

## The Community Conservation Cycle-of-Praxis: A model for enhancing well-being and behavioural change

HENDRI COETZEE\*<sup>1,2</sup> [orcid.org/0000-0002-9210-2797](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9210-2797), SANDRA DU PLESSIS<sup>1</sup> [orcid.org/0000-0003-0628-3761](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0628-3761) and WERNER NELL<sup>3</sup> [orcid.org/0000-0002-3173-837X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3173-837X)

\*Corresponding author, [hendri.coetzee@nvt.org.za](mailto:hendri.coetzee@nvt.org.za)

<sup>1</sup>NVT, Nature's Valley, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>COMPRES, North-West University, Potchefstroom, South Africa

10 <sup>3</sup>Optentia Research Focus Area, North-West University, Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

### Abstract

In South Africa, it is vital to address both environmental and social issues, which calls for the creation of an effective Community-based Conservation (CBC) model to improve the latter. Recognising the necessity to reorient the social dimension of CBC towards community well-being and human behaviour modification, we initiated the development of a model rooted in community well-being, socio-psychological and institutional theories. We also utilised Thøgersen et al.'s (2021) framework to integrate the individual determinants of behaviour with the collective influences of institutional theory as a praxis. Our development process, in collaboration with the Kurland and Covie communities, in the Western Cape (South Africa), was participatory and included a situational analysis and explanatory mixed-methods study. The 'community-based conservation cycle-of-praxis' model we developed includes eight steps: identifying community ideals, challenges and barriers, community assets, developing project interventions and solutions, creating pathways and a roadmap for change, determining pragmatic actions to effect change and monitoring progress and impact. By prioritising community needs and utilising local assets, our model aims to create strong links between conservation efforts and community well-being. However, achieving this requires a shift towards impactful interventions that addresses the root causes of societal issues, leading to healthier, more sustainable communities.

30 **Keywords** Community conservation cycle-of-praxis; community-based conservation in South Africa; community well-being; community needs; community assets; behavioural change.

## Introduction

35 South Africa, along with many countries globally, is confronted by complex social and environmental challenges such as poverty, unemployment, biodiversity loss and climate change (Rice, Sowman & Bavinck, 2021). Experts advocate for contemporary, people-centric approaches such as Community-based Conservation (CBC) (Esmail et al., 2023), particularly those led by NGOs (Wachira et al., 2024), to substantially improve these issues. However, a recent review of CBC's environmental and  
40 social impacts indicates that the shortcomings are predominantly social (Galvin, Beeton & Luizza, 2018) - a trend that is visible on a global level (Esmail et al., 2023).

The literature indicates that several factors contribute to the ineffectiveness of CBC in producing concrete social outcomes. These factors encompass governance (Salerno et al., 2021), policy  
45 challenges (Rice, Sowman, & Bavinck, 2021), the framing of social dimensions (Galvin, Beeton, & Luizza, 2018), the lack of a model providing actionable steps towards positive outcomes (Kaplan-Hallam & Bennett, 2017) and the encouragement of behavioural change for lasting sustainability (Charles, 2021). Furthermore, the integration of monitoring and evaluation processes is crucial (Mahajan et al., 2019; Meijaard et al., 2021).

50 To address some of these challenges, we set out to develop a praxis-of-change model which is aimed at producing more tangible social outcomes, while also enhancing community well-being and behavioural change. We reviewed various models (e.g., Biedenweg, Stiles & Wellman, 2016; Britton & Coulthard, 2013; Collins et al. 2010; Costanza et al., 2007; Kaplan-Hallam & Bennett, 2017),  
55 however found that individually, they often lacked the detailed guidance necessary to integrate well-being aspects and behavioural change into practical steps and pathways into a single model. In other words, although they provide valuable insights, they do not fully meet the social outcome needs that CBC aims to achieve. Consequently, we identified the community wellness model (Prilleltensky, 2001; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2002; Prilleltensky & Nelson, 2002; Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005) and  
60 Totikidis' (2003) community wellness cycle-of-praxis as more appropriate foundations for our model, for the following reasons: The first is designed to guide practitioners from theory to actionable outcomes, aiming to balance personal, relational and collective well-being, with an emphasis on integrating all three dimensions for true wellness, while the second, building on Prilleltensky's

framework, is designed to accommodate diverse cultural contexts, facilitating its application across  
65 different community settings.

### **Community well-being**

With the community wellness model and the community wellness cycle-of-praxis as a foundation,  
we adopted Breslow et al.'s (2018) definition that states: 'Community well-being is the state of being  
70 with others and the environment, which arises when human needs are met, when individuals and  
communities can act meaningfully to pursue their goals and when individuals and communities enjoy  
a satisfactory quality of life.'

In building our conceptual understanding of community well-being, we found Sirgy's dimensions of  
75 well-being and bottom-up spillover theory useful (Sirgy et al., 2010; Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002; Sirgy  
et al., 2000). Sirgy et al.'s (2010) dimensions of well-being highlights the interconnectedness of  
community services and conditions with an individual's overall life satisfaction and commitment to  
his/her community. Examples of some of these extend to encompass family, neighbourhood, social,  
political, leisure, spiritual, educational, health, safety, environmental and financial well-being  
80 dimensions.

In addition, the bottom-up spillover theory, as proposed by Sirgy et al. (2010), merges global and  
facet-based views on well-being. It posits that satisfaction in specific life areas, such as community  
services and basic living conditions, overflows into general satisfaction with community life. This  
85 satisfaction then extends to other life domains: social, family, work and spiritual well-being, thus  
enhancing overall life satisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2010; Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002). In essence, the theory  
highlights the interrelation of different life aspects, suggesting that enhancing certain life domains  
can have a positive effect on general well-being.

90 Building upon this framework, Breslow et al. (2018) characterised human well-being as a condition  
stemming from the fulfilment of human needs, which includes the meaningful pursuit of goals and a  
satisfactory quality of life, within the core constituents of well-being: connections, capabilities,  
conditions and within overarching constituents like equity, justice, security, resilience and  
sustainability. To develop accurate well-being indicators, we have categorised Sirgy et al.'s (2010)  
95 well-being dimensions within Breslow's (2018) four primary constituents of human well-being, as  
outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Integration of Sirgy et al.'s (2010) well-being dimensions within Breslow's (2018) four primary constituents of human well-being

---

**Conditions**  
(circumstances in which human needs are met)

- Economic well-being (Sirgy et al.'s financial well-being)
- Environmental health (Sirgy et al.'s environmental well-being)
- Safety and security (Sirgy et al.'s safety well-being)
- Human health (Sirgy et al.'s health well-being)

---

**Connections**  
(being with others and the environment)

- Social relationships (Sirgy et al.'s social well-being)
- Cultural values and identities (Sirgy et al.'s spiritual well-being)
- Sense of place (Sirgy et al.'s neighbourhood well-being)
- Access to nature (Sirgy et al.'s environmental well-being)

---

**Capabilities**  
(factors enabling individuals and communities to act meaningfully to pursue their goals)

- Knowledge systems (Sirgy et al.'s education well-being)
- Political participation (Sirgy et al.'s political well-being)
- Governance (Sirgy et al.'s political well-being)
- Activities (Sirgy et al.'s leisure well-being, work well-being)

---

**Cross-cutting domains**

- Equity and justice (Sirgy et al.'s social well-being)
- Security (Sirgy et al.'s safety well-being)
- Resilience and sustainability (Sirgy et al.'s environmental well-being)

---

100

Our model is also influenced by Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2001) conceptualisation of community wellness. Central to the model of community wellness is the recognition of the interconnectedness of personal, relational and collective well-being. Achieving overall well-being within communities, they argue, will arise from the balanced satisfaction of this 'tripartite' of needs, provided that these needs are supported by appropriate values and resources. Neglecting any one of these dimensions, they cautioned, can undermine community well-being.

105

Based on this tripartite conceptualisation of wellness, it becomes clear that well-being encompasses more than just emotional and cognitive aspects. It is deeply influenced by socio-political and institutional contexts. Two additional aspects that has an influence of CBC (refs). Table 2 illustrates Nelson and Prilleltensky's (2001) tripartite conceptualisation of wellness.

110

115 TABLE 2: Community wellness model: adapted from Nelson and Prilleltensky (2005), Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) and Prilleltensky et al. (2001)

	Personal	Relational	Collective
<b>Community wellness model</b>	Sense of control over one's life, physical health, love, competence, optimism and self-esteem	Social support, affection, belonging, cohesion, collaboration, respect for diversity and democratic participation	Economic security, social justice, adequate health and social services, low crime, safety, adequate housing and social structures (e.g. educational, recreational and transportation facilities) and a clean environment

Based on this tripartite conceptualisation of well-being, Prilleltensky and Nelson (2002) advocate that relying solely on individual-focused interventions is not sufficient to overcome systemic disadvantages present at the collective level. For instance, challenges related to employment in the community require interventions that not only focus on building individual skills and capacity but also target broader societal structures and institutions that affect the employability of the individual. In developing our model, we opted to integrate the perspectives of both the socio-psychological theories (i.e. those that mainly focus on individual-level determinants of behaviour) and the institutional theories (i.e. those that mainly focus on the role of broader societal structures and norms and their role in shaping individual and collective behaviour). To follow is a brief elucidation on what the respective schools of thought hold.

### **Psychological and social theories relating to human behaviour**

130 In developing a model, we chose to combine insights from both socio-psychological theories (which primarily focus on individual-level determinants of behaviour) and institutional theories (which primarily examine the influence of broader societal structures and norms on individual and collective behaviour). What follows is a concise explanation of the respective theoretical perspectives.

135 Comprehending human behaviour is crucial for fostering positive change, especially when promoting sustainability and encouraging behavioural change. Socio-psychological theories provide significant insights into the intricate dynamics of personal motivations, social interactions and environmental factors that drive human actions and choices, which is instrumental in crafting effective strategies to

140 tackle specific behavioural issues. Within the vast array of socio-psychological theories, those outlined in Table 3 are particularly pertinent to our model.

TABLE 3: Social and psychological theories relevant to our praxis-of-change model

Theories	Founder(s)	Date	Relevance to behavioural change
<b>Social cognitive theory</b>	Bandura	1977	Highlights the role of observational learning and social reinforcement in shaping behaviour.
<b>Ecological systems theory</b>	Bronfenbrenner	1979	Emphasises the interconnectedness between individuals and their social environments by taking various systems' influences on behaviour into account.
<b>Theory of planned behaviour</b>	Ajzen	1991	Focuses on attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control, thereby influencing individuals' intentions and subsequent behaviour.
<b>Socio-ecological theory</b>	Stokols	1996	Examines multi-level influences on behaviour, encompassing individual, interpersonal, community and societal factors.
<b>Self-determination theory</b>	Deci & Ryan	2000	Emphasises intrinsic motivations for autonomy, competence and relatedness, thereby fostering well-being and optimal functioning.

145 Institutions are often seen as the foundation of societies, influencing the attitudes, actions and decisions of the individuals within them. This includes not only formalised rules and regulations such as constitutions, laws, policies and property rights but also informal rules like conventions, traditions and norms that direct behaviour (Vatn, 2015; North, 1990). These institutional structures establish expectations and meanings, thus moulding individuals' interpretations of situations and steering their choices (Weber et al., 2004). Vatn (2015) suggests that institutions shape attitudes and actions by  
 150 defining what is perceived as the "natural" way to act (conventions), the "correct" way to act (norms) and the "sanctioned" way to act (policies and regulations).

Institutional contexts differ across various domains of human interaction, such as the market, community, or family, each highlighting unique forms of rationality (Vatn, 2009). Within these  
 155 settings, individuals assume roles that enforce certain norms and conventions, thereby moulding their rational behaviour (Soma & Vatn, 2010, 2014). Institutions have the power to modify beliefs and attitudes about issues, thereby influencing group actions (Stern & Dietz, 2002). Moreover, institutions, defined as "the rules of the game in a society," (North, 1990) do not only dictate appropriate actions but also shape what individuals can envision doing in each scenario (Hall &  
 160 Taylor, 1996). Institutions comprise symbolic systems, cognitive scripts, classifications that assign

meaning to circumstances and form mental models that lead to actions (Vatn, 2015; North, 1990). Similarly, individuals' worldviews are shaped by their cultural background, personal experiences and prevailing social norms, which in turn affect their beliefs and behaviours (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Therefore, it is evident that institutions significantly influence human motivations, preferences and values (Vatn, 2015; Hukkinen 1999). Different institutional contexts result in varied behavioural patterns and outcomes, underscoring the need to comprehend institutional dynamics to tackle societal and conservational issues (Vatn, 2017).

In summary, both institutional and socio-psychological theories are vital for understanding the formation of human behaviours (Thøgersen et al. 2021). We applied Thøgersen et al.'s (2021) framework to merge individual-level behaviour determinants from socio-psychological theories with the collective impacts of institutional theory in our change-praxis. This framework enabled the creation of specific interventions aimed at influencing daily behavioural choices that impact environmental sustainability and human well-being, as shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4: An integrated institutionalist socio-psychological framework based on Thøgersen, et al. (2021)

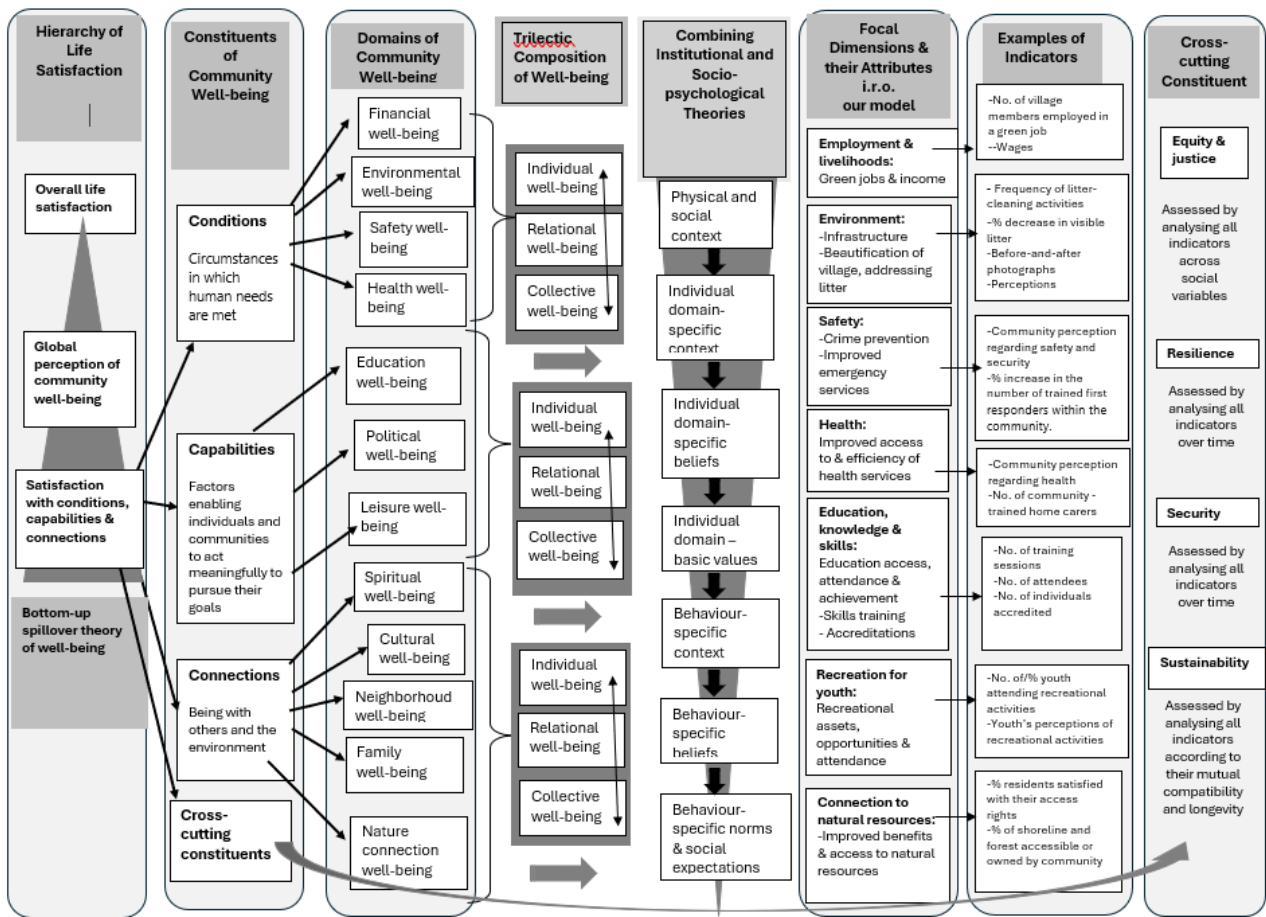
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
	<i>General broad, stable characteristics</i>	<i>Issue-specific mental model</i>	<i>Behaviour-specific mental model</i>
<b>Factors that influence choices and actions</b>	The characteristics that are common to and stable in most individuals	Mental models directly related to the specific issue being addressed	This level comprises factors that directly influence specific actions or behaviours related to the issue being addressed
<b>Physical context</b>	The broader physical contexts that individual values and traits inhabit		The behaviour-specific physical context encompasses the options and resources that are available to address the issue To address a litter problem, for example, these would encompass infrastructure such as waste-disposal facilities as well as community cleanliness initiatives
<b>Individual beliefs and personal norms</b>	General beliefs	Issue-specific individual beliefs and attitudes with regards to, for example, littering that can range from acceptance to	Behaviour-specific beliefs refer to individual perceptions and considerations with regards to behaviour and practices (e.g. the perceived benefits, challenges or

		scepticism or concern	opportunities associated with those behaviours or practices)
		Issue-specific personal norms that relate to an individual's general sense of responsibility or obligation to contribute towards addressing a specific issue (e.g. littering)	
<b>Social context</b>	The broader social contexts individual values and traits inhabit	The issue-specific social context pertains to the significance of a specific issue within an individual's social circles, including the importance friends and family attach to that issue	Behaviour-specific social norms involve perceptions about what is socially expected or acceptable in terms of behaviours related to a specific issue (e.g. how people act to address the issue as influenced by social pressures and cultural norms as well as observations of others' behaviours)
<b>Influence<sup>1</sup></b>	Mostly indirect	Mostly direct	Mostly direct

180 Illustrated in Fig. 1 is our theoretical framework that integrates insights from diverse theoretical and philosophical perspectives on the elements that drive behavioural change in communities. It outlines a methodical process for pinpointing intervention opportunities that enhance community well-being (in the context of CBC) and aids in creating metrics to assess the success of these interventions.

<sup>1</sup> While these factors may exert influence on all individual choices and activities, their impact is typically indirect and mediated through more specific factors in subsequent levels.

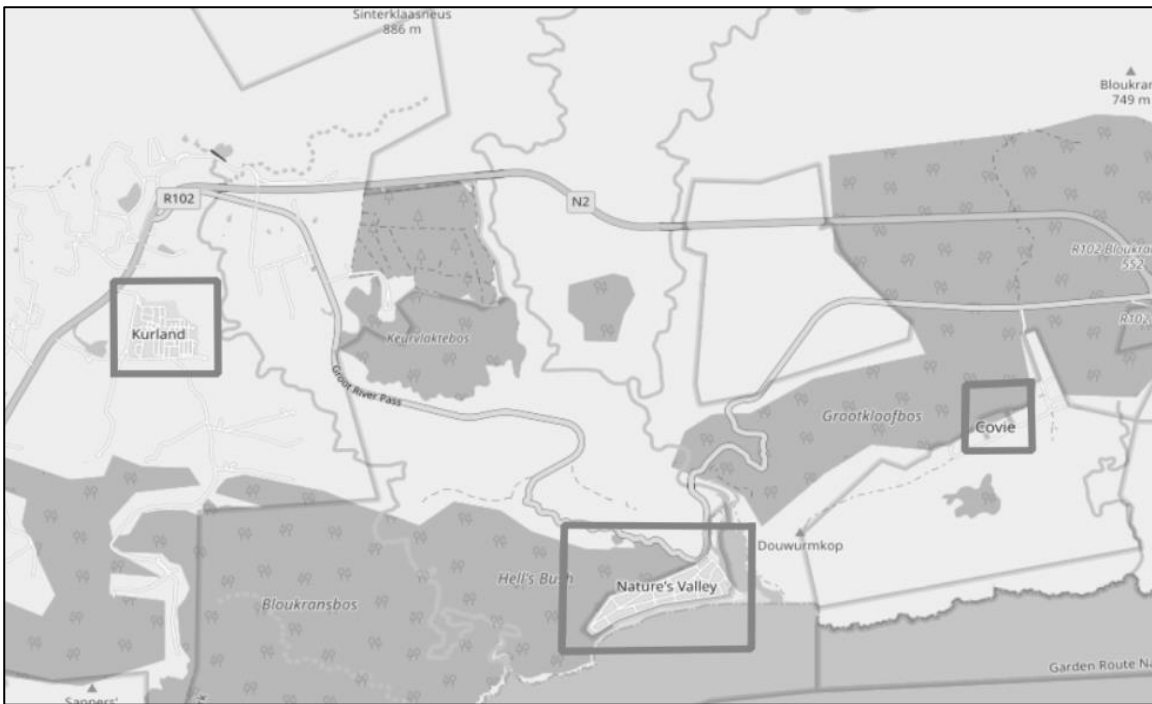




185 FIG. 1: Conceptual framework that underpins the community-based cycle-of-praxis model

### Community context

The Kurland and Covie communities, which contributed to the model's advancement, are located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, flanking Nature's Valley village to the west and east. These communities are under the jurisdiction of the Bitou Local Municipality (with Plettenberg Bay as the largest town in the municipality), within the Garden Route District Municipality and are encircled by the Tsitsikamma Section of the Garden Route National Park.



195 FIG. 2: Map of study area showing the Kurland and Covie communities in relation to Nature's Valley, Western Cape, South Africa

200 Around 4,030 individuals (1,500 households) live in Kurland, whereas Covie is home to roughly 100 people (32 households). In both communities, the majority self-identify as Coloured and predominantly speak Afrikaans (Stats-SA, 2022). Covie presents a more uniform community, while Kurland is more diverse, with IsiXhosa-speaking residents and immigrants from other African countries, notably Malawi and Somalia. The former group is typically employed in farming and domestic roles, whereas the latter often run local shops. Kurland has very basic infrastructure and limited services, in contrast to Covie, which is almost entirely undeveloped. Residents of both communities usually have to travel 30 to 40 kilometres to Plettenberg Bay for more specialised goods and services.

205

### The community conservation cycle-of-praxis

As depicted in Fig. 3, the community-based cycle-of-praxis model consist of eight praxis cycle steps. Steps 1, 2 (except the identification of barriers), 3 and 6 corresponds with the community wellness model and the community wellness cycle-of-praxis while steps 4, 5 and 7 are new additions that are based on our new conceptual framework.

210

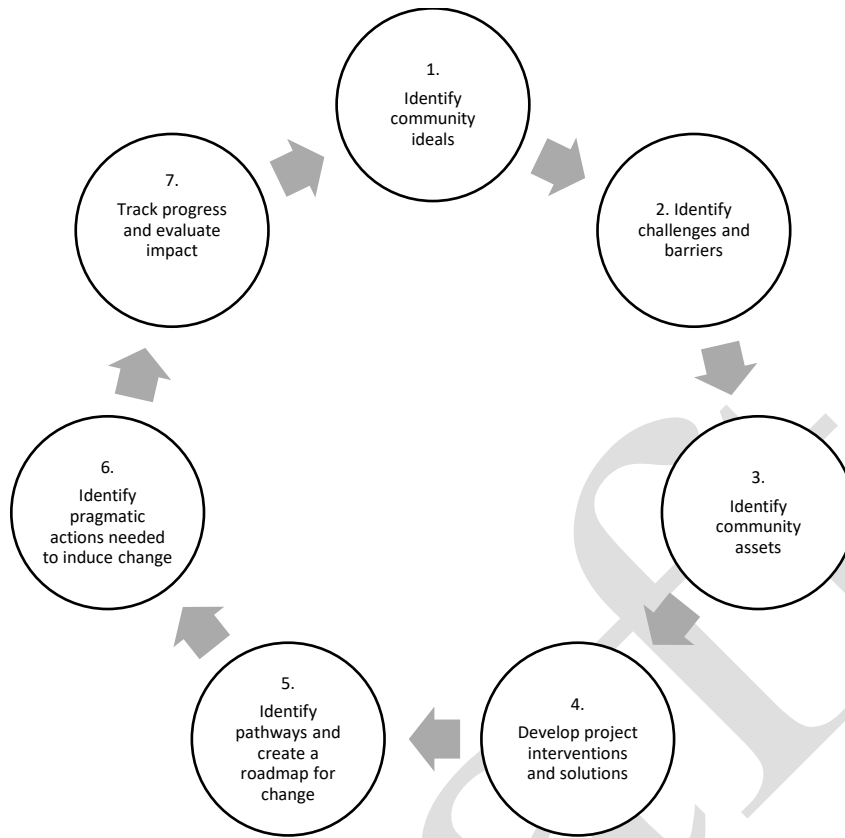


FIG. 3: Community-based praxis-cycle-steps

215

**Praxis cycle step 1: Identifying community ideals**

Step 1 involved the facilitation of participatory situational analysis workshops (Du Plessis, 2024) to determine Kurland’s and Covie’s community's ideals (i.e. their visions for the future/values). Their responses were compiled and categorised in accordance with the community wellness model of personal, relational and collective well-being (refer to Tables 5 and 6). In so doing, we not only gained a better understanding of where the respective communities’ ideals fit within that community’s level of well-being but also highlighted those areas where cooperation and collective efforts will be required if the communities’ ideals are to be realised.

225

230

TABLE 5: Kurland community's ideal



Personal	Relational	Collective
		
<b>Neighbourhood and social well-being ideals</b>		
Securing land from the municipality for food gardens, aiming to sell the harvest locally, thus reducing dependence on external sources		
Securing a permanent working space for Kurland ladies' sewing team		
<b>Social well-being ideals</b>		
	Forming a team of local volunteers to connect community needs with external support, acting as liaisons for organisations wanting to assist the Kurland community, ensuring alignment with the community's actual needs for greater impact	
<b>Education well-being ideals</b>		
Creating a learning and skills development centre focusing on carpentry, electrical work, computer literacy and educational support. The centre will include a dedicated area for learning and reading, complete with computers, functioning as a holistic hub for educational and vocational advancement. It will provide a conducive environment for the community's youth to develop skills and pursue learning. The centre will also offer accreditation for the skills acquired, aiding in employment opportunities		
<b>Economic well-being ideals</b>		
Developing a sustainable marketplace for local products by forming partnerships with hospitality industry entities like restaurants and guesthouses		

TABLE 6: Covie community's ideals

Personal	Relational	Collective
		
<b>Safety, neighbourhood and social well-being ideals</b>		
Ensuring a tranquil, safe environment for raising children		
	Fostering a sense of safety and security within neighbourhoods	
	Reducing drug and alcohol abuse	
<b>Health well-being ideals</b>		
	Establishing a permanent healthcare clinic in Covie village	
<b>Spiritual well-being ideals</b>		
	Increasing attendance at church services and extending their community outreach	
<b>Educational well-being ideals</b>		
	Providing support to re-establish a school within the community	

<b>Environmental well-being ideals</b>	
	Enhancing infrastructure by properly tarring roads and providing additional housing
	Living in harmony with nature
	Creating community food gardens/nurseries
<b>Economic well-being ideals</b>	
Developing a small industry park for vocational training and skills development	
Opening restaurants, eateries and stores to create job opportunities for youth and homemakers seeking work outside the home	
Encouraging Covie community members to sustainably cultivate and harvest produce, selling any surplus to augment household income	
Ensuring Covie fishermen can catch enough fish to support their families and sell any excess	
Guaranteeing the ability to provide food for the table	
	Advocating for the lifting of zone restrictions along Covie shores, granting Covie fishermen the right to fish in their own boats unimpeded

235

### **Praxis cycle step 2: Identifying challenges and barriers**

Step 2 entailed a two-step process of identifying community challenges and barriers by establishing what their needs are, as well as what might be preventing them from achieving their desired ideals.

240 Nell and Coetzee (2024) conducted a mixed-methods study to understand the challenges of the Kurland and Covie communities, which revealed that both communities face significant challenges that can be ascribed to a lack of or the inaccessibility of basic needs such as housing, healthcare, education, transportation, etc. Consequently, Nell and Coetzee concluded that residents find themselves in an “undesirable, underdeveloped state” where they must struggle day after day to

245 merely survive and have little to no prospect of ever being able to improve their well-being by, for example, gaining access to employment opportunities. They concluded the study by identifying the following themes that ought to underpin all projects intended to improve the well-being of the Kurland and Covie communities:

- Working towards economic/financial well-being by finding ways to create jobs.
- 250 • Offering educational/upskilling opportunities to those who wish to improve their employment prospects.
- Improving safety and security.
- Addressing issues pertaining to inadequate healthcare services.

255 In this step, we incorporate the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) problem tree into our model to chart the barriers and understand the cause-and-effect relationships. While the community wellness model and the community wellness cycle-of-praxis do not encompass this step, we have included this to distinguish between the barriers that impede well-being and the essential elements required for achieving well-being. We hold that it is crucial for our praxis-of-change model to not only pinpoint what is lacking for the community's well-being, but also to identify the barriers preventing the community from attaining well-being. This fosters a more effective strategy, allowing the community to comprehend the fundamental causes of the deficiencies and to either eliminate these barriers or surmount them, thereby more adequately addressing their needs and realising their ideal well-being.

260

265 By synthesising insights from the participatory situational analysis workshops (Du Plessis, 2024) with the social study conducted by Nell and Coetzee (2024), we pinpointed the barriers that have obstructed community well-being and impeded the two communities from attaining their desired state (ideal). The "problem trees" depicted in Fig. 4 and 5 visually represent the cause-and-effect relationships that define the barrier to well-being in Kurland (Table 7) and Covie (Table 8).

270

TABLE 7: Barriers obstructing well-being in Kurland

<b>Community services</b>	Previously, the absence of a fire station compromised community safety, particularly in responding to shack fires. This issue has been addressed with the establishment of a local fire station. However, the lack of nearby ambulance services and their delayed response times from town (Plettenberg Bay) remain a concern during emergencies. Additionally, the absence of a police station in the village leads to significant concerns over accessible law enforcement.
<b>Accessibility of healthcare services</b>	The Kurland community faces healthcare challenges as the small clinic is unable to meet all the residents' needs. For instance, the absence of nearby dental services forces residents to undertake long trips for essential care. The healthcare system's strain is further aggravated by the clinic's long waiting times, attributed to being understaffed and too small, with staff often taking extended tea or smoke breaks, disregarding the waiting patients.
<b>Housing and infrastructure</b>	A severe housing shortage significantly affects the well-being of the Kurland community. Moreover, authorities appear to neglect structural issues with existing housing. In terms of infrastructure, residents report that public toilets are non-functional, street lights are inoperative, and the village's dirt roads are poorly maintained. Additionally, cultural groups like the "Elders' Group" lack a dedicated space for their activities.
<b>Unemployment</b>	Unemployment presents a major barrier to the well-being of the Kurland community. Many residents are not aware of job market opportunities and those who seek employment often find themselves either lacking necessary skills or possessing unaccredited skills, further complicating their employment prospects.

<b>Safety</b>	High crime rates significantly impact the sense of safety and overall well-being of Kurland residents. The presence of drug houses and shebeens selling substances to minors, along with pit bulls roaming the streets and an unprotected dam near the Sout River, where many non-swimming children have drowned, are major concerns.
<b>Education</b>	The lack of a local secondary school and scarce educational resources compel children and youth desiring further education to travel great distances. This barrier to academic progression often leads to increased drug and alcohol abuse among young people.
<b>Recreation</b>	Limited healthy recreational options for the youth lead to boredom, which in turn increases their vulnerability to substance abuse.
<b>Connectedness with nature</b>	A minority of Kurland's community members place special value on nature, as reported by Nell & Coetzee (2024). However, they also observed that the community does not view nature as an exploitable resource, and anti-environmental behaviours are uncommon. This comparison of low nature connectedness with moderately positive environmental attitudes indicates a possible gap between environmental consciousness and action, underscoring the challenge of advancing conservation in Kurland (Nell & Coetzee, 2024).

TABLE 8: Barriers obstructing well-being in Covie

<b>Fishing rights</b>	Covie, a community with a rich history in fishing, was forcibly removed from their land in the 1970s, which disrupted their lifestyle. Although they have reclaimed their land in recent years, residents are disheartened to see tourists on the Otter Trail accessing the coastline, a place that belongs to them, while they are denied access. The loss of traditional fishing rights, crucial to Covie's identity and sustenance, has deepened the residents' sense of disillusionment and inequality.
<b>Infrastructure and transport</b>	Covie village is grappling with significant infrastructure challenges, including inadequate housing and sanitation facilities. The lack of playgrounds deprives children of recreational areas, and the scarcity of shops makes accessing basic necessities difficult. The absence of permanent medical facilities further aggravates health care concerns. Additionally, the village's remote location means that public transportation is both limited and expensive.
<b>Drug and alcohol abuse</b>	Drug and alcohol abuse in Covie significantly affects the well-being of families and the broader community. This issue is particularly detrimental to the youth, exposing them to a range of social and health-related challenges. It also disrupts their educational pursuits, impeding their ability to finish school and limiting their future prospects. Furthermore, substance abuse contributes to a lack of safety in the neighbourhood, fostering a climate of insecurity and instability.
<b>Economic challenges</b>	The economic challenges in Covie are complex, characterised by a lack of employment opportunities and a shortage of well-paying jobs, leading to widespread unemployment. The erosion of traditional fishing rights has severely affected the community's conventional means of subsistence, undermined established income sources and intensified financial difficulties. Moreover, the village has seen little development over time, with scant government support for development projects. These issues continue to hinder the community's efforts to achieve sustainable livelihoods and economic stability.

---

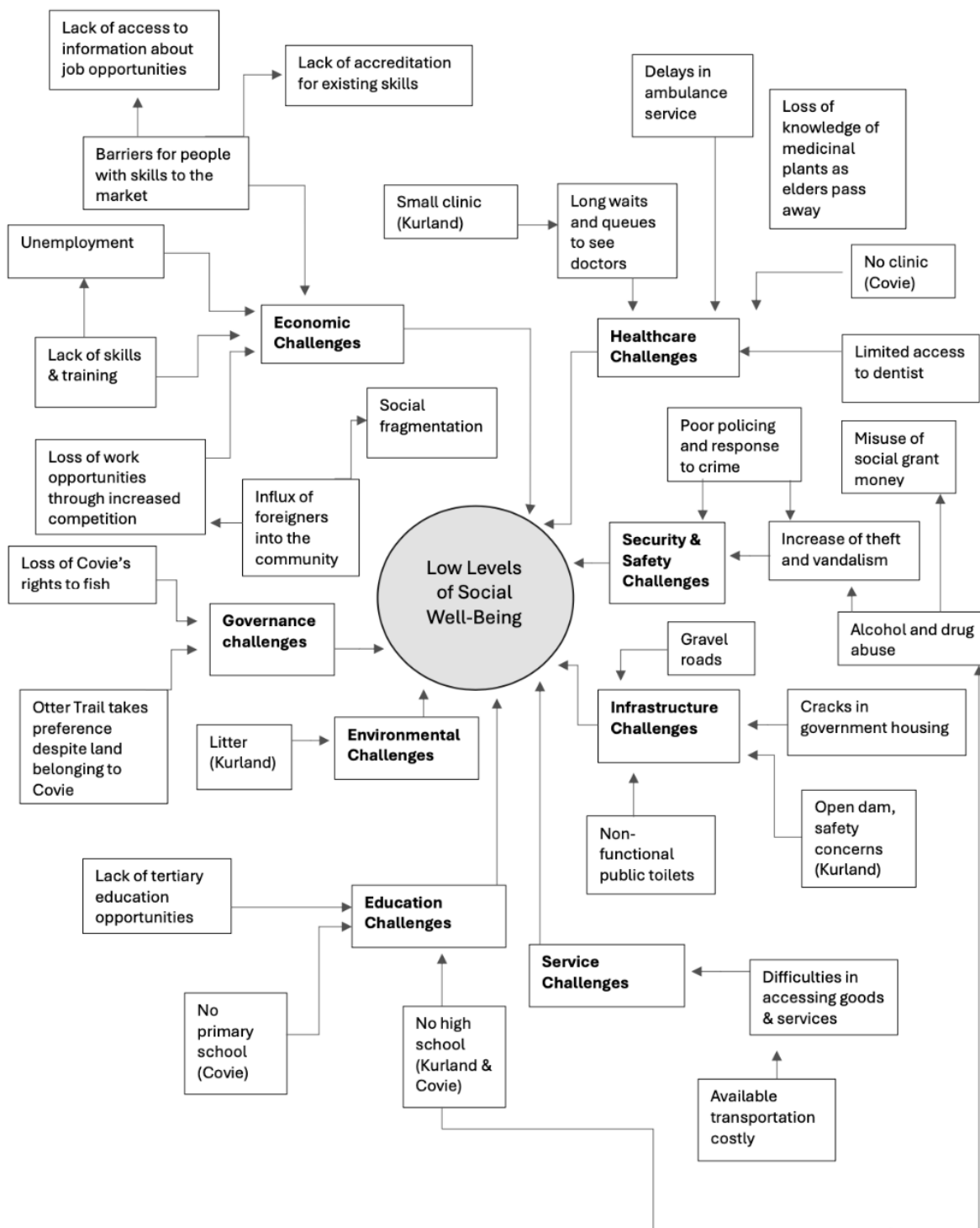
<b>Education and recreation</b>	Education and recreation are crucial for a community's well-being. The shutdown of Cove's local school presents substantial difficulties, necessitating the transportation of children to Kurland and imposing extra costs on economically strained families. Additionally, the absence of after-school programs in the village limits constructive opportunities for the youth, leading many to resort to drugs and alcohol, thus perpetuating the cycle of substance abuse in the community.
---------------------------------	--

---

275 The problem tree in Fig. 4 visually represents the interconnected causes and effects of the current conditions and social challenges identified in step 2.

Draft





280 FIG. 4: Problem tree

Fig. 5 below provides a closer look of the “branches” of the problem tree to understand the causes and effects of the education challenges and economic challenges in the Kurland and Covie communities.

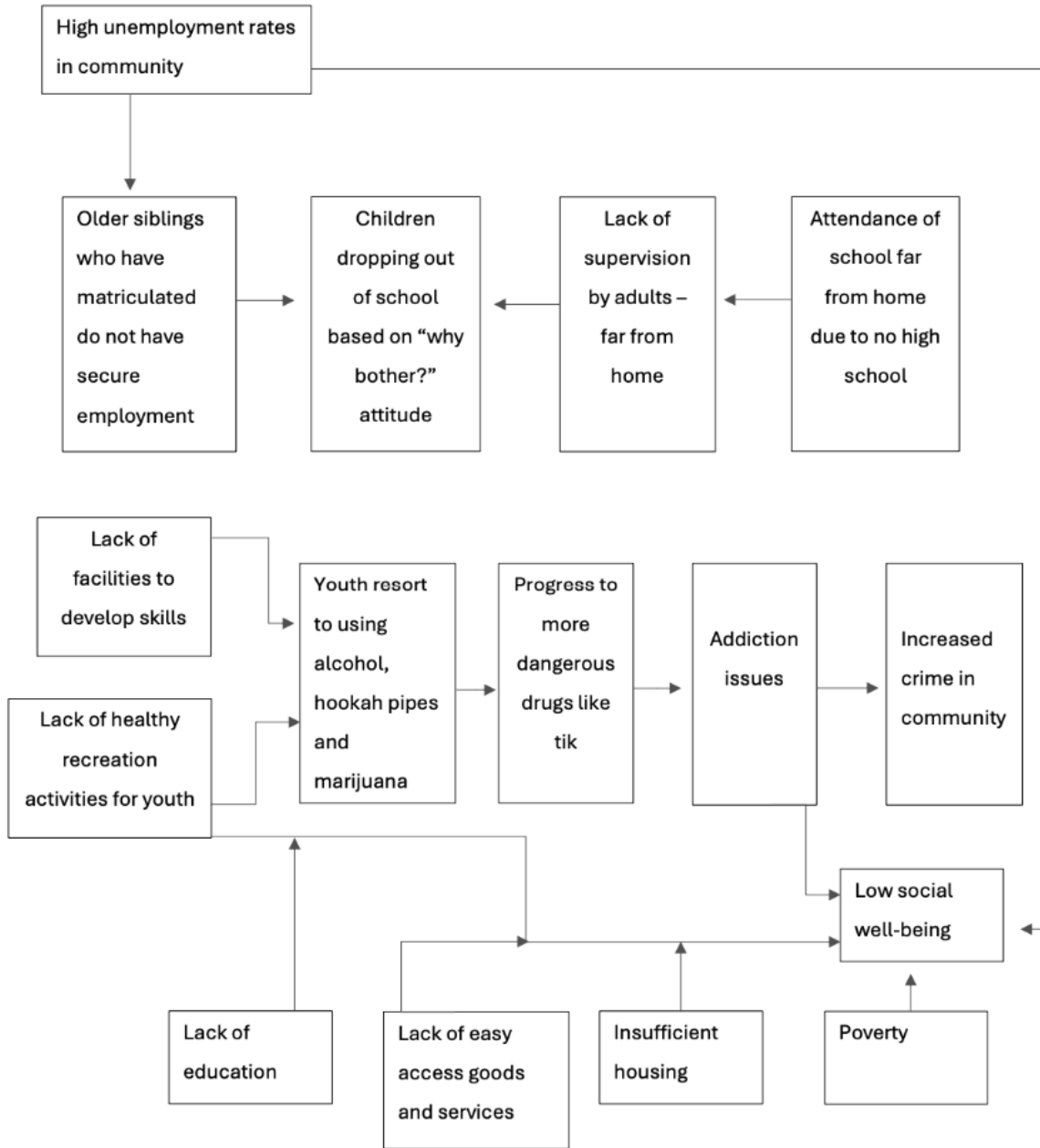


FIG. 5: Cause-and-effect dynamics: Impact of education and skills development issues in Covie and Kurland villages

290 Fig. 5 demonstrates the significant barriers faced by the youth in Kurland and Covie villages due to the absence of a nearby high school, limited opportunities for skills development, and a lack of healthy recreational activities. This scarcity of opportunities has resulted in an increased prevalence of harmful behaviours, particularly addiction issues among the youth, adversely impacting individual well-being and the overall health and social dynamics of the community.

In Covie and Kurland, there is a pressing need for effective interventions to tackle the challenges associated with youth involvement in criminal activities and their struggle to acquire skills and education (Nell & Coetzee, 2024). Such interventions should promote positive social identities and move away from stigmatising labels. For instance, reframing the perception of struggling learners from being labelled as "stupid" to recognising their diverse talents and potential is crucial (Nell & Coetzee, 2024). The authors suggest that developing interventions aimed at boosting residents' self-efficacy through small, visible actions can lead to significant outcomes.

Table 9 provides an illustrative example of how institutional and socio-psychological theories have been integrated by applying Thøgersen et al.'s (2021) framework to arrive at an understanding of the impact values, beliefs and social norms have on behavioural choices in the specific contexts depicted in Fig. 5.

TABLE 9: Impact of values, beliefs and social norms on behavioural choices

Level 1 - General characteristics	
<b>Stable individual traits</b>	The youth in Kurland often display enduring traits like resilience, self-efficacy and motivation. These characteristics are formed through their upbringing and environmental experiences. Nonetheless, the broader physical context of their lives may either test or strengthen these traits.
<b>Fundamental values</b>	The core values that the youth hold are shaped by their interaction with their environment. For example, those growing up in fragmented homes with scarce resources may develop resilience and adaptability, whereas those exposed to substance abuse or poverty might see their confidence and ambitions eroded.
<b>Broader physical context</b>	The youth's well-being and prospects are significantly influenced by their physical surroundings, including housing quality, availability of basic amenities and social challenges. Those from disrupted homes or communities afflicted by substance abuse confront extra hurdles in education and employment. A lack of access to vital services like healthcare and social support can intensify feelings of despair and powerlessness.
Level 2 - Issue-specific factors (youth unemployment and education)	
<b>Beliefs about education and employment</b>	Youths' beliefs regarding education and employment are moulded by their broader physical context experiences. If they view their environment as deficient in opportunities or support systems, this may lead to negative attitudes toward education and the likelihood of securing meaningful employment.
<b>Formal and informal institutions</b>	Community social norms are shaped by the dominant physical conditions. If substance abuse or school dropout rates are high, youths may adopt these norms, engaging in behaviours that continue the cycle of poverty and disenfranchisement. Likewise, formal regulations influence youths' attitudes and actions toward education and employment. For instance, a lack of effective policies for addressing

youth unemployment or ensuring access to quality education can reinforce adverse perceptions and obstruct advancement opportunities. In villages where effective policing and formal regulations are absent, youths face increased risks of drug and alcohol abuse, which can result in a devaluation of education and increased school dropout rates.

---

Level 3 - Behaviour-specific factors

---

**Education**

The physical environment can have a direct impact on young people's ability to pursue academic activities. Factors like unstable housing, exposure to violence, or insufficient educational resources can impede their focus on studies and full participation in school activities.

**Skills development**

In disadvantaged communities, access to opportunities for skills development can be restricted due to inadequate infrastructure and support systems. This can cause youth to face challenges in accessing vocational training or job readiness programs, thereby continuing the cycle of unemployment and economic marginalization.

---

310

**Praxis cycle step 3: Identifying community assets**

315

Achieving the community ideal through strength-based approaches involves actively engaging with community members to identify their assets, such as resources, strengths, knowledge, skills and networks (Nell & Coetzee, 2024). Recognising these resources enables the development of more contextually aligned, inclusive and sustainable interventions that leverage existing community assets, thereby increasing the chances of long-term success. Thus, this step is vital in paving the way for the participatory nature of CBC initiatives.

TABLE 10: Assets contributing to well-being in Kurland

<b>Infrastructure</b>	The Kurland Community Hall is recognised as an asset for providing temporary shelter during emergencies, such as fires and for hosting social events. The community library is also a significant asset, offering essential internet access for online registration and educational resources for the youth. The sports and rugby fields are seen as moderate assets for recreation. However, these contrast with the broader infrastructure challenges, which are viewed as urgent needs.
<b>Environment</b>	Covie village residents regard the natural environment as a key asset, while in Kurland, it is considered of moderate importance. Agriculture and farming have a moderate value. Kurland's community gardens are appreciated for supplying local food and reducing the necessity for long-distance travel to stores.
<b>Schools</b>	The residents' skills and the quality of Kurland's schools and teachers are seen as community strengths.
<b>Local businesses and economic situation</b>	In Kurland, local economic development is seen as moderately valuable, with industries, wine farms and restaurants being potential employment sources. The introduction of Steers, a fast-food chain, and a new fuel station has not only provided quick meal options but also added convenience with accessible ATMs. Spaza shops are essential to the community, offering a local alternative for necessary food items. The sawmill has been crucial in providing jobs, aiding in housing construction and making significant donations to the community. Kurland Bricks has also contributed to employment and housing construction, positively

	affecting the community's economic fabric. While these businesses are viewed as moderate assets by Kurland's residents, there is an acknowledgment that these opportunities are inadequate to solve the village's extensive unemployment issue.
<b>Skills</b>	The skills of community members, particularly in construction and carpentry, are deemed valuable assets to the community..
<b>Healthcare</b>	Community members value the healthcare access within the village, despite the system's efficiency issues and the recognized need for improvement, considering it a moderate to significant asset.
<b>Welfare</b>	Recognised as both a community need and an asset, welfare services are crucial. Organisations and NGOs like Born in Africa and Kurland Bricks are pivotal in providing this support. Born in Africa aids about 450 children with educational assistance yearly, significantly aiding community development. Kurland Bricks also supports welfare by creating a community crèche, reflecting its commitment to corporate social responsibility. Additionally, NVT's engagement in community greening, clean-ups, gardening clubs and environmental education at Craggs Primary School enhances community welfare. Moreover, rehabilitation for youths battling drug addiction and local soup kitchens offering free meals to those at the clinic exemplify the community's welfare resources.
<b>Cultural and recreational contributions</b>	The soccer and rugby fields are vital to Kurland's community spirit. They are instrumental in promoting community engagement, social cohesion and active lifestyles. Despite being identified as a strength, the social study revealed a need for more recreational activities for youth to alleviate boredom and deter drug and alcohol abuse, as noted in participatory workshops.
<b>Local economic development</b>	Service delivery is deemed a moderate asset. Although it ranked low in the social study, local economic development is still considered a moderate asset.
<b>Local leadership</b>	Like local economic development, local leadership received a low ranking in the social study but is viewed as a moderate asset.
<b>Religion</b>	Religion holds moderate influence within the community. Although many residents rarely participate in local church events, certain smaller groups consider them to be of great importance, particularly in tackling drug-related issues. The community exhibits varied degrees of involvement in church activities, with some congregations becoming more proactive in addressing drug concerns.

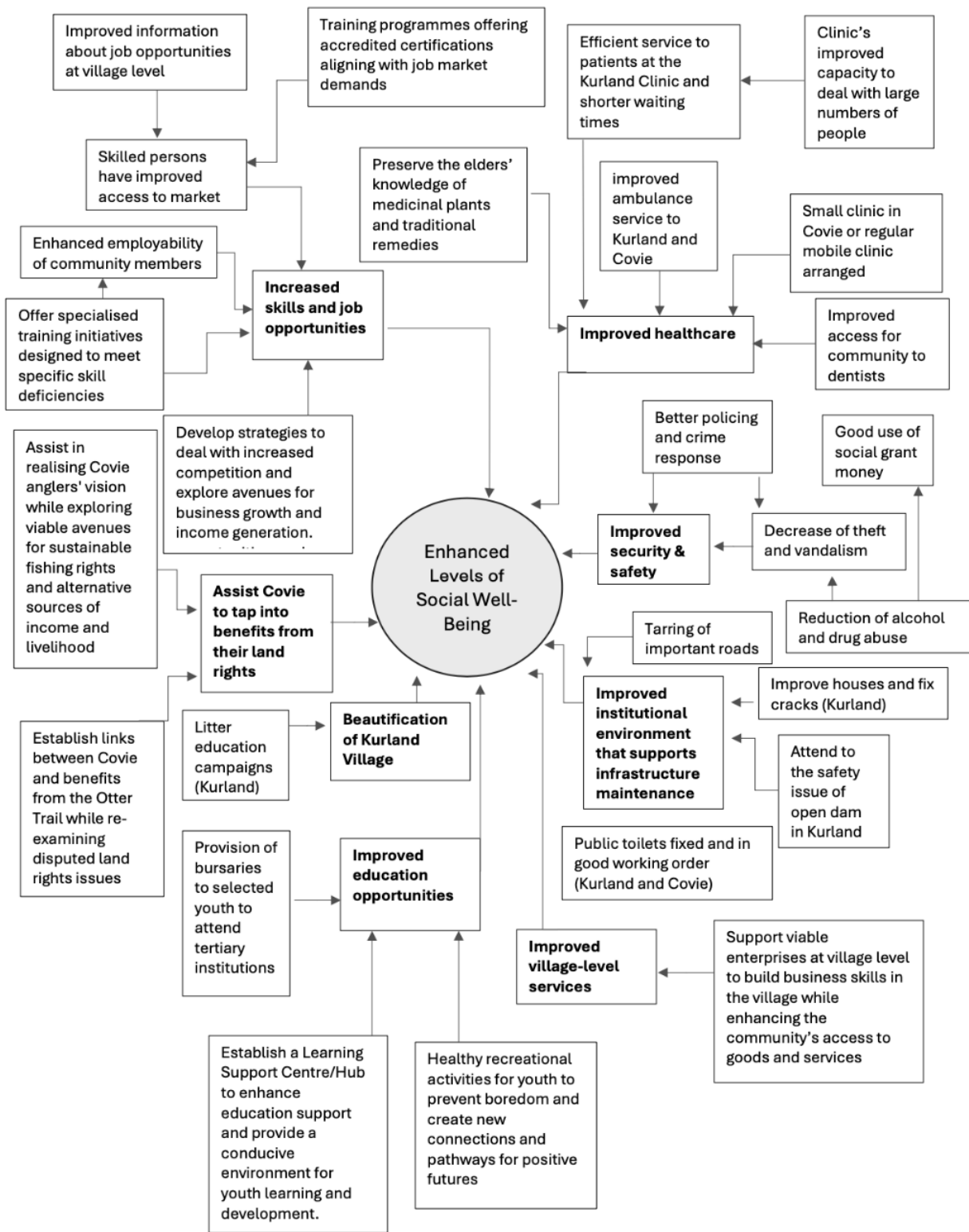
320 TABLE 11: Assets contributing to well-being in Covie

<b>Cultural identity</b>	The historical discovery, establishment and development of Covie hold significant importance for its members. It shapes their sense of place, cultural identity and fosters community cohesion and pride.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	The Covie community's well-being has been greatly enhanced by several key developments. These include the provision of running water and electricity, road improvements for better transportation, the creation of a library filled with educational resources, a central church/school building for communal gatherings and education, a mobile clinic to improve healthcare access and transportation services that allow children to attend school in Kurland.
<b>Economic</b>	The traditional harvesting of honeybush tea, which is no longer practiced due to its illegality, once contributed to Covie's economic health. Nowadays, income from backpackers and job opportunities provided by local businesses like Platbos Hotel, Bloukrans Bungy, the tollgate and King Fisher B&B play a

	role in the community's economy. Like Kurland, these businesses are seen as moderate assets, and although they provide some employment, they are not enough to overcome the extensive unemployment in the village. The level of service delivery in the village is also viewed as a moderate asset.
<b>Skills</b>	In the Covie community, skills in construction and carpentry are highly valued as community assets.
<b>Educational</b>	The well-being of the Covie community is enhanced by educational contributions, such as the provision of a kindergarten and transportation for children to attend school in Kurland.
<b>Environmental</b>	Located in a rural setting, Covie is encircled by forests and fynbos. The natural environment and resources are crucial assets, providing medicinal plants and firewood. Additionally, the beauty of the natural surroundings is appreciated for its aesthetic value. While agriculture and farming are seen as moderate assets, community gardens are treasured for their role in feeding the community. Initiatives like the Covie Fishing Club and a hiking trail through the local fynbos have positively impacted community well-being.
<b>Safety</b>	Although issues with drug and alcohol abuse leading to crime pose safety concerns, there is a sentiment within the community that the current elements of community safety are valuable assets.

#### **Praxis cycle step 4: Developing project interventions and solutions**

Step 4 entails identifying how to bridge the gap between the current state, inclusive of needs, barriers, and existing assets prevailing in the community, and their desired ideals. The development of project interventions occurs in three phases. Initially, we transform the problem tree, developed in the second step of our praxis cycle, into a solution tree (refer to Fig. 6 below). This conversion helps us pinpoint viable solutions to bridge the identified gaps. These solutions form the basis for our project interventions.



330

FIG. 6: Solution tree showing cause-and-effect pathways

**Praxis cycle step 5: Identifying pathways and create a roadmap for change**

Step 5 entails the creation of a roadmap for change, consisting of a series of concrete action-steps.

335 Prilleltensky (2001) characterises the final step of his value-based praxis model as the translation of

research findings into community action through various activities, while Totikidis (2003) specifies actions to improve community well-being in the final step of her model (refer to the next step). Before moving to action, we introduce an additional step: "creating a roadmap for action." This roadmap is crucial to ensure that the actions are in line with the underlying theory and context, namely the ideal, barriers, strengths, assets and needs of the community.

Our praxis-of-change model, which is a result of steps 1 to 5, is depicted in Fig. 7. This Fig. visually illustrates the pathways to affect community well-being in Kurland and Covie. It includes the interventions (inputs), outputs, outcomes, and context, along with a series of enabling actions for each pathway.

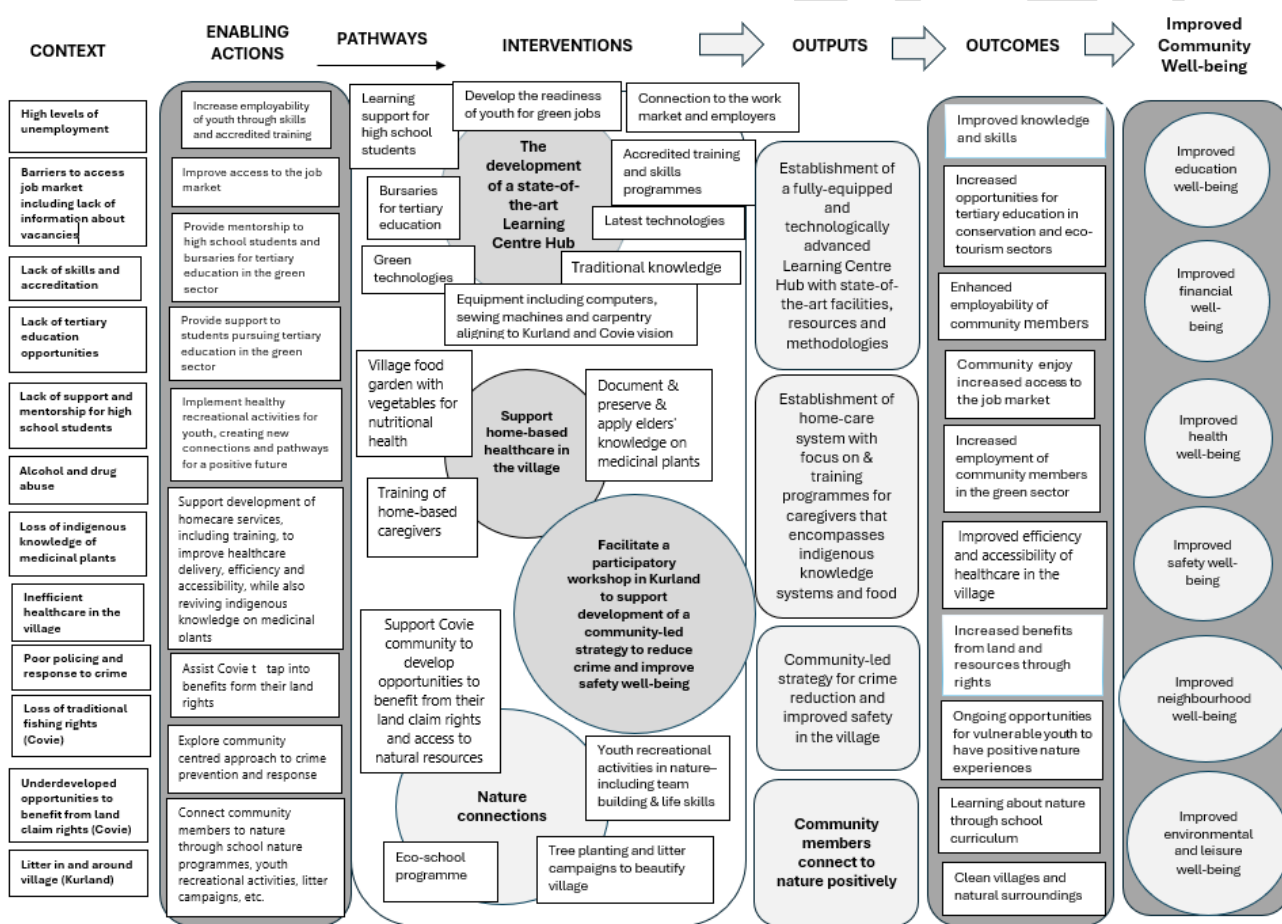


FIG. 7: The praxis-of-change model: A strength-based approach to positively impact community well-being in the Covie and Kurland villages

### 350 Praxis cycle step 6: Identifying the pragmatic actions needed to induce change

Step 6 entails a transition from conceptualisation to practical implementation. This step, which is absent in the two foundational models we used, has been incorporated into our praxis cycle to ensure the community stays aligned with its ideals. To drive real-world change, this involves translating our



355 concepts, ideas, theories, visions and plans into meaningful outcomes. In short, this step brings our theory of change to life.

### **Interconnecting the mental, physical and social space**

360 The concept of “space” has experienced a significant paradigm shift in sociological theory since the mid-nineteenth century. Henri Lefebvre, a notable social science scholar, redefined traditional notions of space in his seminal work, *The Production of Space* (1991). Lefebvre's theoretical framework recognises the interplay between physical, mental and social spaces, underscoring their collective impact on human environments and behaviours. Contrary to the traditional view of space as an “empty abstraction,” he posited that space is socially constructed, deeply entwined with human experiences and interactions. Subsequent scholars like Gruenewald (2003), Warf and Arias (2009), 365 and Rivera-Yevenes (2023) have further highlighted the significance of space in shaping and transforming social life, especially within educational contexts such as learning centres.

### **Creating a platform for pragmatic action**

370 Drawing from these insights into the transformative role of space in social life, and anchored by the collective ideals of the communities, we propose that a good option to create a platform for pragmatic action is the establishment of a physical space such as a resource/learning centre. A place where fundamental values, beliefs, social norms and behavioural choices can be influenced. However, the space will have to address challenges (e.g. needs and barriers) and take into consideration the community assets that are available. Based on the Kurland and Covie contexts, we propose that the 375 space consist of three interconnected focus areas/hubs: a learning hub, community care hub and a nature connect hub (table 12). Each hub should then be further planned to address specific issues in the community.

380 TABLE 12: Interconnected hubs forming the basis of a space that can be used to influence values, beliefs, social norms and behavioural choices

---

#### **Learning hub**

(committed to fostering lifelong learning, skill enhancement and personal development)

- Resources for adult education in personal growth, skill advancement and the sharing of traditional knowledge.
  - Supportive educational services for children and youth, such as tutoring, mentoring and after-school homework assistance.
  - Financial literacy training, including budgeting and financial planning resources, alongside support for entrepreneurial and small business growth.
-

- 
- Enhancing the preparedness and employability of youth in green jobs and broadening their job market access.
- 

### **Community care hub**

(aimed at advancing physical and mental well-being and community safety)

- Advancement of physical and mental health via medical services, wellness projects, preventive care, home-based care, traditional knowledge and health education initiatives.
  - Projects and services to fortify family ties, encourage healthy relationships and provide support for familial issues and challenges.
  - Healthy recreational activities that impart valuable life lessons and address drug and alcohol prevention, targeting vulnerable youth to foster well-being.
  - Tools for crime prevention, emergency response training and assistance for victims of violence or abuse
- 

### **Nature connection hub**

(focused on enhancing environmental sustainability, conservation efforts, eco-friendly living and aiding Covie and Kurland in utilising their rights to natural resource benefits)

- Educational projects on environmental sustainability and conservation within nearby protected areas and spaces.
  - Community-based educational initiatives to encourage eco-conscious living, recycling, and community gardening projects.
  - Opportunities for community engagement in environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.
  - Utilisation of communal rights to land and natural resources for the benefit of the community.
- 

It should be noted that resource or learning centres housing the hubs need not be expansive, state-of-the-art spaces. Rather, existing or underutilised buildings within a community can serve this purpose. In South Africa, as in other regions globally, there are often available municipal or government  
385 buildings that can be repurposed. Informal structures may also be considered. Furthermore, the three-hub concept can be decentralised, meaning it can be distributed across various locations within the community.

### **Praxis cycle step 7: Tracking progress and evaluating impact**

390 In this final step of our praxis cycle, we propose tracking the progress and evaluating impact to ensure that planned activities align community challenges and assets. Adding this step will also address another shortcoming in CBC, namely measuring the impact of its social aspects (Kaplan-Hallam and Bennett 2017). Here we recommend the use of a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) approach that can be used to track progress, to learn from the implementation of projects and to ensure  
395 that the interventions are not only impactful but also executed efficiently.

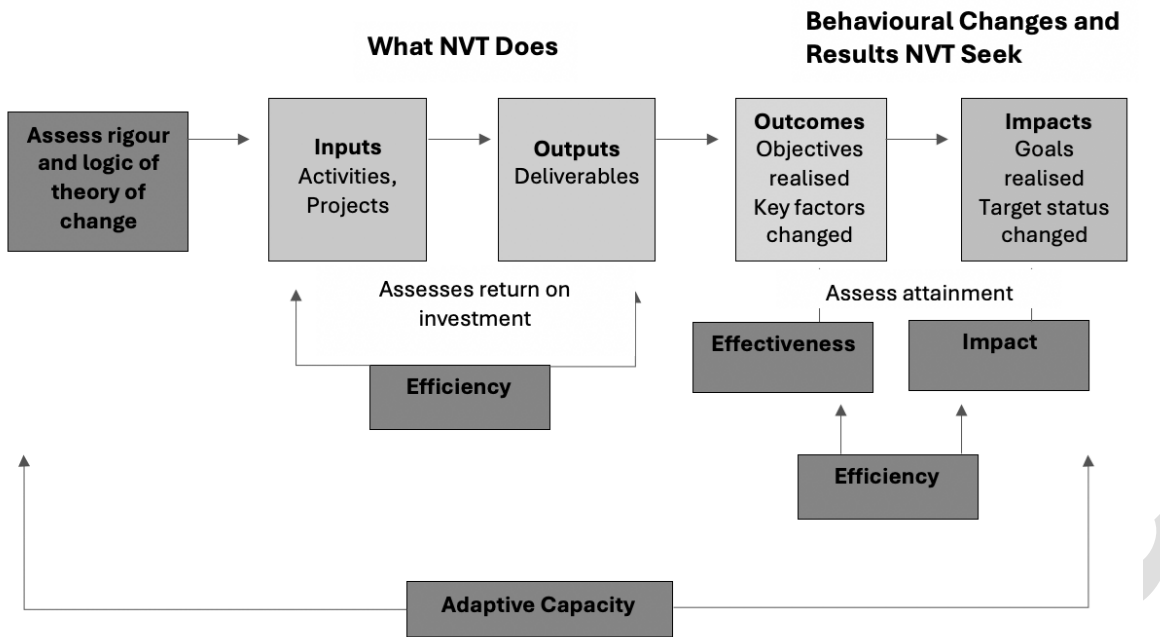


FIG. 8: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach

As depicted in Fig. 8, the proposed MEL approach can guide the assessment of the overall performance of planned activities. In this way, NGO-led organisations can constantly refine the strategy to enhance the overall success of their interventions. A logical framework can be used to provide clarity by tracking the progress made towards achieving the objectives. This also serves as a crucial link between something like a theory of change and the actions that can be taken to implement it effectively. Essential elements such as a vision, goals, objectives, outputs, activities (inputs), quantitative and qualitative indicators, verification and underlying assumptions should be included.

### Partnerships and collaboration

Considering that the primary mandate of most NGO-led organisations does not include community facilities and services, the success of our proposed model depends on collaboration and establishing partnerships with various institutions. For instance, by partnering with educational institutions and social support organisations to supply the required infrastructure and expertise for the anticipated skills development, education and healthcare programmes, NGO-led CBC organisations can enhance the social dimensions of CBC efforts without needing to possess this expertise internally.

### Conclusion

Through the development of our community-based cycle-of-praxis model, we have identified clear actions and pathways that enhance the social dimensions of CBC. Viewing these dimensions through

the lens of community well-being, socio-psychological and behavioral change can significantly improve social outcomes and lead to more effective CBC initiatives by addressing complex challenges throughout the social-ecological system. Such efforts are poised to make a greater impact on complex social and environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss, poverty and job creation. By prioritising community needs and capitalising on local assets, our model can create strong links between conservation outcomes and community well-being. However, achieving this requires a strategic shift towards impactful interventions that tackle the underlying causes of societal issues, thereby fostering healthier and more sustainable communities.

### **Author contributions**

All three authors (HC, SdP and WN) were involved the conceptualisation of the paper, fieldwork and the writing of the manuscript.

### **Conflicts of interest**

None.

### **Ethical standards**

The social study, which informed the model was approved by the North-West University's ethics community (nr). All prescribed ethical guideline were followed before, during and after the project.

### **References**