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Evaluating Community Led Initiatives' Impact on Food Security, Resilience, And Cohesion in Maphalaleni, Eswatini

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Abstract:

The study examines the contribution of community-driven interventions to food security, resilience, and social well-being in a food insecure community in Maphalaleni Constituency, Eswatini in the context of persistent poverty, high levels of youth unemployment, and cyclic food insecurity. The study is based on a mixed methods design coupled with case study and survey approaches on a purposive sample of 60 research subjects. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data which was analysed using thematic and descriptive statistics. Results suggest that measures like savings groups, collective farming, and local development are significantly contributing to economic growth and access to vital services, as well as employment opportunities. They have also increased the resilience of communities against socio-economic shocks such as droughts and inflation in which these two domains have been instrumental through educational outreach and technological innovation. Improved food security is interesting, with diversified diets and more abundant food. The relationships at the community level are just imbued with trust, corporate agency, interdependence all of which accounts for a thriving social cohesion despite relentless economic pressures. Demographic information represents the youth majority, balanced gender, which implies momentum and inclusive growth. The paper successfully argues that community-led initiatives provide an effective route towards sustainable development and suggests integrated policy interventions would be channelled towards entrepreneurship, infrastructure and agricultural modernity. These findings provide helpful direction to policy makers and the implementers of development, in the effort to promote sustainable socio-economic development in the long term in Maphalaleni and in similar rural contexts.

Keywords **—** Community Driven Initiatives, Food Security, Resilience, And Social Cohesion**.**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This One of the highly affected constituencies`s in the Kingdom of Eswatini is Maphalaleni Constituency. Most people in this rural area live off the land and work in informal jobs. Poverty is the norm and access to basic services such as clean water; health care and education is restricted. Even with development works by institutions like World Vision Eswatini, who have provided good water and sanitation, many still cannot meet their family's daily needs. The absence of income and services also impacts how people interact with one another. It can create a strain that undercuts the cohesion of the community when life gets difficult. As Burchi et al. (2022), are eroding social cohesion and are

leading to more vulnerable communities. The answer to these problems is to apply community-driven solutions that address both food needs and community togetherness. Through well-developed local agency and cooperation, the people of Maphalaleni can build solidarity towards a far better and more resilient future.

Some of the Maphalaleni community-driven projects are having a real impact. These initiatives use local concepts and resources to address the challenges in a way that fits people's everyday realities. World Vision's Savings and Lending Groups, for example, have helped many people to start small businesses such as growing vegetables or raising chickens. The donga rehabilitation project at Maphalaleni, which has funded by GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP) is aimed at the revegetation of degraded land and the improvement of food production. A further project, Community-Led Monitoring by AMICAALL, allows residents to monitor and enhance local health services, including those for people with HIV. Such initiatives not only contribute to livelihoods but also foster trust and cooperation. Burchi et al. (2022) highlight that these kinds of local initiatives are strong social cohesion devices. While the people of Maphalaleni are having to be inventive in the ways they feed their families and help each other out, they are creating local solutions that will make their community even more strong and bonded than it has been in the past.

Today, community-based approaches to hunger are catching on in several poor places. These are fundamentally local power and teamwork responses. They support communities to be the architects of their own escape out of poverty and hunger. In Eswatini, Maphalaleni is an illustration of how this works. Community-specific projects and collaborations have been successful. According to Doustmohammadian et al. (2022), engaging communities in planning and action helps ensure that food solutions respond to real needs. One such example of this is the Women in Development (WID) Program that is empowering female members of Maphalaleni to learn livelihood skills such as food processing, gardening, and small business training. Skills that enable women to begin income-generating projects that help to provide for their families and boost the local economy. By addressing hunger condition with local solutions, people get more than food, they gain independence and resilience. It is this local power to affect change and inspire hope that the residents of Maphalaleni are demonstrating through their efforts.

Food insecurity is not new in Eswatini. Many rural areas have long been affected by hunger, worsened by events such as droughts, spikes in food prices and poor economies. Such forces particularly devastate locales such as Maphalaleni. We need "place-based" solutions actions that work in a local setting and cultural context and solve this kind of hunger, argues Petrovic (2024). In Maphalaleni, that includes the Appropriate Technology Program, which trains residents to create water harvesting tanks, toilets and other tools that better life at home and help grow food. This is not a band-aid. They are about cultivating long-term solutions that are tailored to the land, the people, the traditions. The idea is that, by providing the means to help communities feed themselves, they will be less reliant on outside support. When the originated from the affected people, they will most likely work and sustain.

And for understanding community-driven work, the concept of "food democracy" is useful as well. This concept is about putting food back in people's hands, it's about knowing and controlling how our food is grown, how it's shared, and how it's consumed. The 2024 Food Systems Journal, for its part, defines food democracy speakers that aim at systems that ensure everyone can speak and none is left behind. In Maphalaleni, this is taking the form of the Chiefdom Development Planning Process where communities themselves identify and organize around their own priorities and design projects that respond to these needs. They're not just receiving aid, they're the ones leading the charge, planting gardens, sharing food and teaching each other. These efforts are a reflection of the extended aims of sustainable development, in which communities are responsible to their citizens, to the planet and to future generations. For a destiny shaped by ordinary people can bring food sovereignty in its wake.

More than combatting hunger, local initiatives are drawing residents in Maphalaleni closer to one another. Common problems, like poverty or food shortages, can divide people, but common solutions can bring them together. Joint efforts serve to rebuild trust and support. Community-led projects are crucial for realising the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in building inclusive economies that are just, writes Henfrey (2019). In Maphalaleni, the change can be seen not only in food, but in the relationships among residents. These teams look out for each other, celebrate successes, and learn from failures. GEF-SGP city project Success" For example the GEF-SGP donga rehabilitation, WID training, Appropriate Technology workshops, Savings and Lending Groups, Community Led Monitoring are some of the evidence of how local action can result in a sustainable change. Blending food security with social care, community projects are underpinning a hopeful, self-reliant future.

This research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of community-based projects in improving food security in Maphalaleni, Eswatini. Rural communities frequently develop local solutions to socio-economic problems, however, there has been little academic research conducted on the effectiveness of these approaches. First, the investigation will clarify the relationships between these projects and economic and infrastructure growth, and the level of job creation. The importance of economic stability in relieving food insecurity and in understanding how grassroots activities related to food may well in return enrich local economies, however, have potential policy and stakeholder implications. Second, it will examine how these initiatives contribute to building resilience against food insecurity and more extensive socio-economic challenges. Resilience in this context involves coping mechanisms that enable agriculture to continue functioning in the face of climate variability or economic shocks. Finally, the study investigates the contribution these initiatives make in terms of social cohesion in the community. Social capital often increases because of collectively engaging in the challenges that accompany food, though the mechanisms for it require more research. Step by step through these three goals: 1) to better understand the interface of community livelihood, food security, economic well-being and social cohesion, and thus, to close this knowledge gap with an aim to 2) provide a framework for future policy making and 3) for strategic intervention in rural Eswatini.

Maphalaleni Constituency in Eswatini is experiencing ever-worsening food insecurity, due to erratic weather patterns and continued economic instability. And the small village, which relies largely on subsistence farming, struggles to produce regular supply of food because of changing weather patterns and few economic options. Unemployment is increasing and infra-structural development is not enough; many families cannot have optimal nutritional status due to which vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition is worsening. In return, community-based projects have arisen as potential remedies, seeking to mitigate maladaptive behaviour through increasing agricultural productivity, economic prosperity as well as social bonding. Yet there is a dearth of empirical studies evaluating the success of these activities in promoting sustainable food security. Although the same types of interventions have been successful in other developing areas, it is uncertain how these can be applied to Maphalaleni, further complicating the ability for stakeholders and policy makers to make informed decisions. It is also important to ascertain how such efforts fit into local development, food security, and social stability, to inform interventions that facilitate sustainable community development. Without an in-depth assessment, it could be that initiatives will be completely unfocused and mute in responses to ongoing food security problems. This review aims to address the knowledge gap and perform a systematic analysis of the significance and performance of community-based initiatives as well as provide evidence-based recommendations on which interventions in Maphalaleni should be sustained according to its pertained economic and environmental context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community-based interventions have also received broad support as an effective approach to

addressing food insecurity, and this is especially apparent in rural contexts. According to Donohue et al. (2021), community-based food security programs strengthen community capacity by using local knowledge and resources in innovative, sustainable ways. They tend to be targeted at the production of food, food distribution and economic recovery. (2014) who indicated that food insecurity in Maphalaleni, Eswatini is still a challenge as there is high climate variability and fragile economy. Research has indicated that community-based agricultural programmes, for example, collective farming or local food hubs, are instrumental in enhancing availability and access to food (Petrovic, 2024). Nevertheless, scale-up of these interventions is constrained by problems including lack of funding and policy backing. The effectiveness of these interventions in Maphalaleni is of great significance for devising long-term food security strategies.

Resilience plays a critical role in reducing the risk of being food insecure for households and communities from regions vulnerable to environmental and economic shocks. Research by Williams et al. (2022) note that community-driven efforts strengthen resilience by encouraging adaptive agricultural activities and building social relations that contribute to food security. In Eswatini, capacity building initiatives involve the training of farmers in climate-smart agriculture and financial literacy (Campbell et al., 2022). These strategies strengthen communities to withstand economic downturns and environmental disruptions. Empirical evidence regarding the long-term impact of these strategies on businesses is scarce, however. It thus seems imperative that evaluations are conducted for strategies that build resilience in Maphalaleni, as the knowledge can be used to identify food system-supportive policies.

Social cohesion is key for the success of community-led food security interventions. According to Miller et al. (2020), Effective community networks help community members share resources, make decisions collectively, and support one another, leading to food security. In Maphalaleni, initiatives such as community projects, collaborative farming and sharing of food, have also contributed to social group integrative and cooperative processes (Henfrey, 2019). Not only do these programs provide greater access to food; they also build social bonds among community members, who develop a sense of inclusion and shared purpose. But obstacles like social disunity and economic inequality can stifle those attempts. More study is needed about how community development led initiatives can be maximized to improve social capital in Eswatini.

The study of household and community-led interventions for food secure community live hood has several theoretical underpinnings. The SLF highlights the role of local assets, skills and options in achieving food security (White & Thompson, 2022). Likewise, trust, networks, and collective action are some of the mechanisms behind resilience and social cohesion, according to the Social Capital Theory (Smith et al., 2021). By employing these concepts within the Maphalaleni context, better understanding could be advanced about how local community driven projects shape the food security situations. Nonetheless these theories toward youth alcohol misuse have not been empirically tested among Eswatini youth and this is an important gap that requires further studies in order to provide evidence to support them.

In the last 10 years, literature about community-based food security initiatives has elaborated, and developed a focus on sustainability, and inclusivity. Previous works centred mostly on agricultural productivity, and the recent literature stresses the role of the social and economic aspects (Johnson et al., 2023). However, in these networks, differences exist with respect to the effectiveness of the intervention models. Whereas some studies suggest that localized programmes will significantly improve food insecurity, there are others that point to continued obstacles such as lack of funding and policy incoherence (Brown et al., 2023). It is important to appreciate these differences when improving community led interventions in Maphalaleni.

Community-based initiatives have been widely researched in a wide range of contexts but the extent to which they have driven or affected food security, resilience and social cohesion in Eswatini

is yet to be thoroughly analysed. The literature from elsewhere offers valuable perspectives regarding the benefits of local interventions; however, empirical evidence on the value of such interventions in confirming rural Eswatini is sparse (Petrovic, 2024). This research aims to contribute in filling this gap by comprehensively evaluating the local based initiatives in Maphalaleni and determining its facilitating role in achieving of sustainable livelihoods, better nutrition as well as stronger social networks. This will in turn offer specific policy and development practice guidance.

Community-based programs (CBP) are instrumental in strengthening food security, resilience and social cohesion in rural communities. While previous studies bring to the fore their advantages, there is a lack of knowledge on their long-term effects in Eswatini. In meshing theoretical orientations with existing and emerging themes, the review of literature highlights the call for additional empirical research in Maphalaleni. Filling these gaps is expected to lead to better local, context-specific alternatives in terms of approach, social equity and environmental significance for Eswatini's food security.

III. METHODOLOGY

A pragmatism paradigm was used for this study and qualitative and quantitative methods worked together to give a rich description of how community led projects have influence food security, resilience and cohesion in Maphalaleni, Eswatini. Pragmatism offers "practical methods that clarify and sheer through facts" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 33) which allows the researchers to take on various methods to tackle complex social problems. To evaluate the effectiveness of the community-based interventions, non-experimental research design was used, concentrating on descriptive and exploratory techniques. The study employed mixed methods research with structured surveying complemented with in depth interviewing, which aimed to quantify patterns as well as personal narratives. This method led to a comprehensive examination of the impact of the initiatives, which enabled triangulation of results for credibility (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2016). We chose this design because we wanted to test an intervention in the field, without manipulating conditions in a laboratory; to make the study more representative of the lived experiences of inhabitants of Maphalaleni.

A purposive approach was used to select 100 households from Maphalaleni targeting participants with direct experience in community-driven interventions. Purposeful sampling, as stated by Etikan et al. (2016), is successful in identifying participants that can contribute with valuable, pertinent and diverse information to the research problem. The households who participated in local agricultural and savings groups and the food sharing network – critical elements of the strategy to build community resilience. Recruitment was in partnership with community leaders and organisations to facilitate a sample that was representative of a range of social economic status backgrounds. The reason for purposive sampling was to achieve better depth of information while random sampling might have involved the inclusion of individuals with a low level of familiarity of the initiatives being studied. Furthermore, the approach allowed the participation of the key-informants (farmers, cooperative members) whose contributions were essential in capturing the larger scope of impact of the interventions.

Questionnaire were employed for data collection while semi-structured interview was conducted for eliciting qualitative information. The questionnaire was developed with reference to validated food security assessment instruments such as the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) (Coates et al., 2017). The semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to describe, and to give meaning to, their experiences and thus added contextuality to our findings (Kallio et al., 2016). To guarantee clarity and applicability, the instruments were pre-tested in a similar demography neighbouring community. Revisions were done according to feedback in order to clarify question wording and enhance response validity. The use of a mixed-methods research design made it possible to measure outcomes quantitatively while also hearing the personal and narrative

accounts that would allow for exploring the impact of the programs in a complex way.

The research ensured reliability through standardisation of data collection techniques (using supplier interview guides and survey tool). Trustworthiness was supported through audio recording and transcription checks to maintain the integrity of participant response (Noble & Smith, 2015). Validity was ensured by triangulation, with the survey results compared to the responses obtained from the interviews to reveal similarities and differences between the two sets of data (Bryman, 2016). The members check was performed, check whether the participants had the opportunity to revise and verify his or her answer, which was credibility(Brit et al., 2016). Peer debriefing was also used, in which other researchers examined the methods for consistency and objectivity. Taken together, they bolstered the trustworthiness of the study in terms of credibility and transferability.

The University Research Council granted ethical approval for the study. Participants received a consent form explaining the study's purpose, procedures, and risks (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Anonymity was ensured by de-identifying responses, and data was securely stored. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. Special care was taken for at-risk participants, with interviews conducted in a relaxed setting to minimize discomfort. The study adhered to the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (APA, 2017), including respect, beneficence, and justice (Baltes et al., in press).

The data were gathered during a three-month period, administering the survey in a face-to-face fashion. Meetings were conducted at chiefdom community halls and at homes of key informants, to cater for accessibility and respondent's comfort. Instruments were performed by well-trained research assistants, who clarified questions when necessary. Field notes were used to record non-verbal and contextual issues, enhancing qualitative data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The response rate was 85%, reflecting good community participation. Problems included language barriers and time availability for participants, which were resolved with the aid of translation and flexible scheduling. The information was meticulously arranged in a manner that facilitated its analysis and interpretation.

Qualitative data were analysed thematically, in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage method, which involves data familiarization, coding, theme searching, review, naming of themes and producing the final narrative. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, were calculated in order to determine trends in food security, resilience and social cohesion (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 27 software for precision and reliability. Results were also descriptively compared by demographics, revealing differences in the effect of the initiative. Qualitative and quantitative evidence was integrated in order to have a holistic view, and support conclusions with evidence.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Demographic Information

Figure 1 demonstrates the demographic decomposition of the sample used in this study and as such represents a complete profile of the participants, enabling other researchers to identify (based on staff position for example) the population segments representing most value/resources, to breakdown complex population distributions and its effect on social/economic studies. The age structure corresponds to a concentration on the age group 26-35 (30%), which is closely trailed by the age group 18-25 (25%). This points towards a young adult population, which confirms insights from Lutz, Goujon, and DoblhammerReiter (2005) who highlight the importance of age demographics for participation in the labour force and productivity. Equal representation of women and men (50%:50%) suggests that the need for gender equality in demographic studies, as proposed by Klimczuk (2021), can legitimize social research. Given the household composition information, 40% of the participants live in medium size households (3-4 members), which is aligned with Lynn (2022)'s argument that household size impacts on economic well-being and resource distribution. Levels of

education of participants are diverse although secondary education (40%), as well as, no formal education (10%) appearing with the highest and lowest percentage, respectively, with primary and tertiary education each accounting for 25%. This distribution is also consistent with the view of Yusuf, Martins, and Swanson (2014) suggesting that the level of education is key determinant of socioeconomic mobility and workforce readiness. Goldmann (2024), however, argues the opposite, pointing out that demographic analyses tend to overstate the significance of education as a factor of economic success and should consider more holistic cultural and environmental factors. The results of this study have a policy relevance especially in the field of education and labour market, highlighting the need for remedial action to help counteract difference in educational outcomes by household composition.

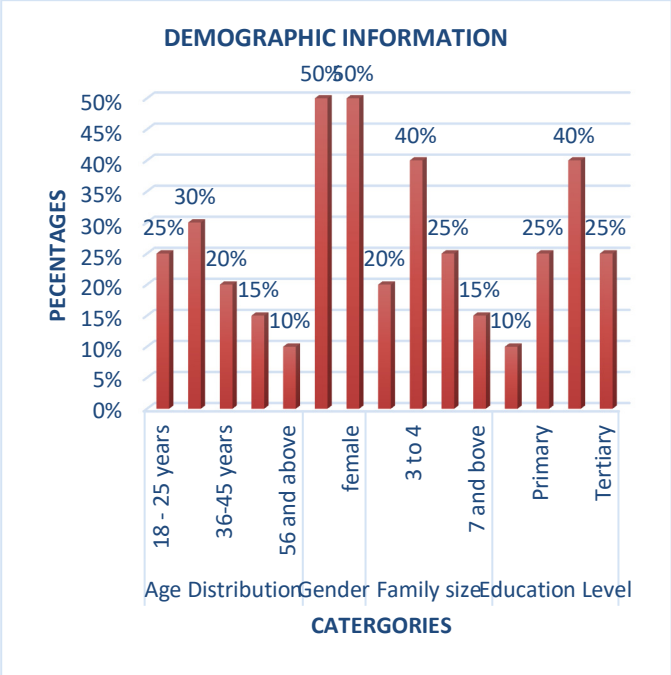

Figure 1: Demographic data providing a comprehensive overview of the participants

B. Economic Growth, Infrastructure Improvements, and Employment Opportunities

The results in table 1 clearly indicate that Maphalaleni community-led projects have had a positive impact on local economic development confirming Objective 1. By this count, 40% of households received between E1000 and E3000 and a lesser 15% more than E5000 per month. These numbers indicate relatively modest, yet meaningful, gains in household income. Timilsina, Stern, and Das (2021) contend that infrastructure, particularly locally adapted infrastructure help ameliorate economic growth by lowering transaction costs and improving access to markets. Participants in this context explained how newly cleared roads, as well as the presence of structured marketplaces, increased efficiency of selling produce and goods. Fifty percent were employed; however, entrepreneurial activity was low at 35% who started or expanded businesses. This finding also confirms the results of Selod, Steinbuks and Trotter (2024), who stress the importance of accompanied services, like training and financing, to have the physical infrastructure realize its effects regarding entrepreneurial capabilities. Though enhanced transportation bolsters supply chains, Hochman and Song (2020) warn that gains may be reversed if governance is flawed or if public services fail to reach vulnerable groups. The sentiments were repeated by respondents, who said that while infrastructure may have been useful, many did not have the startup funding or the skills training. Generally, the study confirms that the community-driven development upgrading of infrastructure can create economic opportunities and reduce poverty; voice, empowerment, and sustainability, however, would benefit from a conducive policy environment, inclusive planning and good investment in human resource on a long-term basis. It will depend on these inter-relationships as to whether community-driven projects will serve to effectively generate sustainable economic growth in Maphalaleni.

Table 1. Socio-economic status of Participants

Socio-Economic Status		Percentages
Incomed level	<E1000	20%
	E1000-E3000	40%
	E3001-E5000	25%
	>E5001	15%
Employment Status	Employed	50%
	Unemployed	50%
Business Development	Started	35%
	Not Started	65%
Access to Essential Services	Significantly Improved	25%
	Improved	40%
	No change	25%
	Worsened	10%

C. Resilience Through Local Food and Income Strategies

The results outlined in table 2 show that the local resilience to food insecurity and economic stress in Maphalaleni was largely due to community level responses. Half of respondents indicated that they never worried about having enough food, and 15% sometimes went hungry. That's a significant move in the direction of stability. Measures included water-conserving agricultural practices, collective farming and mutual food-sharing arrangements that insulated households from outside shocks like drought or inflation. d'Errico et al. (2023) posit that the combination of education, diversified sources of income and access to agricultural inputs contributes to resilience, a perspective consistent with the experiences expressed by participants. Local savings groups and learning exchanges between farmers helped to disseminate practical wisdom and emotional support in difficult times. Some of those surveyed explained that collective efforts created alternative options during financially lean seasons. These community strategies are not only tactics for survival but are proactively planning and mobilising collective adaptation. Haji & Himpel (2024) however posit that contemporary technologies such as blockchain may assist with traceability and food security, yet local adaptability is key, particularly in rural areas with limited digital penetration. In Maphalaleni, resilience has its roots in unity, lived experience, and context-specific knowledge. It is also clear that everyday relationships, underpinning community solidarity, are the mainstay of resilience. So food security isn't just about growing food, but also about building a culture of networked mutualism and shared solutions that can aid recovery, enable adaptation, and encourage proactive planning in times of instability.

Table2. Resilience Against Food Insecurity and Socio-Economic Challenges

Resilience Against Food Insecurity and Socio-Economic Challenges		Frequency	Percentages
Worried about Food	Never	10	50%
	Rarely	6	30%
	Sometimes	3	15%
	Often	1	5%
Went to sleep hungry	Never	10	50%
	Rarely	6	30%
	Sometimes	3	15%
	Often	1	5%
Adverse Conditions	Very well	3	15%
	Well	7	35%
	Poorly	6	30%
	Very Poorly	4	40%

D. Community Trust, Unity, and Collective Progress

The data from Maphalaleni suggests that community-based response have broadly strengthened mutual trust and collective response. Fig 3 The proportion of participants which reported their relationships with the wider community as strong or very strong. Many noted that they felt greater willingness to collaborate and help one another across households. These results are in line with the findings of Dragolov et al. (2016) who find that active citizenship and community purpose engender social cohesion, especially in situations where community members face shared problems. Community gatherings, cooperative farming projects enabled opportunities to raise concerns, discuss shared projects, and celebrate success, bolstering local solidarity. Respondents noted a clear movement away from the effort being dominated by individual acts of delivery to a more concerted and shared approach, that promoted collective responsibility and ownership. Yet, Hooghe (2007) cautions that social divisions or social inequality can undermine the unity of a group if there is mistrust due to unequal possibilities to participate or unmet grievances. Most (but not all) reported a positive shift, but some worried that younger or female voices might still be marginalized. And this underlines the importance of maintaining that vigilant focus on fairness and inclusion so that we can keep the momentum as a collective. There must be openness and flexibility in decision making forums to adapt to changing needs. That means that if people see as a result of their collective work that they have better food, that they have more jobs, new jobs, they begin to trust each other and they begin to trust the community has possibilities. Solidarity in this sense is not simply a product of community-based development,

but the precondition for, as well as the result of, ongoing local action.

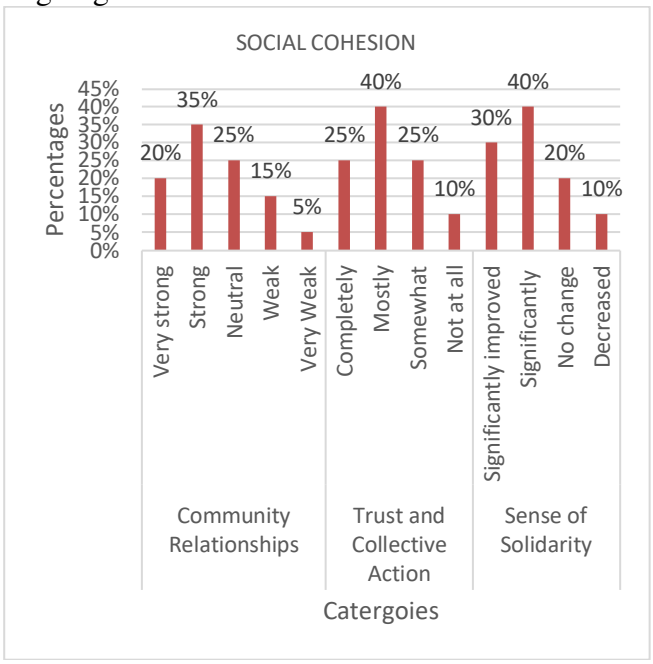

Figure 1 Social Cohesion

E. Perceived Impact on Food Security

Results Table 3 reflects a considerable level of consensus that the community-based interventions contributed to the improved food security situation on Maphalaleni. Many mentioned better access and quality of food, and cost saving through eating food grown by the household, and others talked about improved health situation being especially beneficial to children when fresh locally grown fruit and vegetables were available. Community gardens and cooperative livestock-rearing contributed to reducing dependence on purchased food, families being able to better cope with economic difficulties. Sukulao et al. They argue that 'localised agriculture can improve food systems by incentivizing sustainable practices, encouraging exchange of knowledge, and building resiliency' (2025) – findings similar to those from here. However, Munonye et al. (2022) are more cautious, arguing that outwards risks, including inflation, disruptions of trade routes and climate change, continue to jeopardize food security. Local responses are effective, but still susceptible to systemic pressures. There are statistically significant differences in participants perceived benefits (ANOVA significant at p = 0.045), though there were most (not all) felt the effect to be positive, it was not the same in every household. Differences may represent disparity in access to land, implements, or social network. These findings emphasize the need for equity and inclusivity for scaling-up of such interventions. The results have implications for the need for government and non-government organisations to foster community-led food strategies through capacity building, resourcing, and policy that connects community-based activities with plans for national food resilience. By shoring up these local-based systems, and addressing these vulnerabilities more directly, resilience of community food security is adaptive and sustainable in the face of future challenges.

Table 1 On Anova for Perceived Impact On Food Security

Source of Variation	Sum of Square (SS)	Degree of freedom(df)	Mean square (MS)	F-value	P-value
Between Groups	5.3	3	1.76	3.42	0.045
Within Groups	8.7	36	0.24	1.00	1.00
Total	14.0	39			

V. CONCLUSIONS

Community-driven initiatives in Maphalaleni play an important role in local development by promoting economic growth, improving infrastructure, and generating employment. These programmes have triggered improvements in income and access to basic services and developed entrepreneurial actions. They contribute in terms of resilience to crises of a socio-economic nature (droughts, economic shocks), combining traditional coping strategies and modern technologies. They also enhance social unity by building trust in communities, promoting action and solidarity. In a socio-economic reality of a young, gender-balanced and working population, the interventions represent a positive direction for sustainable development. Food security work has enhanced nutrition and sustainability, but other economic forces maintain an equally important role. The study highlights the role of combined policy responses in addressing inequalities in education, employment, and food security and in realizing long-term economic and social stability. Study limitations are contamination by bias of self-reported data and the changing

socio-economic context, which may limit the long-term relevance of the results. In general, it provides invaluable insights for policymakers and other stakeholders interested in increasing the resilience and prosperity of the community.

The study recommends targeted policy interventions to address disparities in education, employment, and infrastructure, promoting sustainable economic growth. Investments in entrepreneurial support and workforce training can enhance labour market stability and business development. Expanding food security initiatives through technological innovations and localized agricultural strategies will strengthen resilience. Additionally, fostering social cohesion through inclusive community programs can improve trust, cooperation, and collective action. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these interventions, assess the role of emerging technologies in food security, and investigate the dynamics of social cohesion in diverse communities.

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