

**THE CHALLENGES OF STATUTORY SOCIAL WORKERS IN
LINKING FOSTER CARE SERVICES WITH SOCIO-
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

BY

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DECLARATION

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I hereby declare that this research report (dissertation) is my original work. All secondary material used has been appropriately referenced and acknowledged in accordance with the regulation of the University of Pretoria.

Signature

Date

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ABSTRACT

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In South Africa, foster care placement is the first choice of alternative care for children who are in need of care and protection. The aim of foster care is to protect and nurture foster children by providing a safe, caring and healthy environment with positive support. The foster child grant provides financial support towards this end. However, the majority of foster care parents are unemployed and survive on the little foster child grants that they receive from the state. This poses challenges to social workers to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Therefore, the goal of this study was to explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

The research approach for the study was qualitative and the research design was a collective case study. A total of thirty two social workers were purposively selected to participate in the study. The sample included social workers employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development Tshwane Region in the Mamelodi, Tembisa/Eersterust and Mabopane/Winterveldt service points. Data was collected by means of focus group discussions.

The findings showed that the foster child grant plays a major role in meeting the basic needs of service users, which include food, health care, income and education. Furthermore, the findings indicated that underpinning challenges in linking the child grant with socio-economic programmes are located in the Children's Act; the

Department of Social Development's lack of integrating services within and with other relevant departments; limited development centres for service delivery; and a lack of proper supervision of social workers.

The study concluded that linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes requires deliberate planning and the implementation of intervention strategies for sustainable livelihoods outcomes.

Recommendations include decentralisation sections within the Department of Social Development; developing policy or legislation to ensure the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development; increasing the availability of development centres; holistic service delivery to foster care families; thorough induction of new social workers and proper screening of foster care parents.

KEY WORDS

Statutory social worker

Foster care services

Foster child grants

Socio-economic development

Sustainable livelihoods

Developmental social work

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Poverty, unemployment and inequality remain the biggest challenges for development in South Africa. According to the National Development Plan 2030, while South Africa has made some progress in reducing poverty, it is still pervasive and insufficient progress has been made in reducing inequality (RSA, 2012). Millions of people remain unemployed and many working households live close to the poverty line (RSA, 2012). According to Lombard (2008:122), many poor people in South Africa remain trapped in the cycle of poverty and are therefore excluded from participation in mainstream economic activities. Economic freedom is embedded in integrated economic and social development. The first national attempt towards this goal was in 1994 when the government of National Unity adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RSA, 1994) as socio-economic policy for South Africa and thereby committed itself to effectively address the problems of poverty and the gross inequality evident in almost all aspects of South African society. The National Development Plan (2012) is the most recent strategy of government to eliminate poverty and inequalities in the country. Within the social welfare sector, policies and legislation such as the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 are aimed at integrating social development goals and economic development within a developmental social welfare approach.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is aimed at protecting human rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom (RSA, 1996). The National Development Plan aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030 through uniting South Africans, unleashing the energies of its citizens, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, and enhancing the capability of the state and leaders to work together to solve complex problems (RSA, 2012). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) gives everyone the right to access social security, including in the case where people are unable to support themselves and their dependants, and appropriate social assistance. The Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 was amended to provide for the administration of social assistance and payment of social grants (RSA, 2004). Social

grants help to alleviate poverty. The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) was adopted as social welfare policy for South Africa which, in line with its developmental agenda, adopted a developmental approach to social welfare, with the intention to address the issues of poverty and inequality, and to promote social development by integrating social interventions with economic development (Lombard, 2007:295).

According to the Department of Social Development's (DSD) Annual Performance Plan (APP), the DSD renders different programmes to the South African community, which include programmes on substance abuse, older persons, people with disabilities, children, families, social crime prevention and victim empowerment, youth, and HIV and Aids (Department of Social Development, 2013a). This study focuses on the child protection programme which includes foster care services. Within the context of a developmental social welfare policy (RSA, 1997) foster care services should be rendered within a developmental approach, hence the need for linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

According to the DSD Strategic Plan 2012-2015 (Department of Social Development, 2012), the DSD endeavours to provide social protection and investment through three interrelated programmes, namely developmental welfare services, which among others provide care and protection to South Africans in need (Department of Social Development, 2012); community development, which helps communities to mobilise themselves and develop the capacity to participate fully in the South African economy and society (Department of Social Development, 2012); and comprehensive social security, which provides income support to South Africans living in poverty and, in particular, helps to ensure better health and schooling outcomes (Department of Social Development, 2012).

The DSD Strategic Plan 2012-2015 in which the DSD endeavours to provide social protection and investment is not effectively implemented, since statutory social workers have to deal with a huge caseload as well as the increasing number of new foster care applications. Hall, Woolard, Lake and Smith (2012:51) state that statutory social workers and the children's court do not have time to provide adequately for children who are "truly in need of care and protection" as they spend the bulk of their time processing applications for foster care. Therefore the study focuses on the

challenges of the statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, in order to ensure that they render foster care services within a developmental social welfare approach.

The following key concepts are relevant to the study:

Statutory social worker

According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, a social worker refers to a person who is registered or deemed to be registered as a social worker in terms of the Social Service Professions Act, 1978 (Act 110 of 1978). A statutory social worker refers to any social worker who renders statutory services to children who are described as children in need of care and protection in terms of Section 150(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005.

Foster care

According to the Children's Act, foster care means care of a child as described in Section 180(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. It refers to situations in which children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family, other than the children's own family, that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care (United Nations, 2010:6). Foster care is thus a temporary statutory substitute care within a family context for a child whose parents are unable to take care of him/her for various reasons. Section 176 (1) of the Children's Act states that, "a person placed in alternative care as a child is entitled, after having reached the age of 18 years, to remain in that care until the end of the year in which that person reaches the age of 18 years". Section 176 (2) further state that a provincial head of the Department of Social Development may on application of the foster child, allow the child to remain in foster care until the end of the year in which that foster child reaches the age of 21 years.

Foster parent

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 defines a foster parent as a person who undertakes foster care of a child by order of the children's court, and includes an active member of an organisation operating a cluster foster care scheme, and who has been assigned responsibility for the foster care of a child. According to the Children's Act 38 of 2005, a foster parent can also be regarded as a caregiver since a foster parent can be any person other than a parent or guardian, who cares for a child. The majority of foster children are placed in kinship foster care with their grandparents or other close relatives (Hall et al., 2012:51) and most of these foster care parents live in poverty and are unemployed.

Socio-economic development

According to Martinelli, Moulaert and Novy (2013:3), socio-economic development can be defined as the process of human emancipation for everybody, involving the mobilisation of human potentials to achieve it. It has to consider economic activities as embedded with the institutional ensemble of the social dynamics of working, housing, living together, caring and learning (Martinelli et al., 2013:3). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) make provisions for socio-economic rights which include the right to have access to adequate housing, health care, education, social security, food and water.

1.2 Theoretical framework

According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), the financing system for social security and welfare services should be sustainable and equitable. In order to enhance the sustainability of the social security system and to promote greater efficiency, the government of South Africa has committed itself to assist identified welfare groups to access the employment and training programmes provided by other government departments, and by non-governmental programmes involved in micro-enterprises, small business development, co-operative enterprises and the creation of other employment opportunities (RSA, 1997). This study therefore made

use of a sustainable livelihoods approach which focuses more on the following principles: assets, strengths, empowerment, sustainability and capabilities. Barney (2003:262) emphasises that the sustainable livelihoods approach makes a distinction between different assets and places an emphasis on capability. Glavovic and Boonzaier (2007:2) add that the sustainable livelihoods approach places more emphasis on the link between capabilities, equity and sustainability. In the context of this study, the sustainable livelihoods approach focuses on the capabilities, strengths, resources and assets of the foster care family to sustain themselves through socio-economic programmes.

1.3 Rationale and problem statement

South Africa has very high rates of child poverty (Hall et al., 2012:86). In 2010, 60% of children lived below the poverty line (R575 per month) (Hall et al., 2012:86) and depended on social grants for survival. As earlier indicated, according to the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Fact sheet: Issue no 8 of 2014 – 31 August (RSA, 2014), there are 16, 368, 403 beneficiaries of social grants and 548, 421 beneficiaries of foster child grants in South Africa. In alignment with a developmental approach, when rendering foster care services, statutory social workers should not only focus on foster care services from a remedial perspective but should also include a socio-economic development focus. Social development as an approach to social welfare posits a macro-policy framework for poverty alleviation that combines social and economic goals (Gray, 2006:S53).

The reality is, however, that statutory social workers do not operate in a developmental social service paradigm, due to high case loads and implementation challenges as a result of an increasing demand for foster care services in South Africa. To shift foster care services to include a developmental focus will require deliberate planning and initiatives by statutory social workers to link foster care services (including foster care parents and children) with socio-economic development programmes. The current focus of foster care services questions the impact of service delivery to provide adequately for children truly in need of care and protection as the bulk of time goes into processing applications for foster care,

recruiting and preparing foster care parents. In addition, the ambivalence in the Children's Act (RSA, 2005) has led to the Department of Social Development and Justice to interpret and apply the Act differently, resulting in the unequal treatment of children and unconstitutional delays in accessing both grants and services (Hall et al., 2012:14-51); Further, little attention is paid to support foster care parents, especially elderly kin who are often the sole caregivers of foster children, particularly as their abilities are constrained by maternal privation (Hearle & Ruwanpura 2009:429-434). If the Department of Social Development and Justice can interpret and apply the Act in the same way, foster care applications could be speedily processed. This would grant statutory social workers enough time to provide other foster care services, such as linking foster care parents and children with socio-economic development services or programmes. Engelbrecht (2008:176) states that the real issue for South Africa is how to combine social assistance with developmental strategies that will promote economic and social development through employment and social investment programmes that will build human capabilities to promote social and economic inclusion and reduce poverty.

The rationale or focus of this study is underpinned by practice reality which the researcher experiences first hand as a social worker working in the field of statutory services. The majority of foster care parents are unemployed and depend on the little foster child grants that they receive from the state to provide for their families. According to the Children's Act, Section 176(1) and (2), the foster child who has turned 18 years is allowed to remain in foster care until the end of that year or on application by the foster child, he/she may remain in foster care until the end of the year in which he/she turns 21 years. The South African Social Service Agency (SASSA) in the Tshwane Region immediately terminates the foster care grant of foster children when they complete Grade 12 and do not further their education. This takes place regardless of whether the child is employed or unemployed. This makes foster care services without a socio-economic developmental focus unsustainable as the termination of the foster child grant plunges young adults and families back into the cycle of dire poverty and threatens a sustainable livelihood for the family. It was the intention of this study to explore the challenges that statutory social workers face in linking statutory services with socio-economic programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

The research question which guided the study was:

What are the underpinning challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to ensure sustainable livelihoods?

Sub-questions that assisted the researcher in answering the research question were as follows:

What is the core focus of foster care services and how does it relate to poverty reduction?

How can foster care services be expanded to integrate socio-economic development programmes?

What is required for statutory social workers to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes?

1.4 Goal and objectives of the study

The goal and objectives of the study were as follows:

1.4.1 Research goal

The goal of this study was to explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

1.4.2 Research objectives

The research objectives for the study were as follows:

- ❖ To conceptualise foster care and statutory work within the context of developmental social work and the sustainable livelihood approach.
- ❖ To explore statutory social workers' views and experiences of foster care services in relation to contributing to poverty reduction.

- ❖ To identify the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.
- ❖ To explore how these challenges can be addressed.
- ❖ To propose guidelines to enhance effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

1.5 Research methodology

A detailed description of the research methodology and the ethical consideration of the study as well as limitations of the study are presented in Chapter 3.

The researcher utilised a qualitative research approach in this study to learn the meaning that the participants have about the challenges in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:65).

This study sought to address the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development and to propose guidelines to this effect. Therefore the research type utilised was applied research (Neuman, 2000:23). The study used a qualitative research design, more specifically, the collective case study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322).

A purposive sample was selected from social workers employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region, in the section of intake and field services. Stratified sampling (Kumar, 2005:125) was used to select the sample from the three service points, namely Mamelodi, Temba/Eersterust and Mabopane/Winterveldt. Data was collected through focus group interviews (Babbie, 2011:315), using a semi-structured interview schedule (Neuman, 2000:250).

1.6 Division of research report

The research report consists of four chapters. Chapter One provides an introduction and general orientation of the study, including a theoretical framework, rationale for the study and problem statement, the goal and objectives of the study, and a brief overview of the research methodology.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of literature. It gives a brief background on foster care in South Africa, including the purpose of foster care and different types of foster care placements. This chapter also provides an understanding of how developmental social work relates to foster care services, the role of the statutory social worker in social development, and the strategies for socio-economic development.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, which includes a detailed explanation of the research approach, type of research, research design, study population, sampling, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness of the data, pilot study, ethical issues and limitations of the study. Furthermore, the empirical findings of the study are presented and discussed.

Chapter Four is the final chapter of the report and outlines how the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. Furthermore, it discusses the key findings of the study from which conclusions are drawn and presents the recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

FOSTER CARE SERVICES AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

2.1 Introduction

Since South Africa became a democratic country in 1994, millions of its citizens are still trapped in a cycle of poverty, unemployment and inequality. According to the Department of Social Development Annual Performance Plan (2013/2014), the Department's strategic objectives should be viewed in relation to the shift taking place globally in addressing the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and equality (Department of Social Development, 2013a). The Gauteng Department of Social Development has emphasised that it cannot escape these challenges as strategic and legislative documents show that attempts to transform the economic and social landscape embrace these challenges (Department of Social Development, 2013a). These include the Gauteng Social Development Strategy, Gauteng Provincial Anti-Poverty Strategy 2013-2018 and the Children's Act of 2005 (RSA, 2005). During the first quarter of 2013, unemployment increased by 100 000 to 4,6 million, resulting in an increase in the unemployment rate to 25,2% (Statistics South Africa, 2013). A number of policies and programmes have been implemented, including the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, to help reduce poverty, unemployment and inequality. A study by Hall et al. (2012:48) shows that the poverty rate in South Africa would be six percentage points higher in the absence of social grants.

The foster child grant is one of the child grants that are provided to children in need of care and protection, as stipulated in Section 150(1)(2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Section 155(2) of the Children's Act places the child's best interest at the forefront. According to the Department of Social Development Annual Performance Plan (2013/2014), foster care placements still remain the first choice of alternative care for children in need of care and protection, however it is a lengthy process that involves the placement of children through the courts and continuous monitoring of children through supervision once they have been placed with families (Department of Social Development, 2013a). Foster care supervision services include the imperative function by social workers of visiting the parents and children to

implement reconstruction services, socio-economic programmes and also to monitor the progress of the families in resolving their problems. According to Section 156(3)(a)(i)(ii) of the Children's Act, an order made by the presiding officer in terms of Subsection (1) is subject to such conditions as the court may determine which, in the case of the placement of a child in terms of Subsection (1)(e)(i), (ii), (iii), (iv) or (v) may include a condition that "rendering the placement of the child subject to supervision services by a designated social worker and rendering the placement of the child subject to reunification services being rendered to the child and the child's parents, care-giver or guardian as the case may be, by a designated social worker". Financial support through the implementation of the foster child grant is a vital form of assistance to the families, helping them to provide for the children's clothing, food and general maintenance (Van Rensburg, 2006:28). Linking families with foster child grants is also a very important foster care service that social workers deliver to ensure the best interests of the children are served at all times.

This chapter discusses how foster care services can be linked to socio-economic development programmes within the context of developmental social work to achieve sustainable livelihoods. Firstly, the sustainable livelihoods approach is presented as the theoretical framework of the study. The discussion then focuses on foster care in South Africa, looking at the purpose of foster care and different types of foster care, such as kinship care and non-relative family foster care. Then the discussion shifts to developmental social work, linking it with socio-economic development and the human rights approach. This is followed by a discussion on the role of the statutory social worker in social development and the challenges of statutory workers in integrating foster care services with social development. Finally, strategies for socio-economic development are focused on, including the primary role of taking care of foster children and their economic rights, Integrated Community Economic Development, micro-enterprises, social entrepreneurship and various forms of capital to foster a link between foster care and socio-economic development in order to promote sustainable livelihoods.

2.2 Theoretical framework for study

The sustainable livelihoods approach is part of a new international consensus about “redefining objects of social change and safeguarding the rights of the development community to intervene and transform relations between the state and civil society, while questioning traditional development practices,” (Arce, 2003:207). According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), social welfare services and programmes are based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996). It is the right of foster care parents and children to have access to socio-economic development programmes in order for them to secure sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families.

The donor community defines the sustainable livelihoods approach to typify a shift in development practice from needs-based, resource-centred solutions to a focus on people and their capacity to initiate and sustain positive change (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003:187). Toner (2003:779) stated that the sustainable livelihoods approach offers a new way of thinking that places people at the centre, and recognises the complexity of their lives. Allison and Ellis (2001:378) added that the fundamental precept of the sustainable livelihoods approach is that it seeks to identify what the poor have rather than what they do not have and it strengthens people’s own inventive solutions, rather than a substitute that blocks or undermines them. In the context of this study, the sustainable livelihoods approach focuses on the resources, strengths, assets and the capacity of foster parents and children to sustain themselves through socio-economic development projects.

The sustainable livelihoods approach demands willingness to seek and address causes of a particular challenge rather than looking at the symptoms and immediate needs, and to examine longer-term constraints to development (Barney, 2003:261). In this study, the sustainable livelihoods approach provides the theoretical framework for statutory social workers to address the challenges of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Building on integrated community development initiatives that seek to establish linkages to external agencies, a sustainable livelihoods approach emphasises the importance of looking at multi-

levelled relationships linking policy environments to micro-level realities (Barney, 2003:261).

The core concepts of the sustainable livelihoods approach, as described by Hinshelwood (2003:247-248), are 'people-centred'; 'building on strengths'; and 'sustainability'. People-centredness means that the focus is on local livelihoods and community regeneration, local capacity-building, community participation and involvement and community decision-making (Hinshelwood, 2003:247-248). Building on strengths involves focusing on the local skills, knowledge and resources which further enhance the capacity within the area (Hinshelwood, 2003:247-248). Simpson (2009:187) also agree that people-centred, holistic, dynamic and bridging the gaps between macro and micro-development activities and most importantly, building on existing assets, are the essence of a sustainable livelihood approach to development. Rainey, Robinson, Allen and Christy (2003:712) emphasise that decisions must be made that will benefit the entire community, and for this to happen formerly excluded members of the community must be brought into the strategic planning process at the beginning rather than involving them after the decisions have been taken.

Brocklesby and Fisher (2003:186-187) outlined the following four main components of the sustainable livelihoods approach:

- People are conceived of living within a vulnerability context in which they are exposed to risks, through sudden shocks, trends over time and seasonal change.
- People have a number of capital assets, which they draw upon to develop their livelihoods, including social capital, natural capital, financial capital, physical capital and human capital.
- These assets are pulled into people's livelihood strategies, i.e. choices and activities through which people seek to generate a living, or positive livelihood outcomes.
- Policies, institutions and processes are held to shape people's access to assets and livelihood activities, as well as the vulnerability context in which they live.

The sustainable livelihoods approach makes provision for different forms of capital development, namely human, social and economic capital, as they are important components of socio-economic development (Lombard, 2008:123). Midgley (1999:9) asserts that social development is concerned with promotion of human capital formation, collecting assets, mobilising social capital in disadvantaged communities and developing micro-enterprises. Human capital refers to a process of capacitating people with knowledge and skills in order to increase their capabilities, and set them free from constraints of poverty (Jordan, 2008:445). Human capital includes the richness of social networks, cultural and experiential learning, formal and informal education, good health, human security and freedoms provided by the state and quality of life that give higher meaning to human life (Zewde, 2010:102). According to De Jong (2010:21), social capital refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action.

Allison and Ellis (2001:379) claim that the sustainable livelihoods approach seeks to bring together the critical factors that affect the vulnerability or strength of individual or family survival strategies; these are thought to comprise the assets possessed by people and the activities in which they engage, in order to generate an adequate standard of living, and to satisfy their goals and the factors that facilitate or inhibit different people from gaining access to assets and activities. Ellis (2003:998) adds that the sustainable livelihoods approach emphasises an all-round view of the livelihood circumstances of the poor, including their asset status, the activities in which they engage, and the encouraging or discouraging character of the institutional context within which their livelihood strategies unfold.

The sustainable livelihoods approach emphasises the importance and the role of social workers in integrating human, social and economic development. Lombard (2008:123) states that social work can embrace the link between economic and social justice through sustainable livelihoods. She adds that the sustainable livelihoods approach calls for social workers to integrate human and social development and start to engage in economic activities that facilitate economic development for the poor (Lombard, 2008:123). If foster care services are linked to socio-economic development programmes, foster care parents and children will be more empowered to discover their strengths, assets, resources and capacity to

sustain themselves and their families. Brocklesby and Fisher (2003:186) argue that the sustainable livelihoods approach's knowledge is located within the compartmentalised category of "human capital" in which it is seen as a "building block" for the utilisation of other forms of capital.

In essence, the sustainable livelihoods approach can enable foster care parents and children to achieve sustainable livelihoods, since it gives people who are poor the freedom to decide for themselves, actively participate in identification and developing strategies for improving their lives, and facilitate economic inclusion through socio-economic development programmes. Foster care services are analysed and discussed in this chapter through the lens of the sustainable livelihoods approach.

A brief discussion of foster care in South Africa follows in order to have a better understanding of the role of the statutory social worker in the foster care system in South Africa, within the context of developmental social work.

2.3 Foster care in South Africa

In the nineteenth century the churches of South Africa became the foremost institutions taking responsibility to protect vulnerable and poor children and their families (Van Rensburg, 2006:19). During the twentieth century there was a shift from the church, when legislation was implemented to provide safety for vulnerable and poor children in South Africa (Van Rensburg, 2006:21). The social work profession, which facilitates the delivery of foster care services in South Africa, tends to focus on the management of dependency brought about by poverty and on the other hand, the protection and promotion of the rights of vulnerable and marginalised groups in society (Mazibuko & Gray, 2004:129). Midgley (2010:13) emphasises that the social work profession stresses the importance of facilitating change, the use of strengths, empowerment and capacity enhancement, the notion of self-determination and client participation, and commitment to equality and social justice. Various welfare organisations, for example the Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereeniging (ACVV), were established in 1904 and numerous childcare organisations were established in Cape Town in 1908 and in Johannesburg in 1909, as well as the National Council for Child and Family Welfare in 1909 (Van Rensburg, 2006:18).

According to Van Rensburg (2006:18), during the twentieth century the focus of the National Council for Child and Family Welfare was to act in coordination with numerous other organisations to set standards, institute policies, provide support and meet the call of communities for services to children in parts of South Africa. Green (2008:179) emphasises that the provision of developmental social welfare services is the collective responsibility of various role players, including the state, non-profit organisations and the private sector. Child Welfare South Africa was established in 1924, Die Ondersteuningsraad in 1934 and the Christelike Maatskaplike Raad in 1936. Child and family welfare organisations play a fundamental role today in the placement of children in foster care (Van Rensburg, 2006:19). Social workers employed in the non-profit welfare sector render welfare services in fields such as child and family welfare, mental health, disabilities, substance abuse, crime prevention, rehabilitation and chronic illnesses (Green, 2008:180). Delivery of welfare services in the foster care process is the collective responsibility of the Department of Social Development as well as non-governmental organisations.

In South Africa, foster care placements continue to be the first choice of alternative care for children in need of care and protection (Department of Social Development, 2013a). According to the Department of Social Development Annual Performance Plan (2013/2014), 39 586 children placed in foster care received social work services (Department of Social Development, 2013a). In view of the large number of children placed in foster care in the Gauteng Province (Department of Social Development, 2013a), it can be concluded that social workers employed in both governmental and non-governmental welfare organisations have a crucial role to fulfil in the delivery of services to both children and their families in foster care (Eloff, 1987:1).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) was adopted as a national government policy framework to address poverty, inequity and discrimination in the access of state services and in meeting the basic needs of the population. According to Patel and Hochfeld (2012:691), the White Paper for Social Welfare provides the national policy framework which focuses on the two pillars of South African Welfare, which are social security, also known as social protection, and social welfare services, which include foster care services (RSA, 1997). The White Paper (RSA,

1997) outlined a social development approach to welfare services, which seems to be a challenge to statutory social workers who are rendering foster care services through the remedial approach. The National Development Plan (Vision 2030) (RSA, 2012:352) is the national strategy for socio-economic transformation in South Africa. The NDP intends to create an inclusive social protection system that addresses all areas of vulnerability and which is responsive to the needs, realities, conditions and livelihoods of those who are most at risk, as well as to provide support that builds and utilises the capabilities of individuals, households, communities and NGOs to promote self-reliance and sustainable development. One of the five functions of social protection stresses the importance of increasing consumption patterns of the poor, promoting local economic development, and enabling poor people to access economic and social opportunities (RSA, 2012:355).

The Department of Social Development, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the private sector are thus main role players in reducing poverty and inequality and promoting sustainable livelihoods. According to Landman and Lombard (2006:7), social workers emphasise the need for all services in the statutory process, including foster care, to be integrated within a developmental approach and to promote effective networking between various role players. In order to ensure that the basic needs of children in need of care and protection are met, it is important to understand the purpose of foster care in South Africa.

2.3.1 Purpose of foster care

In South Africa, the White Paper for Social Welfare provides for the strengthening of family life in all its varied forms, and recognises the importance of the family as the fundamental unit of care, nurturance and socialisation (RSA, 1997). The purpose of foster care is to provide substitute care within a family setting to children who are orphaned or cannot be cared for by their own parents and this might have been caused by a family crisis, or a gradual family breakdown (South African National Council for Child and Family Welfare, 1987:2). This is in line with Section 28(1)(b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which states that every child has the right “to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from a family environment” (RSA, 1996).

The purpose of foster care, as stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, is to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support. A child is found to be in need of care and protection in terms of section 150(1) and (2) of the Children's Act if the child:

- “has been abandoned or orphaned and is without any visible means of support;
- displays behaviour which cannot be controlled by the parent or caregiver;
- lives or works on the streets or begs for a living;
- is addicted to a dependence-producing substance and is without any support to obtain treatment for such dependency;
- has been exploited or lives in circumstances that expose the child to exploitation;
- lives in or is exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm that child's physical, mental or social well-being;
- may be at risk if returned to the custody of the parent, guardian or care-giver of the child as there is a reason to believe that he/she will live in or be exposed to circumstances which may seriously harm the physical, mental or social well-being of the child;
- is in a state of physical or mental neglect; or
- is being maltreated, abused, deliberately neglected or degraded by a parent, a caregiver, a person who has parental responsibilities and rights or a family member of the child, or by a person under whose control the child is;
- a child who is a victim of child labour; and
- a child in a child-headed household”.

According to Section 152(4) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, “the best interests of children must be the determining factor in any decision whether children in need of care and protection should be removed and placed in temporary safe care and all relevant facts must for this purpose be taken into account”. It is generally presumed that the family is the primary caregiver responsible for the protection and welfare of all its members, as well as contributing to the well-being of society. Family foster care is a social system with many component parts and complex interrelationships between these parts (Whitelaw, Downs, Moore, McFadden, Michaud & Costin,

2004:344). According to Collins and Jordan (2006:11), it is within families where children learn, grow and develop skills that prepare them for life outside the family, first in school and later in the labour force.

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, Section 181(a) and (b) regards foster care as the main source of alternative care in South Africa which, among its purposes, intends "to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support; promoting the goals of permanency planning, first towards family reunification, or by connecting children to other safe and nurturing family relationships intended to last a lifetime, and respect the individual and family by demonstrating a respect for cultural, ethnic and community diversity". Aside from providing protection and therapeutic services, foster care services are aimed at supporting and growing local community initiatives through community development, local community development, income generation and micro-enterprises, among others, to promote the livelihood capabilities of the poor, in this case, foster parents and children (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012:693). Patel (2005:103) emphasises that macro-economic and social policies within a comprehensive commitment to sustainable and people-centred development can address the problems of mass poverty and inequality.

Fallesen (2013:1003) states that social services place foster children in foster care because social services expect the foster care system to provide an environment conducive to the upbringing of foster children. During foster care, statutory social workers are required to render supervision services to foster children, biological parents, foster parents and foster family. Foster care services provide support and services to children who have been found to be children in need of care and protection in terms of Section 150(1) and (2) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Children who have lost their biological parents through death or who are removed from their biological parents often have already suffered from loss, abuse, neglect or ill-treatment and therefore require social services to address their special needs, in the form of social, emotional, physical and psychological support. Support from the social worker is further necessary to assist foster children's integration into their new foster family (Moaisi, 2003:13). The support of children is also necessary to achieve the purpose of developmental services, which is to promote social justice, build

human capabilities and enhance livelihoods and social functioning in order for people to lead productive and fulfilling lives (Patel, 2005:208).

Foster care in South Africa is the foundation of the child protection system where the focus is to facilitate the placement of foster children in need of care under the guardianship of a foster parent (Meintjies, 2005:1). The new foster family should provide an environment that encourages conventional maturation, which avoids further damage to children and corrects specific problems that hinder the healthy personality development of children (Puleng, 2004:10). Foster care services to children thus address the specific needs of the foster children and facilitate the placement of the foster children into their new foster family.

The purpose of foster care services to the biological parents is to assist them in the reunification process. Where appropriate, treatment and reconstruction services are delivered to biological parents to facilitate the process of reunification of the biological parents with their children (Meintjies, 2005:2). During foster care, services are also rendered to foster families who require special assistance in supporting these vulnerable foster children (Meintjies, 2005:2). Foster parents also need financial support. The purpose of foster care services is to provide some reparation for foster parents who take foster children into their homes to provide for their family needs. The Social Assistance Act of 1992 makes provision for foster parents to apply for a foster child grant (Meintjies, 2005:1) which can help the foster parent to meet the foster child's financial needs. The White Paper for Social Welfare states that social security and social development programmes are investments which lead to tangible economic gains and in turn lead to economic growth (RSA, 1997). According to Patel (2005:132), the foster child grant is an intended financial support to foster parents who are willing to provide a secure and nurturing environment for the child.

The social worker needs to monitor how the foster parents support the child/children during foster care and to ensure that children are placed in an appropriate foster home whilst at the same time ensuring that this placement will not further damage the foster child's well-being. The social worker is the key facilitator in the reconstruction process, addressing the problems of both the children and their families in order to reunite children with their families whilst at the same time

providing supervision services to foster families during the fostering process. Where there are limited opportunities to earn a livelihood in a community, social workers may assist in linking the community (in this study foster parents and children) with public works programmes, micro finance and micro-enterprises, social relief efforts and other community development activities (Patel, 2005:149). According to Patel (2005:149), through programmes such as vegetable gardening, sewing projects and bread baking, the income of people living on social grants is supplemented and their social capital is built in the community.

Effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes can help to promote sustainable livelihoods. According to the White Paper for Social Welfare, the wellbeing of children depends on the ability of families to function effectively and because children are vulnerable, they need to grow up in a nurturing and secure family environment that can ensure their survival, development and protection (RSA, 1997). In order to ensure that the child is placed in a secure and nurturing family environment that promotes a sustainable livelihood, it is necessary to look at different types of foster care placements.

2.3.2 Different types of foster care placements

Foster care placement can either be formal or informal. According to the United Nations (2010:6), formal care refers to “all care provided in a family environment which has been ordered by a competent administrative body or judicial authority, and all care provided in a residential environment, including in private facilities, whether or not as a result of administrative or judicial measure”. Informal care refers to “any private arrangement in a family environment whereby the child is looked after on an on-going or indefinite basis by relatives or friends or by others in their individual capacity, at the initiative of the child, his/her parents or other person without this arrangement having been ordered by an administrative or judicial authority or a duly accredited body” (United Nations, 2010:6). For the purposes of this study, the focus on the type of foster care placement was on formal foster care in which the social workers render statutory services in most cases.

Section 180(1)(a) of the Children's Amendment Act, No. 41 of 2007, is explicit about the requirements for formal foster care. It is stated that "a child is in foster care if the child has been placed in the care of a person who is not the parent or guardian of the child as a result of an order of a children's court, or a transfer in terms of Section 171(1) of the Children's Act 38 of 2005". For the purposes of this study, the focus was on the "Kinship care" and "Non-relative care" in which the intake and field social workers mostly render statutory services.

2.3.2.1 Kinship care

The term "kin" refers to any relative of the child, by blood or marriage (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1996:570). In kinship care the child is placed in the care of relatives. According to Hegar and Scannapieco (1996:468), kinship placements are culturally sensitive and may be less traumatic than placement with strangers. It can serve as a strategy for family preservation. Through kinship care, children are able to live with people they know and trust.

The extended family cares for foster children through various initiatives including, fostering by an uncle, aunt, or even frail grandparents (Lombe & Ochumbo, 2008:685). Adamec, Laurie and Miller (2007) highlight that in most cases, the person providing kinship care is the child's grandmother, followed by an aunt. In South Africa, the majority of foster children are also placed with their relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings. Staying with family allows the child's family identity to be transmitted and provides space for the child's cultural and ethnic identity. Kinship care prevents sibling relationships from breaking up, as well as helping children to maintain or form relationships with their extended family (Hegar & Scannapieco, 1996:568).

2.3.2.2 Non-relative family foster care

Non-relative family foster care refers to placement of children with any person who is not related to the child by blood or marriage. In the study conducted by Everett, Chipungu and Leashore (2004:70), children placed in non-related foster care are

three times more likely to be moved to different homes or settings than children in kinship care. Therefore the placement of children with non-relatives should only be considered when no relatives are available, willing or suitable to care for the child. Recent studies show that many children fare better when placed in kinship care, however, when this is not an option for a particular child, placement with a caring, non-related foster family is always the best possible alternative (Baldino, 2009:4). It is a voluntary decision for non-relatives to act as foster carers, so they are at least willing to face the stresses and risks involved in foster parenting.

The White Paper for Social Welfare provides a mandate for all social services to be practised within a developmental approach, which facilitates human, social and economic development and the promotion of human rights of all South Africans (Lombard, 2005:211). Thus, linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes requires social workers to adopt a developmental approach to social work to achieve the mandate of the White Paper for Social Welfare, which includes focusing on social development and promotion of human rights. Discussion on developmental social work can help to find ways on how to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

2.4 Developmental social work in foster care services

Patel (2005:206) defined developmental social work as “practical and appropriate application of knowledge, skills and values to social work processes to enhance the well-being of individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities in their social context”. It involves the implementation of research and the development and implementation of social policies that contribute to social justice and human development in a changing national and global context (Patel, 2005:207). However, according to Midgley (2010:13), there is no standard definition of developmental social work, nevertheless it is possible to identify common themes that provide a basis for a systematic conceptual perspective on developmental social work. Midgley (2010:13) states that these include agreements about the importance of facilitating change, the use of strengths, empowerment and capacity-building, the notion of self-determination and participation, social investment, social rights and a commitment to

equality and social justice. In the survey conducted by Patel and Hochfeld (2012:697), respondents were asked to explain in their own words what developmental social welfare and social work meant to them. The notions of empowerment, self-reliance, capacity-building and participation most frequently appeared in their responses. Based on the above discussion, the notion of change is thus central to developmental social work.

Patel (2005:207) emphasises that developmental social work aims to promote social change through a dual focus on the person and the environment, and the interaction between the two. However, the limits of developmental social work lie in its lack of focus on conflict and how social structures contribute to poverty, inequality, underdevelopment and social exclusion of individuals, families and communities (Patel, 2005:214). Gray (2006:S53) defines developmental social work as the type of social work said to be relevant to, and practised within, the new developmental social welfare system. According to Midgley (2010:18), developmental social workers facilitate the inclusion of service users in all aspects of community living, are actively involved in the community, and work closely with them to secure resources, access networks and establish local networks.

In order to address the social challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequality in South Africa, social development was adopted as a guiding framework for post-apartheid social welfare and social work practice (Hölscher, 2008:116). The aim was that the social development framework would enable the Department of Social Development to respond, among other things, to the socio-economic needs of all South Africans, especially the previously disadvantaged people and the poor (Hölscher, 2008:116). Patel (2005:30) referred to social development as a person-centred approach to development which promotes the participation of people and strengthens the voice of poor people in decision-making and in building a democratic society. Gray (2006:S53) adds that social development “is a theory and approach to social welfare that posits a macro-policy framework for poverty alleviation that combines social and economic goals”. According to Patel (2005:30), the link between social and economic development can be achieved through macro-economic policies which foster social inclusion of people in the development process through employment and self-employment and raise the standard of living of the

poor and the employed. In order to ensure that foster care services are rendered within a developmental approach will require deliberate planning and initiatives by statutory social workers to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Lombard (2005:212) emphasises the importance of respect for human rights in order to achieve social development initiatives and social and economic progress and development.

According to Martinelli et al. (2013:3), socio-economic development can be defined as the process of human emancipation for everybody and involves the mobilisation of human potential to achieve it. It has to consider economic activities as embedded with the institutional ensemble of the social dynamics of working, housing, living together, caring and learning (Martinelli et al., 2013:3). Patel (2005:104) stated that human capital investment in, among other things, education, housing, health care and nutrition, is widely recognised to yield positive returns for the beneficiaries and also for society. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) makes provision for socio-economic rights, which include the right to have access to adequate housing, health care, education, social security, food and water. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution (RSA, 1996) enshrines the rights of all people in South Africa, affirming the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. In line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, developmental social work (Patel, 2005:207) aims to:

- “meet needs, promote and protect the rights of client groups, especially those who are vulnerable and those populations at risk of marginalisation in the society;
- facilitate participation of client groups in managing and solving social problems;
- promote social and economic inclusion through enhanced personal functioning and through strengthening human capital and the livelihood capabilities of individuals, groups and communities; and
- to work collaboratively with all actors, e.g. individuals, families, groups, organisations, communities, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and government to achieve its core purposes”.

According to Patel (2005:156), human rights are the foundation of social development and meeting needs is not sufficient; the promotion, protection and defence of the rights of those who are vulnerable and at risk are an integral part of sustainable human development. This means that services rendered to people at risk should focus on both the needs and rights, as rights cannot be realised if the needs of the people are not met (Patel, 2005:156). Foster care is thus embedded in protecting the rights of children. Kepe and Tessaro (2013:267) emphasised that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of these rights. The state's obligation to respect, protect and promote socio-economic rights is not only concerned with constitutional, legal and institutional frameworks, but it also requires that the citizens and their organisational representatives be considered legitimate participants and active agents in the process (Jones & Stokke, 2005:2).

Section 27(1)(c) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that, "Everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance". In order to meet the socio-economic rights of its citizens, in 2004 the South African government adopted the Social Assistance Act No. 13 of 2004 to help reduce poverty in the country. As earlier indicated in the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Fact sheet: Issue no 3 of 2013-31 (RSA, 2013), there were 58,722 beneficiaries of the foster child grant in Gauteng and 532,159 across the whole country. In the late 1990s, approximately 50,000 children were receiving the FCG. Currently, more than 10 times this number of children receives the grant (Hall et al., 2012:50).

Hall et al. (2012:48) indicate that the South African social system is regarded as better developed than those of most middle-income countries. The foster child grant is designed for children who have been found by the court to be children in need of care and protection (Hall et al., 2012:89). Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:427) state that the purpose of the foster child grant is to ensure that the child in need of care lives in adequate housing, is fed and given clothing, receives necessary medical care and attends school regularly; thus his/her socio-economic development is taken care of. These are considered as the basic rights of the child in need that cannot be realised from the foster care parents' social grant or personal resources alone.

However, Lombard (2003:156) argues that although the social grants system protects vulnerable individuals and families, its long-term sustainability needs to be questioned. It requires additional resources to facilitate the socio-economic development of the child.

The foster child grant is mediated by the foster care parents, who receive the grant, but have to administer it to benefit the foster child for whom it is intended. This means that foster care parents are the intermediaries who are expected to act in the interest of the foster child. A focus on socio-economic development shifts the attention of foster care services also to the foster care parents' right to development and the attached roles and responsibilities to develop their ability to contribute and take ownership for a better future. Sen (in O'Hearn, 2009) emphasises that raising human capability is good because it improves the choices, well-being, and freedom of people and their role in influencing social change. All people, including the foster care parents, no matter how poor they are, have responsibilities towards their communities, but "powerful individuals and organisations, notably governments, bear a particular burden of responsibility in building a society based on equity and fairness" (Green, 2008:24). Green (2008:27) further states that a rights-based approach views people as active subjects of their own development, as they seek to realise their rights.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, "the Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the values of human dignity, achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedom" (RSA, 1996). In line with the Constitution, in 1993 South Africa signed the treaty on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC reaffirms the fact that, because of their vulnerability, children need special care and protection. Special emphasis is placed on the primary and protective responsibility of the family (Abrahams & Matthews, 2011:24). The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) handed the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (2012:3) to the United Nations in 2012, in which they commit themselves to support, influence and promote global initiatives aimed at achieving social and economic equality, and to support the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Post MDG Agenda. The intention of the Global Agenda was to

strive for a people-focused global economy that is regulated to protect and promote social justice, human rights and sustainable development of vulnerable people, including children (Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, 2012:3).

Against the abovementioned background, developmental social work aims to promote social change by focusing on the person and the person's environment. Developmental social work is social work with a developmental focus and it can adopt a social development approach which focuses on the integration of social and economic development. Lastly, developmental social work emphasises respect of human rights which is also inherent to achieving the goals of social and economic development. In order to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, it is important to understand the role of the statutory social worker in relation to socio-economic development programmes.

2.5 The role of statutory social worker in social development

The social problems of poverty, unemployment and inequality still remain a major challenge facing the South African government. The growing Aids pandemic has resulted in the loss of caregivers, an increasing number of orphans and vulnerable children, and rising numbers of child-headed households (Patel, 2005:165). These challenges call for social workers to intervene in order to ensure that the values of human dignity, equality and freedom is respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled by the state (RSA, 1996).

A statutory social worker can adopt various roles to integrate foster care services with social development and achieve the vision of the White Paper for Social Welfare, namely to have a "welfare system which facilitates the development of human capacity and self-reliance within a caring and enabling socio-economic environment" (RSA, 1997). In order to contribute to social and economic development, statutory social workers can assist in the mobilisation of human capital for development; foster the creation of social capital which contributes to economic development and assist low-income and special needs service users to engage in productive employment and self-employment (Midgley, 1996:20). According to Sherraden (2009:6), social workers should practice within several major organising

themes which include basic needs and problem-solving, social justice, human rights and social development. However, from the findings of the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:11), the government does not facilitate an environment conducive to social development by demanding that one social worker integrates statutory services with community development projects, especially due to a lack of resources and infrastructure. Patel (2005:148) adds that the focus in social work has always been on how social security is being used in a desirable way for the benefit of individuals and families. Social work's focal point is also on the types of programmes available for the poor and vulnerable and how these people can access these services and benefits (Patel, 2005:148). In a situation where there is high unemployment and limited opportunities to earn a living in a community, the social worker can assist to link community members with public works programmes, social relief efforts and community development activities (Patel, 2005:149). Patel (2005:149) stresses that social workers as social planners working at grassroots level have a role to study local needs, design poverty reduction strategies and develop business plans which can be presented to government and donor agencies for funding of community development projects”.

According to Midgley (2010:471), social workers can also work with various groups of people such as the members of micro-enterprise cooperatives and motivate them to collaborate on successful ventures. In South Africa there are individual and cooperative saving schemes such as stokvels and burial societies which help with the provision of much needed funds to meet the financial needs of community members. According to Patel (2005:150), social workers often do not see the link between their social work roles and social safety nets. Social workers are of the view that welfare services are underfunded since social security gets the larger share of the overall social development budget, and this means that there will be less money for welfare services (Patel, 2005:150). Lombard and Kleijn (2006:214) indicated that the first step to deliver statutory social services within a developmental approach is in recognising that statutory social services are included in the “basket of developmental social welfare service delivery”. This implies looking at how statutory social services could be delivered within a developmental approach and to look at the challenges to achieve this. This study focuses on the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development

programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. In order to achieve sustainable livelihoods, Midgley (2010:6-12) emphasises that social workers should focus on the clients' strengths rather than deficits and help them to realise their potential for personal growth. He continues saying that communities have many unrecognised assets and it is the task of the social worker to facilitate the awareness on how to use them effectively (Midgley, 2010:6-12).

Statutory social workers are involved in the implementation of various policies and legislation. For purposes of this study the focus is on statutory social workers who implement the Children's Act 38 of 2005. The Chile Solidaro system is a good example that the foster care system can use - this emphasises the importance of the role of the social worker to understand the mechanism in which poverty can be reduced. Saracostti (2008:570) indicates that the functions of the social worker includes collecting and updating information about families belonging to the system (in this case foster families); overseeing the system's progress, and facilitating the participation of families and their members in all the social development programmes aimed at addressing extreme poverty. In this manner, the beneficiaries who were previously disconnected from public agencies due to their state of social exclusion are given the support needed for them to demand their rights as citizens (Saracostti, 2008:571). Engelbrecht (2008:168) adds that social workers who render field services are tasked with an initiative to link human and economic development, to promote human growth, to reduce social inequality and to foster sustainable social development. Lombard and Strydom (2011:340) emphasise: "In view of the positive link between social entrepreneurs and level of education, social workers play a major role in human development by mobilising communities to negotiate and advocate for adequate resources for education".

Statutory social workers are faced with inherent challenges with regard to foster care. Since the amendment of the Children's Act 38 of 2005, statutory social workers are faced with challenges of magistrates and the various departments interpreting the Act differently. Due to the ambivalence in the Act, this results in the unequal treatment of children and unconstitutional delays in access to both grants and services (Hall et al., 2012:14). The confusion about who is supposed to extend the court order of the foster children between the Department of Social Development and Department of Justice has resulted in the lapsing of some of the court orders.

Due to the pandemic of HIV and Aids, statutory social workers have to focus much more on the processing of new foster care applications. HIV and Aids-related infections in adults and babies, the abandonment of babies and children, as well as dysfunctional families for various reasons, have increased the demand for the expansion of foster care services in South Africa. However, this increased demand presents an enormous challenge to institutions rendering foster care services to recruit, screen and train enough suitable foster parents to be able to meet the high demand for substitute care in South Africa (Thiele, 2005:1-4). As a result, statutory social workers and the children's court do not have time to provide adequately for children truly in need of care and protection as they spend the bulk of their time processing applications for foster care, such as finding and preparing foster care parents (Hall et al., 2012:51). Lombard and Klein (2006:224) urge social workers not to use high caseloads as an excuse for not initiating change in protection social service delivery. However, they also agree that social workers should not see high caseloads as a challenge (Lombard & Klein, 2006:224).

In addition to these challenges, administrative delays in processing grant applications, as well as the poor attitude of some administrative personnel, also often deny families the grants to which they are entitled to under South African law (Foster, 2000:81). The foster care grant is administratively burdensome for both social workers and the courts, resulting in a backlog of cases needing extension (Hall et al., 2012:89). Some of the foster care challenges arise through bitter struggles between the paternal and maternal sides of the family, who fight over these children because of the monetary benefits they bring through access to the foster child grant which, at the time of the study (2014), was R830.00 per month per child. According to Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:434), there is also little attention paid to supporting elderly kin, especially as their abilities are constrained by material privation.

Statutory social workers are faced with challenges of lack of resources such as office space, computers and vehicles. Lombard and Klein (2006:226) emphasised that, the lack of resources in social service delivery has resulted in poorly-developed protection services, insufficient resources to provide other social services to the disadvantaged communities and to promote sustainable livelihoods. The attitude of statutory social workers on the developmental approach is also a challenge. Patel

(2005:3) warns that moving from an old way of doing things is always challenging and it causes considerable tension and uncertainty. According to Lombard and Klein (2006:224), a change of attitude is a precondition for developmental statutory case intervention and therefore the excuse for high caseloads, lack of resources and crisis management cannot be condoned.

The difficulties with foster care services, as outlined above, emphasise the need for social workers to link foster care services with socio-economic development, which is a huge challenge. Patel and Hochfeld (2012:693) indicate that the macroeconomic policy of the South African government has not yet created an environment that is conducive to sustainable and equitable economic and social development. They further emphasise that despite significant progress, poverty, inequality and jobless growth persists with dire consequences for the majority of population of South Africa. A key factor that is believed to be hampering progress in translating macroeconomic policies into practice is the under-funding of welfare services and in particular development services (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012:693). In a study conducted by Patel and Hochfeld (2012:698), all the focus group participants agree that the main focus of service delivery in relation to statutory services remains remedial. It was also emphasised that social workers need to engage more actively with other professionals who have expertise in economics in order to develop knowledge about how social workers can integrate social and economic development (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012:698). Brown and Bednar (2006:1499) highlight the importance of creating a very good relationship between the foster parent and the social worker, indicating that the lack of support, trust and open communication between the social worker and foster parent can lead to negative placement outcomes.

In summary, the challenges that social workers face are lack of resources, high caseloads, magistrates and various departments interpreting the Act differently, and the confusion on the extension of court orders between the Department of Social Development and Justice. As a result, this causes delays in the opening and finalisation of foster care cases and the extension of court orders for existing foster children. In order to address the challenges of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, it requires statutory social workers to carefully look at strategies for socio-economic development that have been successfully implemented.

2.6 Strategies for socio-economic development

Children born from poor and socially excluded families are at high risk of being trapped in a poverty cycle and they have little chance of getting education, because the school system of most of these poor people is weak (South African Human Rights Commission, 2014). It is further emphasised that when these poor children leave school, the sluggish demand for unskilled workers means that few will find a job while those who succeed will not be well remunerated or secure a permanent job. However, protective measures such as good nutrition, health care, supportive parenting and opportunities for early learning can nurture positive development and this includes good health, academic outcomes, economic productivity, responsible citizenship and effective parenting for the future generation (Berry, Biersteker, Dawes, Lake & Smith, 2013:26). According to Berry et al. (2013:30) social services, are a vital support to families and children, to prevent and protect them from abuse and neglect. Many children in South Africa experience violence, abuse, neglect and the loss of caregivers, and psycho-social support services may be needed to assist children cope with grief, loss and trauma (Berry et al., 2013:30). Chapter Two of the South African Constitution contains the Bill of Rights, a human rights charter that protects the socio-economic rights of all people in South Africa, including the rights of children, “ to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment,” (RSA, 1996).

In view of the challenges that statutory social workers are facing in rendering foster care services, there is a need to deliberately shift focus to an integrated community economic development (ICED) approach in which foster care families are actively participating in their own development. In the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:7), social workers pointed out the need for all services in the statutory process to be integrated within a developmental approach and for effective networking to take place between the various stakeholders. Nthomang and Rankopo (1997:205) state that ICED is used to indicate that the challenges of marginalised communities cannot be effectively addressed in a partial manner and it emphasises an empowerment dimension to community economic development. Grass-roots participation, capacity-building and economic development should be the key focus areas for an integrative model within the developmental approach (United Nations, 1999:10). Midgley (1996:21) states that social workers can contribute positively to

economic development by assisting low-income and special needs clients to engage in productive employment and self-employment. Both employment and self-employment involve people in productive activities, which generate income and contribute to development (Midgley, 1996:21).

Statutory social workers should integrate foster care services with socio-economic programmes. The Suid-Afrikaanse Vrouefederasie (SAVF) developed an integrated development model that affirms the importance of integrated social and economic policies in achieving anti-poverty outcomes and the importance of service user's voices in this process (Lombard, Kemp, Viljoen-Toet & Booyzen, 2012:192). This model has six pillars which include promotion of economic well-being, improvement of health, improvement of education, empowerment towards positive self-assertion, promoting personal status and dignity and promoting the protection of the most vulnerable. Children's voices also need to be heard to integrate foster care services with socio-economic programmes. In one of the interviews in a study on the impact of climate change on children in South Africa, one child emphasised the right to have a voice, as follows: "Because the constitution does allow me to take part in decision-making. So if you refrain me from making a decision, it means that you should be fined yourself, because you are violating my rights as a child and as a human being living in South Africa." (UNICEF, 2011:11). Linking foster care services with socio-economic programmes implies that statutory social workers should look at the micro/individual and community levels of income, such as micro-enterprises and social entrepreneurship as possible strategies that could help foster care families to generate an income and to create employment opportunities. Midgley (2008:468) defines micro-enterprises as small businesses owned and operated by poor people or groups of poor people with the support of sponsoring organisations. Lombard (2003:163) emphasises that community economic development projects and micro and small enterprises "can facilitate productive self-employment for the poor, which will restore self-respect, facilitate self-reliance and above all transform a condition of dependency to one of self-sufficiency". Devkota (2007:310) adds that once village units are ensured through basic socio-economic developmental structures like health clinics, basic education, technical assistance to farmers, local community infrastructure and conservation programmes, local communities would become sustainable with reduced income disparity.

Social entrepreneurship as a strategy for socio-economic development is seen, “as a practice that integrates economic and social value creation and has a long heritage and a global presence” (Mair & Marti, 2006:36). Acknowledging its poorly defined boundaries, Mair and Marti (2006:37) view social entrepreneurship as a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyse social change and/or address social needs. Statutory social workers can play an important role in facilitating social entrepreneurship in order to promote social and economic development of foster care parents and children by not just providing safety nets and protection for the vulnerable as a human right (Lombard et al., 2012:191). Lombard et al. (2012:191) also point out that by adopting a developmental approach, social workers commit themselves to empowerment and participatory strategies that integrate human, social and economic development. This is possible, as Botha (2009:43) states that social entrepreneurs facilitate opportunities in which community members utilise the resources that they have to achieve socio-economic development. The social entrepreneur aims for value in the form of transformational change that will benefit disadvantaged communities and ultimately society at large (Botha, 2009:43). According to Lombard and Strydom (2011:259), social entrepreneurship provides the opportunity for an inclusive model for economic development through which vulnerable people can become empowered to have a voice in their own development and live with human dignity. Shane (2005:1) states that social entrepreneurship is a good solution for economic development because it provides a relatively non-controversial way to increase the “proverbial pie”, creating jobs and enhancing per capita income growth. Lombard (2008:122) indicates that social work is concerned primarily with the vulnerable and the poor, and therefore social workers are challenged to accept their share of responsibility in addressing inequality and poverty by promoting the rights of poor people to social and economic development.

There are various social entrepreneurship initiatives for addressing social problems which include poverty alleviation, reducing inequality and improving the lives of the disadvantaged communities. The following best practice examples of social entrepreneurship programmes will be presented.

- **Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee (BRAC)**

In 1972, Fazle Abed established the Bangladesh Rural Advanced Committee (BRAC) which focused on local needs and capacities through a systematic approach to poverty alleviation, which emphasises systematic learning at many levels (Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004:265). According to Alvord et al. (2004:265), these initiatives organise the poor for self-help and build local capacities for economic development, health care and education and they focus more on working with women and other oppressed groups. BRAC, which is the largest NGO in Bangladesh, had an even bigger programme than Grameen Bank, with 3.5 million members, and 2.6 million borrowers (Rozario, 2001:61-62).

- **Grameen Bank**

The Grameen Bank, established in 1976 by Mohamed Yunus of Bangladesh, provides group lending for poor people without collateral (Alvord et al., 2004:265). The Grameen Bank's activities are directed to the "poorest of the poor," those who are most in need of assistance, such as poor rural women, who are in theory, organised into mutual support groups (Rozario, 2001:61). Rozario (2001:61) points out that the Grameen Bank has not only been imitated in Bangladesh, but it has been adopted as a model to be replicated throughout and beyond the developing world. However, despite its achievements, the Grameen Bank has been criticised for putting extreme pressure on individual borrowers to repay whatever their respective circumstances, and women spoke of being forced to sell metal roof from their houses or to sell livestock and even their last piece of land in order to meet their weekly repayments (Rozario, 2001:67). The income-generating projects through the Grameen Bank have brought an increase in the degree of involvement of women in the public sphere in Bangladesh, which has provided a major employment sector for women and brought some benefits to poor villagers (Rozario, 2001:64). However, the ability to bring about longer-term structural change was limited (Rozario, 2001:64).

- **Six-S**

In the same year that the Grameen Bank was established, Bernard Ledea Ouedraogo (Burkina Faso) and Bernard Lecomte (France) formed Se Servir de la

Saison Seche en Savane et au Sahel (Six-S), which instituted “flexible funding” for local projects approved by regional networks of village elders and promoted capacity-building to prepare villages to use resources effectively (Alvord et al., 2004:266). According to Alvord et al. (2004:269), Six-S supports village projects to improve sustainable local resources, increases income-generating activities, and builds village capacities through the networking of village organisations. Katungu (2013:v) conducted a study in Mberengwa District, Zimbabwe, which sought to explore the community level initiatives that communities are taking to meet the needs of orphans through community programmes. The findings of this study indicated that through income-generating projects, the orphans are able to meet their needs, which include food, education, clothing, shelter and protection from abuse (Katungu, 2013:97).

Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:434) point out that there is a need to focus on strengthening the social, economic and political capabilities of foster care parents and the challenges they face when caring for children in need. If foster care services are linked with socio-economic programmes, foster care parents can be provided with an opportunity to engage in activities such as micro-enterprises. This shift requires a holistic approach, as the Department of Social Development (2013a:3) concurred: “The Department will therefore continue to commit itself to work together with civil society to accelerate service delivery and effective implementation of programmes that are aimed at enhancing the quality of life of communities and target groups that include the poorest of the poor”. Lombard (2008:137) points out that social workers need to be familiar with the legislation, policies and resources applicable to socio-economic development and should continuously keep themselves updated. Lombard (2008:140) further suggests that the engagement of social workers in economic development should be recognised as a specialised field, however this will depend on the training institutions decision to include economic development training in their social work curriculum. Having access to income for which they have worked will strengthen foster care parents’ self-confidence and belief in themselves to address hardships and poverty. Midgley (2008:474) indicates that increased business activity may create new employment opportunities, and when successful businesses expand, they will require additional workers and hence create employment.

The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) provided a mandate for social services and this included statutory social workers to have a developmental focus (Lombard & Kleijn, 2006). A developmental focus facilitates human, social and economic development and the promotion of human rights of all South Africans (Lombard, 2005:211). According to Lombard and Strydom (2011:340), social workers can mobilise organisations and colleagues to embrace a broader vision of the social work profession's role in development, one that integrates human, social, and economic development, irrespective of the specialised field in which they are working. Midgley (1996:20) argues that social workers can contribute to economic development if they can help in the mobilisation of human capital for development, foster the creation of social capital which also contributes to economic development, and help low income and special-needs clients engage in productive employment and self-employment. It is therefore important that the service users and all the role players in social development, acquire social, human and economic capital in order to achieve social and economic development.

2.6.1 Social capital

In stressing the importance of social capital, Rainey et al. (2003:712) points out that many local economies have stagnated or declined because leaders are too concerned about protecting the special interests of a small group of business leaders. In order for a project to be successful, the bonding and building of social capital in a community, participation in decision-making and project activities are of importance (Lombard, 2003:161). Robison, Schmid and Siles (2002:9) emphasise that social capital qualifies as capital only if it makes humans more productive when they use it in combination with other forms of capital.

2.6.2 Human capital

Rainey et al. (2003:712) emphasise that quality human capital investment improves the skills and cognitive ability of labour, allowing for enhancement of productivity and an expansion of entrepreneurial talent. Lombard (2005:224) asserts that "investments in human and social capital are urgently needed if people are to have the educational levels and skills to utilise the opportunities created by economic

development". According to Lombe and Ochumbo (2008:687), providing education for all children is seen as playing a role in educating, nurturing and providing psychological support. This is one of the needs of orphan and vulnerable children that are most often neglected in favour of meeting critical material and nutritional needs (Lombe & Ochumbo, 2008:687). Research evidence on sub-Saharan Africa's orphan crisis suggests that communities with investments in human capital enjoy high social, political and economic returns compared to communities with low investments in human capital (Lombe and Ochumbo, 2008:692).

According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), South Africa must invest in people; that is, develop the human capital which is essential for increasing productivity and moving people out of poverty. Having a large number of orphaned children unable to attend school diminishes prospects for social and economic progress of an entire community (Ismayilova, Ssewamala, Mooers, Nabunya & Sheshadri, 2012:2050). It is very important to invest in foster care parents and children in order to alleviate poverty and to empower them to be able to develop themselves and their communities and to have a sustainable livelihood. However, this cannot be achieved if statutory social workers do not integrate social and economic development in interventions or alternatively work closely with other social workers who are involved in social and economic development programmes.

Midgley (1996:21) indicates that the involvement of social workers in community-based programmes that foster human capital development is an effective way of engaging the profession in social development, which seems to be a huge challenge for the statutory social workers employed by the Department of Social Development. According to Midgley (2014:66), social investments generate rates of return not only to those who benefit directly from these investments, such as individuals and households, but to society as a whole. Beegle, Filmer, Stokes and Tiererova (2010:1743) warn that if children in need of care increasingly live in households that are less willing or able to invest in their human capital, a reduction in poverty and human development will be hampered.

2.6.3 Economic capital

According to Rainey et al. (2003:710), economic capital is very important in order for communities to achieve their economic goals. Lombard (2008:26) argues that as long as poor people are excluded from active participation in the economy, poverty and inequality will be solidified and the gap between the rich and the poor will continue to grow. This emphasises the importance of linking foster care services with socio-economic development in order for foster care parents and children to achieve sustainable livelihoods. According to Midgley (1999:13), social programmes can also contribute to economic development by assisting low-income people and welfare clients to find productive employment or self-employment. In this way, they will not only earn money but become self-respecting citizens who work, pay taxes, and contribute to economic development. Social development practice relies on social investments and this feature of social development practice gives “expression to the idea that social development is productive in that it contributes positively to economic development” (Midgley, 2014:66).

In view of the above discussion, micro-enterprises and social entrepreneurship are seen as some of the strategies for economic development, helping people to generate income and create employment opportunities. These strategies should be implemented within a developmental approach, which seeks to invest in human, social and economic capital which is evident in the following practice examples:

Social workers employed by SAVF in partnership with the University of Pretoria established a project called Thuthukani (a Zulu word meaning to develop), which accommodated learners from Grades 4 to 6 who have been referred to the programme because of poverty, academic backlog due to family dysfunction or poverty, being in foster care or having orphan status (Lombard et al., 2012:181). The children were involved in a credit system, based on attendance of the homework sessions which allowed for the purchase of school uniform (Lombard et al., 2012:181). This project taught children about entrepreneurship and how to achieve their economic development (Lombard et al., 2012:181). The Thuthukani project addresses the material and economic needs of children and care-givers. In order to protect children against the culture of dependency through hand-outs, their need for clothing and school stationery was addressed by an annual sale of art which allowed

the children to buy school uniform items, blankets and stationery with the credits they earned through regular attendance of homework and group work sessions (Lombard et al., 2012:183).

In a study on the impact of climate change on children in South Africa, children spoke about their role in the prevention of climate change and they indicated that re-using materials that are no longer in use, like plastic mats and plastic bags, can help prevent climate change (UNICEF, 2011:9). Other children indicated that in their schools they recycle papers, tins and cans and the class that collects the most plastic and tin bottles, won a prize and with that money they helped the poor community around the school (UNICEF, 2011:9).

The developmental welfare policy does not only focus on delivering traditional protection and therapeutic services, “it envisages interventions to support and grow local community initiatives through community development, local economic development, income generation and micro-enterprises, among others, to promote the livelihood capabilities of the poor” (Patel & Hochfeld, 2012:693). In summary, despite challenges for statutory social workers to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, examples of best practise to link social and economic development exist that could be followed.

2.7 Summary

Developmental social work includes facilitating change, empowerment, grass-roots participation and human investment. Since developmental social work is practised within a developmental welfare policy, statutory social workers are required to ensure that foster care service delivery incorporates social and economic development. This means linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. The sustainable livelihoods approach was presented as the theoretical framework of the study. Statutory social workers are faced with inherent challenges to practice social work within a developmental approach. This includes lack of resources, high caseloads, confusion between the roles of the Department of Social Development and Justice with regard to the extension of court orders for foster children and magistrates and

various departments interpreting the Act differently. In order to address these challenges, strategies for socio-economic development were discussed, focusing on the primary role of taking care of foster children and their economic rights, shifting the focus to Integrated Economic Development, micro-enterprises, social entrepreneurship and various forms of capital to foster a link between foster care services and socio-economic development to promote sustainable livelihoods. Lastly, a developmental approach is regarded as a framework that can help social workers to alleviate poverty, reduce unemployment and inequality and building people's capabilities to achieve self-sufficiency. The next chapter will present the research methodology, empirical study and research findings.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the empirical study that was undertaken to explore the challenges that statutory social workers face in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihood. The researcher intended to answer the following research question:

What are the underpinning challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods?

The following sub-research questions informed the main research question:

- What is the core focus of foster care services and how does it relate to poverty reduction?
- How can foster care services be expanded to integrate socio-economic development programmes?
- What is required for statutory social workers to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes?

The chapter first presents the research approach, type of research, research design and methodology, credibility and trustworthiness of the study, pilot study, ethical considerations relevant to the study and limitations of the study. The following section presents the empirical research findings of the study. In the final section, the findings are discussed and integrated with literature.

3.2 Research approach

The researcher used the qualitative approach in this study as it is used to answer questions about the “complex nature of phenomena, with the purpose of describing and understanding the phenomena from the participant`s point of view” (Fouché & Delport, 2011:64). Therefore the researcher focused on learning the meaning that

the participants had about the challenges they experience in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:65). The phenomena that the researcher intended to understand was the statutory social worker's views on the challenges in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

3.3 Type of research

The researcher utilised applied research as it focuses on problem-solving in practice and emphasises the participation of the people who are experiencing a problem by involving them in finding a solution for it (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The researcher's primary motivation was to assist in solving a particular problem facing statutory social workers (Bless, Higson-Smith & Kagee, 2006:45), namely how to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. In addition, the researcher intended to seek direction from the research participants on how to deal with those challenges.

The researcher made specific recommendations to enhance the effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Bless et al. (2006:45) confirm that applied research may assist the community; in the case of this study, statutory social workers, to overcome a problem or design interventions which will help to solve a problem.

3.4 Research design

According to Creswell (2007:73), "a case study research design is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g. observations, interviews, documents and reports)". The researcher chose a case study research design since he was primarily interested in the meaning subjects (in this instance, statutory social workers) give to their life experiences, namely the challenges in linking foster care

services with socio-economic development programmes (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320).

The collective case study chooses cases so that comparisons can be made between cases and concepts and in this way theories can also be extended and validated (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). In this study the researcher used a collective case study as an appropriate research design, since it enabled the researcher to gain insight and understanding on the challenges of statutory social workers from various service points in the Tshwane Region in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes (Berg, 2007:292). A collective case study also gave the researcher an understanding of a practice issue experienced by statutory social workers, namely what the challenges are to extend foster care services in order to integrate socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

3.5 Research methodology

This section begins with a presentation of the study population and sampling, followed by a discussion of the data collection method, data analyses and trustworthiness of the data.

3.5.1 Study population and sampling

The population included participants who have the characteristics that the researcher was interested in (Strydom & Venter, 2002:198), namely the statutory social workers employed by the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region in the following service points:

- ❖ Mamelodi
- ❖ Temba/Eersterust
- ❖ Mabopane/Winterveldt

The researcher made use of stratified sampling in order to select the sample from the total of 83 social workers from the three service points. The researcher stratified

the population in such a way that the population within the stratum is homogeneous with regard to the characteristics or the basis on which it is being stratified (Kumar, 2005:125). In this research the strata was the three service points of the Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region. The researcher followed the Department of Social Development's protocol, whereby the Head of Department and the Regional Director were made aware of the proposed study and granted permission. Once the researcher had divided the population in terms of the service points, he then requested a list of names of all the statutory social workers who met the criteria below from their respective supervisors. The researcher then telephonically called all the participants from the list until he received the first twelve from each service point that matched the criteria.

The researcher applied the non-probability sampling technique to draw a purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling refers to the case where the probability of including each element of the population in a sample is unknown (Bless et al., 2006:100). Qualitative researchers seek out individuals, groups, and settings where the specific processes being studied are mostly to occur (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:391), which was, in the case of the study, statutory social workers who render foster care services in the Department of Social Development in the section of intake and field services. According to Kotsedi (2013), in the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region, there were at the time of the study a total of 83 social workers employed by the Department at the respective service points. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which the units to be observed are selected on the basis of the "researcher's judgement about which ones will be the most useful or representative of the study population," (Babbie, 2011:179).

Statutory social workers who met the following criteria were included in the sample:

- Willingness to participate in the study.
- A minimum of one year's experience working as a statutory social worker at the Gauteng Department of Social Development, Tshwane Region, in the section of intake and field services.
- Representing the three service points in the Tshwane Region.
- Diversity with regard to gender and race.

The researcher intended to select a sample of 10 respondents from each of the three service points to form three groups. The researcher over-recruited by 20 per cent to cover for any “no shows”, in case some participants did not arrive for an interview (Greeff, 2011:366) and 12 respondents were selected from each service point. However during the interview, 10 participants from Mamelodi arrived, 12 participants arrived from Tembisa/Eersterust and 10 participants arrived from Mabopane/Winterveldt. The researcher interviewed 32 participants in total.

3.5.2 Data collection

The researcher used focus group interviewing as the data collection method. The focus group interviews are the means of getting “a better understanding on how people feel or think about an issue, product or service” (Greeff, 2011:360). According to Babbie (2011:315), the purpose of focus group interviewing is to explore rather than describe or explain in any definitive sense. In this study, the researcher had an opportunity to explore and understand the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

Berg (2007:148) indicates some of the advantages of focus group interviewing as follows: it allows researchers to better understand how members of a group arrive at, or alter, their conclusions about some topic or issue; it provides access to interactional clues; and it places participants on a more even footing with each other and the investigator. Babbie (2011:316) states that in a focus group interview, group dynamics frequently bring out aspects of the topic that would not have been anticipated by the researcher and would not have emerged from interviews with individuals. The researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 1) to conduct the interviews because this method provides the researcher and participants with much more flexibility (Greeff, 2011:351). Greeff (2011:351) further states that the researcher is able to make a follow up on a particular interesting issue that emerges during the interview and the participants are able to give a fuller view. However, it was not necessary for the researcher to do so.

According to Greeff (2011:366), focus groups usually include six to ten participants; groups this size allow everyone to participate, while still eliciting a range of

responses. However, Greeff (2011:366) advises that whatever the size selected, it is crucial that the researcher over-recruits by 20 percent to cover for no-shows, which the researcher applied, as indicated above. Therefore three focus groups consisting of twelve members each, with a total of thirty six participants, was selected to participate in the discussions; but in the end, thirty two participants were available due to work commitments. Three focus groups were conducted for this study; one in each service point. If a discussion reaches saturation and becomes repetitive after three groups, there is little to be gained by increasing the number of groups (Greeff, 2011:367). After the three focus groups were interviewed, the researcher realised that the discussion reached saturation point because the participants were providing the same responses.

3.5.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to the “non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships,” (Babbie, 2011:391). The researcher brought order and meaning to the data by examining patterns of similarities and differences across cases and established their diversity (Neuman, 2003:439). The researcher listened attentively to words and phrases in the participants’ vocabularies that captured the meaning of what they said and identified different themes (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:402).

Creswell (2007:150) states that to analyse qualitative data, the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles, rather than using a fixed linear approach. In this study the researcher used Creswell’s (2007) analytic spiral data analysis process as a method of data analysis, which unfolded in the following steps:

- **Planning for recording of data**

Schurink et al. (2011:404) emphasise that the researcher should plan for the recording of data in a systematic manner that is appropriate to the setting, research participants, or both, and that will facilitate analysis before data collection commences. In this study, the researcher used a voice recorder to record data. The researcher ensured that the voice recorder did not interrupt the interview or the flow

of the interview and received the respective participants' consent to use the voice recorder. The researcher labelled audiotapes and ensured that the recorder was functional so that it did not draw the attention away from the interviewing process.

- **Data collection**

This process of data analysis necessitated a twofold approach; the first involved data analysis in the field during data collection, whereas the second involved data analysis away from the field after the data collection period (Schurink et al., 2011:408). In this phase, the researcher focused on the pragmatics, such as the sorting, retrieving, indexing and handling of qualitative data that was created in interview transcripts, field notes and through audio recordings.

- **Managing the data**

This is the first step in data analysis that takes place away from the site (Schurink et al., 2011:408). At this stage in the analysis process the researcher organised data into file folders (Creswell, 2007:150). The researcher organised and managed his data into texts in the form of transcripts.

- **Reading and writing of memos**

According to Creswell (2007:150), this stage in the analysis process comprises the reading of transcripts in their entirety several times to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts. While analysing data, the researcher performed editing in order to keep valuable information. The short phrases, ideas or key concepts that occurred to the researcher were noted at this stage by writing memos in the margins of field notes or transcripts, to which the researcher was able to refer later as he classified and interpreted the data.

- **Describing, classifying and interpreting data**

In this phase, the researcher described in detail the developed themes or dimensions through a classification system, and provided interpretation in light of his own views or views of perspectives in the literature (Creswell, 2007:151). The researcher took note of the similarities in the participants' responses. These similar responses for the same topic were classified as a theme or sub-theme which was then supported by quotations from the participants. According to Creswell

(2007:153), classifying pertains to taking the text or qualitative information apart, and looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information. The data collected was also interpreted to make meaning and sense of it (Schurink et al., 2011:416). Lastly, the researcher used coding to analyse the data and to identify similarities and differences.

- **Presenting the data**

According to Creswell (2007:154), in the final phase of the spiral, the researcher presents data, a packaging of what was found in text, tabular, or figure form. The qualitative researcher can also use visuals, figures or tables as adjuncts to the discussions (Creswell, 2009:189). In this research study, data was presented in text, tabular and/or figure form (see 3.7 below).

3.5.4 Credibility, trustworthiness and reflexivity

Schurink et al. (2011:419) emphasised that in order to assess the quality of qualitative research, the criteria for credibility must be maintained by the researcher. The goal of credibility is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in such a manner so as to ensure that the subject has been accurately identified and described. The researcher provided a clear outline on the eligibility criteria for participants to partake in the study. In order to ensure the credibility of the findings, the research assistant was given an opportunity to provide a second opinion throughout the process of data analysis. The researcher ensured that peer debriefing and member checks were done to increase the credibility of this qualitative research study (Schurink et al., 2011:420). This peer debriefing was done by the researcher with colleagues who hold fair or impartial views of the study. The colleagues gave feedback after examining the transcripts to ensure credibility of the study. During member checks, the researcher summarised information and then questioned the participants to determine credibility.

The trustworthiness of this qualitative study was ensured through an audit trail that was kept throughout the data analysis process and critically analysed all decisions and actions that were taken during the entire research process (Schurink et al., 2011:422). The researcher kept voice recordings, field notes and diaries for

appointments during focus group discussions. The audit trail displays the interaction between the researcher and subjects in such a way that the research is understood not only in terms of what was discovered but also how it was discovered (Schurink et al., 2011:422). The researcher ensured that the participants were informed about the position taken in relation to the study. This included the research design and data collection decisions and the steps taken to manage, analyse and report data.

As a researcher it is very important to start reflecting on yourself, which in turn requires an awareness of the self as an active agent in the process. The researcher needs to know how he/she feels, thinks, imagines and what is happening in his/her mind and body (King & Horricks, 2010:126). This means that the researcher should be aware of his/her inner self before listening to the participants. In this study, the researcher ensured that he adheres to reflexivity in this study, which invited the researcher “to look inwards and outwards, exploring the intersecting relationships between existing knowledge, experience, research roles and the world around him” (King & Horricks, 2010:125). King and Horricks (2010:126) further emphasised that doing social research is an active and interactive process engaged in by individual subjects, with emotions and theoretical and political commitments.

The researcher was reflexive as he utilised the values of individualisation, respect and self-determination (King & Horicks, 2010:126). Individualisation implies that the researcher enters into the experiential world of each participant from the participant’s frame of reference (Grobler & Schenck, 2009:40). The researcher ensured that he accepted the participant’s views and experiences unconditionally and without being judgemental (Grobler & Schenck, 2009:40). Lastly, the facilitator focused on the value of self-determination, which according to Grobler and Schenck (2009:42), means that the participant determines for him/herself the direction in which to moves in the exploration of his/her experiences. Etherington (2004:19) points out that in order to be reflexive, the researcher needs to be aware of his/her personal responses and be able to make choices about how to use them. The researcher was aware of his personal responses and ensured that he adhered to the values of individualisation, respect and self-determination to make choices of how to use the responses.

3.6 Pilot study

The pilot study helped to test and refines the aspects of the final study, including its design, field work procedures, data collection instruments and analysis plans (Yin, 2011:37). The researcher conducted a pilot study using the first focus group for the main study. According to Greeff (2011:370), the true pilot test is the first focus group with the participants. No changes had to be made to the research procedures and the interview schedule and hence the data was included in the analyses of the main study. The pilot test on the first focus group interview enlightened the researcher on the feasibility of the study in terms of time, costs and willingness of the participants to participate in the study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:395). The same ethical considerations that applied in the main study were adhered to in the pilot study. Participants gave informed consent by signing the informed consent letters.

3.7 Ethical consideration

One of the reasons why social scientists are so concerned about research ethics is that there have been many cases of the abuse of people's rights in the name of social research (Bless et al., 2006:139). Ethics, which refers to "a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants and/or respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students" (Strydom, 2011:114). The researcher received ethical clearance from the study by the University of Pretoria (see Appendix 2). The researcher also received the permission to conduct the study with the participants (statutory social workers) from the Department of Social Development (see Appendix 3). According to Babbie (2011:478), anyone involved in social science research needs to be aware of the general agreements shared by researchers on what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry. The ethical issues that were relevant for the study were as follows:

3.7.1 Voluntary participation and informed consent

Participation in the research study was voluntary and no one was forced to participate (Strydom, 2011:116). The researcher contacted the participants and disclosed the purpose and objectives of the study. Individuals knowingly gave written consent (see Appendix 4) to participate in the study out of their free choice (Berg, 2009:87). The researcher emailed a consent form to each participant and asked them to sign it prior to the first focus group interview. All the key information was repeated at the beginning of every focus group discussion and the uncertainties were clarified to the participants.

3.7.2 Deception of participants

According to Struwig and Stead (2001) as quoted by Strydom (2011:119), deception refers to misleading participants, deliberately misrepresenting facts or withholding information from participants. The researcher did not hide the true nature of the study from the participants (Bless et al., 2006:144). Before the start of the research study, participants were informed about the goal and the procedures of the research and the researcher also explained the intended outcomes of the study.

3.7.3 Violation of privacy/confidentiality

Strydom (2011:119) defined violation of privacy as “to keep to oneself that which is normally not intended for others to observe or analyse”. Strydom (2011:119) further states that “every individual has the right to privacy and it is his or her right to decide when, where, to whom and to what extent his or her attitudes, beliefs and behaviour will be revealed”. The researcher ensured that he maintained the principles of confidentiality and privacy in every step of the research, by assuring participants that their identity or names would not be disclosed to anyone. Furthermore, the research findings would not be linked to any participant specifically. Babbie (2011:482) emphasises that a research project guarantees confidentiality when the researcher can identify a given person`s responses but promises not to do so publicly. The group members agreed to confidentiality by signing the informed consent form.

3.7.4 Actions and competence of researcher

Punch (2005:277) indicates that the researcher should ask him/herself if he/she has the expertise to carry out a study of good quality, or if he/she is prepared to study, to “be supervised, trained or consulted, in order to achieve that expertise, and to enquire if such help is available?” The researcher believes that he was competent enough to conduct this research study because he has successfully completed a research methodology module. The study was also undertaken under the guidance of an experienced supervisor.

3.7.5 Publication of the findings

The researcher ensured that he revealed his data in an accurate manner and made his findings available (Strydom, 2011:126) in the form of this research report which was submitted to the University of Pretoria. The intention is to publish the research findings in a scientific journal, as was stipulated in the informed consent form.

3.8 Limitations of the study

The researcher has been employed at the Department of Social Development since 2009 and although he does not work in the same office as the participants, he is known by most of the participants. This might have influenced the decision of the participants to be part of the study. Although the selected participants who did not turn up for the focus groups which were held on a Friday (in agreement with the supervisors and participants) indicated that they had to attend to court inquiries, it may be that they did not attend because they know the researcher. However, the final turn out still included two participants more than expected which indicated that they had an interest in participating in the study. The research findings were consistent amongst the groups which also indicated that the participants focused on the discussion of the research topic.

3.9 Research findings

In this section, the biographical details of participants are first presented in a narrative format, and where applicable, it is followed by a graphical illustration of the findings. This is followed by the presentation of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Finally, the findings are discussed and integrated with literature.

3.9.1 Biographical information

The biographical information included the participants' gender; age; years of experience practising as a social worker and rendering foster care services respectively, and their caseload.

3.9.1.1 Gender of participants

Of the 32 participants who took part in the study, six (19%) were males and 26 (81%) were females. The gender of participants is visually presented in the following pie-chart.

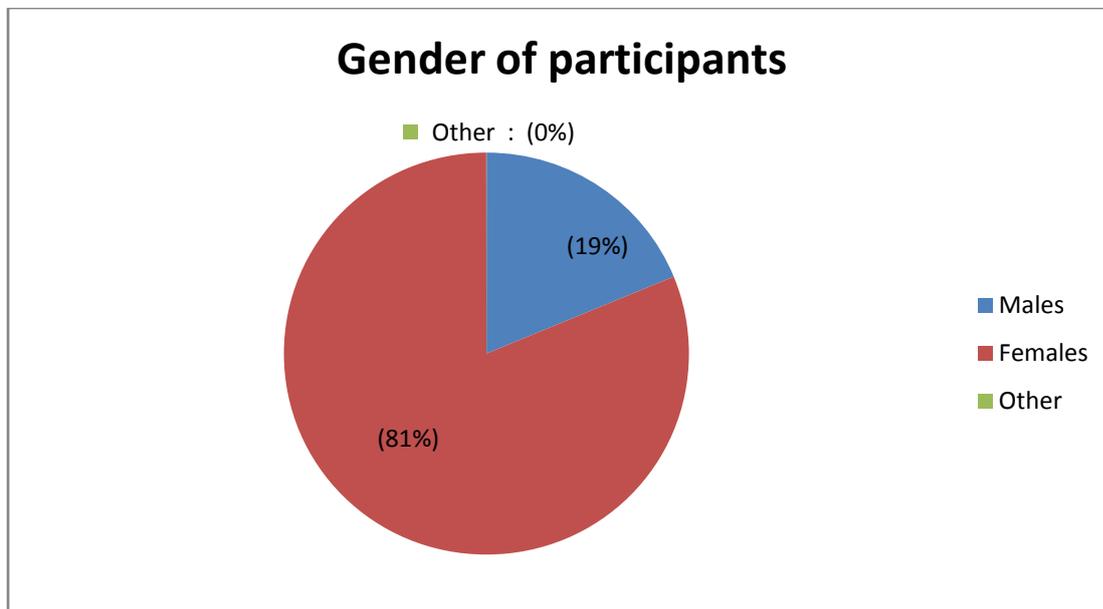


Figure 3.1: Gender of participants

The findings are in line with females dominating the social work profession.

3.9.1.2 Age of participants

The age of participants ranged from 22 to 50 years. Of the 32 participants, seven (22%) were between the ages of 22 and 25 years; 12 (38%) were between the ages of 26 and 30 years; five (16%) were between the ages of 31 and 35 years; four (13%) were between the ages of 36 and 40 years; three (9%) were between the ages of 41 and 45 years and one (3%) between the ages of 46 and 50 years. None of the participants were between the ages of 51 to 55 years and 56 to 60 years. The age of the participants is visually presented in the following pie-chart.

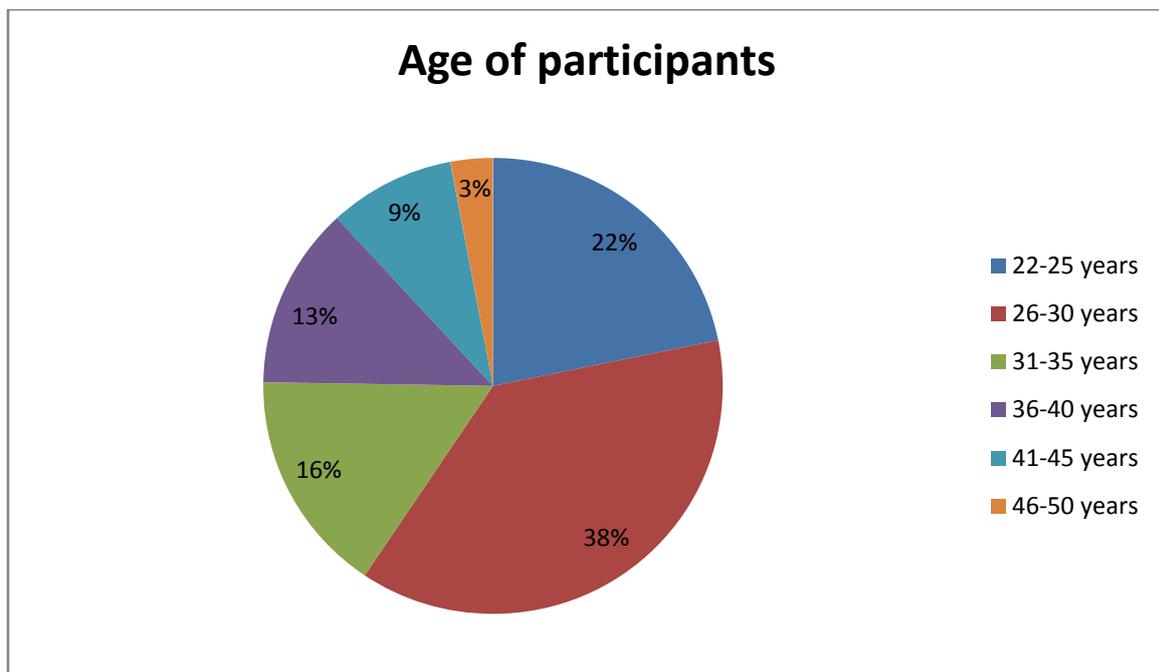


Figure 3.2: Age of participants

The findings indicate that the majority of social workers fall into the youth category and this means that most of them should have been trained in developmental social work. This also means that they should have a better understanding of the link between social and economic development.

3.9.1.3 Number of years of experience practising as a social worker

Figure 3.3 below indicates the number of years of participants' experience in practising as a social worker.

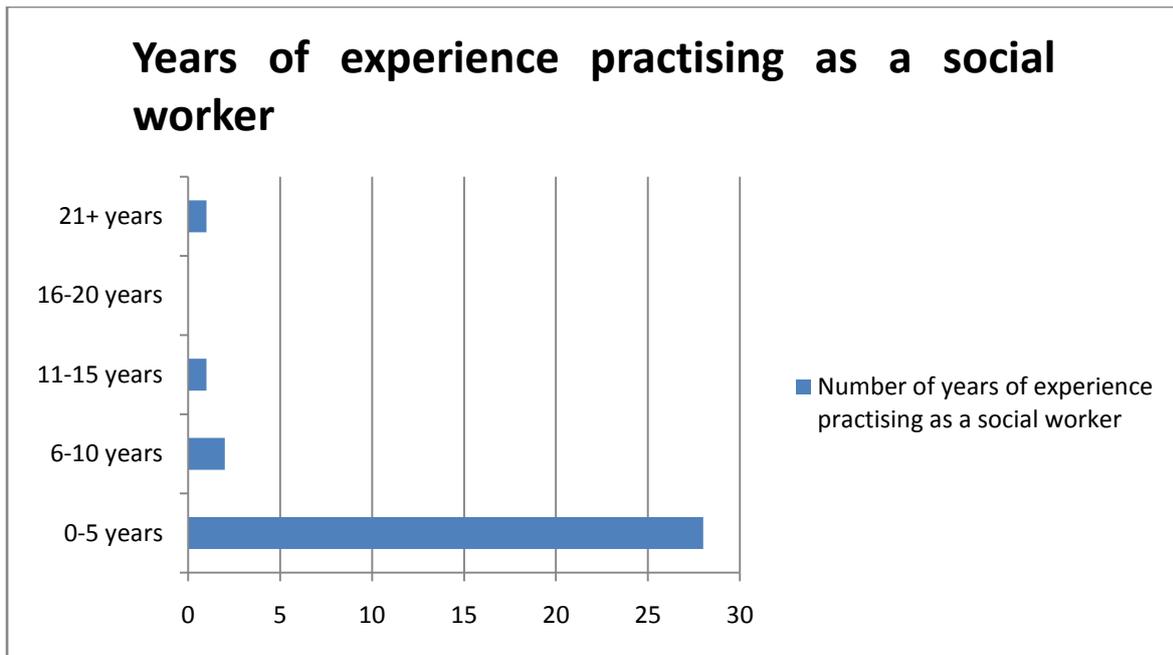


Figure 3.3: Years of experience practising as a social worker

Of the 32 participants, 28 (88%) had between zero to five years of experience practising as a social worker; two (6%) had between six to ten years; one (3%) between 11 to 15 years and one (3%) had 21+ years of experience practising as a social worker. The findings indicate that most of the participants have been practising as a social worker for less than five years. This means that they should have a better understanding of the interrelatedness of foster care and socio-economic development with developmental social work as social work training in all training institutions should reflect a developmental approach with regard to minimum requirements.

3.9.1.4 Number of years involved in rendering foster care services

Of the 32 participants, 28 (88%) were involved in rendering foster care services between zero and five years; three (9%) between six and ten years and one (3%) was involved in rendering foster care services between 11 and 15 years. The years involved in rendering foster care services are visually presented in the following bar graph.

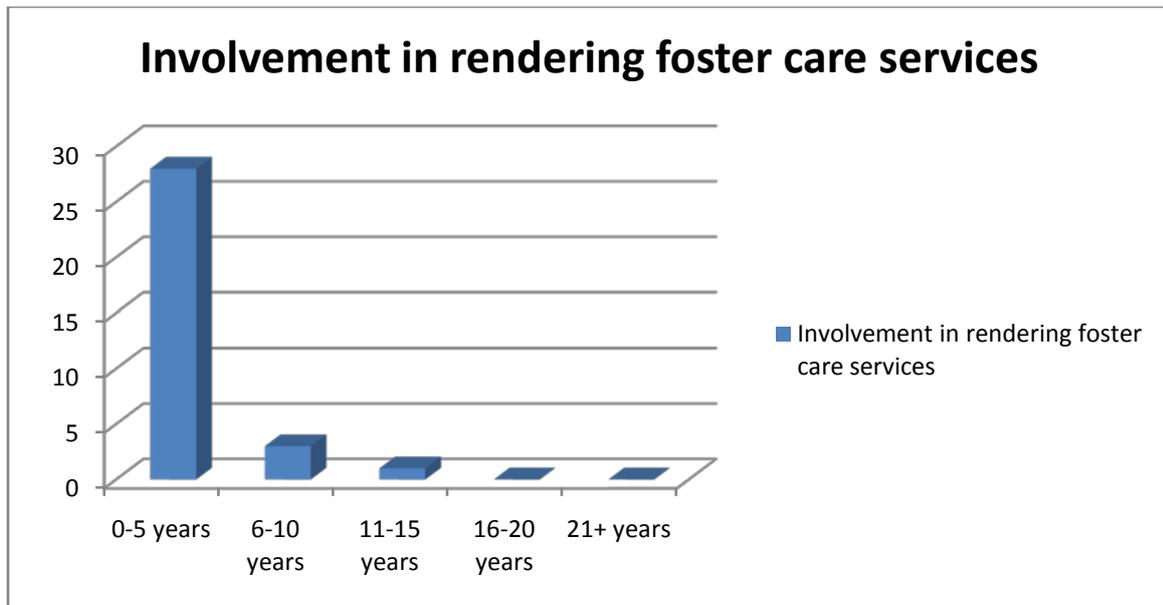


Figure 3.4: Number of years involved in rendering foster care services

The findings indicate that most of the social workers have been rendering foster care services for not more than five years. This means that the majority of social workers started rendering foster care services during their first year of employment.

3.9.1.5 Size of foster care caseload

The findings presented in the following pie chart indicate that most of the participants have a caseload of more than 60. High caseloads might pose a challenge in integration of social and economic development. Lombard and Klein (2006:224) speak out on the unacceptable high caseloads of social workers which highlight the shortage of social workers in the Department of Social Development.

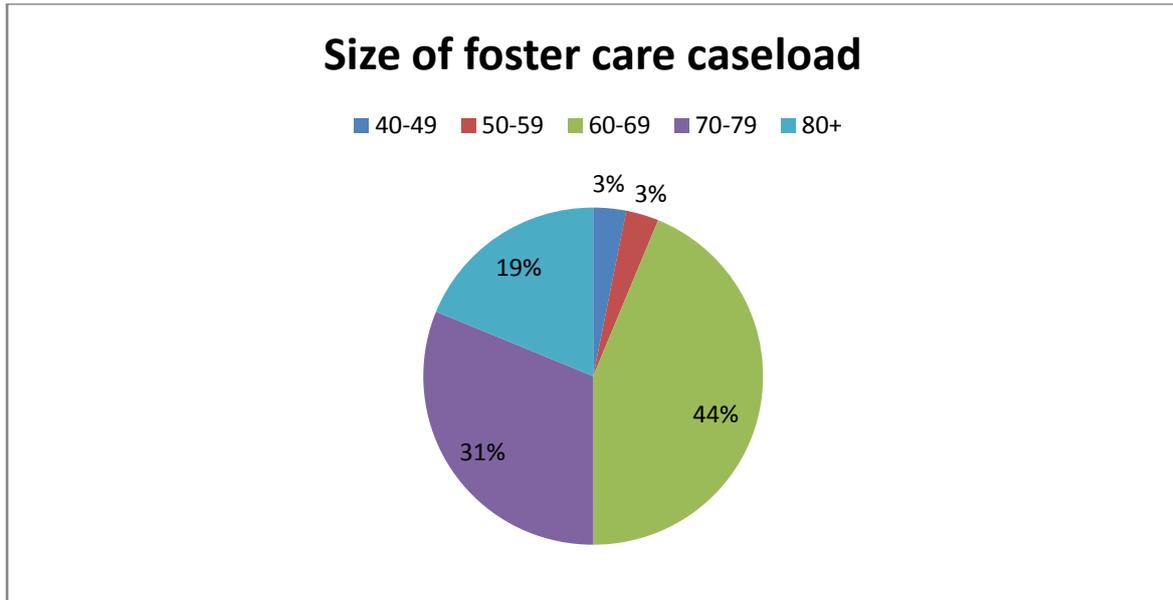


Figure 3.5: Size of foster care caseload

Of the 32 participants; two (6%) had a caseload respectively between 40 and 49 and between 50 and 59; 14 (44%) between 60 and 69; 10 (31%) had a caseload between 70 and 79 and six (19%) had a caseload of above 80.

3.10 Key themes

In this section, the key-themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data are presented. The findings are supported by the direct answers of the participants. The integration of literature follows in a discussion of the findings.

The following Table 3.1 displays a summary of the identified themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

Table 3.1: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Theme 1: Interrelatedness of foster child grant and socio-economic development	1.1 Creating dependency 1.2 Political interference 1.3 Mandatory for foster care parents to save foster child grant 1.4 Education and training 1.5 Integrated services
Theme 2: Foster care services and poverty reduction	2.1 Meeting basic needs 2.2 Poverty alleviation
Theme 3: Best practices of linking foster care services with socio-economic development	3.1 Establishment of more development centres 3.2 Developing a database for service providers and users 3.3 Proper supervision of social workers
Theme 4: Challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes	4.1 Centralisation of sections in the department 4.2 Foster child grant and foster care placement 4.3 Statistics on the number of beneficiaries reached through different programmes
Theme 5: Addressing challenges to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes	5.1 Decentralisation of sections within the department 5.2 Developing policy or legislation to ensure the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development 5.3 Focusing on the impact of social work services rather than focusing on quantity 5.4 Increasing the availability of development centres 5.5 Provision of enough resources 5.6 Focusing on foster care family as a whole 5.7 Liberate social workers to practice what they have learned at the university

Theme 1: Interrelatedness of foster child grant and socio-economic development

The participants' responses on the interrelatedness of foster child grant and socio-economic development were contradicting. The majority of participants indicated that there is interrelatedness between the foster child grant and socio-economic development as it contributes to the child's education, care and protection.

A few participants who did not see the foster child grant as interrelated with socio-economic development were of the view that it creates dependency and is not sustainable. As a result, service users return to the poverty trap when the foster child grant lapses. Participants indicated that foster care parents also no longer want to foster children when their orders lapses.

One of the participants indicated that even if the foster child grant has benefits, such as family preservation, it does not facilitate community upliftment, skills development or job creation.

Participants' views on the interrelatedness of the foster child grant and socio-economic development are reflected in the following responses:

- *“Interrelatedness of foster child grant and socio-economic development is present. A child who receives foster child grant, mostly the mindset is to say that they are coming from disadvantaged families since they are in need of care and protection. Someone within a rational family [well functioning family] takes the child and for that child to be cared for there is something needed to be given to look after the child, but it stops there and does not continue to other means of support. But it develops the child from zero to eighteen years; [it is] better now with the new court ruling that the foster child grant be extended even if the child goes to the university. This is developmental since the child will contribute to the development of the country once he [she] is educated.”*
- *“Foster child grant and socio-economic development are interrelated because even though foster care services creates dependency, but the intention is to assist foster care families if they save money to pay for the child's university*

registration. In that way the service users can be able to grow and develop themselves.”

- *“There is interrelatedness between foster child grant and socio-economic development, however it only depends on the statutory social worker if he [she] is doing everything that is required of him [her]. For example, it is up to the social worker to ensure that foster children are linked to socio-economic programmes more especially when they exit the foster care system.”*
- *“If we say foster child grant is not developmental, do children not go to school or even go to universities. If this is not happening, we can say it is not developmental, but if it is happening, therefore it is developmental.”*

The responses of the participants who were of the view that there is no interrelatedness of the foster child grant and socio-economic development, are as follows:

- *“There is no interrelatedness between foster child grant and socio-economic development. The government from 1994 should have looked at the impact or effect of foster care. I think foster care has more of the negative impact or effect than on the positive. In fact on paper it says we [Department of Social Development] are developmental but in reality we are more to welfare. You cannot talk about socio-economic development when you look at foster child grant. If you keep on giving people they will not protect it unless they have worked for it.”*
- *“There is no developmental focus in foster child grant. The government is ensuring that children are kept in families but personally I think, they don't go beyond that. There is no community upliftment, skills development and job creation.”*
- *“People want things for mahhala [free]. They think that they are entitled to social grants and food parcels whether they meet the requirements or not.”*
- *“There is no interrelatedness since foster child grant is residual and it is not sustainable, while developmental social work is about skills development.”*
- *“Foster child grant is not having a developmental approach, but is investing on the child's education. It is for the child who is intelligent that can go to universities.”*

The following sub-themes on the interrelatedness of foster child grant and socio-economic development emerged:

Sub-theme 1.1: Creating dependency

Some participants were concerned that the foster child grant rather contributes to dependency than empowering service users to be independent in order to ensure that they achieve sustainable livelihoods without relying on the state. Some of the participants' views in this regard are as follows:

- *“There is no relation between foster child grant and poverty reduction, instead of being developmental, it creates dependency. If you can look at our foster care caseload, foster parents depend on the grant. If the foster child turns eighteen or 21 years there is no more income for the family.”*
- *“The problem is that foster child grant is a periodical benefit as they only receive it until eighteen years. This is very difficult to sustain it. It creates poverty and because we don't develop these kids when they are in foster care, when the grant is stopped for some reasons, the family have nowhere to rely on and they go back to poverty.”*

The majority of the participants were of the opinion that the government of South Africa is contributing towards creating dependency for the service users, beyond having socio-economic benefits. The view of the participants on the role of government in promoting dependency is aptly captured in the response of one participant:

- *“The president of the country Honourable Jacob Zuma is also contributing to dependency. He recently visited our area (Mabopane) and neglected us as social workers. He gave this family R1000 because they were complaining that they don't have food. He only brought the problems to us. They just give as long as you vote for ANC. There is a challenge that as social workers we are trained on the developmental approach, but our government is brainwashing our people into the dependency route. It is encouraged from the early childhood development, for example children are singing a song which says, *dintlul, Mandela monnawasichaba, dijo, dintludimahhala everything kemahhala* [Houses, Mandela father of the nation, food and houses are for*

free everything is for free]. As social workers we try to encourage them to do things on their own. The relationship between me and one of my clients [foster care mother] turned sour after I have advised her to start something like a food gardening. The perspective of our community is that everything is mahhala [free]. The government who is supposed to encourage the developmental approach is also contributing to dependency.”

The strong views of the participants on the foster child grant support that the foster child grant is not empowering service users but rather creates dependency, beyond having socio-economic benefits.

Sub-theme 1.2: Political interference

Participants were of the view that government promises people free services and social grants when they are campaigning for political votes. As a result, people feel entitled to receive government services, irrespective of whether they meet the requirements or not. Some of the participants are of the view that they are not consulted when legislations and policies are formulated as they are the ones who deal with people at the grassroots.

The findings on the political interference indicated that service users have a sense of entitlement on government services, irrespective of the criteria to be followed. Some of the participants were of the opinion that the government is using a top-down approach and they are not consulted on all government decisions. The following quotes capture the essence of participants' views on the political interference in the execution of their duties:

- *“The government has created a mentality that people automatically qualify for foster care. Other service users are forcing for foster care application if the child`s father`s whereabouts are unknown.”*
- *“My problem is that in South Africa we are giving a lot, for example a person has an RDP house, the child is attending school for mahhala [free], the other child is getting foster child grant, the grandmother is receiving an old-age grant. It would work if there are conditions and people will want to get skills.”*
- *“The main problem is that the government do not consult with the social workers on how to ensure a developmental social work instead they engage*

with the service users who are sometimes manipulative. They find that social workers have a lot of contributions to make. There is one incidence whereby the Minister of Social Development embarrassed a social worker in front of the service users at XXXXXX [anonymous for protection]. Social workers are the ones who know what is happening on the ground.

- *“Social workers are not consulted, for example, there are government printed vehicles advertising that government will provide them with food, reaching 1.5 million beneficiaries. One community member told me that this car can cause trouble for me.”*

The above responses capture the essence of the participants’ experiences on political interference that hinders the rendering of foster care services. The findings indicate that political interference is a big challenge as politicians would promise the community free services without looking at legislation to guide them. These legislations are also formulated by the very same politicians while social workers on the ground feel that they are not consulted.

Sub-theme 1.3: Mandatory for foster care parents to save the foster child grant

The participants were of the view that foster care parents are not utilising the foster child grant for the benefit of the foster child. Most of the participants indicated that the foster child grant does not benefit a foster child as there is no legislation that compels foster care parents to save a portion of the foster child grant or legislation that enforces the linking of foster child grant with socio-economic programmes. The views of the participants are reflected in the following verbatim statements:

- *“The person who is receiving foster child grant does not use it for the benefit of the child, for example, you will find that a child is eighteen years but does not have money on the bank. That’s what is happening mostly and many of my colleagues can be my witness. Many of these children end up on the streets abusing drugs.”*
- *“Foster care is motivated by the love of money. It is difficult to force foster care parents to save money since there is no legislation that forces them to save money for the foster children. It is all about benefiting themselves from foster care. The Minister of Social Development will also announce from media that people should apply for foster care grants.”*

- *We need a structure to enforce the linking of foster care with socio-economic development. We don't have remedies or power to enforce foster parents to save money for foster children. Saving money should be mandatory.*

Responses from participants emphasise the importance of formulating a policy that will give a mandate to foster care parents to save money for foster children for future purposes.

Sub-theme 1.4: Education and training

Findings above demonstrate that the foster child grant contributes positively to the foster child's education, however there are concerns that the standard of education is declining and there are no proper support structures for foster children in the educational system. Participants indicated that the majority of foster children who are seventeen or eighteen years of age are still in lower classes or levels and this worries them [social workers] a lot. The participants expressed their concerns through the following statements:

- *"We [social workers] help them with school, but the standard of education is declining. We have foster children who are 17 and 18 years that are doing Grade 6 and 7 in our caseload. We also have foster children who have behavioural problems and social workers are not informed until the problem is worse. It is difficult for social workers to intervene."*
- *"There is lack of proper evaluation from the psychologist, because you cannot wait for the child to be in Grade 12 to realise that he is not doing well. You should be aware of that earlier. Just imagine a child who is 17 years old and still doing Grade 10 - you start to get worried as a social worker."*

Most of the participants were of the view that the Department of Social Development is not facilitating a link between foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. The Department has trained a number of social auxiliary workers and they were not absorbed in the workplace. Most foster children do not further their studies at a tertiary institution or Further Education and Training College due to lack of support from the Department. The views of the participants on the role of the Department in linking foster care services with socio-economic programmes are reflected in the following quotes:

- *“The link between foster care services with socio-economic development programmes is there but it is not working. For example, we have social auxiliary workers who were trained by the Department on a learnership programme and they are still at home. That happened three years ago.”*
- *“There is definitely a big need to link foster care services with socio-economic programmes, but it is not happening within the Department of Social Development. We identify foster children who have learning challenges while they are young, but we don’t have relevant places to refer them to. For example we take them to Vista which is now the University of Pretoria [Mamelodi] for counselling and then what? At the end of the year you have to give a child’s report and you will say they are improving, while you see that there is no improvement.”*
- *“Our very huge problem is that even if the child is doing well, we don’t have relevant places where we can refer them to. For example, our department is only focusing on social work bursaries and this seems to be selfish. We need to work with other departments and see different types of bursaries they have. The children have different interests, not only social work. You cannot, for example, do medicine with the Department of Social Development.”*

The participants suggested that foster children should be the Department’s first priority when it comes to offering bursaries. Foster children should also not be limited to social work bursaries, but should also be linked with other bursaries from the Department or other government departments. This is reflected in the following views of the participants:

- *“Prioritise children who are/were in foster care. I have a child who did well in Grade 12 and wanted to do teaching while the Minister of Social Development had offered him social work bursary. In that realm, we can refer that child to the university. For example, we can write a letter to the Head of Department, Prof Antoinette Lombard, because universities assist those children who are in need. We need to let the children do what they want.”*
- *“The Department only focus much on social work and for me that is creating dependency because we are still training people to help others. Bursaries are only offered for social work.”*

- *“Bursaries are only offered in social work. We need to include different fields or work with other departments. We need to extend our bursaries, e.g. our support service like Human Resource also has bursaries.”*
- *“Parents play an important role on the foster care services, e.g. NFSAS is not guaranteed to foster children and the foster care parent should always be prepared to pay the fees for the foster child.”*
- *“As social workers we need to ensure that we encourage foster children to apply for the bursaries. In fact we need to look at the family as a whole and ensure that they receive services that can promote their social development.”*
- *“Our department should ensure that our foster children get bursaries through a database and ensure that those who matriculate get those bursaries because they will be sustainable. The institutions are doing that.”*

Some of the participants were of the view that the government is already offering bursaries for disadvantaged children and it is up to them as to whether they are willing to use that opportunity. This is reflected in the following response:

- *“Government is already providing bursaries for all the universities. It depends on the foster children if they get better results. I always tell my foster children that as orphans they can also go to a university if they are determined to improve their lives. Children from poor families they usually get best results at the university since they know their background or upbringing.”*

The views of the participants support the findings that the foster child grant plays a big role to ensure that a foster child gets education, however it is also indicated that there seems to be no support from foster care parents to ensure that the foster child gets a better education. It was suggested that foster children should be linked with tertiary institutions through the Department of Social Development bursaries or different Departments.

Sub-theme 1.5: Integrated services

Findings indicate that the link between foster care services and socio-economic development programmes is possible if the Department of Social Development ensures that their services are integrated with other government departments. They further suggest that the integration of services should first start within the Department's different sections. The participants' views on the integration of services are reflected in the following responses:

- *“Let start with our Department before we go and integrate our services with other departments.”*
- *“There should be interlink among the Department of Social Development's sections, e.g. sustainable livelihoods section is not linked to statutory work.”*
- *“Integration of government department's programmes in alleviation of poverty, for example, Department of Trade and Industry and Department of Education. The Department of Education with the banks is encouraging parents to save money and they have partnered with banks and there is a percentage for each R100 saved. Social workers and foster care parents are not aware of that and they are the people who should be involved.”*
- *The Department of Social Development does not have the right connection with other departments. Before engaging them with the different programmes, they should know where to send them after they have completed.”*
- *“Link foster care parents with the Department of Trade and Industry to start a cooperative. Remember if you can develop one member of the family, you will be developing the whole family.”*
- *“Ensure that children who are extremely in dire need receive services, e.g. tenders, a job in army or anywhere.”*
- *“Foster care services can be linked with socio-economic programmes, for example, you will find that a family of seven depends on the foster child grant of one child and if we can look at the family as a whole and link them to other departments such as the Department of Agriculture, this family can start a garden that can promote sustainable livelihood. The family cannot only depend on the grant but will be developmental.”*

- *“The universities and the Department of Social Development are not working together. What we have learned at the university is not what we are doing at work.”*

The responses strongly indicate the view that integration of services among different government departments is important and that this should first start within the different sections of the Department of Social Development.

Theme 2: Foster care services and poverty reduction

Findings demonstrate that foster care services play a major role in meeting the basic needs and providing a source of income to service users, more especially child-headed households and disadvantaged families. It also emerged from findings that foster care services only alleviate poverty on a short-term basis rather than long-term. Some of the participants indicated that most of the service users who have completed Grade 12 find themselves without any source of income as the court order should have lapsed. One of the participants pointed out that unemployed foster care parents often use the money saved for the foster child’s education to buy clothes in December. The responses of the participants with regard to what extent do the foster care services that they render relate to poverty reduction focused on the following sub-themes: meeting basic needs and poverty alleviation, which will be next discussed.

Sub-theme 2.1: Meeting basic needs

Some participants were of the view that foster care services play a major role to meet the basic needs of the service users, namely food, health care, income and education, more especially those who are from disadvantaged families. It also emerged that foster care services assist in the foster child’s physical growth, which includes growth in height and weight and other body changes.

Two participants concurred as follows:

- *“Foster care services include that the child’s needs are met, e.g. school, hospital, free government services and the provision of the social grants.”*

When the child without a parent has been given the above, in a way you are reducing poverty.”

- *“Foster care services contribute to the child’s growth and therefore the child will be motivated because he will get school shoes and the other basic needs. Foster care service users can buy maize and vegetables in order to survive. In fact with vegetables they can live a healthy life than someone who always eats meat.”*

The findings indicate that foster care services play a major role in assisting service users to meet their basic needs, which includes food, health care, income and education.

Sub-theme 2.2: Poverty alleviation

Findings indicate that foster care services are playing a major role in poverty alleviation. Furthermore, foster care families are provided with a source of income. The views of participants on how foster care services contribute to poverty alleviation are reflected in the following statements:

- *“At the moment we should look at those families that are in need and foster care does alleviate poverty to the poor. As a short term it alleviates poverty but in the long term it does not alleviate poverty. More especially when the child is out of the foster care system. Whether she completes Grade 12 or drop out of school.”*
- *“Foster care families are not equal in terms of their financial status. So foster care provides a source of income for these parents who do not have source of income. Later we can then link them with the socio-economic development programmes.”*
- *“There are circumstances where poverty is reduced, e.g. child-headed households.”*
- *“There is a connection between foster care services and poverty alleviation since at the beginning the foster child grant was intended to reduce poverty. Our foster care parents should therefore be taught about foster care and how to raise foster children. This brings us to the questions that if there was no foster child grant, will the foster parent look after the foster child?”*

- *“Foster care reduces poverty, as a full time student I learned about three types of poverty, e.g. chronic, absolute and relative poverty. Foster child grant might not reduce absolute poverty, but can reduce relative poverty.”*

One of the participants said that foster care services should contribute to poverty reduction rather than poverty alleviation. The response of the participant is reflected in the following words:

- *“Poverty reduction and alleviation is not the same. In fact we are doing alleviation instead of reducing poverty. It is like putting a bandage on a gaping wound in other words you only cover the wound. Like the issue of them going to school after Grade 12, we advise foster parents to save for foster children, but in December they are forced to buy clothes for the children with the money that was saved, even for school trips. You cannot expect the family that depends only on the foster child grant to save for the children because that is the only income that they get.”*

The findings reflect that foster care services help to alleviate poverty as service users, including child-headed households and needy families, are provided with sources of income.

Theme 3: Best practices of linking foster care services with socio-economic development

Most of the participants indicated that there is no best practice of linking foster care services with socio-economic development that they know of in the Department of Social Development. However, the participants suggested the following themes as best practices of linking foster care services with socio-economic development: the establishment of more development centres; developing a database for service providers and users; and proper supervision of statutory social workers.

Sub-theme 3.1: Establishment of more development centres

Most of the participants were of the view that there are shortages of development centres that can be used to refer foster care parents and children to develop themselves in order to promote sustainable livelihoods. Participants suggested that the establishment of more development centres in various service points can serve as best practice of linking foster care services with socio-economic development. The participants' views are reflected in the following responses:

- *“There are no development centres to help them (foster care family) find jobs. There are many foster parents who are unemployed. In Mamelodi you can refer to Stanza Bopape but we are not sure if they go there.”*
- *“It is possible that we can link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. But I think in terms of socio-economic development programmes we have few development centres, at least five centres be established in Winterveldt. For example, in Winterveldt we have a lot of people.”*
- *“We do not have enough service providers to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.”*

A number of participants stated that most of the service users are not willing to develop themselves and their families as they are used to depending on the Department or government and not empowered to do things on their own. The participants' responses are captured as follows:

- *“Service users, when you refer them for socio-economic development programmes, they do not go there and this makes me wonder if they don't have money or they like to depend on the state.”*
- *“Dependency is a challenge in terms of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, because we refer service users to the development centres but they do not go there.”*

The findings confirm that there are few economic development centres in various service points and therefore the establishment of more of these economic development centres can help to link foster care services with socio-economic

development. It is also indicated that service users seems to be unprepared to utilise the available economic development centres as a result of dependency.

Sub-theme 3.2: Developing a database for service providers and users

The findings point out that developing a database of all the service providers and users can serve as best practice of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. The participants indicated that this will make it easier for them to link foster care services with socio-economic development. The following responses capture the essence of the participants' views:

- *“If we can have a database of all the development centres around our area. I heard that canalisation section have a list of all the service providers for all the service points.”*
- *“There is no list of development centres in Mabopane/Winterveldt and we cannot send this people to Soshanguve since they are poor and do not have money to go there.”*
- *“Not in foster care. In other Departments, they have a central database of all the service providers e.g. for HIV or skills development centres.”*
- *“We also need to have a list where all the services of the different sections of the Department are listed. We have not observed that in our Department.”*
- *“There is no proper identification of foster children to link them with appropriate development programmes.”*

The findings indicate that the establishment of a database of all the service providers and users can help to link foster care services with socio-economic development.

Sub-theme 3.3: Proper supervision of social workers

The participants were of the view that they do not receive proper supervision or support from their supervisors. It also emerged that participants are not protected by their managers and they are not liberated to perform their duties as they have learned at university. The views of the participants are captured in the following responses:

- *“Social work supervisors also have no information. When you have a service user in your office and go to the supervisor for assistance, you will find that she also does not know.”*
- *“Our managers do not protect social workers. For example you place a child in foster care because the biological mother is deceased and the whereabouts of the biological father is unknown. When the biological father appears and willing to take care of the child. The manager will say continue with foster care because they are afraid of the public protector.”*
- *“Our managers forces us to finalise the children`s court inquiry as long as it is opened.”*
- *“If the Department allow us to be social workers we will be more developmental.”*
- *“Our services should assist in developing this country. How can we do that if our managers or government do not support us.”*

In addition to lack of support or supervision from their respective supervisors, participants also reported their social work managers to be using a top-down approach and this hinders social workers in expressing themselves.

Theme 4: Challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes

A significant number of participants stated that they face a lot of challenges to ensure that they link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Findings indicated that centralisation of sections in the Department makes it difficult to link foster care services with socio-economic development. Most of the sections of the Department, such as canalisation, probation, community planning and development and sustainable livelihoods, are based in the Pretoria regional office, rather than on the service points where the community is. Participants were of the view that there is also no integration of services among these different sections of the Department.

Some of the participants indicated that prospective foster care parents are more interested in the application of the foster child grant than foster care placement.

Findings show that foster care parents lose interest in the foster child when the grant is suspended or it lapses. One of the participants indicated that statutory social workers should ensure that prospective foster care parents are thoroughly screened before foster care placement take place.

Most of the participants pointed out that the Department of Social Development is more interested in the number of service users reached than on the impact of the services rendered. As a result, statutory social workers do not conduct thorough investigations on foster care cases as their performance is determined by the number of cases finalised. Three sub-themes emerged from the findings, which will be discussed next:

Sub-theme 4.1: Centralisation of sections in the Department

Most of the participants indicated that as long as the different sections of the Department are centralised in Pretoria, it will remain a challenge for them to link foster care services with socio-economic development. According to the participants, the core sections that facilitate development for service users are based at the Pretoria regional office instead of being in the community. Participants were also of the view that there is no working relationship within the different sections of the Department. Statutory social workers are not aware of what is done in the Sustainable Livelihood Section even though they are employed in the same Department.

The comments made by the participants in this regard indicated their doubtfulness about the possibility of linking foster care services with socio-economic development in the Department of Social Development if this challenge is not addressed:

- *“There is a structure and systems in place. Policies and structures are there, but the failure is with certain individuals. We have probation, community planning and development and sustainable livelihoods sections, but this is centralised in Pretoria. There is no link between foster care services and our very same sustainable livelihood.”*
- *“We work in entities and there is poor management. For example, when you are in statutory section you don’t know what is happening at sustainable livelihoods section. There is no link.”*

- *“The dilemma that is faced by statutory social workers is also faced by other sections.”*

The findings suggest that the Department integrate its services amongst its different sections and then decentralise these sections to various service points.

Sub-theme 4.2: Foster child grant and foster care placement

The experiences of most of the participants is that foster care parents visit their offices with a view of applying for the foster child grant first and then apply for foster care placement. Findings show that this becomes a challenge as most of the foster care parents abandon foster children when the grant lapses. This loses focus on the goal of foster care, which is the care and protection of children. The views of the participants in this regard are reflected in the following quotations:

- *“Service users only come to apply for foster child grant, rather than foster care placement. They don’t care about child protection. They don’t care to save money for the child. It is no longer about caring for the child, for example, they get angry if the foster child grant is suspended. What were the children eating before the approval of foster care?”*
- *“Within the foster care family they don’t want to look after the child once the foster care is suspended. It seems they are after money than looking after the child. When the child is closer to Grade 12 you will find that the child is not doing well. The foster parents do not take measures when the child is not doing well at school, they only focus on their children. They don’t even attend school meetings. As long as the money is still coming in, the child will have problems when the grant has stopped and will be on his own.”*
- *“But for unrelated foster care placement it becomes worse. What can also be worse is that when the foster care parent dies, you can see that the new foster parent is interested in money, because if the child is a slow learner, she won’t be interested in looking after the child. When the child has reached eighteen years they are also no longer interested in looking after them and foster care then becomes no longer developmental.”*
- *“When the child turns eighteen foster parents would like to get rid of them and complain and when the child is in the adolescent stage they don’t complain about their children, but with foster children they will complain. It seems like*

foster children are from their own island. They treat their children and foster children differently. Why does her [foster care parent] child is her problem but the foster child belongs to the social worker?"

- *"You will also find people who are financially stable applying for foster child grant and you ask yourself if they really want to look after the child or they are motivated by money. For example, one of the applicants applied for foster care even though the child benefited from his deceased father who was employed as a soldier from the government."*

One participant felt that statutory social workers also have a role to ensure that prospective foster care parents are taught about foster care during pre-screening. A participant's answer is captured in the following verbatim statement:

- *"We [Statutory social workers] should move away from focusing on foster child grant and focus on the placement, more especially if the family is financially stable. We should also recommend for adoption even though clients do not want it."*

The abandonment of foster care children when the foster child grants lapses, serves as proof that foster care parents are only interested in the foster child grant rather than foster care placement. Social workers are also urged to thoroughly prepare foster care parents for foster care placements.

Sub-theme4.3: Statistics on the number of beneficiaries reached through different programmes

The majority of the participants were of the view that the Department of Social Development is more interested in the quantity rather than quality in rendering foster care services. As a result this makes it difficult to spend so much time on one case as this will seem like the social worker is not performing his/her duties, as outlined in the standard operational plan. The following quotations highlight this overwhelming challenge faced by the participants:

- *"Our focus is on the quantity and not quality. We are pushing numbers and do not evaluate the impact of our services. All the numbers are not the true reflection of what we are doing in the field. We are de-servicing the people."*

- *“Our Department is focusing on the quantity. The number of service users reached, rather than the impact on the service rendered.”*
- *“There is nothing that we do which is developmental. They will tell you that you cannot report the same beneficiary within the same quarter. So how am I going to check the progress? They are putting us under pressure to an extent that we don’t even care if we render quality service as we are working only with quantity.”*
- *“Our Department is expecting numbers; they do not care on the impact. We only evaluate the events that we had. And in those events, they only focus on catering, venue and other logistics. They don’t care about the impact.”*
- *“We don’t do a quality or thorough investigation because of the pressure for three months turnaround. They say we should compile twenty reports per month, they don’t care if there is quality.”*

The number of beneficiaries reached through different programmes regarded as more important by the Department than the impact of the service rendered.

Theme 5: Addressing challenges to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes

The participants proposed a number of solutions to address the challenges to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. These challenges are incorporated in the following sub-themes:

Sub-theme 5.1: Decentralisation of sections within the Department

Most of the participants indicated that decentralisation of all the sections of the Department to various service points can help to ensure the integration of foster care services and socio-economic development. The participants proposed that each service point should consist of statutory services, canalisation, probation services, sustainable livelihoods, partnership and finance and human resource sections. The proposals raised by the participants are reflected in the following verbatim statements:

- *“The other sections are centralised in Pretoria and statutory services are decentralised to different service points. Each service point should have a statutory social work section, sustainable livelihoods, community planning and development, probation and finance and partnership, all in one place.”*
- *I think it should be mandatory to link foster care parents with socio-economic programmes via sustainable livelihoods section. For example, here in Temba [Hammanskraal] there is no-one from the sustainable livelihoods section and we don't know of any socio-economic programmes that they offer.”*
- *“Within our Department, different sections such as sustainable livelihoods should be available to link foster care parents and children with socio-economic programmes. This should start with us in the Department to work together and communicate with them.”*
- *“What is the reason, for example, of having a canalisation officer, community planning and development and information technology specialist in the regional office (Pretoria) than placing them at various service points?”*
- *“We are not aware of the different sections in the Department. I have a problem with different sections. They are stationed in Pretoria where everything is developed, while here in Mabopane/Winterveldt we have poor people who need those services. Those sections also do not visit us to tell us about their services. At least all the sections of the Department should be decentralised. One service point should have all the sections in one place. It is possible that we can link foster care services with socio-economic programmes if we can address the challenges that we have.”*

Centralising all their services to various service points in order to link foster care services to socio-economic development programmes implies that each service point should have statutory services, canalisation, probation services, sustainable livelihoods, partnership and finance and human resources section.

Sub-theme 5.2: Developing legislation or policy to ensure the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development

Some of the participants suggested that the Department of Social Development should establish legislation or policy that will make it mandatory for the foster care

parents to save a certain amount of foster child grant. The participants' suggestions are as follows:

- *“If foster care parents keep on saving money for foster children, I would say foster care is developmental. It should be mandatory to save money for foster children.”*
- *“At Mabopane office, we always advise foster care parents to save money for the foster children, but there is no document or policy that talks to that. They query it.”*

Most of the participants indicated the benefits of saving the foster child grant and is reflected on the following responses:

- *“Saving a foster child grant can also help when the child wants money for registration at a university before he [she] gets a bursary or loan. I had a child who completed Grade 12 and could not go to a university because he had no money for registration.”*
- *“I have a child who has R40 000 in the Bank that was saved by the foster care parent since she was a child. Just imagine how much money will the child have when he exit the foster care system or goes to a high school. Our social work supervisor told us that they had a meeting with SASSA and they advised that this is unlawful.”*

The proposal that there should be a policy or legislation in place that can make it mandatory for foster care parents to save a certain amount of foster child grant for future purposes, include an educational plan.

Sub-theme 5.3: Focusing on the impact of social work services rather than focusing on quantity

A number of participants suggested that the Department should put more focus on the impact of social work services instead of focusing on the number of beneficiaries reached. The following quote captures the essence of the participant's views:

- *“Move away from quantifying our services and do a quality job. The Department is focusing on the numbers and not the impact. When it comes to that I feel very irritated.”*

The responses of the participants concur with the suggestion that the Department should shift focus from quantifying foster care services and put more focus or emphasis on the impact or quality of foster care services rendered.

Sub-theme 5.4: Increasing the availability of development centres

Most participants suggested that the Department should increase the availability of development centres to ensure that foster care family is provided with skills that can promote sustainable livelihoods. They further emphasised the importance of investing in foster care parents' and children's human development, by engaging them in skills development programmes. The participants' suggestions are reflected in the following verbatim words:

- *“In order to ensure the interrelatedness between foster care services with socio-economic development, we need to offer foster care parents and children skills development so that they can be able to sustain themselves. We leave foster children unskilled and with no source of income.”*
- *“In most of time we only link foster care services with the Social Relief of Distress clients. In our case we don't link them with any socio-economic development programmes, e.g. in Bronkhorstspuit there are no development centres that I know of. Even if you go to a development centre, there is no guarantee that you will get a job afterwards and contribute to the development of the country.”*
- *“Social workers do not know about the available socio-economic programmes in the community and most of them are funded by the Department. The Department should make social workers aware of the centres for socio-economic development.”*
- *“In Mpumalanga province they have service centres, for example, for grannies and people with disabilities. People are trained in dressmaking and beadwork. Even Mamelodi SOS is also doing the same.”*

The findings emphasise the importance of ensuring that social workers are made aware of the development centres to promote integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

Sub-theme 5.5: Provision of enough resources

Most participants were of the view that if they can be provided with enough resources, the integration of foster care services and socio-economic development can be achieved. The participants proposed that all the social workers should be provided with an office, furniture, telephone line and a car to render effective services. Participants' suggestions are quoted as follows:

- *“When you (Department of Social Development) hire a social worker you need to provide an office, a car and other resources. For example, you will find four social workers driving in one car for home visits and this makes them to have little time to interview the families.”*
- *“There was a time whereby eight social workers in 2010 were sharing one computer and they were expected to type ten reports per month.”*
- *“Subsidised vehicles are very important because the process for booking a government vehicle is very long more especially during emergency situations.”*

Findings indicate that sufficient resources remain a big challenge at the Department and hinder the rendering of foster care services.

Sub-theme 5.6: Focusing on foster care family as a whole

Participants stated that in order to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, statutory social workers should shift their focus from only on the foster child, to the family as a whole. The participants' suggestions are reflected in the following verbatim quotes:

- *“We need to focus on the children and foster parents and creating programmes for both of them.”*
- *“We can link foster care parents to development centres or form cooperatives. We need to also involve children who were not in foster care.”*
- *“My question is who do we develop, foster parents or foster children? All should be developed, but a caseload is too big.”*
- *“Also us as social workers we are discouraged. We don't regard the family as a whole we just focus on extending the order. I am not sure if it is lack of passion or we are discouraged.”*

Findings indicate that social workers should shift their focus from only being on the foster children to looking at a foster care family as a whole, including the foster care parents' children.

Sub-theme 5.7: Liberate social workers to practice what they have learned at the university

Most participants indicated that social workers should be liberated to apply the skills and knowledge that they have acquired from their universities. The participants emphasised that they are also not getting enough support from their respective social work supervisors, with their different suggestions reflected in the following feedback:

- *“Do not politicise [of] our services. What our seniors say is final and if you don't do that you can be disciplined. Our managers should allow us to be social workers and don't force us to do wrong things.”*
- *“The Department had set boundaries for us as social workers and they should allow us be social workers and develop our community”.*
- *“Statutory social work can be done by anyone because we are not given an opportunity to practise as social workers are supposed to.”*
- *“We should practise what we have learned at school, even though we are limited at work.”*
- *“There is no thorough supervision since social work supervisors are overworked. The ration is one social work supervisor to seven social workers.”*
- *“In the Department, we are not doing what we have been taught at the university.”*
- *“The work that we are doing can be done by anyone. What we are doing is only administration.”*
- *“We need to sit down and look at the foster care services and know what is expected of us.”*

Findings indicate the ongoing challenges that social workers face to integrate foster care services with socio-economic programmes, despite some suggested proposals to achieve this.

3.11 Discussion of findings and integration of literature

In this section the findings are discussed and integrated with relevant literature and the theoretical framework.

The findings indicate different opinions of participants on the view that there is interrelatedness between the foster child grant and socio-economic development. According to the participants, it depends on the social worker if he/she is willing to link foster care children with socio-economic programmes. The participants highlighted that on paper it clearly states that social workers need to be developmental, but practically the Department of Social Development is focusing more on welfare. This view is argued by Lombard (2003:156) who states that although the social grant system protects vulnerable individuals and families, its long-term sustainability needs to be questioned. She further warned: "Social grants cannot be a permanent option for unemployed families, neither from an economic burden viewpoint, nor from the perspective of the beneficiaries' self-esteem." Lombard (2008:26) further postulates that government continues to promote development, while only focusing on welfare, and as a result this has a major impact on the role of social work in service delivery. On the other hand, "the government has adopted a developmental approach to social service delivery, to promote the goals of sustainable development in order to redress past imbalances that, it says, implies integrating social interventions with economic development," (Lombard, 2008:26). The participants stated that foster care is residual and it is not sustainable. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach has been seen as a means of improving the livelihood outcomes of disadvantaged communities through increasing income, reducing vulnerability, strengthening of social networks, improving the use of resources and opportunities and promoting a more sustainable environment (Patel, 2005:161).

Some participants had strong views that foster care services seem to create dependency by the foster care family as the government promises people free services and social grants. This is confirmed by Engelbrecht (2008:169) who states that at a point where service users access social work services there is already an established culture of dependence. Government indicated in 2006 that the social assistance system was not specifically designed with exit strategies for beneficiaries,

other than a change in their living circumstances and income levels, pointing out that there is a lack of a proactive and deliberate strategy to link social grants beneficiaries to opportunities for economic activity (RSA, 2006). As indicated in the findings, although sections such as sustainable livelihoods, canalisation, probation services, partnership and finance exist in the Department of Social Development, they are not directly linked with the foster care grant on the implementation level.

The findings show that it is possible to link the foster child grant with socio-economic development if it can be mandatory for foster care parents to save a certain amount of the foster child grant, provide education and training to foster care family as a whole, and to render integrated services. Patel (2005:50) states that human development involves a process of achieving human capabilities in a way that is equitable, participatory, productive and sustainable. The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) alerted that a lack of education of the head of the household is closely associated with poverty in the household. Therefore South Africa must invest in people, and that is to develop human capital which is essential for increasing productivity and moving people out of poverty (RSA, 1997). Glavovic and Boonzaier (2007:2) add that livelihoods focus on the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation.

There is also a need for closer working relationships between various stakeholders, government, non-profit organisations, church-based organisations and the private sector to collaborate on linking service users to economic activities (RSA, 2006). Makofane and Gray (2007:202) emphasise that the South African government's development approach to social welfare requires that social workers play a bigger role in poverty eradication by promoting the active involvement of people in their own development and facilitating partnerships between the state and provincial government, the private sector, business and all stakeholders in social development.

The findings on the extent that foster care services relate to poverty reduction only with regard to meeting basic needs and poverty alleviation. According to most participants, foster care services help to meet the basic needs of foster care families because they provide a source of income. The right to an income concurs with the

perspective of the developmental approach to social welfare in South Africa which is firmly grounded on the rights-based approach (Patel, 2005:98). Patel (2005:98) continued that the goal of the developmental approach includes achieving social justice, a minimum standard of living, equitable access and equal opportunities to services and benefits and a commitment to meeting the needs of all South Africans, with a special emphasis on the needs of the most disadvantaged in the society. This is also embedded in Section 27 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa which clearly states that all the citizens have a right to access to health care services, food, water and social security (RSA, 1996). According to Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:427), the foster child grant ensures that a foster child lives in adequate housing and is provided with food, clothing, health care and schooling - these are considered as the basic needs of the foster child but are unlikely to be met from the respective foster care parent's pension money or personal resource alone.

The findings indicate that participants had no examples within the Department of Social Development of best practices in linking foster care services with socio-economic development. A significant number of participants were of the view that the establishment of more development centres, developing a database for service providers and users and proper supervision of statutory social workers can serve as best practices conducive to foster care services with socio-economic development. Investments in employment programmes, skills development, public works, self-employment for the poor and marginalised, micro-enterprises and fostering asset accumulation through subsidised savings schemes are mostly favoured over an excessive focus on the provision of social grants and remedial and maintenance-oriented social services (Patel, 2005:103). Patel (2005:149) further states that programmes such as vegetable gardening, sewing projects, a car wash, an eating-house, bread-baking and fabric printing have supplemented household income for people living on social grants and for those who had no income. Midgley (2010:117) adds that although the vending of cooked food, fruit, newspapers, candies, and soft drinks was popular, agricultural projects such as poultry raising, mushroom cultivation, and vegetable farming as well as production crafts, decorative household items, pottery, carpet and mat weaving had also emerged as supplements for household income for disadvantaged people. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach as a "process tool to enable participants in development programmes to identify key

constraints and opportunities for development interventions” (Allison & Ellis, 2001:380), can assist statutory social workers to address the challenges of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

The findings indicate that challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes range from the centralisation of sections in the Department of Social Development, foster child grant and foster care placement and statistics on the number of beneficiaries reached through different programmes. Most of the participants were of the view that as long as the core sections of the Department such as canalisation, sustainable livelihoods, probation, partnership and finance are centralised in Pretoria, it will remain a challenge to link foster care services with socio-economic development. This decision to centralise the core sections of the Department lies with the policy makers and needs to be reviewed in order to ensure effective integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. According to Green and Nieman (2003:166), “changing the way decisions are made is believed to be at the heart of successful social development programmes”. Some of the participants held the view that prospective foster care parents are motivated by money in applying for foster care placement. Foster child grant is intended to provide financial support to foster care parents who are willing to provide a child with a secure and nurturing home environment (Patel, 2005:132). Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:424) add that the foster child grant was introduced by Government as an intervention designed to address the psychological, social and financial difficulties faced by foster children. Social work focus is therefore on how social security is utilised optimally for the benefit of individuals and families, what are the different types of programmes that are available to the service users and how these people can access these services and benefits (Patel, 2005:148). The other challenge raised by the participants is that the Department of Social Development is more interested in the number of service users reached per month, thus focusing on the statistics rather than on the impact of social work services on the service users. The White Paper for Social Welfare states that developmental social welfare policies and programmes should be based on the principle of quality service (RSA, 1997). This principle (RSA, 1997:10) stated that, “all social welfare programmes will strive for excellence and for the provision of quality services.” One

of the values of the Department of Social Development is to deliver high quality services characterised by care for the people, and excellence in partnership with stakeholders (RSA, 2013b).

Participants proposed different solutions to address the challenges to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. These solutions range from decentralisation of sections in the Department; developing a policy to ensure the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development; focusing on the impact of social work services rather than focusing on quantity; increasing the availability of development centres; the provision of enough resources; and liberating social workers to practice what they have learned at the university. The nineteenth principle on the decentralisation of service delivery (RSA, 1997) states that, “the Government is committed to the devolution of appropriate welfare functions to local government level in order to promote increased access to services, improved co-ordination of services, local empowerment and greater responsiveness to meeting needs.” Midgley (2010:18) concurs that developmental social workers are actively involved in the community and work closely with community groups to secure resources, access networks and establish local projects. They avoid office-based practice and instead are out in the field working with service users and community groups (Midgley, 2010:18). According to Brocklesby and Fisher (2003:187), Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches symbolise a shift in development practice from a needs-based, resource-centred solution to a focus on people and their capacity to sustain positive change.

Most participants suggested that the Department of Social Development should ensure that more development centres are established in the communities. In a study on the multiple perspectives on the child support grant, most participants asserted that if government invested in job creation, recipients’ alleged dependency on grants might as a result decrease (Hölscher, Kasiram & Sathiparsad, 2009:20). In support, Lombard (2005:224) states that the impact of investing in human and social capital cannot be enhanced, except through a more deliberate linking of social programmes with economic development.

In order to foster a link between social and economic development programmes it requires a policy to integrate foster care services and develop a critical practice

which makes it necessary to challenge certain aspects of current social and policy contexts. Gray (2006:S56) asserts that social development requires that the national, provincial and local government, non-government organisations and private sector, and more especially those in the economic sector, work together to link social and economic goals. The findings indicate the importance of integrating all the sections of the Department for the effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. In a study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:7), social workers emphasised the need for all services in the statutory process to be integrated and holistic within a developmental approach and for effective networking to take place between different stakeholders.

A significant number of participants indicated that the Department should ensure the availability of resources such as office space, furnisher, telephone line and transport. In the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:9), social workers employed at the NGOs experienced frustration regarding the lack of resources and infrastructure provided by the Department of Social Development for the establishment and continuation of community projects. Alpaslan and Schenck (2012:375) also conducted a study in the provinces of Mpumalanga, North West, Eastern Cape and the Western Cape with social workers in the employ of the governmental and non-governmental organisations in rural communities; it was also found that offices were inaccessible, office space limited and social workers had to share offices, even with other professionals. There were no telephones, computers or even fax machines, a shortage of vehicles, and there were no facilities such as waiting areas, toilets and electricity. The lack of resources in social service delivery results, amongst others, to poorly developed protection services, inadequate resources to provide other social services to the poor and to promote sustainable livelihoods (Lombard & Klein, 2006:226). Participants were of the view that it is vital for statutory social workers to focus on foster care family as a whole. This is in line with Patel's (2005:24, 167) view that the family is seen as a natural mechanism for meeting the needs of its members and that family support to "youth is vital in making the transition from childhood to adulthood, from school to work and to becoming productive, proactive and responsible citizens of the society".

Lastly, participants suggested that they need to be liberated to perform their duties based on the skills and knowledge that they have acquired during the course of their

studies. They also emphasised their right to individual and group supervision as part of the support from their supervisors. Ife (2001:142) advises that social workers do not need to feel guilty about being passionate about the cause of human rights. He further alluded to the fact that social workers also need to remind themselves of the reasons for choosing social work as a profession, and they must find ways of maintaining a sense of vision, purpose and passion (Ife, 2001;143). The core value of social work is social justice and therefore upholding human rights and social justice is the motivation and justification for social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2005). Lombard (2005:226) concurs that social workers should stand up for their professional rights to make themselves heard with regard to working conditions, but also in particular to acknowledge the valuable role that the social welfare sector makes in facilitating a democratic, pluralistic South African society.

In summary, social workers are faced with a number of challenges in integrating foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, which ranges from political interference, lack of legislation that guides the utilisation of foster child grant, lack of development centres from various service points, lack of supervision for social workers, centralisation of different sections of the Department, and focusing on the number of beneficiaries reached versus the quality of foster care services rendered and poor provision of resources. However, these challenges can be addressed if the Department practises a developmental approach as stipulated in the White Paper for Social Welfare 1997, promotes the integration of services, the establishment of development centres, a shift in focus to the impact of foster care services rendered and to ensure the liberation of social workers to practise the skills and apply the knowledge acquired from the university. The integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes can be achieved if social workers perceive foster care service delivery through the lens of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach, which focuses on people's strengths, assets, resources and human capital. Human capital is seen as a building block for the use of other forms of capital.

3.12 Summary

The chapter presented the research methodology, ethical issues related to the study and the research findings from the empirical study, followed by a discussion of the findings and verified by literature. The key findings will be presented in Chapter Four, as well as the conclusions on the findings and the recommendations based on the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the extent to which the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. Furthermore, the key findings are presented, followed by the conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusions.

4.2 Goal and objectives of the study

The goal of this study was to explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

The goal of the study was obtained by achieving the following objectives:

Objective 1

- ❖ To conceptualise foster care and statutory work within the context of developmental social work and the Sustainable Livelihood Approach.

This objective was achieved in a discussion in Chapter Two (Section 2.2, 2.3, Sub-section 2.3.1 and Section 2.4). In addition, it was addressed in the empirical study findings in Chapter Three (Sub-section 3.7).

From the literature study it is clear that in South Africa, foster care placement remains the first choice of alternative care for children in need of care and protection. The Children's Act 38 of 2005 Section 181(a) and (b) regards foster care as the main source of alternative care in South Africa which, among its purposes, intends "to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support; promoting the goals of permanency planning, first towards family reunification, or by connecting children to other safe and nurturing family relationships intended to last a lifetime, and respect the individual and family by demonstrating respect for cultural, ethnic and community diversity".

According to the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), statutory services should be rendered within a developmental approach. This is supported by Lombard and Kleijn (2006:214) who advise that the first step to deliver statutory social services within a developmental approach is in recognising that statutory social services are included in the “basket of developmental social welfare service delivery”. This means looking at how statutory social services could be delivered within a developmental approach and to look at the challenges to achieve this. In order to foster a link between foster care services and socio-economic development programmes, social workers should look at foster care services through the lens of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach which focuses on the resources, strengths, assets and the capacity of service users to sustain themselves through socio-economic programmes. The participants’ responses were contradictory in terms of the interrelatedness of the foster child grant with socio-economic programmes. The majority of participants indicated that the foster child grant contributes to the foster child’s education, care and protection. However, there is a perception among some social workers that the foster child grant creates a dependency which is not empowering and therefore not sustainable.

Objective 2

- ❖ To explore statutory social workers’ views and experiences of foster care services in relation to contributing to poverty reduction.

The objective was addressed in Chapter Three (Sub-theme 2.1 and 2.2) and Chapter Two (Section 2.3, Sub-section 2.3.1 and Section 2.4). The empirical findings of the study demonstrate that foster care services play a major role in meeting the basic needs and providing a source of income to service users, more especially child-headed households and disadvantaged families. It also emerged from the findings that foster care services only alleviate poverty on a short-term basis rather than long-term.

Hearle and Ruwanpura (2009:427) state that the purpose of the foster child grant is to ensure that the child in need of care lives in adequate housing, is fed and given clothing, receives necessary medical care and attends school regularly; thus his/her socio-economic development is taken care of. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) makes provision for socio-economic rights, which include

the right to have access to adequate housing, health care, education, social security, food and water. This is also in line with Section 27(1) (c) of the Constitution (1996) which states that, “Everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance”. The state, non-governmental organisations, civil society and the private sector are the main role players in reducing poverty and inequality and promoting sustainable livelihoods. Linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes requires that social workers adopt a developmental approach to social work to act upon the mandate of the White Paper for Social Welfare, which includes, among other things, focusing on social development and the promotion of human rights.

Objective 3

- ❖ To identify the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

This objective has been achieved in Chapter Two (Section 2.5), where it became evident that social workers are faced with major challenges with regard to rendering of foster care services. These challenges include magistrate courts and the different interpretation of the Children`s Act, high caseloads and lack of resources such as office space, computers and vehicles.

In addition, the third objective of the study was accomplished in the presentation of empirical study findings in Chapter 3 (Sub-themes 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3). Findings reveal that centralisation of sections in the Department of Social Development make it difficult to link foster care services with socio-economic development. Most of the sections of the Department of Social Development, such as canalisation, probation, sustainable livelihoods, partnerships and finance, are based in the Pretoria regional office rather than at the service points where the community is. Other findings shows that foster care parents lose interest in the foster child when the grant is suspended or lapses. Lastly, the findings reveal that the Department of Social Development is more interested in the number of service users reached than on the impact of the services rendered. As a result, statutory social workers do not do thorough investigations on foster care cases as their performance is determined through the number of cases finalised.

Objective 4

- ❖ To explore how the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes can be addressed.

The objective was achieved in Chapter Two (Sub-section 2.6) as part of the literature study and in the empirical study in chapter three (Sub-theme 3.1 to 3.3). Literature supports the idea that in view of the challenges that statutory social workers are facing in rendering foster care services, there is a need to deliberately shift focus to an integrated community economic development (ICED) approach where foster care families are actively participating in their own development. In the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:7), social workers point out the need for all services in the statutory process to be integrated within a developmental approach and for effective networking to take place between various stakeholders. Literature indicates that it is important for the service users and all the role players in social development to acquire social, human and economic capital in order to achieve social and economic development.

In the empirical study in Chapter Three (Sub-themes 3.1 to 3.3) the findings indicated that there is no best practice of linking foster care services with socio-economic development in the Department of Social Development. However, the participants suggested that best practices of linking foster care services with socio-economic development can evolve from the establishment of more development centres, developing a database for service providers and users, and proper supervision of statutory social workers.

Furthermore, in Chapter Three (Sub-themes 5.1 to 5.7), the participants proposed solutions to address the challenges they face in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. These solutions are integrated in the recommendations in Section 4.4 as follows under guidelines, to enhance the effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

Objective 5

- ❖ To propose guidelines to enhance the effective linking of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

This objective was partially addressed in Chapter Two (Section 2.6) from a literature perspective and in Section 4.4 that follows under recommendations.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The respective key findings and conclusions of the study are presented as follows:

- The findings indicate that the foster child grant plays a major role in meeting the basic needs of service users, namely food, health care, income and education, and more specifically targeting those who are from disadvantaged families. However, the findings also indicate that some social workers have the perception that the foster child grant creates dependency rather than empowering service users to promote sustainable livelihoods. In this regard, Lombard (2003:156) emphasises that although the social grants system protects vulnerable individuals and families, it requires additional resources to facilitate long-term sustainable socio-economic development of the child.
- ✓ It can be concluded that the foster child grant makes provision for the foster child's socio-economic rights, as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, emphasising that everyone has a right to have access to adequate housing, health care, education, social security, food and water. The foster child grant is aligned with the aim of the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) which strived to have "a welfare system which facilitates the development of human capacity and self-reliance within a caring and enabling socio-economic environment".
- The findings demonstrate that political interference hinders the rendering of foster care services as the government and politicians promise free services to service users without looking at the relevant policies and legislation to inform their decisions.
- ✓ It can be concluded that linking foster care services to socio-economic development programmes requires political will to counteract a top-down approach and to facilitate poverty reduction strategies for sustainable livelihoods.

- Findings indicate that social workers expect that the foster child grant makes provision for savings for purposes of higher education of foster children.
- ✓ There is no section in the Children’s Act that dictates any linkage of the foster child grant with socio-economic development programmes in order to promote sustainable livelihoods.

- The findings indicate that the Department of Social Development is not integrating its services with other relevant government departments, and that this should start within the Department by coordinating the different sections. Most of the sections of the Department, such as canalisation, probation, sustainable livelihoods, partnership and finance are based in the Pretoria regional office rather than at the service points where the community is. Statutory social workers are not aware of what is done in the sustainable livelihoods section even though they are employed in the same Department.
- ✓ The conclusion is that a lack of information on available services makes it impossible for social workers to create linkages and collaboration between foster care and other services that could facilitate sustainable livelihoods. Interventions should be based on well-informed decisions embedded in partnerships that target service delivery for sustainable outcomes. This is in alignment with the findings of the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:11), which indicated that the government does not facilitate an environment conducive to community development by demanding that one social worker integrates statutory services with community development projects. Service delivery should connect interventions in a complementary way to promote sustainable livelihood outcomes.

- The findings show that best practice for linking foster care services with socio-economic development outcomes can be promoted by establishing more development centres, developing a database for service providers and users, and proper supervision of social workers.
- ✓ It can therefore be concluded that best practice for linking foster care services with socio-economic programmes requires deliberate planning and the implementation of intervention strategies for sustainable livelihood outcomes.

Midgley (1995:25) indicates that social development is “a process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with dynamic process of economic development”.

- The findings reveal that foster care parents lose interest in the foster child when the grant is suspended or lapses. It was also found that foster care parents treat foster care children differently to their own children. Furthermore, foster care parents visit social work offices with a view to applying for the foster child grant, rather than applying for foster care placement.
- ✓ It can be concluded that the foster child grant could put already vulnerable children further at risk if foster care is not in their best interest. Furthermore, screening procedures and monitoring of foster care parents and placement should be prioritised in foster care service delivery. According to the Children’s Act (RSA, 2005), foster care is aimed to “protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support”.

- The findings demonstrate that the Department of Social Development is more interested in the number of service users reached than in the impact of the services rendered. As a result this makes it difficult to spend so much time on one case as it will then create the impression that the social worker is not performing her/his duties, as outlined in the standard operational plan of the Department.
- ✓ Therefore, it can be concluded that social workers’ performance is judged by the number of beneficiaries reached per month rather than on the impact of the services rendered. The quality of services is thus subordinate to quantity. This is not in line with a principle of the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997:10) which states that, “all social welfare programmes will strive for excellence and for the provision of quality services”. In addition, the Department of Social Development is not practising one of its values which is to deliver high quality services characterised by care for the people, and excellence in partnership with stakeholders (RSA, 2013b).

- The findings suggest that the Department of Social Development should decentralise sections within the Department, develop legislation or policy to ensure the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development, and sharpen foster care service delivery by providing infrastructural resources, focusing on the foster care family as a whole and liberating social workers to practise what they have learned at the university.
- ✓ The researcher therefore concluded that social workers have an understanding of the gaps in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes and that integration of services within the different sections of the department, other relevant government departments, non-profit organisations and the private sector could foster the integration of foster care services and socio-economic development programmes.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addressing the challenges of linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods, the researcher recommends the following guidelines:

❖ Decentralisation of sections within the Department of Social Development

Decentralisation of all the sections of the Department of Social Development to various service points would help to promote the integration of foster care services and socio-economic development. The Department of Social Development should build partnerships by redeploying its officials to service points and thereby ensure that each service point consists of statutory services, canalisation, probation services, sustainable livelihoods, partnership and finance and human resource sections. This will increase communication and cooperation amongst the Department's officials and create a platform for integrating foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. In the study conducted by Landman and Lombard (2006:7), social workers pointed out that there is a need for all services in the statutory process to be integrated within a developmental approach and for effective networking to take place between different stakeholders. In support of this,

the SAVF developed an integrated development model that affirms the importance of integrated social and economic policies in achieving anti-poverty outcomes and the importance of service users' voices in this process (Lombard et al., 2012:192). Foster children should also be linked with bursaries in higher education, the private sector and learnerships within various government departments and other stakeholders.

❖ **Developing a policy or legislation to ensure integration of foster care services with socio-economic development**

The Department should facilitate the development of policy or legislation to enforce and monitor the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. Within the context of sustainable livelihoods, a needs analysis for policy development should include exploring how assets can be developed through the foster child grant to facilitate opportunities for foster children for further learning through higher education or vocational-related training for skills acquisition.

❖ **Focusing on the impact of foster care services**

The Framework for Social Welfare Services (RSA, 2013b) sought to facilitate the implementation of rights-based and quality developmental social welfare services. It is therefore recommended that the Department of Social Development shifts focus from the number of beneficiaries reached through different programmes to the impact of foster care services rendered to service users. The performance of social workers should be determined by the impact made during the rendering of services. This would allow social workers to have more time to screen prospective foster parents, provide thorough foster care supervision services to the foster care family and render quality foster care services by integrating it with socio-economic development programmes.

❖ **Increasing the availability of development centres**

The Department of Social Development should establish more development centres in the community to promote the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. Service users should be capacitated with skills development programmes, including entrepreneurship, dressmaking, beadwork, plumbing, baking, catering and

gardening. This is emphasised by the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997:4) which states that South Africa must invest in people; that is to develop the human capital which is essential for increasing productivity and moving people out of poverty.

❖ **Providing infrastructural resources**

The Department of Social Development should provide resources for infrastructure, including office space, computers, tables, chairs, telephone line and transport. A lack of resources is not only a challenge for statutory social workers employed by government - research done by Schenk and Alpaslan (2012:373) found that there is a need for infrastructure in governmental and non-governmental organisations as office space is limited and social workers share offices; there are no telephones, computers or even fax machines; they experience a shortage of vehicles; and there is no access to facilities such as waiting areas, toilets and electricity. The Department of Social Development should speed up the process of providing subsidised vehicles to social workers as it enables them to undertake essential and approved official journeys in those cases where the use of other available government transport is neither practical nor economical. Lombard and Klein (2006:226) warn that a lack of resources in social service delivery results, amongst others, in poorly developed protection services, inadequate resources to provide other social services and to promote sustainable livelihoods to the poor.

❖ **Focusing on the foster care family as a whole**

In order to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes, statutory social workers need to shift from focusing only on the foster children, to the foster care family as a whole. Patel (2005:167) indicates that families should be supported and their capability should be strengthened to meet the needs of their members. According to Patel (2005:245), “all people need care and support at different times in their lives but that the intensity and the nature of the support may vary depending on the needs of the individual, the family and the availability of support networks in the community”. It is therefore recommended that social workers include all the foster care family members during foster care supervision, while linking foster care services with socio-economic programmes to promote sustainable

livelihoods. The disadvantaged and marginalised foster care family members should be linked with the socio-economic development programmes available in their community.

❖ **Liberate social workers to practice their skills and knowledge**

There was a cry out from social workers participating in the study that in their workplace they are not given an opportunity to practise the skills and knowledge they acquired from their respective universities to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. This is caused by the way in which their roles and responsibilities are structured by their organisations. Furthermore, there is also a lack of individual and group supervision for new social workers and those that have been in the field for longer periods to monitor the integration of foster care services with socio-economic programmes. Therefore the Department of Social Development is requested to liaise with universities to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the social workers are in line with the skills and knowledge acquired from their various universities. It is also recommended that social work supervisors should conduct individual and group supervision every month, or when the need arises, to provide support to social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

❖ **Thorough induction of new social workers**

The Department of Social Development should provide a thorough induction for new social workers so that they will know how to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. This includes familiarising social workers with the role and responsibilities of the other sections in the Department of Social Development to facilitate the integration of foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods. This can be done if the Department of Social Development integrates or builds a good working relationship amongst the different sections. Lastly, it is recommended that social workers are continuously trained on the developmental approach, as required by the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 section 150 to 190, Chapter 11 of the National Development Plan (RSA, 2012:352) on social protection, and Chapter 2 of the Constitution on the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996:4).

❖ **Proper screening of foster care parents**

The findings indicate that some of the foster care parents visit social work offices with a view to applying for the foster child grant rather than to apply for foster care placement. This becomes a challenge as most of the foster care parents abandon foster children when the grant lapses. When foster care parents abandon foster children, it is contrary to the goal of foster care, which is the care and protection of children. The purpose of foster care, as stipulated in the Children's Act 38 of 2005, is to protect and nurture children by providing a safe, healthy environment with positive support. It is therefore recommended that social workers do a thorough screening of prospective foster care parents prompting their long-term intention specifically when the grant lapses before finalising the children's court inquiry to ensure that suitable prospective foster parents are appointed.

❖ **Further research**

The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997:87) stresses the importance of conducting research for the purpose of shaping policy development and social programmes, such as a needs analysis, programme evaluation and advocacy. Areas for further research relating to the outcomes of the study are as follows:

- The effectiveness of integrating services within the different sections of the Department of Social Development for linking the foster child grant with socio-economic programmes through a pilot project.
- Piloting a development centre for best practice model in linking the foster child grant with socio-economic programmes, and exploring the impact.

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Appendix 1

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Focus group: Social workers

Goal of the study:

To explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihood.

Biographical information

1. Gender:

Male	
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Female	
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Other	
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2. Age:

22-25	
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26-30	
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31-35	
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36-40	
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41-45	
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46-50	
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51-55	
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56-60	
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3. How many years experience do you have in practising as a social worker?

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21+ years	

4. How long have you been involved in rendering foster care services?

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21+ years	

5. How big is your foster care caseload?

Question 1

How do you see the interrelatedness of foster care and socio-economic with developmental social work?

Question 2

To what extent do the foster care services that you render relate to poverty reduction?

Question 3

What is your view on linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes?

Question 4

What best practices of linking foster care services with socio-economic development do you know of that you can share?

Question 5

What would you say are the underpinning challenges to link foster care services with socio-economic development programmes?

Question 6

What would you say is required for statutory social workers to integrate foster care services with socio-economic development programmes?

Appendix 2

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER, UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

1 April 2014

Dear Prof Lombard

Project: The challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes
Researcher: SL Dhludhlu
Supervisor: Prof A Lombard
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference numbers: 11302722

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical review.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** on 27 March 2014. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

Prof Karen Harris
Acting Chair: Postgraduate Committee & Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail:karen.harris@up.ac.za

Research Ethics Committee Members: Dr L Blokland; Prof Prof M-H Coetzee; Dr JEH Grobler; Prof KL Harris (Acting Chair); Ms H Klopper; Dr C Panebianco-Warrens; Dr Charles Puttergill; Prof GM Spies; Dr Y Spies; Prof E Taljard; Dr P Wood

PERMISSION LETTER, GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

21/01/2002 09:59 013341467

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GAUTENG PROVINCE

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries : Refilwe Makapela
011 355 7676 ; Cell No. 082 460 3131
Sub-Directorate Research and Policy Co-Ordination
Dir.: Research and Demography
CD: Development and Research

Dear Mr. Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu

RE: YOUR APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT

Thank you for your application to conduct research within the Gauteng Department of Social Development.

Your application on the research on "The challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio economic development programmes" has been considered and approved for support by the Department as it was found beneficial to the Department's vision and mission.

The approval is subject to the Departmental terms and conditions as endorsed by you on the 4/12/2019

May I take this opportunity to wish you well for the research.

Looking forward to a value adding research and a fruitful co-operation.

With thanks.

MS.W.R. TSHABALALA
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

DATE: 20/01/2020

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANTS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Social Work & Criminology

15/02/2014

Ref: Sandile Lucas Dhludhlu
20117 Bufferzone Ext.03
Mamelodi East
0122

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Title of Study: The challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes.

Purpose of the study: To explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes to promote sustainable livelihoods.

Procedure: I understand that I will be invited to be part of a group discussion to explore the challenges of statutory social workers in linking foster care services with socio-economic development programmes. The focus group interview will take approximately one hour and it will be conducted in an accessible venue that will be convenient for me. I take note that the focus group discussion will be recorded by using a voice recording machine.

Risks and Discomfort: I understand that there are no known anticipated risks and discomfort that I may be exposed to during my participation in this study. I take note that I can decide what I want to share with the group or not with regard to my experiences of foster care services that I have been engaged in. I also understand that it is my right to decide at any time during the interview to quit my participation without any consequences. I take note that if there is a need, the researcher will refer me to a social worker who will be able to talk to me about the area of my work.

Benefits: I understand that there are no known direct financial benefits to me for participating in this study. However, I take note that I may indirectly benefit from the results of the study in that the Department of Social Development will be informed how to improve their service delivery to clients.

Department of Social Work & Criminology
University of Pretoria
PRETORIA 0002
Republic of South Africa

Tel: Number 00 27 12 420 2325/2030
Fax: Number 00 27 12 420 2093

www.up.ac.za

Participant's Rights: I know my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw my participation at any time.

Confidentiality: I know that in order to record accurately what the participants will say during the interview, a tape recorder will be used. However, I have been assured that my responses will not be documented in any way that I will be identified. The tapes will only be listened to by the researcher and on request by my study supervisor. As a participant I will keep what is said in the focus group discussion confidential. I acknowledge that the results of the study will be published in a research report which will be submitted to the University of Pretoria. In addition, the research findings will be published in a scientific journal. I am aware that the data will be stored for 15 years in the Department of Social Work and Criminology, according to the policy of the University of Pretoria.

Person to contact: If you have any queries or concerns, you can contact the researcher, Sandile Dhludhu, at 072 550 7599 at any time during the day.

Declaration

Iunderstand my rights as a research participant and I voluntarily give consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about, how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

.....
Participant (Print name)

.....
Participant's Signature

.....
Date

.....
Researcher (Print name)

.....
Researcher's Signature

.....
Date