is shaped by how value becomes attached to these efforts, that is, whether the means (donations) expand the ends (well-being) or become entangled with unfreedoms that constrain children and school-going youth's ability to convert these means into real opportunities.

4.4.2 Gratitude and Grievance: Teachers' ambivalent views on IPP contributions

Teachers often expressed gratitude for the IPP's contributions, noting that learners now had basic items like stationery and books to work with in class, and tracksuits to keep them warm during Sutherland's harsh winters. These donations, they explained, made an immediate and visible difference, where before children were unable to fully participate in class and often stayed absent. Furthermore, several teachers held a sense of dignity and pride when it came to the smart white boards and tablets, donations that, while being a meantime intervention, allowed them to make learning more interactive and fun.

Yet, this appreciation was often accompanied by deep frustration, because even after their efforts, learners continue to arrive at school without their school supplies, as well

as unwashed clothing. This was particularly discouraging because teachers themselves often suggested possible wish-list items, which the principal would then relay to the IPPs to help guide their contributions. The acting principal of Sutherland High School explained how uncomfortable she felt with this dynamic, saying she did not want to “go in front of the community and have to beg for things for the school” (Interview, Naomi, August 2024).

Despite receiving the same supplies as the primary school, tensions arose as the high school teachers perceived that the primary school had been favoured (Interview, Naomi, high school’s acting principal, August 2024). Compounding this frustration, the donations allocated to the high school were riddled with issues: solar panels were installed incorrectly, the sports field remained incomplete, and within weeks of the IPP erecting a new perimeter fence, it was vandalised (Interview, Naomi, high school’s acting principal, August 2024). Moreover, the previously consistent communication between the wind farms and the schools deteriorated, and the growing uncertainty around the arrival of promised donations fostered a deep sense of dissatisfaction among the teaching staff.

From the teachers’ perspective, then, the IPPs contributions were met with both appreciation and scepticism. While they acknowledged the short-term relief, voiced concern about the fragility, inconsistency, and, at times, the indignity of securing such support, these donations provided a more engaged classroom. Their reflections reveal an ambivalence at the heart of the IPPs role in the development of children and school-going youths: a simultaneous gratitude for what has been given, and a lingering unease about whether such interventions can meaningfully address the structural conditions shaping education in Sutherland.

This ambivalence highlights the difference between the means (donations) and ends (well-being). The donations, while providing immediate relief to some unfreedoms, become entangled with wider capability constraints that limit their potential to create environments where capabilities can be enhanced. So, one cannot say that the means do not expand the ends; instead, they do so partially.

4.4.3 Beyond resources: Parents and residents on the unaddressed structural constraints

For parents and residents, they felt conflicted. They believed that the schools were the only ones benefiting, not the children, as some reported how the schools would give out donations at the start of the year, but when the children lost something or ran out, they had to then buy whatever the school had left from the donations (FGD 2 and 3, November 2024). Some also noted that it does not address the deeper, underlying issues: “I believe the companies that are operating here can still do a lot in terms of bringing in social workers if they could, because even if they donate, the problems won’t go away without the proper groundwork” (Speaker 2, FGD 4, Police Officer, November 2024).

These views build on one another. Schools allegedly selling the donations meant for the learners highlight the structural constraints that reproduce systematic unfreedoms. In this case, the school, facing its own forms of freedom, inadvertently extends these unfreedoms to the learners in a space where their capabilities should be enhanced.

Here, the critique is not about the absence of contributions but rather the form they take. It is perceived as surface-level, disconnected from the emotional, psychological, and social needs of children. Another resident voiced a similar concern, questioning the purpose of new facilities when the children themselves are struggling:

Even though the wind farms...can bring in a lot of things, as they are busy now, they've donated to the library, they are building a science centre, so now who is going to attend that science centre? Who's going to be there to use those facilities when our children as young as that age [10] are developing in that manner [engaging in substance abuse] (FGD 4, November 2024).

This comment points to a disconnect between material contributions and the lived realities of local youth. Building a science centre may look like a long-term investment in education, but if children are not supported in foundational ways, with emotional care, mentorship, safety, or motivation, then the centre risks being underused or symbolic, a charismatic effort rather than transformative.

Unlike the teachers' perspectives, these concerns reflect a gap between resources and real freedoms. Donations may increase resources, but they do not necessarily translate into expanded capabilities if they are not rooted in a grounded understanding of what young people need to thrive. The responses above underscore the importance of understanding local context and development that is not only about solving immediate issues but about enhancing the ability of children to live lives they have reason to value. Without this, even generous efforts risk being band-aids, and the core challenges to child and school-going youth development, such as substance abuse, pregnancy, dropout, and emotional neglect, continue to go unaddressed.

4.5 Discussion

This section examines how Independent Power Producers (IPPs) Socio-economic Development (SED) contributions intersect with the development of children and school-going youth in Sutherland. Using Sen's (1999) capability approach as a framework, education is highlighted as a crucial capability that enables the expansion of individuals' freedoms and agency. According to Sen, development should be viewed not merely as the provision of resources (means) but as the expansion of people's real freedoms (ends) to live lives they have reason to value.

My findings suggest that while IPP donations, such as stationery, e-learning tablets, and school uniforms, provide immediate and visible relief to the schools, they do not necessarily translate into the expansion of learners' capabilities.

Seeing where the schools face their own structural challenges, such as the burned-down building, inadequate bathrooms, unauthorised access to its grounds and neglected sports fields and courts, this signals to learners that their needs and environments are not worth sustaining. In turn, frustration and disconnection arise, challenging the value that school holds in their lives. Sports and academics, where the former promotes physical development and the latter intellectual growth, become domains that yield little benefit when only a few learners engage.

Learning is not simply about the presence of a classroom; it is about being in an environment that enables meaningful engagement with education. When children cannot convert the opportunity of formal schooling into meaningful learning, it indicates deeper unfreedoms. They are in school but not learning. Present but not participating.

However, the learners face several challenges that begin long before they enter the classroom. For many, the trajectory is marked from birth. Interviews and focus groups with the community members frequently returned to the perception of FASD, with some teachers convinced that the signs are present in their learners. While no formal diagnoses were available to confirm this, the perception itself shaped how young people were understood and approached in schools.

In Sen's (1999) framework, stigma in this sense can be understood as capability deprivation, where its social function limits children's real opportunities for learning, belonging, and self-worth. Here, the classroom environment and relationships with peers, teachers, and the broader community play an important role in providing the environment in which learners' capabilities can be enhanced.

But the absence of resources, specialised support, and inclusive schools leaves teachers to find ways to cope on their own, in turn also limiting their capability. This restricts what children can realistically achieve should they be given priority in terms of assessing and addressing their needs. Nonetheless, with the emotional and professional burden placed on the teachers in trying to manage children who may have undiagnosed developmental conditions, it becomes a norm to assert dominance, one not out of a lack of care but where agency becomes guided by necessity. When children are routinely exposed to raised voices and labelling, their capabilities for dignity, participation, and confidence become severely diminished, and over time, these conditions risk being internalised, leading to withdrawal and disengagement from education itself.

Where residents pointed to the absence of meaningful and safe spaces, it underscored that children's opportunities for play, social interaction, and personal development are restricted by their environment. The lack of such enabling safe spaces is referred to as an unfreedom, a condition hindering children's ability to pursue lives they have reason to

value. In contexts marked by limited freedoms and constant exposure to adult substance abuse, children's agency becomes further constrained as their choices are shaped more by these conditions than by genuine opportunity.

Where there are no safe spaces, visible substance abuse shapes the daily rhythms of life. From my own observations in the town, drunkenness and smoking marijuana were visible in public spaces throughout the day, speaking to their normalisation. For many young people with limited agency, this exposure translates into early experimentation, escalating into patterns of substance abuse that seep into their daily lives.

When asking residents what is here for the children to do, substance abuse was often referenced. Residents emphasised how young children start using substances and that they are not discreet nor scared in their use. These accounts show how substance use becomes embedded within the lives of children and school-going youth. It emerges in the absence of freedom and limited agency, as previously mentioned, where children lack access to safe, meaningful spaces for play or healthy social interaction, all of which are necessary for freedom and, subsequently, development. Instead, they are exposed to adult substance abuse, live in poverty, and, because there is nothing else to do, their values are shaped by what is readily available, highlighting their limited agency. Moreover, when communities begin to view young people primarily through the lens of their deviant behaviour, it can reinforce stigma and reduce the motivation to invest in their development, further shrinking their ability to live lives they have reason to value.

When there are no meaningful spaces (unfreedoms) and children fall into the cycle of substance use (limited agency), deviant behaviours start to rise. While not all of these acts can be considered purely due to limited agency, given unfreedoms like boredom, some are guided by necessity to avoid deprivations such as starvation. Sen (1999) argues that development should remove all unfreedoms and expand substantive freedoms beyond basic needs, such as access to food. Substantive freedoms thus imply the ability to translate food into avoiding deprivations.

But when new forms of avoiding deprivations arrive in an area marked by widespread poverty, this leads to gendered vulnerability, where girls exchange themselves for these

necessities. It is essential to highlight that these cases involve construction workers hired by IPPs (wind farms), which the government mandates to contribute to the SED and ED of local communities. But when no measures are put in place for further imposing unfreedoms, a period that should be marked by hope, becomes one that reinforces capability deprivation with the increase of STIs and pregnancy amongst the young women in the town.

Community members hold different values regarding teenage pregnancy. Some frame it purely in terms of individual choice, while others recognise it as shaped by systems of neglect and the absence of meaningful spaces. Furthermore, a residence highlights the implications for girls, showing that it can lead to various forms of unfreedom. Without the proper information and resources, this limits their agency to make choices that prioritise their well-being. The impact of pregnancy then, amongst this group, results in further capability deprivation, such as STIs, and now having to take on the role of a mother. This impacts their ability to have meaningful education, which in turn has rippling effects across generations.

The factors that lead to teenage pregnancy can be broadly understood as systematic, structural, and social neglect, limiting girls' agency, leading to the exposure of vulnerability. These overlapping unfreedoms disempower them to negotiate safe sex and put them at risk of both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections that further limit their capabilities. Thereafter, she is no longer just a teenager but a mother. These accounts speak to broader concerns about agency, capability, unfreedoms, and the social conditions in which decisions are made.

The cases of bullying and dropping out of school, while undoubtedly intertwined with these realities as mentioned above, can be further used to underscore the extent of the challenges of education. Bullying, as discussed in section 4.3.7, happens in educational settings. Here, it undermines a learner's sense of safety, self-worth, dignity, and freedom, which are central to living a life one values. It reflects the broader inequalities and challenges, such as substance abuse and deviant behaviour, a reflection of the emotional insecurity from the absence of meaningful spaces and safety nets, all of which many children in Sutherland may carry with them into the classroom. Moreover, when children

experience bullying, either from peers or teachers, it further limits their capabilities in a setting that is considered one where they can be enhanced. After repeated struggles with learning, absenteeism, or conflict with peers, dropping out of school may be the only option they see.

But learners dropping out of school should not be seen as a simple act of disengagement, but rather as a result of intersecting unfreedoms. For many children in Sutherland, the capability to be educated is not guaranteed solely by the presence of school; it also depends on warmth, nutrition, respect, and sustained adult guidance. Without these enabling conditions, their functionings are limited, which in turn reshapes their values, leading some to view schooling as meaningless.

With everything mentioned above, the necessary adult guidance is clearly needed. Children are consistently reported as being neglected by parents, caregivers, and teachers. Still, when those expected to be role models in their lives further undermine them, it not only diminishes their chances of developing their capabilities and fostering agency, but it also leads to deeper issues related to power, frustration, and cycles of social breakdown. These issues manifest in their daily lives. How they treat others, how they harm themselves through substance abuse, and how they impact their environment, whether by breaking into places or vandalising property.

From a lack of safe spaces to a gap in the safety net, children are *left to navigate* their environment with limited freedoms. In many cases, this leads to a shift in values due to what seems to be a social norm. These circumstances not only deprive them of enhancing their capabilities and the necessary adult guidance to do so but also further limit their agency to what is readily available. Furthermore, the means to satisfy key functionings with limited agency led their agency to be guided by necessity. That is, stealing the simplest things like bread. Their challenges, therefore, do not exist in isolation. Substance abuse, deviant behaviours, gendered vulnerabilities, teenage pregnancy, bullying, and dropping out of school; these are all consequences of their limited freedoms, and all play a role in sustaining one another.

My findings thus reveal that while donations provided by the IPPs are undoubtedly valuable in the context of widespread poverty and unemployment, they reveal a gap between the means and the ends. This does not mean that their efforts are not valued, for they do symbolically gesture a form of care towards this group. But because of the various unfreedoms, the constraints on learners' capabilities and agency, the IPPs' efforts towards development can be considered misaligned. It becomes entangled with the various unfreedoms in ways that learners cannot use these donations in ways that can contribute to their development.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of child and youth development in Sutherland, establishing that the challenges faced by children and school-going youth stem not from a deficit of individual potential, but from a pervasive web of systemic, structural and social constraints. From the earliest stages of life, a child's trajectory is severely limited by deep-seated issues such as parental neglect and inadequate early childhood support, compounded by poverty and a profound lack of safe, meaningful public spaces.

The data reveal that these constraints are not abstract; they are keenly observed, named, and felt by teachers, community members, and parents who attempt to intervene with often-insufficient means. The subsequent failure of both government and social services to provide consistent, reliable support represents a critical institutional void, leaving young people to navigate a hostile environment without the protection and guidance necessary for genuine development.

Furthermore, the analysis of the local primary and high schools demonstrated how chronic infrastructural and socio-economic shortcomings inadvertently disconnect learners from meaningful education. While the presence of dedicated teachers and ad hoc feeding schemes offers moments of resilience, these efforts are often insufficient and inconsistent. They are, as this chapter has argued through the lens of Redfield (2018),

temporary 'band-aid' solutions that fail to address the underlying wounds of structural neglect and chronic underfunding.

Ultimately, this collective reality severely limits children's real freedoms and curtails their agency to pursue lives they have reason to value, as defined by Sen's Capability Approach. The findings underscore that authentic development is contingent upon sustainable, systemic change that transcends temporary fixes and actively dismantles the entrenched barriers of socio-economic constraint.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore how the socio-economic contributions (SED) of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) intersect with the development of children and school-going youth in Sutherland. Recognising that education is widely regarded as the foundation for expanding capabilities, it sought to identify the developmental and educational support needs of Roggeveld Primary School and Sutherland High School. This was followed by an investigation into the current state of development among learners, the objectives of the IPPs youth SED, and community perceptions of these contributions in relation to the development of children and school-going youth.

Using Sen's (1999) Capability Approach, I examined how IPPs' development initiatives toward the schools, in the form of donations, are perceived and valued, in terms of their impact on learners, by different community members aged 18 and above. These perspectives were assessed in line with Sen's (1999) proposed framing of values as a means to an end or an end. This meant critically analysing whether donations (means) genuinely contribute to freedoms (ends) where capabilities allow it (the agency to use means) or merely become entangled in the broader reality of unfreedoms that limit learners' capability to use them effectively. A qualitative case study, involving 17 interviews, 8 focus groups, and observations of the town, was carried out over five fieldtrips between 2024 and 2025, while thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, which revealed three key themes.

The first theme, the realities of education and school-related challenges, highlights how education, being a key capability that enhances learners' other capabilities, can inadvertently disconnect them from meaningful education. Confronted by structural neglect and broader social challenges (unfreedoms), these spaces suggest to learners that their needs and environments are not worth investing in, impacting both physical development through sports and intellectual growth through academics. Here, value is positioned as an end.

The second theme, everyday challenges to youth development, identifies multiple overlapping unfreedoms that limit both learners' capabilities and agency, and sometimes guide them by necessity. Due to the absence of safe spaces and gaps in the safety net, children are left to navigate their environment without adequate adult guidance, facing issues such as perceived foetal alcohol syndrome disorder (FASD), substance abuse, deviant behaviours, gender vulnerabilities, teenage pregnancy, bullying, and school dropout. When these issues merge, the capability and agency to access meaningful education become significantly diminished.

Considering the challenges faced by the schools and their learners, the third and final theme, IPPs' contributions and their alignment with local needs, shows how these interventions, largely in the form of donations, become entangled with learners' unfreedoms. While such donations symbolise a form of care, through the lens of Redfield (2018), they function as temporary "band-aid" solutions that fail to address the underlying wounds of structural neglect and chronic underfunding. As a result, these contributions come to be valued as ends in themselves by learners and community members alike. Teachers, however, articulate a more ambivalent position: constrained by their own limited agency and the necessity of coping within existing conditions, they recognise the immediate usefulness of these donations, even as they remain aware of their inadequacy as substitutes for systemic change.

5.1. Recommendations

After exploring how IPPs' contributions intersect with child and school-going youth development in Sutherland, this research argues that current efforts are not aligned with the local context to foster meaningful development that can expand freedoms. To achieve this, development should be approached carefully. Rather than prescribing operational solutions, the thesis highlights conditions under which collaboration is impossible without structural change in governance, coordination, and accountability.

5.1.1 Strategic considerations for the IPP Programme

Drawing on the discussions above and throughout this thesis, it is essential to interrogate the broader implications of the IPP programme as a mechanism for local development. This requires examining how development is conceptualised within their SED obligations and assessing whether these interventions meaningfully expand local freedoms or, conversely, risk reproducing patterns of dependency.

Community meetings with stakeholders who present a wish list are not only restrictive and sometimes misinformed, but also create dependency, as seen where frustrations emerge when these wish lists are not met or delayed. While meetings are indeed crucial for feedback and ongoing engagement, development requires more than just a wish list; it necessitates a thorough engagement with the community's complexities, which sometimes involves efforts that cannot be addressed solely by addressing visible challenges. This may resemble extended investment horizons as opposed to brief investment cycles over the course of 20 years.

It is therefore not enough for IPPs to simply conduct desktop research on the local context. Even for those who go beyond these efforts to carry out in-person community analysis, how IPP representatives interpret development in relation to the social challenges that emerge can vary. These interpretations should therefore be validated with a qualified community development specialist and measured alongside their ability to expand freedoms. In light of this, co-planning mechanisms could be implemented, either by aligning with provincial education departments or by enhancing the capacity of non-governmental organisations in the area.

5.1.2 The proposed trajectory for research in Sutherland

This research has focused on how IPPs' SED contributions intersect with the development of children and school-going youth. It identified the challenges learners face and considered how these contributions might be better aligned to expand their freedoms. However, Sutherland and its wider community face a range of structural and social

challenges, as outlined throughout this study, many of which remain deeply entrenched despite ongoing “development” efforts.

Future research should therefore extend beyond school-going youth to include other social groups, such as working-age youth and the elderly. Disaggregating the population in this way would make it possible to examine how IPPs’ contributions intersect differently with distinct life stages and social positions, and how development is variably experienced across the community. Such an approach allows for a more nuanced assessment of whether these contributions function as effective means to expand specific freedoms (ends), or whether they become entangled with particular forms of unfreedom that constrain people’s ability to convert resources into valued ways of living.

In addition, future research should track the longer-term trajectories of these contributions by focusing on the development of capabilities and community agency over time. This would enable a more robust evaluation of whether SED interventions support the gradual strengthening of local capacities for participation and collective action, or whether they reproduce dependence on top-down initiatives. Framing future work in this way would deepen understanding of development not merely as the delivery of resources, but as the expansion of people’s real freedoms to shape their own lives.

5.1.3 Policy recommendations

As shown in section 1.2.1, Education (44,4%) is most often funded by IPPs. This focus may be motivated by the imperative to fulfil their scorecard requirements. As scholars such as Borchardt (2023) and Malope (2022) show, tangible donations are far easier than creating decent jobs. This research, however, not only underscores the significance of psychosocial services but also emphasises how expanding individuals’ freedoms, such as meaningful access to education and healthcare, aside from ensuring these facilities merely exist in proximity, can enhance their capabilities. Such an expansion is central to any substantive account of development. On this basis, a reassessment of current SED expenditure criteria is warranted.

The criteria mentioned above can be expanded to include indicators that measure human capabilities. This can then focus on the community itself and its participation in its own development. As this research shows, communities surrounded by unfreedoms have limited opportunities and may become complacent with the development imposed on them. Thus, by actively involving them, not just through wish lists but by giving them space to understand their structural challenges that manifest into social issues, *including* guiding them through possible solutions, they become better equipped to ensure their own upliftment. Local municipalities should therefore be encouraged not only to establish coordination platforms or councils where different needs are articulated, but also to ensure that these processes are facilitated by a reputable, independent community development specialist who can mediate between stakeholders and help align efforts across sectors.

Lastly, measures should be put in place that not only limit the social disruptions associated with IPP projects but also actively address their effects. It is ultimately counterproductive for the state to mandate IPPs to contribute to local development in response to enduring colonial and apartheid legacies, while the programme itself simultaneously generates new forms of inequality and vulnerability. Robust accountability and transparency frameworks should therefore be established and consistently enforced.

5.2 Concluding remarks

Sutherland, a small town in the broader Karoo region, continues to grapple with deeply entrenched challenges, including poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. These conditions persist despite sustained development efforts by the SALT Collateral Benefits Programme, the SAAO, and, more recently, Independent Power Producers (IPPs). This study set out to examine how IPPs' socio-economic development (SED) contributions intersect with the lives of children and school-going youth, to identify where and why such interventions fail to translate into more meaningful developmental outcomes.

The analysis led to three themes: the realities of education and school-related challenges. The analysis developed three interrelated themes: the realities of education and school-related challenges; everyday constraints on youth development; and the nature of IPPs' contributions and their alignment with local needs. Together, these themes show how structural conditions are translated into everyday social and personal obstacles, fundamentally shaping children's lived realities.

Education emerged as a critical focal point, not only because it constitutes a key capability that enables other capabilities, but also because it is the primary sector funded by IPPs. However, where other forms of freedom remain constrained, investment in education alone does little to support the development of a community capable of becoming more self-reliant.

The persistence of core problems despite ongoing interventions suggests that many IPP initiatives function as “Band-Aids” or “magic bullets”: temporary and superficial responses, often driven by corporate visibility and the rhetoric of “charismatic technology,” rather than by genuinely transformative change. In this sense, development in Sutherland remains a form of “meantime” development, where deeper structural transformation is continually deferred.

This thesis does not argue that IPPs should resolve structural failures in the education system, nor does it evaluate education policy per se. Instead, it examines how corporate-led, place-based development interventions intersect with a profoundly uneven public education system, and how this intersection is lived and interpreted at the local level. Its contribution lies in demonstrating the limits of projectised development in contexts of institutional fragmentation, rather than in prescribing programmatic solutions.

Ultimately, development must extend beyond the mere provision of resources towards the expansion of people's substantive freedoms; their real ability to live lives they have reason to value. In Sutherland, this points to the importance of addressing the absence of safe spaces and the gaps in the local safety net. Until development strategies shift from measuring material inputs to strengthening individual and collective capabilities, communities such as Sutherland will continue to find their prospects constrained by the

very structural conditions that development interventions claim to remedy through the language of upliftment.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

Interview guide

Participants will be asked to take part in semi-structured interviews regarding their knowledge on projects and programmes funded by independent power producers (IPPs) for child and youth development.

The interview with the Karoo Hoogland Municipality will cover the following themes:

- Needs and challenges of the schools
- Needs and challenges of the youth
- Development priorities
- Coordination with renewable energy companies
- Projects currently funded
- The municipality's position within these developments

The interview with the IPPs (Roggeveld AND Soetwater Wind Farms) will cover the following themes:

- Projects currently invested in
- Rationale behind funding these projects
- Future projects to be invested in

The interview with staff members of the primary and high school will cover the following themes:

- Needs and Challenges of the Schools
- Needs and challenges of the youth
- Projects and programmes invested in by the IPPs
- Engagement with the municipality and IPPs

Appendix B: Focus group guide

Interview guide for focus group

Participants will be asked to take part in focus groups based on their knowledge and perceptions on what impact projects and programmes funded by independent power producers (IPPs) has on child and youth development as well as education. Using snowball sampling, participants will be chosen based on their knowledge from when they were learners or being parents to current learners, as well as learners who have dropped out. There will be 5 focus groups with 5 participants in each.

The focus groups will cover the following themes:

- Exploring perceptions and experiences of parents educational background
- Identifying needs and challenges of the youth
- Identifying needs and challenges of the primary and high school
- Development initiatives currently implemented
- Understanding IPP-funded projects and programmes specifically
- Opinions and suggestions

Appendix B: Observation guide

Outline of Observation Guide

Since my project seeks to understand what impact social and economic development by Independent Power Producers (IPPs) have on child and youth development, I will spend time in the town and take field notes. While I won't be doing participant observation, observations will occur and potentially involve:

- When speaking to development practitioners, I will be aware of what is going on around me before, during and after the interviews with regards to the projects and programmes that is implemented.
- My time in the town will allow me to look at how the IPP's and the schools potentially work together. This includes observing the rationale behind the IPP's investments such as what guides them, is it merely what they see is needed or are they informed.
- I will also have the opportunity to observe what child and youth development projects and programmes are happening in the town and the kind of contribution they may have to their development.

This project does not intend to observe minors, nor will it monitor and evaluate the impact it has on each child, but rather how other participants such as the funders, the municipality and the schools are viewing the projects and programmes.

Appendix C: Research Ethical Clearance (2024-2025)



CONFIRMATION OF RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL

REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form

8 July 2024

Project number: 30725

Project Title: Exploring Child and Youth Development: A case study of development projects funded by IPPs in Sutherland, Northern Cape

Dear Miss C Rickerts

Identified supervisor(s) and/or co-investigator(s):

Dr SP Borchardt

Your REC: Social, Behavioural and Education Research (SBER) - Initial Application Form submitted on 19/06/2024 08:48 was reviewed and approved by the Social, Behavioural and Education Research Ethics Committee (REC: SBE).

This approval is only valid until the end of the protocol approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
12 June 2024	11 June 2027

GENERAL COMMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS PROJECT:

INVESTIGATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter.
2. Always use your project ID number (30725) in all correspondence with the REC: SBE concerning your project.
3. Please note that the REC has the prerogative to ask further questions, seek additional information, and monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process, where required.

Appendix E: Interview Consent Form in English

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information below which will explain the details of this research project.

Please feel free to contact the researcher about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are completely satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate. In other words, you may choose to take part, or not. Saying no will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part initially.

The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University has approved this study (Project ID #: 30725]. We commit to conduct the study according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the South African Department of Health Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Studies (2015) and International Sociological Association (ISA) and the South African Sociological Association (SASA).

1. WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY?

This research study is conducted by Caitlin Rickerts.
The researcher is a Master of Arts student at Stellenbosch University in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology.

2. WHY DO I INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited to take part in this study as you live in Sutherland and the Karoo Hoogland Municipality and/or have knowledge on what projects and programmes Independent Power Producers (IPPs) are funding in Sutherland.

3. WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?

Sutherland forms part of the greater Karoo and is home to the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO), Southern Africa's Largest Telescope (SALT) and now Independent Power Producers (IPPs). However, like much of the Karoo, Sutherland grapples with poverty, high unemployment, and social inequality. Therefore, in order to explore child and youth development, this study aims to unpack what projects and programmes are implemented by IPPs who are mandated to invest in social and economic development.

4. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you consent to participate in this study, you'll be invited to engage in an interview with the researcher lasting no more than an hour.

5. ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN MY TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

There will be minimal inconvenience of time commitment, but this will be managed by working around the time participants have available, meeting with the participants where it is suitable for them and keeping the interview to 60 minutes.

6. WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

There is no direct benefit to participants however, they will gain some insight into potential interventions that can be implemented to foster holistic child and youth development.

7. WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY AND ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?

Participation from the participant is important to the study however they will not be paid to take part and there are no costs involved.

8. WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY INFORMATION?

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected.

All data will be de-identified through the use of pseudonyms as confidentiality will be prioritised.

- Your data will be stored electronically on my (the researcher) personal laptop, which is secured, and password protected.
- Nobody besides me (the researcher) will have access to this data.
- No participants will be identified in the research report, publications or presentation.
- The raw data will not be released to or shared with any other person/third party.
- The information collected for this study can be used for future publications and/or used for other purpose in the future.

You are free to agree or disagree to be recorded. Should you agree for the interview to be recorded, you will not have the opportunity to review/edit the tapes. Nobody besides the researcher will have access to these recordings which holds the purpose of transcribing the interviews into documents for further analysing. Should you disagree, you will be asked whether notes can be taken by the researcher.

9. HOW DO I MAKE CONTACT WITH THE RESEARCHER?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Caitlin Rickerts at [REDACTED], and/or the study supervisor Dr. Stephanie Borchardt at [REDACTED].

10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions, concerns, or a complaint regarding your rights as a research participant in this research project, please contact Mrs Clarissa Robertson ([REDACTED]) at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant, I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form, or it was read to me, and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and I am satisfied that all my questions have been answered
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and nothing bad will come of it – I will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I agree that the interview with me can be [video-recorded / audio-recorded].

By signing below, I _____ (*name of participant*) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by _____ (*name of principal investigator*).

Signature of Participant

Date

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

As the **researcher**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

☐	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
☐	I did/did not use an interpreter. (If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.)

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Signature of Interpreter (if applicable)

Date

Appendix F: Focus Group Consent Form in English

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a research project. Please take some time to read the information below which will explain the details of this research project.

Please feel free to contact the researcher about any part of this project that you do not fully understand. It is very important that you are completely satisfied that you clearly understand what this research is about and how you could be involved.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to decline to participate. In other words, you may choose to take part, or not. Saying no will not affect you negatively in any way whatsoever.

You are also free to withdraw from the study at any point, even if you do agree to take part initially.

The Research Ethics Committee: Social, Behavioural and Education Research at Stellenbosch University has approved this study (Project ID #: 30725]. We commit to conduct the study according to the ethical guidelines and principles of the South African Department of Health Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Processes and Studies (2015) and International Sociological Association (ISA) and the South African Sociological Association (SASA).

1. WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY?

This research study is conducted by Caitlin Rickerts.

The researcher is a Master of Arts student at Stellenbosch University in the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology.

2. WHY DO I INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

You are invited to take part in this study as you live in Sutherland and the Karoo Hoogland Municipality and/or have knowledge on what projects and programmes Independent Power Producers (IPPs) are funding in Sutherland. Furthermore, I would like to hear how you believe this social and economic development funding impacts child and youth development in this area.

3. WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH PROJECT ABOUT?

Sutherland forms part of the greater Karoo and is home to the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO), Southern Africa's Largest Telescope (SALT) and now Independent Power Producers (IPPs). However, like much of the Karoo, Sutherland grapples with poverty, high unemployment, and social inequality. IPPs are supposed to invest in social and economic development. Therefore, it's important to look into what these IPPs are doing to support youth development and education. This investigation can help guide interventions to address these challenges.

4. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you consent to participate in this study, you'll be invited to engage in a focus group lasting no more than an hour with the researcher.

5. ARE THERE ANY RISKS IN MY TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

There will be minimal inconvenience of time commitment, but this will be managed by working around the time participants have available, by choosing a central point where the focus groups can be held and keeping the focus groups to 60 minutes.

6. WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

There is no direct benefit to participants however, they will gain some insight into potential interventions that can be implemented to foster holistic child and youth development.

7. WILL I BE PAID TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY AND ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?

Participation from the participant is important to the study however they will not be paid to take part and there are no costs involved.

8. WHO WILL HAVE ACCESS TO MY INFORMATION?

Any information you share with me during this study and that could possibly identify you as a participant will be protected.

All data will be de-identified through the use of pseudonyms as confidentiality will be prioritised.

- Your data will be stored electronically on my (the researcher) personal laptop, which is secured, and password protected.
- Nobody besides me (the researcher) will have access to this data.
- No participants will be identified in the research report, publications or presentation.
- The raw data will not be released to or shared with any other person/third party.
- The information collected for this study can be used for future publications and/or used for other purpose in the future.

You are free to agree or disagree to be recorded. Should you agree for the interview to be recorded, you will not have the opportunity to review/edit the tapes. Nobody besides the researcher will have access to these recordings which holds the purpose of transcribing the interviews into documents for further analysing. Should you disagree, you will be asked whether notes can be taken by the researcher.

9. HOW DO I MAKE CONTACT WITH THE RESEARCHER?

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Caitlin Rickerts at [REDACTED], and/or the study supervisor Dr. Stephanie Borchardt at [REDACTED].

10. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions, concerns, or a complaint regarding your rights as a research participant in this research project, please contact Mrs Clarissa Robertson [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at the Division for Research Development.

DECLARATION OF CONSENT BY THE PARTICIPANT

As the participant, I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form, or it was read to me, and it is written in a language in which I am fluent and with which I am comfortable.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and I am satisfied that all my questions have been answered
- I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressurised to take part.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and nothing bad will come of it – I will not be penalised or prejudiced in any way.
- I agree that the interview with me can be [video-recorded / audio-recorded].

By signing below, I _____ (*name of participant*) agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by _____ (*name of principal investigator*).

Signature of Participant

Date

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

As the **researcher**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

☐	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
☐	I did/did not use an interpreter. (If an interpreter is used then the interpreter must sign the declaration below.)

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Signature of Interpreter (if applicable)

Date