

# **LOCALISING SELECTED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN WATERBERG, VHEMBE AND CAPRICORN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITIES: PROGRESS TOWARDS AGENDA 2063 IN LIMPOPO**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The United Nations instituted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, which spoke of a global commitment toward the realisation of critical matters concerning poverty and inequality, climate change and encouragement of sustained economic growth by 2030 (United Nations 2015). These 17 interlinked goals underpin just how important integrated and localised approaches to development are in ensuring inclusivity for all people. This is further complemented by Africa's Agenda 2063, a strategic framework developed by the African Union outlining the aspiration of the continent to attain socio-economic transformation in a 50-year period, with a vision of a prosperous, united and sustainable Africa (African Union 2015). Taken together, the SDGs and Agenda 2063 represent the interest in aligning global development targets with particular challenges and opportunities found in the African context, including those at subnational levels. The role of local municipalities is crucial in the execution of these agendas, making their ability to achieve sustainable results exceedingly significant (United Nations 2015).

However, their translation into practice at the municipal level becomes an enormous challenge, especially in developing areas such as Limpopo in South Africa. Municipalities within the province of Limpopo face structural, financial and governance-related challenges that obstruct the proper integration of the SDGs into local development frameworks (Maphangwa 2023). The limited institutional capacity and resource

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constraints in many of these municipalities further complicate the task of aligning local plans with the broader objectives of Agenda 2063 (Maphangwa 2023). This policy-implementation gap raises critical questions about the ability of Limpopo's municipalities to meaningfully contribute toward both the SDGs and Africa's long-term developmental vision. It is within this context that this paper seeks to critically assess the attainability of selected SDGs in Limpopo municipalities and explore the implications of their efforts for Agenda 2063.

The following key questions guide this paper: How are municipalities in Limpopo progressing in their efforts to localise the SDGs? What factors enable or inhibit their success? What lessons can be drawn from their strategies to inform broader policy discussions on sustainable development in Africa? The primary objective of this paper is to evaluate the alignment of local municipal strategies with the SDGs, identify the key enablers and barriers to progress and provide recommendations for increasing local governance capacity to meet the requirements of Agenda 2063. Focusing on selected SDGs related to poverty alleviation, infrastructure development and environmental sustainability, this paper offers a critical lens through which to view the intersection of global development goals and local realities in Limpopo.

The significance of this paper lies in its contribution to understanding the complex dynamics involved in localising global development agendas within subnational contexts. For South Africa, achieving the SDGs is not only a national priority but also a necessary step toward fulfilling the broader aspirations of Agenda 2063. Municipalities, as the closest level of government to the people, play an essential role in driving sustainable development at the grassroots level. Therefore, this paper provides insights crucial for policymakers, development practitioners and scholars interested in the intersection of global development frameworks and local governance. By analysing Waterberg, Vhembe, and Capricorn District Municipalities in Limpopo, the paper adds to the growing body of literature on SDG localisation. It offers practical recommendations for improving policy formulation and implementation in South Africa's pursuit of sustainable development.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section explores the theoretical frameworks of Sustainable Development and Place-based Development and reviews existing literature on the SDGs and Agenda 2063. It focuses on their relevance to local governance and the challenges and opportunities of localising these global frameworks within Limpopo municipalities.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This paper is embedded in the complementary paradigms of Sustainable Development and Place-based Development theories, providing a comprehensive lens to examine the adaptation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the selected municipalities. The theory of Sustainable Development articulated in the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987) underscores the necessity of achieving a balance between economic growth, social equity and environmental protection for enduring sustainability. This framework is pivotal in understanding how the selected municipalities strive to incorporate SDG targets into local development strategies, addressing pressing social challenges such as poverty while fostering sustainable economic growth. It facilitates an exploration of how local governmental entities navigate the intricate trade-offs between urgent socio-economic needs and overarching global sustainability objectives (Hopwood et al. 2005).

In complementarity, Place-based Development theory emphasises the critical role of local characteristics—encompassing geographic, institutional and socio-economic conditions—in shaping development outcomes (Barca et al. 2012). This theory is especially pertinent in understanding the diverse progress of the selected municipalities in implementing the SDGs, given their distinct contexts and capacities. Place-based Development advocates for localised, context-sensitive strategies that align global development objectives with specific regions' unique challenges and opportunities. Carson and Koch (2013) argue that understanding local dynamics and the fragmentation of development processes is essential for effective policy formulation. Moreover, Hart and Connolly (2022) highlight how targeted place-based

policies can address geographically concentrated disadvantages, thereby facilitating a more equitable distribution of resources.

Leadership also plays a significant role in Place-based Development. Horlings et al. (2018) assert that effective leadership is vital for building institutional arrangements that support localised initiatives. Integrating insights from Place-based Development theory with the principles of Sustainable Development, this paper evaluates the extent to which selected municipalities contribute to the global SDG agenda while adapting governance structures to their regions' socio-economic and environmental realities. This integrated approach is crucial for achieving sustainable and inclusive development aligned with both the SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the interplay between governance and place-based approaches can yield valuable lessons for public policy. Klepac et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of effective governance in realising place-based strategies, indicating that strong institutional frameworks can enhance the implementation of SDGs at the local level. This synergy between governance and local development underscores the need for municipalities to foster collaborative networks among stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, which are essential for overcoming the challenges associated with SDG localisation.

Overall, by weaving together the principles of Sustainable Development and the nuanced understandings of Place-based Development, this theoretical framework not only evaluates the contributions of the selected municipalities to the global SDG agenda but also elucidates the pathways through which local governance structures can adapt to their unique socio-economic contexts, ultimately fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review examines the implementation and localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063 within selected municipalities in Limpopo, South Africa. It highlights their challenges, opportunities, and comparative analysis with other African municipalities.

## **Overview of the SDGs and Agenda 2063**

The SDGs and Africa's Agenda 2063 are comprehensive frameworks designed to inspire global and continental development. Both frameworks share a vision of fostering sustainable, inclusive and equitable development, albeit at different levels. The SDGs, launched in 2015 as part of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, consist of 17 interrelated objectives addressing various global challenges such as poverty eradication, health and well-being, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, climate action and sustainable cities (United Nations 2015). These goals are intended to be universally applicable, with the expectation that national and subnational governments will adapt them to local conditions while maintaining alignment with global targets.

Conversely, Agenda 2063 is a strategic framework adopted by the African Union in 2015, outlining the vision of socio-economic transformation at the continental level over the next 50 years. This framework envisions "the Africa we want," characterised by inclusive growth, good governance, peace and security (African Union 2015). Agenda 2063 identifies seven aspirations that align closely with the SDGs, including a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, integrated governance and a people-driven development strategy (African Union 2015). While the SDGs provide a global template, Agenda 2063 emphasises African solutions for African challenges, making it highly relevant for local governance structures aiming to tailor development goals to regional contexts.

Both the SDGs and Agenda 2063 are pivotal for local governance, as their implementation is pegged at local government levels. Subnational governments, particularly municipalities, play a critical role in driving the localisation of these development goals, given their proximity to communities and their capacity to tailor interventions to local needs. The SDGs advocate for the engagement of local authorities, civil society and the private sector in reaching specified targets, underscoring the significance of multi-tiered governance and the necessity of increasing capacities at the local level (Sachs 2015). Local governments are expected to integrate the SDGs into their development plans and ensure

their alignment with regional and municipal policies. For example, SDG 11, focusing on sustainable cities and communities, directly links to municipal responsibilities like urban planning and transportation systems, making local governments essential for achieving this goal (Pieterse 2019).

Similarly, Agenda 2063 emphasises local governance for achieving its ambitious objectives, recognising that most developmental challenges—such as infrastructural inadequacies and governance deficiencies—are experienced at the local level. The framework necessitates active participation from municipalities and local governance bodies to foster inclusive growth and development from the ground up (African Union 2015). Focusing on localised actions and strengthening the capacities of subnational authorities, Agenda 2063 encourages municipalities to align their development strategies with the continent’s broader objectives. For example, Aspiration 1 of Agenda 2063 envisions a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth, closely aligning with SDGs 1 (No Poverty) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), thereby linking local economic policies with continental ambitions (Pieterse 2019).

## **Challenges of Localising SDGs**

Localising the SDGs entails adapting these global objectives to local contexts, a process significantly influenced by Place-based Development theories. One of the key challenges in this localisation process is the lack of institutional capacity within local governments. Municipalities in developing contexts often face substantial resource constraints, both financial and human, which hinder their ability to effectively plan, implement and monitor SDG-related initiatives (UCLGA 2019). In Limpopo, municipalities often struggle with inadequate staffing and technical expertise, which can lead to fragmented and inconsistent approaches to sustainable development (Kanyane 2014). Limited financial resources further restrict their ability to invest in infrastructure and services critical for achieving the SDGs (Nel 2020).

Weak governance and political instability also pose significant barriers to localisation. Local governments in many developing contexts operate in environments characterised by political patronage and corruption,

undermining the effectiveness of SDG localisation efforts. Political interference in Limpopo's municipal governance has been identified as a major hindrance to achieving development objectives (Madumo 2015). Additionally, poor coordination between national and subnational governments complicates the localisation of SDGs, leading to policy fragmentation and undermining localised SDG interventions (Agyemang 2018).

Moreover, limited data availability and monitoring capacity hinder the localisation of SDGs. Robust data collection and analysis are essential for effective implementation; however, many municipalities in Limpopo lack the necessary infrastructure and expertise (Nel 2020). Without accurate data, municipalities struggle to track progress and make evidence-based decisions, further undermining efforts to implement sustainable development strategies (Agyemang 2018).

### **Enablers of Localisation**

Regardless of these challenges, several enablers can support the localisation of SDGs in developing contexts closely linked to Place-based Development theories. One crucial enabler is community engagement and participatory governance. Localising the SDGs requires the active participation of communities, as they possess valuable insights into local needs and priorities. Engaging community members in decision-making processes can improve the relevance and effectiveness of SDG-related projects, leading to more tailored and context-specific solutions (Satterthwaite 2016). This engagement builds public trust in local governments and promotes collaboration between citizens and municipal authorities.

Another key enabler is the formation of strategic partnerships between local governments, civil society organisations, the private sector and international donors. These partnerships can help municipalities overcome financial and technical constraints by leveraging external resources and expertise. Collaborations with international development agencies can provide funding for SDG projects, while partnerships with research institutions can build technical capacity for effective implementation and monitoring (Sachs 2015). In Limpopo, partnerships

with NGOs and the private sector have been crucial for advancing local development goals, particularly in areas such as education and renewable energy (Nel 2020).

## **Case Studies of Municipalities in Limpopo and Comparative Analysis with African Municipalities**

### **District Municipalities in Limpopo**

Examining the Waterberg, Vhembe and Capricorn District Municipalities in Limpopo provides a nuanced understanding of the challenges and progress in localising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the context of South Africa's province. This analysis is grounded in Place-based Development theories, which emphasise the importance of local contexts, resources and governance structures in shaping development outcomes.

Vhembe District Municipality faces critical issues related to poverty and food insecurity, significantly affecting its progress on SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). According to the Vhembe District Municipality Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2020-2021), approximately 56 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, exacerbating food insecurity and limiting access to essential services. Despite attempts at community-based development projects, the district is hindered by limited financial resources and institutional capacity, resulting in underdeveloped social services and insufficient agricultural support (Chauke 2018). Historical socio-economic inequalities further exacerbate these challenges, underscoring the need for integrated and resourceful approaches to achieve SDG targets (Madzivhandila 2019). The reliance on Place-based Development theories emphasises the importance of contextual factors in addressing these issues, necessitating strategies that are tailored to local needs and grounded in the existing socio-economic landscape.

Capricorn District Municipality has achieved notable progress in SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through expanded educational and health services, aided by partnerships with national and international organisations (Mokgola 2020). The



municipality's IDP (2021-2022) highlights improvements in school infrastructure and healthcare facilities, reflecting concerted efforts to improve service delivery. However, ongoing infrastructure development and economic growth challenges limit its capacity to fully implement other SDGs (Molepo 2020). Capricorn's achievements reflect the potential of targeted strategies and collaborations; however, broader systemic issues remain, pointing to the need for more cohesive place-based approaches that integrate various sectors and levels of governance.

Waterberg District Municipality has focused on economic development and environmental sustainability, aligning with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 15 (Life on Land) (Ngobeni 2021). The municipality's IDP (2020-2021) outlines initiatives in promoting sustainable tourism and managing natural resources, recognising the significance of environmental assets for local economic development. However, challenges such as environmental degradation and limited local capacity hinder these initiatives. Waterberg's focus highlights both opportunities and constraints in leveraging local resources for sustainable development, illustrating the critical role of Place-based Development theories in understanding how local assets and challenges can inform effective strategies.

### **Comparative Case Studies in Africa**

In contrast to Limpopo municipalities, Kigali, Rwanda, has successfully localised SDGs through robust urban planning and environmental management, achieving significant progress in SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action) (Hagenimana 2020). The city's success can be attributed to strong decentralisation, community participation, innovative solutions such as green city initiatives, and comprehensive waste management programs (Munyaneza 2021). These efforts exemplify how effective local governance can harness place-based resources and community engagement to achieve sustainable development, contrasting with the financial and infrastructural constraints faced by Limpopo municipalities.

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, presents another comparative perspective. Like Limpopo, Dar es Salaam faces rapid urbanisation and resource constraints impacting SDG 11 and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) (Kamau 2019). However, Dar es Salaam has made notable progress through strategic partnerships with international organisations and the private sector, facilitating urban infrastructure development and water management projects (Ndyetabura 2021). This collaborative approach highlights the importance of leveraging external resources and local capacities, underscoring the relevance of Place-based Development theories in overcoming challenges related to SDG localisation.

Accra, Ghana, demonstrates a different model by leveraging its status as an economic hub to attract investments and partnerships for sustainable development (Opoku 2018). Initiatives related to SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) have advanced through public-private partnerships and innovative financing, showcasing a successful integration of global goals with local economic strategies (Ababio 2019). This contrasts with Limpopo municipalities, which frequently encounter challenges in attracting investments and forming effective partnerships. The ability of Accra to mobilise resources reflects the significance of local context and governance in facilitating sustainable development, aligning with Place-based Development paradigms.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, illustrates how substantial investments and strategic planning can drive progress in SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities) (Taffese 2021). The city's infrastructure and social services developments are supported by significant investments, contrasting with the infrastructure challenges faced by Limpopo municipalities. Addis Ababa's experience underscores the impact of investment and planning on SDG outcomes, offering valuable lessons for improving infrastructure and resource management in Limpopo through a place-based lens.

The comparative analysis highlights both common challenges and distinctive approaches in SDG localisation across different municipalities. While Limpopo municipalities grapple with significant constraints in infrastructure, governance and resource mobilisation, municipalities in Kigali, Dar es Salaam, Accra, and Addis Ababa

demonstrate various strategies for overcoming similar challenges. The contrast underscores the importance of effective governance, strategic partnerships and targeted investments in achieving SDGs, all of which can be informed by Place-based Development theories that emphasise local conditions and capacities. These insights offer valuable lessons for enhancing SDG localisation efforts in Limpopo, highlighting the need for strategies that are not only contextually relevant but also grounded in the principles of sustainable development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper adopted a qualitative, comparative case study design to explore the localisation of SDGs in selected municipalities within Limpopo, South Africa. The focus was on the municipalities of Vhembe District, Capricorn District, and Waterberg District, which were chosen for their diverse economic activities, population sizes, infrastructure challenges, and existing development initiatives. This selection provided a comprehensive understanding of SDG localisation in Limpopo (Molepo 2020). The paper aimed to contextualise the efforts of these municipalities by comparing them with other African cities such as Kigali, Dar es Salaam, Accra and Addis Ababa, offering a broader perspective on African SDG localisation efforts (Hagenimana 2020; Kamau 2019). Data collection relied primarily on secondary sources, including government reports, policy documents, academic literature and municipal development plans. These documents were sourced from official government websites, local municipality archives and relevant academic databases. This approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of existing policies and strategies related to SDG implementation.

Thematic analysis was conducted using Atlas software to identify patterns, barriers and enablers in SDG localisation across the selected municipalities. The analysis focused on specific themes, including infrastructure development, economic growth, community engagement and governance challenges. Coding the data collected, the paper highlighted key findings regarding the challenges and progress of each municipality, providing evidence-based insights into the localisation of the SDGs. To substantiate findings regarding the challenges in infrastructure development and economic growth within Capricorn

District, Vhembe District, and Waterberg District municipalities, the study referenced specific case studies and data from the analysed documents (Mthombeni 2021). This approach acknowledged potential limitations related to data availability and the generalisability of findings due to the specific focus on selected municipalities and reliance on secondary data sources.

## **FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

This study explores the complex interplay between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Africa's Agenda 2063 within the context of selected Limpopo municipalities, drawing upon Place-based Development theories. The findings highlight the unique challenges faced by these municipalities in localising development goals while revealing opportunities for improvement through tailored approaches and strategic collaborations.

### **Findings**

#### **Institutional Capacity and Resource Constraints**

The findings reveal that municipalities in Limpopo, particularly Vhembe, Capricorn, and Waterberg, face significant institutional capacity challenges. These include inadequate staffing, limited financial resources, and insufficient technical expertise. The historical context of socio-economic inequalities exacerbates these challenges, creating barriers to the effective implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 objectives. In contrast, municipalities in other African nations, such as Kigali and Accra, leverage better governance structures and resource mobilisation strategies, demonstrating a more effective localised approach.

#### **Community Engagement and Participatory Governance**

Community engagement emerges as a critical enabler for the successful localisation of SDGs in Limpopo. Evidence suggests that municipalities that actively involve local communities in decision-making processes—such as Capricorn District Municipality with its education initiatives—tend to experience improved outcomes. In comparison, other African

municipalities exemplify the importance of community participation, as seen in Kigali's urban planning efforts. This reinforces the idea that local knowledge and input are invaluable for contextualising and effectively implementing development initiatives.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

Strategic partnerships are significant in overcoming local constraints and improving the effectiveness of SDG localisation. For example, Capricorn District Municipality has benefited from collaborations with national and international organisations to improve education and health services. In contrast, municipalities like Waterberg are still navigating the complexities of building such partnerships, limiting their potential for resource mobilisation. Thriving cities such as Accra and Dar es Salaam illustrate how leveraging partnerships can lead to transformative investments and infrastructure developments.

### **Data Availability and Monitoring**

Robust data collection and monitoring systems are essential for tracking progress towards the SDGs. Findings indicate that Limpopo municipalities often struggle with inadequate data infrastructure, hindering their ability to implement evidence-based policies. In contrast, municipalities like Addis Ababa have established more sophisticated data management systems, enabling effective tracking of SDG outcomes. This highlights the critical need for enhanced data capabilities in Limpopo to facilitate informed decision-making and accountability.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

The comparative analysis underscores the necessity of a multifaceted approach to localising the SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Limpopo. While the municipalities face notable challenges, the integration of Place-based Development theories reveals opportunities for tailored interventions that consider local socio-economic contexts and governance structures.

## **Addressing Institutional Weaknesses**

To effectively localise the SDGs, there is an urgent need for capacity-building initiatives that improve the institutional framework of Limpopo municipalities. Strengthening human resources and improving technical skills through training and partnerships with academic institutions can empower local governments to devise more effective sustainable development strategies. Such capacity-building efforts should be contextually relevant, focusing on the specific needs and dynamics of each municipality.

## **Enhancing Community Participation**

The findings highlight the importance of participatory governance in the localisation process. Municipalities should adopt mechanisms that facilitate meaningful community engagement, ensuring that local voices are not only heard but actively shape development priorities. Implementing participatory budgeting and community-led development initiatives can foster a sense of ownership and accountability among citizens, driving more effective localised interventions.

## **Fostering Strategic Partnerships**

The establishment of robust partnerships between local governments, civil society, private sector actors and international donors is vital for overcoming resource constraints. Municipalities should proactively seek collaboration opportunities that can provide financial resources, technical expertise and innovative solutions. The successful experiences of municipalities in Kigali and Accra serve as valuable lessons, illustrating how effective collaboration can drive sustainable development outcomes.

## **Investing in Data and Monitoring Systems**

The study highlights the critical role of data in tracking SDG progress and informing policy decisions. Limpopo municipalities must invest in developing comprehensive data management systems that facilitate regular monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives. Collaborating with research institutions and leveraging technology can

improve data collection efforts, enabling local governments to base their decisions on empirical evidence and adaptive management.

## **Contextualisation and Integration of Approaches**

The analysis emphasises that effective localisation of the SDGs requires an integrated approach that aligns local, national and continental objectives. Contextualising global goals within the unique socio-economic landscape of Limpopo, municipalities can develop strategies that resonate with local realities while contributing to broader development aspirations. The alignment of local policies with the goals of Agenda 2063 can improve coherence and synergy in development efforts.

In conclusion, the localisation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Limpopo municipalities is fraught with challenges yet ripe with potential. By addressing institutional weaknesses, increasing community participation, fostering strategic partnerships, investing in data systems, and integrating approaches, Limpopo can pave the way for more effective and sustainable development. This analysis, grounded in Place-based Development theories, provides a framework for understanding the nuanced dynamics at play and guiding future efforts to achieve these critical development goals.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To improve SDG localisation in Limpopo's municipalities, several policy recommendations emerge from the analysis:

### **Governance Reforms**

Effective governance reforms are essential for advancing SDG localisation in Limpopo. Local governments should prioritise transparency and anti-corruption measures while improving inter-departmental coordination. Establishing robust accountability mechanisms, promoting participatory governance and engaging community members in decision-making processes will build public trust

and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and reflect local priorities.

### **Institutional Capacity Building**

Municipalities must invest strategically in human capital by providing targeted training for government officials on SDG-oriented planning, data management and sustainable resource strategies. Increasing technical expertise in areas like urban planning, environmental sustainability and social services will enable municipalities to integrate SDGs more effectively into local frameworks. Streamlining bureaucratic processes and adopting efficiency-focused reforms will further strengthen institutional capacities, enabling responsive and adaptive SDG implementation.

### **Resource Mobilisation**

To address the financial constraints faced by Limpopo's municipalities, it is crucial to diversify funding sources. Policymakers should pursue alternative financing mechanisms, including public-private partnerships, international grants and innovative models such as green bonds and municipal bonds designed for sustainable development. Securing consistent, diversified funding will empower municipalities to invest in infrastructure, social services and environmental projects that align with both local needs and SDG priorities.

### **Strengthening Partnerships**

Building and maintaining strategic partnerships with civil society, private sector stakeholders, international organisations, and academic institutions will be key to filling financial and technical resource gaps. Facilitating multi-stakeholder collaborations allows municipalities to leverage external expertise, promote innovation, and create tailored solutions for local development challenges. Municipalities can better address unique local needs and accelerate SDG progress by fostering place-based partnerships.



## **Improving Data Collection and Monitoring**

Accurate and reliable data is fundamental for tracking SDG outcomes and guiding evidence-based policy decisions. Municipalities should invest in advanced data collection technologies and establish systems for continuous data analysis. Strengthening capacity in data management will enable municipalities to set measurable, context-specific goals, monitor progress effectively and ensure transparency and accountability in SDG implementation. Enhanced data infrastructure will also support responsive policy adjustments, making SDG initiatives more adaptable to evolving local conditions.

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper has explored the progress and challenges that Limpopo's municipalities face in localising the SDGs and aligning with Africa's Agenda 2063. The findings reveal significant variation in the extent of progress across different municipalities. While Capricorn District has made notable strides in areas like health (SDG 3) and education (SDG 4), others, such as Polokwane and Vhembe, continue to face challenges in crucial areas such as water management (SDG 6), sanitation, poverty reduction (SDG 1) and hunger alleviation (SDG 2).

Key barriers to progress include governance-related issues such as corruption, poor coordination, and limited institutional capacity. These challenges are compounded by financial constraints and the lack of strategic partnerships, which hinder the effective integration of the SDGs and Agenda 2063 at the local level. However, the paper also highlights several success stories in which community engagement and targeted partnerships have demonstrated the potential for municipalities to achieve sustainable development, provided that governance and resource mobilisation are adequately addressed.

Several policy recommendations are proposed to augment SDG localisation in Limpopo. These include governance reforms to improve transparency and accountability, capacity building to strengthen institutional capabilities, innovative approaches to resource mobilisation, and the formation of strategic partnerships. Moreover, investments in

data collection and monitoring systems are essential for tracking progress and ensuring that development interventions are evidence-based.

Future research could delve into more detailed, empirical assessments of SDG localisation in Limpopo, incorporating primary data collection to evaluate specific interventions. Expanding the paper to include other provinces in South Africa or municipalities across different African regions would provide broader insights into SDG localisation and Agenda 2063 alignment. Additionally, investigating successful case studies from across Africa could offer practical lessons for improving development outcomes in Limpopo and beyond.

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