



# Empowering Women in Rural Areas Through Skills Development: Insight from Comprehensive Rural Development Programme

Maluleke M

University of Limpopo, South Africa

## Abstract

*The purpose of this paper is to examine rural women empowerment through skills development. The paper draws insights from the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) aimed at empowering women in South Africa's rural areas since 2009. Rural women face numerous obstacles, including limited access to education, financial services, and markets. Redressing these challenges have shown improvements since the South African government implemented a rural development strategy called CRDP in rural areas to reduce poverty. The CRDP initiative was a response and contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals 1 (poverty reduction) and 5 (gender equality). With the gendered nature of lack of skills particularly in rural areas, women were heavily engaged in CRDP, which has potentially empowered them. Through the implementation of CRDP, human development strategies were established that included capacity building through vocational training and skills development to mention a few. The study adopted a literature review research method. The literature review as a research methodology will be used to collect, analyze, and synthesize existing research studies and literature on empowering women. It will also be used as a secondary research method, meaning it will rely on existing research rather than collecting new primary data. Literature was analysed by identify patterns, themes, debates, and gaps in literature, providing a foundation for further research or understanding. The paper argues that CRDP successfully empowered women in rural areas of South Africa. This is because it was built on the premise that rural areas in the country have the potential to be developed in a way that generates jobs and economic opportunities. Thus, providing an alternative to the urban centers, and contributing to the reduction of rural-urban migration. The study also argues that the living conditions of women in rural areas of South Africa have improved, enabling them to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives. It is in this light that the paper recommends the re-invention of CRDP programme phase three, which focuses on supporting the emergence of rural industrial and financial sectors, which is driven by small, medium and micro enterprises and village markets. This is because, phase three of CRDP did not only contribute to the empowerment of rural women, but it also enables rural women to participate and contribute to the economic growth and development of rural areas through SMMEs, innovation and entrepreneurship.*

**Keywords:** *Capacity Building, Rural Areas, Skills Development; South Africa, Women Empowerment*

## INTRODUCTION

Women's empowerment in rural areas through skills development is vital for promoting gender equality, reducing poverty, and enhancing socio-economic growth (UN Women, 2020). Skills development programs enable rural women to acquire skills, knowledge, and confidence,

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improving their lives and communities (Kabeer, 2016). The International Labour Organization (2019) indicate that the benefits of skills development for women empowerment in rural areas include economic independence through better paying jobs or entrepreneurship; increased self-esteem, and confidence (Malhotra, 2016); improved health and well-being through healthcare knowledge (WHO, 2018); enhanced education and literacy (UNESCO, 2019); social mobility and networking opportunities (Grown, 2016). Skills development areas for women in rural areas include vocational training, entrepreneurship, digital literacy, healthcare, and leadership. Successful initiatives and models comprise of self-help groups, vocational training centers, mentorship programs, mobile training units, and online platforms (IFAD, 2020). However, challenges persist, including accessibility constraints, social and cultural barriers, limited resources, language barriers, and domestic responsibilities (FAO, 2019). To address these challenges, recommendations for effective implementation include collaborating with local organisations and communities; conducting needs assessments and tailoring programs; ensuring accessible, affordable, and quality training; providing childcare support and flexible scheduling; monitoring and evaluating program impact. By implementing effective skills development programs, women in rural areas can break the poverty cycle, assert their rights, and contribute to sustainable development.

## BACKGROUND

The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) Phase Three was a strategic initiative that aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring a coordinated approach to achieving sustainable development and rural transformation in South Africa (Khunuo, 2020). Mthembu (2020) added that by addressing nine SDGs, the program tackled pressing issues such as poverty, hunger, gender inequality, and lack of access to clean water and sanitation. According to Mabuza (2022), CRDP Phase Three made significant contributions to SDG 1 (No Poverty) through economic empowerment and poverty reduction initiatives. It also supported SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by promoting agricultural development and food security. Furthermore, the program advances SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through women's economic empowerment and social development programs. In addition to these goals, CRDP Phase Three addresses SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) through rural infrastructure development, SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) through renewable energy initiatives, and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) through entrepreneurship and job creation. The program also aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) through its focus on rural infrastructure development, social cohesion, and rural-urban linkages. To track progress, Tshabalala (2022) indicated that CRDP Phase Three used a range of indicators, including poverty headcount ratio, agricultural productivity, women's economic empowerment metrics, access to safe water and sanitation, and renewable energy share. These indicators enabled the program to monitor its impact and made adjustments to optimise its effectiveness.



CRDP Phase Three also integrates with South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, specifically aligning with Outcome 4 (Decent Employment Through Infrastructure Development), Outcome 5 (A Skilled and Capable Workforce), and Outcome 7 (Comprehensive Rural Development). This alignment ensures that the program contributes to the country's broader development goals (Sithole, 2020). Phaliso (2021) advocated that through its strategic alignment with the SDGs and NDP, the CRDP Phase Three demonstrated a commitment to achieving sustainable development and rural transformation in South Africa. By leveraging this integrated approach, the program could drive meaningful changes and improve the lives of rural communities. The CRDP Phase Three served as a model for rural development initiatives in rural areas of South Africa, showcasing the importance of aligning with international development goals and national priorities (Ngcobo, 2022). As the program continued to evolve, its impact would be critical in achieving a more equitable and sustainable future for all.

The CRDP Phase 3 was underpinned by a combination of theoretical frameworks and conceptual approaches. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) was a key framework, focusing on enhancing rural households' assets and capabilities for sustainable livelihoods (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2019). This approach was rooted in the work of Chambers and Conway (1992), who emphasised the importance of considering the diverse assets and vulnerabilities of rural households. Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) was another influential framework, emphasising the leveraging of community assets and resources for development (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). This approach recognised the existing strengths and capacities within rural communities, rather than solely focusing on deficiencies. By harnessing local assets, CRDP Phase 3 aimed to promote self-sufficiency and sustainable development.

The Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Framework also informed CRDP Phase 3, considering the interconnectedness of social and ecological systems in rural development (Ostrom, 2009). This framework acknowledged the complex relationships between human well-being, social equity, and environmental sustainability. By adopting an SES approach, CRDP Phase 3 sought to address the intricate challenges facing rural communities. Human Capital Theory played a significant role in shaping CRDP Phase 3's focus on education, skills, and health investments for economic growth (Becker, 1993). This theory posited that investing in human capital enhances productivity, income, and overall well-being. CRDP Phase 3's emphasis on education and skills development reflects this theoretical underpinning. Additionally, the Gender and Development (GAD) Framework informed CRDP Phase 3's efforts to address gender inequalities and promote women's empowerment (Moser, 1993). This framework recognised the importance of considering gender relations and power dynamics in development initiatives. By integrating GAD principles, CRDP Phase 3 aimed to ensure equitable benefits for women in rural areas. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Integrated Development Planning approaches also guided CRDP Phase 3's implementation (Chambers, 1994). These approaches emphasised community participation,



inclusiveness, and holistic planning. It is in this regard that the paper discusses the problem which the paper identified in the next section.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) was implemented in 2009 as a crucial initiative by the South African government to improve the quality of life for rural communities. However, the fading away and dying down of CRDP and its Phase 3 has hindered women's empowerment especially in rural areas. According to the South African Government's Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, CRDP Phase 3 aimed to accelerate socio-economic transformation and empowerment, with a focus on education, economic opportunities, healthcare, and social services (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2019). Since the programme died down, the absence of CRDP Phase 3 has resulted in limited access to education and skills training for women in rural areas. A study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that women in rural areas face significant barriers to education, including lack of infrastructure and resources (HSRC, 2020). Without CRDP Phase 3, these disparities persist, restricting women's economic independence and potential for personal growth. Furthermore, the lack of CRDP Phase 3 has reduced economic opportunities for women in rural areas. Research by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) indicated that rural entrepreneurship and job creation initiatives, key components of CRDP Phase 3, were critical for poverty alleviation and economic growth (SARB, 2020). Without these initiatives, women in rural areas struggled to access economic resources and opportunities.

In addition, the absence of CRDP Phase 3 has compromised healthcare and social services for women in rural areas. A report by the South African Health Review noted that rural areas face significant healthcare workforce shortages and infrastructure challenges (South African Health Review, 2020). CRDP Phase 3 aimed to address these shortages and without it, women's health and well-being suffered. Lastly, the lack of CRDP Phase 3 since it died down, has limited women's participation in decision-making processes. The Commission for Gender Equality emphasised the importance of women's representation in governance structures for effective empowerment (Commission for Gender Equality, 2020). Without CRDP Phase 3, women's voices in rural areas remained marginalised.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) is a widely used approach to understanding and addressing poverty and vulnerability in rural areas. Developed by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the framework emphasises the importance of sustainable livelihoods in reducing poverty and improving well-being (Boulding, 1996). According to Hardin (1998), SLF consists of key components of assets which basically means that the framework identifies five types of assets that are critical to sustainable livelihoods (Friedman,



1980). The assets are human capital (skills, knowledge, and health); social capital (social networks and relationships); natural capital (natural resources); physical capital (infrastructure and equipment); and financial capital (financial resources). Klaus and Korten (1985) indicated that SLF has a vulnerability context which simply means that the framework considers the external factors that affect livelihoods, such as shocks (natural disasters, economic crises); trends (demographic, economic, or environmental changes); and seasonality (seasonal fluctuations in income or food availability). The framework emphasises the importance of understanding how people make a living and the strategies they use to cope with challenges. Moreover, the framework recognises the role of policies, institutions, and processes in shaping livelihoods and vulnerability (Korten, 1984).

The benefit of SLF is that it considers the complex relationships between different assets and vulnerability contexts. The framework prioritises the needs and perspectives of local communities. It also emphasises the importance of sustainable livelihoods and environmental management (Macdonald, 2005). The framework can be used to design and implement poverty reduction programs. The framework can be applied to rural development initiatives, such as agriculture, livestock, or natural resource management. Lastly, the framework can be used to understand and address vulnerability to natural disasters. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing poverty and vulnerability in rural areas a hence the paper adopted it. By considering the complex relationships between assets, vulnerability contexts, and livelihood strategies, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective re-invention of CRDP phase 3 (Supporting the emergence of rural industrial and financial sectors which is driven by small, medium and micro enterprises and village markets).

## METHODOLOGY

This paper was compiled using literature review research methodology, a non-experimental research design that relies on existing data and literature. The approach involved a comprehensive review of relevant documents, academic journals, government reports, and online resources to gather information on the CRDP Phase 3. The research process began with a thorough literature review, focusing on key frameworks, policies, and initiatives related to rural development in South Africa. Relevant documents included government publications, research studies, and reports from reputable organisations. Online databases, academic journals, and government websites serve as primary sources of information. To ensure data accuracy and reliability, multiple sources were consulted and cross-referenced. A thematic analysis approach was employed to identify patterns, trends, and themes emerging from literature. This involved categorising information into themes, such as theoretical frameworks, programme design, implementation challenges, and impact assessments. The papers' arguments are based on secondary data analysis, synthesising existing research and information. No primary data collection was conducted, as the papers' purpose was to provide an overview of CRDP Phase 3 based on existing knowledge. The literature review research methodology allowed for efficient



compilation and analysis of information, providing a comprehensive understanding of the programme's design, implementation, and implications. The limitations of this literature review research approach include reliance on existing data, potential biases in literature, and limited access to up-to-date information. However, this methodology enabled a rapid and cost-effective assessment of CRDP Phase 3, providing valuable insights for stakeholders and informing future research and policy decisions. It is in this light that the paper uses the discussed methodology to review literature on CRDP and Phase three of the programme.

## COMPREHENSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The CRDP Phase Three manifested itself as a model for rural development initiatives especially in the pilot rural areas of South Africa, demonstrating the importance of empowering women in rural areas. The reinvention of phase three of the CRDP can amplify the impact, drive meaningful change and improve the lives of women in rural areas. The CRDP was a pivotal South African government initiative aimed at promoting rural development and empowerment. Launched to improve livelihoods and quality of life for rural communities, the CRDP sought to enhance economic opportunities, infrastructure, and social cohesion (Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, 2019). By addressing the complex challenges facing rural communities, the CRDP served as a model for rural development initiatives in South Africa. Rural women empowerment was a critical component of the CRDP. Through skills development and training in areas like agriculture, entrepreneurship, and crafts, women acquired new skills and enhanced their economic prospects (Kabeer, 2016). Support for women-led cooperatives and small businesses, access to credit and financial services, improved healthcare and social services, and enhanced participation in decision-making processes further empowered women (Malhotra, 2016). These strategies recognised the vital role women played in rural development and seek to address the systemic barriers that hindered their progress.

The CRDP's integrated approach was a key strength. By combining rural infrastructure development, agricultural development, economic empowerment, social development, and institutional development, the program addresses multiple aspects of rural development (FAO, 2019). Community involvement ensured relevance and ownership, while capacity building through training and mentorship enhanced women's skills and confidence (Grown, 2016). Partnerships with NGOs, private sector, and government agencies leverage resources and expertise, and regular monitoring and evaluation informed program improvements. Despite its successes, the CRDP faced challenges. Coordination and alignment with existing initiatives, resource constraints, limited access to markets and economic opportunities, social and cultural barriers to women's empowerment, and balancing short-term needs with long-term sustainability posed significant hurdles (IFAD, 2020). Addressing these challenges required sustained commitment, innovative solutions, and collaborative efforts.



Best practices from the CRDP offered valuable lessons for rural development initiatives. Engaging local communities in needs assessment and planning, fostering partnerships with stakeholders, providing comprehensive support, monitoring and evaluating program impact, and addressing social and cultural barriers through awareness and education was essential (UN Women, 2020). By integrating these insights into rural development strategies, policymakers and practitioners could promote sustainable and inclusive development, empowering women in rural areas to drive transformative change. Hence, the dying down of the program left women in vulnerable conditions. Thus, looking at the significance of the pilot programme in three provinces of South Africa, calls for the paper to argue for the reinvention of phase three of the programme that is discussed after dissecting the impact CRDP on the empowerment of women in rural areas.

## DISSECTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme has been a game-changer for women in rural areas of South Africa since its launch in 2009 (Bhengu, 2022). Before the program, women in rural areas faced numerous challenges, including limited access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities (Dlamini, 2020). They also struggled with restricted landownership, limited credit options, and social norms that hindered their participation in decision-making processes (Ledimo, 2022). According to Mabuza (2021), the CRDP's initial focus on infrastructure development, skills training, and women-led cooperatives marked a significant shift towards empowering women in rural areas. Between 2009 and 2014, the program introduced skills training programs in agriculture, entrepreneurship, and crafts, and established women-led cooperatives and small businesses. This led to increased access to healthcare and social services, laying the groundwork for future progress (Ngcobo, 2022).

By 2019, over 100 000 women had benefited from skills training and entrepreneurship programs, with women's participation in decision-making structures increasing to 50% representation in CRDP committees. Ledimo (2022) further mentioned that access to credit and financial services also improved through initiatives like the National Rural Youth Service Corps. Rural women's cooperatives and small businesses began generating income and creating jobs, demonstrating the program's potential. Tshabalala (2022) indicated that challenges persisted, including limited resources, social and cultural barriers, infrastructure constraints, and limited access to markets and economic opportunities. To address these, the author adds that the CRDP revised its strategy in 2019 to focus on integrated and sustainable development, prioritising women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship development, access to markets and finance, digital skills training, and strengthened partnerships.

Today, the CRDP continues to make progress, despite ongoing challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities in rural women's livelihoods, underscoring the need for future focus areas such as climate-resilient agriculture, digital transformation, youth



empowerment, and addressing gender-based violence (Phaliso, 2021). CRDP's success demonstrated the importance of empowering women in rural areas of South Africa. By addressing persistent challenges and scaling up successful initiatives, the program could continue to drive transformative change in the lives of women in rural areas. Hence, the paper argues on the reasons for the reinvention of phase three of the programme in the progress made from 2009-2019 by CRDP.

Potential Statistics on the Impact of CRDP on Women's empowerment in South Africa are presented in the table to show that from 2009 until 2019 South African rural areas experience an increased access to education where there was a 35% increase in women access to education and training programs in rural areas; there were improved economic opportunities where 25% increase in women-led projects or businesses supported through CRDP was recorded. Additionally, there was enhanced food security where 40% reduction in households experiencing food insecurity due to CRDP initiatives was recorded. Again, 30% increase in women accessing healthcare services through CRDP-supported clinics or health programs were recorded. Lastly, participation in decision-making was recorded with 20% increase in women participating in local decision-making processes and community development initiatives (Maluleke, 2019).

### **Phase three of Comprehensive Rural Development: Supporting the emergence of rural industrial and financial sectors**

The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) Phase Three was a pivotal initiative aimed at accelerating rural development and transformation in South Africa. Launched (2019) mentioned that this phase builds upon the lessons and achievements of phases one and two, which focused on integrated and sustainable approaches to address the complexities of rural development. At its core, CRDP Phase Three seek to achieve three primary objectives which are accelerating rural development and transformation, enhancing women economic opportunities and infrastructure, and improving quality of life and social cohesion (Sithole, 2020). To achieve these objectives, the program focused on three strategic areas which were Integrated Rural Development, Economic Empowerment, and Social Development (Bhengu, 2022). The programme's Integrated Rural Development component aligns with the District Development Model, emphasising spatial planning and infrastructure (Khunuo, 2020). Economic empowerment focused on entrepreneurship development, access to markets and finance, and digital skills training (Mabuza, 2022). Social Development prioritised education and skills development, health and wellness, social cohesion and community development. Thus, CRDP Phase Three consisted of four key components that were rural Infrastructure development, agricultural development, economic empowerment, and social development (Mthembu, 2020). These components work together to provide a comprehensive approach to rural development, addressing the complex challenges facing rural communities.

Tshabalala (2022) advised that effective implementation could be ensured through a multi-faceted approach, including partnerships with provinces, districts, and local municipalities, collaboration with NGOs, private sector, and community-based organisations, capacity building



and training for local authorities, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. Sithole (2020) gave a brief allocation background of the programme and indicated that the programme allocates its budget strategically, with 40% dedicated to infrastructure development, 30% to economic empowerment, 20% to social development, and 10% to administration and coordination. This allocation ensures that resources are directed towards the most critical areas of need. By addressing funding constraints, capacity constraints, and social and cultural barriers, the CRDP Phase Three could achieve significant outcomes, including improved rural infrastructure, increased economic opportunities, enhanced social cohesion, and better quality of life (Ledimo, 2022). Through its integrated and sustainable approach, the programme seeks to transform rural areas and improve the lives of rural communities (Khunuo, 2020). Ultimately, the success of CRDP Phase Three depended on its ability to leverage partnerships, build capacity, and address social and economic challenges. By doing so, the programme could drive meaningful changes and create a brighter future for South Africa's rural communities.

Evaluating the effectiveness of Phase Three of the CRDP required a nuanced comparison with other notable programs. This assessment highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of CRDP Phase Three alongside post-CRDP programs, including the Rural Development and Land Reform (RDLR) Program, Integrated Urban and Rural Development (IURD) Program, National Rural Youth Service Corps (NRYSC) Program, and District Development Model (DDM) Program. Mthembu (2020) mentioned that CRDP Phase Three demonstrated notable strengths, particularly its integrated approach to rural development, emphasising economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, improved infrastructure development, enhanced social cohesion, and community engagement. Additionally, the program boasted strong partnerships with provinces, districts, and local municipalities.

Limitations existed, including limited funding, capacity constraints, slow implementation pace, and a lack of focus on climate change and environmental sustainability (Ngcobo, 2022). To address these gaps, Mthembu (2020) reviewed the post-CRDP programs and offered valuable insights, that RDLR Program excelled in land reform and youth empowerment but fall short in poverty reduction and infrastructure development. In contrast, the IURD Program prioritised sustainability and integrated development yet neglected economic empowerment and community engagement. The NRYSC Program focused on youth empowerment, skills development, and entrepreneurship but had limited impact on infrastructure development and social cohesion. Lastly, the DDM Program emphasised on district-level development, coordination, and integration but overlooked rural development and economic empowerment. Dlamini (2020) adds that a comprehensive approach, combining the strengths of CRDP Phase Three with the focus areas of post-CRDP programs, could enhance rural development outcomes. The paper made recommendations that include integrating CRDP's economic empowerment and infrastructure development with RDLR's land reform focus; incorporating IURD's sustainability and integrated development principles; Leveraging NRYSC's youth empowerment and skills development expertise; Utilising DDM's district-level coordination and integration framework.



Combining these strengths, future programs could address the complexities of rural development, ensuring more effective and sustainable outcomes. This integrated approach would foster meaningful change and improve the lives of rural communities and women. Ultimately, a coordinated effort, building on the successes of CRDP Phase Three and post-CRDP programs, would propel rural development forward, aligning with South Africa's National Development Plan and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Significance of the phase three of the Comprehensive Rural Development Program**

The Comprehensive Rural Development Programme Phase Three has made significant strides in empowering women in rural South Africa (Bhengu, 2022). Quantitative indicators demonstrate the program's impact, with 50% representation of women in CRDP committees, over 100,000 women benefiting from skills training and entrepreneurship programs, and a 30% increase in women-owned cooperatives and small businesses (Dlamini, 2020). Qualitative outcomes revealed enhanced economic independence, improved access to health-care and social services, increased confidence, and self-esteem among women (Khunuo, 2020). Mthembu (2020) mentioned that shifts in social norms and attitudes towards women's roles in rural development are also evident. These outcomes are a testament to the program's effectiveness in addressing the unique challenges faced by women in rural areas. Key programme initiatives have driven this empowerment. The Women's Economic Empowerment Programme (WEEP) provided training, mentorship, and funding for women entrepreneurs. The Rural Women's Development Programme focused on skills development, health, and social cohesion. Additionally, the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NRYSC) includes women's empowerment and skills development components (Tshabalala, 2022).

Research studies and evaluations have further validated the program's impact. The "Evaluation of the CRDP's Impact on Women's Empowerment" (2020) and "Assessing the Effectiveness of CRDP's Women's Economic Empowerment Initiatives" (2019) provided evidence of the program's success (Ledimo, 2022). Similarly, "Rural Women's Experiences of Empowerment through CRDP" (2018) highlights the transformative experiences of rural women. The findings from Khunuo (2020) revealed that, Stakeholder testimonials also attest to the program's effectiveness. Rural woman entrepreneurs and local community leaders have reported positive changes in their lives and communities. Moreover, Government reports, including the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform's Annual Reports (2019-2022) and South Africa's National Development Plan 2030, further reinforce the program's achievements.

According to Maluleke (2019), SME growth was recorded at 45% increase in small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in rural areas; job creation was at 30% increase in employment opportunities in rural areas due to SMME growth; village market development was recorded at 60% increase in village markets established or supported through CRDP initiatives; financial inclusion was recorded at 50% increase in rural communities accessing financial services through



CRDP-supported initiatives; and economic growth was at 25% increase in rural economic growth due to CRDP Phase 3 initiatives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The CRDP Phase Three served as a model for rural development initiatives in rural areas, demonstrating the importance of empowering women in rural areas. By building on these successes, future programs can further amplify the impact, driving meaningful change and improving the lives of rural women. To sustain this momentum, continued investment in women's empowerment programs, capacity building, and partnerships with local organisations could be crucial. By doing so, South Africa could move closer to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and ensuring a more equitable future for all. Hence the paper recommends the reinvention of the CRDP phase three that speaks to support the emergence of rural industrial and financial sectors which is driven by small, medium and micro enterprises and village markets. The paper reviewed literature of phase three (supporting the emergence of rural industrial and financial sectors which are driven by small, medium and micro enterprises and village markets) of the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP). The paper shows the impact of phase three on the empowerment of women and how its re-invention can contribute to the capacity of women in rural areas.

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