

**The Experiences of Social Workers in the Implementation of the
Community Development Strategy in Vhembe District, Limpopo
Province, RSA**

By

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Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Social Work (MA – SW)

In the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Social Sciences)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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2017

DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Master of Arts in Social Work (MA – SW) has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

Nemutandani, V

05 /06 /2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to give recognition to the following people who have contributed positively and unconditionally in my study:

- ❖ Thank you Lord, for giving me the strength to continue throughout this study.
- ❖ My loving husband, Dr. Nmutandani Simon for being my pillar of strength.
Thank you sweetheart for the continued support and encouragement.
- ❖ My children, without knowing, encouraging me through their endless questions.
- ❖ My supervisor, Professor J.C Makhubele for his guidance, support and patience displayed throughout the study. Thank you Prof. for believing in me.
- ❖ The University of Limpopo and the Department of Social Development for affording me the chance to conduct the study.
- ❖ To Dr. Nande Neeta for always being there in times of need for the proof reading of my entire study. Stay blessed.
- ❖ To my colleagues, especially Dr. Pfarelo Matshidze for the support and for sometimes putting me under pressure. It has worked, thanks.
- ❖ To all the respondents who voluntarily participated in the study, my sincere thanks to you.

ABSTRACT

Community Development is a strategy in community work, and on that basis forms one of the key methods of intervention in Social Work (case work; group work and community work). This strategy is relevant in social work practice as it is underpinned by assumptions such as: social justice; equality; empowerment and social change and is based on human development with a strong emphasis on communities. The main purpose of community development is to build the capacity of people to work as a collective in producing tangible and sustainable benefits to address their common challenges.

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of social workers in the practice of Community Development in Vhembe District whilst the objectives of the study were to determine the knowledge of social workers with regard to community development; to establish the views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for community change; and to establish the nature of the challenges which impede social workers in the application of Community Development as the method of social work.

The study adopted a qualitative approach which was to explore the social workers experiences in the implementation of the community development strategy in social development. The research approach employed by the researcher assisted in understanding the phenomena better but also gave the respondents an opportunity to freely share their experiences, thoughts and expectations of their practice environment.

The data was collected through focus group discussions by interviewing group members. The respondents were senior social workers who have been employed by the Department of Social Development for a period of five years. The focus group consisted of twelve social workers from four sub-districts or local municipalities in Vhembe District (Thulamela, Makhado, Musina and Mutale). The data collected through interviews was analysed using Creswell's six steps.

The aim of the study was realised as the study revealed that it is essential to redefine the role of social workers especially, in the alleviation of poverty. Social development has a number of policy documents that spells out clear guidelines to address poverty alleviation and many other social challenges in communities. Strategies are to be put in place to filter down these policies for implementation.

The study concluded that social work is a profession with three primary methods of intervention which contributes to the wellbeing of the individual, family, groups and communities at large. The findings of the study have revealed that case work has been the dominant preferred method of practice amongst social workers in the Vhembe District with little emphasis on community work. Social work as a profession has the responsibility to redefine its role with regard to poverty alleviation.

Based on the findings, the following were recommended:

That respondents extend their intervention beyond case work and group work and the necessary support such as training and resources be made available to social workers;

community development be recognised as a specialised field within social work practice; social workers be well versed on social development policies and how to implement those policies; the community be educated on the dependency syndrome and the purpose of the community development strategy before any community intervention.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Community Development is one of the key methods of intervention in Social Work. This method is underpinned by assumptions such as: social justice; equality; empowerment and social change. It is based on human development with a strong emphasis on communities. Community Development builds the capacity of people to work as a collective in producing tangible and sustainable benefits to address their common challenges. This strategy gives communities greater control over their challenges and instills a sense of confidence upon the realization of their capabilities as a collective (Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2011).

In line with the above, the researcher finds synergy with Tan (2009) who notes that the theory of community development is the most practical framework for social workers seeking change for individuals and societies in communities in which they live. It is a comprehensive and a multidisciplinary intervention strategy that includes disciplines such as social work, health, education and even agriculture. An understanding of Community Development and how it is applied is essential for an effective developmental practice and for the fulfillment of the current local and global development agenda. The Dictionary of Social Work (1995:12) defines community development as “a process whereby people are enabled to mobilise and manage forces and resources in a community by creating opportunities for democratic decision-making,

active participation and co-operation, self-help, development of leadership and utilisation of education opportunities to promote the intrinsic potential and forces in the community as a whole". In this definition the emphasis is placed on the empowerment of the community.

Patel (2005:161) describes community development as an intervention strategy most suitable for addressing poverty, community participation, empowerment and social economic development in social work and social services profession. Based on the above cited definitions of community development, it has become increasingly important for social workers to define their role within a community development setting. Social work as a profession has a significant role to play in addressing challenges faced by communities through the community development strategy. Community development for example, in the Social Development Framework for Social Welfare Services (2013) is described as a strategy which facilitates change in communities by focusing on their material and non-material conditions. Poverty alleviation projects are among the programmes that promote skills development and employment creation in terms of community development. This expectation of the prominence of the community development strategy within the Department of Social Development is however not evident in the practice of social work but appears to be slowly being taken away by other social services cadres such as community development officers employed by municipalities.

Although there are Community Development frameworks and policies in place it is a fact that the decision makers have not sustained the implementation of these policies in the practice of Social Work. This has resulted in the marginalisation and the shift to the periphery of community development as an intervention strategy in social work practice. The **vision** of the Department of Social Development is to promote a caring and integrated system of social development services that facilitates human development and improves the quality of life. The **mission** of social development, on the other hand, is to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and quality social development services, and the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable development in partnership with all those committed to building a caring society (Social Development Annual Report, 2012). The researcher therefore argues that the aspirations of social development cannot be fully realised without the implementation of community development as social workers are adequately trained to meet the requirements of both the mission and vision of social development.

1.2 Theoretical framework of community development

Schenck, Nel and Louw (2015), describes a theoretical framework as a theory or system that provides the researcher with a framework on how to perceive a phenomenon such as people, behaviour and actions. It is from the theoretical framework that the researcher is able to understand the phenomenon. Schenck, Nel and Louw further emphasise that any decision on a particular theory to be adopted by the researcher should be driven by the nature and understanding of the phenomenon. They also perceive a theoretical framework as enabling the community practitioner to

facilitate change in a consistent, ethical and accountable manner. It is against this background that the researcher based this study on two approaches, namely the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach; and the Social Development approach.

1.2.1 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach

Asset-based approach to community development is defined by Makhubele & Shirindi (2015), as a move towards community building that sees community members as active change agents rather than passive beneficiaries or clients and is relationship driven. Schenck, Nel and Louw (2015), stipulates that the premise of the asset based perception is that all communities can contribute tremendously to a self-sustained improved quality of life no matter how poor they are or whether they possess strengths, assets and energies or not. These scholars further note that communities are both subjects and objects of change and they need to be recognised as a social unit in a geographical place where change can take place.

As an approach to community development, asset-based approach takes as its starting point the existing assets and strengths of the community, particularly the strengths inherent in the community-based associations and other social networks. A capacity-focused paradigm recognises the skills, talents and gifts of local community members. Hence this approach is fundamentally bottom up because it begins with what is present in the neighbourhood, and inside-out, relying heavily on the efforts of internal agents, such as residents, associations, and institutions. The asset-based approach leverages

on the identification and the capitalisation of both the tangible and intangible assets available to a community, rather than on what it lacks (Makhubele & Shirindi, 2015). In agreement with the above authors, Gray (2004), describes the ABCD as a strengths-based approach which begins with a process of community engagement in which the community worker is a facilitator and a partner in helping the community unleash its collective potential. Gray's focus is on assets and resources rather than needs and problems. Most important Gray notes that the ABCD is essentially about harnessing non-material assets and resources, such as people's participation, community support and naturally occurring social networks, and combining these strengths with unorganised community programs around issues of common concern.

Thus the researcher is of the view that social workers ought to base their intervention in community development on the asset based approach (ABCD) alongside any other approach they might consider appropriate during intervention with communities. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to allow the community members to assess their own expertise and assets before reaching out for assistance. This is very important for the community as it builds on their confidence levels, believing in themselves and developing a sense of ownership of their own community development initiatives.

1.2.2 Social development Approach

Midgely and Conley (2010), defines social development as an approach to social welfare which offers an effective response to current social problems and is viewed as an approach promoting social change. Whereas Patel (2005), defines Social

Development as a people centered approach to development, that promotes citizen participation and strengthens the voice of the poor in decision making and building democratic and accountable institutions. Democratic participation is considered to be an integral part of the achievement of human development and is an end in itself. Gray (1997), perceives social development as an attempt to be all things to all people which requires a broad-scale multi-pronged attack from those involved in the delivery of social services and more broadly, in development.

In addition, Dlangamandla (2010), states that Social Development is the ongoing socio-economic process that involves the structural transformation of a society rather than simply economic growth. The structural transformation of a society means that all facets of society, including education, employment and human services must be changed to meet the needs of individuals in a particular society. Midgely and Conley (2010), defines social development in the context of three elements. Firstly, the degree to which social problems are managed; secondly, the extent to which needs are met; and finally, the degree to which opportunities for advancement are provided. These three elements apply to individuals, families, groups, communities and the society at large towards the development of their lives.

The researcher therefore concludes that Social Development is a vehicle for social change through which economic, social and physical needs of society are addressed. Hence, the whole process of Social Development is geared towards change and Gray (2002), is of the opinion that social workers have the knowledge and skills needed for

empowering development practice and the values relating to social justice and human rights so that they fit like hand in glove with social development thinking. This is the reason behind Mel's strong belief that social development then should be the policy of choice in the face of the social problems South Africa is confronted with. The researcher views the two theoretical approaches as the backbone of the study

1.3 Rationale of the study

Social work as a profession prescribes to a practice environment which entails three primary methods of intervention namely case work; group work; and community work. Community development is one of the approaches used by the state for intervention in order to ensure that the community is equipped with necessary skills and knowledge to enhance their wellbeing. Hence Social workers are viewed as the "foot soldiers" of the state, who are expected to implement governmental policies in the form of service delivery using all three methods of intervention as a means of recognizing the interrelatedness of the socio-economic factors that affect people's lives, the complexities of social needs, the challenges facing social welfare services and the diversity of role players in the system (Framework for Social Welfare Services, 2013).

The University of Venda, as a Social Work training institution places students at various agencies such as, correctional services, Social Development and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) for work integrated learning under the supervision of trained practising social workers. Anecdotal reports from social work students who are placed in various Departments of Social Development agencies, reveals that very few agencies

do however engage in community development practice to uplift the well-being of community members in the Vhembe District. Research results from other studies have not yet revealed the reasons for the disinterest in the practice of community development by the social workers in Vhembe. The apathy of social workers in the involvement with community challenges as portrayed by students reports, causes great concern, especially in the light of Limpopo Province being ranked as the highest in unemployment in 2007. The understanding of the researcher with regard to community development is that, “an empowered community breeds a peaceful and responsible nation”. Thus on what has been stated above, the researcher felt the need to unravel the pros and cons of the implementation of the community development approach as a tool for poverty alleviation in the Vhembe District.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Despite the fact that the social work profession puts emphasis on primary intervention as mentioned above, as its core in the upliftment of the lives of people who are vulnerable and need help, student’s reports have revealed that social casework has become the most dominant intervention method with a greater focus on social security and this is at the expense of the other methods. It is the researcher’s view that the implementation of community development as a comprehensive intervention strategy may assist in reducing the burden of social security on social development. Intervention at a community level is much more effective and its impact longer lasting than intervention at an individual level.

Services provided by social workers employed by the Department of Social Development appear to be providing statistical-driven kind of service delivery whereby social work intervention is measured quantitatively. Social workers are expected to provide monthly reports which are based on statistical evidence. Long-term intervention such as community development and working in groups does not have the desired impact needed for reporting as currently required by the Department of Social Development. Intervention on individuals creates high caseloads and the reporting of such cases amounts a high case load for the individual social worker. This mode of intervention focuses on quantity results rather than quality. Developing a community on challenges they are confronted with through empowerment and capacity building results in a long-lasting solution.

Developmental Social Welfare calls for a variety of role players to change their focus to strategies that will contribute to social and economic development. The social work intervention programs have become substantial with regard to case work but very little is done at community level development and this has created a divide. In order to bridge the gap between what and who, social workers ought to undergo a paradigm shift mentally with regard to their intervention methods. This can only be realized if social workers develop a positive attitude in order to redefine their role in the development of communities in an effort order to address the challenges that focus on human capacity and self-reliance in an enabling environment.

1.5 Aim and objectives of the study

1.5.1 Aim

The concept aim refers to attaining an end of which an effort or ambition is directed towards (Fouche & De Vos, 2002). The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of social workers in the practice of Community Development in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa

1.5.2 Objectives

Unlike the aim, the objective is described by Fouche (2000), as having more concrete, measurable and speedier achievement of the end. Bless and Higson-Smit (2000), alludes to the fact that an objective, especially that of explorative studies serves to gain better knowledge of a phenomenon, a community or an individual.

The objectives of the study therefore were:

- I. To determine the knowledge of social workers with regard to community development.
- II. To establish the views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for community change.
- III. To establish the nature of the challenges which impede social workers in the application of Community Development as the method of social work.

1.6 Research Questions

Research questions are important in guiding the process which is being researched. They also serve as a yardstick in responding to the objectives identified for the research. The researcher has identified the following research questions which will serve as a guide in responding to the experiences of social workers in the practice of Community Development:

What is the knowledge of social workers with regard to community development as a method of social work intervention?

What are the views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for community change?

Which challenges impede social workers in the application of Community Development as the method of social work?

1.7 Research Methodology

The researcher adopted the qualitative design as this is suitable for a case study, like the one explored in this undertaking. The population consisted of 12 senior social workers who have been in the employment of the Department of Social Development for a period of five years and above. A purposive sampling method was selected by the researcher. The data-collection method utilised was in the form of a focus group interview. The researcher also conducted a pilot study.

The collected data was analysed qualitatively using Creswell's (2005:191) six steps which is discussed in chapter 3.

1.8 Ethical considerations

According to Gray (2009), ethics refers to the rules of conduct. Whilst (Neuman, 2011), describes ethics as a set of moral principles which are suggested by an individual or group, which offers roles and behavioral expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents. The researcher adhered to the following ethics as they are the most appropriate for this study:

1.8.1 Permission to conduct the study

The researcher requested permission to conduct the study from Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee before the commencement of the study and which was granted.

1.8.2 Consultations with relevant stakeholders

Due to the study being conducted with senior social workers from the Department of Social Development, the researcher requested written permission to conduct the study from both the Provincial and District Office of Social Development and it was granted.

1.8.3 Informed consent

This is a process through which the researcher seeks explicit agreement from subjects to participate in a research project based on their full understanding of the procedure involved and the possible effects (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006). The

researcher informed the respondents about the purpose of the study and also provided them with a detailed consent form which they signed and handed back to the researcher. The use of the tape recorder was also communicated for purposes of the respondent consenting.

1.8.4 Confidentiality

Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006), define confidentiality as assuring respondents that the information they give will be treated with confidentiality. All data collected for the purpose of the study was protected and will remain protected by the researcher from the knowledge of the public.

1.8.5 Anonymity

Neuman (2011), defines anonymity as the ethical protection that people who are studied remain nameless to protect their identity from being disclosed. The researcher assured the respondents that their names would not appear anywhere in the study in their names as it would have been replaced by numbers.

1.8.6 Acknowledgement of others work

Maree (2005), defines plagiarism as the use of others data or ideas without due acknowledgement and permission where appropriate as unethical. All work that was used for the purpose of this study from other sources was duly acknowledged by the researcher through standard acknowledgement procedures.

1.8.7 Limitations of the study

The limitations experienced by the researcher when conducting the study was that the researcher had to conduct focus groups in each municipality rather than bringing the respondents to a central venue as proposed in the proposal. As much as these unforeseen changes did not affect the outcome, the researcher does however feel that a larger group of the respondents brought together to a central venue would have had a greater impact on the study and the richness of the data could have been enhanced.

1.9 Significance of the study

Community development is described as a process whereby different people with aligned interests and challenges come together in a collaborative manner to address the matter at hand. Government involvement should however be part of this community engagement. This initiative by government should be based on improving or enhancing the social and economic wellbeing of the community. Social work practice is a profession with an emphasis on the improvement of the social wellbeing of the person, family and community therefore strengthening the practice of community development. Hart, (2012) states that constructive and effective community development in South Africa is recognized as a cornerstone of National Development. The community development discourse has become a global agenda and as such has gained momentum over the years.

The Department of Social Development has policies in place that ensures that communities are developed to reach its potential in dealing with challenges in their lives

such as the white paper, social development strategic plan and the service delivery model. This study seeks to add voice to the developmental global agenda discourse with a specific focus on community development as a people driven service delivery model, within Social Development. The author also envisions that this study will create and develop a need for government to accelerate the implementation of all policies on community development which will lead to community enhancement and better life.

1.10. Operational concepts

The following definitions of relevant concepts used in the study assisted in the conceptualisation of the community development strategy in Social Work.

1.10.1 Community development

Gray (in Nicholas, Rautenbach & Maistry, 2011), defines community development as an intervention strategy. He further describes it as a democratic, grassroots or bottom- up, humanistic, people centered approach that emphasizes the participation and involvement of local people in all aspects of development and their empowerment through among other things, education, conscientisation, awareness raising, capacity building, community action and community organisation. For the purposes of this study, the researcher defines community development as a process whereby the community is empowered and capacitated to understand and address their own challenges in order to enhance their wellbeing with the help of the community developer. The government in this instance serves as a support system providing resources that are out of reach to the community.

1.10.2 Implementation

In the context of this study, the researcher defined implementation as putting into action what has been planned or concluded.

1.10.3 Strategy

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined strategy as a planned process to be used aimed at addressing the envisaged challenge or problem.

1.10.4 Social workers

Social workers are described by Zastrow (2010), as graduates of schools of social work who use their knowledge and skills to provide social services for clients.

The researcher has used the different definitions above as a point of reference in this study to illustrate that Community development is a structured intervention and a skilled process which social workers are appropriately and adequately trained for, and together with the joint efforts of the community, government and business are able to meet the needs and demands of the community.

1.10.5 Experience

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defines experience as a process that one undergoes either through formal learning or through practice which contributes to the way one thinks and conducts oneself.

1.11 Structure of dissertation

The research report for the dissertation consists of five chapters which the researcher outlines as follows:

Chapter 1: General orientation of the study

This chapter outlines the introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, problem statement, and motivation of the study, the aims and objectives, research questions, ethical considerations, significance of the study and the operational definitions of concepts.

Chapter 2: Community development as a model of social work intervention

Chapter two, the literature review is categorized by the theoretical conceptualization of community development as an intervention strategy in social work.

Chapter 3: Methodology employed

The research methodology employed is presented, ethical considerations applied and the limitations of the study are all issues that are addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data

This chapter focuses on providing a comprehensive analysis of the findings of research conducted and the results which responds to the aims and objectives of the study.

Chapter 5: Summary of the major findings, conclusions and recommendation

This chapter focuses on the summary, conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.

CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS A STRATEGY OF SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

2.1. Introduction

Twelvetrees (2008), notes that while capitalism has ensured that many prosper beyond their wildest dreams, many others seem destined to have poor jobs, poor health, poor education and a life of poverty in which the economic status of “excluded” people create a kind of “learned” helplessness. Twelvetrees therefore, recognises that action is needed including psychological processes which produce and perpetuate systematic oppression, exclusion and powerlessness. Community development as an intervention strategy in social development becomes useful and important in the improvement of such inequalities.

This chapter is on the literature reviewed by the researcher in order to gain knowledge and better understanding of the researched topic. The discussion in the chapter is primarily based on the concept community development and its significance in the Department of Social Development as a strategy to alleviate poverty and at the same time accelerate development among the disadvantaged. Different readings such as breaking the cycle of poverty, community development a critical approach, introduction to community practice, the annual report of the Department of Social Development,

Professionalisation of Community Development and many others were explored in order to interrogate the concept of community development and its role in social development.

2.2 Community Development as an intervention strategy

In the past, community development was seen as a movement which was designed to promote better living for the whole community with active participation and community initiative. Community development is a critical approach which begins in the everyday reality of people's lives by experiencing the ordinary. Furthermore, Ledwith (2011), states that community development is a praxis that locates the silenced stories of those who are marginalised and excluded and this is the heart of any theory of change for social justice.

Some studies define community development as a vehicle to improve the socio-cultural conditions of communities. For example, Gray (2011:163), defines community development as "different intervention strategies that combine the efforts of the people themselves with government to improve their economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions".

On the other hand, Knack (2007), defines community development as a process whereby different people from different backgrounds who have different and aligned interests, come together to resolve issues in a collaborative manner. In her first definition, Cavaye (2006), focuses on community development as a process conducted by community members in which local people do not only create jobs, income and

infrastructure, but also help their community become fundamentally better able to manage change. In the second definition Cavaye (2008), agrees with Gray's definition which emphasises community development as a process in which people are united with government authorities to improve their economic, social and cultural conditions which enables them to contribute fully to national progress.

The Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) (2013) of Social development refers to community development as a process and method aimed at enhancing the capacity of communities to respond to their own needs, and at improving their capacity for development, through community mobilisation, strength-based approaches and empowerment programmes. The model also perceives community development as a complex system of processes made up of two essential elements, namely - the participation of people themselves in efforts to improve their level of living, developing a sense of ownership of the process, taking initiative and contributing meaningfully to joint planning, decision making and implementation/evaluation; And the mobilisation and provision of resources, and the creation of access to opportunities that encourage initiative, self-help and initiatives for mutual benefit.

Weyers (2011), provides a comprehensive definition of community development. He describes community development as a method, process, programme and strategy by means of which change agents, with or without the help of external systems:

- I. Speed up the tempo at which a community develops.

- II. Provide directions to the development process in order to realise objectives purposefully within the economic, psychosocial, bio- psychological, technological, spiritual- cultural, political, environmental, educational and other spheres of life.
- III. Make the goal attainment process as cost- effective, streamlined and sustainable as possible so that both human and environmental resources are used optimally and
- IV. Contribute to human growth and the unlocking of human potential by empowering community members to take responsibility on their own, as well as the whole systems to develop

Based on the above- mentioned definitions, the researcher is of the belief that Community development as a strategy, takes the community “in need” through a process that allows it to identify its problem but also understand the cause thereof in order for the community to come up with effective strategies for intervention. It is for this reason, that the researcher support’s Ledwith’s (2011), view when he alluded to the fact that the way people understand their world, shapes the way they live in it, and it is by challenging the way they see their world that they open themselves to new worldviews and new possibilities for creating a world that is just. These definitions also bring on board a strong emphasis of community development, through collective action which is primarily aimed at addressing the needs of communities who are excluded from the mainstream activities.

In addition, Combat Poverty Agency of (2000), report stated that Community development:

- I. Is about enabling or empowering people to actively work towards social change which will improve the quality of their lives.
- II. Is a collective process that recognises the interdependence of people
- III. Helps people to identify and articulate their needs, and influence the decision-making processes and structures that affect them, their communities and the wider society.

This is confirmed by Ledwith (2011), who states that community development is committed to social justice through a process of critical education that begins in personal empowerment and follows through to collective action for a more just, equal and sustainable world. The researcher is therefore of the view that Community Development in social work practice is based on the intention to build the capacity of community members, by encouraging them to create their own future through fulfilling their own dreams and this is achieved by empowering communities with relevant skills and knowledge. The researcher is furthermore, of the view that community development as a development strategy, is appropriate in addressing the mission and vision of the Department of Social Development and adequately addresses human development in the form of empowering the community with skills that she contribute to the quality of life of the community as envisaged in the vision of the Department of Social Development. This should however be done through inter-sectoral collaborations.

2.3 Community Development: An international perspective

Community development is an international phenomenon and is practised both in developing and developed countries. Community development in some International countries, is advanced by government (state) involvement just like in South Africa. Scotland (Glasgow), for example, the government is involved in in community initiatives of the city council (local government) by providing resources and getting into partnerships with communities. The City Council in Glasgow, took a community development approach to address the asylum seekers and the refugees plight, by enabling them to influence social policy and service provision (CDA, 2008).

The United Nations (1963), defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to the national progress.

2.3.1 Community Development in India

The community development programme was launched in 1952 and fifty-five projects were established. The rural development programme is the biggest rural reconstruction scheme undertaken by the government of India. It has been variously described as the hope and happiness for two thirds of the Indian population and also seen as the testament of emancipation and the declaration of war on poverty. The planning commission of India has defined community development programme as an attempt to

bring about a social and economic transformation of village life through the efforts of the people themselves. It is important in the sense that it is instrumental in raising the standard of living of the rural community with the end result for social change, economic development and emergence of new local leadership at the village level.

2.3.2 Community Development in Tanzania

According to Collins (2008), Community development in Tanzania is based on the guiding principles of rural development which is self- help and self- reliance. The fundamental aim of community development is to enable people in rural villages, through their efforts and co- operation with one another to bring about improvement on all aspects of rural life and the rapid betterment of their standards of living. The first President, of the republic of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julias K, Nyerere, once said, that “true development is the development of the people and not of things” (Nyerere, 1973}. The Tanzanian government believed that the development of the people is brought about by the people themselves. It is the government’s responsibility to put mechanisms in place which will support the communities to achieve the envisioned capacity. The Tanzanian government also believed that, to achieve community development, people must be enabled to develop their capacities, to identify their problems and plan ways of solving them. The responsibility of the government then, becomes that of preparing policies and creating conducive environments for the people and other concerned parties to render and sustain delivery of the services.

The Tanzanian government also has a community development policy in place specifically intended to help the people to bring about their own development. The policy enables individuals, families, groups and associations to contribute more to the government objectives of self-reliance and therefore bring about change at all levels and finally the nation as a whole (Ministry of community development and woman affairs, 2006). It is of the researcher's observation that the policy put much emphasis on the abundant resources available in Tanzania such as, water, natural resources, minerals livestock etc. and yet people live in poverty. The policy suggests mechanisms such as providing communities with the necessary knowledge and skill that would assist in communities to uplift themselves.

2.3.3 Community development in South Africa

In South Africa, community development only became known in 1984 when the population development program was launched. The focus was to stimulate community development activities at the local level in order to improve the quality of life of the people. However, community development in South Africa was viewed with mistrust and skepticism in government circles because of its potential for political change (Makhubele & Shirindi, 2015). Community development in South Africa cuts across all disciplines such as, health and agriculture and there is a strong component of community development.

The South African government has policies in place that ensures that the needs of communities and the society at large are addressed by involving business and

governmental departments as stakeholders. The South African government acknowledges the need for a developmental paradigm shift, through which communities can be engaged, capacitated and resources made available in the development of people's lives. But very little has been put in place to accelerate the process. As poverty alleviation has become one of the important targets set by world leaders to address inequalities, the South African government together with other world leaders has come up with policies to combat poverty.

In September (2000), the world leaders adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration which set in motion a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty. The declaration was later transformed into the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). South Africa was part of this initiative and made a commitment to the eight MDGs which were adopted by the United Nations (UN) member states. South Africa also affirmed its commitment by embracing the eight MDGs into a National set of ten Priorities. Its first priority is to address the scourge of poverty by transforming the economy to create employment and sustainable development.

2.4 Policy imperatives to address Poverty

Throughout the course of history, societies have developed mechanisms and policies to assist those who are disadvantaged, vulnerable and/or poor. The underlying motivation has always been that the human need for survival implies a necessity to sustain a basic functionality of human collectives. Thus, humans have always tried to put some system in place to take care of – or else define out of the ambit of collective responsibility – at

least the most basic needs of those who are living on society's margins (Hölscher, 2008). In her article, Hölscher interrogates the policy imperatives put in place intended to bring about change in the lives of the poor in a developing environment.

The researcher believes that policy imperatives for the development of communities are important as they provide a common basis for stakeholders who are involved in community interventions or initiatives geared towards community upliftment. Despite its importance, the researcher concurs with the concern raised by Gray (2004), that the frameworks for social services and policies are not always aligned to the demands and realities of social work practice.

The following policies as discussed above, all emphasise the relevance of community development in Social Development:

2.4 1 The 1997 White Paper of Social Welfare

The 1997 white paper was a negotiated policy frame work and strategy which charted a new path for social welfare in the promotion of national social development. This document was produced with the full participation of all the stake holders in the welfare field (White Paper, 1997). The white paper for social welfare was developed to afford society, opportunities to participate in activities that will bring change in its circumstances. The focus of community development programs in the welfare field in the white Paper are:

- I. The facilitation of the community development process.

- II. The development of family-centered and community-based programs.
- III. The facilitation of capacity-building and economic empowerment programs.
- IV. The promotion of developmental social relief and disaster relief programs.
- V. The facilitation of food aid programs in emergency situations owing to disasters such as floods, fire, civil unrest or drought, or to alleviate acute hunger. Food aid of this nature to be a temporary measure until individuals and households are incorporated into other social development programs.
- VI. Voluntary participation in social and community programs to be actively encouraged and facilitated.
- VII. Self-help groups and mutual aid support programs to be facilitated where necessary.
- VIII. Promoting advocacy programs.

The White Paper of 1997 also made a commitment on poverty. This required social development to contribute towards the eradication of poverty through a developmental approach which, among other things, discouraged dependency, promoted the active involvement of people in their own development, employed a multifaceted, multispectral approach, and encouraged partnership between the state, provincial government and all other stakeholders in welfare (Gray, 2004). Hence social welfare policies and programs are developed and targeted at poverty prevention, alleviation, reduction and the development of people's capacity.

2.4.2 National Development Plan (NDP)

The National Development Plan is a policy document that seeks to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality. This policy document is meant to redress social ills that were created by apartheid. The plan focused on the capabilities of people and also creating possibilities. The NDP was launched in 2010 and was adopted by the South African government in 2012/2013. The plan outlined the desired destination and the roles of different stakeholders that each sector of society plays to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were developed as a roadmap for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. Based on the values and principles agreed upon by Member States in the 2010 Millennium Summit, the MDGs have served as a global framework for collective action to reduce poverty and improve the lives of poor people. Across eight clear goals, the MDGs include 21 time bound targets to measure progress in poverty reduction and hunger as well as improvements in health, education, living conditions, environmental sustainability and gender equality (MDG Gap Task Force, 2015). The ultimate aim of the NDP was to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 (Zarenda, 2013).

2.4.3 Social Development Strategic Plan (2010- 2015)

The Social Development Strategic Plan (2010- 2015), is just but one of the measures put in place by the South African government to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment among the vulnerable groups. Programs were developed to protect South Africans from poverty and other deprivations. Through the community development programme, the department has developed policies, strategies, programs

and tools for empowering and building the capacities of the poor and vulnerable as well as affected communities to unleash their potential for sustainable community development.

The project description of community development in the strategic plan is outlined as follows:

- **Sustainable Livelihoods:** develops and provides support for the implementation of programmes, strategies and tools for sustainable livelihoods, and manages service delivery partners.
- **Community Development Policy and Service Standards:** develops and facilitates the implementation of policies, guidelines, norms and standards to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of community development services and programmes.
- **Youth:** develops and facilitates the implementation of policies, legislation and programmes to protect vulnerable youth.
- **Non-Profit Organisations:** builds capacity of NPOs and ensures efficiency in the registration of NPOs and monitoring of their compliance to the Non-profit Organisations Act (1997).
- **HIV and AIDS:** Develops supports and monitors the implementation of policies, programs and guidelines to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS in line with the 2007–2011 National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS, STIs, TB and Malaria.

- **National Development Agency:** provides grants to civil society organisations to implement sustainable community-driven projects that address food security, and create employment and income opportunities.

2.4.4 The Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM)

The ISDM (2013), recognises that Social work services are rendered using three primary methods, namely case work, group work and community work/development. The following are the discussions on community development as addressed in the ISDM:

2.4.4.1 Purpose of Community Development

Firstly, the aim of community development is aimed at the facilitation of community development services through the human-orientated and people-centred approaches of participation, empowerment and ownership of the development actions by the community to address and prevent deprivation (physical and psychosocial needs, lack of access to basic material, etc.).

Secondly, it is aimed at rendering community development services by identifying and implementing the required interventions in conjunction with the community development worker, community and other relevant stakeholders. The following programmes are rendered by social development:

Poverty reduction programmes

- Facilitation of development centres
- Promotion and facilitation of the establishment of cooperatives
- Integrated empowerment programmes, which build the capacity of the poor to achieve self-reliance
- Promotion of access to departmental and other opportunities and resources
- Socio-economic programmes
- With other sectors, implementation of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development
- Strategy and the Urban Renewal Strategy
- With other stakeholders, facilitation of disaster management processes.

Registration and facilitation of NPOs

- Registration of community development ventures.
- Registration of nonprofit Organisations.
- Maintaining a database of service providers.
- Assessment of the community's structures, historical background, profile resources, strengths and needs; identification of community leadership; and strengthening and building of structures that can assist in this regard.
- Planning and prioritising of activities required to develop the community by formulating goals and objectives, assessing the available resources, setting time frames and compiling budgets.

- Facilitation of the implementation of identified development activities, according to the plans developed by involving the community; appointment of leaders in the community; mobilisation of resources; monitoring of implementation; and development and strengthening of community Organisations and leadership within the community.
- Monitoring of implementation of jointly planned activities, giving feedback to the community and re-planning actions where required.
- Documentation of all interactions and interventions by facilitators and practitioners for future reference.

Community profiling

A classification in terms of community development processes would include the following:

- Delimitation of the community and gaining their trust and getting to know the current community services, history, resources and state of the community.

Planning and prioritisation

- Planning and prioritising of activities required to develop the community by formulating goals and objectives, assessing the available resources, setting time frames and compiling budgets.

Evaluation of implementation

- Monitoring of implementation of jointly planned activities, giving feedback to the community and re-planning actions where required.

Documentation of activities

- Documentation of all interactions and interventions by facilitators and practitioners for future reference

Facilitation, integration and coordination

- Facilitation of the implementation of identified development activities, according to the plans developed by involving the community; appointment of leaders in the community;
- Mobilisation of resources; monitoring of implementation; development and strengthening of community organisations and leadership within the community

2.4.5 Framework for social services (2013)

in order to enhance service delivery, social development has recognised that managing the workload of social service practitioners is a critical factor in the delivery of social welfare services. Social development has identified the following elements of workload management:

- I. Understanding the human resource capacity of the organisation;
- II. Knowing the basket of social welfare services rendered by the organisation;

- III. Determining the nature of work to be done by the social service occupations and practitioners;
- IV. Determining the factors influencing workload of practitioners;
- V. Overall performance management practices and systems used by organisations and the sector.
- VI. Determination of workload ratio.

The framework has further outlined the management of caseload as per social workers' categories as follows:

160 hours per month 8 hours of supervision General administration of 16 hours per month Continuous professional development of 8 hours per month	No factors considered thus 160 hours per month	1:61 cases per month 1:224 cases annually
All time allocations indicated in scenario 1	Nature of beneficiaries Travelling	1:44 cases per month 1:160 cases annually
All time allocations indicated in scenario 1	Travelling Court work	1:19 cases per month 1:134 cases annually
80 hours per month available for casework 48 hours per month available for group work	No factors considered thus 160 hours per month	1:37 cases per month 1:160 individuals in groups per month
80 hours per month available for casework	No factors considered thus 160 hours per month	1:37 cases per month 1:135 cases annually

48 hours per month available for group work		1: 40 individuals in group per month 175 individuals in groups annually Number of people reached through community work to be determined by the size of target community
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Table 1: Management of caseload as per social workers’ categories

Based on the above outlined policies that eloquently stipulates the role of social development with regard to community development, researcher argues, that social workers employed in the Department of Social Development have a major role to play in ensuring that social workers are familiar with policy documents such as the White Paper of 1997, MDGs, NDP and the ISDM, understood and implemented.

2.5 Community development- A strategy to reduce poverty

Statistics South Africa (2008-2009) has revealed that Poverty is a key development problem in social, economic and political terms. In post-apartheid South Africa, fighting the legacy of poverty and under-development has always been a central theme of Government. Hence, the demand for regular, quality poverty data to inform Government’s planning and actions is extremely high. These data are especially critical in the light of the creation of the new planning commission within the Presidency which needs this information to properly direct and align all government departments in a concerted effort to achieve the desired victory against poverty in South Africa.

Community development has the potential to effect changes that will combat poverty and social exclusion.

In the strategic plan (2010- 2015), the minister of Social Development, Mrs. Molewa stated that government is putting measures in place to address the challenges of poverty and unemployment among vulnerable groups. The deputy minister, Ms. Dlamini, emphasised the need for building cohesive community programs to take care of the social, physical and economic needs. The Department of Social Development recognises the fact that in order to tackle cohesive communities, it requires a combination of strategies ranging from existing Social Security measures to developmental welfare services and community development interventions.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW, 2010) asserts that the effects of Poverty are often reflected in the multitudes of the vulnerable groups such as youth, children, women, elderly, disabled, refugees, homeless and all those who are at risk. It further states that in order to eradicate poverty, the importance of consultations and involvement of the vulnerable should not be underestimated in the process of helping them to gain self- confidence. The IFSW (2010), further suggests that, when examining the social problem (e.g. poverty) and ways in which social workers can help to alleviate, address and help individuals affected by poverty, the Statement of Ethical Principles should be consulted for guidance.

Understanding that the South African government has initiatives such as social grants in place the researcher is however, of the opinion that very few sustainable initiatives are in place that should allow the beneficiaries to be self- reliant. Hence the importance of the utilization of community development as a strategy to reduce poverty should be on top in the consideration by social development.

2.6 Community development and the role of social work

The researcher is of the opinion that, social workers have a responsibility to ensure that social conditions that contribute to economic inequalities and unjust policies and practices are challenged and abolished.

The definition of social work profession is to promote social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance wellbeing. Utilizing theories of human behavior and social systems, social work intervenes at the point where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (IFSW, 2012). What remains of utmost importance with regard to the Social Work definition is for social workers to uphold this definition and base their day to day practice of social work on the definition. Equally important is the vision and mission of the Department of Social Development. **The vision states:** A caring and integrated system of social development services that facilitates human development and improves the quality of life, whilst the mission focusses on: Ensuring the provision of comprehensive, integrated, sustainable, and quality social development services, and create an enabling environment for

sustainable development in partnership with all those committed to building a caring society (Social Development Annual Report, 2012).

Lombard (2010), draws attention to the importance of the Social Work profession to fulfill its role and contribute to addressing Social Development goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG'S). The social workers' responsibilities and their role in removing the social, political, cultural and structural determinants of poverty and inequalities should be demonstrated in their strategies, actions and achievements in addressing injustices. Community development should therefore be seen as an intervention strategy which is pivotal in the development of society and should also be visible to ensure that the vision and mission of the Department of Social Development is upheld. Lombard (2003), also confirms that social workers has a major role to play in communities. But, because social work is associated with food security, it somehow makes it difficult for the social worker to clearly play her/ his role, of enabling, capacitating and empowering the communities with the necessary skills in order to become self-reliant.

This once again qualifies the role of Social Development for the practice of the community development strategy in its intervention with communities. In order for the social worker to demonstrate his/her role, it requires the necessary skills in community analysis, social planning, and community organising and social action. The social worker also plays an important role in community practice which calls for social workers

to help people to discover their own resources and their own ability to create influence and positive change (IFS, 2012)

In addition to everything said with regard to the social worker's responsibilities in community development by different authors, Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) eloquently emphasise the following roles of the social worker:

- I. **Guide-** the view of the community development worker is much broader and longer term than those of the community members they work with. These scholars perceive the community developers as people who might have a better understanding than the community of possible consequences of any action but fully understand their own limitations. It is important for community developers to understand that they do not know everything and therefore the community should never become dependent on them. The community developer's role as a guide is primarily based on providing understanding within a certain situation and does not entitle them to lead from the front but jointly make discoveries as they go along.
- II. **Adviser-** The community developers are expected to provide advice based on their greater knowledge and broader view. The sole purpose of this role is to motivate and enable. The advice should be based on the possible choices a community can make and the probable consequences.
- III. **Advocate-** This role requires the social worker to be able to represent the people to the outside world only if the situation demands. It is advisable that one or two people accompanies the social worker so the learning opportunity is utilised.

- IV. **Enabler-** The role of the social worker is to ensure that the community is enabled to fulfill their abstract human needs, to enhance their learning processes and to help them gain meaningful empowerment.

The researcher believes that the principles of social work are equally important in stressing the responsibilities of the social worker and is discussed according to the IFS, 2012 as follows:

- I. Respecting the right to self-determination – Social workers should respect and promote people’s right to make their own choices and decisions, irrespective of their values and life choices, provided this does not threaten the rights and legitimate interests of others.
- II. Promoting the right to participation – Social workers should promote the full involvement and participation of people using their services in ways that enable them to be empowered in all aspects of decisions and actions affecting their lives.
- III. Treating each person as a whole – Social workers should be concerned with the whole person, within the family, community, societal and natural environments, and should seek to recognise all aspects of a person’s life.
- IV. Identifying and developing strengths – Social workers should focus on the strengths of all individuals, groups and communities and thus promote their empowerment.

Both the roles and responsibilities described by Swanepoel and De Beer (2006) and the IFS (2012), draws on three major elements which is: enabling communities; focusing on

the strengths of the community and self-determination which are important in the social work. The swing towards developmental welfare practice and its greater emphasis on community development drew criticism against social workers who mainly practised casework and of social work education programs for failing to teach development (Gray, 2004).

2.7 Requisite knowledge of social workers within the community development strategy

The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) considers community social work as involving an understanding of power dynamics and social relations that govern the relationships between various structures and diverse communities and working to achieve social justice through structural change. If the issue is poverty, for example, a social worker practising from a community perspective may focus on the political economy that creates these conditions. CASW, on the other hand, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, 2011) stresses the importance of social work students being knowledgeable about the ways in which communities and populations can become more involved and competent in drawing on their strengths and assets to solve problems and enhance the quality of their lives. The social work curriculum takes adequate care of the theoretical component of community development during the training of social work students. The training equips students to use their abilities acquired during the training of social work and also use their influence to protect and advocate for the victims of poverty and inequalities. It is, however evident that the theory learned by students during social work practice training affords them minimal

practice thereof. This is based on the evidence in the form of written reports from social work students who are placed at various agencies across the Limpopo Province for work integrated learning. The reports from students reveals, every year, that very little attention is placed on communities. The researcher's argument here is that social workers in their training are adequately trained and prepared to deal with community development challenges, the challenge however emerges when the practice environment does not provide the required support to the new social workers. This is supported by Lombard (2003), when the author asserts that social workers are well trained in the community development practices.

2.8 Views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for change

In this study the researcher has adopted the social development approach as one of the fundamental approaches in social work practice to best explain the importance of community development within a developmental approach in social work. There is presently, no study done on the implementation of the community development strategy as a tool for change in Limpopo Province. But the researcher discovered a study which was carried out by Dlangamandla in Gauteng Province. Dlangamandla (2010), refers to developmental social services as the delivery of integrated and community based social services, facilities, social investment programmes and social assistance to promote social justice, build human capacities, and enhance livelihoods and social functioning in order for people to lead productive and fulfilling lives. Dlangamandla further argues that developmental social services should be based on the guiding principles set by the

overall policy framework. The findings of Dlangamandla (2010), revealed that the social developmental approach is not fully implemented as social workers are battling with the understanding of how to implement the approach in practice. The study also revealed that there is a need to develop a national action plan to stimulate the implementation of a social developmental approach in practice.

2.9 Challenges of social workers in the utilization of Community Development strategy

Cock's study in (2008) established that there is a challenge between the development of legislation, having it passed and the ultimate implementation thereof. She further argues that legislation takes people out of their comfort zones and the whole exercise can be traumatic. Moreover, apart from the resistance to change, a number of factors could go wrong in the implementation phase which jeopardies the successful implementation of legislation. Cock in her study attributed a number of reasons for the lack of implementation of such legislation as follows.

- I. Lack of skills by personnel who must implement the legislation
- II. Communication challenges between policy makers and implementers which leads to ineffective implementation
- III. Inadequate time devoted to a programme
- IV. Too much expectations within unrealistic time frames

The researcher is of the view that even if many policy frameworks may be put in place, if proper mechanisms and a well-informed context on the ground is not in place, challenges are bound to swart the achievement of the desired goals.

Gray and Lombard (2008), on the one hand reminds the readers of the cold facts of social work. They refer to social work as an urban-based profession whereas the most important social development needs were, and still are, in rural areas, especially in the former homelands where black poverty is rife. These scholars further note that in 2001, the welfare Minister reported that 45 per cent of the population lived in rural areas; most rural people were poor; and poorest people amount to 72 per cent of the population – were black, with rural women and children as the poorest of all. Lombard (2003), points out that social workers are faced with the daily challenge of alleviating poverty and calls on the social welfare services to embark on a sustainable entrepreneurial route to address these challenges.

What will be important to consider is to incorporate the entrepreneurial training in the social work education curriculum.

The researcher is of the view that the social work profession needs to establish its professional boundaries as there is a great need for the profession to remain relevant and responsive to society's needs. This is in the light of the understanding of all challenges that could be encountered in the utilisation of community development.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The key purpose of this chapter is to spell out the research methods that were employed for this study

3.1 Research methods

Research methods refer to the practices and techniques used when conducting research. It shows how all the major parts of the research study - the population, samples or groups, sampling methods, sample size, inclusion and exclusion criteria, the pilot study, gaining access to the setting, data collection methods and data analysis work together in an attempt to address the research questions (De Vos, 2007 *et al*). Research methodology thus concerns the selection of appropriate research design for a particular study and entails the plan, structure and the strategy of the research.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present the research methods employed in the study and the following aspects are outlined as: the research approach; research design; study area; target population; sampling methods; data collection techniques; and data analysis.

3.2 Research Approach

The researcher employed a qualitative research approach which focused on the aim of discovering and understanding the experiences, perspectives and thoughts of respondents (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005 and De Vos, *et al*). The qualitative approach is usually described as allowing a detailed exploration of a topic of interest in which information is collected by a researcher through case studies, ethnographic work, interviews, and so on. Inherent in this approach is the description of the interactions among respondents and researchers in naturalistic settings with few boundaries which result in an open flexible research process. Yates (2004,) concurs when he states that “qualitative research explores how individual or group members give meaning to and express their understanding of themselves; their experiences and/ or their worlds”.

The researcher applied the qualitative research approach in order to have an insightful and comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes around the implementation of community development by social workers in the Department of Social Development as a poverty eradication strategy. Except for the qualitative approach contributing to the researcher acquiring in-depth information from the respondents which assisted in unearthing fundamental questions that prompted the study, the researcher was also of the view that it was the most appropriate approach for the purposes of this study.

3.3 Research Design

The case study design was employed by the researcher as it allowed her to gain an in-depth understanding of the practice of community development and what it meant for the social workers involved in the study. De Vos, *et al*, describe a case study as a type of design where researchers are primarily interested in the meaning subjects give to their life experiences. This type of research design assisted the researcher to gain profound understanding of the phenomenon from different social workers' perspective based in different municipalities in the Vhembe District. By so doing, the researcher ensured that the voices of all the four municipalities where the study was conducted were heard and represented. The researcher's choice of the case study design is further supported by Smith (2000) when he states that a case study design is an approach which can be used to study a social problem through a thorough analysis of an individual case. The case may be a person, group, process, community or any other unit of social life. The decision which motivated the researcher to opt for the case study design was based on the fact that it facilitates the collection of detailed, in-depth data and indeed it was the most appropriate study design utilised in the context of the study. The study was explorative in nature as it aimed to explore the implementation of the community development practice by social workers in the Vhembe District.

3.4. Study Area

The study was conducted in Vhembe District which is one of the five districts in the Limpopo Province. The other four districts are Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune and Waterberg. The Limpopo Province is a rural setting and is known to be one of the

poorest provinces in South Africa. Vhembe District comprises of four municipalities which consist of Thulamela, Musina, Mutale and Makhado. The data for the study was collected from all the four municipalities.



3.5. Target Population

Study population is defined as the total set of objects, individuals or a group of people having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying and from which the individuals or unit of the study are sampled (De Vos, 2007 *et al*). A population encompasses all the elements that make up the unit of analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Desmond Painter, 2009).

The population consisted of senior social workers who have been in the employment of the Department of Social Development for a period of five years and above. The total number of senior social workers in Vhembe district was 12. Three social workers from Social Development in each of the four municipalities (Makhado, Thulamela, Musina and Mutale) in Vhembe District were represented. The groups of social workers were solely identified based on the experience and knowledge which they acquired over the years of their employment in social development.

3.6. Sampling Method

Sampling method is defined as the process of selecting a group of people or portion of the population that represent the entire population being studied (De Vos, *et al*). De Vos explains that representativeness is the underlying epistemic criterion of a valid or unbiased sample. The researcher used the non-probability sampling method wherein the purposive sampling was selected. This method involves the conscious selection of certain subjects to be included in the research project (De Vos, *et al*). The researcher provided the criteria of the respondents to participate in the study to the Social Development office. Senior social workers were selected based on the required criteria which was: senior social workers who have been in the employment of the Department of Social Development for a period of five years and above. A number of twelve senior social workers representing four municipalities in the Vhembe District were selected based on the purposive sampling method and who had adequate knowledge of the phenomenon. In confirmation, Creswell, (2003) and Babbie and Mouton (2007) concur

with the fact that the researcher should use the most appropriate respondents in the study being conducted.

3.7 Data Collection Techniques

De Vos (2007), defines data collection as the precise, systematic gathering of information relevant to the research purpose or to the specific objectives of a study and collecting data is about using the selected methods of investigation. The data-collection method utilised for the study was in the form of focus group interviews. Dlangamandla (2010), states that a focus group can be used when a researcher is looking for a range of ideas or feelings that people have about something whilst Kumar (2005), perceives focus group interviewing as a collective rather than an individualistic research method that focusses on the multimodality of participants' attitudes, experiences and believes.

The researcher decided on a focus group based on two reasons: Firstly, it is advantageous as the researcher interacted with a group of respondents in a limited period of time and this is supported by Babbie and Mouton (2007: 292). Secondly, the researcher was of the view that the focus group would add value and maximise the benefits of the study, as respondents would share their experiences, express and clarify their views with each other and in that manner contribute diverse and reliable information to the study.

The researcher conducted a pilot study in the form of a focus group, with a group of five senior social workers in the Makhado Municipality to test the interview schedule. It is important to mention that the social workers who participated in the pilot study were not

included in the main study. Although there were no changes or additions to the interview schedule (see appendix 3), the pilot study, did however, contribute to the researcher's level of confidence and preparedness for the focus group in the study.

Following the ethical clearance certificate which was received by the researcher from the Provincial Department of Social Development (see appendix 2), the researcher was also issued with a permission letter to conduct the study in the Vhembe District (see appendix 4). The researcher conducted the study with the focus group consisting of 3 senior social workers in each municipality. A total of twelve senior social workers representing each of the four municipalities (Vhembe, Thulamela, Mutale and Musina) were interviewed.

The researcher requested for the respondents' consent to record the focus group discussions. The recordings of the interview conducted during the focus group ensured that the responses from the respondents are quoted as closely and adequately as possible.

A semi structured interview plan was designed which served as a guide to the researcher during the focus group interview. The interview schedule consisted of five questions (see appendix 5) which aimed at responding to the research questions of the study which was to explore the experiences of social workers regarding the practice of community development in Vhembe District. The researcher adopted the role of a

facilitator throughout the data collection process which contributed positively to a fair representation of all respondents and municipalities.

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and interpretations to the mass of collected data (De Vos, 2007). Boeitjie (2010), refers to data analysis as a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes and other material accumulated by the researcher to increase own understanding and allow the researcher to present her/ his own discovery to others. In addition, the author states that data analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what the researcher will tell others.

The collected data was analysed qualitatively using Creswell's (2005:191), six steps.

According to Dlangamandla (2010), qualitative data involves inseparable relationship between data collection and data analysis. This means that data analysis can be done while the researcher is collecting data. After each of the focus groups of the four municipalities, the researcher analysed the data.

During the focus group interview, the researcher recorded the discussions based on the consent received from the respondents. The researcher also made short hand notes which served as reminders for each question responded to by the respondents. After each focus group interview conducted, the researcher provided the research assistant

with the recordings of the discussions to transcribe. Creswell's six steps were implemented by the researcher as follows:

Step 1: The researcher selected a transcript and read it to get meaning of the information whilst writing down thoughts coming to mind.

The researcher carefully read through all the transcripts, taking note of the notes that was done by the researcher during interviews with the aim of ensuring that all responses by the respondents were captured and by so doing familiarising the researcher with the data collected.

Step 2: Upon completion of the first step the researcher put together a list of similar topics into columns that were labeled as major topics.

For example, the researcher coded question one with the colour green and the data collected for this question was put into column one.

Step 3: This step involved, abbreviating the topics as codes and writing the codes next to the appropriate segment of the texts, observing the organisation of data to check if new categories or codes emerged.

Step 4: The researcher discovered major topics in the responses which was placed in the appropriate columns and was labelled with the same colour code as the question.

Step 5: A final decision was made on the abbreviation of each category and codes were arranged alphabetically.

The researcher used the similar responses from the respondents as themes which were colour coded hence no need for abbreviations.

Step 6: The researcher put the collected data material to each category and performed a preliminary analysis.

The final product of the data analysis process was that all data collected from the study was presented in one document with appropriate labelling and coding for effective analysis and understanding.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in the qualitative study is important in the verification of the interpretation of the results (Glesne, 2006:38; De Vos, 2005:362). The researcher ensured the trustworthiness of the study by consulting and cross checking with the participants during the focus group interview and the compilation of the report.

3.10 Conclusion

The researcher in this chapter described the methodology employed to conduct the study and analysed the data according to six themes as prescribed by Creswell (2005).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1. Introduction:

The primary aim of this chapter was to present, analyse and interpret the findings of the study. The findings are thematically presented according to the following format: First section is the biographical profile of the research respondents; and the second section is the presentation of the themes that emerged from the data analysis process. The themes allude to the reviewed literature.

The 12 respondents interviewed were senior social workers and who had worked for more than five years in their position, they were all from the Department of Social Development in the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province. The profile of the respondents was gender aged and years of experience.

4.1.1

Gender:	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
Number of Respondents:	8	4	12

Table 2: Gender

Twelve senior social workers were the focus group and the gender of the respondents demonstrate that the majority of the respondents were females (08) and only four (04) were males. Even though the selection of the respondents was carried out by the social development office, the study does reflect the realities of the practice environment which is dominated by female social workers as opposed to male.

4.1.2

	Age bracket	No. respondents	Total
1.	30- 35	02	
2.	36- 45	08	
3.	46- 55	01	
4.	56- 65	01	12

Table 3: Age of respondents

The above table illustrates that only two respondents were between the ages of 30 to 35 whilst the majority of the respondents were between 36 to 45 years old. One respondent was between 46 to 55 years old and the other between 56 to 65 years old. The policy on progression of social development stipulates that Social workers who are employed at entry level can only progress to the next level which is a senior position, after 10 years. This effectively means that a social worker who is employed at social development at the age of 23 will only progress to a senior position at the age of 33. It

is also interesting to note that the oldest respondents are much fewer than the rest of the respondents. The researcher feels that social workers at this level of maturity, with regard to both age and experience should be in a supervisory or managerial position

4.1.3

No. of years:	5- 10	11- 20	21- 30	30 plus
No. of respondents	02	05	04	01

Table 4: Years of experience

The above table shows that two respondents have working experience of between 5 to 10 years; five respondents 11 to 20 years; whilst four had working experience of between 21 to 30 years and one respondent a 30 plus years of experience. The researcher defined experience in chapter 1 (10.1.4) as a process that one undergoes either through formal learning or through practice which contributes to the way one thinks and conducts oneself on the job. The researcher's view is that it is difficult for an older person to explore anything new and as such, they tend to resist change. Hence it becomes easier to embrace the old way of doing things.

The above section concluded the biographical evidence of the respondents who participated in the study. The following section focusses on the themes and subthemes that emerged during the data analysis.

4.1.4

The areas of operation of the 12 social workers who participated in the study is displayed below:

Name of Municipality	Makhado	Musina	Thulamela	Mutale	Total
	03	03	03	03	12

Table 5: Areas of operation of respondents

The above table demonstrates a fair and balanced representation of all municipalities The study had in the Vhembe District. Each municipality was represented by three respondents who were all senior social workers. The total number of the senior social workers who represented the four municipalities in the Vhembe District were twelve (12).

SECTION 2: Findings

4.1.5. Themes and sub- themes identified in the study during data analysis

This table below demonstrates the themes and sub-themes identified in the study.

THEMES	SUB- THEMES
1. Methods of intervention practised by the social workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case work • Group work • Community work
2. The rationale for the use of the methods	
3. Respondents understanding of community development	
4. Challenges experienced in practising community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets • Lack of resources • Caseload • Transport • Community perceptions and dependency syndrome <p>Continuing training of social workers</p>
5. The importance of community development in bringing about change	

Table 6: Summary of the themes and sub- themes

4.1.6 Discussion on themes and sub- themes

4.1.6.1. Theme 1: Methods of intervention practised by social workers

A method is understood to be an orderly way of procedure and is always carried out towards achieving a specific aim. Social work methods are the methods that social workers use to help people of all ages and from various sections of society to enhance their social functioning and to cope more effectively with their problems (Palmar, 2014). This notion is further supported by Padgett (2008), who states that the nature of social work methods is such that as social workers do not decide what problems and issues they would like to address for their intervention is based on the facilitation of change. This change does not only include change among individuals but change within the individual's environment that is oppressing or prohibiting the individual from positive growth and development. Within the social work methods, social workers seek to challenge inequality and disadvantages, promote social justice and advocate for resources and opportunities for individuals, groups and communities. The practice of Social Work is grounded on three primary methods of intervention that is, intervention with individuals and families; groups; and communities.

The researcher reports on the following methods of intervention based on the three identified sub- themes from the discussions with the respondents:

Case work:

Palmar (2014), describes case work as all human beings being part of society and everyone in the society having different social roles and duties. While performing these roles and duties, individuals face many problems in one or other form, which hinder their

performance as social beings. Palmar further elaborates that every individual is unique with different sets of needs from others in society and has a different way of handling his/ her life situations. To understand the uniqueness of human behavior and the individual differences, one needs to understand a human being vis-à-vis his/her social environment and life experiences. A person is a net product of interaction between biological, psychological and environmental factors.

All twelve respondents were reported to be engaged in case work and an average of 80% of the respondents work on a monthly basis, consists of case work intervention. The percentage reported by the respondents is not different to the percentage prescribed by the Framework for Social Services (2013), as outlined in chapter 2 (2.4.5), for social workers in an attempt to resolve the case load concerns.

Group work:

The majority of the respondents reported that group work was not much of a focus area in social work practice “for that matter it is a method that could be done once per quarter”. The conceptual understanding of the majority of the respondents was that group work is an appropriate social work method to respond to social problems in schools. The problems identified by the respondents were however that of time and caseload. One of the respondents also mentioned that one of the major challenges contributing to the lack of implementation of this particular method, was the time consuming nature of the method. “It is not practical to go to a school make arrangements to have contact with learners for a number of days in a month, even though it might be once a week”. Some respondents felt that, perhaps if there was a

memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Department of Social Development and the Department of Education, access to the schools could be much better and easier. It appeared from the discussions that some of respondents have lost interest in group work at schools due to the nature of the relationship. To endorse this assertion, one respondent said “I feel like I need to beg the principals all the time when I need contact with the schools”. The respondents acknowledged that in fact the group work method employed in practice has very little traits of the actual group work process as prescribed in social work education. “We just go there for at least an hour and talk to learners”. What was also evident in the focus group discussions was that, the nature of social work practice has very little emphasis on group work as a method due to the demand of individual and family cases. Group work is not regarded as a major intervention method. “Social workers are not hands on with group work at all, especially in schools”. An average of 20% group work practice was reported by all respondents. “Except for going out to schools once in a while, group work is mostly practised with support groups of HIV and AIDS”.

Community development:

The respondents briefed the researcher that within the Department of Social Development in Vhembe District, there is a section called Community Development that is responsible for community development projects. The manager heading the section of community development is a social worker but the officials, who are called “community development workers” are people who hold matric certificates and have undergone short courses. The community developers employed by social development

in the community development section are responsible for all community development projects. It is therefore of the researcher's view that community development as an intervention model demands a well-trained person who will understand and also will be able to implement the processes within community development which will yield a sustainable community upliftment. The social workers are at this point well trained for community intervention. Social development on the other hand should consider taking the present community development officials through formal training.

The respondents raised the following reasons for not fully practising community development: Firstly, that the community development section in social development is already involved in community development and they would not like to duplicate the work as they serve the same communities and clients. The respondents however expressed a concern around the practice of the community development workers because they focus only on existing Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO's). Secondly, the other major concern echoed by the majority of the respondents was that, community development is not an important focus area in the strategic plan of the Department of Social Development, this means that they cannot report it anywhere and is seen by them as a time waster. The general template that is followed to write monthly reports is silent on community development. The focus is much more on campaigns and therefore it is rare to find a report on community development.

Community development as a strategy for intervention in social work practice in Vhembe District is reported by respondents to be at an average of 20%. This

percentage once again corresponds with the framework of social service workload allocation as discussed in chapter two. Respondents agreed that very little is done and this partly based on the two reasons stipulated above. Respondents agreed that the actual community development practice is only done in their agencies when student social workers are placed for field work practice. A few respondents however reported that due to a lack of resources, they would prefer to do campaigns, although understanding that it does not address the needs of the community. It was further reported that the campaigns are mostly focused on substance abuse in the form of “Ke Moja” (referring to a puppet show which is taken to schools by social workers who are trained to address issues of substance abuse) and is done once in a quarter.

The following remarks are from social workers during the focus group discussions:

- “I cannot lie to you, we are not practising it, we just go out to communities’ for a talk on campaigns and it is once- off”;
- “I feel it is important for social development to consider employing social workers who specialise in community work/ community development only”;

These remarks are an indication that the respondents understand that community development in the social work practice is important but it appears that social development does not have adequate support systems in place to ensure effective implementation of the community development strategy. The discussions also highlighted the misconceptions about the role of the social worker and that of the

community developer in as far as the practice of community development is concerned. Landman (2005), also acknowledges that community development has a macro focus which provides the social worker with opportunities to become involved in preventative work. It enables the community through various specialised skills, with the aid of resources (internal and external to the community) to become empowered and enthusiastic; to get involved in their own development; to stand up for their needs and rights and to work together to accomplish the community's goals. The Department of Social Development has policies in place that adequately stipulates its stance and responsibilities towards community development. Such policies include the white paper, the National Development Plan (NDP) and most importantly the Integrated Service Delivery Model (ISDM) that focuses extensively on the programmes.

4.1.6.2 THEME 2: The rationale of using the methods

This theme was based on the respondents having to share their views on why the methods of social work were practised in the manner it is currently in social development. It is important for the researcher to start from the premise of social work as a profession and its intention. Rwomire (2011), defines social work as consisting of organised and systematic efforts to secure the highest level of personal and social satisfaction for individuals, groups and communities and aims at enabling all people to develop their full potential. The general consensus from the respondents was that the three methods of social work are important for practice and should be seen as complementing each other in their endeavor to help clients reach their full potential. The study conducted by Landman (2004), confirms that the common ground is that, both

intervention levels can be rendered from a developmental approach. The reason is that community development encompasses individuals as well as the bigger community, and change first takes place in individuals and then they effect change in their communities. Landman further asserts that community development can be ranged along a continuum to describe progress toward control over larger and larger realms of life that indicates movement from the micro, individual (casework) to the larger macro problems where the whole community is affected.

One of the respondents cited an example of repeatedly seeing a client requesting for food parcels and how it affected him when he could not provide all the time. “There is no guarantee that our clients will get food parcels every time they come to the social work office in fact, most of the time there are no food parcels in our offices”. The respondent further informed the researcher that he linked the client with other women in the community she resides in and together, they formed a funeral catering project. This is a success story he shared to demonstrate his utilisation of the community development strategy, which complimented his case work method. As an illustration of what he was doing, he stated:

- ‘I have learned to focus on areas of my work that will make it easier for me to report on the departmental focus areas and I focus only on case work because I see a lot of clients, so group work and community work do not take me anywhere’.
- “I avoid group work and community work because I cannot report the process followed and it just complicate my work”

What the researcher observed throughout the discussions was that, the intervention methods applied were dependent on the social worker and what worked best for her/him and what benefit them at that point in time and in terms of statistical reporting. After all the discussions and views of the respondents on this particular theme and despite the different understanding and views of the respondents, they felt that there was a great need to implement all the primary methods of social work, with the understanding that these methods cannot be equally distributed with regard to social work intervention.

4.1.6.3 THEME 3: Respondents understanding of community development

Gray (in Nicholas, Rautenbach and Maistry, 2011), defines community development as an intervention strategy. He further describes community work as a democratic, grassroots or bottom- up, humanistic, people centered approach that emphasises the participation and involvement of local people in all aspects of development and their empowerment through among other things, education, conscientisation, awareness raising, capacity building, community action and community organisation. The researcher understands community development to be a process through which the community is empowered and capacitated to understand and address their own challenges in order to enhance their wellbeing with the help of the community developer. The government in this instance serves as a support system providing resources that are out of the reach of the community. This is confirmed by Landman (2005), when she states that although community development implies ownership, involvement and participation of the client system, the aid of internal and external resources for funding and/or other needs remain a crucial aspect of creating an

enabling environment for development. Facilitation of an enabling environment by professionals such as social workers is crucial in view of the fact that changes impacts and affect people in different ways.

Based on the focus group discussions the respondents appeared to perceive community development as a separate entity to social work. There seemed to be confusion amongst the respondents as to the difference between community work and community development. There were two respondents, who were also the youngest in the group, who were able provide the group with an eloquent elucidation of the difference between the two concepts and she was also able to state the principles, skills and the roles of the social worker. The respondents' contribution was so significant at that point of the discussion that it brought the respondents to a common understanding of the community development strategy. During the discussions some respondents were downgrading community development as they viewed it as a strategy that should be practised by "non-degree holders" because it involves physical work. Some understood community development to mean that they have the responsibility to set up projects for the community, as such issues of funding kept on diluting the discussions. Community development to some respondents is perceived to be a burden with no benefits. Hence community development, professionals have to turn away from the traditional problem orientation and focus on the clients' deficiencies to a perspective that focuses on strengths and capabilities. People should be involved in their own development; whilst being steered into the right direction by means of community projects (Landman, 2005).

The following input was made by the respondents with regard to their understanding of community development:

- “Community development is about setting up income generating projects for the community members who are unemployed”;
- “Community development we do because we do register crèches and monitor them”;
- “Community development is about giving people the necessary skills, which will make them to do things for themselves”.
- “I have no idea, some of us graduated a long time ago and in my time, we only spoke about community work, what is the difference”?

The irony in all this, is despite the fact that number of policy documents within social development that recognises the importance of community development as a strategy to alleviate the current challenge of poverty, there is still a lack of promotion, policies towards its implementation.

4.1.6.4 THEME 4: Challenges

Cock’s study (2008), established that there is a challenge between the development of legislation, having it passed and the ultimate implementation thereof. She further argues that legislation takes people out of their comfort zones and the whole exercise can be daunting. Apart from the resistance to change, a number of factors could go wrong in the implementation phase which jeopardises the successful implementation of legislation. Cock, advanced a number of reasons for the lack of implementation of such legislation as follows.

- I. Lack of skills by personnel who must implement the legislation
- II. Communication challenges between policy makers and implementers which leads to ineffective implementation
- III. Inadequate time devoted to a programme
- IV. High expectations within unrealistic time frames

The challenges raised by Cock above are similar to the problems raised by the respondents though context based. Specific challenges that stood out in the discussions are merged in the following themes, such as targets; lack of resources; caseload; community perceptions and dependency syndrome; training needs of social workers.

Targets

The major concern was that social development is based on various programmes which have specific targets that social workers have to adhere to. The statistical nature of reporting has developed an intervention pattern from social workers which is based on quantitative data rather than qualitative data. This type of intervention force social workers to focus on the focus areas which rarely provide space for lengthy hours' intervention as is the case with community development.

Lack of resources

All respondents raised concerns about the lack of resources in social development. One major challenge raised by all respondents with regard to the lack of resources was transport. One of the respondents said "we have one car in our office which is shared by eight social workers, how do you work under such conditions? it might take me two

weeks to visit communities” the respondent added. From the discussions with the respondents’, transport appeared to be a general challenge with some reporting that engaging in visiting homes and projects in communities was a serious challenge. Due to the problem of transport, two respondents alluded to have lost interest in working with communities as it complicates planning and the implementation of any programme that needs a visit from the social worker or even just monitoring and evaluation of projects. What also came up as a challenge from the discussions was working relationships amongst colleagues especially when it comes to transport. This was confirmed by a respondent who shared her experience with the group- “I once had an important case that I had to attend to. It was not my turn to use the pool vehicle and I had to negotiate with a colleague to use the car on that day, he refused”! two other respondents related similar experiences. The conclusion was that the lack of transport hampers service delivery and social development needs to seriously address the matter. Budget constrains was also another important concern. One respondent said “fine, you set up a project but when it comes to the financial outlay of the project, social development has no budget allocated for such projects”.

Caseload

Surprisingly, concerns on caseload were still a serious concern for some of the respondents. Six of the respondents raised concerns of not having enough social workers in the agency she is representing. This results in one person being overloaded with work. “case work on its own is very demanding because of the reports and the forms to be completed and filled, my whole month is easily consumed by casework”

remarked one respondent. Another respondent added that “there is this huge expectation of delivering services by social development but the practicality thereof, is not considered at all. Hence the impact of most of the work we do cannot be measured, our intervention is bound to be ineffective”. This sentiment was shared by the majority of the respondents.

Community perceptions and dependency syndrome

The respondents shared their frustrations about the perception of community members as follows: “some community members refuse to understand that they have the power to change their living conditions”; “Our communities have become comfortable with handouts and do not want to participate in anything that involves themselves having to work”; “The dependency syndrome has killed our nation. I tried to set up a sewing project with a group of women, the machines were there and someone to train them. They all disappeared with the exception of one person remaining and this was not cost effective for the sponsors of the machines and trainer”.

Training needs of social workers

Most of the social workers reported that they completed the social work degree many years ago. “We still rely on the theory that we gained when we were still students, that is what? 12 year ago, remarked one respondent”. Since there are new developments in the profession, this has created a gap in their knowledge. The respondents also feel that very little is done to keep them on par with developments and yet they are expected to implement programmes and policies that they have not been appraised about. One

respondent remarked, “we are sometimes accused of being stuck in the past, how do you practice the present if you do not know it”? “supervisors and managers attend these training but they do not do the work. Do they come back and train us? No”! So one can emphasise with the social workers as their statements speaks volumes about the pathetic situation they are in.

The following uttered statement received nods from some of the respondents to support its importance:

- “It sometimes becomes so embarrassing to see that students who come for fieldwork from different institutions, are so advanced in terms of knowledge and yet I am expected to supervise them”.
- “The implementation of community development in our practice will decrease the workload that we always complain about because community and group work interventions will bring down the number of individual cases reported to the office”.

The majority of the respondents reported that their role as social workers in the community is misunderstood. “Even though I go through the process of equipping my clients with all the necessary skills to be able to do things for themselves, they expect me to be actively involved” uttered one respondent. From these discussions with the respondents it is obvious that community development approach is not understood by the communities. “Communities have a perception that social workers are there to make sure that development is done for them and do not see themselves getting involved in

it". The researcher is of the view that the implementation of community development requires a paradigm shift from both the social worker and the community members.

4.1.6.5 THEME 5: Importance of community development

The majority of the respondents acknowledged the importance of community development although it is not that visible in their day to day social work practice. It was interesting to note the paradigm- shift from the initial stage of the interviews. Respondents got to a stage of agreeing that community development is important especially in poverty alleviation but also felt that there should be a clear differentiation of roles and responsibilities between them (social workers) and the officials from community development. The respondents also admitted that some of the problems they experience in communities, need a community development approach. What also came out strong in the discussions was the need for workshops or training in the form of short courses and support which is presently lacking in social development. Some expressed that some of the reasons for not prioritising community development was purely based on lack of knowledge. The respondents also felt that this discussion did assist them in understanding the community development strategy better and that such intellectual discourse is very important. One respondent uttered a crucial statement when he said, "social development must reconsider their reporting tools because social workers base their intervention on the reporting templates provided to them which has specific targets and do not accommodate all the interventions carried out by the social worker.

What also came out as important from the focus group discussions, was the acknowledgement by the respondents that the community development approach is an approach in which the people or the community concerned should be involved in their own development. This is very important in social work. One respondent viewed case work as an intervention method that still creates a sense of dependency because clients in most cases fail to resolve their problems, as such they keep on coming back to the social worker with the same problem. Community development is perceived as an approach by respondents, that addresses community challenges in the form of empowerment and capacity building forming the cornerstones of development in communities. “The community development approach is also aimed at addressing the social ills that threaten the survival of the vulnerable groups and that is what social work is all about”, remarked a respondent.

4.1.7 Conclusion

This chapter was a presentation of all the data collected from the focus group; which was analysed and interpreted. This chapter also responded to the major research questions of the study which were:

What is the knowledge of social workers with regard to community development as a method of social work intervention?

What are the views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for community change?

Which challenges impede social workers in the application of Community Development as the method of social work?

The data gathered from the respondents which was put into different themes as discussed in this chapter, was able to adequately address the research questions and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to explore the experiences of social workers in the implementation of community development in the Vhembe District. The aim of this chapter was to report on the findings and state the conclusion and the recommendations which emanated from the study. The study was guided by the research question which was as follows: what are the experiences of social workers in the practice of community development in the Vhembe District?

5.1 Findings of the study

The findings of the study address the following objectives of the study:

- I. To determine the knowledge of social workers with regard to community development.
- II. To establish the views of Social Workers towards community development as a tool for community change.
- III. To establish the nature of the challenges which impede social workers in the application of Community Development as the method of social work.

It is against this background that the researcher reveals the findings of the study as follows:

5.1.1 The knowledge of social workers with regard to community development

- I. With regard to the conceptual understanding of the community development intervention strategy, the respondents possessed inimal knowledge. Social workers who appeared to have some insight of the intervention strategy are the newly appointed social workers who have been in the employment of social development for a period of five to seven years.
- II. The respondents acknowledged that this particular intervention strategy has a role to play in the development of society especially in addressing unemployment, poverty and the social ills that has plagued communities.
- III. The lack of knowledge of the strategy by some of the respondents especially the older group in terms of years of experience, attributed it to lack of support from the department especially where training is concerned.
- IV. The policies in social development specifically the white paper (1997), together with the policy frameworks of social development as discussed in chapter two, which emphasise the role of community development in addressing the social ills caused by apartheid seem to be overlooked by the implementers.

5.1.2 Views of Social Workers towards community development

- I. There was a strong perception from the respondents that the social work profession has been dominated by one intervention method which is case work

to the detriment of the people it is supposed to serve and at the expense of the other methods which is group work and community work.

- II. Despite the fact that the respondents acknowledged the importance of the community development strategy as a tool for change for the vulnerable, their view is that, it should be considered a specialised area with people employed for that purpose only.
- III. The findings further revealed that some respondents are not keen on adopting the community development strategy because community development is seen as a burden on the professional social workers and should be employed by none degree holders. This view was not shared by all the respondents as some felt that community development has a role to play in social work and by social workers.
- IV. The beneficiaries of the community development strategy are perceived as suffering from “dependency syndrome” and do not value the importance of the intervention strategy.

5.1.3 Challenges which impede social workers in the application of Community Development

- I. Lack of continuous training within the profession was raised by the respondents as a huge challenge. There is a gap that exists between the respondent as an implementer of all policies that are developed by social development, and respondents are expected to implement what they might not have adequate knowledge of.

- II. The respondents mentioned lack of resources as a huge challenge emphasising on transport. The major challenge was seen to be transport as it inhibits service delivery.
- III. Caseload is still a problem within social development and until such time that this problem is solved, social work will continue to be seen as a non-impact profession that is based on quantitative statistics and very little emphasis on quality.

5.2 Conclusion

The conclusion is that:

Social work is a profession with three primary methods of intervention which contributes to the wellbeing of the individual, family, groups and communities at large. This is confirmed by the ISDM (2013), a policy document in social development. The findings of the study have revealed that case work has been the dominant preferred method of practice amongst social workers in the Vhembe District with little emphasis on community work. In order to respond to the mission and vision of social work as stated in chapter one and from the international definition of social work, it becomes imperative to revisit the current practice of social work in the country for there is a need for an intellectual discourse on the importance of community development. This is in the light of the fact that each social worker seems to have his/ her own interpretation of service delivery development. But they do acknowledge that this strategy could play a role in social work practice.

Social work as a profession has the responsibility to redefine its role with regard to poverty alleviation. Presently, as per the findings of this research, the role of the social work profession is not clear and based on the above said; the question still exists as to what exactly the role of the social worker is with regard to developing the community and poverty alleviation in particular, as prescribed by most policy documents of social development. At the moment it is not clearly reflected in practice.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are the recommendations:

- I. Respondents should extend their intervention beyond case work and group and the necessary support such as training and resources should be made available to them.
- II. Community development should be recognised as a specialised field within social work practice.
- III. Social workers should be well versed on social development policies and how to implement those policies.
- IV. The community should be educated on the dependency syndrome and the purpose of the community development strategy before any community intervention is carried out.

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APPENDIX A: University of Limpopo clearance certificate



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 2212, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:noko.monene@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 27 January 2016

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/08/2016: PG

PROJECT:

Title: Social workers experiences in the implementation of the
Community Development Strategy in Vhembe District,
Limpopo Province, RSA

Researcher: Ms V Nemutandani

Supervisor: Dr JC Makhubele

Co-Supervisor: N/A

Department: Social Work

School: Social Science

Degree: Masters in Social Work


PROF TAB MASHEGO

CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
- ii) The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

APPENDIX B: Limpopo Provincial Ethical clearance certificate

CONFIDENTIAL



OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS
COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 05th MAY 2016

PROJECT NUMBER: 2015/10PG

PROJECT

Title: Social Workers Experiences in the Implementation of the Community Development Strategy in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, RSA.

Researcher: Nmutandani V

Department: Department of Social Development

Prof S Maputle

Acting Chairperson: Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee

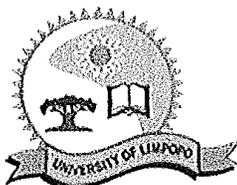
The Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC) is registered with National Health Research Council (NHREC) Registration Number REC-111513-038.

Note:

Should there be any amendment to the approved research proposal; the researcher(s) must re-submit the proposal to the ethics committee for review prior to data collection.

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROJECT NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

APPENDIX C: Letter to conduct research in Vhembe District



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT

To: District Director, N. Mulaudzi
Department of Social Development
Vhembe District

Date: 04/ 06/ 2016

Cc Mokobane R

Title of the Study: Social Workers Experiences in the implementation of the Community Development Strategy in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, RSA

Re: Scheduled dates for interviewing social workers in four municipalities

As per attached correspondence from the provincial research committee, I am conducting research to assess the implementation of community development by social workers in Vhembe district.

I plan to conduct the interviews at the four municipalities on the following dates in June:

7 June	8 June	9 June	10 June
Makhado	Musina	Mutale	Thulamela

Your office will receive a report upon completion of the research project

Your support is highly appreciated

Kind regards

.....
Veronica Nmutandani

Contact details:

Email: veronica.nmutandani@univen.ac.za

Cell: 0828302212

APPENDIX D: Letter of consent

LETTER OF CONSENT



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

DATE: 11/04/2016

Title of the Study: Social Workers Experiences in the implementation of the Community Development Strategy in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, RSA

Dear

You are being invited to participate in a research study on the Experiences of Social Workers in the Implementation of Community Development as an Intervention strategy in the Vhembe District.

This research will require about 1- 2 hours of your time. During this time, you will be interviewed about your experiences generally in Community Development. The interviews will be conducted at a central location decided by Social development. Participation is voluntary and could be withdrawn at any given time should the participant wish so.

By participating in this research, you may find the interview to be very informative and rewarding and your experience might benefit others by helping your colleagues to better understand community Development. Matters of anonymity and identity will be adhered to throughout report compilation. While the interviews will be tape-recorded, the tapes will be destroyed once they have been typed up. The typed interviews will also NOT contain any mention of your name, and any identifying information from the interview will be removed.

The results from this study will be made available to the Department of Social Development.

I have read the above information regarding this research study on the experiences of Social Workers in the implementation of Community Development in Vhembe District, and I consent to participate in this study.

_____ (Printed Name)

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

APPENDIX E: Interview schedule

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Which methods of intervention are mostly practiced by social workers?
2. What is the rationale for their use?
3. What is your understanding of community development?
4. What are the challenges currently experienced with regard to the practice of community development?
5. In your view, do you think that social Workers ought to practice community development strategy to bring about change?