



**PRESIDENTIAL
CLIMATE COMMISSION**
TOWARDS A JUST TRANSITION

June 2025

A Presidential Climate Commission Report

Komati's Just Transition

Assessing progress, challenges, and lessons

About this report

This report details progress under the decommissioning, repowering, and repurposing of Komati Power Station (KPS) covering the period since the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) published its first evaluation report in November 2023. Informed by desktop research and interviews with key stakeholders working in Komati, this report examines the current state of affairs and planned activities for the next years and reflects on the overarching successes, challenges, and lessons learned both for Komati and other decommissioning sites.

About the Presidential Climate Commission

The Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) is a multistakeholder body established by the President of the Republic of South Africa. The PCC advises on the country's climate change response and supports a just transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society.

The PCC produces recommendations to government based on research and evidence and facilitates dialogue between social partners—ultimately aiming to define the type of economy and society we want to achieve and detailed pathways for how to get there.



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Summary of key findings

Assessment of progress and plans

Since late 2023, there has been limited progress with respect to decommissioning (Component A) and repowering (Component B) activities under the World Bank-funded Eskom Just Energy Transition Project (EJETP). Procurement challenges and uncertainty over the extent of infrastructure demolition caused delays in securing an owner's engineer (OE) to lead work under Component A. Eskom expects to have an OE on board by July 2025 who will lead detailed planning for activities.

Component B has seen slightly more progress, with an OE appointed and procurement for the battery energy storage system (BESS), synchronous condenser, and Phase 1 of the solar photovoltaic (PV) system under way. Environmental assessments revealed that the originally planned wind capacity of 70 megawatts (MW) to be built within KPS is not feasible due to potential negative impacts on the local ecosystem and grid infrastructure. As a result, Eskom has increased the amount of solar PV to be built in Phase 1; however, a final decision on the total renewable energy capacity that can be built on-site is still pending. Eskom anticipates the construction of the 150 MW BESS to begin by October 2025 and Phase 1 of the 72 MW solar construction to begin by November 2025.

A wide range of activities and implementers operate in and around Komati and aim to help manage the socioeconomic impacts of the shutdown. These include Component C of the EJETP, led by Genesis Analytics as the implementing agent (IA), but also a broader portfolio of activities. To help coordinate these various activities and ensure effective stakeholder engagement and communications, several engagement platforms have been established. These include Eskom's Komati Stakeholder Forum, the community's Ward 4 Komati Community Steering Committee (Steer Co), and the PCC-led Komati Redevelopment Initiative.

Other stakeholder engagement initiatives include the development of the Komati Protocol, led by groundWork, which provides principles for engaging with the community, and the establishment of a community of practice that will focus on applying the asset-based community development (ABCD) framework in Komati. Plans for 2025 include a project implemented by Indalo Inclusive and funded by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit; GIZ) that will support the cocreation of innovations with the community related to the just

energy transition. The PCC will also be leading several engagement and communications activities as part of the communications workstream under the Komati Redevelopment Initiative.

With respect to reskilling and upskilling activities, 393 Eskom workers and community members received training in various areas, including renewable energy and soft skills, from October 2022 through 2024. A welding training facility was constructed, and an initial cohort of 7 people were trained. Additionally, 11 community members received training in data engineering and tech-related skills, and 22 small businesses received training under the Business Accelerator Programme. In 2025, Eskom plans to refurbish the Komati Training Centre, train additional cohorts in welding, and provide a 12-month training course for 15 community members in agricultural entrepreneurship. The IA will conduct several résumé/curriculum vitae development workshops and train additional cohorts in data engineering, in hard skills, and under the Business Accelerator Programme.

Although permanent and longer-term job opportunities have largely yet to materialise, several opportunities for short-term employment have been created. In 2024, Eskom employed 186 community members over a period of 75 days in an invasive alien species removal project. The Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) has also now established the Social Employment Fund (SEF) for Komati, which launched in January 2025. The SEF will provide part-time employment for 300 community members over the course of a year.

The longer-term employment opportunities will likely come from the various economic diversification opportunities being pursued. Eskom has established an agrivoltaics plant, an aquaponics system, and a containerised microgrid assembly line at Komati and is looking at ways to scale these initiatives. The IA is working to develop business cases for several priority initiatives, including an invasive alien vegetation removal and pelletisation project, personal protective equipment manufacturing and distribution, copper recycling, waste tyre processing, setting up a call centre, and steel fabrication. Outside of the EJETP, Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) is leading the development of an economic diversification strategy for Komati to be completed in mid-2025.

Community development and infrastructure remains one of the most challenging areas to progress in Komati. It encompasses a wide range of social and economic issues, many of which fall outside Eskom's purview but nevertheless strongly impact the ability of Komati to transition in a just manner. There has been

limited tangible progress in addressing the socioeconomic challenges noted in the first report, but several initiatives are in the advanced planning stages, with implementation likely to begin in 2025. This includes Breadline Africa establishing an early childhood development centre, Eskom refurbishing a building to serve as a community town hall, and the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA) undertaking a rapid diagnostic assessment in Komati at the request of the PCC.

The Steer Co is also hoping to support community development projects in 2025, but lack of funding, space, and engagement from relevant government departments are key barriers. There are also ongoing and planned socioeconomic development initiatives at the local municipal, district, and provincial levels that will likely impact the transition in Komati both directly and indirectly.

Disbursement of funds under the EJETP has been slow given the delays under Components A and B, which account for most of the funding. Furthermore, additional funding beyond the EJETP will be needed to support the transition at Komati, particularly in the form of grants. In late 2024, the Just Energy Transition Project Management Unit (JET PMU) launched the JET Funding Platform to help match credible transition projects to grant funding. Although the platform is not specific to Komati, it does have the potential to support Komati-based initiatives.

Key takeaways

Stakeholders interviewed for this report noted several successes in Komati as well as ongoing challenges and key lessons learned. There was a strong consensus that stakeholder engagement has improved significantly, with the community now taking an active role in decision-making. The work in Komati is also being looked at through a broader lens than before, encompassing the surrounding community and not just focusing on the boundaries of the power station. Furthermore, some important projects have gotten off the ground, and additional resources beyond the EJETP have been raised to support priority activities. Finally, implementers have shown an interest in and willingness to apply innovative and adaptive approaches to their work, which enables them to learn lessons and improve implementation going forward.

Several ongoing challenges also must be addressed to unlock further progress at Komati. Timing and sequencing remain issues; many projects still have not started, largely due to bureaucratic and procure-

ment-related challenges, and the scope of other projects has changed. Relatedly, the scale and sustainability of project impacts are concerns, with limited tangible benefits realised to date and uncertainty over whether proposed and initiated projects will be scalable and sustainable after grant funding ends. Additionally, although engagement and communications efforts have increased, some interviewees noted that not all efforts are of equal quality, and it has been difficult to get some key stakeholders to engage. Repeated consultations that do not include the right stakeholders or fail to result in subsequent action run the risk of disincorporating participation in the future.

Capacity issues are another key barrier, with all levels of government, community members, and donors and implementers facing a variety of technical, financial, and human resource capacity constraints. These capacity constraints exacerbate coordination challenges, resulting in a lack of ownership over key decisions and issues. This lack of ownership, as well as unclear delineation of roles and responsibilities, has contributed to the lack of progress in addressing critical social and community development issues in and around Komati.

Drawing on these successes and challenges, six key lessons emerged for Komati and beyond:

- Start early to enable proper sequencing so that new economic opportunities, including permanent and sustainable jobs, are available before a plant or coal mine shuts down, with proper stakeholder engagement embedded in the decision-making process.
- Avoid premature conclusions with respect to the just transition being a failure or a success; overly negative narratives are counterproductive.
- Use innovative approaches and funding models so that activities can be adjusted as lessons are learned on the ground.
- Do not lose sight of the bigger picture; the impacts of many just transition initiatives can take years to materialise, so it is critical to have a long-term vision that is connected to broader regional and national efforts.
- Focus on results-oriented engagement, with specific goals that must be accomplished through the engagement process, rather than the goal being engagement itself.
- Clearly designate responsibility and foster ownership over identified problems to overcome coordination challenges.





Komati



Introduction

Context

Eskom's Komati Power Station (KPS) was South Africa's largest power station when it was built during the 1960s. Its nine units operated off and on for decades until the station reached the end of its economic life and decommissioning began in 2018, with units sequentially removed from operation over the next four years.¹ In October 2022, the last operational unit was shut down. Shortly thereafter, a large World Bank funding package was announced to support decommissioning, repowering, and repurposing activities in and around Komati.

In 2023, at the request of President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC) examined the process of decommissioning, repurposing, and repowering at Komati. Although KPS closed for economic reasons and not due to the energy transition, the PCC took the opportunity to learn from the closure. In particular, the aim of the work was to evaluate the extent to which the process and early outcomes at Komati met the principles of justice (procedural, distributive, restorative) as set out in the country's Just Transition Framework.

In November 2023, the PCC published a report titled *Early Lessons and Recommendations from Komati's Decommissioning and Repurposing Project*. The report was informed by a six-month process of evidence collection and stakeholder feedback.

The key findings and recommendations from the initial report are as follows:

- The scope of the Komati project was initially too narrow, focusing within the boundaries of the power station, to achieve the type of transformational change necessary for the just transition and should be broadened to encompass the wider community and region.
- Stakeholder engagement before the plant shut down was not sufficiently inclusive or procedurally just.
- Community members and workers want to be involved in the decision-making processes. An asset-based community development (ABCD) approach could help facilitate engagement and community ownership of the process.

- Timing and sequencing are essential; engagement with stakeholders on decommissioning and economic diversification activities should start years before a plant is shut down.
- An intergovernmental, multistakeholder approach is necessary for successful transitional projects because Eskom cannot diversify the economy alone.
- Significant financial resources are required for decommissioning, repowering, and repurposing projects, with a variety of sources and types of finance needed.

Following the adoption of the report, the PCC initiated a program of work aimed to accelerate progress at Komati, referred to as the Komati Redevelopment Initiative. This work includes the convening of monthly coordination meetings chaired by the PCC with participation from key stakeholders, including Eskom, the provincial government, development partners, and nongovernmental organisations. Under this structure, the PCC created seven workstreams focused on issues including community development, power station repurposing and decommissioning, long-term development planning and economic diversification, infrastructure and social facilities, communications, mobilising financial resources, and monitoring and evaluation. The PCC's role extends beyond convening monthly meetings. It also actively supports stakeholders by facilitating engagement with relevant partners, helping to address challenges, unlock barriers, and secure funding opportunities. Eskom and the Komati community have also established their own coordinating bodies to help progress this work and ensure that relevant stakeholders are responding to community concerns.

Report objectives and scope

With more work now under way in and around Komati to support the transition, and in keeping with its mandate to monitor and report on progress, the PCC tasked its Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (M&E WG) with completing an updated assessment report. Thus, this report aims to identify the key stakeholders involved in Komati and their respective roles; detail what has been accomplished in and around Komati since the last report; provide an overview of planned activities for the next year; reflect on the extent to which the recommendations from the PCC's first report have been adopted; and summarise overarching successes, challenges, and lessons learned both for Komati and other decommissioning sites.

¹ For more information on the history of the power station and the early decommissioning process, please see the Presidential Climate Commission's first report on Komati, referenced below and available on the commission's website.

The report aims to be constructive while presenting a frank assessment of real progress based on evidence and stakeholder interviews. The ongoing challenges and lessons learned highlighted in this report are not intended to slow down the transition process but rather to ensure that socioeconomic measures are effectively in place at future decommissioning sites to avoid re-creating the issues experienced at Komati.

The report covers progress at Komati and the surrounding areas, including both completed and planned activities, as of March 2025. The activities reported include those that fall under the scope of the Eskom Just Energy Transition Project (EJETP) led by Eskom and funded by the World Bank. The project's objectives are to decommission the Komati coal-fired power plant, repurpose the project area with renewables, and create opportunities for workers and communities during the transition process. The EJETP is a key focus of the evaluation because it is currently the largest source of funding for transition activities at Komati, but other relevant activities being carried out in the community and region are also discussed in this report.

Methodological approach

In September 2024, members of the PCC's M&E WG began preparing an updated progress report on Komati. Following the M&E WG's approval of the report concept note, the report team reviewed meeting minutes from the Komati monthly coordination meetings and other publicly available documents. The data collected from these were used to identify key stakeholders to interview and relevant questions. From November 2024 through February 2025, the report team conducted interviews with 14 organisations and individuals who are key stakeholders in Komati's just transition (see Appendix B for a list of all interviews conducted). The interviewed organisations and individuals are directly involved in implementing transition-related projects in and around Komati or otherwise have responsibility over socioeconomic development-related activities in the region.

Throughout the research and writing process, the findings were discussed with the M&E WG for feedback. In February 2025, a draft report was completed and shared with all interviewees, the M&E WG, and the PCC for input.

Report structure

The report begins with an assessment of what has happened in and around Komati since the PCC's last report. This progress assessment is divided into three components in line with the EJETP scope but also covers broader stakeholders and activities. Component A includes the decommissioning, demolition, and rehabilitation activities. Component B is repowering with renewables. Everything detailed under these two components currently falls under the purview of the EJETP and its funding. Component C is the broadest and includes upskilling and reskilling for workers and community members, community development and economic diversification, business development, and communications and engagement activities. The "Component C and other socioeconomic development initiatives" section details activities led by a wide range of partners operating both within and outside the scope of the EJETP.

The second part of the report summarises overarching successes, cross-cutting challenges, and lessons learned both for Komati and future just transition project sites, and it reflects on the extent to which the recommendations from the first report have been successfully implemented. The report also includes a list of stakeholders, interviews conducted for the report, and a table of ongoing and planned projects as appendixes.





CHAPTER 1

A one-year assessment of progress

Component A

Component A of the EJETP focuses on decommissioning the plant and rehabilitating the site. A budget of US\$33.5 million has been allocated to this component under the World Bank funding, with plans for the process to take up to four years and have a one-and-a-half-year preparatory phase (PCC 2023). Eskom initially planned to appoint an owner's engineer (OE) for Component A before the end of 2023. However, the procurement process failed to identify a suitable tenderer. A second procurement process, with a revised scope of work, is under way, and an appointment is expected by July 2025.

Simultaneously, Eskom has been working to determine the extent of demolition that will be necessary under Component A. Per the terms of the agreement with the World Bank, Eskom is obligated to make the coal power station permanently inoperable; however, Eskom would also like to repurpose as much of the existing infrastructure as possible for other activities. For example, discussions are still ongoing with respect to how to use the cooling towers. Some interviewees, within both the community and Eskom, cited strong opposition to the demolition of the cooling towers as a sticking point in moving Component A forward in 2024. As noted in the PCC's 2023 report and in interviews with stakeholders for the current report, the community has expressed a desire to turn the cooling towers into a tourism centre and/or museum. However, Eskom said this is not possible as Komati is classified as a National Key Point under law which protects critical infrastructure. Although the towers may have limited utility from a repowering standpoint, they serve as a visible symbol of the plant's historical importance for the community. It was noted that senior Eskom leadership played a key role in helping to overcome some of this opposition and pushed the work forward. In August 2024, Eskom issued a request for information (RFI) seeking "creative and sustainable proposals for the repurposing of cooling towers at the Power Station," but it received no responses (Eskom 2024). Eskom is now looking to issue an expression of interest to a wider audience and is awaiting World Bank approval.

Considering these ongoing conversations, the scope for Component A has evolved over the past year. The request for proposals (RFP) for the OE issued in 2024 was not fully clear on the extent of demolition, and the resulting bids exceeded the budget that Eskom expected. Consequently, Eskom cancelled the initial tender in late 2024 and has finalised the revised terms of reference for Component A. Eskom has also received permission from the World Bank to conduct an expe-

ditioned procurement for the OE using the existing panel of qualified engineering consultants and expects to be able to appoint the OE by July 2025. Once appointed, the OE will conduct detailed planning for activities under Component A, including rehabilitation activities, and then work to hire an engineering procurement and construction (EPC) contractor to implement the activities. Given that Component A is relatively limited in scope compared to Components B and C, key stakeholders anticipate being able to progress quickly once the implementing partners are on board.

Component B

Component B of the EJETP includes the repurposing of the project area with renewable energy, batteries, and synchronous condenser and has a budget of US\$416 million. The initially planned capacity to be built at Komati was 150 megawatts (MW) from solar photovoltaic (PV) energy, 150 MW from batteries, and 70 MW from wind energy, with solar energy generated on-site from mid-2024 and wind from late 2025 (PCC 2023). To date, 500 kilowatts (0.5 MW) of solar have been built on-site as part of the agrivoltaics demonstration project. The energy generated from this project feeds into the services building and security.

In October 2023, a contract was awarded to WSP Group Africa Limited to serve as the OE for Component B. The initial tasks for the OE included finalising the concept designs and functional specifications for the renewable energy and battery storage bidding documents to recruit EPC contractors to implement these activities (World Bank 2024). In the case of the solar PV, for example, the EPC contractors will do the detailed engineering and construction work, then hand the commissioned plant over to Eskom for operation. The OE will oversee this process from a quality control and assurance perspective.

Throughout 2024, the OE and Eskom worked to assess the potential sites for renewables at Komati and do the required environmental assessments. This process revealed that, due to environmental factors—including the potential impact of wind turbines on birds and bats in the area and encroachment on wetlands and transmission infrastructure—it would not be feasible to build the originally planned wind capacity of 70 MW. Given space and environmental constraints, only 10–20 MW of wind capacity could safely be built within KPS, which would significantly reduce the economies of scale. This has led Eskom to recommend that wind turbines no longer be built on-site; however, the decision has not yet been formalised in relevant legal documents.



The initial plan was to build the solar and wind capacity in two phases. However, given the evolving plans on wind capacity and demolition, Eskom has revised the initially issued tender documents for solar PV to increase the capacity to be built in the first phase to 72 MW. The tender to procure this initial solar PV capacity closed in mid-February 2025, and Eskom plans to award a contract and begin construction by the end of November. This does not bring forward the full capacity that had been planned for Phase 2, but it does increase the initial amount of solar to be built. Construction for this initial phase will be in the outer areas of the plant where there are no decommissioning or demolition activities. The total renewable energy built on-site at Komati will likely be less than originally planned due to insufficient space to build enough solar PV to compensate for the anticipated loss of wind capacity.

The battery energy storage system (BESS) procurement has also progressed over the past year. The bid window for procurement of 150 MW for four hours closed in December 2024, and more than 10 responses were received. Eskom anticipates that construction for the BESS will begin by the end of October 2025. The construction period for the BESS and Phase 1 solar PV is expected to take 18 months, followed by 18 months of operational maintenance. The appointment of an EPC contractor for the synchronous condenser is also in the procurement stage.

In discussing the challenges and revisions to Components A and B, Eskom emphasised how long these projects take to develop. It explained that as the work

progresses, many of the initially planned activities change because of financial and technical reasons. Eskom highlighted that a key lesson from Komati is the need to start this work earlier and the importance of sequencing.

Another initial challenge was around the local content requirements. Eskom has a minimum threshold for the portion of goods and services that must come from local businesses. Given that the renewable energy sector is still fairly nascent, many of the related goods and services for the repowering activities may be difficult to source through local vendors. However, procuring all the goods and services from international vendors does little to build domestic industries and capacities. Discussions were held over several months to reach an agreement on the appropriate threshold for local content in this project.

Component C and other socioeconomic development initiatives

A wide range of activities and implementers are working in and around Komati to manage the socioeconomic impacts of the plant's shut down. This section includes updates on activities under the EJETP's Component C as well as the broader portfolio of relevant socioeconomic development initiatives related to Komati's just transition (e.g., outside of the EJETP). In this report, the activities are organised across thematic subsections: stakeholder engagement and communications, reskilling and upskilling, jobs,

economic diversification, community development and infrastructure, long-term development planning, and mobilisation of financial resources. Appendix C provides a breakdown of all ongoing and planned projects covered in the report.

Under the EJETP, a total of US\$47.5 million has been allocated to support Component C. The activities under Component C are informed by the socio-economic impact assessment (SEIA) that Eskom conducted for Komati. These activities encompass upskilling and reskilling for workers, community development, economic diversification, small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development, and communications and engagement activities.

Since the initial assessment report on Komati was published by the PCC, Eskom has worked to expand and accelerate activities under Component C while also recruiting an implementing agent (IA). In April 2024, Genesis Analytics was appointed as the IA; it is overseeing Component C of the EJETP in coordination with a consortium that includes two other organisations. Synergy Global Consulting is the lead on stakeholder engagement and community liaisons, and Phakamani Impact Capital oversees the enterprise and supplier development workstream and the training and skills development workstream.

The IA has defined three workstreams under its scope of work for Component C, aligned with the findings of the SEIA. The first focuses on creating new economic activity by identifying and building new business ventures. Priority initiatives being developed under this workstream include the following: invasive alien vegetation removal and pelletisation, personal protective equipment (PPE) manufacturing and distribution, development of a waste tyre processing facility, establishment of a copper recycling plant, and creation of a steel fabrication facility. These and other activities outside the EJETP are covered under the section on economic diversification below. Guiding principles for this workstream include leveraging the buying power of Eskom to create foundational revenue streams, colocating different aspects of production to cluster economic activity, and basing decisions on assessments of economic efficiency and sustainability (Genesis Analytics 2024).

The second workstream will support existing economic activity and tap into planned repurposing activities, with priority given to people currently living and working within Komati. To support this workstream, the IA recommended various skills development activities as well as the development of the SME Growth Fund. Priority activities under this workstream include the

Enterprise Development Programme to support local SMEs and the Career Development Programme to provide training in technology-related skills to community members (see the “Reskilling and upskilling” and “Economic diversification in Komati” sections).

The third and final workstream focuses on supporting community well-being. Critically, this workstream is not intended to duplicate or replace government services or funding. Priority projects being explored under this workstream include support for a community clinic, town hall, library, and bus shelters (see the “Community development and infrastructure” section).

Under each of the workstreams, there are myriad potential projects but a finite amount of funding available. To assess which projects to move forward, the IA has agreed upon a multistage assessment process with Eskom. The first stage looks at whether a project aligns with the EJETP vision and if there are any critical viability constraints. If the project meets these criteria, a more detailed assessment will be conducted looking at a variety of factors, including job creation potential, ability to make use of existing skills, ability to leverage private sector participation, whether Eskom can enable the minimum market demand required to make the opportunity commercially viable, and support for localisation. If projects are deemed viable based on these factors, they will then proceed to proposal development. If the proposal is approved by Eskom, it will then go to market for solicitation.

The IA will be conducting a baseline exercise in early 2025 to inform the detailed and longer-term work plan, including a monitoring and evaluation plan for the entire project. Meanwhile, work under Component C has continued to progress, along with other socioeconomic support activities, as detailed in the following sections.

Stakeholder engagement and communications

PROGRESS TO DATE

Significant stakeholder engagement and communications activities have been conducted since the PCC’s first Komati report was published. These activities have been supported by the creation of several new platforms to support engagement. Eskom has set up the Komati Stakeholder Forum (KSF) to improve engagement and communications between Eskom and the Komati community. The platform has clearly defined terms of reference, and participants include the KPS management team, the local councillor, nonprofit organisations, community leaders, and local entrepreneurs (Genesis Analytics 2024).

The community, with coordinating support from the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA), established its own engagement platform in August 2023: the Ward 4 Komati Community Steering Committee (Steer Co). Although its activities are not part of the EJETP, the Steer Co does aim to coordinate engagement between the Komati community, Eskom, different levels of government, the PCC, and various implementing partners. It also aims to help align community stakeholders and the various developmental initiatives, and it serves as the entry point to the community for organisations and institutions that seek to initiate or implement projects in Komati. It is currently chaired by Ward Councillor Edward Nyambi, with George Mpe serving as the deputy chairperson. The PCC has helped mobilise funding through the African Climate Foundation to support logistics and meetings for the Steer Co.

Given the growing demands placed on the Steer Co and the need to delineate roles and responsibilities, seven development pillars were established under the committee, aligned with the community's priority areas of concern: local economic development; social development, livelihoods, and human health; agriculture and land reform (food security) support; transportation, security, and safety; local infrastructure development; water, energy, and sanitation; and moral regeneration. Each pillar has one or two designated leads.

According to DARDLEA, this structure has enabled better organisation, a clearer understanding within the community of the various projects, and better relations and communications with Eskom. The Steer Co has also developed a communication strategy to guide communications and engagement with the community and external stakeholders to ensure timely access to accurate information. The strategy designates the chairperson and deputy chairperson as the primary messengers and stipulates, among other things, that the Steer Co will attend to queries raised by the community or other stakeholders within seven working days.

The Steer Co supported communication with external stakeholders in November 2024 when a delegation attended the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Baku, Azerbaijan. The COP is an annual international conference that brings together top leaders and climate experts from around the world to discuss progress and goals for addressing climate change, and the just transition has been a topic of increasing focus. Representatives from the Steer Co attended COP29 and participated in an event showcasing the importance of community inclusivity as a key mechanism to drive the just transition.

The PCC is also supporting engagement and communications efforts broadly through its Komati monthly coordination meetings and specifically through the communications workstream. In 2024, the workstream supported a variety of activities, including drafting a communications plan, which lays out key messages and talking points on Komati so that all stakeholders have a common base of information, and presenting on progress at Komati to the National Communicators Forum.

The IA has also been leading engagement efforts under the EJETP since beginning work in April 2024. The IA reported weekly visits to Komati and noted that dynamics have improved significantly thanks to working closely with the Steer Co and ward councillor to codevelop projects. Other implementing partners and stakeholders have also noted engagement and communications as a notable area of progress in Komati.

However, despite some attempts to support engagement between the KSF and the Steer Co, questions remain about whether having both platforms is necessary or helpful. Some interviewed stakeholders suggested combining the two platforms. Community members view the Steer Co as the venue in which they have real ownership and say. On the other side, Eskom views the KSF as critical to its own engagement activities both with community leaders and the surrounding farming areas.

SUCCESSSES

In general, interviewed stakeholders agreed that engagement is one of the areas that has seen the most improvement in Komati. The creation of the community Steer Co, the PCC's monthly coordination meetings, and Eskom dedicating more time and resources to this work were all cited as key to progress. Additionally, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Grievance Redress Mechanism for the EJETP have been successfully established.

To help guide community engagement and development activities, groundWork worked throughout 2024 to develop the Komati Protocol, which provides principles for how facilitators and other actors in the Komati area should engage the community in a procedurally just manner. A day-long workshop was held with the Steer Co to review and provide feedback on the protocol, which has subsequently been approved.

Eskom noted that one of the biggest accomplishments with respect to communications and engagement over the past year has been creating a shared and accurate understanding of why Komati closed and the opportunities around the just transition—a point of tension and confusion noted in the PCC's first Komati report.

According to Eskom representatives, there is now greater understanding within the community that Komati closed for economic reasons, and community members are no longer holding on to false hope that the coal-fired power station will come back online. This understanding has also helped community members see the potential opportunities that could arise from the energy transition, but the process is still ongoing. Changing the narrative and mindsets regarding the just transition requires a collective effort by many and cannot be accomplished by Eskom alone.

Eskom attributes this mindset change to open and honest dialogue, supported by the community information centre that has been set up at KPS, where community members can come to ask questions, provide feedback, and tour the facilities. The community centre employs two community members, which has created more trust and buy-in as well.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Despite progress, some challenges around communications and engagement persist. For example, according to some interviewed stakeholders, there are still information barriers with the community not having immediate access to critical updates. Most of the stakeholders involved in Komati rely on the Steer Co to communicate relevant updates to the community and collect feedback. Stakeholders share updates with the Steer Co through the various engagement platforms that have been established, and the Steer Co, in turn, hosts quarterly feedback sessions with the wider community. However, if the Steer Co is not provided with accurate information in a timely manner, then this leads to a breakdown in the communication chain. There have been instances in which the Steer Co has had to repeatedly request information and only received it after several months, if ever (e.g., the asset register and updates on the social relief packages; see the “Community development and infrastructure” section for more details). Therefore, it is critical that information is shared with the Steer Co as it becomes available. If there is uncertainty or bad news, this also must be communicated.

Additionally, the fact that the SEIA report covering the next plants to be decommissioned has been completed but not released was flagged as a broader transparency concern.

There are also many different actors involved in Komati, and this can make it difficult to understand and effectively communicate the various roles and agendas of these different organisations. Furthermore, these actors are unevenly involved, and many of the actors that should be highly engaged are currently not, for a variety of reasons.

Some departments from the Mpumalanga provincial government have been heavily engaged in Komati, particularly through its support of the Steer Co; however, several noted that other provincial departments, as well as local (Steve Tshwete Local Municipality [STLM]) and district (Nkangala) municipal government involvement is lacking. The municipal and local governments face multiple competing demands on their limited resources, which impact their involvement. However, their leadership will be critical to building and shaping policies and projects in and around Komati.

One interviewee noted the importance of being comfortable with discomfort. Some implementing partners may try to avoid conflict or delays by excluding stakeholders that they believe could disrupt the process, but doing so runs the risk of creating bigger problems down the line. Conflict is unavoidable and natural when operating in highly contested spaces, and it is essential to have qualified community engagement experts to help navigate these situations.

PLANS FOR 2025

To continue building on progress in stakeholder engagement and communications, and to address the ongoing challenges, several new communications and stakeholder-engagement projects will be implemented throughout 2025 and beyond.

To help support community engagement, the PCC helped mobilise funding through the German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit; GIZ) to work with Indalo Inclusive, a nonprofit organisation that aims to support green entrepreneurship and has a history of supporting engagement efforts in similar contexts. Indalo Inclusive is leading a project in Komati throughout 2025; however, it should be noted that its scope of work is not focused on resolving stakeholder conflicts. Indalo’s work in Komati will have four components, to be implemented over a 12-month time frame.

The first part of Indalo’s work will focus on building awareness and understanding of climate change and the just transition within the community. During the first quarter of 2025, Indalo hosted three workshops on climate change and the just transition for the community. This workstream also includes conducting a situational analysis and stakeholder mapping to understand opportunities and challenges and identify stakeholders with interests and influence related to Indalo’s scope of work. The analysis and mapping will be living documents that are updated as additional information is gathered throughout the project. They aim to improve understanding of the status quo in

Komati, including factors that are difficult to capture in a desktop review, such as culture and social hierarchy. They will help shape the entire project, identify the things that are important to the community, and enable a more inclusive process. The analysis will also help inform the planned community awareness and business exposure workshops under this component. The latter workshops will involve bringing in entrepreneurs from around the country to present on successful innovations they have developed, with a focus on green entrepreneurship.

The second component of the work focuses on codeveloping innovations within the community through participatory, inclusive processes. This includes cocreation workshops with the community to better understand what the needs are. The plan is to have community workshops across three geographic areas: Komati and surrounding farms, Blinkpan/Koornfontein and surrounding farms, and Lesedi Village. The goal is to identify two community-owned innovations per area for a total of six innovations to be further developed under the third component of work.

This second component also includes the development of a gender and youth analysis report. Indalo's previous work has shown that women and youth often have different needs and interests, but they may face challenges voicing their needs and concerns in open forums due to power and gender dynamics. The idea is to have more targeted engagements with these groups to identify specific interventions of interest to them, to be summarised in a report and integrated into the cocreation process.

The third component under Indalo's scope of work is support for innovation development and testing, business incubation, and piloting. This stage of work will further develop the six innovation concept notes created by community members under the second component, testing the innovations and developing hypotheses, business plans, and financial forecasts for each innovation. Indalo will also help support the registration of innovations, and some grant funding will be provided for three selected innovations. There is currently R100,000 set aside for three innovations, but there are plans to support mobilisation of additional resources (financial and technical) for all six innovations. An innovation symposium is scheduled to take place on 29–30 July 2025, where the innovations will be pitched for additional funding. The fourth and last component focuses on communications and showcasing the project results.

Indalo is also supporting the Komati Facilitators' Community of Practice launched under the Komati monthly coordination meeting's community development workstream. Participants focus on how to best facilitate community-centred development in Komati. Their aim is to cocreate an inclusive, safe space where best practices are explored and celebrated and where conflicts and challenges are transformed into valuable learning opportunities. The group has also been put forward as a vehicle for applying the ABCD framework in Komati, where practitioners can explore what modifications may be necessary for the just transition context and possibly compile a lessons-learned publication about experiences with the ABCD approach. The group is led by groundWork, and Indalo provides coordination support to facilitate these discussions; it has met twice as of March 2025.

There are also several pieces of work being led by the communications workstream for 2025. The communications plan is expected to be finalised early in the year, which will help guide communications activities in Komati by focusing on three priorities: developing key messages for the Komati annual report, creating information platforms (e.g., websites and information hubs), and enhancing media engagement and outreach efforts. The PCC is still awaiting sign-off from key stakeholders on the plan. The communications workstream is also leading an audit of key websites to assess available information on Komati as well as on accessibility, language, and document structure to enhance public access to relevant materials. The findings will be shared once the sign-off process is completed. Other planned communications activities include the development of a podcast that aims to improve understanding of the just transition in South Africa to also be aired on the radio (in English and Siswati) throughout Mpumalanga and potentially other provinces. This project is supported by GIZ.

The communications workstream and the PCC will also continue efforts to engage key stakeholders and support transparency throughout 2025. A briefing for municipal and provincial communicators is set to take place early in 2025 as well as a briefing to the South African National Editors' Forum and the Foreign Correspondents Association of Southern Africa.

At a high level, the data collected for this report indicates that great efforts have been made since the initial Komati report was published to enhance engagement and rebuild trust with the community and other stakeholders. There have been improvements in many respects, but the situation is still very fragile, and community members are understandably suspicious of external organisations coming in to implement new projects.

Reskilling and upskilling

PROGRESS TO DATE

Training for workers and community members was one of the earliest activities to begin as part of Komati's transition process, and it continued to expand throughout 2024. As emphasised by the Steer Co, the new value chains that aim to be created in and around Komati require entirely new skill sets for workers. Various training programmes have begun, but many who have received training are awaiting the start of projects that will enable them to put these new skills to use.

In September 2022, the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet (GEAPP) agreed to provide grant funding to support the establishment of a Komati training facility in partnership with the South African Renewable Energy Technology Centre (SARETEC). The aim was to begin training as soon as possible while concurrently developing a physical training centre. Starting in October 2022 through 2024, 393 Eskom workers and community members received training in various areas, including renewable energy and soft skills. To select people for the training, Eskom workers had the opportunity to apply based on their skills, and community members were identified with the help of community leaders or through open calls, depending on prerequisites for the training. According to interviewees, one challenge in terms of including community members in the trainings offered to date has been that many of those who are unemployed in the community lack the educational or skill prerequisites needed to begin the training. There are efforts under way to look for trainings that are more accessible for community members.

While training is one of the few workstreams that has had tangible outcomes to date, progress has still been slower than initially anticipated. The plan had been to construct the physical training facility concurrently with the initial trainings, but that has yet to be completed. Although the initial plan was a combined infrastructure and training package through SARETEC, this has been revised into two core components of training and infrastructure, with SARETEC having successfully completed Phase 1 of training. GEAPP and Eskom are currently working together to identify service providers for Phase 2 of the program, which will separate the training and infrastructure development. The hope is to bring in local technical and vocational education and training institutions to provide some of this training while also leveraging existing programmes.

Other progress under reskilling and upskilling includes the completion of the welding training facility, which has trained 7 people to date. Also, the IA for Com-

ponent C of the EJETP has trained 11 community members in data engineering and tech-related skills. Six of these people have taken an exam to progress to Microsoft Azure and Power BI modules for further skills development. Some of the community members who have participated in various training opportunities offered to date are shown in figure 1.

Additionally, training for SMEs has commenced under the Business Accelerator Programme, which is part of the Enterprise Development Programme. To support this, the IA established an online platform called IncubateMe. Interested SMEs register on the IncubateMe portal and undergo a detailed assessment to determine their stage of development (from start-up to well established), goals, and the type of support needed. There were 22 small businesses included in the first cohort that registered through IncubateMe and received training accredited by the Construction Education and Training Authority in 2024. In December, the businesses that had undergone the training submitted business plans and other required documents as evidence of completing the training.

Outside of trainings happening immediately in Komati under the EJETP, other partners are leading regional trainings with potential benefits for Komati. For example, DARDLEA has hosted several trainings throughout the province to build awareness and capacity among traditional leaders and healers on climate change and the just transition. Additionally, Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) is providing municipal and provincial officials throughout the country with training on just transition and green economy topics to enhance capacity to support future projects, including those in Komati. Thus far, training has been conducted in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, and Gauteng and has included a mix of representatives from various levels of subnational government.

PLANS FOR 2025

In terms of plans for 2025 and beyond, an RFP to refurbish the Komati Training Centre closed in early February. Eskom is targeting a completion date of August 2025. The IA is planning to hold résumé/ curriculum vitae (CV) development workshops for the community throughout 2025. The Steer Co has raised some concerns about the usefulness of holding these workshops now given the lack of available job opportunities in the community.

There will also be a second intake for the Business Accelerator Programme in 2025, and a second cohort of 18 participants began the data engineering training in February 2025. From the group of people taking the Power BI training, the IA plans to select two



Figure 1 | Community members have participated in various employment and training programmes including alien invasive plant removal and training in data analysis, renewable energy and welding

individuals to serve as interns who can be trained as facilitators for future trainings. To support hard skills training, the IA has designed and received approval for a training programme that will include theoretical and practical components followed by 18 months of on-the-job training with an approved employer. This will be concluded with a trade test qualifying the individual as an artisan. The skills to be developed under the programme include electrical, mechanical fitting, boiler making, and welding. This is still subject to final approval by Eskom, but if approved, it will begin in early to mid-2025. Additionally, the next cohort for the welding training was expected to begin in April 2025.

Eskom also plans to commence training for agri-pre-neurs in 2025. Funding has been approved for 15 community members to undergo a 12-month program that includes both theoretical and practical training for building a business around agriculture. The agrivoltaics plant and aquaponics system built at Komati will be utilised in the training.

Outside of the EJETP work, groundWork has drafted a proposal to conduct community-based planning training. The training is targeted at steering committees, other community structures, and local municipal officials and aims to support inclusive community planning within the context of the just transition. The training is still being finalised and conversations on next steps are ongoing, but the goal is to eventually provide the training in multiple communities impacted by the decommissioning of coal plants.

Jobs

Given that several activities in Komati are in the early stages or have yet to begin, many of the envisaged job opportunities have yet to be created. To help address this, some shorter-term employment opportunities have been developed. In 2024, Eskom implemented an invasive alien species removal project that employed 186 community members over a period of 75 days. Eskom is now finalising the business case for extending this initiative and tying it to other economic diversification opportunities.

Additionally, the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) of South Africa was approached by the PCC in 2024 with a request to put together a work programme at Komati, similar to what the IDC has supported elsewhere. The IDC is fully owned by the South African government, and its work aims to support job-rich industrialisation and inclusive economic development (IDC n.d.).

By June 2024, the IDC had raised R11 million from its own balance sheets to support the creation of the Social Employment Fund (SEF) at Komati. This funding will be able to cover stipends and programmatic costs for 300 people for 100 workdays over the course of one year across four themes: education, food security, sports, and health. Although the initial funding only covers one year, the hope is that additional fundraising can be conducted during 2025 to extend it to three years.

In July, the IDC finalised a contract with the Seriti Institute to serve as implementing partner for the SEF. As the implementing partner, Seriti will manage the call for applications to fill the 300 jobs, 10–12 percent of which will be team leader roles with higher skills requirement. Recruitment was initially delayed due to concerns from the Steer Co, whose members felt that there was insufficient information on the training and monitoring to be undertaken as part of the SEF. Once the IA provided the requested details, the Steer Co gave its approval for the project to move forward. The SEF launched in January 2025, and recruitment for participants began in February with a first cohort of 100 participants expected to begin in late March, working on projects related to food security and nutrition.

Although this work is now progressing, this example points to a difficult trade-off that must be balanced at Komati and in future decommissioning projects. The community understandably wants a say in its own development and to have greater agency than it was afforded earlier in the process. At the same time, various stakeholders have called for an expansion and acceleration of work to more quickly address the negative impacts of the closure, including job loss. Furthermore, stakeholders, including implementing partners, have their own goals and performance metrics that impact project design and implementation.

The need for inclusive stakeholder engagement and expediency must be balanced. Of course, starting the transition process earlier at other sites will allow for a more robust engagement and input process without necessarily delaying implementation. Furthermore, failure to conduct adequate engagement at the beginning will often mean larger problems and delays down the line. Finding the balance between moving at speed and bringing all stakeholders on board at Komati remains a challenge.

Another challenge—in terms of creating job opportunities for the community—that was noted by some interviewees is that many community members are not qualified to fill the jobs that have been created thus far or those that are anticipated to be created. For example, while the renewable energy projects under Component B are anticipated to create numerous jobs, many of these are likely to be highly technical and will require specialised skills that may not be readily available within the community. Addressing this challenge will require either identifying and providing the education and training necessary to prepare community members for these jobs or creating additional job opportunities that are better aligned with existing skills and education levels in the community. As implementation expands and accelerates in 2025, it is expected that more job opportunities will become available.

Economic diversification in Komati

While the SEF will hopefully provide shorter term relief for unemployment, other economic diversification activities are still moving forward with the aim of providing medium- and longer-term job creation and economic growth in and around Komati. There are several projects that have been piloted as well as many more under consideration for further development.

The agrivoltaics plant and aquaponics system have both been built at Komati. Fresh produce from the plant is used by the Komati catering contractor and donated to the Blinkpan school. A former security manager from KPS now runs the aquaponics facility, as depicted in Figure 2. Eskom is undertaking engagements to discuss expansion and further utilisation of these facilities, in addition to using them for training, as mentioned earlier.

The containerised microgrid assembly activity has also seen notable progress. Two assembly lines were created at Komati with 25 artisans, welders, and engineers on each who can assemble one container per week (Genesis Analytics 2024). To date, 17 microgrids have been built at Komati. However, a feasibility study by Eskom showed that production costs must go down to make this a sustainable business venture in the longer term. Hence, assembly of additional units is currently paused as Eskom works to secure an agreement with the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) to support this work, including conducting a regional market assessment, creating a commercialisation strategy, and updating the business case.

To help guide the economic diversification work more broadly, TIPS is leading the research and writing of a report on options for economic diversification in Komati with funding from GIZ and in consultation with the PCC. This is part of the Just Transition to a Decarbonised Economy for South Africa (JUST SA) project, which is discussed further under the “Long-term development planning” section. The strategy will focus on the Ward 4 area but looks at the surrounding areas as well given that it is very difficult to diversify a small area in isolation. The work is still in the early stages, but TIPS has undertaken a comprehensive literature review, has developed an analytical framework for economic diversification, and is working to develop interview questionnaires to facilitate stakeholder interviews in March and April 2025. The strategy aims to look at what has already been done in and around Komati in terms of economic diversification research and development and repackage it as a very localised

strategy. This will be informed by stakeholder engagements in the community and more broadly. The focus will be on activities that fall outside the fence of the power station. TIPS aims to submit the final strategy to the PCC by August 2025.

There are six priority initiatives for economic diversification under Component C that will be pursued by Eskom and the IA in 2025. The first is the invasive alien vegetation removal and pelletisation project, which would build on the work detailed in the previous section and look to develop a facility that produces pellets with high energy density to be used as a sustainable fuel with clean cooking applications. The second is the PPE manufacturing and distribution facility. Eskom is also exploring the possibility of establishing a copper recycling plant that would process scrap copper into reusable materials for industrial and commercial applications.

Another potential opportunity is around waste tyre processing, which would make use of the existing stockpile of waste tyres throughout the country. A processor, proposed to be based at Komati, would collect the tyres and recycle them into a variety of products, including furniture and waste tyre crumbs that have several applications and a large export market. The fifth opportunity is around setting up a call centre for a global business services (GBS) operator in Komati, and the sixth priority initiative is a steel fabrication facility, which would produce steel products for various applications. The IA is working to further develop the business cases for these initiatives and has issued RFIs for the first four initiatives and is working to finalise an RFP for a feasibility study to investigate the economic viability of a call centre.

Additionally, a tender to conduct a feasibility study looking at the potential for building a biogas plant at Komati was released in January 2025 and closed in March. Exploratory research is also in progress for repurposing of the demineralisation water treatment plant, oil seed plant cultivation and processing, and vanadium redox flow battery manufacturing.

Eskom is also working with the local municipality (STLM) and the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDT) on establishing a steel incubator in Komati in partnership with the Mpumalanga Stainless Initiative.

In early 2025, Eskom plans to launch a calendar of business development events open to a broader audience. The plan is to offer training sessions that are open to all SMEs in the region, with the events advertised through the Ward 4 councillor and Steer Co as well as at the information centre.

Under the Enterprise Development Programme, building on the training provided under the Business Accelerator Programme, the IA is launching the Finance Accelerator Programme, which aims to connect the SMEs to funding. This could potentially be done through the SME Growth Fund, which is currently being designed by Eskom but is not yet established, or through the open market. The IA will provide ongoing support to the businesses throughout the process of applying for funding and the loan period if secured. The IA is in the process of recruiting two interns from the local communities to be stationed at the information centre in Komati to provide business development support.

Efforts are also under way to strengthen relationships with larger businesses to integrate local small businesses into supply chains. These efforts include working to understand the supply chain requirements and how to enable local small businesses to meet these requirements and successfully apply for tenders. However, progress in advancing support for local businesses has been slowed by limited access to the local SME database.

The Steer Co is also looking into economic diversification opportunities in agriculture, but access to land is a key issue. It is looking into opportunities around greenhouse farming, which requires less land and can produce year-round. The goal is to connect the production to food vendors and translate this into cash flow for the community.

STLM also highlighted business opportunities around fly ash processing and requested that Eskom give the community access to the fly ash storage dam. However, there are some potential environmental and health concerns related to the use of the ash that must be considered.

The economic diversification work is particularly difficult for several reasons. As highlighted in the IA's interview, although the immediate zone of influence for the project is 50 kilometres around Komati, the aim is to create a broader economic impact in the region, which requires significant diversification of the regional economy. However, doing this at any scale takes a long time, and a lot of the initiatives that work toward restructuring an economy do not lend themselves to quick wins. Thus, many of the benefits from the economic diversification projects could take years to materialise.

Additionally, many projects that may seem initially promising end up not being feasible for a variety of reasons once more research is conducted (e.g., insufficient local demand, cost and space constraints, etc.). Detailed

information is needed on the demand for products and services as well as the cost of developing these initiatives, but at the same time, implementers do not want to spend months to years conducting feasibility studies and have no tangible results to show.

Community development and infrastructure

The PCC's initial assessment report for Komati highlighted several socioeconomic development challenges facing the community and broader region as well as priority projects that the community would like to see addressed. Interviews for this report confirmed that Komati is still facing many of the same challenges. Some of the most pressing development-related challenges highlighted include food insecurity, unemployment, lack of critical infrastructure (a clinic, community hall, bus shelters for school children, library facilities, recreational facilities, stormwater drains, street lighting), poor access to basic services (water, sanitation, electricity, road grading, primary health care), and unsafe conditions for accessing the informal settlement (the "Big House Farm"). Many of these challenges and the requested support fall outside of the scope of the EJETP and Eskom's responsibility, but they are discussed here because they impact the just transition for Komati more broadly. Addressing these will require a range of stakeholders, particularly at various levels of subnational government.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Since the first PCC report was published, there has been progress in some key areas. Once onboarded, the IA began working on several of the community development projects that were identified as priorities by the ward councillor. For example, establishing a community clinic is a top priority for the community. In mid-2024, Eskom donated a building to the community to be developed into a clinic. However, progress on this has stalled over budgeting concerns, with the projected amount needed to support the clinic increasing and exceeding what Eskom had the capacity to provide. At that time, Eskom could have provided a limited amount of further funding to support the clinic but requested a commitment from the municipality to sustain the clinic thereafter. STLM has endorsed the project, and engagement with the Mpumalanga Department of Health to support the clinic project is ongoing. Unfortunately, given the time that has lapsed, Eskom funding is no longer available, but Eskom reports that it remains committed to making the building available for this purpose. According to STLM, Thungela Resources has also donated two mobile

clinics, and there is a proposal for a satellite shelter and parking space for the mobile clinic to use when it is in the area.

Another priority for the community is the development of an early childhood development (ECD) centre. Breadline Africa, a nonprofit focusing on early learning infrastructure and support and working outside the scope of the EJETP, was requested by the Presidency to conduct an ECD needs assessment covering Komati, Ermelo, eMalahleni, and Middelburg. Breadline Africa conducted the needs assessment from April to June 2024, and the findings revealed critical ECD needs within Komati. Based on population estimates, approximately 200 children within the Komati area need access to ECD, which is roughly double the current enrolment at the six existing centres in and around Komati. These existing centres face significant resource and infrastructure gaps, and many parents struggle to pay the fees for their children to attend.

As part of the needs assessment, Breadline Africa also conducted extensive engagement activities with relevant stakeholders, including the local municipality, owners of existing ECD facilities, and civil society. This informed the development of a proposal for an ECD programme in Mpumalanga, with Komati to serve as the pilot hub. The proposed hub in Komati would consolidate the existing ECD centres in Komati and would include four 60-square-metre classrooms, a shared kitchen, 12 low-flush toilets, a toy library, a sports field, a playground for the community, and two offices. The kitchen is envisaged to be a mobile kitchen, similar to a food truck, which would support a food security and nutrition programme and has the potential to generate an additional income stream for the centre.

The estimated cost of building the hub and operating it for three years is R10 million, most of which would go to infrastructure development. Breadline Africa has committed to allocating R1.2 million of its funding to this and is working with the Presidency to do fundraising for the remaining costs for Komati and beyond. Eskom has confirmed its willingness to support the initiative by providing assistance (e.g., the donation of JoJo tanks). The aim is to ultimately create 120 hubs in Mpumalanga, reaching 23,000 children annually by 2029.

In November 2024, Breadline Africa submitted a site development plan to STLM's town planning department for review and is awaiting feedback. Efforts are also under way to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Breadline Africa, STLM, and the Department of Basic Education to support the project. The MOU will help clarify outstanding



Figure 2 | A former security manager at Komati Power Station now runs the aquaponics facility on its grounds

questions regarding ownership of the infrastructure and land as well as maintenance issues. This will ideally help streamline bureaucratic processes and approvals so that construction of the ECD centre can move forward.

Breadline Africa has also selected a consultant to assist with the rezoning application. The rezoning process is estimated to take three months to complete, and Breadline Africa hopes to be able to begin construction of the ECD hub by October 2025.

PLANS FOR 2025

At the request of the PCC and with its facilitation support, the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency (MISA) is preparing to undertake a rapid diagnostic assessment to address immediate infrastructure gaps in Komati. The plan is for the assessment to be completed in early 2025. MISA met with STLM in January 2025 to discuss the project scope and secure STLM's buy-in, but more engagement between the two parties is needed. MISA is reviewing key development and planning documents for the region to inform the project's next steps.

Infrastructure projects to be pursued in 2025 include the refurbishment of the community hall, the replacement of bus shelters, establishment of library facilities in Komati, and construction of a bridge to the Big House Farm informal settlement. For the community hall, Eskom is in discussions with the Koornfontein mine regarding the refurbishment of one of its buildings. After refurbishment, the building will be donated to the local municipality, contingent on its

commitment to long-term maintenance. There are plans to engage with other mines as well, and the IA has requested that Eskom draft a formal letter to use for engagement. On the bus shelters, Eskom received a letter of support from the Ward 4 councillor and will engage with STLM on the issuance of permits. The STLM library manager has sent a proposal to Eskom requesting that it donate a park home to serve as a library facility, which is under review. The local municipality has been requested to support the construction of the bridge to Big House Farm.

The Steer Co is also hoping to move forward with several critical community development initiatives in 2025. There is a pressing need for a social worker based in Komati. The Steer Co has identified a space in which the social worker could operate, but it is awaiting word from the Department of Social Development on appointing this person. The Steer Co also hopes to organise community events such as sports tournaments and entertainment throughout the year, but logistical and financial support, as well as access to facilities, remains challenging.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Although there has been some progress on priority community development initiatives, significant challenges remain. For instance, the community has struggled to secure land that can be used to implement many of the community development initiatives. For several buildings and other facilities, it is not clear to the community who owns the infrastructure and

land, which prevents the community from being able to access and use it. Land for animal grazing was also highlighted as a key need.

In early 2025, Eskom provided the Steer Co with the asset register it had been requesting for several months; however, it does not contain all the information on asset ownership that the community wants, including clarity on who owns the recreational facilities. Eskom will continue to liaise with the Steer Co and the town planner to collect this information. Additionally, according to STLTM, Black Royalty Minerals has made land available to the community as part of its Social and Labour Plan. Projects will need to be identified and presented for consideration; engagement is under way for continued collaboration.

Another challenge is funding. Some stakeholders have noted a concern that there is not yet a clear plan or confirmation of funding for various community development projects and related infrastructure. In its interview, Eskom confirmed that it does not have funding available to support all the requested community development projects. As noted earlier, many of these priority community development and infrastructure projects fall outside the scope of the EJETP and Eskom's purview. Unclear delineation of responsibility for funding and implementing these projects further complicates the situation because many projects do not fall neatly under the auspices of one entity.

Even in instances where Eskom or other groups working in Komati have funding to support the initial development of a project—for example, the clinic or a recreational facility—maintenance of the project will eventually come to the local municipality, which faces significant resource constraints. Eskom emphasised that fundraising and implementation of these types of projects should be led by the local and district governments, with Eskom playing a supporting role. However, some stakeholders emphasised the responsibility of Eskom to ensure that any infrastructure or services that they are handing over to the municipality or others to manage are in good working condition when they do so.

Given the influx of funders and implementing partners coming into Komati, it is essential that efforts are coordinated and capacity built within the community to implement these projects in the long term. Some implementing partners have cited red tape and bureaucracy as a major barrier preventing the implementation of projects that will have tangible benefits for the community. For example, challenges addressing land use and rezoning, as well as managing public administrative protocols at the provincial level, have reportedly

delayed progress on the ECD centre. Having standardised and streamlined processes in place to guide and coordinate just transition-related projects could help reduce delays. This will require involvement and leadership on behalf of all levels of government. However, several interviewed stakeholders noted challenges engaging key departments, including the Department of Public Works, Roads and Transport at the provincial level and the Department of Social Development at the national level.

Inadequate or lack of access to basic services is an ongoing challenge in the community. According to the Steer Co, water supply challenges include water reservoir and network system leaks; outdated and broken infrastructure; lack of security around reservoir tanks; and lack of connection to piped water supply in farming areas, resulting in reliance on JoJo tanks. Road infrastructure in the farming areas is also an issue, as is livestock theft.

There are also issues with the energy supply. Two villages in the Komati area (Blinkpan and Koornfontein) had previously been supplied through a substation at the Goedehoop mine. However, vandalism of the substation has rendered it inoperable. Eskom has come up with an interim solution to power these two villages through a temporary transformer at KPS. Although electricity supply issues have decreased in frequency, the two villages still experience intermittent power disruptions. The Steer Co highlighted this as a particular problem for people with chronic health conditions who rely on medication that needs to be refrigerated. Eskom Distribution is reviewing the current infrastructure to develop a permanent solution.

Food insecurity is another critical issue facing the community. In 2024, 284 families in Komati and Blinkpan were referred to the municipality for social relief support in the form of food parcels. The Department of Social Development determined that 200 of the families qualified for the relief, although the Steer Co does not know how qualification was assessed. Additionally, the expectation was that the families deemed eligible would receive food parcels immediately, but they have yet to receive any food assistance, and the Steer Co has been informed that there is currently no budget to support this.

Concerns about crime and safety, highlighted as a top issue by community members during the PCC's initial visits in 2023, also persist. In the Steer Co's assessment, not much has changed in terms of social ills since the PCC's initial report; crime continues to escalate, particularly among young people who lack access to employment and recreational and entertainment activ-

ities to occupy them. The Steer Co reported that the high anxiety levels within the community are destabilising and pointed to the need to be able to see visible signs of progress, such as new infrastructure and people getting permanent job placements, as key to improving conditions in the community.

The good news is that many of the large projects that are anticipated to bring tangible impacts for the community are set to kick off in earnest in 2025. Furthermore, all the stakeholders in and around Komati remain committed to moving this work forward.

Long-term development planning

Although there is a critical need to address the immediate community development concerns in and around Komati, it is also important to have a long-term vision for what Komati and the broader region may look like in 20 or more years. The trajectory of social and economic development in and around Komati will be impacted not only by the EJETP but also policies and actions taken at the local, district, provincial, and national levels. There are various initiatives happening at each of these levels that will have direct and indirect impacts on Komati.

LOCAL AND DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY INITIATIVES

The local (STLM) and district (Nkangala) municipal governments serving the Komati area play a critical role in service provision and community and economic development. However, subnational governments throughout South Africa are confronted with significant financial and technical capacity constraints that limit their ability to manage climate change and the just transition, as highlighted in the PCC's *State of Climate Action in South Africa* report (Carter et al. 2024). Municipalities are dependent on tariff collection for much of their budgets and in the face of high levels of unemployment and poverty, many households are unable to pay for service delivery, which reduces the ability of municipalities to provide the infrastructure and services that fall under their mandates (Carter et al. 2024). As a result, many local and district governments are unable to meet the needs of their constituents, and the loss of jobs and economic opportunities from the closure of coal plants can be further destabilising.

The Nkangala Economic Development Agency is working on some development and economic diversification initiatives that could benefit Komati. An example is the redevelopment of the Witbank Dam area outside eMalahleni, which includes building retail and accom-

modation spaces. This has the potential to bring jobs and other economic opportunities to the district, which could benefit Komati residents.

PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES

The Mpumalanga provincial government is in the process of developing a just transition plan for the province. The first phase of the plan development has been completed, and concept notes for the second and third phases have been developed to enable fundraising for these phases. The province has also completed its climate change adaptation strategy, which incorporates some just transition components as well as Indigenous knowledge systems.

In partnership with the World Bank, the provincial government is also working on the Roadmap for Inclusive Economic Diversification and Transformation (RIEDAT) Initiative. The first phase of the work has been completed, and the second phase will focus on developing options for inclusive economic diversification in the Komati region once sufficient feedback has been collected from key stakeholders on the work to date and future plans.

In partnership with the provincial government, the PCC published the *Short-Term, Private Sector-Led Employment Strategy for Mpumalanga* in August 2024 (Adonis et al. 2024). The report was commissioned by the PCC to identify private sector-led employment opportunities in the province that could come to fruition by 2030. Potential industries were identified and assessed using economic data and qualitative research in consultation with over 40 industry experts and provincial stakeholders. Based on this, three existing opportunities and four new opportunities were identified as key growth opportunities within the province. The existing opportunities are to grow the value chains in wood, citrus and citrus processing, and tourism. Research indicates that unlocking growth in these value chains has the potential to create up to 47,000 new jobs by 2030 (Adonis et al. 2024). The new subsectors identified include production and processing of industrial hemp, development of a sustainable aviation fuel industry, development of the GBS industry, and stimulating a market for agrivoltaics in farming. The most promising opportunities for the Nkangala Municipal District, in which Komati is located, include hemp, sustainable aviation fuel, and GBS.

Also at the provincial level, a consortium of partners, including TIPS, GIZ, Indalo Inclusive, and the Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency, among others, are working on the JUST SA project funded by the International Climate Initiative. Under this project, TIPS is leading a multiphase provincial research programme.

The first phase focuses on identifying practical pathways for economic diversification in the Mpumalanga coalfields, which will be linked to the Komati economic diversification strategy it is leading. The second phase will involve a deep dive into what it would take to successfully establish diversified economic activities at scale in one or two sectors.

The first phase is currently under way; practical pathways for economic diversification will be identified through an assessment of economic diversification theory and relevant international experience. The study also aims to assess the status quo on the ground in terms of skills, resources, and local government capacity to identify what support and interventions will be needed to drive the diversification strategies. TIPS is also commissioning research on the viability of expanding the tourism industry in Mpumalanga's coal belt, which will feed into the JUST SA provincial research program.

Also under the JUST SA project, GIZ is finalising plans for SME support programmes at the provincial level. This support is anticipated to include business training, coaching, business development, and building SME capacity to improve access to finance for bankable projects.

TIPS is also looking at labour policy and social protection measures as part of a national research programme, but with a focus on Mpumalanga. This will include developing a proposed policy package for coal workers in Mpumalanga and an assessment of the affordability of various policies under current circumstances.

Mobilisation of financial resources

Although a substantial amount of funding is provided through the EJETP, more funding—particularly in the form of grants—will be needed to successfully transition KPS and the surrounding community in a just manner. With respect to the World Bank funding, disbursement and use of the funds has been slower than anticipated, with slightly more than US\$2.3 million disbursed by the end of 2024. The low disbursement to date is partially the result of delays in starting projects in Components A and B, which account for the bulk of the funding.

To help support raising additional funds to support work at Komati, a financial mobilisation workstream was established in 2024 under the Komati coordinating committee convened by the PCC. However, with the launch of the JET Funding Platform (see below), this workstream has now been phased out.

One major achievement with respect to mobilising funding for Komati and beyond was the launch of the JET Funding Platform by the Just Energy Transition Project Management Unit (JET PMU). The platform is intended to match credible transition projects with grant funding from various types of donors (government, philanthropy, private sector, banks). While the platform is not exclusive to any geographic location in South Africa, there is an emphasis on projects that support economic diversification in Mpumalanga. The platform was launched in late 2024, and the first application window closed on 13 December with more than 150 applications received.

These applications are being reviewed by the JET PMU and its technical support partner (currently, Tshikululu Social Investments) against the following criteria: alignment with the JET objectives; project sustainability and potential for long-term impact; technical and financial feasibility; capacity to contribute to social and economic development, particularly in vulnerable communities; and potential for scalability and replication (JET PMU 2024). Projects that are deemed to meet these criteria will be added to the project pipeline for potential donors to view and fund. For projects that are considered promising but need further work, the technical support partner may provide feedback and/or support to help improve the proposal. The JET PMU has committed to responding to applicants within 90 days of the application window closing. The second bid window opened on 15 January 2025, and the third and fourth windows are anticipated to open in late 2025 given the high volume of initial responses. The full list of proposals is not publicly available, but any projects that get awarded grant funding will be published to the grant register.

This platform has the potential to help unlock grant funding from projects in Komati and the broader region. Breadline Africa has submitted the ECD hub project for review, and other Komati-focused projects may also be under review.

Fundraising support could also be made available through the Just Transition Fund, led by groundWork and the Life After Coal campaign. The fund is expected to be operational by mid-2025; it aims to assist communities in developing funding proposals and may directly support projects as well. This initiative will be accompanied by observatories (just transition centres) that will monitor progress and encourage active community participation in the just transition process.



CHAPTER 2

Key takeaways

Whereas the previous section sought to provide the facts on progress and concrete future plans for Komati, key stakeholders interviewed for this report were also asked to reflect on higher-level successes, challenges, and lessons learned that apply not only to Komati but also to future decommissioning sites and just transition projects more broadly.

Successes

There have been several accomplishments in moving the work forward at Komati since the first assessment report was published by the PCC. It is clear that concerted efforts have been made on behalf of key partners to implement the recommendations made in the first report, particularly with respect to broadening the scope of the project and improving procedural justice through inclusive engagement and involvement of the community in decision-making. There has also been some progress in terms of mobilising additional financial resources, but more grant funding will be critical. Key areas of success are summarised below.

Based on the interviews, stakeholders seem to be viewing the activities and needs in Komati with a wider lens than before; the focus is not just within the fence of the power station or even the immediately surrounding area. There are ongoing and soon-to-begin efforts to connect Komati to broader diversification and planning efforts. For example, the economic diversification strategy being developed for Komati by TIPS will have strong links to the economic diversification work for the province. And the SME support is working to better integrate local businesses into regional supply chains. This broader scope is essential to achieving the type of transformational change that is needed to enable a just transition.

There was strong consensus among the stakeholders interviewed for the report that engagement has improved significantly. There is continuous engagement between the community and implementing partners, and the community has been able to participate more in decision-making. The improved engagement has led to fewer misunderstandings within the community about why the plant closed and has driven more acceptance of the project overall.

There has also been some progress in terms of getting projects off the ground, which will set the stage for accelerated and more impactful implementation in 2025 and beyond. For example, hundreds of Eskom employees and community members have received training, which should position them to apply for the jobs to be created under the different components

of the JET project. The training was also successful in terms of improving the tone of engagement with the community by allowing community members to participate in and benefit from these early activities. Similarly, having the first cohort of SMEs complete training was a notable success. Supporting these local SMEs is a cornerstone of the economic diversification work. Additionally, the approval and launch of the SEF is a big win for the community and will provide critical short-term employment support.

Related to the SEF, there have been several achievements in mobilising additional resources for Komati. The SEF is one such project that has been funded and is additional to the World Bank funding through the EJETP. There is also support under the JUST SA project that is being directed toward Komati activities, and Breadline Africa is in advanced stages of fundraising for the ECD centre. Furthermore, the launch of the JET Funding Platform will be critical to mobilising more grant funding in Komati and the broader province.

One final area of success highlighted by stakeholders was the adoption of innovative approaches. As highlighted in the PCC's first report, the decommissioning process at the power station began several years before the country had a Just Transition Framework or Eskom had a JET Office to help guide this work. Thus, Eskom largely had to define its approach to justice and implementation of the just transition. This has been an ongoing learning process, with successes and challenges, but it has also enabled the adoption of innovative and flexible approaches to adapt to lessons as they emerge. For example, partners have really embraced the ABCD approach, initially proposed by groundWork. Although the ABCD approach itself is not new, partners are pioneering and piloting how this approach can be adapted to the just transition context.

Challenges

Despite some notable successes to date, numerous challenges remain. Addressing these challenges will be key to unlocking further progress and requires action from all stakeholders. Importantly, the ongoing challenges detailed here should not be taken as a reason to slow down the transition process; rather, they point to socio-economic measures that should be in place at future decommissioning sites to avoid re-creating the issues experienced at Komati.

With respect to the recommendations from the first report, timing and sequencing remain major issues, with significant delays in various aspects of implementation. Additionally, although there have been

improvements in fostering an intergovernmental, multistakeholder approach—particularly supported by the various engagement platforms—limited involvement and the capacity constraints of key stakeholders are ongoing challenges without straightforward solutions. The paragraphs below provide an overview of the high-level challenges highlighted in the interviews.

As mentioned above, timing and sequencing are significant challenges. Efforts to accelerate implementation since the initial PCC progress report have seen only limited success. Most notably, work under Components A and B, which accounts for most of the EJETP funding and has significant job creation potential, has yet to begin in earnest. The delays have largely been related to bureaucratic and procurement challenges as well as the scope of the projects changing once deeper investigations were conducted.

Related to this, there are also concerns about the scale and sustainability of projects. The tangible benefits realised to date have been small, and implementers are now revisiting some of their assumptions about projected future impacts of projects. For example, the renewable energy projects may generate relatively few permanent jobs. There are also questions about whether many of the proposed and initiated projects will be sustainable after grant funding ends. It is not yet clear what, if any, big-ticket industries could feasibly be established in Komati to provide jobs and economic growth at the scale that the power station previously provided and in a manner that is sustainable without grant funds.

Additionally, while there has been significant progress in engagement and communications, there is still room for improvement. Some projects were stalled in 2024 due to a lack of community buy-in at the start but were subsequently able to move forward once the Steer Co was able to review project details and provide approval. Some interviewees voiced concerns about the quality of the engagements being conducted, with repeated consultations not leading to subsequent action. There is a need to coordinate and streamline engagement efforts so that engagement is proactive rather than reactive and leads to demonstrable outcomes. Furthermore, there is some frustration with respect to transparency because some information is not being made publicly available in a timely manner. See the PCC's 2023 report on Komati for more specific recommendations on addressing engagement and communication challenges (PCC 2023).

Capacity issues are a key barrier to implementing a just transition in Komati, with all levels of government, community members, and donors and implementers facing a variety of technical, financial, and human

resource capacity constraints. With respect to Eskom and the national government, there was a steep learning curve in terms of working with the World Bank to meet its various requirements and getting procurement processes started (and restarted), which caused multiple delays. Now that some of the initial hurdles have been cleared and a few critical procurements have been completed, the hope is that work will accelerate quickly in 2025. However, some interviewees flagged that capacity constraints, in terms of expertise in economic revitalisation and diversification work, may still exist.

At the municipal level, significant resource constraints hinder the ability of the local and district governments to address socioeconomic development challenges in and around Komati. Several stakeholders have noted challenges engaging with the municipality on key issues and the need for both the local and district governments to be more actively involved. However, without increased funding and capacity-building support for municipal governments, this will likely be difficult to change.

Within the community itself, there are concerns about a lack of technical capacity to fill the jobs that are being created. Reskilling and upskilling can help fill some of these gaps, but in other cases it may not be feasible from a time or resource standpoint to enable people locally given the highly specialised nature of some of the work.

Finally, capacity constraints among the donors and implementers should be addressed. Many donors and implementers lack training on how to successfully engage communities, especially in fraught situations. Building the capacity of these groups to do so or ensuring that they are working closely with engagement and local experts is key. Additionally, implementing partners have noted challenges with navigating red tape. Addressing this will require efforts both on the implementer and government side to help reduce bureaucratic hurdles by streamlining administrative processes and ensure proper procedures are being followed without causing undue delay.

Given the myriad actors and varying levels of capacity, coordination is essential and an ongoing challenge. With so many different stakeholders involved in and around Komati, it is a challenge just to get a clear picture of everything that is happening. Additionally, donors and implementers have their own interests and goals that guide their work, which can lead to a proliferation of research and investigative efforts that are not synergised and consequently fail to advance collective work. The coordination challenges also cause, or perhaps sometimes enable, lack of ownership over

key decisions and issues. Coordination is an issue both horizontally and vertically. For example, at the project level, some stakeholders voiced concern that operations are not coordinated and there are not clear enough links between the different pieces of work (e.g., how the trainings will feed into the economic diversification work). And then vertically, policies and programmes being implemented by government and nongovernment actors at the national, provincial, and local levels are often not integrated, which can lead to conflicting or duplicative efforts as well as service gaps.

Related to both the capacity and coordination challenges is the lack of progress in addressing critical social and community development issues, including crime and safety and inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure. Part of the challenge seems to stem from a lack of clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for tackling these issues. Oftentimes, a given challenge could arguably fall under the purview of multiple entities at various levels of government with no one clear lead, resulting in the previously mentioned lack of ownership. Other times, it seems to be clear who should be responsible for addressing a challenge, but the responsible party is either unwilling or unable to step in for a variety of reasons, often stemming from the capacity issues noted above. This is further exacerbated by poor linkages to the just transition in existing policy as well as the lack of a regional diversification plan that incorporates the just transition.

Finally, everything in Komati is happening under intense media and political scrutiny. There are some benefits to this in that it has greatly increased transparency and supported monitoring and evaluation efforts. However, it has also meant that those with vested interests, particularly in the coal sector, have exploited the story for their own political purposes, causing hurt and confusion in the community as a result. There have been many articles published in the past two years claiming that Komati is an example of a failed just transition, which is often counterproductive. This framing also tends to present Komati as a global pilot for the just transition, which can be problematic given that the plant's closure was not related to South Africa's efforts to reduce emissions. Komati was not originally envisioned or planned to be a just transition project, so much of the work to date has had to be reactive rather than proactive. This nuance is often lacking in the reporting done on Komati.

Lessons learned

In addition to the lessons that come from the successes and challenges noted above, interviewees noted other important lessons from Komati, which have been summarised into six key points, many of which echo the lessons learned in the PCC's 2023 report.

Start early to enable proper sequencing

Nearly every interviewee said a key lesson learned from Komati was the need to start the transition process much earlier, years before a plant or coal mine is shut down. Looking at examples of coal regions that have transitioned elsewhere in the world, the process can take decades to result in sustained economic diversification. Engagement should be one of the first steps so that all impacted stakeholders are taken along in the process and can inform decision-making. Having a community committee, like the Steer Co, involved and capacitated from the outset can help support this. While engagement is sometimes regarded as costly and time-consuming, lack of sufficient engagement up front is likely to result in delays and additional costs down the line.

Furthermore, sequencing is critical: new sustainable and green jobs and other economic opportunities need to be available before decommissioning begins. The focus should be on permanent and sustainable job creation rather than short term employment opportunities. Additionally, training and capacity-building for workers, community members, and local businesses must start early to ensure that these groups have the requisite skills to take advantage of economic opportunities that are created in the decommissioning and transition process.

Avoid premature conclusions

As noted above, a just transition takes significant time and effort. Narratives in the media and elsewhere claiming that Komati is an example of a failed just transition are premature and counterproductive. There have undoubtedly been challenges, but the work is in many regards only just getting off the ground, and high-level impacts could take years to realise. An open and transparent assessment of successes and failures is critical, but overemphasising negative narratives could stall progress and discourage potential funders from lending additional support.

Use innovative approaches and funding models

There are few real-world examples on how to successfully implement a just transition, on any scale. Thus, stakeholders in Komati are continuously learning from their successes and failures. An adaptive and flexible approach that enables adjustment in response to these early lessons is critical. Such an approach also requires an innovative funding model that enables support for emerging activities. Allowing for flexibility can also enable projects to start more quickly; some interviewees noted that there seems to be a desire for perfection and to come up with projects that address all needs simultaneously (e.g., the perfect being the enemy of the good). However, building in the flexibility to change activities down the line as needed can enable work to get off the ground more quickly and start generating benefits for the community.

The stakeholders interviewed for the report were very open about the mistakes made to date, and there are already efforts under way to avoid replicating these at future decommissioning sites. Furthermore, it was clear that implementing partners paid close attention to the recommendations and lessons learned from the PCC's first report and have made concerted efforts to address these. Ongoing monitoring and feedback are essential to identify and address these challenges and lessons in real time.

Do not lose sight of the bigger picture

As mentioned in the “Challenges” section, the immediate issues facing Komati receive much attention. However, it is important to not lose sight of the bigger picture, both temporally and geographically. While critical needs require immediate attention, it is also important to think about and plan for a vision of Komati 20–30 years in the future. Efforts to address short-term needs should be connected to this longer-term vision. For example, better access to education is an immediate need in the community but can also support longer-term goals by ensuring youth are equipped with skills that will be needed in the green economy 10 years down the line.

Additionally, the work at Komati needs to be appropriately contextualised within and connected to efforts in the region and the nation. Komati is a relatively small area with a small population, and economic diversification efforts typically require larger economies of scale. With the decommissioning process starting at other nearby plants, looking at the problems and opportunities systematically can help projects reach a larger,

more sustainable scale. Relatedly, connections between just transition–related policies and programmes at the national, provincial, and local levels need to be strengthened. Many activities seem to be happening in isolation, but a focus on the bigger picture could help improve coordination.

Focus on results-oriented engagement

While early and continuous engagement is critical to the transition, the quality of these engagements is also important. Tick-box consultation and/or repeated meetings with stakeholders that do not result in tangible outcomes run the risk of disincentivising stakeholder engagement going forward. It is essential to have clear questions and goals heading into any engagement as well as a process for how to involve stakeholders in the decision-making, including through cocreation and design of projects.

Having explicit funding set aside for engagement, and for building the capacity of community structures to participate in these engagements, can help support this. Ensuring that municipal government is at the heart of the facilitation process is also critical to build ownership and buy-in. There also needs to be comfort with experiencing conflict. Many of the transition topics are highly contested, and there will not be full agreement. Stakeholders can work with experienced facilitators to find compromises and paths forward, even when there is no clear consensus.

Clearly designate responsibility and foster ownership

As covered in the “Challenges” section, progress at Komati has been hampered by poor coordination and lack of ownership. Clear designation of roles and responsibilities can help address both challenges. A thorough understanding of the political economy at all levels can help support this process by mapping what entities are legally mandated to fulfil certain roles and identifying leaders who can help influence change on the ground.

Stronger coordination between levels of government and other stakeholders in the area can enable better delegation of responsibility and reduce redundancies. This can also help streamline processes and reduce red tape, which was flagged by implementers as a major delay to implementation. Development of an integrated approach plan for Komati that covers the activities of various implementers and other stakeholders could help support coordinated and collective action.



CONCLUSION

Komati has both the distinction and difficulty of being the first to undertake many of these types of activities in South Africa. It is clear from talking to stakeholders that implementing a just transition is difficult and time-consuming under the best conditions, but it is even more challenging within the context of high levels of poverty, unemployment, and inequality.

However, it is also clear that the involved stakeholders are passionate about the work and remain deeply committed to move this forward at pace and scale. The PCC will continue to support progress at Komati and the evaluation thereof, and it will report findings to the government and the public.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Mapping stakeholders in Komati with their roles and responsibilities

STAKEHOLDER NAME	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES
Breadline Africa	This South African nonprofit organisation is dedicated to addressing poverty, hunger, and economic inequality through innovative community empowerment solutions. Its primary mission is to alleviate poverty, improve quality of life, and promote sustainable development in marginalised communities. In Komati, Breadline Africa is establishing an ECD hub to support the educational and developmental needs of young children, empowering the local community for long-term social and economic improvement.
Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE)	A national department, the DMRE develops and implements the Integrated Resource Plan, which sets out the decommissioning schedule for Komati and other coal-fired power stations. The DMRE, National Treasury, and the DBSA also established the Independent Power Producers Office for the specific purpose of delivering on the Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme objectives.
Department of Public Enterprises	This state department is responsible for the management of Eskom.
Eskom KPS	Eskom plays a critical role in the Komati region, particularly in supporting the just transition of energy production. As part of the EJERP in Komati, Eskom's responsibilities are divided into several key components, namely A, B, and C. Component A focuses on the decommissioning of KPS, managing the transition from coal-based generation to cleaner, more sustainable energy sources. Component B involves the development and implementation of renewable energy projects in the region, including solar and wind energy initiatives, to ensure the continued provision of power as part of the energy shift. Finally, Component C addresses the social and economic impacts of this transition, which include reskilling and upskilling workers, fostering local community engagement, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods in the area.
Genesis Analytics	This consulting firm was appointed as the IA for Component C of the EJERP.
GIZ	GIZ supports sustainable development through technical cooperation, capacity-building, and policy advisory services. In South Africa, GIZ collaborates with the government, private sector, and civil society to advance renewable energy, climate resilience, skills development, and economic transformation. In Komati, GIZ financially supports the cocreation project, enabling community initiatives or interventions implemented by Indalo as well as the JUST SA projects.
GEAPP	A coalition of philanthropic organisations, governments, development institutions, and private sector partners, GEAPP is dedicated to accelerating an equitable energy transition in developing and emerging economies. Its mission focuses on expanding access to reliable, renewable energy; reducing carbon emissions; and creating green jobs to drive inclusive economic growth. In Komati, GEAPP supports training efforts and the development of a training facility.

STAKEHOLDER NAME	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES
groundWork	A nonprofit environmental justice and development organisation, groundWork supports just transition efforts in South Africa, particularly by monitoring adherence to justice elements. In Komati, groundWork is responsible for developing the ABCD approach, ensuring that community-driven solutions align with sustainability and social equity principles.
Impact Catalyst	This initiative was founded by a group of companies to create mechanisms that drive large-scale, socioeconomic development initiatives through public-private partnerships. In Komati, Impact Catalyst explores manufacturing opportunities.
Indalo Inclusive	Indalo Inclusive is a nonprofit company mandated to support and promote social, green, inclusive, and responsible entrepreneurship in South Africa. It develops skills through its own solar and manufacturing projects across the province. In Komati, Indalo leads the Komati Just Energy Transition Community Engagement & Interventions Co-creation Project, which empowers and capacitates communities while developing community-driven interventions.
IDC	The IDC is a national development finance institution supporting Komati through the SEF. The IDC has invested R11 million to create 300 short-term job opportunities in Komati, contributing to economic development and community upliftment as part of the just transition efforts.
JET PMU	A unit established by the Presidency to oversee the implementation of the Just Energy Transition Partnership and the broader Just Energy Transition Investment Plan, largely focused on Mpumalanga. One of its key achievements is the establishment of the JET Funding Platform, which serves as a matchmaking mechanism between granters or funders and JET projects. This platform facilitates the mobilisation of financial resources to support transition projects.
Komati Steer Co	The committee is chaired by the Ward 4 councillor and consists of ward committee members. It aims to build a united, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable community by driving innovative and transformative socioeconomic and environmental development. Its primary role is to facilitate and coordinate responses to concerns raised in Ward 4 while lobbying stakeholders to address these challenges. The Steer Co meets monthly and conducts community feedback sessions on a quarterly basis.
Mpumalanga DARDLEA	DARDLEA is responsible for implementing national legislation, policies, and programmes within the province, with a particular focus on driving provincial economic development and managing climate change and the just transition. This department has played a pivotal role in establishing the Komati Steer Co, providing essential support to empower the Steer Co in facilitating its monthly meetings and ensuring effective community feedback. Through this effort, the department ensures that all stakeholders are engaged and that the region's transition is both inclusive and aligned with broader provincial and national goals.
Mpumalanga Green Cluster Agency	This agency is responsible for driving sustainable development and green economy initiatives within the Mpumalanga province in South Africa.
Nkangala District Municipality	The Nkangala District Municipality established the Nkangala District Climate Change Forum (NDCCF) as the primary governance body for coordinating and overseeing climate change adaptation, mitigation, and disaster risk management initiatives across the district. This forum ensures that climate-related projects and policies align with national and provincial climate strategies and frameworks, fostering a collaborative approach among municipalities, government agencies, private sector stakeholders, and communities. Through the NDCCF, the Nkangala District Municipality plays a crucial role in driving resilience-building efforts, integrating climate considerations into local development planning, and mobilising resources to support sustainable and just transition initiatives, such as the Komati Just Transition.
Nkangala Economic Development Agency	This agency is responsible for a longer-term development strategy in the Mpumalanga province.
PCC	The PCC is an independent, statutory, multistakeholder body responsible for coordinating and facilitating efforts in Komati. It plays a crucial role in providing strategic advice and guidance for the region's just transition. The PCC has established monthly meetings and various workstreams, bringing together diverse stakeholders to provide regular updates and share progress on a wide range of projects in Komati.

STAKEHOLDER NAME	ROLE/RESPONSIBILITIES
SARETEC	SARETEC is a national renewable energy technology centre in South Africa. SARETEC supported the first phase of training in Komati from 2022 to 2024.
STLM	STLM is responsible for the provision of basic services, including water, sanitation, refuse removal, environmental services, environmental health, and air pollution in Komati and the surrounding area.
TIPS	TIPS is an independent, nonprofit economic research institution based in Pretoria, South Africa. It was established to support economic policy development, with a focus on industrial policy in South Africa and the region. In Komati, TIPS supports the just transition by developing the regional economic strategy.
World Bank	The World Bank is an international development bank that provides funding to developing countries for specific projects. It approved a US\$497 million loan to support the decommissioning of the Komati coal-fired power plant, repurpose the project area with renewable energy and batteries, and create opportunities for workers and communities. The World Bank also supported Phase 1 of the RIEDAT Initiative in partnership with the Mpumalanga provincial government and is currently in discussions for Phase 2 of this work.

Appendix B: List of interviews conducted for the report

ORGANISATION/STAKEHOLDER	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Genesis Analytics	20 November 2024, 5 February 2025
IDC	27 November 2024
GIZ	27 November 2024
groundWork	2 December 2024, 7 February 2025
Eskom	3 December 2024
World Bank	10 January 2025
Impact Catalyst	13 January 2025
GEAPP	15 January 2025
DARDLEA	17 January 2025
Ward 4 Steer Co	21 January 2025
TIPS	21 January 2025
Breadline Africa	22 January 2025
Indalo Inclusive	24 January 2025
JET PMU	24 January 2025
STLM	14 February 2025

Appendix C: Ongoing and planned projects supporting Komati's just transition

CATEGORY	LEAD AGENCY	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	STATUS
EJETP^a Component A <i>Decommissioning the plant and rehabilitating the site</i>	Eskom	Decommissioning the plant	Appointment of OE, detailed planning for activities, and implementation of plan, including demolition to render plant inoperable and rehabilitation activities	OE appointment expected by July 2025
		Repurposing of infrastructure	Repurpose as much of the existing infrastructure as possible for other activities, such as the cooling towers	
EJETP Component B <i>Repurposing the project area with renewable energy, batteries, and synchronous condenser</i>	Eskom	Overall project support	Overall project support through appointment of OE	OE appointed; support ongoing
		Battery storage	150 MW for four hours BESS	Construction expected to begin October 2025
		Wind energy	70 MW of wind generated on-site from late 2025	Likely cancelled
		Solar energy	Construction and operation of solar PV on-site, originally planned for 150 MW but subject to change based on available space	Construction of Phase 1 (72 MW) expected to begin November 2025
		Synchronous condenser	1x synchronous condenser	Procurement stage
EJETP Component C	Eskom with IA	Overall project support	Overall project support	IA appointed April 2024; support ongoing
Stakeholder engagement and communications	PCC	Communications workstream	Activities include developing a communications plan, enhancing media engagement and outreach efforts, auditing websites with information related to Komati, briefing journalists and government representatives, and supporting a podcast and radio program on the just transition to be broadcast through local stations in Mpumalanga	Ongoing
	Indalo Inclusive	Komati Just Energy Transition Community Engagement & Interventions Co-creation Project	The project involves four components over 12 months. Component 1: building awareness and understanding of climate change and the just transition within the community; Component 2: codeveloping innovations within the community through participatory, inclusive processes; Component 3: innovation development and testing, business incubation, and piloting; Component 4: communication and showcasing the project results	Community awareness workshops completed; innovation cocreation activities ongoing; all activities to be completed by end of 2025
	ground-Work, Indalo providing coordination support	Komati Facilitators' Community of Practice	The group will focus on how to best facilitate community-centred development in Komati. It has also been put forward as a vehicle for applying the ABCD framework in Komati, where practitioners can explore what modifications may be necessary for the just transition context and possibly compile a lessons learned publication about experiences with the ABCD approach	Group launched in early 2025 and has convened twice as of March 2025

CATEGORY	LEAD AGENCY	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	STATUS
EJETP Component C: Reskilling and upskilling	Eskom with IA	Enterprise Development Programme <i>Workstream 2^b</i>	Includes training under the Business Accelerator Programme, the Finance Accelerator Programme, and the SME Growth Fund (to be established). This project aims to provide support to small businesses through accredited training, business development events, and by connecting SMEs to funding	Cohort 1, with 22 small businesses, trained in late 2024; Cohort 2 starting in 2025
	Eskom with IA	Career Development Programme <i>Workstream 2</i>	This project aims to provide training in technology-related skills to the community through data engineering training as well as broader support through CV development workshops	11 community members trained to date; second cohort started in February 2025; CV workshops ongoing
	Eskom with IA	Hard Skills Training Programme <i>Workstream 2</i>	A training programme that would include theoretical and practical components followed by 18 months of on-the-job training with an approved employer with a trade test qualifying the individual as an artisan; the skills to be developed under the programme include electrical, mechanical fitting, boiler making, and welding	IA awaiting final approvals, would begin mid-2025
	Eskom	Refurbishment of Komati Training Centre	Refurbishment of Komati Training Centre on-site at the power station	Target completion August 2025
	Eskom	Agri-preneur training programme	Training for 15 community members to undergo a 12-month programme that includes both theoretical and practical training for building a business around agriculture	Funding approved; procurement for service provider under way
	Eskom	Welding training	Establish welding training facility and train workers and community members in welding skills	Training centre established; first cohort trained in 2024 and second starting April 2025
Jobs	IDC with Seriti Institute	SEF for Komati	The project aims to create sustainable work opportunities, enhance community well-being, and support the broader goals of the just transition; it will provide part-time employment for 300 community members over the course of a year	Launched January 2025; first cohort of 100 participants recruited

CATEGORY	LEAD AGENCY	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	STATUS
EJETP Component C: Economic diversification	Eskom with IA	Invasive alien vegetation removal and pelletisation <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would remove invasive vegetation and process it into biomass pellets for sustainable fuel; the facility would harvest, chip, dry, and compress the biomass to produce pellets with high energy density suitable for industrial and commercial use	RFI issued; working on business case
		PPE manufacturing and distribution <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would establish a facility to manufacture and distribute PPE for various industries; the facility would produce, test, package, and supply high-quality PPE, ensuring compliance with safety standards and industry regulations	RFI issued; working on business case
		Copper recycling plant at KPS <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would establish a copper recycling plant in Komati to process scrap copper into reusable material for industrial and commercial applications; the facility would collect, sort, clean, and refine copper waste from various sources	RFI issued; working on business case
		Waste tyre processing <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would establish a facility to collect and process waste tyres for downstream recycling and energy recovery; the facility would sort, shred, and prepare tyre material for use in applications such as pyrolysis, crumb rubber production, and alternative fuels	RFI issued; working on business case
		Steel fabrication <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would establish a facility for the fabrication of steel structures and components; the facility would cut, weld, assemble, and finish steel products for use in construction, infrastructure, and industrial applications	Working on business case
		Call centre/ GBS operation <i>Workstream 1</i>	This project would establish a call centre/GBS operation in Komati to promote economic diversification and economic opportunities	Finalising RFP for a feasibility study to investigate economic viability
		Exploratory research for additional initiatives <i>Workstream 1</i>	Additional initiatives include a feasibility study for a biogas plant, repurposing of demineralisation water treatment plant, vanadium redox flow battery manufacturing, oil seed plant cultivation	RFP issued for biogas study; other exploratory research ongoing
	Eskom	Other economic diversification initiatives	Agrivoltaics plant, aquaponics system, and microgrid assembly line	Pilot projects completed; exploring options for scaling projects while building business cases
	STLM/ DEDT/Eskom	Steel incubator	Eskom working with the local municipality (STLM) and the provincial DEDT on establishing a steel incubator in Komati in partnership with the Mpumalanga Stainless Initiative	Information not provided by time of publication
Economic diversification	TIPS	TIPS: supporting an economic diversification strategy for the Komati region	This project aims to develop a well-structured economic diversification strategy for the Komati area that can foster collaboration among stakeholders to ensure a just transition	Stakeholder engagement under way; expected completion date of August 2025

CATEGORY	LEAD AGENCY	PROJECT TITLE	PROJECT DESCRIPTION	STATUS
EJETP Component C: Community development and infrastructure	Eskom with IA	Komati clinic <i>Workstream 3^c</i>	Supporting the establishment of a health clinic in Komati, to be led by the Department of Health with some support from Eskom/IA	Facilitating discussions with relevant parties and fundraising
		Community hall <i>Workstream 3</i>	In discussion with Koornfontein mine to donate a building that can be refurbished by Eskom and donated to the municipality for use as a community hall	Facilitating discussions with relevant parties
		Library <i>Workstream 3</i>	Support for improving library services in Komati	Facilitating discussions with relevant parties and fundraising
		Bus/taxi shelters <i>Workstream 3</i>	The provision of bus/taxi shelters for Komati in partnership with STLM for maintenance	To be completed by end of 2025
		Big House Farm bridge <i>Workstream 3</i>	Provision of the Big House Farm with a bridge to allow easier access for community members, to be led by STLM with support from Eskom/IA and the PCC	The PCC to send letter to STLM
Community development and infrastructure	Bread-line Africa	ECD hub	Establish an ECD hub to revitalise the Komati community; the proposed hub would consolidate the existing ECD centres in Komati and would include four 60-square-metre classrooms, a shared kitchen, 12 low-flush toilets, a toy library, a sports field, a playground for the community and two offices; the kitchen is envisaged to be a mobile kitchen, similar to a food truck, which would help support a food security and nutrition programme and has the potential to generate an additional income stream for the centre	Submitted rezoning application and working to establish MOU with STLM and Department of Basic Education; targeting to begin construction in October 2025
Community development and infrastructure	MISA/PCC	Rapid diagnostic assessment	Rapid diagnostic assessment to address immediate infrastructure gaps in Komati	Engagements with municipality ongoing

Notes:

a. This table includes ongoing and planned projects that are part of the World Bank-funded EJETP as well as those funded and implemented outside the scope of the EJETP. Projects that are part of the EJETP are noted as such in the first column.

b. There are three workstreams under Component C of the EJETP being implemented by the IA, which are defined as follows. Workstream 1 leverages the buying power of Eskom to create foundational revenue streams, colocating different aspects of production to cluster economic activity, and basing decisions on objective assessments of economic efficiency and sustainability. Workstream 2 supports existing economic activity and taps into planned repurposing activities, with priority given to people currently living and working within Komati. Workstream 3 supports community well-being.

c. The ongoing initiatives under Workstream 3 are priority community development projects in which Eskom or the IA is playing a supportive role to help address issues but cannot bear the full responsibility to complete the task because roles and responsibilities are designated to other parties (e.g., maintenance of local infrastructure by municipality) and sufficient funding is lacking.

Abbreviations

BESS	battery energy storage system
COP	Conference of the Parties
CV	curriculum vitae
DARDLEA	Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DEDT	Department of Economic Development and Tourism
DMRE	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
ECD	early childhood development
EJETP	Eskom Just Energy Transition Project
EPC	engineering procurement and construction
GBS	global business services
GEAPP	Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation)
IA	implementing agent
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
JET PMU	Just Energy Transition Project Management Unit
JUST SA	Just Transition to a Decarbonised Economy for South Africa
KPS	Komati Power Station
KSF	Komati Stakeholder Forum
M&E WG	Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group
MISA	Municipal Infrastructure Support Agency
MOU	memorandum of understanding
NDCCF	Nkangala District Climate Change Forum
OE	owner's engineer
PCC	Presidential Climate Commission
PPE	personal protective equipment
RFI	request for information
RFP	request for proposals
RIEDAT	Roadmap for Inclusive Economic Diversification and Transformation
SARETEC	South African Renewable Energy Technology Centre
SEF	Social Employment Fund
SEIA	socioeconomic impact assessment
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
Steer Co	Ward 4 Komati Community Steering Committee
STLM	Steve Tshwete Local Municipality
TIPS	Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies

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