

**The role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights of orphan and vulnerable children in Malawi: A case study of Chisomo Children's Club in Blantyre, Malawi**

**By**

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**in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria,  
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## DECLARATION

I, **Evelyn Maggie Kasambara**, declare that, **“The role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights of orphan and vulnerable children in Malawi: A case study of Chisomo Children’s Club in Blantyre, Malawi”** is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

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September 2018

SIGNATURE

DATE

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” Romans 8 vs 28. I have seen the love of God manifest in my life and I would like to thank a few people who made this journey possible.

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Finally, my profound gratitude to Chisomo Children’s Club Malawi for allowing me to use the organisation for this study. I truly hope that this study will help influence change for the improvement of the lives of Malawian children.

# **ABSTRACT**

## **THE ROLE OF NGOS IN PROMOTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF ORPHAN AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN MALAWI: A CASE STUDY OF CHISOMO CHILDREN'S CLUB IN BLANTYRE, MALAWI**

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The high levels of poverty and HIV/AIDS in Malawi (Rena, 2007:1) have led to an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) (USAID, 2015:1). The government of Malawi commits itself to protect children by implementing the National Policy on Early Childhood Development (Department of Gender, Youth and Community Services, 2003:3). However, child protection is not only the responsibility of government. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a critical role to play in child protection and in doing so promote the socio-economic rights of OVC (Department of Gender, Youth and Community Services, 2003:19). Social work is a human rights profession (Keeney, Smart, Richards, Harrison, Carrillo & Valentine, 2014:4) and social workers are key role players in child protection and responsible for upholding children's socio-economic rights.

The goal of the study was to explore and describe the role of the NGO, Chisomo Children's Club (CCC), in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi.

The study was exploratory and used a qualitative research approach. The research design used was instrumental case study. The sample was purposively selected and

comprised of ten social workers from CCC as participants. Data was collected from the social workers through one-to-one interviews. These interviews were guided by a semi-structured interview schedule.

The findings of the study indicate that participants have an understanding of children's socio-economic rights. While CCC are centred around promoting children's rights to education, protection, food and good health, the OVC do not always utilise the shelter that the organisation provides or arranges as they often return to the streets.

The services at CCC are in alignment with the principles of the human rights-based approach, namely participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment (Palmqvist, 2011:14). The study concludes that the lack of funding, uncoordinated service delivery among different role players in child protection, and the lack of adequate community involvement in child protection activities have a negative influence on service rendering and consequently on promoting children's socio-economic rights.

The recommendations include the need for CCC to explore more funding options through government, international child protection agencies and embassies. There is a need to establish a forum for stakeholders to join efforts in child protection. Furthermore the community outreach programmes should be increased in order to reduce income poverty of OVC households; and community campaigns to raise awareness on OVC and how to become involved in child protection.

## **KEY WORDS**

Orphan and vulnerable children

Socio-economic rights

Chisomo Children's Club

Malawi

Non-Governmental Organisations

Social work

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## **Abbreviations**

CBCC – Community based child care centre

CCC – Chisomo Children’s Club

CPC – Child protection crisis

COTN – Children of the Nation

ECD – Early Childhood Development

FAO – Food and Agricultural Organisation

IDEA – Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistances

IGA – Income generating activities

NCA – Norwegian Church Aid

NGO – Non-governmental organisation

NPA – National Plan of Action

OVC – Orphans and vulnerable children

PEPFAR – Presidents Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WALA – Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement

WFO – World Food Programme



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# CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 Introduction

For decades poverty and HIV/AIDS have been known as pertinent challenges affecting developing countries such as Malawi (Rena, 2007:1). The continued existence of these challenges has led to an increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) (USAID, 2015:1). Children face a lack of social support, access to education, and development which implies a violation of their socio-economic rights (Rena, 2007:3). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) socio-economic rights are fundamental rights which all human beings should have. These include the right to health care, education, food and protection. This affirms the importance of protecting and promoting socio-economic rights and a call to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to play a role in the prevention of socio-economic rights abuse experienced by children. The government of Malawi, through the National Policy on Early Childhood Development (Department of Gender, Youth and Community Services, 2003:3), commits itself to protecting children by caring and attending to their needs and promoting the realisation of their human rights.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) includes a commitment to bring an end to global poverty and ensure inclusive and equitable education among other things (UN, 2014). The study investigating the role of NGOs in promoting children's rights to socio-economic development within a human rights-based approach in a Malawi setting. The study particularly concerned itself with Chisomo Children's Club (CCC), a local NGO in Malawi, which aims at improving the lives of children. Factors contributing to a harmful environment include a lack of access to education, child abuse, child neglect, poverty and HIV/AIDS (CCC, 2015:2). The study was built around the human rights theoretical framework where it explored the role that NGOs in Malawi play in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC.

The following key concepts are relevant to the study:

### **Child**

Section 23 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi defines a child as any human being below the age of 16 (Act No. 7 of 1995). However, in 2017 the 36<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment act was passed by Malawi's Parliament defining a child as anyone under the age of 18 (Girls no Brides, 2017:1). For the purpose of this study, a child refers to a person below the age of 18.

### **Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)**

There is no uniform definition for OVC. Hage (2012:6) divides vulnerable children into two main groups: street children and children living in low capacity households (both orphans and non-orphans). According to the World Bank (2005:2), an orphan is a child whose mother, father or both parents have died. In the context of this study, OVC refer to children in conflict with the law and children who face adversities within their environment of care, including living in conditions that are unfavourable to their socio-economic development and wellbeing.

### **Socio-economic rights**

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) (International IDEA, 2014:4) embodies socio-economic rights by defining them as people's rights to education, health care, food, water and the right to a decent living among other things (International IDEA, 2014:4). This study adopted this definition and hence focused on socio-economic rights as children's rights to education, protection, food, shelter, and health care regardless of age, sex, race and religion.

### **Blantyre**

Blantyre is Malawi's second largest city with the number of inhabitants expected to reach 1,068,681 by the year 2015 (Malawi Atlas, 2008:11). The Malawi demographics profile of 2018 indicates that the population of Blantyre as of 2015 was 808,000 (IndexMundi, 2018:1).

It is located in the Southern region of the country; it is popularly known as the commercial city and it covers an area of 2,012 km<sup>2</sup> (Malawi Atlas, 2008:11).

### **Chisomo Children's Club**

CCC is a NGO which was founded in 1998 by the Living Waters Church in Malawi. It aims at restoring capacity in OVC by helping them to develop to their full potential by promoting justice and enabling them to access their rights (CCC, 2015:1).

### **1.2 Theoretical framework**

The human rights-based approach was utilised as the theoretical framework by the researcher to explore how CCC, a NGO in Malawi, promotes socio-economic rights for OVC. It is about empowering citizens to know their rights and enabling them to participate in decision making on matters that affect them. It entails an increase and existence of accountability between rights holders and duty bearers (UNICEF, 2007:27).

### **1.3 Rationale and problem statement**

The rationale for this study was linked to the high levels of vulnerability of children in Malawi. Many children are orphaned and vulnerable due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and poverty (Berutt, 2011:2) which in turn impacts on their socio-economic rights such as access to protection, education, health, food and security. Rena (2007:3) points out the challenges faced by OVC in Malawi citing among other things such as lack of adequate health care and access to education. These challenges influenced the researcher's interest in the study in terms of the role NGOs play in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC.

Whilst the challenges that OVC face are well identified, the researcher has not come across adequately documented evidence on the role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC from a human rights-based approach in Malawi. It is not well documented to what extent NGOs have succeeded in rendering services that promote children's socio-economic rights of OVC from a human rights-based approach as most literature is found in the organisation's annual reporting. NGOs have a critical role to play in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC (Department of Gender, Youth and

Community Services, 2003:19). However, there is a shortage of in-depth documented evidence on how NGOs contribute to promoting socio-economic rights of OVC. This study attempted to explore the extent to which one NGO's service delivery contributed to promoting children's socio-economic rights. The researcher envisaged that findings of the study will emphasise a human rights-based approach in social policy and social service delivery, and contribute to showcasing best practices that can be adopted by NGOs in Malawi to promote socio-economic rights of OVC.

The study was guided by the following research question:

What is the role of CCC in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi?

The research question was underpinned by the following sub-questions:

- What social services are rendered by CCC to OVC?
- What are the challenges faced by CCC in delivering services to OVC?
- How do the services rendered by CCC promote socio-economic rights of OVC?
- How can service delivery by CCC be improved to promote socio-economic rights of OVC?

## **1.4 Goal and objectives of the study**

The goal and objectives of the study were as follows:

### **1.4.1 Goal of study**

To explore and describe the role of the NGO, CCC, in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi.

### **1.4.2 Objectives of the study**

- To conceptualise OVC and their socio-economic rights.
- To conceptualise and contextualise the role of NGOs' service delivery within a human rights-based approach.

- To explore and describe the services rendered by CCC in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC.
- To determine the challenges faced by CCC in delivering services to OVC.
- To propose guidelines on how service delivery can be improved to promote socio-economic rights of OVC.

## **1.5 Research methodology**

The research approach that was utilised in this study was qualitative in nature as it sought to explore feelings, understandings and experiences of research participants (Fouché & Delport, 2011:66) regarding the role of CCC in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC. This study was exploratory in that it investigated the role that NGOs play in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC. It attempted to provide relevant supporting information to the existing body of knowledge on the role NGOs play in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC within a human rights-based approach (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The study was applied research as it has relevance to the current NGO roles in promoting children's socio-economic rights (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The study employed the instrumental case study design by examining several social workers in order to get an in-depth description and exploration of the role of NGOs in rendering services that promote socio-economic rights to OVC from the perspective of social workers (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). The study's population consisted of social workers employed at CCC in Blantyre. From this population, the researcher used her own judgement in purposively selecting a sample which she believed comprised of the most attributes and characteristics, and those who would be most representative for the research (Strydom & Delport, 2011:392). Semi-structured one-on-one interviews and document study were the primary data collection methods used in this study. Qualitative data analysis (Creswell, 2014:197-201) and content analysis (Rose, Spinks & Canhoto, 2015:1) were used as data analysis methods for this study. A more detailed description of the research methodology will be presented in Chapter Three, including the ethical aspects that were relevant to the study.

## **1.6 Division of research report**

This research report is divided into four chapters. Chapter One provides the general introduction and orientation of the study, including the problem statement; a brief overview of the theoretical framework and research methodology; the goals and objectives of the study; the research questions and the chapter divisions. Chapter Two provides a literature review on the role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC within a human rights-based approach. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and presents the empirical findings of the study. Finally, Chapter Four presents key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

NGOs have various roles to play in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC. In a Malawian context, NGOs have for many years actively provided funding and institutional care to OVC (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:16). The chapter will focus on conceptualising OVC in Malawi and the role of NGOs in promoting the socio-economic rights of OVC globally and specifically in Malawi. The chapter begins with a background of CCC followed by a brief conceptualisation of OVC and socio-economic rights. Focus is then shifted to Malawi's legislative and policy frameworks for child protection which is followed by an overview of the situation of OVC in Malawi. The next discussion focuses on the human rights-based approach, which forms the theoretical framework of the study. The following discussion is about NGO's initiatives regarding OVC in Malawi. This includes exploring best practices of NGOs in rendering services to OVC in relation to how they upholding human rights. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### **2.2 Chisomo Children's Club (CCC)**

CCC has been in operation in Malawi since 1998 (Constitution of CCC, 2013). It was established with an aim of bringing long-term change in the lives of girls and boys who are vulnerable; giving them hope and a future by developing their spiritual, physical, material, mental and emotional capacity (CCC Constitution, 2013). As an NGO, CCC promotes justice by helping children access their rights and understand their responsibilities (CCC Constitution, 2013).

As an organisation, their programme focuses on all children in Malawi without discrimination in respect of gender, tribe, race, colour, creed, religious belief, sexual orientation, political affiliation, nationality, disability, or membership of any minority group (CCC Constitution, 2013). Through the programmes implementation, Chisomo aims to achieve long-term change in not only children's lives, but in the lives of their



families. They plan to reintegrate children into their families and communities; to ensure that children develop and have the capacity to escape dependency; and to promote the rights of all children (CCC Constitution, 2013).

According to a 2016 report, CCC operates under six thematic areas namely: relationship building, education, family/community tracing, health, child rights and advocacy, family empowerment, and income generating activities (CCC, 2016:4). Relationship building focuses on outreach visits, centre activities and counselling (CCC, 2016:6). Education focuses on school enrolment programmes, life skills centres and catch-up lessons. The family and community tracing focuses on outreach programmes and reintegration, while the health aspect's focus is on clinics (CCC, 2016:6). The key thematic area of child rights and advocacy focuses on championing the collaborative efforts of different stakeholders by proposing a street children charter. Finally, the family empowerment and income generating activities focus on strengthening of community self-help groups with an aim of providing economic support (CCC, 2016:6).

CCC can only implement programmes that effectively address the needs of OVC by having an understanding of OVC in a Malawian context.

### **2.3 Conceptualising orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Malawi**

In an African context, vulnerability of children has been contextualised as a child not having their basic rights fulfilled which include: being given a name at birth and nationality; safe home and community environment; education; family care and support; sufficient food and nutrition (Skinner, Tsheko, Mtero-Munyatu, Segwabe, Chibatamoto, Mfecane, Chandiwana, Nkomo, Tlou & Chitiyo, 2004:10). Additionally, it also includes the protection of children from maltreatment - both inside and outside the home; security from government and the community; health care and good hygiene; shelter; recreational facilities; love; good clothing, and the right to make choices concerning their way of living (Skinner et al., 2004:10).

According to CCC (2015:2) children in Malawi are vulnerable when they have been subjected to child labour, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, poverty, and orphanhood.

The Malawi National Plan for Action for OVC 2015-2019 released estimated numbers and proportions of vulnerable children between the ages 0-18. Table 2.1 below displays the numbers of children between the ages of 0-18 as indicated in the NPA 2015-2019 from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> wealth quintiles by age group, sex, residence and region (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:12).

**Table 2.1: Estimated numbers and proportions of vulnerable children**

	Single orphan	Double orphan	Total Orphans	Children living in household with no adult education *	Children living with one parent	Children not living with a parent	All vulnerable children
<b>Age</b>							
0-4	131,986 (22.6%)	35,666 (19.0%)	167,653 (21.7%)	83,797 (32.4%)	77,774 (31.6%)	86,838 (8.1%)	413,918 (22.5%)
5-14	363,255 (62.2%)	116,385 (62.0%)	479,640 (62.2%)	147,938 (57.2%)	123,059 (50.0%)	797,626 (74.4%)	1,144,253 (62.2%)
15-17	88,770 (15.2%)	35,666 (19.0%)	124,436 (16.1%)	26,898 (10.4%)	45,286 (18.4%)	187,614 (17.5%)	281,464 (15.3%)
<b>Sex</b>							
Male	281,493 (48.2%)	95,736 (51.0%)	377,229 (48.9%)	125,954 (48.7%)	112,722 (45.8%)	477,074 (44.5%)	864,628 (47.0%)
Female	302,518 (51.8%)	91,982 (49.0%)	394,499 (51.1%)	132,679 (51.3%)	133,396 (54.2%)	595,003 (55.5%)	975,006 (53.0%)
<b>Residence</b>							
Urban	21,608 (3.7%)	7,696 (4.1%)	29,305 (3.8%)	6,983 (2.7%)	13,290 (5.4%)	51,460 (4.8%)	82,784 (4.5%)
Rural	562,403 (96.3%)	180,021 (95.9%)	742,424 (96.2%)	251,650 (97.3%)	232,829 (94.6%)	1,020,618 (95.2%)	1,756,851 (95.5%)
<b>Region</b>							
Northern	58,985 (10.1%)	15,581 (8.3%)	74,566 (9.6%)	10,863 (4.2%)	19,443 (7.9%)	101,847 (9.5%)	169,246 (9.2%)
Central	227,180 (38.9%)	61,947 (33.0%)	289,127 (37.5%)	104,747 (40.5%)	100,417 (40.8%)	491,011 (45.8%)	787,364 (42.8%)
Southern	297,846 (51.0%)	110,190 (58.7%)	408,036 (52.9%)	143,024 (55.3%)	126,259 (51.3%)	479,219 (44.7%)	883,025 (48.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>584,011 (14%**)</b>	<b>187,718 (4.5%**)</b>	<b>771,729 (18.5%**)</b>	<b>258,633 (6.2%**)</b>	<b>246,119 (5.9%**)</b>	<b>1,072,077 (25.7%**)</b>	<b>1,839,635 (44.1%**)</b>

\* Including households with no adults

\*\* Percentage of the total of 4.2 million children living in the lowest three wealth quintiles

**Source: Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016**

The table above elucidates that an estimated 44.1% of the households in the lowest wealth quintiles have children aged between 0-17 and approximately 1.8 million children in Malawi are living in a household with a vulnerability factor (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:12).

Recent studies from the Presidents Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) indicated that in 2015, Malawi had 1.4 million children affected by HIV/AIDS, which is a total representing 9% of the country's population, and that 770,000 have been orphaned due

to HIV/AIDS related diseases (PEPFAR, 2015:42). The 2015 United States Agency for International Development (USAID) fact sheet in Malawi indicates that 66% of the country's population are under the age of 25 with 16.7% of them being OVC due to HIV and poverty (USAID, 2015:13).

The rising figures of children who have been orphaned and left vulnerable in Malawi indicate that there is much that needs to be done in ensuring that the socio-economic rights of OVC are upheld. Van De Putten (2014:13) suggests that just as HIV/AIDS often leads to children becoming orphans and vulnerable, poverty equally results to child vulnerability because most parents in Malawi cannot afford to meet basic material needs of their children. Child vulnerability results in children's socio-economic rights not being met.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) embodies socio-economic rights as being mandatory, fundamental and as an entitlement to every human being by birth. As indicated in Chapter One, the concept socio-economic rights in this study refers to children's rights to protection, education, health, nutrition, and equal opportunity regardless of sex, culture, religion and race (International IDEA, 2014:4). The Republic of Malawi is founded on principles of a human rights-based approach that promotes the welfare and development of its people and is committed to achieving these socio-economic rights (Republic of Malawi Constitution, 1995). Chapter 23 of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi embodies children's socio-economic rights by stating them as children's rights to equality, participation, safety, education, healthy life, protection and the right to be raised in a family (Republic of Malawi Constitution, 1995).

Socio-economic rights are second generation's human rights encompassing adequate standard of living, health, housing, education, and they are called positive rights (Androff, 2016:31). Programming that seeks to uphold children's socio-economic rights needs to be centred on ensuring that services are delivered within a human rights-based approach. An African study on the link between the human rights-based approach and humanitarian programming expresses the human rights-based approach as the following: participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment (Palmqvist, 2011:14). There is the need to explore the relevance of the principles of

participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability in relation to NGOs promoting socio-economic rights of OVC.

- ***Participation***

Participation is the state of mind where the right holders, which in this case of the study is referring to OVC, are at the heart of development on matters that affect them (Palmqvist, 2011:14). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) (2007:10), every person is entitled to free, active and meaningful participation to ensure a full enjoyment of their civil, economic, social and political development.

As far as implementation of a human rights-based approach is concerned, the right holders are expected to be active participants in matters relating to their livelihood (Broberg, Sano & Hans-Otto, 2017:670). All human beings have the right to free participation in the life of the community (UN, 1948). The rights-based approach in programming aims to achieve participation where all right holders are able to raise their voice without any discrimination (Palmqvist, 2011:14).

- ***Non-discrimination***

Non-discrimination means recognising that all human beings are equal and entitled to his/her human rights without discrimination on any grounds including sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion and disability (Palmqvist, 2011:15). According to Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all human beings are equal before the law and should be treated without any discrimination (UN, 1948).

Non-discrimination entails that all human beings by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person are entitled to their rights without any form of discrimination (UNESCO, 2007:10). Non-discrimination within a rights-based approach requires a focus on addressing discrimination and inequality, where possible data needs to be disaggregated by sex, religion, ethnicity, language and disability so as to give visibility to potentially vulnerable groups (UNESCO, 2007:10).

In implementing the rights-based approach in child programming, there is need to ensure that all children are involved and have equal access to the programmes and all benefits so that they are empowered (Palmqvist, 2011:15).

- ***Empowerment***

Empowerment and the human rights-based approach unlock potential in OVC and allow them to be self-determining. Empowered individuals and communities take an active role and feel ownership of what they do as they have access to decisions, resources, capability to change, and spearhead their own development (Palmqvist, 2011:15). Empowerment demands that people's capabilities to use their human rights grow as they are empowered to claim their rights than simply wait for the provision of services, legislation or policies (UNESCO, 2007:10-11). NGO programming within a human rights-based approach should focus on building capacities of communities in order to be able to hold those responsible to account by giving people the power and capability to change their life, improve their communities and influence their own destinies (UNESCO, 2007:10-11).

When children are empowered they have a boosted confidence and this enables them to claim their rights, become social actors, and gain control of their lives (Palmqvist, 2011:15), hence enabling them to become accountable.

- ***Accountability***

The principle of accountability entails OVC being aware of their respective responsibilities as right holders and the responsibilities of the duty bearers in fulfilling them. OVC must be supported in claiming their rights while duty bearers must fulfill their various obligations (Palmqvist, 2011:14)

Accountability within a rights-based approach requires identifying right holders and their corresponding duty bearers (UNESCO, 2007:11). The duty bearers are entrusted with meeting their obligations of protecting, promoting, fulfilling human rights, as well as ensuring that they abstain from human right violations (UNESCO, 2007:11).

It is important to adhere to the human rights-based approach in NGO programming as far as children's socio-economic rights are concerned. As stated by Androff (2016:31), socio-economic rights are linked to political engagement through policy practice and social action. Upholding of the socio-economic rights for children in Malawi thus requires having an understanding of the countries legislative frameworks and policies governing child protection

## **2.4 Legislative and policy framework for child protection**

The government of Malawi has adopted international and national treaties on child rights. The Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations[UN], 1990) which Malawi signed in 1991 governs the socio-economic rights and protection of children for their full and harmonious development. According to Section 23 (1) to (4) of the Republic of Malawi Constitution (1995), "all children regardless of their birth are entitled to equal treatment before the law, they should be given a name at birth and have the right to know and be raised by their parents and also have the right to be protected from economic exploitation". In 2010 the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act 22 of 2010 was passed in parliament governing the protection of children's socio-economic rights. The National Policy on Early Childhood Development (ECD), OVC was launched in 2003 and it highlights government's commitment to the protection and promotion of socio-economic rights of OVC (Department of Gender, Youth and Community Services, 2003:3).

In responding to the situation of child protection, care and support in Malawi, the government developed the NPA for orphans and vulnerable children. The NPA is based on the principles that are set out in the National Policy on OVC in Malawi 2003 (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:15). The NPA is championed by government and supported by stakeholders, communities and families in an effort to respond to the national crisis of child vulnerability which, through a 2013 situational analysis, found that vulnerable children in Malawi are subjected to various forms of abuse, exploitation and lack of access to essential services (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:6).

Malawi has good policies in place with regards to child protection and human rights promotion, however, there are challenges in programme implementation that is aimed at promoting the rights of OVC. Despite the various government efforts, the researcher views the challenges faced in programme implementation as being caused by the increasingly growing numbers of OVC, lack of NGO funding, the increase in deaths from HIV/AIDS and related diseases, and lack of support from various stakeholders in ensuring effective joint programming that is aimed at promoting the socio-economic rights of OVC. There is need for government to revise policies that govern child protection in ensuring that all right holders and government as a duty bearer adheres to their responsibilities.

The government of Malawi aims to enhance the survival, protection and development of 1,440,000 million vulnerable children through strengthened capacity of families, communities and government enhanced policy and legislation by 2019 (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:20). There is a need to understand the situation of OVC in Malawi if the country has to reach the goal of changing the lives of 1,440,000 million vulnerable children by 2019.

## **2.5. Overview of OVC situation in Malawi**

According to the UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014:2), although human vulnerability is not a new concept, it is increasing due to various factors such as financial instability and environmental factors as a result of people living in extreme poverty and deprivation. Regardless of poverty reduction reports, more than 2.2 billion people worldwide are either near or living in multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2014:3). Malawi as a developing country is no exception as the World Bank 2017 annual report states that 389 million people in Africa continue to live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2017:36). Statistically this is shocking because it means that not much has changed since the year 2014. Similarly, nearly 80% of the global population lack comprehensive social protection, 12% suffer from chronic hunger, and close to 1.5 billion people are informally employed (UNDP, 2014:3). These statistics highlight the severity of global poverty which affects developing countries in Africa such as Malawi.

According to the NPA for Vulnerable Children in Malawi 2015-2019, 61.4% of children between ages of 0-17 live within households that fall below the poverty line; 1.8 million children live in broken families of either one parent or double orphaned households; and it is estimated that 12,000 children live in child-headed households while 10,000 are under institutional care (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:11). Mana (2017:1) states that between the years 2009-2014 the number of children in institutional care increased by 62%, while in 2017 approximately 10,000 children were being raised in child care centres in the country. Much as institution-based care appears to be the answer to a child's needs, children under this type of care continue to face negative effects such as being deprived of their right to an identity and inheritance. Other problems faced by vulnerable children in Malawi include child labour, early child marriages, early sexual intercourse, teenage pregnancies, conflict with the law, low education attendance, and poor health conditions (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:11). This paints a picture of high child vulnerability in Malawi which only propels child poverty.

UNICEF (2015:1) states that 74% of Malawi's population lives below the poverty line of USD 1.25 a day. Considering that the World Bank Global Monitoring Report (World Bank, 2015:1) states that people living on less than USD 1.90 are said to be poor, 74% of Malawians are poor. The 2017 World Bank reports that a large share of the African population continues to live on USD 1.90 or less a day with a total of 389 million people remaining in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2017:36). OXFAM (2015:14) affirms the increasing levels of poverty in Malawi by indicating that out of 16.3 million Malawians, at least 50% live below the poverty line.

United Nations (1999 in Lombard, 2003:157) define poor people as those lacking food, water, land, productive resources, equipment, income generating skills, health facilities, basic health information and practices, and low resistance to illnesses and disease, among other things. Olinto, Beegle, Sobrado and Uematsu (2013:2) observe that the poor continue to define their needs as lacking basic needs such as access to basic utilities namely water, sanitation, electricity and a lack of adequate and quality education. A most recent study on global multidimensional poverty indicates poor



people identifying their needs as proper nutrition, education, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, floor and assets (Alkire & Robles, 2017:3). How poor people define their needs are evidently directly related to basic human rights. Poverty therefore contributes to child vulnerability as children face a lack of access to services that meet their basic needs.

SOS Children's Villages International is an international organisation that operates in Malawi focusing on socio-economic care for OVC by offering institutionalised as well as day care for children affected by poverty, HIV and related problems. In 2013 SOS Children's Villages International Malawi produced a summary of alternative care arrangements which shows that Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world ranking 170 out of 186 in the 2013 Human Development Index (SOS Children's Villages International Malawi, 2013:4). Malawi remained number 170 out of 188 countries in the 2016 Human Development Index (Human Development Report 2016:208) indicating that there has been no change since the 2013 report. Such high levels of poverty have great impact on the wellbeing of children because the children face a number International Villages Malawi of vulnerabilities (SOS Children's Villages International Malawi, 2013:4). According to SOS Children's Villages International Malawi (2013:4), organisations such as UNICEF estimate that 800,000 Malawian children have lost either one or both parents thereby posing some of the widespread challenges concerning children in the country. Statistically, 65% of girls and 35% of boys under the age of 16 in the country have experienced violence; 25% are used for child labour, while 23% of girls are at risk of early marriage (SOS Children's Villages International Malawi, 2013:4). These statistics depict the severity of child vulnerability in Malawi as many of these children are living without any form of protection or support which makes them vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, child marriage, neglect and trafficking, among other problems. Furthermore, it contributes to a continued cycle of poverty as these children continue to face a lack of access to their socio-economic rights.

Poverty leads to child vulnerability because most parents in Malawi cannot afford to provide basic materials such as clothes to their children (Van De Putten, 2014:13).

According to Hara, Nduna, Ndebele and Pillay (2012:435), the HIV AIDS pandemic is a well-established phenomenon worldwide, particularly in sub Saharan Africa and Southern Africa which is one of the most affected regions. AIDS not only increases the population of OVC, but conversely decreases the number of breadwinners, leading to many households being headed by grandparents and children, known as child-headed homes (Hara et al., 2012:435). Several studies have documented the declining wealth of households as a result of AIDS; as a household member falls ill, medical care and other expenses increase, while both ability to work and capacity to generate income are likely to decrease (UNICEF, 2006:10). As a result, in households affected by AIDS, more money is spent caring for sick members, leaving fewer resources for the children and these adjustments can have a particularly harmful effect on children in poorer households, which already have fewer resources (UNICEF, 2006:10).

The rate at which children are orphaned and vulnerable due to poverty and HIV in Malawi is alarmingly high (USAID, 2015:1). Consequently, Berutt (2011:2-3) observes that out of 1000 child births, annually, 110 children die due to poor hygiene and sanitation and approximately 30,000 newly born babies are infected by the HIV virus. According to the Clinton Foundation (2016:1), 1.4 million or almost half of all the children in Malawi suffer from malnutrition as a result of poverty. The increase in poverty and HIV impact on the socio-economic development of children means that their socio-economic rights are not being upheld in that they are deprived of the opportunity to grow up in environments that allow them to flourish.

According to Handley, Higgins, Sharma, Bird and Cammack (2009:3-4), prolonged illnesses such as HIV/AIDS result in abandonment of productive activities whilst affecting livelihood and decreasing the ability of parents and guardians to care and provide for their children. This does not only leave them vulnerable but it also results into violation of their socio-economic rights due to unmet basic needs such as food, education and health care (Handley et al., 2009:4).

According to Guarcello, Lyon and Rosati (2004:5) orphanhood can affect children in many possible ways because as parents succumb to HIV/AIDS, children may have to allocate more time to income generation, food production, household chores or to caring

for other family members. This tends to result into some form of child labour because children are required to shoulder extensive house responsibilities, including house chores. The loss of the mother may mean that the child must shoulder more of the burden of running the household, while the loss of the father might mean that the child must work outside the home to compensate for the father's lost earnings (Guarcello et al., 2004:5). The continued vulnerability of children results into child marriages in that the children tend to resort to marriage as a way of meeting their basic needs. According to Girls Not Brides (2015:1), a global partnership of more than 700 civil society organisations committed to ending child marriages and enabling girls to fulfil their potential. Every two seconds a girl is married before she is physically or emotionally mature enough to become a wife or a mother (Girls Not Brides, 2015:1). Globally, at present, 720 million women were married before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and every year they are joined by another 15 million child brides (Girls Not Brides, 2015:1).

The situation of child marriages is no better in Africa considering that a 2015 UNICEF report indicates that large numbers of African girls and women suffer the consequences of child marriage (Girls Not Brides, 2015:2). Statistics indicate that 40% of women in sub-Saharan Africa get married as children and that child marriages are widespread in West and Central Africa where 42% of women are married as children while in East and Southern Africa child marriages affect 37% of girls (Girls Not Brides, 2015:2). Not surprisingly, Africa is home to 15 of the 20 countries with the highest rates of child marriages in the world (Girls Not Brides, 2015:2). These reports are an indication of the severity of child vulnerability and socio-economic injustices that affect children.

The overview on the situation of OVC in Malawi indicates poverty and HIV/AIDS as the main causes of child vulnerability. However, the Malawi Constitution (1994) states children's socio-economic rights as being mandatory and emphasises the obligation to have them upheld. The above section also highlighted that children have continued to be vulnerable despite government and NGO interventions. A human rights-based approach needs to be adopted by child protection organisations in an effort to promote socio-economic rights of OVC. According to Palmqvist (2011:14) the principles of the human rights-based approach are empowerment, accountability, non-discrimination and

participation as discussed above. The human rights-based approach focuses on putting people at the centre of development (Palmqvist, 2011:11). It is within this context that the study adopted the human rights-based approach as its theoretical framework.

## **2.6 Theoretical framework: The human rights-based approach**

As indicated in Chapter One, the human rights-based approach stems from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Pawar, 2012:35). While there is no agreed upon definition of the human rights-based approach, for conceptual clarity, the human rights-based approach, as defined by Pawar (2012:35), directed the researcher in this study. Pawar (2012:35) defines the human rights-based approach as “an empowering approach which suggests that citizens have justifiable entitlement to human dignity and worth, to basic services, for example, food, education, health, and employment, and justifiable duties to the community.” The human rights-based approach concern itself with human rights, education and empowerment of individuals to know their rights; it refers to the existence of accountability between right holders and duty bearers in the respect, protection and fulfilment of rights (UNICEF, 2007:27).

These principles highlight the need for an inclusive, participatory and empowering approach to be realised and adopted by organisations that render services to children.

The focus of this study fits into the human rights-based approach in that it aimed to explore and describe the role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi with a particular emphasis on CCC as a case study. The researcher chose the human rights-based approach not only because it is embedded in engagement and empowerment as it allows right holders to participate in decision matters that affect them, but it also recognises that NGOs should focus their activities on upholding human rights. However, Vandenhoe and Gready (2014:310) highlights some negative connotations of the human rights-based approach. For example, they observe that “the human rights approach has been labelled bad and disadvantageous in that NGOs view it as a deviation from what they consider as good development of being value rather than evidence-based since it focuses more on the needs of the people than those of the NGOs”. Thus, NGOs view good development as the services that they assume people

need without really consulting with them what their needs are, thereby creating an impression that the NGOs are not necessarily prepared to adopt the human rights-based approach to service delivery. Nevertheless, the human rights-based approach focuses on the promotion of people's rights and the need for participation in matters that affect them.

Efforts to implement programmes that adheres to the human rights-based approach is evident in Malawi as government has shown primary commitment by instituting various legislation and policies that are supposed to protect children and ensure that duty bearers take responsibility in upholding children's rights (see Section 2.4 above). NGOs such as CCC have a role to play in making children aware of their rights, upholding human rights and challenging social injustices. There is also need for NGOs to adhere to policy and legislation that covers child protection in strengthening their efforts of ensuring that children's socio-economic rights are uphold.

## **2.7 The role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights**

According to Mercer (1997) in Seabe (n.d.:5), NGOs are hailed as drivers of economic development and are perceived as a universal solution to the problem of poverty. The roles of NGOs have been defined by Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond and Wolf (2002:9-10) as providing resources, capacity building and enhancing community participation. Most NGOs work in communities to supply resources which range from disaster relief, providing for teachers' salaries, to providing tin roofs (Miller-Granvaux et al., 2002:9). NGOs also enhance community capacity building by assisting in creating training schools and committees through which communities can gain control of their own schools (Miller-Granvaux et al., 2002:9). According to Miller-Granvaux et al. (2002:9), NGOs, similarly, play an active role in community participation by engaging communities in decision making and facilitating what problems the community faces and how they can be solved. In response to the diverse problems and needs of OVC in low-income countries, a range of NGO programmes have evolved over time in an effort to improve the daily lives and future prospects of the children (Larson & Wambua, 2011:1). NGOs in Malawi have, for many years, been rendering services to communities with the aim to alleviate poverty and HIV/AIDS (UNICEF, 2006:7). The efforts of these NGOs, of

which mostly under challenging conditions, are applauded. NGOs in Malawi, such as the case with NGOs across the globe, have for many years been providing capacity building, skills training and resources (Miller-Grandvaux et al., 2002:9-10) in communities with an aim of alleviating poverty. However, regardless of these efforts, children remain vulnerable. More work needs to be done in ensuring that children's socio-economic rights are upheld and they are accorded equal and non-discriminatory opportunities to thrive. There are best practices of how NGOs have successfully implemented programmes in Africa from which NGOs in Malawi can learn and incorporate in OVC programmes.

NGOs in poverty alleviation in Africa (UK Essays, 2013:2) summarises the role of NGOs in relation to microfinance, capacity building, self-reliance and sustainable community development, peace building, environmental conservation and development, food security, transportation, and humanitarian assistance. The researcher will briefly expand on some of these above-mentioned roles of NGOs with specific emphasis on how they promote socio-economic rights for OVC.

### 2.7.1 Microfinance

Microfinance is an important area that NGOs have fully put into practice in reaching out to the poor. The roles played by NGOs in this sector have immensely contributed to poverty alleviation in vulnerable communities with microfinance currently being promoted as a key development strategy for promoting poverty eradication and economic empowerment (UK Essays, 2013:4). According to Mutami and Mago (2014:5) microfinance dates back to the 1970s when Yunus, a Nobel Prize winner, realised that basic classroom economics was not helping the poor to move out of poverty and as such, he started to give out small amounts to the poor. These experiments were proven to be worthwhile as they led to social transformation through the alleviation of poverty.

Microfinance programmes have the potential to transform power relations and empower both women and men who are poor (Cheston & Kuhn 2002:168). Access to microfinance translates into a better life through better nutrition, higher improved health

outcomes as it allows people to send children to school, and increase chances of employment (UN, 2013:8).

Microfinance has been evident to benefit children as studies have shown that beneficiaries of microfinance use the money to pay school fees for their children, purchase more food for the family and an improved healthcare (Child Protection in Crisis, 2011:11).

Microfinance fits well into development and can be adopted as a poverty alleviation strategy as it empowers individuals to get hold of economic opportunities and manage their vulnerabilities by giving them self-control and improved self-esteem (UN, 2013:12). The researcher views microfinance as an agent of poverty alleviation which, in turn, results in the improvement of children's livelihoods because if families are economically empowered, they are able to provide children with their basic socio-economic needs. Through the provision of microfinance to the community, families are able to acquire different skills and knowledge hence building their capacity and enhancing community development.

### 2.7.2 Capacity building

PEPFAR (2012:3) looks at capacity building and strengthening frameworks as the process by which individuals, groups and organisations increase their abilities to first perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and to, in turn, understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. Capacity building is another NGO strategy that helps to bring about sustainable community development because through this approach, communities become independent (Hedayat, Hedayat & Ma'rof, 2010:88). Dibie, Edoho and Dibie (2015:7) highlights that capacity building entails a process which enables individuals to develop critical, social and technical capacities to be able to identify and analyse their problems and offer solutions to them.

Capacity building is interdependent and, for growth to be achieved, it requires the integration of several levels of capacity building. According to Lammert, Johnson and Fiore (2015:2-3) the four types of capacity building that need to work hand in hand to

ensure maximum effectiveness are: human capital which includes intellectual capacity such as knowledge and skills, additionally interest, patience and persistence. This is supported by Midgley (2014:83), saying that human capital is also a way in which people can build their capacity as it focuses on the acquisition of skills and knowledge through education, creativity and leadership. Building human capacity strengthens organisational capacity. This involves interaction, collaboration and communication among people within an organisation (Lammert et al., 2015:2). The achievement of human capacity building and improved organisational understanding and communication trickles down to the advocacy for changed policies and procedures which aim to benefit citizens. Structural capacity includes elements of policies, procedures and practices (Lammert et al., 2015:3). Lastly, citizens can only be agents of change in their communities if they have resources and materials needed to implement change (Lammert et al., 2015:3). As emerged in this chapter, there are challenges that hinder citizen participation in communities, such as a lack of resources, including funding, increasing poverty levels, and a non-commitment from stakeholders.

According to The World Bank (2017:21) the collective skills and capacity of a population are a crucial determinant of economic growth and poverty reduction. Through support of access to quality basic services such as health, social protection, opportunities, jobs and financial services, individuals can fulfill their potential and countries achieve greater economic success (World Bank, 2017:21).

Through the provision of education, skills and knowledge, NGOs develop the capacity of community towards achieving sustainable development (NGOs in ..., 2013:7). Building community capacity requires an understanding of the community, it requires investing time in understanding the needs of the people in the community. This is confirmed by literature as Hedayat et al. (2010:88) state that it is important to note that before building capacity within programmes, NGOs need to identify pre-existing capacities such as skills, structures, partnerships and resources.

In Malawi, districts such as Lilongwe and Chiradzulu also receive funding from NGOs for vocational skills and training which target older vulnerable children not attending school and they offer education and parenting support which targets care givers of



vulnerable children (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:16). It is significant to always put people at the centre of development as capacity building can only be achieved through the participation of citizens in their own development (Dibie et al., 2015:4).

Capacity development is considered to be a long-term, endogenous process of developing sustainable abilities on all levels: the individual, organisational, institutional and system level (Ulleberg, 2009:17). In this regard, the researcher is of the view that capacity building ensures the promotion of children's socio-economic rights in that the communities are empowered hence their becoming skilled in how to develop themselves sustainably and, in turn, having the capacity to raise children in environments that pose lesser risks to their wellbeing. If communities are equipped with skills and knowledge, they are self-reliant and play a great role in community development.

### 2.7.3 Self-reliance and community development

The concept of self-reliance is strategically situated within the essence of community development and is related to other concepts like mutual-help, self-help, participation of the indigenous people and rural progress (NGOs in ..., 2013:7-8). It dates back to as far as 1841 when Ralph Emerson who stressed that self-reliance is about one's trust in present thoughts, skills, originality and belief in own capabilities (Marinova & Hossain, 2006:2). Translated to the community, self-reliance refers to the power of independence, creativity, originality and belief in strength and reliance at community level (Marinova and Hossain, 2006:2). Motivating and mobilising people to become self-reliant and to participate in development activities become an important objective of the NGOs (Hedayat et al., 2010:89)

Depending on the government, help may be considered desirable for a short term but the aim of community development must ultimately be self-reliance (Hedayat et al., 2010:89). Self-reliance encourages the necessity for people to use local initiatives, their abilities and their own possessions to improve their condition (NGOs in ..., 2013:7-8).

For Ite (2016:2), self-reliance focuses on the power on independence, creativity, originality and self-belief in strength and resilience. At the heart of self-reliance and sustainable development lie the principles of care for human wellbeing, basic needs of the poor, welfare of future generations and preservation of environmental resources (Ite, 2016:11).

NGOs can thus promote the socio-economic rights of OVC by integrating programming that aims at empowering the community by making them self-reliant and independent. According to Hedayat et al. (2010:89) NGOs have a role to play in helping communities become more self-reliant and realise its potential through education, organisation, consciousness raising, small loans and the introduction of simple new technologies.

Children, through collective community skills, are raised to be self-reliant and are able to use their abilities in order to be agents of change (Tsoi-A-Fatt, 2008:6). Furthermore, the spirit of ownership of community property such as public schools and hospitals once instilled in children, empowers and enables them to contribute positively to society. Self-reliant communities become empowered to contribute to community development hence adopting favourable food security strategies that NGOs may introduce in communities.

#### 2.7.4 Food security

In view of severe food insecurity in Malawi, NGOs in the country now attempt to intervene to protect small farmers from eviction; indigenous people from losing traditional lands and fishing grounds; and segments of the population from discriminatory food supply schemes (NGOs in ..., 2013:10). Furthermore, they are developing the concept of nutritional rights, as opposed to the right to adequate food, and are putting pressure on the government to take responsibility for supplying funding for nutrition in national budgets (NGOs in ..., 2013:10).

Some of the benefits of NGO involvement in Malawi as highlighted by the World Food Programme (WFP) are increased government capacity and infrastructure which come about through efforts to fill gaps caused by government inability to carry out specific tasks, and by partnering with NGOs which help to increase the pool of resources for both food and non-food complementary inputs (WFP, 2009:2). Furthermore, NGOs tend

to involve people directly in the assistance process of their various needs and this ensures sustainable change (WFP, 2009:2). NGOs in Malawi have been setting up Community Based Child Care Centres (CBCC) in order to provide support to OVC by using school feeding programmes as an incentive for vulnerable children to stay in school (Department of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2016:16).

Additionally, through the rural resilience initiative, WFP has integrated four risk management strategies namely; risk reduction, risk transfer, prudent risk taking and risk reserves with an aim of helping poor households improve their food security and deal with climate variability and thereby strengthening their resilience (WFP, 2018:1). According to WFP (2018:1) the initiative has been implemented across three districts benefitting over 10,000 households. The rural resilience initiative aims at achieving food security by focusing on drought affected areas and areas that are highly dependable on rain (WFP, 2018:3).

Through strengthened partnerships, the year 2017 saw NGOs play a significant role in food security. As indicated in the USAID food assistance fact sheet, the USAID office of food for peace enabled WFP to distribute life-saving food assistance to over 5.1 million people (USAID, 2017:1). WFP also conducted food for asset activities with an aim of helping over 460,000 small holder farmers and their communities to build resilience and recover from drought (USAID, 2017:1). Additionally, in partnership with the Catholic Relief Services, USAID successfully provided long-term development programmes for over 248,000 food insecure households to reduce chronic malnutrition and food insecurity in the most food insecure districts in Malawi (USAID, 2017:1).

NGOs do not only provide food relief and implement food security programmes in Malawi, they also act as policy watchdogs for ensuring that the government implement policies that are favourable to citizens. Hence, the researcher views the role of NGOs in food security as a contribution to children's socio-economic rights because this means that children are adequately provided with food which contributes to their good nutrition and healthy upbringing. Food security is influenced by natural disasters and hence NGOs in Malawi have a crucial role in responding to natural disasters through the

provision of food relief. Natural disasters can happen at any time which call for humanitarian response.

#### 2.7.5 Humanitarian response

There has been an improved donor response on a global level to the rise in humanitarian needs with over US\$24.5 billion being used by donors and non-state organisations in 2014 to support the needs of vulnerable and displaced people (Spencer, 2015:3). The provision of food and non-food items during emergency periods, war time and other disaster periods is crucial (NGOs in ..., 2013:12).

Over the years, organisations such as UNICEF have been offering humanitarian relief to countries such as Malawi in times of disaster. This relief has been in the form of food, school materials, as well as temporary shelter. During the 2014-2015 floods, national disaster in Nsanje, UNICEF Malawi provided humanitarian relief in the form of tents that were used as classrooms and shelters for children (UNICEF, 2015:30).

According to the 2016 UNICEF annual report, UNICEF Malawi responded to multiple crises by delivering emergency supplies worth US\$4.1 million providing invaluable humanitarian assistance to drought, food insecurity and cholera in the year 2016 (UNICEF, 2016:57).

Malawi as a country, continues to be impacted by disasters such as cholera, flooding and drought. The year 2016 had late rains and prolonged dry spells which exacerbated to low crop production resulting in 0.716 million metric ton maize deficit (UNICEF, 2016:3). In reaction to this, UNICEF revised their funding and successfully managed to support nutrition emergency response in all drought affected districts by identifying and treating children under five years with severe acute malnutrition, immunising children aged 6-69 months against measles, providing children with life-saving curative interventions and ensuring that commodities are delivered to all community management sites (UNICEF, 2016:3).

In addition, 2,615,000 children were reached with Vitamin A supplementation and 2,428,000 were reached with de-worming. UNICEF supplied potable water to 65,260

people, over 400,000 people were reached with hygiene promotion messages, and emergency preparedness and response capacity was strengthened by training 189 child protection workers on real-time monitoring of children accessing psychosocial services (UNICEF, 2016:3).

All these efforts were not done independently as UNICEF Malawi also worked in collaboration with the Malawi government through the Ministry of Health in conducting preventive mass oral cholera vaccination campaigns in cholera prone areas where 93,457 people have been vaccinated (UNICEF, 2016:3). Joint programmes between the Malawian government and UNICEF in ensuring that children's socio-economic right to health is upheld, affirm the government's commitment which is clearly indicated in the countries legislation and policies as stated under Section 2.4 of this chapter. According to UNICEF (2016:3), 100 schools were provided with teaching and learning materials and supported the recruitment of volunteer teachers in 168 learning centres.

In conclusion, NGOs have been contributing to promote OVC socio-economic rights through humanitarian response, food security, self-reliance and community development, capacity building and microfinance. In the next discussion, the initiatives of NGOs in Malawi will be discussed in relation to a human rights-based approach.

## **2.8 NGOs initiatives within a human rights-based approach in Malawi**

In this section the work of Norwegian Church Aid, Christian Aid, Children of the Nation (COTN) and UNICEF will be explored in relation to how they deal with OVC in Malawi from a human rights perspective and how the organisations incorporate the rights-based approach in their service delivery. The following discussion will point out how these NGOs, through the work of social and community workers, have successfully managed to implement programmes from a human rights-based approach.

According to the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) (2011:7-8) services delivered to OVC in Malawi cannot be achieved without the efforts of people in the community. NCA volunteers in villages of Bembeke in Malawi's Central Region were charged with the responsibility to educate, empower, and encourage pregnant women to visit the clinic and receive adequate healthcare (NCA, 2011:7). Within two years of the introduction of

these volunteers, the number of hospital deliveries increased to 88% and only one child was registered to have died compared to 17 who died before the project was introduced. In addition, the intervention reduced the number of malnourished children from over 43 to less than 10 (NCA, 2011:7). Furthermore, the project reduced the risks of mother to child transmissions of HIV, and the number of OVC because new health education initiatives helped to ensure that all mothers became aware of their right to health services and their responsibility to access this right as right holders. Therefore, children's right to health is upheld by providing equal and non-discriminatory health services to all children.

In an effort to promote the rights of children in Malawi, the NCA constructed maternity wings in Chitipa, Rumphi, Lilongwe, Balaka, Blantyre, Nsanje, Thyolo and Phalombe districts (NCA, 2015:6). The construction of new maternity wings and the provision of new equipment cannot be taken for granted due to its potential to help decrease maternal and child deaths in the country. In 2015, for example, Malawi had one of the world's highest number of deaths attributed to child birth or pregnancy-related illnesses rated at 700 deaths per 10,000 people. Worse still, of every 1000 babies born, 80 were dying before they reached the age of 5 (NCA, 2015:6).

A 2014-2015 Annual Report by Christian Aid, an international NGO operating in Malawi whose sole purpose is to build resilience in communities and aid the communities in leading healthy lives, states that in an effort to improve child healthcare in Karonga, a district in Northern Malawi (Christian Aid, 2015:9). In the year 2015, the organisation trained 62 health workers in community-based maternal and newborn care and carried out village clinics for more than 9,000 children under five years (Christian Aid, 2015:9). Furthermore, the organisation ensured healthcare for the prevention and treatment of child illnesses with more than 5,000 pregnant women and new mothers receiving referrals. As a result, the 2014-2015 financial year saw an increased proportion of women receiving comprehensive and timely antenatal, delivery and postnatal care (Christian Aid, 2015:9). These implemented projects in various districts in Malawi resulted into improved health and livelihood of OVC as well as their guardians which

affirm that a human rights-based approach to service delivery promotes the upholding of socio-economic rights of OVC.

The 2015 annual report of UNICEF Malawi affirms impacts of a human rights-based approach on the health of women living with HIV/AIDS. Equal and non-discriminatory service delivery increased the number of women living with HIV/AIDS who received treatment from 74% in 2014 to 85% in 2015. Similarly, 95% of exposed infants were able to receive antiretroviral prophylaxis, thereby decreasing their risk to HIV infection (UNICEF, 2015:1). The project thus demonstrates how UNICEF operates under a human rights-based approach which is evident in their respect and protection of mother and children's right to health services. Furthermore, assisting pregnant mothers and giving infants access to antiretroviral treatment ensured that vulnerable children were accorded their right to healthy living.

In another project, the NCA, during the 2005-2010 timeframe, partnered with the Evangelical Church, and people of Dedza, a district in central Malawi, in implementing an integrated sustainable water and sanitation project that aimed at providing safe water for OVC in CBCC (NCA, 2011:8). The project minimised the possibilities of OVC suffering from waterborne diseases caused by poor sanitation while realising their right to health services. Similarly, NGOs such as USAID have over the years taken great interventions as far as curbing poverty in Malawi is concerned (USAID, 2014:4). By providing clean and safe water, the NCA and the Evangelical Church promote children's right to health.

According to USAID (2014:4), some of its interventions in Malawi have been through Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA). This is a project that engages farmers in commercial marketing in order to improve household's income and food security. WALA provides households with integrated programming that focuses on maternal and child health, nutrition, agriculture and natural resource management. Statistically, 111,675 farmers benefited from WALA in the short term agricultural sector productivity programmes, while 97,111 individuals benefited from the financial services led by WALA such as village savings and loan groups (USAID, 2014:4). Organisations such as Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and WFP also extend feeding

projects in an effort to improve the lives of OVC in Malawi. According to FAO (2010:20) the WFP implements the school feeding project in 13 primary schools in districts across Malawinamely, Kasungu, Lilongwe, Salima, Dedza, Mangochi, Thyolo, Nsanje, Ntcheu, Chikwawa, Chiradzulu, Zomba, Mulanje and Phalombe. This feeding programme targets OVC. They are given food at school and 12.5kg of cereal as a take-home food ration. Overall, the programme supports 635,000 pupils of which 63,500 are boys and 330,200 are girl OVC (FAO, 2010:20). Since the introduction of this programme, some of the reported benefits include improved school attendance by OVC and improved food security for households fostered by OVC through the take-home rations (FAO, 2010:20). Through the provision of food relief, children's socio-economic rights to education is realised as the study above indicates that there was an increase in school attendance which was a direct result of children having access to food. Additionally, food relief contributes to improved health.

COTN is an international NGO which has been operating in Malawi since 1998 with an aim to help children who have been affected by HIV/AIDS, poverty, illiteracy and other environmental challenges. In the year 2016, in an effort to improve the lives of OVC, COTN was able to reach out to a number of children with 4,578 children attending COTN schools, 118 children being sent to college and vocational training schools, and kindergarten OVC school performance experiencing a 16% improvement (COTN, 2016:10). The numbers have slightly improved when compared to a picture created by the 2015 annual report where 4,269 children attended school, 108 students were sent to university and vocational schools, and 3,993 children were fed daily (COTN, 2015:6). Provision of school materials and vocational skills training facilitate improved learning and promotes children's right to education, and as a result, a better future.

It is recorded that over 1.4 million children are involved in child labour in Malawi (NCA, 2011:14). NCA, in collaboration with the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation Malawi, conducted human rights education and awareness campaigns on the dangers of child labour and trafficking which is a violation of children's rights (NCA, 2011:14). The campaigns were registered successful as far as at least one child was recorded to have been rescued from child labour in Mozambique and 52 other vulnerable children



rescued from potential child trafficking (NCA, 2011:15). The discussion indicates that NGOs undertake various interventions to ensure that all children are treated equally and living in environments that enable them to fully enjoy their human rights.

## **2.9 Summary**

The chapter has explored the policies and legislative frameworks for child protection in Malawi and provided an insight regarding the status of OVC in the country as well as the role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights within the human rights-based approach.

Accountability, empowerment, participation and non-discrimination as principles of the human rights-based approach can be integrated in OVC programmes with an aim of promoting children's socio-economic rights. OVC programmes that are embedded in a human rights-based approach ensure that the focus of services are on children's basic needs. The high levels of poverty and HIV/AIDS in the country and their impact on children shows that much still has to be done to promote the socio-economic rights of OVC.

Children poverty can be alleviated through a human rights-based approach as it addresses children's basic needs. NGOs can play a role in alleviating poverty in families through microfinance, capacity building, self-reliance and sustainable community development, peace building, environmental conservation and development, and food security.

The Norwegian Church Aid, Christian Aid, Children of the Nation (COTN) and UNICEF programmes provide best practice examples on how to deal with OVC in Malawi from a human rights perspective.

The document analysis indicate that CCC programmes focuses on all children in Malawi without discrimination in respect of gender, tribe, race, colour, creed, religious belief, sexual orientation, political affiliation, nationality, disability, or membership of any minority group (CCC Constitution, 2013). CCC's programmes reach out to children and their families.

The next chapter will focus on the research methodology and empirical study and findings of the study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The chapter presents the research methodology that was utilised in the study, the empirical study and findings. The chapter begins with an outline of the research approach, research type and the research design used. The research methodology then follows, including the population and sampling, the data collection methods, the data analyses, and how the trustworthiness of the data was secured. The next discussion focuses on the pilot study, followed by the ethical aspects that guided the study, and the limitations of the study. The following section will present and discuss the empirical findings of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

The research question that guided the study was:

What is the role of Chisomo Children's Club in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi?

In answering the research question, findings were informed by responses to the following sub questions:

- What social services are rendered by Chisomo Children's Club to OVC?

- What are the challenges faced by Chisomo Children's Club in delivering services to OVC?
- How do the services rendered by Chisomo Children's Club promote socio-economic rights of OVC?
- How can service delivery by Chisomo Children's Club be improved to promote socio-economic rights of OVC?

### **3.2 Research approach**

The qualitative research approach was utilised in this study as it sought to explore feelings, understandings and experiences of research participants (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:66) regarding the role of CCC in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC. Using a qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94) of the role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC from the perception of social workers working with CCC in Blantyre, Malawi.

The study served an exploratory purpose due to the lack of empirical information on the role of CCC in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC. Exploratory studies are used when there is lack of basic information on an area of interest (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The study was also descriptive in nature as it sought to provide a descriptive answer (Kreuger & Neuman, 2006 in Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95-96) on how CCC promotes socio-economic rights of OVC and what roles the organisation undertakes in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC.

### **3.3 Research type**

The study fits well under applied research as its findings intended to find solutions to problems and troublesome situations with regard to a practical issue (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95), namely the role of CCC in promoting children's socio-economic rights. The

researcher envisaged that findings from this study could inform service delivery that would promote children's socio-economic rights.

### **3.4 Research design**

The case study design was applied in this research and in particular, instrumental case study (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:322). According to Fouché and Schurink (2011:322), an instrumental case study design allows for a detailed description and exploration of a phenomenon through data collection methods which would allow the researcher to give an in-depth description and exploration of the role of CCC in rendering services that promote socio-economic rights to OVC from the perspective of social workers. The in-depth information that the researcher obtained in this study, assisted her to make recommendations that could inform policy development with regard to promoting socio-economic rights of OVC (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:320).

### **3.5 Research methodology**

This section will provide a detailed breakdown of the research methods that were utilised in this study. Firstly, the study population and sample criteria will be discussed, followed by the data collection, the data analysis, and how the trustworthiness of the data was secured.

#### **3.5.1. Study population and sampling**

The study was conducted at CCC, which is one of the biggest NGOs offering institutional and home-based care to OVC in Malawi. The research population consisted of all the social workers employed at CCC. According to Strydom (2011a:223) a population is the totality of persons, events, organisation units, case records or other sampling units with which the research problem is concerned. As the research population was large, the researcher used non-probability sampling in selecting the sample. Once the research study was approved, the manager at CCC produced a list of all social workers employed at CCC. Using this list, the researcher then used her judgement in purposively selecting a sample that would best reflect the attributes and

characteristics of the population and hence the most representative of the study population (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392).

The sample included 10 social workers who were willing to participate in the study and met the following criteria:

- At least 3 years of direct social work practice experience,
- At least one year working experience at the CCC, and
- Engage in micro and/or macro social work practice at the NGO.

### 3.5.2. Data collection

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews and document study were the primary data collection methods used in this study.

#### 3.5.2.1. *Semi-structured one-on-one interviews*

One-on-one interviews were conducted in order to exchange information between the researcher and social workers on how services delivered by CCC promote socio-economic rights of OVC. A semi-structured interview schedule was used as data collection method to guide the interviews (See Appendix A). A semi-structured interview refers to an interview guided by a set of predetermined open ended questions on the interview schedule (Greeff, 2011:352). The advantage of using a semi-structured interview schedule is that it is flexible and allows the researcher to probe and gain an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions (Potmus, 2013:254). In addition, the use of semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to understand the world from the participant's point of view (Greeff, 2011:347). The semi-structured interviews are disadvantageous in that their nature of being open ended makes them very time consuming (Greeff, 2011:353).

#### 3.5.2.2 *Document study*

To complement the data collected through the one-on-one interviews, the researcher studied the organisation's annual reports, CCC constitution and participants' job descriptions. These documents were studied to explore how the NGO views its role in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC. The strength of using these documents as a data collection method is that the researcher was able to obtain objective information from these documents which she could compare with the responses of the participants from the interview (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:382). However, the researcher was aware that these documents may reflect biasness as they were produced by the organisation to positively influence consumers (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:382). Therefore, the two data sets were triangulated to mitigate possible biasness (Bowen, 2009:28). The researcher will discuss how the documents analysed were incorporated in the empirical findings (see Section 3.10).

### 3.5.3. Data analysis

The process of qualitative data analysis involves organising and making sense of the data in terms of the participants' views (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:399). In this study the researcher used Creswell's data analysis process. Using Creswell's process, the researcher organised and prepared the data, read through all the data, coded the data, generated themes and sub-themes from the data, and eventually presented and interpreted all the data (Creswell, 2014:195). These steps unfolded as follows:

- **Organising and preparing of data for analysis**

The interviews were audio taped. The researcher transcribed the interviews, typed up field notes and sorted out all the data (Creswell, 2014:195). The transcription process entailed listening to the audio recorded interviews to ensure that data was accurately described.

- **Reading through the data**

After transcribing all the information, the researcher read the transcripts to familiarise herself with the data and obtain a general overview thereof (Creswell, 2014:197). Whilst reading through the data, the researcher wrote down her own reflections on the general

ideas from participants, as well as her overall impressions of the data collected (Creswell, 2011:197).

- **Coding the data**

After reading through the data, the researcher then grouped the data into different categories by labelling each category with a term and colour highlighting it (Creswell, 2014:198). This enabled the researcher to identify topics based on previous literature as well as identifying codes that were surprising and not anticipated in the study (Creswell, 2014:198).

- **Generating themes and detailed descriptions**

After grouping and coding the data, the researcher then began generating themes and detailed descriptions of the data. The process of generating themes and detailing descriptions involves rendering information about people, places or events in the research setting (Creswell, 2014:199). From the coded data, the researcher generated descriptions of research participant's age, sex, highest tertiary qualification, as well as years of social work experience.

- **Interrelating themes/descriptions**

The researcher used a table to present participant's biographical information and in addition, narrative passages to convey detailed discussions of each theme and sub-themes with an incorporation of multiple quotations displaying perspectives of each participant (Creswell, 2014:200). The quotations from the participants were presented verbatim so as to display participant's exact responses.

- **Interpreting the meaning of themes/descriptions**

The final stage of the analysis involved the interpretation of findings and attaching meaning to them. The researcher made use of her personal interpretation based on her experiences as a professional social worker as well as making reference to literature (Creswell, 2014:200). The researcher then dissected and examined the findings thoroughly to determine if they confirm past information or diverge from it regarding the

role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi (Creswell, 2014:200). The process of examining the findings enabled the researcher to generate questions that she had foreseen earlier in the study (Creswell, 2014:200). Having done this, the researcher drew provisional conclusions on how CCC was amplifying socio-economic rights. Recommendations were drawn from the findings and conclusions (see Chapter 4, Sub-section 4.4).

Content analysis was employed to analyse the participant's job descriptions and annual reports of CCC. This process involved classifying the texts through structured coding to which the researcher then drew conclusions (Rose et al., 2015:1). The characteristics that the researcher was interested in included information that was in support of, or completely different from the empirical findings. The researcher particularly concerned herself with how CCC viewed social workers' roles in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC, the general understanding of children's socio-economic rights, and how CCC operates on a daily basis within a human rights-based approach.

### **3.6 Trustworthiness of collected data**

Social work has an ethical responsibility to conduct qualitative research that is accurate (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006:444). Authors such as Lincoln (1985), in Lietz et al. (2006:444), state that trustworthiness is established when findings reflect meanings as described by participants. The trustworthiness of this research was increased through the use of the following strategies: member checking, reflexivity and the use of an audit trail (Lietz et al., 2006:444).

The researcher achieved member checking by taking research data, responses and transcripts back to each participant to allow them to confirm or challenge whether the transcripts were written accurately regarding how the researcher interpreted the information based on how the participants had responded in the interview. Member checking allows the participants to review and verify findings in accordance to how they responded to the actual interview (Lietz et al., 2006:453). To manage possible biasness towards the rights of children, the researcher engaged the process of reflexivity throughout the research process by keeping a written reflection journal that unselfishly



considered how her perspective and viewpoints may have influenced the research (Lietz et al., 2006:447). In achieving trustworthiness of the research through audit trail, the researcher recorded all changes she made during the course of the research in her diary and incorporated it into the research report where necessary (Lietz et al., 2006:450). For example, the researcher probed more on the role of social workers in education as this is an area of interest and it enabled her to get rich information on the role social workers play, this was incorporated in the findings.

### **3.7 Pilot study**

The researcher carried out a pilot study prior to the main investigation. This pilot study served as a dress rehearsal for the main investigation (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:73). The researcher went through all the steps in the research methodology, including selecting the sample purposively, testing the interview schedule and transcribing the interview to analyse data for emerging themes and sub-themes. The first two interviews of the social workers were used as the pilot test of the study. The data that was collected from the pilot study was incorporated in the main study as acceptable in qualitative research (Junyong, 2017:601). Conducting this pilot study enabled the researcher to identify any flaws in the interview schedules (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:73). The pilot study showed that question five was confusing as it was not clear whether referencing to their role as social workers applied to their individual roles or to the role of the institution as a whole. The researcher rephrased the question to enable social workers to express their role in child protection from an individual perspective. The pilot study established the feasibility of the study (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:73).

### **3.8 Ethical considerations**

The researcher abided by various ethical considerations which provided a set of responsibilities on what should and should not be done during the study (Silverman, 2011:88). Firstly, the researcher sought and was granted permission (see Appendix B) to carry out interviews at CCC. The researcher requested and was granted ethical

clearance by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria (see Appendix C). The researcher obtained ethical clearance to ensure that risks faced by researchers are minimal (Strydom, 2011b:127). The ethical principles that guided the researcher will be discussed below.

### 3.8.1 Informed consent

Strydom (2011b:117) summarises the process of informed consent as making the participants aware of the expected duration of their involvement, possible advantages and disadvantages of participating in the study, and possible harm which they may be exposed to in their role as research participants. According to Strydom (2011b:118), informed consent ensures the full knowledge and cooperation of participants while resolving any possible tension, aggression, resistance or insecurity that they may have.

The researcher compiled a written informed consent letter that was sent to participants before the actual interview. According to Rubin and Babbie (2013:289), the consent form should provide information regarding all the features of the study. The informed consent letter informed the participants of the researcher's intentions to make use of a voice recording device during the interview, with their permission, as a way of ensuring accurate capturing of information. For the purpose of documenting the research findings, all participants were required to sign their letters to state they agree to be part of the research. Participants were also given an option to decline being a part of the study and those in agreement had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. However, no participant declined or withdrew from the study.

### 3.8.2 Privacy/confidentiality

Strydom (2011b:119) defines privacy as keeping to oneself that which is normally not intended for others to observe or analyse. Silverman (2011:419) states that confidentiality means researchers are obliged to protect the participant's identity and the location of the research. The researcher maintained the confidentiality of the participants by using codes when referring to them instead of names. According to Strydom (2011b:119) every individual has the right to decide when, where, and to whom

his/her behaviours, beliefs and attitudes will be revealed. The researcher ensured that only she and her supervisor will be allowed to view participant transcripts. Participants were also given the option to view their own transcripts. The data collected was only used for purposes of research and this was conveyed in the informed consent letter. The data obtained from the interviews will be stored at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Social Work and Criminology for a period of 15 years whereafter it will be destroyed. The informed letter indicated that if it was to be used again, it would be for research purposes.

### 3.8.3 Avoidance of harm and debriefing of participants

Avoidance of harm is an important research ethic as respondents are prone to be subjected to physical or emotional harm as a result of being part of the research (Strydom, 2011b:115). The study did not pose any physical harm. The researcher avoided possible emotional harm of participants by preparing them on what the research is about, and what is required from them (Strydom, 2011b:115). She also debriefed them after the interview as this enabled her to clarify any misconceptions or questions that may have arisen from the participants after taking part in the study (Strydom, 2011b:115). Furthermore, the researcher indicated to the participants that they could follow up with the head of programmes in the NGO, should they feel they experienced that the researcher has inflicted harm on them in any way during the interview.

### 3.8.4 Voluntary participation

According to Babbie (2012:32) participation should be voluntary and no participants should be forced to participate. The researcher observed this ethical aspect by informing each participant what the research is about and giving them an option of deciding if they want to participate or not. As indicated in Sub-section 3.8.1, it was also indicated in the informed consent letter that participating in the study was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

### 3.8.5 Dissemination of information

The researcher has an ethical obligation to report her findings as the study intended to contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field of study. The findings have been presented in this research report to the University of Pretoria. The researcher reported all findings in an honest manner without any form of misrepresentation (Strydom, 2011b:126).

### **3.9 Limitations of the study**

The study was qualitative in nature and the following limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the research findings. Firstly, the study was carried out in one NGO, CCC, and therefore the findings do not represent the role of other NGOs in Malawi in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC. The study was based on collecting subjective information from participants in their own words. One needs to consider that some participants may have given biased information because they wanted to present their organisation in a positive light. As a way of counteracting these limitations, the researcher ensured that participants were informed that their identity would be protected in presenting the findings.

### **3.10 Empirical findings**

This section discusses the empirical findings of the study. The section is divided into biographical information of the participants, and the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study. Findings are presented in the form of narrative passages and are compared and contrasted with evidence obtained from literature sources and document analysis.

During the documents analysis, three themes emerged from the three job descriptions (named A, B and C respectively), namely diversion and outreach programmes, economic strengthening activities, and family reintegration programmes. Additionally, more themes emerged from the analysis of the annual reports and the CCC constitution, namely outreach programmes, education, family reintegration programmes

and counselling. The findings on these themes were integrated in the corresponding themes of the findings from the one-on-one interviews.

### 3.10.1 Biographical details of research participants

The age, sexual orientation, years of social work experience, and participants' academic qualifications are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1: Biographical information of participants**

Participant s	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Sexual orientation	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	25-29	30-34	30-34	30-34	25-29	35-39	25-29	45-49	25-29	35-39
Years of social work experience	6	4	5+ <sup>1</sup>	7+ <sup>1</sup>	3	14	3	3-4	4-5	5
Years at CCC	2	3	2	5	3	14	3	3-4	4	2
Highest tertiary education	Degree in Social Work	Degree in Social Work	Degree in Social Work	Advanced Diploma in Community Development	Degree in Community Development	Degree in Sociology and Gender Development Studies	Degree in Social Work	Diploma in Social Work	Diploma in Social Work	Advanced Diploma in Community Development

<sup>1</sup> In the case of P3 and P4, the participants responded to the question on how many years of working experience in social work they have, by adding a + to the respective numbers. The researcher interpreted it as between 5 and 6 years for P3, and between 7 and 8 for P4.

There were more female than male participants in the study. The gender profile confirms the gender imbalance in the social work profession and the label given to social work as being a female dominated profession (Hicks, 2015:271). Majority of the social workers were under the age of 40 and have not practised as social workers for longer than 10 years. The longest serving social worker at CCC had been employed for a total of 14 years while the average years of employment for other participants were between three and four years. With regards to their highest tertiary education, the majority of the social workers were holders of a bachelor's degree in social work.

### 3.11 Key themes and sub-themes

In this section the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study are presented. The findings from the interviews will be complimented with direct voices of participants and where applicable, integrated with literature. The themes, sub-themes, and categories of sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Contextualising children's socio-economic rights	1.1. Social worker's knowledge of how children understand their socio-economic rights 1.2. Social worker's roles in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Awareness</li> </ul>
2. Interventions and programmes that promote socio-economic rights of OVC	2.1. Life skills lessons 2.2. Outreach programmes 2.3. Counselling 2.4. Sports and recreation 2.5. Diversion programmes 2.6. Income generating activities
3. Alignment of services to key themes and principles of the human rights-based approach	3.1. Participation 3.2. Family strengthening 3.3. Re-enrolment into schools
4. Challenges in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC	4.1. Lack of funding 4.2. Poverty 4.3. Children's resistance to staying at home or in institutional care
5. Role of stakeholders in improving	5.1. Community engagement

programmes that promote children's socio-economic rights	5.2.	NGO involvement
	5.3.	Families of OVC
	5.4.	Government involvement

**Theme 1: Contextualising children’s socio-economic rights**

Findings indicate that participants see children’s socio-economic rights as their ability to access their basic needs which include housing, wellbeing, nutritious food, life, good shelter, and education. Two sub-themes emerged from this theme.

**Sub-theme 1.1: Social worker’s knowledge of how children understand their socio-economic rights**

The participants’ had different perspectives on how children at CCC understand their socio-economic rights. There was a twofold response. The one response related to how participants understand children’s socio-economic rights, and secondly their view on how aware and informed children are about their socio-economic rights.

The narratives below indicate participants’ understanding of children’s socio-economic rights:

**P4:** *“Children’s socio-economic rights are rights to good health, right to education, right to be raised by their guardians”.*

**P9:** *“Actually I feel that socio-economic rights of children; it’s all about children’s rights especially these children that are vulnerable having the freedom to participate in activities, having the freedom to receive education, having the right to receive security and having the right to be protected”.*

**P2:** *“I would say it’s something which children have to understand about their wellbeing in terms of rights which are entitled to them. I would speak of like maybe rights to food, to education, being alive, being able to play, being able to associate with others and also like just everything for their wellbeing, being aware of them”.*

All participants displayed an understanding of children’s socio-economic rights as the right for children to be free, safe, healthy and happy. A study from the University of Pune elaborates on children’s basic rights, namely protection and prevention of illegal

abortion, right to nourishment and good health, love and affection from family as well as society, protection from any form of abuse, recreation, the right to basic education, right to full development, right to identity, and the right to live happily existing in a community (University of Pune, 2012:44).

Participants articulated their views on children's awareness and knowledge of their rights as follows:

**P4:** *"Children at CCC are aware of their rights because normally we provide life skills lessons to them and on those life skills lessons, topic of rights are included in that".*

**P3:** *"I feel like most children in Malawi are not aware of their rights but until they come to CCC and we work with them".*

The findings indicate that participants recognise the role that CCC plays in making children aware of their rights.

### **Sub-theme 1.2. Social worker's roles in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC**

Research findings indicate that social workers at CCC play a vital role in promoting children's socio-economic rights through protecting them, advocacy, education, as well as awareness. These categories will be next discussed.

- **Protection**

Findings indicate that children are taught how they can protect themselves as a safety measure. Children are also protected in forms of the provision of food and basic necessities. Knowledge on protection is transferred to children by making them aware of their human rights and preparing them to speak up when their human rights are violated. The following narratives reflect participant's views on protection:

**P3:** *"We protect juvenile children, those children that are involved in various crimes. There is a right in Malawi, every child is not supposed to be incarcerated, we work with the police. The police sends that particular child to us and we work with that particular child trying to bring in something that has been lacking for him or her to commit that particular crime".*



**P3:** *“When they come to the centre we provide them with a balanced diet to make sure that they have eaten in the morning, afternoon and in the evening”.*

**P2:** *“In child protection as I have already stated, that we mostly look at children and also teach them about their rights and also how can they protect themselves because its not all the time that they are going to be with someone older but when they know they are also able to protect themselves against such other things”.*

**P1:** *“On protection as a child protection worker, I make sure that a child exercises his or her rights without any infringements”.*

Child protection is a society’s responsibility. Although the state is the principal duty bearer for respecting and protecting children within their territories; other non-state entities such as parents, families, teachers, doctors, probation officers and social workers are also recognised as duty bearers in the protection of children (United Nations, 2011:14). The protection of children encompasses adopting a holistic approach that ably understands that children’s relationships are interdependent and interconnected (United Nations, 2011:14). Children must be protected from human rights violations by people who are closely involved with them. At the same time, children must know how to protect themselves and participate in matters that affect them.

- **Advocacy**

Being the voice to the voiceless applies to the promotion of socio-economic rights of children. Participants’ views highlighted that social workers at CCC conduct community advocacy meetings as a way of providing human rights education and ensuring that the communities are aware of how they can protect children. The role of social workers in advocacy also involves voicing out and enabling the children to exercise their rights without barriers. The following participants’ views reflect these sentiments:

**P2:** *“So I think each and every day we promoting children’s rights, and its not only here at Chisomo, because we have advocacy meetings in the communities and even in schools were we also advocate for children’s rights”.*

**P1:** *“Protection, as a child protection worker, I make sure that a child exercises his or her rights without any infringements”.*

Zastrow (2010:71) states that advocating for clients entails that social workers speak up on behalf of them so that they are provided with services as well as securing beneficial change in institutional policies. In being advocates, social workers seek to empower clients or citizen groups (Zastrow, 2010:71). Being empowered enables them to speak up and exercise their rights without infringement.

- **Education**

Education is a constitutional right in Malawi as highlighted in Chapter Three of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (Republic of Malawi Constitution, 1995). Therefore, it is paramount that all organisations promoting socio-economic rights for OVC should adhere to providing services that promote and protect children’s right to education. The narratives below indicate how CCC programmes promote children’s right to education.

**P5:** *“In education I also assist in catch-up lessons to make sure that when the child returns [to their] homes, [they] should be used to the life of school. I also teach a child like a teacher while [I] am a social worker, just to make sure the child should feel valued”.*

**P4:** *“I would start with education; we reregister these children to school after reintegrating them”.*

**P1:** *“The first thing on education [I] would say, I really encourage children to get back to school. If support is needed, we conduct what we call school registration; so as a social worker I make sure that a vulnerable child is registered in school”.*

The findings are confirmed by research from the Azusa Pacific University on the role of a social worker, stating:

“Social workers pick up where teachers left off as they are equipped to address the social and psychological issues that can block academic progress. They employ different interventions such as counselling, crisis interventions and prevention programmes that help young people overcome

the difficulties in their lives and as a result give them a better chance at succeeding at school” (Azusa Pacific University, [sa]:13).

The intervention programmes that CCC implements range from catch-up lessons to life skills lessons. Social workers engage OVC with an aim of stimulating their interest in education so as to ensure that they enroll for school. In the case where they have dropped out of school, and the need arises, participants indicated that social workers re-register children into the education system. Zastrow (2010:71) sees the role of social workers in education as having the responsibility to give children information and teaching them adaptive skills.

- **Awareness**

People can jointly promote and protect the rights of OVC if they are mindful of how to do so. Participants indicated that awareness is a role in which social workers primarily focus on educating children and the community on how they can ensure that their rights can be promoted and protected in the community. They articulated their views as follows:

**P1:** *“We conduct much of our awareness campaigns in communities where we aim at informing people about child protection issues”.*

**P2:** *“Child protection we don’t just say it but we mean it and we do it in a way that when the children come here they are made aware of their rights and in any other way if their rights are violated, they have to report”,*

Zastrow (2010:71) confirms that social workers have an awareness role. They raise awareness by engaging in community activities that involve fact finding and analysing of community needs, they largely engage in research, mobilisation, dissemination and interpretation of information and various other efforts that promote community public support and understanding. In the analysis of social workers’ job descriptions, it was found that all social workers are expected to undertake advocacy and an awareness raising role.

## **Theme 2: Interventions and programmes that promote socio-economic rights of OVC**

Based on the findings, the interventions and programmes that promote socio-economic rights of OVC are twofold. Some of the interventions and programmes are centred on individual child development while others focus on family economic empowerment with an aim of improving the life of the child from home. Interventions and programmes include life skills lessons; outreach programmes, counselling, sport and recreation, diversion programmes and income generating activities as will next be discussed.

### **Sub-theme 2.1: Life skills lessons**

Life skills lessons help in assisting the children to become more aware of their rights as it is during these lessons that social workers teach and educate children about their basic rights. Life skills lessons create awareness, but most importantly empower children to not only know their rights, but also to take responsibility to act upon their rights, such as attending school and learning. Participants' views in this regard are reflected in the following quotes:

**P5:** *“Life skills are there to just empower the child to know what their rights are”.*

**P3:** *“We have life skills programme whereby social workers are assigned to give a specific topic pertaining to education empowerment because most of the children...are on the street and [are] juvenile children. They are children who usually are not interested in school or their attention has been deviated from school so we try to rebuild that through modelling, through inspirations, through motivation talks”.*

**P7:** *“Life skills lessons promote most of their rights. Through these lessons children are made aware of their rights”.*

The benefits of life skills lessons for children as pointed out by the study's findings, are supported by Prajapati, Sharma and Sharma (2017:3) who state that through life skills children develop better thinking, social and emotional skills.

### **Sub-theme 2.2: Outreach programmes**

Participants referred to street outreach programmes in particular. Additionally, the outreach programmes include counselling (see Sub-theme 2.3) and home visitations. Through outreach and assessment, social workers encourage and assist OVC in going

back home if the conditions are conducive to do so. With reference to the documents analysed, job description C clearly stipulates that social workers at CCC have a paramount responsibility of conducting street outreach programmes with an aim of identifying vulnerable children and interacting with them and assisting them in tracing their families. By reaching out to the children in the street, social workers promote OVC needs for shelter, protection, and food. They also encourage them in this way to go to school. The aims of the outreach programmes in promoting the rights of OVC are underpinned in the following narratives:

**P3:** *“Outreach programmes where we go and engage with children where they are found, right from the streets and trading centres of Blantyre and above. So that’s a programme because when we meet them we really find out why they are found on the streets, why they are not attending school whilst their friends are in school”.*

**P4:** *“We conduct street outreach and we normally meet with these children on the street and we provide counselling to them upon building a relationship of trust, we invite them to the centre and provide shelter to them”.*

**P1:** *“We have a street outreach programme which aims at interacting with those children who are vulnerable on the street so we aim at convincing them to go back into their homes”.*

According to CCC’s 2017 Annual Report, human rights education and awareness is an important component of making children aware of their rights and improving their wellbeing as this knowledge becomes beneficial to them and aids them in making better decisions. Findings correlate with CCC’s emphasis on outreach programmes as one of the ways of promoting children’s socio-economic rights. In 2017 a total of 297 children were met and assisted through street outreach programmes where they, among other things, received counselling and became more aware of how to protect themselves (CCC Annual Report, 2017:26).

### **Sub-theme 2.3: Counselling**

Findings indicate that social workers encourage OVC through counselling to give their views while they listen to what is important to them. Job description B emphasises the

responsibility of social workers to undertake regular one-to-one counselling sessions. These counselling sessions assist OVC mentally and physically to ensure that they are participating in activities at the CCC such as sports and recreation (see Sub-theme 2.4). Participation assists OVC in acquiring appropriate behaviour to conduct themselves in society. The purpose of counselling is reflected in the following participants' views:

**P5:** *"As a counsellor I have to understand what the child knows and understand what he or she wants from the child protection view. In the counselling session I have to make sure that the child gives me his or her opinion and I direct the child"*.

**P10:** *"The children when they are found just roaming in the streets they are taken to Chisomo DIC for some counselling and then we reintegrate them back to their families"*.

**P3:** *"Providing social work counselling and all services deemed necessary in social work so that we can develop that particular child to become 'normal' or a 'good' child"*.

Through counselling, social workers at CCC assist children to deal with their trauma and experiences, and prepare them for possible reintegration with their family. Kamwendo and Kawale-Magela (2011:27) observe that through counselling, children are able to understand and accept challenges that they face; they get an opportunity to develop skills that enable them to better cope with their challenges, and it facilitates behaviour change and improvement of self-image and esteem. Ahmed (2016:196) simply states that counselling skills are important for social workers to intervene and meet the needs of people.

#### **Sub-theme 2.4: Sports and recreation**

A healthy wellbeing and an emphasis on sports and recreation is an area that CCC targets as a way of promoting children's rights to participation, freedom and expression. Their activities are indicated by two participants:

**P1:** *"Every Friday we do have what we call sports but it involves children from surrounding areas so they do come to Chisomo just to play and relax"*.

**P2:** *"We also offer education, we offer life skills, there is sporting activities"*.

Ekinde (2017:12) emphasises the value of children playing sports, saying that it develops physical skills, teaches them to exercise, make new friends, have fun, learn to be team players and improve their self-esteem. Sport is thus more than just a physical activity that diverts the attention of children in the streets. It plays a great role in advancing education and in enhancing knowledge.

### **Sub-theme 2.5: Diversion programmes**

CCC offers diversion programmes for OVC who are taken to CCC instead of juvenile centres. The following are the participants' views on how diversion programmes promote the socio-economic rights of OVC by giving them a second chance at life.

**P3:** *"We protect juvenile children, those children that are involved in various crimes. There is a right in Malawi, every child is not supposed to be incarcerated, we work with the police. The police sends that particular child to us and we work with that particular child trying to bring in something that has been lacking for him or her to commit that particular crime".*

**P8:** *"We also offer diversion programmes whereby the children have been involved in crimes and then they are minors. They will be diverted from police to courts to Chisomo, and be given the understanding of who they are and how they could behave as a good citizen".*

**P1:** *"Uhm we have other interventions like we have a diversion programme that normally looks at children in conflict with the law".*

This finding is in line with UNICEF's ([sa]:8) comment that diversion of children in conflict with the law in Malawi focuses on the child and not the offence as it is intended to help the child to be accountable and to reforms. Therefore, it should not be a punishment as it is in the best interest of the child. The aim of diversion programmes is child rehabilitation in order to prevent further offences by seeking to address the underlying factors contributing to the criminal behaviour (UNICEF, [sa]:3). According to UNICEF ([sa]:3), child rehabilitation during diversion programmes is achieved through encouraging the child to take responsibility for his or her action, as well as focusing more on addressing the needs of each child individually. Job description A states that

social workers' roles in the diversion programmes are to ensure that they engage with other key stakeholders involved in outreach and court diversion work e.g. community groups, Police and Victim Support Units, and other NGOs that render services to children on the street in order to strengthen support to these children and refer them to organisations that are best capable of providing care for them based on the needs of the child. Therefore, effective diversion programmes require collaboration among various role players.

### **Sub-theme 2.6: Income generating activities**

In an effort to socio-economically empower households, CCC provides monetary relief to support various income generating activities. Families and guardians of vulnerable children institutionalised at CCC as well as vulnerable families surrounding Lilongwe and Blantyre where CCC operates from, are supported by social workers through self-help groups as well as providing start-up capital. Through these income generating activities families are able to pay school fees for their children, pay their hospital bills, buy food and clothes for the children, and become economically empowered. CCC believes that economically empowered families are a more sustainable way of fighting poverty as it enables the family to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The participants' views are captured as follows:

**P6:** *“We do also provide some IGA's [Income Generating Activities] because we thought if we empower the households the households will be able to meet some of the needs of the children”.*

**P10:** *“We work with parents, we make sure we economically empower the parents by providing them with income generating activities”.*

**P5:** *“By doing income generating activities, the parents will be able to pay school fees and the child will not be wandering in the streets, he or she will be going to school and at the same time the money they are generating will make them economically empowered”.*

The provision of income generating activities by CCC as an intervention to help promote children's socio-economic rights is confirmed by Hasan, Hossain, Sultana and Ghosh



(2015:73) who state that income generating activities have seen an increase in family income which in turn helps covering for basic expenses, improved sanitation, payment of children's school fees, as well as an improved nutrition for members of the family. Stokes, Lauff, Eldridge, Ortbal, Nassar and Meht's (2015:53) study on the benefits of income generating activities showed that entrepreneurial income generating activities have proven to be a positive tool for development.

### **Theme 3: Alignment of services to key themes and principles of the human rights-based approach**

Despite several challenges (see Theme 4 below), findings indicate that services, programmes and interventions to OVC are aligned with children's socio-economic rights. The sub-themes that emerged from this theme, namely participation, family strengthening and re-enrolment into schools, relate to children's socio-economic rights to education, health, protection, housing and the right to be raised by family (Androff, 2016:31). They are also aligned with the key principles of a human rights-based framework, including participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment (Palmqvist, 2011:14). These sub-themes are discussed below.

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Participation**

According to UNICEF (2007:3) participation is one of the key principles of the human rights-based approach. Social workers expressed their views on how inclusion and participation of children in the programmes rendered at CCC contribute to upholding children's socio-economic rights. Participation gives children an opportunity to become confident in sharing their views, obtain information which empower them to make decisions on and speak out on matters that affect them. The narratives below illustrate this finding.

**P2:** *“Through human rights education children are made aware of their rights, so you are able to promote their rights because they are able to speak up on issues that concern them”.*

**P6:** *“We believe that if we can include the children in any other activities that the normal children maybe those that are coming from better households are receiving, we feel that we are helping them, so we believe in participation, including them”.*

The findings resonate with the observation of Ruiz-Casares, Collins, Tisdall and Grover (2017:1) that children’s rights require the respect and implementation of both the protection and participation of children and young people. As outlined in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990), it states that parties’ responsibility to ensure that “every child is freely forming and expressing his/her views in matters affecting them, and in particular, should be provided with the opportunity to be heard”.

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Family strengthening**

The findings indicate that the programmes rendered at CCC contribute to strengthening family ties as reflected in the following participants’ views.

**P10:** *“So mainly [the purpose of the programmes] is to reintegrate them back [in]to their families so that they grow in their families”.*

**P3:** *“Socially we try to bring back the child to the community and try to reconcile with the community and we try to make sure as soon as possible that the family has been strengthened., we make sure that the family has been counselled accordingly so that they should begin to support that particular child in terms of education, socially trying to take care of that particular child so eventually the child will grow as a responsible child, economically and socially”.*

**P4:** *“After some time we reintegrated these children back [in]to their communities and on that it’s one of the rights which every child has, right to be raised by their guardians or their parents if they [are] around”.*

CCC acknowledges the paramount importance of allowing children to grow up with their families as this is their constitutional right as outlined in Chapter Five of the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, Act No.7 of 1995. This is achieved by reintegrating OVC back into their homes after preparing them through counselling, education and training programmes.

### **Sub-theme 3.3: Re-enrolment into schools**

Findings indicate that empowering children to re-enrol into school was one of the biggest achievements of the programmes that social workers render at CCC which affirms their right to education. As indicated in Theme 2, Sub-theme 2.2, social workers engage in various street outreach programmes where they also visit children's households and families. They play a key role in re-registering children and ensuring that they go back to school. The narratives below show participants' efforts in this regard.

**P3:** *"After meeting them right from the street we go to their households to their families and try to work with them so that we should get them to school".*

**P4:** *"We re-register these children to school after reintegrating them".*

In confirming the role of social workers in keeping children in school, Constable (2008:5) extends this role further in saying that social workers are to work one-on-one with teachers, families and children to address individual situations and needs by assisting children in school processes with efforts to make school safe for everyone. Additionally, through assessment, home visits, group work and counselling individuals, social workers work closely with students, parents, teachers and community agencies in an effort to enable all children in the community to access and learn in a school environment (Openshaw, 2008:6). Access to education is in line with the human rights-based approach which emphasises equality and empowerment. Efforts to re-registering OVC for school is a way of providing them with equal opportunities to acquire an education.

### **Theme 4: Challenges in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC**

Findings indicate that most participants viewed lack of finances, poverty and children's resistance to staying at home or institutional care as the main challenges that hinder the promotion of children's socio-economic rights. These challenges will be discussed as sub-themes.

#### **Sub-theme 4.1: Lack of funding**

CCC requires funding to implement their programmes and meet the needs of the ever growing number of children at the centre. Findings indicate that programmes are affected by inadequate funding and delayed aid from donors. The participants' voiced their challenges with a lack of funding as follows:

**P10:** *"The other challenge is funding, sometimes funding is delayed"*.

**P1:** *"Financial constraints - we really need adequate funding much as we already doing this work, we really need adequate funding"*.

**P3:** *"We wish we could do more, we have plans you know we have these theories to change a child holistically, looking at the family, looking at the community, looking at the people themselves, but sometimes because we just have one donor who has his or her area of focus for instance so we fail to achieve other activities"*.

CCC's experience with a delay in donor funding concurs with Harir's (2015:13) opinion that donors' preference shift over a period and that with time they become increasingly selective which influences NGOs chances to access funding. However, cuts in funding has also become a reality on a global level (European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017:9). Similarly, this is a challenge in Africa as a study in South Africa by Volmink and Van der Elst (2017:18) indicated that lack of funding is the main barrier hindering the work of NGOs.

#### **Sub-theme 4.2: Poverty**

Findings indicate that the children continue to go back to CCC or the streets because most families of OVC in Malawi are poor and trapped in a poverty cycle where they are unable to look after their families. On the streets they beg for handouts which leave them more vulnerable for exploitation. Returning to the centre poses a further burden on CCC's already limited resources. The poverty reality was expressed by two participants:

**P8:** *"...the number of children in the streets is rising because of the poverty levels in the homes"*

**P4:** *"Some of the children are not returned in their homes because of their poverty status, the poverty status is very high"*.

From a human rights-based perspective, household poverty forces children into environments that increase their vulnerability as they are constantly trying to find means of survival at the expense of their protection, safety, health and wellbeing. A study on human rights and disadvantaged groups by the University of Pune (2012:44) showed similar findings on the impact of poverty and how it impinges on children's rights. The study indicated that poverty forces children to start working from a very young age which put their physical, psychological and intellectual development at risk (University of Pune, 2012:44).

#### **Sub-theme 4.3: Children's resistance to staying at home or in institutional care**

One of the most recurring challenges, according to participants, is children's resistance to staying at home or in institutional care and how in turn, it becomes a challenge for CCC to render services. As indicated in Sub-theme 4.2, because of the poverty, children resist when it comes to living with parents at home. Children become used to the street life where they are exposed to drugs such as weed and crime. Regardless of NGO interventions, they resist going back home. The narratives below highlight the vulnerability of children:

**P10:** *"Sometimes after providing all the necessary things for the parents, the child may just be used to being in the streets, she or he may come back to the street and that is a challenge".*

**P8:** *"Because the children are moving from one place to another on the streets, those that are older than them will make them understand that staying in the home will be of no benefit because they don't have money at hand on a daily basis. So the handouts that are usually there on the streets make the children love more money than staying at home".*

**P5:** *"Children are resistant and its a problem to counsel the children and move them from negative to positive behaviour we are looking for. The problem arises maybe because other children have been engaged in smoking chamba [weed] and we try as much as possible to just make sure that the child changes".*

The findings of this study corroborate with Bhukuth and Ballet's (2015:137) observation that poverty is the main driving factor that results into children living on the streets. Furthermore, Bhukuth and Ballet (2015:137) concur that the longer children stay on the street, the more they adopt the lifestyle of being addicted to drugs and substances. They then become more resistant to going home or to institutions that will look after them.

### **Theme 5: Role of stakeholders in improving programmes that promote children's socio-economic rights**

There was a general agreement by most participants that involving other stakeholders will result into an improved service delivery. Greene (2006) in Fassin (2008:8) defines stakeholders as any individuals or groups involved in a programme or beneficiaries of a programme. The participants expressed the need for communities to take responsibility by setting protective structures and refraining from handing out money to the children. They indicated that children belong to a family unit and therefore emphasised the need for stakeholders to work closely together to economically empower households in pursuit of increasing their financial ability to provide for their children. The findings also reveal the need for the government to work with other stakeholders by implementing strong child protection policies as well as putting resources into children focused initiatives. Lastly, findings indicate the need for NGOs to collaborate in joint programming with regards to the promotion of children's socio-economic rights. Four sub-themes emerged from this theme, namely community engagement, NGO involvement, families of OVCs, and government involvement which will be further discussed below.

#### **Sub-theme 5.1: Community engagement**

Participants placed an emphasis on community involvement as a way of improving programmes that support children at CCC. They highlighted that there is a need for protective structures in the community, community responsibility, as well as community advocacy with regard to child protection. The following quotes highlight participants' views in this regard:

**P2:** *“The community as well the authorities in the communities, because I think the community is the first place where most people, almost everybody comes from, so I think if the communities on their own could be advocating so much on the rights of children on socio-economic rights.”*

**P6:** *“The plight of many vulnerable children especially in Malawi is getting worse because I think Malawi needs more collaborative, protective structures from the community.”*

**P3:** *“The community, not necessarily financially but when they have seen a child they know in the street they must do something.”*

In support of the findings, Wessells (2009:8) states that the community is a crucial source of support as it includes family members, friends, teachers, elders, religious and traditional leaders, youth groups and other collaborative structures who provide valuable care and support to children.

### **Sub-theme 5.2: NGO involvement**

Participants indicated that if more NGOs work together, it will result in better and improved programmes and more effective service delivery. They pointed out that partnerships with the business and formal education sectors can improve children’s socio-economic rights to education. Participants expressed their opinions as follows:

**P3:** *“Even other NGOs they can collaborate with us so that we can solve this problem together”.*

**P9:** *“These programmes can be improved in such a way that we do need a lot of partners to work with because as Chisomo we cannot provide everything. I was looking at an angle where a child cannot be enrolled again in school but rather is better off with some skills training yet Chisomo we do not provide that training so we need a certain partner who can help us with that”.*

The importance of partnerships among NGOs are supported by Genc (2016:225) who points to the broader community benefits of interaction and cooperation between NGOs in that it may be useful for improving society. Similarly, Lingan, Cavender, Lloyd and

Gwynne (2009:11) allude that NGOs have influence in the provision of global public goods to citizens. Collaboration between NGOs can thus result in more effective interventions and programmes to meet the needs of children.

### **Sub-theme 5.3: Families of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)**

Participants were of the view that family economic strengthening promotes children's socio-economic rights (see Theme 2, Sub-theme 2.6). The family is an important stakeholder in providing in the basic needs of children and thus prevent that they live on the street. CCC engages children's families by grouping them according to their geographical locations and providing loans and start-up capital for them to run various businesses and village savings so that they can support their children.

The approach in empowering families economically is reflected in the following participants' views:

**P1:** *“Categorise women into groups and encourage them to do some sort of village saving but they shouldn't share the money but they should be using money for investing in businesses, so we encourage businesses, so basically we are also into much as we are into working directly with children But we are indirectly also having preventive measures”.*

**P3:** *“Family strengthening to make sure that the child is not going back to the street. So we provide the family with a start-up loan but after assessing the capacity and capability of that family to use that particular loan”.*

Economic strengthening is increasingly applied as part of a multi-sectoral integrated community development approach (Child Protection in Crisis (CPC), 2011:11). According to Save the Children (2012:5), family support, policies and programmes have the potential to impact the individual child as well as his or her family. Financial and social support is vital to enable immediate and extended families to provide adequate care and protection for their children and to avoid abandonment (Save the Children, 2012:5).

### **Sub-theme 5.4: Government involvement**



Despite the evident government interventions (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4) in promoting children's wellbeing, there was a recurring view among participants that more needs to be done by the government to promote children socio-economic rights. The findings indicate that there is need for policy change and revision with regard to child protection as well as creating awareness around the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (Act No 22 of 2010). There were also views that government should put in more effort and resources to help OVC. The role of government has been captured in the following participant's responses.

**P5:** *"Maybe if the government can make some strong policies to make sure those parents are known as parents and parents have to take care of the child".*

**P1:** *"First thing is making popular, the Child Protection Act, so government should help much as we are already doing that but government should help in making popular the child protection act".*

**P6:** *"The government could put more effort and pulling more resources into the initiative".*

The role of government in child protection is stipulated by the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner who state that it is the government's duty to ensure responsibilities are clearly delegated, roles clearly defined, and obligations met to ensure that children's rights are respected and fulfilled (United Nations, 2011:20).

### **3.12 Summary**

This chapter presented the research methodology utilised in this study and the underpinning ethical principles that guided the study. Five themes and sub-themes emerged from the data. The themes identified from the data were contextualising children's socio-economic rights, interventions and programmes that promote socio-economic rights of OVC, alignment of services to key themes and principles of the human rights-based approach, challenges in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC, and the role of stakeholders in improving programmes that promote children's socio-economic rights.

In contextualising children's socio-economic rights, two sub-themes emerged and the first was social worker's knowledge of how children understand their socio-economic rights and the findings indicate that children have a good understanding of their basic socio-economic rights such as their rights to be happy, right to education and their right to good health. The second sub-theme that emerged was the social worker's roles in promoting children's socio-economic rights through protection where they work with children in conflict with the law and other children at CCC and how they can be safe. They also promote children's rights through advocacy which is done through conducting community meetings where they speak to the communities about children's socio-economic rights. Social workers play a role in education through catch-up lessons for children at CCC as well as re-registering children back into the education system in their respective communities. Lastly, social workers have a role in promoting children's rights through awareness raising. The awareness is twofold; awareness campaigns in communities on child rights education, as well as awareness campaigns with OVC to educate them on their rights.

Theme 2 focused on interventions and programmes that are undertaken at CCC to promote children's socio-economic rights. These include life skills lessons, sports and recreation, counselling, diversion programmes, as well as income generating activities. Theme 3 reported on the alignment of CCC programmes and how they achieve the promotion of children's socio-economic rights through the human rights-based approach. The findings as contextualised in the sub-themes of participation, family strengthening and re-enrolment into schools indicate that CCC adheres to children's socio-economic rights to health, education, safety as well as a right to be raised by family.

Theme 4 highlighted the challenges in promoting socio-economic rights of OVC. Lack of funding, poverty and children's resistance to staying at home or in institutional care emerged as some of the main challenges that hinder the promotion of children's socio-economic rights. Lastly, Theme 5 pointed out the stakeholders that should join efforts to improve programmes that promote children's socio-economic rights, namely NGOs, the community, families of OVC and the government.

Chapter Four will present the study's key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter concludes the research report. Firstly, it outlines the extent to which the research objectives of the study were achieved. The key findings and conclusions will then be presented. Finally, recommendations will be made.

### **4.2 Goals and objectives**

The goal of this study was to explore and describe the role of the NGO, CCC, in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi. The goal was obtained through the following objectives:

#### **Objective 1:**

- To conceptualise OVC and their socio-economic rights

This objective was achieved. The objective was discussed in Chapter Two (see Sub-section 2.3) where children's socio-economic rights were presented as food and nutrition, shelter and education for all. Furthermore, children's socio-economic rights were discussed within the human rights-based approach with reference to the principles

of the approach namely participation, non-discrimination, empowerment and accountability (Palmqvist, 2011:14).

The objective was also covered in the empirical chapter where social workers' views on how they conceptualise children's socio-economic rights were presented (see Chapter Three, Sub-section 3.11, Theme 1). They indicated their understanding of children's socio-economic rights as the right to health, education, protection, children's right to be raised by their guardians, the right to good food, and the freedom to associate and participate. Participants also displayed their understanding of their roles in adhering and ensuring that children's socio-economic rights are upheld (see Chapter Three, Section 3.11, Theme 1). They explained how they render services that aim at promoting children's socio-economic rights within the context of a human rights-based approach (see Theme 3).

#### **Objective 2:**

- To conceptualise and contextualise the role of NGOs' service delivery within a human rights-based approach

The objective was achieved in Chapters Two and Three. The key principles and themes of the human rights-based approach was discussed in Chapter Two (see Sub-section 2.3).

In Chapter Three (see Sub-section 3.11, Theme 3) findings were presented and discussed on how CCC programmes adhere to the human rights-based approach. The extent to which CCC includes the principle of participation was explored in Chapter Three (see Sub-theme 3.1), where social workers explained that through human rights education and programme inclusion, children are made aware of their human rights and fully participate in matters that affect them.

Through empowerment and non-discrimination, the OVCs rights are strengthened as some of them are reintegrated into their communities and families which enables them to be raised by their parents or caregivers (see Chapter Three, Sub-theme 3.1-3).

Chapter Three (see Sub-section 3.11, Sub-themes 2.1-2.6) provides a summary of NGO programmes and how they aim at promoting children's socio-economic rights by being inclusive, empowering, non-discriminatory, transparent and accessible to all children.

**Objective 3:**

- To explore and describe the services rendered by CCC in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC

This objective was achieved in Chapter Three (see Sub-section 3.11, Sub-theme 1.2) in a detailed description of the role that social workers play in promoting children's socio-economic rights. Social workers at CCC play an active role in protection, advocacy, raising awareness and education by ensuring that children who come to the institution are provided with shelter, school catch-up lessons, and an opportunity to re-register into schools.

Furthermore, the interventions and programmes available at CCC that ensure that OVC socio-economic rights are promoted were discussed in Chapter Three (see Sub-section 3.11, Sub-theme 2.1-2.6). These include life skills lessons, outreach programmes, counselling, sports and recreation, diversion programmes and income generating activities.

**Objective 4:**

- To determine the challenges faced by CCC in delivering services to OVC

This objective was achieved in Chapter Three (see Sub-section 3.11) where the challenges were identified.

Lack of funding was identified as one of the main challenges that leads to the organisation failing to reach out to as many vulnerable children as desired (see Sub-theme 4.1). Persisting poverty was pointed out as one of the major challenges as increased poverty levels in households resulted in more children being orphaned and vulnerable (see Sub-theme 4.2). Finally, children showed a lot of resistance as they prefer to be on the streets as opposed to under the care of their caregivers or

institutions which then becomes a challenge for CCC in delivering services to all the children (see Sub-theme 4.3).

#### **Objective 5:**

- To propose guidelines on how service delivery can be improved to promote socio-economic rights of OVC

This objective was achieved by the recommendations as discussed in section 4.4.

### **4.3 Key findings and conclusions**

This section presents the key findings of the study and the respective conclusions on the findings.

- Findings of the study indicate that participants understand what children's socio-economic rights entail. The programmes at CCC are centred on promoting children's rights to education, protection, food and good health. However, although shelter is provided, OVC often end up in the streets which becomes an ongoing challenge for CCC.
  - It can be concluded that as an organisation, CCC delivers services that are committed to promote children's socio-economic rights. Although CCC faces challenges in upholding OVC human rights, the interventions and programmes strive to act in the best interest of the child. As an organisation, CCC adheres to the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination and empowerment.
- The findings showed that CCC caters for all vulnerable children across all geographical areas in and around Blantyre.
  - It can be concluded that services at CCC are inclusive and non-discriminatory which is aligned with the human rights-based approach.
- Findings revealed that CCC faces challenges in service delivery that have an influence on upholding OVC's socio-economic rights. Lack of funding to

implement programmes is a constant challenge, which is exacerbated by children who are placed back into the community and then returns to the street.

- It can be concluded that the demand for service delivery and the funds to implement programmes remains a constant factor to contemplate in rendering effective services to OVC.
- The findings pointed out that stakeholders do not sufficiently join efforts to work together in order to ensure effective service delivery to OVC.
  - It can be concluded that service delivery in child protection will be fragmented and duplicated when stakeholders work in isolation. Furthermore, it negatively impacts on resources as stakeholders compete for the small amount of available resources.
- The findings indicate that CCC's income generating activities contribute to economically empower OVCs households, which in turn alleviates their poverty.
  - It can be concluded that income generating outreach programmes strengthen families' ability to support their children in meeting their basic needs. As a result, the numbers of children who are vulnerable will decrease; hence CCC will be better able to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable children.
- The findings indicate that communities give children handouts and do not direct them to the necessary institutions or care. The intention to support the children is then misdirected as they rather stay on the streets and resist going home or staying in institutional care. Communities' lack of understanding of national policies on child protection contribute to the manner that they respond to OVC.
  - It can be concluded that awareness raising campaigns and information are required for the community to have a better understanding of the role that they can play as an important stakeholder in child protection. Communities will have a better understanding of their role in safeguarding children if they have knowledge of national policies on child protection.

## 4.4 Recommendations

The findings of the study show evidence that CCC strives to promote the socio-economic rights of children from a human rights-based framework. However, the findings also indicate specific challenges to service delivery in upholding OVC's socio-economic rights. In meeting Objective 5 of the study, the following recommendations serve as guidelines on how CCC can improve service delivery that promotes OVCs socio-economic rights.

- **Explore more funding options**

Findings indicated that a lack of funds limit the execution of reaching out programmes to promote the socio-economic rights of OVC. CCC should explore how international child protection agencies, embassies and government can assist in funding their programmes to ensure a more and effective impact.

- **Build relationships among stakeholders**

The findings indicated that stakeholders in child protection have to join efforts in working together to improve the range of service delivery that will promote OVCs socio-economic rights. The Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare should form a consortium of all stakeholders in child protection work in order to establish better ways on how they can effectively share resources, leverage existing programmes, and avoid replicating what is already in place. By working together, stakeholders will also ensure that they implement programmes in the interest of the child which are based on agreed goals.

- **Adopt large scale implementation of income generating activities**

The findings of the study indicate that CCC provides loans and start-up capital to households of OVC as a way of economically empowering them to provide children with their needs. It assists in reducing poverty which is a key SDG (UN, 2015). It is recommended that CCC search for funding that will enable them to adopt large scale income generating activities as these will result in a more sustainable mode of reducing child vulnerability.



- **Re-enforcement and education on national child protection policies**

The findings of the study indicated that government, as duty bearer of children's rights, has a role to play in ensuring that Malawians are aware of national child policies to prepare and enable civil society to work collaboratively with NGOs on promoting children's rights. It is thus recommended that all national policies be made available in user-friendly ways to ensure all Malawians have access to it; the educated and uneducated. Furthermore, there is need to reinforce and encourage policy education through community forums and settings. Community-based organisations can play an important role in policy education of civil society and communities.

- **Raising community awareness on how to handle OVC**

One of the challenges that CCC faces in its programmes is the lack of participation within the communities. CCC, in collaboration with other child protection organisations, should work with communities in raising their awareness of the role that they can play in child protection and how best they can handle OVC in their local context.

- **Further research**

It is recommended that stakeholders collaborate and pilot a study on the planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of a joint child protection project for OVC. Furthermore, the impact of CCC's income generating activities and how they could be scaled up as a poverty reduction method in Malawi can be researched.

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# Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule for Social Workers

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**Goal of the study:** The goal of the study is to explore and describe the role of the NGO Chisomo Children's Club in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi

### Biographical information

In what age group do you fall?

20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60+
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Gender: Male:  Female:

Qualifications:

Years of experience in child protection work:

How many years have you been working at Chisomo Children's Club?

### Questions on children's rights

1. What is your understanding of children's socio-economic rights?
2. To what extent in your view are children aware of their rights?
3. What programmes are rendered by Chisomo Children's Club for OVC?
4. To what extent do these programmes promote children's rights?
5. What role do you play in promoting children's socio-economic rights to
  - Education
  - Protection
  - Health services
  - Housing
  - Food

6. What are the challenges faced by the organisation in rendering programmes to OVC?
7. How can programmes implemented by Chisomo Children's Club be improved to promote socio-economic rights of OVC?
8. Do you have any additional information that you want to share with me on the research topic?

# Appendix B: Letter of Informed Consent for Participants



Faculty of Humanities  
Department of Social Work and Criminology

14/04/2017

Our Ref:  
Researcher: Evelyn Maggie Kasambara  
Tel: +265 999 511 053  
E-mail: kasambaraeve@gmail.com

## Informed consent

**Title of research:** The role of NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights of orphaned and vulnerable children: The Case of Chisomo Children's Club in Blantyre, Malawi.

**Purpose of the study:** The purpose of this study is to explore the role of the NGO Chisomo Children's Club in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC in Malawi.

**Procedure:** The procedure for data collection will involve a one on one unstructured interview with the researcher. The researcher will visit your office at an agreed date and time that is convenient for you. With your permission, the researcher will make use of a voice recorder during the interviews as this will allow her to accurately document the interview. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes of your time.

**Risks:** There are no risks involved in participating in the study.

**Benefits:** There are no financial benefits or any other incentives attached to participating in the study.

**Participants Rights:** Participation in this research is voluntary and as such participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any negative consequences.

**Confidentiality:** Participants confidentiality will be ensured by not stating their names or presenting any information that is directly linked to them. Participants will be allocated codes or pseudo names as opposed to using their real names to protect their identity. The data obtained from the interviews will be stored for 15 years in the Department of Social Work & Criminology where after it will be destroyed. If the data is reused, it will only be for research purposes.

**Dissemination of research findings:** The findings of the study will be submitted to the University of Pretoria in the form of a research report. In addition, it will be used for a publication of a scientific journal. The Chisomo Children's Club will receive a summative report on the study.

I confirm that I have read the contents of the informed consent and agree to participate in this study.

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Departement Maatskaplike Werk en Kriminologie  
Lefapha la Bomotheo  
Kgore ya Modiro wa Leago le Boseny

## Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Approval



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities  
Research Ethics Committee

6 June 2017

Dear Ms Kasambara

**Project:** The role of the NGOs in promoting socio-economic rights for OVC: a case study of Chisomo children's Club in Blantyre, Malawi  
**Researcher:** EM Kasambara  
**Supervisor:** Prof A Lombard  
**Department:** Social Work and Criminology  
**Reference number:** 15196853 (GW20170504HS)

Thank you for the response to the Committee's correspondence.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 5 June 2017. 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 your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

**Prof Maxi Schoeman**  
**Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za**

cc: Prof A Lombard (Supervisor)

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MWC Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof sL Horne; Dr Jink and; Ms A Goo Sannes; Dr R Hassell; Ms RT Greender; Dr L Johnson; Dr L Fanelibiano; Dr C Postergill; Dr D Royston; Dr M Taub; Prof SM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms S Tober; Dr E van der Kolkout; Dr G Wolmarans; Ms B Mokoape

## Appendix D: Permission Letter Chisomo Children's Club



13 February 2017  
Evelyn Kasambara  
mHub  
P.O Box 31669  
Lilongwe 3.

Dear Evelyn,


**Re: Permission to use Chisomo Children's Club for a Masters Research Study**

Reference is made to your letter dated 13 February 2017, in which you are asking for permission to use Chisomo Children's Club (Blantyre Drop In Centre) for your Masters study.

On behalf of Chisomo Children's Club (CCC), I am pleased to inform you that you can use Chisomo Children's Club as a case study of your research. This means that you have been granted permission to interview 10 social workers within the organization, about the roles of CCC in promoting socio-economic rights of vulnerable children and services rendered to vulnerable among others.

I would like also to advise that, CCC is a child protection institution, as such you will be required to sign a child protection policy before you start the data collection exercise.

Best Regards,

  
Charles Gwengwe

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

CC:

Director of Programmes

Centre Manager for Blantyre

Centre Manager for Lilongwe

Human Resource Officer



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