

## CHAPTER 1

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Much energy has been invested towards the development of the poor rural communities with less promising achievement, and yet these communities are still regarded as backward. Why is that so? The answer is that those communities did not receive sustainable development. Sustainable development is ensured by successful community empowerment. Community empowerment approach is possible if social work practitioners link both the economic and the social capitals of communities in their community work interventions (Sherraden & Ninacs, 1998:1). Sustained development is achieved through the enhancement of the capacity of communities to actively take control of their own development.

According to Schwerin (1995:56), a community empowerment programme has the aim "to increase your capacity to define, analyse, and act on your own problems."

In this study, the researcher intends to evaluate the impact of a community empowerment programme, namely the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) on the rural communities in the Phalala district of the Bushveld region in the Northern Province.

Communities who received and those who did not receive the CBPWP, the experimental and the control groups, respectively, will participate in this study.

To achieve effective evaluation of the programme, the researcher discusses in detail the motivation for the choice of the subject, problem formulation, goal and objectives of the study, the hypothesis, research approach, type of research, research design, research procedure and strategy, the pilot study, description of the research

population, sample and the sampling method, ethical issues, limitation of the study and definitions of key concepts.

## 1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT

The researcher is employed by the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) under the Department of Public Works and had rendered the programme to twenty one of the forty eight rural communities who applied for the programme. Evaluation studies of the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities had not yet been done and it is along that backdrop that the researcher felt the study was of utmost importance.

King, Keohane & Verba (1994:15) have stated that “a research project should make a specific contribution to an identifiable scholarly literature by increasing our collective ability to construct verified scientific explanations of some aspect of the world”. Their statement became the source of the second motivation of this study, namely that the researcher was influenced to contribute additional programme evaluation knowledge towards the social work profession.

## 1.3 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Problem formulation is according to Leedy (1989:46), the heart of the research study. He advises that the researchers should “formulate a problem that is carefully phrased and represents the single goal of the total research effort” (Leedy, 1989:46).

Mamasela (1998:20), on the other hand, states that a research problem is that difficulty that was identified together with its possible proposed solution/s.

Rural communities in South Africa were not sustainably empowered. It is why they have lowered socio-economic and political backgrounds, the lack of necessary infrastructures such as roads, electrification, sanitation, recreational facilities, etc, and they have become more poorer, more dependent and more apathetic than those ones which have received sustainable empowerment. Specific community

empowerment programmes such as the CBPWP were implemented in order to address the conditions of communities, but their impact on these communities were not evaluated.

This study is of utmost importance because it is concerned with the evaluation of the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities.

## **1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **1.4.1 GOAL**

The goal of this study was *to evaluate the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities.*

### **1.4.2 OBJECTIVES**

- To investigate through a literature study the issues regarding community empowerment and community empowerment programmes.
- To investigate through an empirical study the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities.
- To formulate guidelines and make recommendations regarding the impact of and the implementation of the CBPWP in rural communities.

## **1.5 HYPOTHESIS**

Hypotheses were defined by Leedy (1989:60) as "tentative, intelligent guesses posited for the purpose of directing one's thinking toward the solution of the problem."



This concept was further simplified by a definition which says “a hypothesis is a statement about the *relation between two variables* which implies that its truth can be tested. It is thus subject to acceptance or rejection, usually at a certain level of probability” (Behr, 1988:5).

Hypotheses possess in them an activity for collecting, analysing and interpreting the data that are to be utilised to solve the problems.

The hypothesis for this study is: *if rural communities receive an adequate CBPWP community empowerment programme then they tend to become empowered.*

## 1.6 RESEARCH APPROACH

Both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches were utilised in this study. To be more specific, the dominant-less- dominant model was utilized. According to Creswell in De Vos (1998:360), it means that the “researcher presents the study within a single, dominant paradigm with one small component of the overall study drawn from the alternative paradigm.” In this study the qualitative approach is dominant with a small component of quantitative data.

## 1.7 TYPE OF RESEARCH

The type of research for this study was evaluative research because the researcher wanted to evaluate the impact of the CBPWP on rural communities. According to De Vos (1998:367), evaluative research is “the systematic application of social research procedures for assessing the conceptualisation, design, implementation and utility of social intervention programmes”. For Mark (1996:230), “Program evaluation is a type of research that uses established social science research methods to evaluate the success or effect of a social service program.”

## 1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN

Every scientific research project requires a plan that tabulates all the activities which are to be utilised in answering a research problem.

A research design is that plan, which is defined as “a plan that shows, through a discussion of our model and data, how we expect to use our evidence to make inferences” (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994:118).

Suchman (1967:91) elaborates on the importance of a research design by mentioning that “it indicates the general approach to be used, for example, experimental, field survey, clinical observation, and specifies the actual procedures for selecting the population to be studied.”

This study utilised a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of CBPWP on rural communities.

A quasi-experimental design appears in a situation when two groups “the receipt and non-receipt of service” are compared (Cheetham, Fuller, McIvor & Petch, 1994:22).

To be more specific in this study, the quasi-experimental design, namely the comparison group posttest-only design was utilised. According to Fouché and De Vos in De Vos (1998:131), “this design (also called the static group comparison design) can be illustrated as follows:

Experimental group:            X        O1

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Comparison group:            O1”

In a static group comparison design, Tripodi (1981:218) writes, one group is the experimental group, which is exposed to the independent variable (X). The other group, the comparison group, is not exposed to X.”

In this study, the experimental group is composed of the communities who received the CBPWP programme, and the control group of those who did not receive the programme. A posttest comparison between the two groups was implemented. The comparison group posttest-only design was chosen above other designs because it does not expose the respondents to harmful effects for study purpose. In this case, the control group was not purposefully denied of the CBPWP for the interest of the study, (compare Strydom in De Vos, 1998:25.)

## 1.9 RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND STRATEGY

In this study, both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were utilised. Since the feelings and opinions of the respondents about the obtaining of the objectives of the CBPWP was the main focus of the study, respondents were engaged into focus group interviews to saturately discuss the identified topics around the programme's objectives.

According to Schurink, Schurink and Poggenpoel in De Vos (1998:314), a focus group interview can be described as “a purposive discussion of a specific topic or related topics taking place between eight to ten individuals with similar background and common interests.”

Templeton (1987:5-6) contributes a definition that states, focus group interviewing is “a small, temporary community, formed for the purpose of the collaborative enterprise of discovery.”

Rural communities are mostly of low educational background. The focus group interviewing method of data collection was relevant to them as it offered them an opportunity to discuss sensitive issues in small groups and did not require expressions in a written language.



The researcher trained an observer who became judgemental when recording responses from participants. An observer made use of tally sheets to focus their "observations on specific behaviours" (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1984:122). The tally sheets are referred to as score forms in this study.

Lehmann and Mehrens (1971:84) emphasise that "observers have to be well trained on what to observe and what to ignore in order to do their job correctly", and that their recording forms used for recording responses from respondents are to be prepared earlier on in advance.

The quantitative data was collected through an attendance register to obtain the biographical profiles of the respondents. Limited quantitative data regarding the obtaining of the CBPWP objectives was also compensated by the qualitative data.

## 1.10 PILOT STUDY

Literature study, consultation with experts and feasibility of the study will be discussed in this section.

### 1.10.1 LITERATURE STUDY

According to Royse (1991:40), literature review helps relate the research problem to the existing theory. It also helps generate the hypotheses when the researcher will be combining "an empirical investigation results with its findings" ( Fouché & De Vos in De Vos, 1998:57-58).

The researcher gathered the theoretical knowledge regarding community empowerment and community empowerment programmes through consulting a variety of books, journals, theses, newspapers and reports. Authors of these materials ranged from the locals to the nationals and to the internationals. This ensured valuable information.

### 1.10.2 CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS

The researcher consulted the following experts:

Mr Koena Mathatho was an Assistant Director in the Nutrition Services under the Department of Health and Welfare and an expert on community empowerment programmes and rendered the Community-Based Nutrition Project (CBNP) to specific communities. Mr Mathatho shared materials regarding community based programmes with the researcher. He also delineated the similarities between the CBPWP and the CBNP.

Mr T.E. Rivisi was a Senior Communication Officer in the Office of the Premier of the Northern Province and a Public Administration Masters student at the University of Pretoria. He believed funding is the backbone of community empowerment programmes without which the programmes will be unable to kick-start.

Mr S.L. Sithole was a senior lecturer in the Social Work Department at the University of the North. To him, it makes perfect sense to evaluate any programme that was initiated by either governmental or non-governmental organisations.

### 1.10.3 FEASIBILITY OF THE STUDY

This study was feasible because the researcher had obtained co-operation from both the respondents of the study and the custodian of the CBPWP, the Northern Province Department of Public Works. The department supported the researcher by offering bursary for the study.

### 1.10.4 PILOT TEST OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

The researcher utilised two rural communities representing the experimental and the control groups who were not to be part of the research project, to do a pilot test for the focus group interview.



The pilot test enabled the researcher to reformulate the focus group interview questions and develop adequate technical skills for recording the interviews.

### 1.11 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION, SAMPLE AND THE SAMPLING METHOD.

According to Arkava and Lane (1983:27), a population refers to the individuals, groups or communities who possess specific characteristics that set boundaries on the study units.

In their glossary of terms, Rosenthal and Rosnow (1984:478) defined a population as “the organisms or other units from which we have drawn our samples and to which we want to generalise.”

Forty eight rural communities in the Phalala district of the Bushveld region in the Northern Province who applied for the CBPWP formed the population of this study. It was both difficult and impossible for the researcher to collect, analyse and interpret data regarding the programme evaluation from all these rural communities, and as a result, a sample was drawn from the population.

A sample is defined as “the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study” (Arkava & Lane, 1983:27). A sample is therefore a subset of the entire population ( Davitz & Davitz, 1996:11).

There were 21 communities who received the CBPWP and 27 communities who did not receive the CBPWP representing the experimental and the control groups, respectively. The procedure was to draw two sampling frames from these populations. A sampling frame is according to Philliber, Schwab and Gloss (1980:73), a procedure of assigning a number to every member of the population. Rose (1982:51) mentions that “the most important point about a population is that in principle it can be enumerated, i.e. all the members can be listed. This list is termed a *sampling frame*.”

Numbers assigned to both types of communities (those who received and those who did not receive the CBPWP ) were written on small cards that were mixed and a selection made to draw five from each group through the lottery method (Nigel, 1993:87).

This type of selection is termed stratified sampling which ensures that respondents of the research project are proportionally selected and that subgroups of the communities are included in the study. Five communities from each the experimental and the control groups that were selected contributed six of its steering committee members each as respondents for this study. A total of sixty respondents participated in the study.

### 1.12 ETHICAL ISSUES

Two ethical issues were considered in this study, firstly; that the respondents were not deceived into participating because they were given an opportunity to express their willingness to take part in the study, and secondly; the National Research Foundation's (NRF) financial assistance towards this study was accordingly acknowledged by the researcher (Strydom in De Vos, 1998:25-32).

### 1.13 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The researcher identified the following limitation:

- \* steering committee members as representatives of their respective communities were the respondents for this research study, therefore generalizability is violated because these members possess properties that are different from those of the population they seek to represent. That is, steering committee members were elected due to some special leadership skills that they possess which might not be available in their respective population.

## **1.14 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Important key concepts to be discussed in this section are community empowerment, impact, programme and rural communities.

### **1.14.1 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

Community empowerment was defined by Potgieter (1998:216) as “a process of increasing personal, interpersonal and collective power which allows individuals, families, groups and communities to maximise their quality of life.”

According to Schurink in De Vos (1998:407), it is “the process of increasing personal, interpersonal and political power, enabling individuals or collectives to improve their life situation.”

Communities who were sufficiently empowered are able to do things on their own, thus limiting their reliance on the outside help. Such communities have a stronger say on the decisions that affect their own lives.

### **1.14.2 IMPACT**

Impact denotes gathered information regarding the outcome or the effectiveness of an intervention or programme (Cheetham, Fuller, McIvor & Petch, 1992).

Rossi and Freeman in De Vos (1998:374) say that “an impact assessment gauges the extent to which a programme causes change in the desired direction.”

Impact is the measurement used to determine if change has been effected by an intended intervention or programme. An impact assessment process is therefore an important component of every programme for it is through it that one can tell if the programme has indeed achieved what it was intended for.



### 1.14.3 PROGRAMME

A programme is “any organized effort on the part of some official or voluntary agency to provide some public service or to meet some social problem” (Suchman, 1967:8).

For Lombard (1991:115), every programme has procedures that are to be followed which are made up of specific activities that are arranged to meet certain goals.

A programme is usually associated with time frame and funding which should be expropriated in order for a problem to be solved. A programme is any method or procedure with its relevant activities, coupled with specified period to do them and the necessary funding, meant at ameliorating social issues.

### 1.14.4 RURAL COMMUNITIES

Rural communities are backward and still retain their traditional relationships. Toennies called them *gemeinschaft* to mean they are characterised by “kinship, friendship and commitment to land” (Chambers & McBeth, 1992:22-23).

According to Lombard (1991:222), “ ‘rural’ can be used to describe the unique problematic nature of development in rural or country areas, thus, a rural area is an area which has backlog in comparison to cities.”

The rural communities are those environments that are less developed than the other areas within a given society.

### 1.15 CONTENTS OF RESEARCH REPORT

This study is divided into six chapters which are briefly outlined below.

Chapter one outlines the motivation for the choice of the subject, problem formulation, goal and objectives of the study, hypothesis, research approach, type of research, research design, research procedure and strategy, pilot study, description

of the research population, sample and sampling method, ethical issues, limitation and definitions of key concepts of the study.

Chapter two discusses community empowerment, its elements, its historical roots, its theoretical background, its process, and the roles of social work practitioners during the community empowerment process.

Chapter three outlines some examples of community empowerment programmes from both American and South African community backgrounds. The characteristics of these programmes are discussed.

Chapter four discusses programme evaluation research, different types of the programme evaluation and the process of evaluation research. It also discusses the content of the Community Based Public Works Programme, its objectives and the process.

Chapter 5 outlines the empirical research findings of this study. In the first section of the chapter, the study discusses the research methodology and in the second section, the actual empirical findings of the study.

Chapter six outlines conclusions and recommendations regarding the study.

## **1.16 SUMMARY**

This chapter discussed the general introduction of the study with the focus on appropriate research methodology. In the next chapter, the study will give detail discussions on community empowerment, its elements, historical roots, theoretical background, the process and the roles which social work practitioners play during the community empowerment process.