

2010-2023



Sustainable  
Livelihoods  
Foundation  
NPC

# IMPACTS

On 26th November 2010, SLF was registered as a Section 21 not for profit company.

SLF started with nothing other than the aspirations of its three co-founders to contribute to social development in South Africa and their sheer determination to make a difference.

From in-depth field research to informing policy and practice, SLF's work has brought about a range of cross-cutting, real-world impacts of global significance.

Some of our most important influences have included advancing debate and driving trends on matters such as township entrepreneurship, participatory community engagement, more equitable research methodologies, and climate justice.

We have maintained rigorous institutional integrity in partnership with seven elected and highly committed Board members.

We share with you an overview of our achievements since we started out.

Co-founders: Andrew Charman (PhD), Leif Petersen (PhD), Gill Black (PhD)

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# OVERVIEW

The Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation Non Profit Company (SLF) was established in 2010 with the aim of strengthening livelihoods, promoting health and building resilience among marginalised communities. Since establishment, SLF has

worked continuously in a range of contexts and disciplines with over 50 local, national and international funders and clients, conducting projects and interventions throughout South and southern Africa.

Our projects fall within a matrix of research, engagement and development, with our key themes of work focused on:

## Local Economies

Understanding, interacting with, and devising pragmatic programmes and policy to enhance development practice in informal livelihoods and township economies in southern Africa.

## Resilience

Research and engagement in collaboration with community partners for democratic development of solutions towards community, economic and climate change adaptation.

## Health Participation

Fostering public health and engaging communities in health science research through innovative approaches and creative methods.



Working with community partners from marginalized settings, and with support from collaborators and funders, SLF has driven a practical, grounded and evidence-based approach to its work across these themes. We have explored a range of important developmental challenges through intensive, on-the-ground investigation by a strong core team of economic, social science, architectural and health management experts. The SLF team has engaged decision makers in government, academia and the NGO sector to

inform development and policy making. SLF's work has taken on a policy focus over the last decade, increasing democratic processes in research activities, innovation in development practice, and supporting evidence-based planning in government. SLF's outputs now inform the highest levels of South African policy making. Further, our work has driven much development dialogue, especially in fields of development practice, climate change resilience, and research methods.





# OUR EVIDENCE-BASED METHODS

The principles of best practice in community, social and economic development must be grounded in solid evidence. By drawing upon decades of practitioner experience and ground-breaking iterative approaches of immersion and engagement within our team, SLF has been able to drive pioneering and innovative research techniques such as small-area censuses, community led research processes and an array of participatory visual methods. These methods and approaches have generated

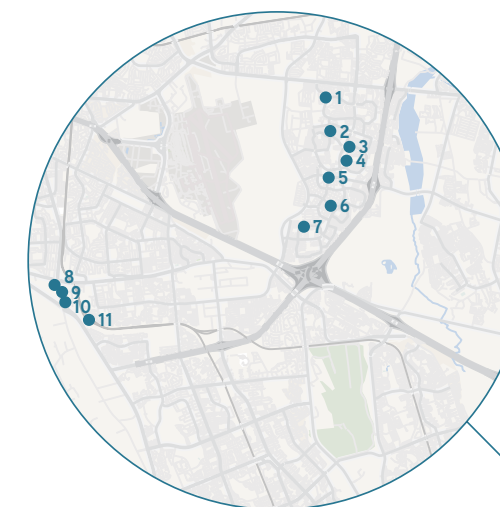
qualitative understanding of South and southern Africa's non-Western, organically emerged "majority world" where developmental needs are acute. Through committed project management and involvement in all aspects of theoretical review, evidence gathering and informing development recommendations, SLF takes full cycle ownership of its activities and outcomes. Many aspects of SLF's work have been independently peer-reviewed by national and international academics and development practitioners.



# The Small Area Census

Starting in 2009, SLF pioneered the mixed method of the "small area census" which combines South African township census data alongside qualitative business interviews into a range of geospatial products that came to reveal the important individual and collective findings

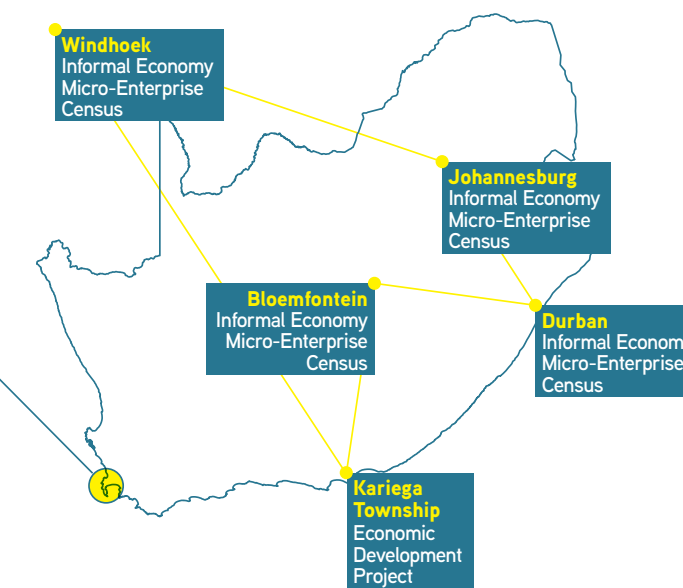
of township economies. This research has formed the cornerstone of SLF's informal economy research and development practice, transforming how policy makers and development practitioners interpret the township economy.



- 1 Western Province Township Economic Development Strategy (2020)
- 2 Creative Economies Music Album and Film Production (2017-2018)
- 3 Heart of the Matter Dietary Perception Study (2017)
- 4 Tuberculosis Awareness Delft Youth Theatre (2012)
- 5 Herbanisation - Urban Greening (2010-2015)
- 6 Informal Economy Micro-Enterprise Census (2009-2020)
- 7 Making All Voices Count Participatory Methods for Storytelling (2016-2017)
- 8 Bucket Loads of Health Water and Sanitation (2017)
- 9 Water and Fire Disaster Resilience (2019-2022)
- 10 Safe Shebeens Enhancing Safety in Township Nightlife
- 11 Youth Action Programmes (2014-2018)

## National Projects:

Township Economic Development Project (2020 - 2023)  
Informal Economy Micro-Enterprise Census (2009 - 2020)  
National Informal Grocery Retail Markets Study (2017 - 2018)  
Technical Support to International Labour Organisation (2018)  
Fairtrade Impact Study (2011)





# Engagement for development

An important challenge in the South African development context where entrenched inequalities are pervasive and persistent is finding ways to reflect the genuine voices of marginalised communities. SLF's use of methods such as participatory theatre, photovoice, digital storytelling, collective filmmaking, hand mapping, body mapping and community mapping have served to develop critical insights

into issues such as interpersonal violence, public health challenges, environmental disaster impacts and household resilience. The use of citizen voices has allowed SLF to broaden and deepen understanding of these important development matters among policy makers, researchers, civil society and community members.







# IMPACTS

## Policy and development impacts

From research and policy engagement to human development, SLF's work has brought about a range of cross-cutting, real-world impacts. Important impacts have been in the form of prompting debate and driving trends on matters such as township entrepreneurship, democratic methodologies, and climate resilience.

**Tangible evidence of impacts can be seen across an array of metrics:**

- **Over 60 peer-reviewed publications**, an academic book on township economy, multiple book chapters, a special edition on community engagement in health science research, and dozens of media articles on topics including economic and social development, public health and climate resilience with over 750 citations in the peer-reviewed literature.
- **More than 100 conference presentations worldwide**, including keynote talks at international meetings organized by Wellcome, the Global Health Network, North-Eastern University and Connecticut College in the US, Concordia University in Canada, and numerous academic and policy events held throughout South Africa.

- **Over 70 video outputs** including co-produced media from participatory engagement, short films and a documentary.
- **More than 100 client / funder reports and briefs** based on outputs of our work.
- **Policy development and strategic advice at all levels of South African government** on themes such as township economic development, climate resilience, public health, and spatial planning.

Inputs to the National Treasury, the Competition Commission, targeted mayoral committees, and national, provincial, and municipal departments including Economic Development, Water and Sanitation, Human Settlements, and Disaster Risk Management.

- **More than 10 local economy / community needs assessments and subsequent plans** for township economies and markets across South Africa. These have independently attracted **over R10 million in co-funding** from institutional partners and clients.
- **Leadership of online training courses** on the ethics of participatory visual methods for the Global Health



Network and community engagement and involvement in research for the National Institute of Health Research (UK) (NIHR).

- **3 influential and widely accessed website products** including [www.waterandfire.info](http://www.waterandfire.info), [www.emergentcity.co.za](http://www.emergentcity.co.za), [www.stateofthenation.net](http://www.stateofthenation.net).

### Public Exhibitions, Engagements, Events

- Our team has designed and facilitated **over 80 public exhibitions** and community & policymaker engagement events covering an array of topics, for example, urban greening, health awareness, urban mobility, community safety, reading promotion, gender and social inclusion, and opportunities for youth.



**Institutionally, SLF has also had the following impacts:**

- Created more than 25 full-time, and 250 part time and temporary employment opportunities.
- Sponsored, hosted and field-supervised PhD, Masters and undergraduate students including multiple international scholars.
- Maintained high institutional integrity with seven elected board members who have attended 50 board meetings.
- Mentored and built capacity of well over 200 township entrepreneurs, creative artists, local activists and community-based co-researchers across South Africa.
- We have collaborated with over twenty research teams nationally including groups at the Universities of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, the Western Cape, Witwatersrand, the Free State and Kwa-Zulu Natal, in addition to the Human Sciences Research Council.
- Internationally, we have formed significant collaborations with the Institute for Development Studies (UK), the Kenya Medical Research Institute, and the Universities of Concordia, John's Hopkins, Stirling, Glasgow and Oxford including the Oxford Clinical Research Unit in Vietnam, and the Madihol Oxford Research Unit in Thailand.

### Finances

- Since establishment SLF has grown its annual turnover from R25,000 to R6 million.
- Over R60 million financial turnover since establishment.
- Conducting individual assignments with up to R15 million project budget.
- Annual independent financial audits since establishment, with continuous unqualified audits since 2015.



# Showcased projects and outputs

**Cities Support Programme - Township Economic Development (CSP TED)** is a South African National Treasury funded project providing over three years of multi-disciplinary technical support to five major South African metros. The project seeks to pilot a transversal, participatory approach to township economic development to strategize, plan, fund, implement and monitor projects within specific

townships to achieve a meaningful economic development impact and institutionalise TED in the metros. SLF is the lead agency providing technical assistance to these metros and have identified and led 40 distinct projects including urban renewal and placemaking, enterprise development, policy and environmental sustainability.

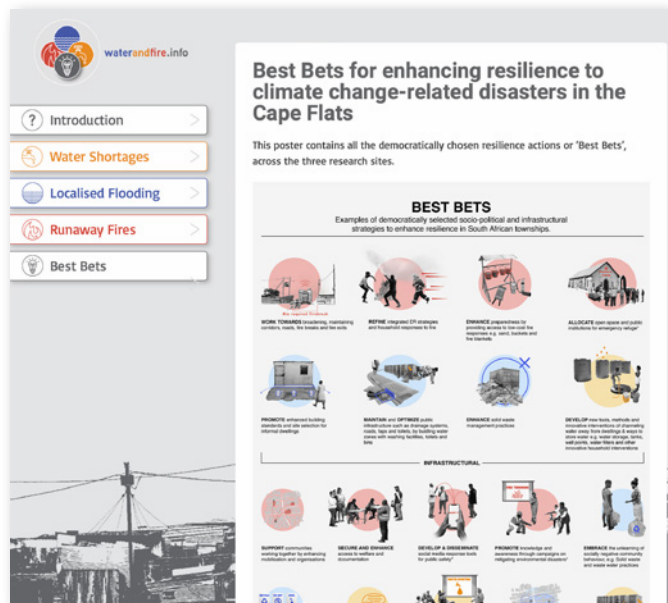


**Tshelimnyama Micro-Node Proposal: Perspective**  
Cities Support Program: Township Economic Development | Pinetown South | Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation | March 2022



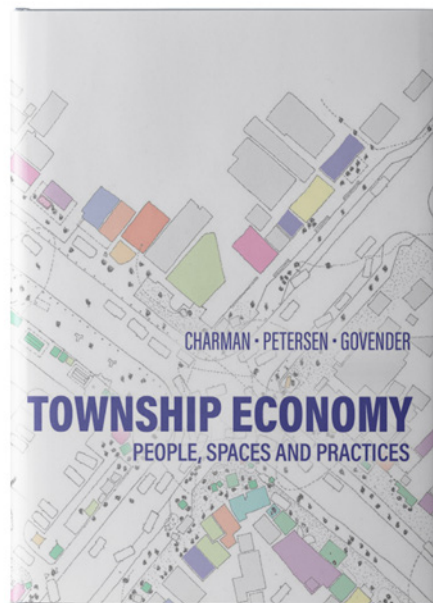


**UKRI GCRF: Water & Fire** - During 2019 - 2022, in collaboration with the Universities of Stirling and Cape Town, SLF implemented the three-year “Water and Fire” project. This project, funded by the United Kingdom Research Innovation Global Challenges Research Fund (UKRI GCRF), aimed to directly address disaster risk management of interconnected environmental hazards of runaway fires, localised flooding, and water shortages in marginalized, urban Cape Town communities. SLF tested new methods of complementary democratic and creative engagement to develop and advocate for community-driven solutions and resilience action to these hazards. The project brought together principles of disaster risk management with the democratic prioritization of risk reduction at a local level, while developing intervention strategies and sharing findings with local government and other stakeholders through a community-driven co-produced research and solutions development process. Visit <https://www.waterandfire.info> to see the outcomes of the project.



**Township Economy book** - In 2020, much of SLF’s body of work on the township informal economy was published in “Township Economy: People, Spaces and Practices” by SLF Directors Andrew Charman, Leif Petersen, and Board Member Thiresen Govender. The book comprehensively uncovers empirical patterns of economic activity in ten South African and Namibian townships. Drawing from over a decade of transdisciplinary economic, urban design, and sociological experience in those townships, building on a wide array of methods such as surveys, interviews, photographs, geospatial data, and drawings, the book showcases the space, place and functioning of township economies and the livelihoods of the people therein. Published by the HSRC Press, the book has been released to a global audience and is now progressing towards its second edition.

<https://www.hsrcpress.ac.za/books/township-economy-people-spaces-and-practices>



**Bucket Loads of Health (BLH)** showcases SLF’s engagement with at-risk communities in health science research. Funded through a Wellcome International Engagement Award, BLH responded to health challenges induced by a severe drought in the Western Cape province. To comply with extreme water restrictions, residents experimented with harvesting rainwater and recycling grey water. This introduced public health concerns, as these approaches carry numerous, significant health risks. Supported by SLF, the BLH project brought a microbiology team from Stellenbosch University together with residents of Delft and Enkanini. The community members participated in **body mapping, personal story telling and filmmaking with musical accompaniments** to reflect on their water challenges and how these connected to their health and wellbeing. Through a **knowledge exchange and co-learning** process, the creative outputs were shared with the microbiologists who in turn engaged the community members in the aims, objectives and techniques of their research including a tour of their lab. Health risks dialogue associated with using alternative water sources was facilitated to encourage the generation of community-driven ideas for safe water saving and recycling. Outputs and learning were shared with the public via exhibitions in the vicinity of the participating communities, making climate change science both accessible and relevant.



**Public and community engagement in health science research: Openings and obstacles for listening and responding in the majority world** is a Research Topic, published in the journal Frontiers in Public Health in the specialty section Public Health Education and Promotion.

Led by SLF in 2022, this collection explores approaches taken by engagement practitioners, engagement scholars, social scientists, and researchers to promote listening and responding to community voices in research processes. It examines multiple global health challenges and seeks to understand obstructions to meaningful integration of community voices in health science research in low-and-middle-income countries. The Research Topic comprises 10 articles including six original research papers, two community case studies, one methods article, and a perspective piece. Experiences are shared from Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America. The authors raise important questions and offer recommendations to strengthen and ground community engagement practice in global health research in resource-limited contexts.





# Testimonials



*The CSP have found SLF to be an outstanding partner owing to the team's extensive experience in and understanding of township economic development, high level of technical capability and expertise across a number of disciplines,... and passion for the programme and the delivery of its objectives.*

S. Mazibuko | Programme Manager Cities Support Programme; South African National Treasury

*The AfOx travel scheme is such a valuable way of bringing together African researchers to explore cross-disciplinary work together. We were delighted to host Dr. Gill Black from Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation in Cape Town, South Africa. Her organisation's creative, community-based participatory work on public health was an inspiration for us and our students. Having her with us for an extended visit allowed for numerous conversations and sparked new ideas for collaborative work across our institutions.*

Maureen Kelley | Professor of Bioethics, Ethox, Wellcome Centre for Ethics and Humanities, University of Oxford

*The contribution and work done by SLF on our Township Economy Growth Strategy has been of exceptional insight and quality. SLF's research methodologies and prowess in the sector resulted in the delivery of a product that will ensure real and practical implementation."*

John Peters | Chief Director, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Western Cape Government

*What has been done [by the SLF-led team] in this community is incredible. I would love to be part of it as far as I can so that we can action these plans that these community members have put together and we are on par with what they have said.*

Lynn Worship | Disaster Management, City of Cape Town









None of our work would have been possible without the perseverance of our dynamic team, or the recognition and support of multiple donors, funders, collaborators, partner organizations, institutions, and individuals to whom we are most grateful. We are as excited as ever about our future work and hope to continue our highly valued partnerships with all of you.

**[www.livelihoods.org.za](http://www.livelihoods.org.za)**