

**THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING SOCIO-
ECONOMIC EQUALITIES OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN
PRETORIA CENTRAL**

BY

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REFUGEES IN PRETORIA CENTRAL**

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ABSTRACT

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC EQUALITIES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN PRETORIA CENTRAL

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DEGREE: MSW SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

Globalisation has contributed to people migrating across national borders for different reasons, including economic hardships, political and social oppression, geographic and social factors (Triegaardt, 2009:1). Africans who seek refuge, asylum or an opportunity to improve their economic prospects and life within the borders of South Africa, face xenophobic attacks by black South African citizens, subjecting them to different forms and degrees of prejudice and discrimination (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:192). Rising inequality stifle economic growth, create poverty traps, wastes human potential and generate fertile ground for political and civil unrest, instability and heightened human insecurity (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2013:22).

The goal of the study was to explore the contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central.

The study utilised the qualitative research approach; it was exploratory and applied and made use of the instrumental case study design. The study adopted the non-probability sampling method, namely, purposive sampling to select eight social work participants from four Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) located in Pretoria Central. Data was collected by means of semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

Findings show that the exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees starts with their struggle to secure documentation that give them access to jobs, education and other

opportunities. Furthermore, in rendering services to asylum seekers and refugees, social workers mainly focus on material assistance, safe accommodation, statutory intervention and psycho-social support and lack a developmental approach with a focusing on integrated social and economic development. Findings also reveal that social workers collaborate with critical government departments and organisations, but not in a partnership that unites stakeholders to facilitate the promotion of socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees' socio-economic rights.

The study concludes that the focus on traditional remedial practice, poor networking, inadequate coordination of interventions between government and NGOs and lack of representation at the level of policy advocacy and policy making, contribute negatively to social workers' efforts to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

The study recommends that social workers integrate a developmental approach in the provision of services, strengthen partnerships between governmental departments and NGOs and advocate for the socio-economic rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

KEY WORDS

Asylum seeker

Developmental social work

Refugee

Pretoria Central

Social work

Socio-economic equalities

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Dominelli (2007:7) states that “globalisation has redefined communities, changed boundaries, fused cultures and altered social relations within and between communities to create players with access to markets and choice, and non-players who are excluded”. Socio-economic inequalities have become a major concern for social work practice in the modern world, as they are exacerbated by globalisation and neoliberal policies in many different parts of the world.

Hölscher (2011:44) states that social justice constitutes one of the defining principles of social work, and from the beginning of the profession’s existence, social workers have worked with immigrants. Furthermore, social workers have been fighting against structural oppression and social injustice, by advocating the promotion of social inclusion and human rights worldwide (Ife, 2001:173). Asylum seekers and refugees are part of the global migrant community and have faced challenges such as; social, economic, political, cultural and environmental inequalities and exclusion, marginalisation, poverty, racism, discrimination and violence.

This study sought to explore whether social workers in Pretoria Central contribute to promoting social and economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. It focused on social workers employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as they “have a long and remarkable history of campaigning and pioneering on behalf of many minority groups”, (Hirsh & Powell, 2002:113) such as asylum seekers and refugees.

The key concepts relevant to the study are as follows:

Social Work

This researcher adopted the global definition of the social work profession, by International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) (2014) for this study:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by the theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing.

Social workers help people increase their capabilities for problem solving and coping, and they assist them to obtain necessary resources, facilitate interactions between individuals and between people and their environments, make organisations responsible for people and influence social policies (NASW, 2015).

Socio-economic equalities

In this study, socio-economic inequalities relate primarily to disparities in income, resources and access to social commodities such as health and education, within and between societies (Warwick-Booth, 2013:2).

According to the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW, 2014:4), promoting social and economic equalities includes:

Advocacy for the realisation of human rights for all peoples; a socially-just international economy; the development of socio-economic structures that ensure environmental sustainability; and the recognition that social cohesion and institutional solidarity must be at the forefront of policy and government decisions.

Refugee

As defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2012:2), in accordance with the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who:

Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [her] nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [herself] of the prosecution of that country.

Asylum seeker

As defined by the UNHCR (2012:8), an asylum seeker is someone who has made a claim that he or she is a refugee, and is waiting for that claim to be accepted or rejected. The term contains no presumption either way; it simply describes the fact that someone has lodged the claim, however some asylum seekers will be judged to be refugees and others not (UNHCR, 2012:8).

Pretoria Central

Pretoria Central includes the following suburbs, namely: Pretoria Central Business District (CBD), Arcadia, Hatfield, Sunnyside and Salvokop (City of Tshwane, 2014).

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A human rights-based approach was utilised as the most suitable theoretical framework to understand social workers' contribution in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. The human rights-based approach provides the framework for social workers to gain knowledge about human rights, social justice as well as international and local laws (Ife, 2012: 287) which enable them to meaningfully promote the socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. The study envisaged that the findings would contribute to policy and practice interventions that respect the rights of asylum seekers and empower them to stand up for their rights. The application of the rights-based approach to the study is further discussed in Chapter 2.

1.3 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The complexities and challenges of socio-economic and cultural transformations and neoliberalism have influenced social workers to respond to the globalised context of social problems. With the launch of The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, social workers, educators and social development practitioners committed themselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems

that positively address the root causes of oppression and inequality, and to working together to create a more socially just and fair world (The Global Agenda, 2012:1). Accordingly, social work research is interested in the role of addressing inequalities and social problems, to facilitate new studies and the accumulation of new knowledge for effective practice with marginalised populations, such as asylum seekers and refugees.

The South African Constitution states that the Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy and it enshrines socio-economic rights such as health and education as basic human rights to all South African citizens (RSA, 1996). The South African Constitution [Section 27 (1) (c), Section 27 (2), Section 28(1), (b) and (c)] further emphasises the provision of social security as a basic socio-economic right for all citizens in South Africa (RSA, 1996). Asylum seekers and refugees are protected and eligible for the same privileges as in the case of citizens by means of the Refugees Act (RSA, 1998). The exclusion of marginalised populations such as asylum seekers and refugees from the social security programme, implies a violation of their socio-economic rights. Furthermore, the Refugee Act (RSA, 1998) mentions that a refugee is entitled to the same basic health services and basic primary education which South Africans receive from time to time.

South Africa has relatively well developed policies and legal frameworks to protect the basic rights of asylum seekers and refugees. However, it is through a lack of implementation of these policies and legal frameworks that most asylum seekers and refugees are often denied services, which severely impacts on their livelihoods. Despite the fact that South Africa has well-resourced governmental departments and NGOs that should service asylum seekers and refugees, there are still various challenges, resulting in socio-economic inequalities of asylum seekers and refugees. The premise for the research was that it is unknown to what extent social workers are contributing to promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. Therefore, this study sought to explore social workers' contributions in this regard.

It was envisaged that the findings from this study would inform social workers on the gaps in practice and how mobilisation of policy and social work education could contribute to creating an enabling environment promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa. Furthermore, the findings should

contribute to an awareness of human rights, and the obligations of the State to protect these rights in the struggle for the realisation of socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa.

The following research question guided the study:

- What is the contribution of social workers in Pretoria Central in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?

Sub-questions

- How informed and responsive are social workers towards promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?
- How can social workers play an effective role in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?
- What are the challenges that social workers face in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees, in response to poverty and human indignity?

1.4 GOAL OF STUDY

The goal and objectives of this study were as follows:

1.4.1 Goal of the study

To explore the contribution of social workers in Pretoria Central in promoting social and economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

1.4.2 Objectives of study

- To theoretically contextualise the social and economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees within the human rights-based approach.
- To explore the extent to which social workers are informed and respond to the socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

- To determine how social workers can play an effective role in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.
- To determine the challenges that social workers face in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.
- To make recommendations on how social workers can improve the provision of services to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research approach was qualitative (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008:79) and exploratory in purpose (Adler & Clark, 2011:13). The type of research was applied because the researcher wanted to influence policy and practice arrangements in the field of working with refugees (Adler & Clark, 2011:382).

The study utilised a case study researcher design, in particular, an instrumental case study design (Strydom, 2011:322; Porta & Keating, 2008:224). The population in this study consisted of social workers working for four NGOs rendering services to refugees in Pretoria Central. The researcher used a non-probability sampling method, namely, purposive sampling (Strydom, 2011:230; Neuman, 2007:142) to select eight social workers to participate in the study from the four participating NGOs.

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews as a data collection method and used a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the study (Greeff, 2011:152). Data analysis was conducted through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79). For data processing and analysis the six steps of qualitative analysis identified by Creswell (2014:197-200) were employed. More details on the research methodology are provided in Chapter 3.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The research report of this study consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1 focuses on the introduction and general overview of the study. It comprises the problem statement, research questions, goal and objectives, and a brief overview of the theoretical framework and research methodology of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the study. It includes the theoretical framework of the study, namely the human rights approach. Furthermore, it discusses social and economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees and the role of social work within this field of service delivery.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology of the study, including the research approach, research type, research design, study population and sampling method, the data collection method, data analysis methods, the pilot study, and the ethical considerations of the study. The empirical findings of the study are also presented and discussed, and the limitations of the study are outlined.

Chapter 4 indicates how the research goal and objectives were achieved. In addition, it presents key findings, draws conclusions and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the literature review of the study and focuses on social workers employed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as they “have a long and remarkable history of campaigning and pioneering on behalf of many minority groups”, such as asylum seekers and refugees (Hirsh & Powell, 2002:113).

The chapter initially positions social work in the centre of work with refugees and asylum seekers, then expounds on the challenges and issues asylum seekers and refugees face internationally and, more particularly, in South Africa. The next section presents the human rights-based approach as the conceptual framework for the study, indicating how this is pivotal to promoting and protecting human rights among asylum seekers and refugees. Thereafter, the role of social workers in advocating for social justice and addressing social and economic inequalities for asylum seekers and refugees is discussed. Lastly, the chapter discusses developmental social work theory and practice, both at micro, mezzo and macro levels and its relevance in offering holistic and integrated services to asylum seekers and refugees.

2.2 SOCIAL WORK CONTEXT OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

The international definition of social work states that, “principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work” (IFSW, 2014). Furthermore, the social work profession has a holistic vision and concern for those who are marginalised, disempowered and without voice, and it strives to alleviate poverty by facilitating social change and social inclusion (Dominelli, 2012:114). The definition indicates that excluded people constitute a central focus for social work and this inevitably includes asylum seekers and refugees.

The IFSW identifies asylum seekers and refugees as “highly vulnerable” groups of displaced people (IFSW, Displaced Persons Policy, 2012). This is due to

discrimination, significant deprivation and frequent impoverishment. Marginalised from their society, they face emotional trauma, loss of economic opportunities, breakdown of cultural identity, loosening of social and familial structures, interruption of schooling, and increased poverty levels (Taylor, 2004:6). They suffer from grief relating to deceased or missing family members, mental illness and in extreme cases, resort to begging to survive (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002:257). The impact of displacement is felt more acutely by children, women, the disabled and elderly people (IFSW, Displaced Persons Policy, 2012).

The National Association of Social Workers' (NASW:USA) policy statement on immigrants and refugees states that "the plight of refugees and immigrants [must] be considered on the basis of human values and needs, rather than on the basis of an ideological struggle related to foreign policy" (NASW, Immigration Policy Toolkit, 2006:4). According to the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), the well-being of South African citizens is shaped by strong inequalities, as the country faces poverty, lack of economic empowerment among disadvantaged groups, and persistently high unemployment (IOM, 2013:12). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) cites that the implications of rising inequality for social and economic development are many. It can stifle economic growth, create poverty traps, waste human potential and generate fertile ground for political and civil unrest, instability and heightened human insecurity (UN DESA, 2013:22). For instance, fellow Africans seeking refuge, asylum or an opportunity to improve their economic prospects and life within the borders of South Africa, face xenophobic attacks by black South African citizens, subjecting them to various forms and degrees of prejudice and discrimination (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:192).

With the launch of The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development at the United Nations Social Work Day in 2012, social workers, educators and social development practitioners, committed themselves to supporting, influencing and enabling structures and systems that positively address the root causes of oppression and inequality (IASSW, 2012:1). Improving the well-being of people, families and communities require a conducive, just and fair environment within which people can make their own choices (IASSW, 2014:4), and where the fundamental freedoms and rights of individuals and groups are protected (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:314). Social workers, educators and social development practitioners, feel compelled to advocate

for a new world order which makes a reality of respect for human rights and dignity and seeks to create a more socially-just and fair world (The Global Agenda, 2012:1). Lombard and Twikirize (2014:314) site that "social workers' commitment to social justice and human rights is evident from how they promote social and economic equality amongst people who are marginalised and excluded from social and economic processes". According to Banerjee (2005:9) social workers can accomplish the desired goal of social justice by promoting a combination of equal and fair access to political, social and economic resources, services and opportunities. This would lead to better living conditions and life circumstances for the poor, vulnerable, oppressed and marginalised in society (Banerjee, 2005:9). The plight of asylum seekers and refugees is a global issue as will be next discussed.

2.3 GLOBAL CONTEXT OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

According to Taylor (2004:4), in order to understand the plight of asylum seekers and refugees, it is important to review their pre- and post-migration experiences. Many of them experience imprisonment, torture and murder of their family members before arriving in a country of refuge (Taylor, 2004:4). Fangen (2006:1) observes that refugees face many uncertainties whilst trying to create a new life in an unfamiliar country. This is due to different cultures and language barriers they experience, leading to miscommunication.

Hendricks (2009:71) summarises some of the common challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees in the United States of America (USA) as follows:

- No emotional and financial support of family.
- No documentation.
- Minimum wage jobs.
- Single parent households.
- Lack of marketable skills.
- Difficulty to obtain services, such as housing, education and health.
- Language barriers.
- Racism and discrimination.

Taylor (2004:6) points out that most refugees in Australia experience long periods of unemployment or earn low wages, which is a key indicator of poverty. Taylor (2004:13) further highlights that many asylum seekers and refugees face social exclusion as a result of their unemployment. They are discriminated against by many employers and they end up in the informal sector, where they are in frequent conflict with urban laws that fail to recognise the existence of the informal sector (Taylor, 2004:13).

The word “settlement” applies to asylum seekers and refugees and it captures the concrete activities and processes of becoming established after arrival in the country of settlement (Valtonen, 2008:6). “Integration”, on the other hand includes settlement, but is a more goal-oriented dimension of settlement, focusing on asylum seekers and refugees full participation in the social, economic, cultural and political life of a society, while retaining their own cultural identity and values (Valtonen, 2008:6). In other words, it implies they should attain equitable status, roles and relations to the institutions in the society of settlement (Valtonen, 2008:6).

According to Collett (2004:77) asylum seekers are often viewed as a danger to national identity, security and wealth. By describing them as bogus and criminal, their ill-treatment can be legitimised and they can be objectified based on perceived characteristics, leading to human rights of masses of people being ignored (Collett, 2004:77). In the United Kingdom (UK), press coverage has been almost universally negative and routinely portrays asylum seekers as “scroungers” thus, adding to the general perception that the country is receiving considerably higher numbers of asylum seekers (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:9). These negative perceptions have been instrumental in fuelling public disquiet about asylum seekers and refugees and have resulted in verbal and, on occasions, physical abuse (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:9).

A study of Somali refugees in Norway, reports that asylum seekers and refugees are often humiliated and degraded in new societies as they attempt to settle and, in addition, their competencies are not recognised (Fangen, 2006:1). Dowling and Sextone (2010:119) postulate that “legislation in the UK has steadily sought to deny refugees and asylum seekers social rights which the welfare state proclaims as universal.” They continue saying that the plight of asylum seekers and refugees is a global issue and is often reduced to an economic problem by laws and policies of different countries (Dowling & Sextone, 2010:119).

There is strong evidence to show that asylum seekers and refugees face difficulties when accessing healthcare services. According to Aspinall and Watters (2010:26) studies in the UK, provide evidence that many women asylum seekers and refugees have poor antenatal care and pregnancy outcomes, and low uptake of preventative healthcare measures concerning breast and cervical cancer. Studies in the UK further reveal that there is little evidence of the commissioning of services for disabled asylum seekers and no clear guidance on the responsibilities of authorities towards asylum seekers and refugees with care needs (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:29). Mental conditions, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety are prevalent among asylum seekers and refugees, but the provision of health services to victims of torture and violence is widely regarded as inadequate (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:30). There is particular concern in the UK, relating to the vulnerability and ill health of asylum seeking and refugee children and older refugees (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:vi). Access to HIV/Aids treatment for asylum seekers and refugees has emerged as an important public health issue (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:vi). Asylum seekers and refugees with care needs are particularly vulnerable to poverty and isolation, without the involvement of the State and legislation.

Valtonen (2008:75) cites that “equality is a challenging and multifaceted concept with surprising versatility in interpretation...As a principle it is related to parity and egalitarianism.” Equality with reference to equal worth proposes a moral principle that, as human beings, everyone should be accorded treatment on the basis of equal worth without regard to differences such as gender, race, ethnicity and class (Valtonen, 2008:75). From a socio-economic perspective, equalities of asylum seekers and refugees refer to fairness in provision of social services and benefits, fair distribution of opportunities such as employment and education and development of legislation and policies that remedy limitations of the common law. There is a strong need for social work practice to address the socio-economic inequalities for asylum seekers and refugees, as these imbalances have been exacerbated by globalisation and neoliberal policies in many parts of the world. This has led to many social, economic, political and environmental challenges, leading to the emergence of issues such as extreme poverty, marginalisation, social exclusion, wars and environmental degradation, just to mention a few. The following sub-section continues the discussion

on the plight of asylum seekers and refugees, with a particular focus on the South African context.

2.4 ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The emergent rise of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa has led to the adoption of the Refugee Act 130 of 1998, which is used to assess asylum seeker claims (RSA, 1998). The Refugee Act encompasses both the 1951 United Nations Convention and 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 African Union Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (RSA, 1998). The South African Bill of Rights spells out socio-economic rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees, that include legal protection, non-discrimination, administrative justice and access to social services (RSA, 1996). Socio-economic rights are linked to a number of access rights, which impose positive duties on the State to make provision of available resources (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:314). These socio-economic rights include environmental rights and rights to land, housing, healthcare, food, water, social security and assistance, education and children's rights to shelter and to basic nutrition, social services and healthcare services (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:315). The mentioned rights provide an important safeguard to ensure a basic standard of living and the enjoyment of basic human rights among everyone in South Africa (Belvedere, 2007:59).

Many people from around the world migrate to South Africa for different reasons, but most people from African states flee their countries because of economic hardships, wars and dictatorial governments, political and social oppression, restricted educational opportunities, geographic and social factors (Blavo, 1999:4). According to the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) (2011:15) the South African government's approach to migration is 'Janus-faced': offering a friendly, embracing vision to the world whilst in reality shutting out most non-nationals living within the country.

Despite South Africa being a favourable destination for immigrants lured by the attractiveness of a dynamic economy and democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom enshrined in the South African Constitution, the "harsh reality is that

migrants have encountered a society grappling with the legacy of apartheid" (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193). Although the transition to democracy in South Africa ushered in the formal removal of racial discrimination, it did not eradicate inequalities (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193). The increase in unemployment, HIV/Aids and crime, and the growing gap between rich and poor, coupled with the State's failure to meet the high expectations created when it came into power in 1994, have culminated in a disempowered population (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193).

On the 12th of January 2015, South Africa ratified the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), reaffirming government's commitment to social and economic justice, which is at the heart of the South African Constitution (McLaren, 2015). Article 13 of the constituent International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966), and Article 2 of the constituent ICESCR (1966), protect and guarantee the socio-economic and political liberties of 'aliens' in foreign lands (UNICEF, 2011:22;24). These include the right of migrants to access decent health, education and legal services, as well as general social security (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011a:6). This means that the South African government should create conditions that ensure asylum seekers and refugees have access to comprehensive services that enhance their social and economic well-being. However, most South African policies prohibit asylum seekers and refugees from working, studying and being fully integrated in communities they settle (CoRMSA, 2011:28). CoRMSA (2011:22) believes that delays and capacity constraints within the Department of Home Affairs leave asylum seekers undocumented for long periods, creating a barrier to their ability to work, or benefit from social grants. In the health sector, asylum seekers and refugees continue to have negative experiences, as ambiguity persists, which limits their access to healthcare in general and anti-retroviral therapy (ART), in particular (CoRMSA, 2011:20). For instance, Apalata, Kibiribiri, Knight, and Lutge (2007:13) interviewed refugees in Durban, who reported receiving poor services at local public hospitals. They faced language barriers with black nurses who were reluctant to render services to foreigners.

Xenophobia is another factor contributing to social and economic exclusion, humiliation, degradation and physical harm of asylum seekers and refugees (Crush & Pendleton 2004:9). The perception amongst South Africans that foreigners steal jobs, coincides with the increase in unemployment and the government's struggle to redress

the imbalances of the past, “causing discontentment and indignation to peak and thereby providing the perfect breeding ground for xenophobia to take root and flourish” (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:197). Xenophobia is a crisis in South Africa and it poses grievous threats to asylum seekers and refugees protection by negating the principles of human rights. Xenophobic violence is a serious ongoing concern and foreign nationals continue to lose their livelihoods and in extreme cases, their lives.

Inhumane work conditions, lack of accommodation or living in unclean environments, and poor nutritional conditions all contribute to the poor health status of asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers and refugees struggle to access credit and banking services, further reducing their physical and financial security (CoRMSA, 2011:25). This is particularly unjust given the enormous difficulties asylum seekers and refugees face in obtaining documentation.

It is crucial for the South African government to be aware of challenges in implementation of policies, especially relating to asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, the Children’s Act 38 of 2005 as amended, governs all issues affecting children in the country and its definition of a child in need of care and protection includes unaccompanied and separated foreign children. Despite South Africa having a relatively well developed policy and legal framework for securing the rights of foreign unaccompanied or separated children, it is in the implementation of these policies and legal frameworks that there is often a denial of services to or confusion about rights of migrant children (Schreier, 2011:28). A study by the University of Cape Town, Refugee Rights Unit (UCT RRU) demonstrated that there are a number of critical child protection gaps in the implementation of these frameworks for unaccompanied or separated foreign children, by magistrates, social workers and officials of the Department of Home Affairs in particular (Schreier, 2011:3). This challenge in implementation is also prevalent in the education sector as “demands by school administrators and principals for study permits and birth certificates, language admission tests, claims that schools are ‘full’, being relegated to the bottom of enrolment lists, financial hardship, geographical inaccessibility and unwarranted fee demands” (Crush & Tawodzera, 2011b:9).

CoRMSA (2011:4) postulates that South Africa has an urban integration policy which allows refugees to settle among the local population and engage in self-reliance

activities like any other groups in the country. However, most refugees sustain themselves economically, without support of social grants, leaving vulnerable groups of refugees like the disabled, the elderly, women and children with no means of support. Many asylum seekers and refugees are located in the informal sector, where they engage in petty entrepreneurship enterprises to make ends meet. CoRMSA (2011:28) asserts that many migrant women are forced into prostitution to be able to meet the needs of their dependants.

In summary, the poor state of well-being, as exhibited by asylum seekers and refugees lack of access to local services and decent employment opportunities, restricts them from integrating easily into communities in which they attempt to settle and from contributing to host-community development. Instead, they are strongly encouraged to return to their home countries, or are detained when they come in contact with the law enforcement personnel. Despite ongoing attempts by the State to exclude asylum seekers and refugees, these groups continually show resilience by finding ways of circumventing the numerous obstacles to their quest for survival (Belvedere, 2007:59). Asylum seekers and refugees manage to find ways of taking charge of their lives, and by building networks and participation in the informal sector activities such as street trading and car guarding (Belvedere, 2007:59).

NGOs continue to lobby for the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees' rights against recalcitrant departmental representatives, who hold that foreigners do not enjoy any rights in South Africa (Belvedere, 2007:59). In the short term future, NGOs predominantly, together with asylum seekers and refugees, and a progressive judiciary will need to spearhead to the struggle for the humane treatment of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa (Belvedere, 2007:67). In the longer term, asylum seekers' and refugees' struggles will require linking up with broader societal issues affecting South Africa's poor majority, "out of a realization that the economic forms of exclusion between rich and poor that we face do not distinguish between citizens and non-citizens" (Belvedere, 2007:59).

Inequalities in the provision of services and opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees, is a social justice issue, as all people desires to live in a society that is fair, where hard work is rewarded and where their socio-economic position can be improved regardless of their background. Respecting the human dignity and socio-

economic rights of asylum seekers and refugees are embedded in a human rights-based approach.

2.5 A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

This study utilised the human rights-based approach as theoretical framework to understand social workers' contribution in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. The United Nations (2006:15) defines a human rights-based approach as:

A conceptual framework or the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and is operationally directed at promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.

Globalisation has a major impact on social work, especially the people social workers render services to and represent. It is therefore very important for them to understand human rights and identify ways human rights can serve as a basis for practice (Ife, 2012:303).

Issues involving human rights, their nature, what they mean in practice and adopting such rights centrally affect what social workers do in their day-to-day work (Ife, 2012:117). Therefore, social workers should be concerned about all aspects of a person's economic, social and cultural rights. Social work practice should also include issues of civil, political and environmental rights (Ife, 2012:177). Ife (2001:164) points out that social workers should bridge the micro-focus to the macro practice strategies that emphasise a human rights framework, and should be interconnected at all levels of practice, in order to influence policy and structural change.

Ife (2001:5) further notes that globalisation has brought about neoliberal policies focusing on economic development and less on human rights leading to inequalities, social division and few profiting at the expense of many. It is only when economic development takes cognisance of the human rights context that social equity and

progress can result. In the era of globalisation, social workers need to understand the full spectrum of issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees and report on all human rights violations to bring their issues to the forefront. It is equally important to educate local communities on issues of migration, and the issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees, to try and change peoples' negative attitudes and create an environment conducive to full integration. In short, social workers have an important role to play in working with asylum seekers and refugees and, in particular, addressing the social and economic inequalities. Swenson (2001:218) notes that social work is well positioned to take up its role in social change for a just society.

Mapp (2008:24) emphasises the link between human rights and social justice as follows: "Contemporary human rights are based upon the ideal of social justice, a concept so central to social work that it is one of the six values affirmed in our Code of Ethics". Many asylum seekers and refugee families live in a vicious cycle of poverty and it breeds and transmits its effects from one generation to another (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008:79).

Social workers who work with asylum seekers and refugees are supposed to overcome oppressive structures (Sen, 1999:15) and discourses that make it hard for these groups to enjoy their rights like any other members of society. The human rights-based approach was utilised to clarify whether social workers involved in this study were knowledgeable about human rights, social justice as well as international and local laws surrounding asylum seekers and refugees which will aid them to meaningfully contribute in promoting their socio-economic equalities.

Ife (2012:255) points out that, if social work is a human rights profession, it is essential that the profession itself operates in such a way that its own practice observes human rights principles and does not violate the human rights of others. Ife (2012:255) postulates that the important principle is social workers should respect other people's human rights by allowing them self-determination and control over the situation in which they find themselves.

Asylum seekers and refugees are part of the global migrant community and face challenges such as social, economic, political, cultural and environmental inequalities. Government policies and interventions must aim to empower asylum seekers and refugees, allowing them to realise their potential and be fully integrated in communities

they settle in across the country. In addition, the South African government should take up the task of educating the general population on issues involving asylum seekers and refugees and the responsibilities it has towards them. This would improve the image of asylum seekers and refugees, in contrast with the general view that asylum seekers and refugees are a direct threat to jobs, education, food, housing and other services government is mandated to deliver (Sisulu, 2001:6).

Social workers are duty bearers in the human-rights based paradigm. Therefore, the following discussion explores social workers' crucial role in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees, to make effective decisions and help them regain their own lives.

2.6 THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE CONTEXT OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES

Social work has a crucial role to play in acting against injustices of poverty and the widening gap between the rich and poor, both at the macro and micro level. Social workers should ensure that policy and integrated social and economic development interventions reach the grassroots, where the vulnerable and downtrodden are found. Social work should respect the dignity of these vulnerable groups, by helping voice out their special needs. Social justice and human rights are important values of social work and are important to achieve social change, by addressing economic and social marginalisation of those living in poverty. Empowerment of these vulnerable groups can be achieved through community development. Community development initiatives can focus on SMMEs and income generating projects, to build sustainable livelihood of communities involved. Social workers can also help in capacity building and equipping the communities with the necessary skills essential to becoming successful entrepreneurs. Social workers should understand how macroeconomics work, and should assist their clients to access funds for community development initiatives. Even welfare NGOs, should engage their clients' community based economic development activities.

Social workers can advocate for equality and protection of human rights and the inclusion of the poor issues that affect their communities. Social work has a crucial role to play in policy making, although this is largely a neglected area of practice.

Social workers in practice deal with profoundly vulnerable populations, overwhelmed by oppressive lives, circumstances and events they are powerless to control (Gitterman, 2001:1). Furthermore, social workers have been fighting against structural oppression and social injustice, by advocating for the promotion of social inclusion and human rights worldwide (Ife, 2012:193). This means that social work must have an international perspective, as it is not enough to be only concerned with the local and the immediate context in which social work is located (Ife, 2012:119).

With the growing numbers of migrants across the world, it is increasingly likely that social workers will encounter immigrants or refugee families and individuals on their caseload (Elliott & Segal, 2012:140). For social work to see itself as a human rights profession, there is a need to link the global and local divide (Ife, 2001:165). Global awareness and culturally sensitive insight are essential for effective work with migrants. Additional requirements are the ability to see the local in the global and the global in the local, and professionals who are educated within a human rights ethos (Elliott & Segal, 2012:140). This requires social workers to have the capacity to see local problems also as global problems, and to see that they can be adequately addressed by action at both global and local levels, and finding ways to link the two (Ife, 2001:165). Human rights discourse moves between the global and the local divide, and provides a basis for creating practice, making it of particular value for social workers struggling to practise in the new environment of globalisation (Ife, 2012:304). This is the key to ensure the survival of the profession in the future (Ife, 2012:304). In this context, it can be argued that social workers need to actively participate and be involved in social work action, for promoting global justice and against local consequences of global problems (Dominelli, 2012:3). To achieve meaningful intervention with migrations, social workers have to move from the traditional remedial practice and focus on working at the level of policy making, as too few social workers are engaged in policy advocacy, immigration research and policy making (Elliott & Segal, 2012:140). Social workers are under-represented in strategic positions that enable the profession to participate in policy making, public education and improving services to asylum seekers and refugees (Elliott & Segal, 2012:140).

Social workers broadly agree that to achieve social justice, they need to promote equality in social, economic and political spheres; and promote fair and equal access to political, social, and economic resources, services and opportunities among the poor, vulnerable, oppressed and marginalised in society (Banerjee, 2005:4). Therefore, if social workers wish to improve marginalised peoples' circumstances, they must be involved in advocacy practice. If social workers fail to advocate for vulnerable peoples' policy ideas, consequently, their values will not be well represented in policy making circles (Hofer, 2012, as cited in Lombard, 2013:14). Chang-Muy and Congress (2009:331-334) stress the importance of advocacy work by social workers to assist asylum seekers and refugees. They should petition for deliberate actions that will promote social justice as opposed to counteract their position. In this regard, Dowling and Sextone (2010:120) point out that social workers in the UK usually act as agents of the Home Office through taking steps to confirm immigration status, which can result in aiding to the deportation of some asylum seekers. This might hinder asylum seekers from returning to welfare organisations as they are afraid of being reported to immigration officials (Dowling & Sextone, 2010:120). This in turn, compromises the role of social workers in relation to their professional responsibilities and duties in working with asylum seekers and refugees, including unaccompanied minors (Dowling & Sextone, 2010:120). It leads to a situation whereby these disadvantaged groups are neglected and even left more vulnerable, and social workers are frustrated as they lack the legal knowledge and expertise to offer a good service (Dowling & Sextone, 2010:119).

Green (2012:3) postulates that ending inequality concerns all nations, since in a globalised world, poverty and suffering do not remain confined within borders, but spill over in the form of conflict, migration, and environmental degradation. Social workers are urged to move away from only focusing on clients' individual psycho-social problems and to also extend their services to reducing households' financial vulnerability (Engelbrecht, 2009:165). Hofer (2012) (in Lombard, 2013:14) notes that social workers should look beyond a problem and "see structural causes, social injustices, opportunities and abilities." Social workers have to tackle poverty amongst marginalised communities, such as asylum seekers and refugees, because poverty is a disaster in its own right, and not least because it is a structural and highly politicised issue (Dylan, 2013:116). Social workers are human rights workers; their practice must

address these issues of structural disadvantage (Ife, 2001:173). Social workers can play key roles in advocating for change, by caring for and protecting the environmental justice, human rights, active citizenship and promoting robust resilience in communities (Dylan, 2013:117). Social workers can educate communities on immigrants' human rights issues and policies to enable better integration and acceptance of these minority groups into their new communities. Social workers also need to be familiar with the variety of available organisations and services in order to help asylum seekers and refugees navigate a system that is often confusing and overwhelming (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002:481). The network includes public and private agencies at the international, national, state and local levels (Potocky-Tripodi, 2002:481).

Dowling and Sextone (2010:120) postulate that social workers are poorly trained on issues of immigration and do not view asylum seekers and refugees as clients, but instead act as gatekeepers and informers on behalf of the immigration services. Collett (2004:84) adds that asylum seekers are not significantly covered in social work training curricula and neither emphasised in social work practice. While this was stated 14 years ago, the status quo remains, although, universities are making efforts to address contemporary issues of refugees and asylum seekers.

To conclude, social workers should be knowledgeable regarding key problem areas affecting asylum seekers and refugees, such as health, housing, education and economic hardships. However, there are significant constraints in practice as to how social workers can advocate to fill gaps in South Africa's legislation that impact negatively on asylum seekers and refugees, both at micro, meso and macro levels. Social workers should challenge institutional contexts and government policies that perpetuate the oppression of asylum seekers and refugees.

The next discussion will focus on conceptualisation of developmental social work with asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa, by focusing on the key themes that underpin the approach.

2.7 DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WORK WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Midgley and Conley (2010:312) postulate that it is possible to identify common themes in developmental social work, “these include agreements about the importance of facilitating change, the use of strengths, empowerment and capacity enhancement, the notion of self-determination and the client participation, and a commitment to equality and social justice”. A right-based approach, economic and social development, democracy and participation in development, social welfare pluralism and bridging the micro-macro divide, are themes of a developmental approach to social work (Patel, 2015:82). The themes are aimed at promoting social justice, building human capabilities, enhancing livelihoods and the social functioning of asylum seekers and refugees to lead productive lives. These themes are discussed as below:

2.7.1 A rights-based approach

Developmental social welfare is firmly rooted in a rights-based approach and aims to achieve social justice, a minimum standard of living and a commitment to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees (Patel, 2015:82). A rights-based approach mandates social workers to empower asylum seekers and refugees in addressing social and economic marginalisation and protecting their human rights.

Empowerment is a quintessential approach of social work, it promotes socio-economic equalities, social justice, challenges the role of social power and occurs on personal, interpersonal and political levels that encompass power relations (Garcia 2009:89). Empowerment has its roots in structural social work which aims to analyse social relations that underpin and promote oppression, along such lines as gender, race, social class, cultural identity, disability, age and sexuality (Hicks & Murray 2009:146). Social work must incorporate multidimensional analyses of structural disadvantage, such as oppression and inequality, at the forefront of social work thinking, at all levels of practice (Ife 2001:174).

Many NGOs, international and local, have worked with minority groups such as asylum seekers and refugees for centuries, promoting social and economic development. Hirsch and Powell (1998) cite that NGOs promote social and economic improvement

of people through community work aimed at empowering people to identify local social needs, develop self-help skills and negotiate for additional resources. They are also involved in research, income generating projects, advocacy services, and awareness programmes involving community participation at all levels.

Some international and local NGOs in South Africa such as UNHCR and South African Red Cross Society drive towards community-based approaches, aimed at helping asylum seekers and refugees re-establish livelihoods, through programmes like vocational training, environmental protection and micro-credit schemes. These programmes have a human rights context, aimed at addressing socio-economic rights of vulnerable groups, and promoting the dignity and worth of all human beings. Through a human right-based approach, social workers educate and raise awareness of asylum seekers and refugees on human rights, which will empower them to claim their rights from service providers. Social workers need to understand the full spectrum of issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees and report on all human rights violations to bring their issues to the forefront. It is equally important to educate local communities on issues of migration, the issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees, to try and change peoples' negative attitudes and to create an environment conducive to full integration. Landman and Lombard (2006:3) point out that community development should be holistic and should integrate social, economic, political, cultural, environmental and personal/spiritual development. A study by Lombard (2005:219) shows welfare organisations can bridge the socio-economic divide by engaging clients in entrepreneurship ventures and transforming community development projects into micro-businesses. Lombard and Strydom (2011:331) state that social workers, especially in NGOs will engage more easily in social and economic development activities, community development and new innovative strategies such as social entrepreneurship, if they understand their role in poverty reduction.

Anti-oppressive social work can be used by social workers to reduce socio-economic inequalities. In tackling this form of inequality, social workers use an inter-disciplinary approach, and involve other relevant professionals as poverty and oppression are deeply structural impacts on all aspects of asylum seekers and refugees lives. Social workers play an important role in empowering clients to make effective decisions and regain their own lives. Asylum seekers and refugees can also engage in collective action to challenge the government to respond to their needs. Social workers should

challenge institutional contexts and government policies that perpetuate the oppression of asylum seekers and refugees. Government needs to be convinced to allow refugees the freedoms necessary to pursue socio-economic development. Swenson (2001:218) notes that social work is well positioned to take up its role in social change for a just society. Social workers have an important role to play in working with asylum seekers and refugees and, in particular, addressing the economic and social marginalisation of these vulnerable groups living in poverty.

Feminist social work, in particular can also empower refugee women to challenge power structures that impact their access to material resources (Orme 2009:74), life chances and maintain conditions of degradation, deprivation and ostracism. Some cultural constraints produce gender-specific roles limiting girls and women access to decision making and education. Social workers can be agents of change by promoting education of girls and women and including them in income generating programmes such as a poverty alleviation measure. Conscientisation of women's socio-economic rights is also critical and should be undertaken at both the personal and societal level (Dominelli 2002:75).

2.7.2 Economic and social development

The second theme of the developmental approach is the integration of economic and social development (Patel, 2015:88). The integration of economic and social objectives is a key element of social development (Lombard, 2003:2). Social development proposes that social welfare should be investment oriented, seeking to enhance human capacities to actively participate in the productive economy (Midgley, 2001:2).

Lombard (2003:9) recognises the need for the social work profession to reinvent itself and pursue social entrepreneurship, as a creative and innovative way to achieve self-esteem and personal empowerment, which is important for the building of social capital. Social workers should be instrumental in building alternative systems that promote sustainable human development. Social workers have to be innovative in creating programmes that target asylum seekers and refugees and not simply wait for funding from government institutions.

Social and economic development programmes should take the environment into consideration. Green social work is holistic and is concerned with understanding environmental issues and how they impact upon people's behaviour (Dominelli, 2012:7). In working with asylum seekers and refugees, social workers should identify environmental issues that influence social and economic development. For instance, asylum seekers and refugees, who live on the streets or in dilapidated housing facilities might have health risks limiting their potential to work and earn an income to sustain their families. Their children might not be getting nutritional food essential for their cognitive and physical development, leading to poor performance at school. Social workers can create awareness on environmental rights and advocate for policy change to enable these vulnerable groups to benefit from their environment. According to Dominelli (2012:7) green social work is holistic and is concerned with understanding environmental issues and how they impact upon people's behaviour.

2.7.3 Democracy and participation

The third theme of the developmental approach relates to the participation of asylum seekers and refugees in their own development (Patel, 2015:91). Intervention services should be based on participatory approaches, which involve asylum seekers and refugees in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phase. Most refugees sustain themselves economically, without support of social grants, leaving vulnerable groups of refugees like the disabled, the elderly, women and children with no means of support. Social workers should also engage in 'dialogue' with asylum seekers and refugees to better understand their problems, and as a way of enhancing and protecting their rights (Ife 2001:177). Participation of clients empowers them and builds self-reliance and self-determination, which are crucial for sustainability of programmes. According to Garcia (2009:91) from a strength-based perspective, participation should validate and recognise the value of individual uniqueness, capacity of individuals to overcome hurtful life situations and the significance of belonging to a community as a measure of individual wholeness. Therefore, resources should be linked to meet the needs of individuals and families, so that they achieve a greater sense of well-being and life satisfaction. Partnerships are vital to ensure the voices of the asylum seekers and refugees are heard in meeting their needs.

2.7.4 Social development partnerships

The fourth theme of the developmental approach calls upon government, NGOs, communities and the private sector to form partnerships and collaborate in promoting social development (Patel, 2015:93). Problems associated with the social exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa, are deep-rooted and complex and therefore a single approach or agency cannot resolve them (Pierson 2002:52). The problems faced by asylum seekers and refugees, require bottom up approaches involving local people, communities, NGOs, government, private sector and international agencies.

Government should collaborate with other social partners to create an enabling environment conducive to addressing structural causes of poverty and inequalities that affect asylum seekers and refugees on a day to day basis. September (2007:98) points out that NGOs play a crucial part in delivering social services in South Africa. Government should acknowledge their role, ensure they are adequately funded, have better salaries and working conditions and are positioned to provide comprehensive services by prioritising preventative services. A good working relationship between NGOs and government, built on open communication and trust should be established. Simultaneously NGOs can continue to advocate for marginalised groups like refugees, to effect policy change at all levels of practice.

Different government departments should collaborate to provide effective services and avoid duplication or service gaps in practice. For instance, the Department of Health and Social Development, Department of Home Affairs and Department of Education can work together to ensure that all needs of unaccompanied foreign minors are met, including the issuing of legal documents which are crucial for children to access medical services and to be integrated into the educational system. Different NGOs working for the same cause should network, in their efforts to bring forth a strong voice and to build better capacity for integrated services. For instance, many welfare NGOs assist with placement of unaccompanied foreign children in foster care or child and youth care centres and reunification with their families. However, they require the legal assistance of Lawyers for Human Rights to secure documentation from Department of Home Affairs, to enable them to finalise their cases in Children's Court.

Social workers need to adopt a multidisciplinary approach, involving working with professionals from different disciplines to ensure that the needs of asylum seekers and refugees are met. Social workers should have professional unity, under the wing of the Council for Social Service Professions, so they are better able to respond to issues of poverty and inequality at local, national, regional and international level.

Social workers are at the frontline of working with vulnerable groups, and there is a need for international exchange of knowledge to ensure that they are knowledgeable and effective in dealing with trans-cultural problems (Dowling & Sextone 2010:127). Social workers need skills to work with diverse clients who are traumatised by problems such as poverty, exploitation, discrimination, racism, war, famine, violence, genocide and a range of physical and emotional problems related to leaving their home countries (Hendricks 2009:66). Social workers should take the lead in developing practice that is culturally competent and advocate for policies from government that respect the diversity of different cultures in meeting their needs. Cultural competence is both a personal and organisational quest. Social workers should not allow their own cultural backgrounds to influence or bias service provisions to their clients. Organisations should sensitise, educate and train their social workers to render services to diverse cultures. Social workers should also understand the broad oppression and human rights abuses within the context of culture and advocate for social change and social justice that should transcend cultural difference (Ife 2001:189).

Networking between government, the welfare sector and the corporate world is crucial. The private sector has a social responsibility to investment in the communities in the areas they operate in. Corporates can assist welfare organisations to transform and adopt more business principles. A good example is that of Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa, allocating a welfare organisation, Future Families, office space on their premises and various other significant, cost saving support services over a number of years. This has enabled the organisation to transform from offering mainly psycho-social support to affected and infected HIV positive clients to one that also provides a wide range of income generating projects for disadvantaged members of the community. Their programmes include vocational training, financial planning training, parenting skills training, and cancer and TB awareness (Future Families 2014).

2.7.5 Bridging micro-macro divide

The last theme of the developmental approach is the bridging of the divisions between micro and macro interventions and this can be achieved by changing the structures and institutions that caused social economic injustices (Patel, 2015:98). Government must adopt policies that are proactive and can facilitate the full integration of asylum seekers and refugees. For instance, government can adopt policies that ensure that all vulnerable people regardless of citizenship, have access to social security and education policies to integrate them into the education system. Social workers play a critical role in influencing policies that are inclusive of the poor and advocating for justice, equality, the protection of human rights, and the promotion of family values (Swenson, 2001:218). At the same time, casework is still equally important when dealing with asylum seekers and refugees as many of them deal with personal and mental health challenges, including depression. However, in rendering psycho-social services, a developmental perspective to residual services is advocated as it views the client as a person with human rights and at the same time promotes the integration of economic and social development (Lombard & Kleijn 2006: 215).

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has reviewed literature on the contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. A sustainable approach to development encompasses social development and is rooted in human rights and confronts social and economic inequalities both within and between countries (Hawkins, 2010:73). The literature review indicated that asylum seekers and refugees face socio-economic inequalities, both in the global and South African context. Asylum seekers and refugees are excluded from governments plans, with only temporary measures being put in place to support them, which do not contribute to their livelihoods. The international community have a role to play in partnering and networking with local organisations to ensure that the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees are respected and that they live to their full potential.

The chapter also looked at the human rights-based approach and how it demands for the creation of a social, economic and physical environment in which asylum seekers

and refugees have fair and equal opportunities and access to education, jobs and health services. Through the developmental approach, social workers can play a crucial role in providing innovative, integrated strategies to address the alienation and the economic, social and environmental marginalisation of asylum seekers and refugees (Lombard, 2006:5).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology and empirical findings of the study. The goal of the study was to explore the contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria.

To achieve this goal, the following question guided the study:

What is the contribution of social workers in Pretoria Central to promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?

The research question was informed, by the following sub-questions:

- How informed and responsive are social workers towards promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?
- How can social workers play an effective role in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees?
- What are the challenges that social workers face in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees, in response to poverty and human indignity?

The chapter first presents the research approach, followed by the research type and research design of the study. Next, the population and sample, how the data was analysed and how the trustworthiness of the data was ensured, are discussed. Subsequent sections discuss the ethical aspects and the limitations of the study. The research findings are then presented and finally the chapter concludes with a summary.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

This study utilised the qualitative research approach to gain an understanding of processes, experiences and meanings people assign to their understanding of issues of concern (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008:79). In the case of this study it was to explore the contribution of social workers in Pretoria Central to promote social and economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. The researcher relied on interpretive inquiry, inductive analysis and the meaning that participants held on the issue (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:45). The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to understand the feelings and opinions of the sampled group of practising social workers, and make a thorough analysis of their contribution towards promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. This enabled the researcher to understand “participants’ frames of reference”, and to group the data into common themes (Snape & Spencer 2003:3). Adler and Clark (2011:13) mention that the major purposes of scientific research include exploration, description, explanation and evaluation. The study was exploratory as the research topic is relatively unstudied (Adler & Clark, 2011:13).

3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH

The appropriate type of research for this study was applied, because it was intended for use in the immediate future and to suggest action or increase effectiveness in an area of practice (Adler & Clark, 2011:382). Gravetter and Forzano (2006:36) assert that applied research concerns itself in finding solutions to problems in practice. The study sought to investigate and inform issues that have implications for everyday life and provide solutions to everyday challenges of asylum seekers and refugees that social workers have to respond to in providing services (Stangor, 2011:11). The findings are intended to increase awareness and effectiveness on how social workers can improve service delivery to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

This researcher made use of a case study and, in particular, the instrumental case study design 'with the aim of gaining new knowledge, which may inform policy and development' (Strydom, 2011:322). Porta and Keating (2008:224) state that a case study is a research strategy based on the in-depth empirical investigation of one, or a small number of phenomena in order to explore the configuration of each case and to elucidate features of a larger class of phenomena by developing and evaluating theoretical explanations, between cases and concepts and theories can be extended and validated.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

This section outlines the study population and sample; the data collection methods and analysis and the trustworthiness of the data.

3.5.1 Study population and sampling

The population in this study consisted of social workers working for NGOs in Pretoria Central that area being home to asylum seekers and refugees from different African countries. The researcher identified four NGOs working mainly with asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central. Below, are short descriptions of the identified four NGOs:

- **Child Welfare Tshwane** provides services to vulnerable children, through security, development and helping children to cope independently. They offer social work services to all the children in the City of Tshwane, between the ages of birth and 18. Child Welfare Tshwane upholds and maintains professional standards of service delivery in their endeavours to strengthen family ties and to ensure that each child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential.
- **Catholic Women's League** is an NPO accredited to render statutory services and also to facilitate both local and intercountry adoptions. Their services range from providing early intervention child protection services, statutory services for

abandoned or consented for, special needs and orphaned children. Providing option counselling services to birthparents. Screening and assessment of prospective adopters. Placement and finalization of national and inter country adoptions.

- **PEN** works to uplift people living in the inner-city since 1992. They offer a holistic set of services to support people to overcome their current circumstances, restore their dignity and become self-supporting, well adapted, responsible members of society.
- **Future Families** is a non-profit organisation rendering quality services to Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and people infected and affected by HIV/Aids in South Africa. Their objective is to keep children in their families. They empower the community to care for the family and create support to ensure the family can successfully raise balanced children who will become responsible members of the community

The number of social workers, and hence the population for the study included three social workers from Future Families, five from Child Welfare Tshwane, two from PEN and two from Catholic Women's League.

This study made use of the non-probability sampling method, namely, purposive sampling. According to Strydom and Delport (2011:392), purposive sampling is the kind of sampling that enables the researcher to deliberately seek distinctive and divergent data. The researcher used his judgement in selecting participants with a specific purpose in mind (Neuman, 2007:142). The purposive sampling technique enabled the researcher to select samples of participants that exhibited a variety of relevant variables that are critical to the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2013:128). Since the study was exploratory in nature, it was appropriate that purposive sampling be used (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namely, 2005:5).

The following criteria were utilised for identifying participants for the study:

- Social workers working in NGOs in Pretoria Central.
- Social workers with at least two years' experience in working with asylum seekers and refugees.
- English as the medium of language.
- Participants' willingness to participate in the study.

Permission was obtained from Directors and Managers of the four NGOs, to approach social workers who deliver services to asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore, the identified social workers agreed to participate in the study by signing a letter of informed consent.

Table 3.1 below presents a summary of the population and sample of the NGOs in Pretoria Central that work with asylum seekers and refugees.

Table 3.1: NGOs in Pretoria Central working with asylum seekers and refugees

NGO	Areas of operation	No of social workers servicing the area	No of social workers directly working with asylum seekers and refugees
Child Welfare Tshwane	Pretoria CBD, Arcadia, Sunnyside	5	2
Catholic Women's League	Sunnyside	2	2
PEN	Pretoria CBD	2	2
Future Families	Pretoria CBD, Arcadia, Sunnyside	3	2

3.5.2 Data collection

The researcher conducted one-on-one interviews to collect data, and used a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the interview (see Appendix A). Greeff (2011:351) postulates that semi-structured interviews are utilised by researchers to gain a detailed picture of a participant's beliefs about, or perceptions or accounts of a particular topic. The researcher thus formulated a list of predetermined questions to guide the interview, but by no means dictated the schedule (Greeff, 2011:152). The researcher interviewed all participants face to face in their respective offices and administered the informed consent form (see Appendix B) before each interview. All the participants signed the informed consent form and thereby also agreed that the interview could be recorded. The data was saturated (Creswell, 2014:189) by the eighth interview. Interviews were conducted at the respective offices of participating organisations in Pretoria Central. Interviews were between twenty to forty minutes and were conducted in a period of two months.

3.5.3 Data analysis

Data analysis was done by looking for repeating trends and patterns within the data (Greeff, 2011:373). The researcher made use of thematic analysis, as a qualitative analytic method to identify, analyse and report on patterns (themes) that emerged from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006:79).

For data processing and analysis, the six steps of qualitative analysis identified by Creswell (2014:197-200) were employed:

- Managing Data

The data was managed by making use of an audio recorder to voice record the interviews. The recordings were converted to an mp3 file format and transferred from an audio recorder to a computer to facilitate storage of the information. The researcher created computer files and labelled them appropriately. Additionally, backups for all audio files were created and stored. The files were subsequently transferred to compact disks which were labelled appropriately.

- Organising and preparing data for analysis

The recordings were accurately transcribed into a word package.

- Reading through all data

The transcripts were read and notes were made in order to identify data significant to the study's goal. Similar topics were clustered together and codes were assigned to the topics.

- Coding the data

Data was examined and coded into categories and sub-categories. This was achieved by repeated reading of the collected data.

- Interrelating themes

Themes and sub-themes were identified and classified in accordance to the context of the study.

- Interpreting the meaning of themes

Interpreting the themes and sub-themes involved comparing data with existing research findings. The researcher noted irregularities and categories or themes that were internally consistent but distinct from one another were identified. The researcher interpreted the data accordingly and, in the process, sought for other, plausible explanations for these data and linkages among them. The information collected was evaluated to determine whether it is central to answering the research question.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness of collected data

Data verification was done based on Lincoln and Guba's (1999) model on trustworthiness, as discussed by Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:419). Lincoln and Guba refer to four criteria to measure and ensure trustworthiness and these are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The researcher ensured validity and trustworthiness of data through the strategies of prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexivity (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2010:444).

- Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1999) (Schurink et al., 2011:420) maintain that credibility in qualitative research suggests a match between research participants' views and researchers' reconstruction and representation of them. This aspect of qualitative research is the relationship between the data and the context it relates to, and how confident the researcher is about the truth of the findings (Creswell, 2014:201). The researcher enhanced the truth value and credibility of the research data through prolonged and varied field experience, reflexivity (field journal), and peer examination (Shenton, 2004:70). To further ensure credibility the researcher subjected the research to a peer working in the field, who was not participating in the study, for analysis and feedback, scrutiny and questioning (Lietz et al., 2010:451). This allowed the researcher to view his research more objectively and allowed him to interrogate and think critically about the chosen research methods.

- Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the extent to which findings can be transferred to another setting or applied to other situations and generalised (Lincoln & Guba, 1999 in Schurink, et al., 2011:420). It is concerned with the degree to which the findings of the research study are applicable to other contexts or groups. To ensure transferability the research report contains information on the number of people involved in the study; the data collection methods; the number and length of the data collection sessions, and the time period of data collection (Shenton, 2004:70). Therefore, any research conducted within the same parameters should produce the same results as the study (Schurink, et al, 2011).

- Dependability

Dependability considers whether the findings would be consistent if the research project was replicated with the same participants or in a similar context or setting (Krefting, 1991:216). The researcher sought to ensure this by providing thick descriptions of the research site and research methods.

- Confirmability

According to Schurink, et al, (2011:421) confirmability stresses the need to ask whether the researcher provides evidence that corroborates the findings' interpretations by means of auditing. In this study, confirmability audit involved a description of the research steps taken from the start of the research project to the development and reporting of findings. This is known as an audit trail, as it describes the research procedures and allows for the researcher to follow his own research procedures consistently (Lietz et al., 2010:450). Jeanty and Hibel (2011:649) describes an audit trail as a log or diary used to keep track of research events in a chronological order to record the researcher's impressions, perceptions and experiences in order to manage threats to trustworthiness. The researcher kept a recording system (Silverman, 2013:171) where he recorded all the processes followed, decisions and actions taken during the process of data collection, including actual dates, venues and events (Schurink et al., 2011:422). A consistent pattern of the procedures was followed during data collection. The procedures were described in the researcher's diary, as were all the functions performed including unexpected occurrences and how these were handled (Lietz et al., 2006:450).

3.6 PILOT STUDY

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000:155) define a pilot study as a small study done prior to a larger piece of research to determine if its methodology, sampling instruments and analysis are appropriate and adequate. A pilot study can "pay enormous dividends by developing a few questions and probes that stimulate discussion about the key research topics" (Barbour & Schostak, 2005:45). A pilot study is an excellent strategy to determine the feasibility of the study and the data gathering instruments (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:112; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009:203).

For this study, the researcher used the first two interviews as a pilot test. Greeff (2011:370) postulates that a true pilot study is the first interview with the participants. This enabled him to gain more practical experience and confidence of the interviewing technique. The questions were clear and no changes were made. The pilot study's data was used in the main study.

3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (2011:114) ethics “offer rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students.” Permission was granted by the four NGOs to conduct the study (see Appendixes C - F). Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the University of Pretoria (see Appendix G). Avoidance of harm, voluntary participation and informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, deception of respondents, competence of researcher and limitations of study were all ethical principles that guided the researcher and are discussed as follows:

3.7.1 Avoidance of harm

According to Adler and Clark (2011:52) ethical standards allude to the obligation to protect study participants from harm, which means that the physical, emotional, social, financial, legal and psychological well-being of those who participate in a research project must be protected, both during the time that the data is collected and after the conclusion of the study.

The researcher clearly explained the goals and procedures of the study beforehand. The researcher informed the participants that there were no direct benefits for their participation in the study. Although no emotional or any other harm was envisaged, the participants were debriefed to determine their opinions about the interviews and also given an opportunity to raise any questions about the study (Neuman, 2007:53).

3.7.2 Voluntary participation and informed consent

Neuman (2007:54) cites that no one should be coerced into participating in social research and that participation should be voluntary. This principle was upheld in this study by obtaining informed consent from all participants and permission from their respective organisations. Participants were requested to sign consent forms before participating in the study, and were made aware that they could withdraw at any stage of the study if they wanted to do so. In addition, the participants were informed before

the study that there was no compensation for their participation. All participants also consented to the use of an audio recorder during the interview sessions.

3.7.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

The principle of anonymity could not be ensured as the researcher knew some of the participants and the interviews were face to face. Moreover, the directors of participating NGOs knew who had participated in the study. However, confidentiality of information was guaranteed. According to Babbie (2010:67) confidentiality is when the researcher can identify a given person's responses but essentially undertakes not to do so publicly. The confidentiality process was explained to the participants and they were ensured that any information shared during the interviews should be kept strictly confidential. Participants' were also reassured that their responses would not be linked to a particular NGO. Furthermore, participants were given pseudonyms and were informed that their real names would not be used on the tape and transcripts nor in any of the reports in which is part of the confidentiality principle, as stipulated by Rubin and Babbie (2011:83).

3.7.4 Deception of respondents

Strydom (2011:119) states that deception is the deliberate withholding of information and or the giving of falsified information to people to ensure their participation in a study. In this study, the researcher was honest and provided all the information concerning the study to the participants beforehand. No information was distorted or changed to meet the requirements of certain people to ensure their participation. No participants were manipulated in any way to provide information, as this would have compromised the outcome of this study, and render the entire study invalid.

3.7.5 Competence of researcher

Adler and Clark (2011:42) discuss the importance of maintaining the "highest levels of competence" when carrying out social research. The researcher has substantial

background experience in social research and has done an in-depth literature review of prior, similar studies to have a better understanding of the topic and issues surrounding it. He also passed a research methodology module as part of the course work for the MSW Social Development and Policy programme. Furthermore, the study was conducted under an experience supervisor who was consulted for guidance. The researcher also respected the rights and dignity of all the participants in the study.

3.7.6 Limitations of the study

The researcher is a social work practitioner in the field of refugees and asylum seekers. As such, he knew some of the research participants which might have caused them to withhold certain information from him. However, the researcher attempted to counteract this possible challenge by ensuring the interview environment was non-threatening and by co-signing the consent form which holds him to an ethical obligation of confidentiality.

3.8 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section first outlines the participants' biographical details, followed by data presented in the form of themes and sub-themes.

3.8.1. Biographical details

This section highlights participants' age, gender, qualifications and years of experience in working with asylum seekers and refugees as summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Biographical information of participants

Participants	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Age	36-40	31-35	25-30	25-30	31-35	51-55	41-45	31-35
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Years working with asylum seekers and refugees	2	3	2	3	3	4	8	4
Highest tertiary education	BSW in Social Work	BSW in Social Work	BSW in Social Work	BSW in Social Work	BSW in Social Work	PhD in Social Work	BSW in Social Work	BSW in Social Work

The table reflects that participants' ages ranged from 25 to 55 years. Two participants were between the age of 25 and 30; three participants were between the age of 31 and 35; one participant was between the age of 36 and 40 and one participant was respectively between the age of 41 and 45 and 51 and 55 years. The age categories indicate that the participants were experienced social workers. The female gender bias of the participants is aligned with the tendency in the social work profession. Seven of the participants had a Bachelors in Social Work degree and one a doctoral degree.

With regard to years of experience in working with asylum seekers and refugees, two participants had two years of experience, three participants had three years of experience, two participants had four years of experience and one participant had eight years of experience.

3.9. KEY THEMES

In this section the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data analyses will be presented and discussed. The findings will be substantiated by the direct voices of participants and where applicable, integrated with literature. The findings will be discussed under six themes and sub-themes which are summarised in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-theme
1. Reasons for asylum seeking and refugee status	
2. Challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees	2.1 Socio-economic challenges 2.2 Political and environmental challenges 2.3 Institutional and infrastructural challenges
3. Services provided to asylum seekers and refugees	3.1 Psycho-social support 3.2 Material assistance 3.3 Statutory services 3.4 Referrals
4. Challenges encountered by social workers rendering social services to asylum seekers and refugees	4.1 Cultural incompetence 4.2 Lack of funding 4.3 Human resource challenges 4.4 Institutional and infrastructural challenges
5. Strategies for social workers to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees	5.1 Understanding the socio-economic equalities 5.2 Addressing poverty and human capital development 5.3 Awareness of legislation and policies

Theme 1: Reasons for asylum seeking and refugee status

Participants had a good understanding of who an asylum seeker and refugee are and why they find themselves in these positions. The participants' views of an asylum seeker and refugee compare with literature, stating that an asylum seeker and refugee is someone who finds himself/herself in a foreign country seeking refuge and protection and who is unable or unwilling to return to his/her native country, due to fear of persecution (UNHCR, 2012:2). Their views are represented in the following statements:

P5: *“An asylum is a person who fled from their country seeking protection in South Africa due to war or economic reasons. A refugee is a person who comes to South Africa to seek greener pastures.”*

P1: *“...asylum seekers are people who migrate from their countries because of political instability while some refugees come to South Africa on their own will.”*

P7: *“...asylum seekers are people who are from foreign countries that are seeking identity documents to be accommodated in a certain country.”*

P2: *‘An asylum seeker is anyone who fled their country because of war and sought protection from the South African government.*

P3: *“A refugee is a person whose asylum application has been processed and found to be displaced and issued with a refugee permit”.*

The main reasons for asylum seekers and refugees' migration include political instability, religious wars, civil war, genocide, droughts, poverty, economic meltdown and dictatorial governments that render them destitute in their home countries:

P8: *“Asylum seekers left their country because of some various reasons, it might be political, or any other reason that the person leaves their country.”*

P4: *“... they fled due to various reasons that can be some kind of prosecution, whether its political or religious or due to war.”*

P1: *“...they [asylum seekers] came here to seek refuge mainly because they were exposed to fights or harmful experiences in their country.”*

The reasons cited by the participant's on why asylum seekers and refugees flee their countries correlate with Blavo's (1999:4) observation that many people from African states flee their countries because of economic hardships, wars and dictatorial governments, political and social oppression, restricted educational opportunities, geographic and social factors.

Theme 2: Challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees

Participants indicated that asylum seekers and refugees face challenges in accessing basic human rights such as education, health, food and shelter. Most of these challenges are inter-twinned. These challenges will be discussed next as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 2.1: Socio-economic challenges

From a socio-economic perspective, findings indicate that asylum seekers and refugees experience challenges in economic participation. Most participants reported that asylum seekers and refugees were denied employment due to reluctance by different institutions to recognise asylum/refugee permits. The inability to secure legal documentation aggravates difficulties for asylum seekers and refugees and therefore denies them socio-economic rights. Furthermore, even those who manage to acquire permits are exposed to labour abuse by various employers. These findings are supported by the following views of participants:

P4: *“...most of the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers complain about is unfair labour practices where employers pay them less and work long hours even though they are holders of running permits.”*

P2: *“...they [asylum seekers and refugees] can't get jobs and they are exploited further so they will never get to be socially accepted and economic freedom.”*

P6: *“One refugee came to our company and confessed that ever since she came to South Africa, she has never been accepted by any employer because she does not have a permit and cannot open an account...”*

One participant pointed out the tension that is created between South Africans and asylum seekers and refugees, due to competition and demand for income opportunities:

P5: *“It becomes a challenge as we have a large number of South Africans doing small business so for them [asylum seekers and refugees] to enter that business it becomes a strain for South Africans because the competition and the demand is very high.”*

A major setback for asylum seekers and refugees is that their skills are not always recognised as in the case of their own country. The following view summarises the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees:

P3: *“Some asylum seekers and refugees are qualified in their own country they are teachers, nurse, engineers but when they come to South Africa they could not get their qualifications recognised.”*

The socio-economic challenges that asylum seekers and refugees face, infringe on their socio-economic rights. The findings are confirmed by Taylor (2004:6) who points out that most refugees go for long periods unemployed or earn low wages, a key indicator of poverty. Taylor (2004:13) further highlights that many asylum seekers and refugees face social exclusion because of unemployment. Taylor (2004:13) remarks that they are discriminated against by many employers and that the informal sector is often the only option for them to generate an income. However, it is in the informal sector, where they are in frequent conflict with urban laws as they do not recognise the existence of the informal sector (Taylor, 2004:13). Narayan (2002:52) further notes that in many developing countries, the poor are often isolated in the informal sector and lack access to markets and business-related information essential to effect meaningful economic development. Collett (2004:77) points out that asylum seekers are often viewed as a danger to national identity, security and wealth. These negative

perceptions have been instrumental in fuelling public disquiet about asylum seekers and refugees resulting in verbal and, on occasions, physical abuse (Aspinall & Watters, 2010:9).

Subtheme 2.2: Political and environmental challenges

Midgley (1999:15) mentions that many economists recognise that economic development does not depend entirely on conventional economic inputs such as capital, labour and human skills, but also on the wider social and political context in which development takes place. He also notes that political instability, civil conflict, and institutionalised corruption are major causes of economic stagnation in many parts of the world. Asylum seekers and refugees are migrating from their countries of origin based on discontent in that country only to face political challenges in South Africa due to historical inequalities. Some of the participants highlighted the fact that asylum seekers and refugees face political challenges that greatly affected their stay in South Africa. Some participants concurred that South African citizens face internal political and environmental challenges that leaves them with little patience in accommodating asylum seekers and refugees:

P5: *“Asylum seekers and refugees are subjected to an environment which consistently stampede on their rights due to the political system in the country where most blacks are underprivileged...Black South Africans still face political and economic pressure resulting in them not accommodative of asylum seekers and refugees.”*

P4: *“Africa’s political uncertainties are consistently unfriendly to asylum seekers and refugees....”*

Language barriers exacerbate asylum seekers and refugees’ challenges as reflected in the words of one participant:

P5: *“When [asylum seekers and refugees] come to South Africa it is difficult for them to stay within the society freely because of language and stereotype. They are forced to stay as groups of foreigners from one country or other refugees from other countries. It is difficult since in most*

cases it is the locals who can connect them to jobs or other projects that can help them to survive.”

Asylum seekers and refugees’ position to address these challenges are further weakened by their limited human rights:

P6: *“When they [asylum seekers and refugees] get into South Africa their human rights are limited. We all know of what is going on within the country in terms of the xenophobic attacks... They [asylum seekers and refugees] are already coming with the fear of their human rights already being transgressed”.*

Findings correlate with literature, which states that the South African Government’s approach to migration is ‘Janus-faced’: offering a friendly, embracing vision to the world whilst shutting out most non-nationals living within the country (CoRMSA, 2011:15). Adjai and Lazaridis (2013:193) argue that, despite South Africa being a favourable destination for immigrants lured by the attractiveness of a dynamic economy and democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom enshrined in the South African Constitution, the "harsh reality is that migrants have encountered a society grappling with the legacy of apartheid". They further state that although the transition to democracy in South Africa ushered in the formal removal of racial discrimination, it did not eradicate inequalities (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193). The increase in unemployment, HIV/Aids and crime, and the growing gap between rich and poor, coupled with the State's failure to meet the high expectations created when it came into power in 1994, have culminated in a disempowered population (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013:193).

Subtheme 2.3: Institutional and infrastructural challenges

All of the participants revealed that obtaining documents was the major challenge faced by asylum seekers and refugees. Social service organisations and social workers find it difficult to fully assist undocumented asylum seekers and refugees as their undocumented status affects their access to medical care, education, government social benefits and housing. The participants’ responses reflected the

difficulty that asylum and refugee seekers face to access services in South Africa. The participant's views are expressed as follows:

- P3: *"We have reports of them [asylum seekers and refugees] being treated very badly at clinics. The one lady was actually told to stop producing children".*
- P7: *"They are rejected in the local hospitals and clinics."*
- P4: *"I came across one asylum seeker who for long has been failing to access medical assistance for her child in public hospitals and resorted to private clinics that proved very expensive."*
- P1: *"Asylum seekers and refugees find it difficult to place their children in schools without documentation and further struggle to afford schools fees. Asylum seekers and refugees also struggle to qualify for school exemption."*
- P5: *"Asylum seekers and refugees are also requested to produce study permits which is an anomaly as the asylum and refugees permit specifies that they are allowed to study".*
- P6: *"The challenge they [asylum seekers and refugees] face are most of their children not going to school and them not receiving the medical help because of lack of documentation"*
- P6: *"They [asylum seekers and refugees] are not able to open bank accounts because they do not have the thirteen-digit ID."*

These participants' comments concur with Aspinall and Watters (2010:vi), who state that asylum seekers and refugees with care needs are particularly vulnerable to poverty and isolation, without the involvement of the State and legislation. CoRMSA (2011:25) confirms that asylum seekers and refugees struggle to access credit and banking services, reducing their physical and financial security. This is particularly

unjust given the significant difficulties asylum seekers and refugees face in obtaining documentation.

Theme 3: Services provided to asylum seekers and refugees

With regard to basic provision of services, all the participants reported their organisations were providing services to asylum seekers and refugees in the form of basic needs, safe accommodation, getting children to school and advocating for them at the courts of laws through Lawyers for Human Rights. However, participants revealed that asylum seekers and refugees only obtain such services from the organisations for a restricted period and thereafter are expected to be self-sustainable.

Subtheme 3.1: Psycho-social support

All participants confirmed that they provided psycho-social support services to asylum seekers and refugees among other social services. They reported that therapeutic, educational and support groups as well as individual counselling sessions are provided.

P5: *“As an organisation we created attachment groups to build up broken families. We receive a number of children at our organisation and most of them would have been separated with their parents for years or some do not even know their parents.”*

P5: *“Our organisation provides psycho-social support through HIV/Aids support groups and sexual gender based violence. In most case we contract external counselling practitioners to conduct the group activities. Asylum [seekers] and refugees need such services because most of them might be not sure of where they can get support especially [with regard to] HIV/Aids related problems.”*

Future Families annual report (2014) reflects the psycho-social support that the organisation provides to HIV positive clients.

Subtheme 3.2: Material assistance

Participants revealed that their organisations have programmes to assist asylum seekers and refugees to sustain themselves. Participants stated that their organisations provided material assistance in the form of project grants, start-up capital and funding for existing businesses. However, due to lack of funding, most organisations could no longer offer sufficient material assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. Participants acknowledged these facilities in their organisations:

- P7: *“As a form of self-sustenance, we provide grants to refugees who may want to start a business or a project that can make them self-sustained, but most of them can’t make it because the amounts are little to properly run a profitable business.”*
- P3: *“We try and help as far as we can with regards to material aid but our organisation is very small and money is in short supply”*
- P5: *“Our organisation supports asylum seekers and refugees by providing technical and financial support. It is difficult to support all of them so we refer some to organisations or business organisations that can assist them further.”*
- P4: *“For asylum seekers our organisation has a grant for them but for refugees they are referred to the government.”*
- P8: *“We are no longer offering food parcels, Future Families help them (asylum and refugee seekers) with food vouchers but the vouchers are not always available.”*

The above statements complement the notion stated by Midgley (1999:11) that social workers can assist in the mobilisation of human capital for development, which has potential to produce net economic gains to individuals and society at large. Through human development investment, members of the community are able to achieve self-esteem and personal empowerment, which is important for the building of social capital. For instance, Future Families assists asylum seekers, refugees and orphans

and vulnerable children with a wide range of income generating projects. Their programmes include vocational training, financial planning training, parenting skills training, and cancer and TB awareness, just to mention a few (Future Families, 2014).

Subtheme 3.3: Statutory services

The participants revealed that one of the core services they render is advocating for legalisation of undocumented asylum seekers and refugees. They make use of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 as amended and the Refugee Act of 1998 among other legislation in South Africa. The participants reported that they make use of Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), South African Police Services (SAPS), Department of Home Affairs (DHA), among other government departments, to assist in providing statutory services to asylum seekers and refugees. Below are some of the views expressed by participants.

P7: *Our wish is to have the pieces of legislation in the Children's Act 38 [of] 2005 reviewed to allow long term placement in places of safety of children whom are categorised as asylum seekers or refugees.*

P5: *"Our main challenge is getting asylum seekers and refugees permits because most of them [asylum seekers and refugees] come to South Africa without any documents that we can use to acquire permits. However, our work is made a little easy when we approach the courts as we work closely with LHR and SAPS to advocate for the refugee and asylum seekers and undocumented children."*

Ife (2001:188) states that there are severe constraints in practice on how social workers can advocate filling the gaps within legislation that impact negatively on asylum seekers and refugees, at micro, meso and macro levels. Social workers should challenge institutional contexts and government policies that perpetuate the oppression of asylum seekers and refugees. More research is needed with good practice examples, on how barriers can be overcome and effective solutions achieved when working with asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers should continuously strive for awareness of connections between policy and practice, and its implications for human rights and principles of social justice; and continue to defend the need for

good professional practices in supporting vulnerable citizens. In working with asylum seekers and refugees, it is of utmost importance to understand human rights reach across the public/private divide, and see both the public and the private sector as essential contexts for human rights work (Ife 2001:188). Therefore, services should be rendered to asylum seekers and refugees from a human rights perspective.

Subtheme 3.4: Referrals

Participants reflected that their organisations were not able to fully assist asylum seekers and refugees, and relied on referrals to other stakeholders for some services. Participants identified several organisations they work with to ensure asylum seekers and refugees receive further assistance, such as the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Department of Social Development (DSD), International Organisation for Migrants (IOM), Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), Jesuit Relief Services (JRS), United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the South African Red Cross Society. Participants confirmed referrals as follows:

P3: *“If we cannot offer the service in our organisation we refer to other social service institutions for further assistance. The main reasons we refer may be; budget constraints, case complications, outsourced services such as counsellors, self-sustenance programmes such as baking courses, sowing, driving, therapist, advocacy, asylum/refugee family tracking, documentation, accommodation and repatriation. Some of the organisations that were identified as critical are IOM, LHR, DHA, DSD, JRS, UNHCR.”*

P7: *“Asylum seekers and refugees are referred to JRS to help them with accommodation because it’s something beyond our scope of practise.”*

The problems faced by asylum seekers and refugees, require bottom up approaches involving local people, communities, NGOs, government, private sector and international agencies. Problems associated with the social exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa, are deep-rooted and complex, a single approach or agency cannot resolve them (Pierson, 2002:52).

Theme 4: Challenges encountered by social workers rendering social services to asylum seekers and refugees

Social workers face a number of challenges when rendering services to asylum seekers and refugees. The challenges faced by social workers are around including cultural competence; lack of funding; human resource challenges and inadequate strategies to address lack of documentation. These issues will be discussed next as sub-themes.

Subtheme 4.1: Cultural incompetence

Asylum seekers and refugees come from different parts of the world and have different cultures, often diverse within each ethnic group. Social workers are at the frontline of working with vulnerable groups, and there is a need for international exchange of knowledge to ensure they are better prepared and more effective in dealing with trans-cultural problems (Dowling & Sextone 2010:127). Participants acknowledged they do not fully understand the different cultures of asylum seekers and refugees hindering their provision of services. Language was stated as the major hurdle to effective provision of services to asylum seekers and refugee seekers. The participants articulated their challenges as follows:

P5: *“When you are working with asylum seekers and refugees you need to embrace their culture since most of them take time to understand how we behave in South Africa. Some come from strict cultural backgrounds while some are very willing to learn the new environment. Culture can be very frustrating especially in your efforts to provide service. There is also need for us as social workers to understand the dynamics in culture so that we embrace it to our advantage and to the benefit of asylum seekers and refugees as they adjust.”*

P7: *“Language is a huge barrier that made service delivery by social workers a bit difficult. Our organisation sometimes make use of a hired interpreter so that we are able to work with the asylum seeker or refugee. We sometimes receive a number of unaccompanied minors and without an interpreter it is very difficult to assist the children.”*

P6: *“We fail to understand the kind of services they really are looking for because of the language barrier.”*

The views by participants are corroborated by literature. Dowling and Sextone (2010:127) highlight that asylum seekers and refugees come from different parts of the world and have different cultures, and might be diverse within each ethnic group. Developmental social work challenges social workers to gain knowledge of cultures, values, beliefs, understanding of communication patterns, and differences between diverse racial/ethnic groups. Social workers should take the lead in developing culturally competent practice and advocate for policies from government that respect the diversity of different cultures and meet their needs. Ife (2001:5) agrees that cultural competence is both a personal and organisational quest. Social workers should also understand the oppression and human rights abuses within cultural contexts and advocate for social change and social justice to transcend cultural difference (Ife 2001b:189). Social workers should thus not let their cultural backgrounds influence or bias service provisions to their clients. Organisations should sensitise, educate and train their social workers to be able to work with diverse cultures.

Subtheme 4.2: Lack of funding

The participants stated that their efforts in delivering efficient and consistent services to asylum seekers and refugees were hindered by programme budgets. The participants expressed that their organisations rely on donations and partnerships to provide services. Government is burdened by other national commitments resulting in less focus on asylum seekers and refugees. The shortage of funds is evident in the voice of one participant:

P4: *“Even if we want to service our clients efficiently, sometimes the budget set aside by the organisation limit us from executing the much needed assistance. We know our organisation also depends on donations so sometimes if they don’t get enough funding to support asylum seekers and refugees project then we are bound to suffer.”*

The findings indicate that due to lack of funding, organisations often struggle to render the relevant and appropriate services required by the refugees and asylum seekers,

especially when it comes to infrastructural resources such as housing. Some organisations refer asylum seekers and refugees to those organisations that provisionally cater for extended provision of accommodation. In some cases, asylum seekers and refugees end up in the streets without safe accommodation. Participants expressed the challenges with accommodation as follows:

- P3: *“Asylum seekers totally rely on our organisation for accommodation as most of them have no relatives in South Africa, no money to pay for their own accommodation, property owners require South Africa ID or Passport...”*
- P7: *“Accommodation is always a problem because the places that provide accommodation need South African ID’s; of which accommodation is also provided for a maximum of three months.*
- P8: *“Accommodation is a challenge because we have few organisations that help refugees and most organisations have limited services so they are unable to cover all refugee needs.”*

The statements above, emphasise the importance of social capital in social development. The concept of social capital formation is commonly used to refer to the creation of economic and social infrastructure, for instance roads, bridges, irrigation and safe water drinking systems. Social capital encompasses community relations with the “outside world”, including other communities and formal institutions (Narayan, 2002:368). Midgley (1999:12) recommends that social capital should be an integral part of all community work practice, as it contributes to community-held assets which “are important in that they provide the economic and social base on which development efforts depends”. Lombard (2003:7) notes that connections between people in a community are important for them to realise their full potential, enhance a greater sense of worth and in providing strength and control to claim charge of their own destinies.

Subtheme 4.3: Human resource challenges

Participants expressed that their organisations struggle due to shrinking operational budgets and reduced staff compliment. High caseloads and limited people power present a challenge that directly affects service provision to asylum seekers and refugees:

P1: *Social workers' ability to fully play their role is affected by a high caseloads and shortage of man[people]power.*

P2: *"...there is so much do to do but with very little man[people]power, so at the moment we are only focus on assisting children with asylum and refugee status rather than assisting all asylum seekers and refugees to be self-sustainable and acquire economic freedom."*

P5: *"We have a large number of clients approaching our organisation and our man[people]power is not enough so we have to put clients on the waiting list which is a bit of a challenge because they [asylum seekers and refugees] have urgent needs."*

Subtheme 4.4: Institutional and infrastructural challenges

Participants acknowledged they often operate under stressful institutional and infrastructural conditions, presenting challenges in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. Below are some of the testimonies from the participants:

P1: *"We have faced numerous challenges when trying to get documentation for unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and refugees. Our legislation as a country is so restrictive and needs review to allow asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied minors the chance to benefit from social equalities."*

P2: *"Resources and systems are available but the stakeholders are also not fully equipped on how to handle cases of asylum seekers and refugees."*

P6: *“As NGOs we are limited in terms of the services we can provide to asylum seekers and refugees.”*

The above stated challenges hinder social workers to fully integrate micro and macro practice as required for a shift of service delivery towards the developmental paradigm.

Theme 5: Strategies for social workers to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees

The participants highlighted various strategies that can contribute to the promotion of socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. As part of the strategies they indicated the following; understanding socio-economic equalities; addressing poverty and human capital development; awareness of legislation and policies that promote social and economic equality of asylum seekers and refugees, and advocating for promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. These strategies will be discussed below as sub-themes.

Subtheme 5.1: Understanding the socio-economic equalities

Participants indicated that asylum seekers and refugees face economic, educational, political and economic challenges (see theme 2) that negatively influence their socio-economic rights. South Africa has a strong Constitution and Bill of Rights that enshrines some socio-economic rights and obligations of asylum seekers and refugees, including legal protection, non-discrimination, administrative justice and access to social services (RSA, 1996). Most of the participants managed to express what social and economic equalities entail. They all highlighted they have been practising the promotion of socio-economic equality through supporting asylum seekers and refugees to acquire documentation, vital for them to benefit from social grants, bank loans and other economic benefits offered through the government. The commitment of participants to address inequalities are substantiated below:

P3: *“As social workers, we think asylum seekers and refugees have rights like any other South African, hence it is important to make sure they access all the social and economic benefits available.”*

- P8: *“If a person is a refugee and has acquired documentation they must have access to employment, social grants and all basic services”*
- P7: *“We need to integrate and create access for all refugees in their communities and help them to become financially stable and independent so that they can take care of their families.”*
- P2: *“Everyone that is in the country must live a life that is dignified and that they [asylum seekers and refugees] can actually sustain themselves and that they do not always come back asking for handouts.”*
- P6: *“Everyone within the borders of South Africa must have equal access to both economic and social means that are being provided by the government, like having access to social grants”.*

Social development requires that economic development should be inclusive, integrated, and sustainable and bring benefits to all, this requires integrating social development with economic development (Midgley, 2010:15). Furthermore, it proposes that social welfare should be investment oriented, seeking to enhance human capacities to actively participate in the productive economy (Midgley, 2010:15). The integration of economic and social objectives is a key element of social development (Lombard, 2003:2). Developmental social work calls for more innovative, integrated strategies to address the alienation and the economic, social and environmental marginalisation of vast sectors of the population who are living in poverty, are vulnerable and have special needs (Lombard, 2006:5).

Subtheme 5.2: Addressing poverty and human capital development

There is a fragile line between social work as a profession and its contribution in promoting socio-economic equalities. The main reason being that social workers can only contribute within the confines and provisions of the country's legislation hence the contribution is limited. Regarding promoting social and economic equalities, findings show that all participants' responses acknowledged asylum seekers and refugees' need to have access to economic and social means provided by the government. Economic equalities that must be taken into consideration are fair labour practices

towards all South Africans including asylum seekers and refugees, abilities to open bank accounts, access to loans and medical aid. A participant highlighted that:

P1: *“Our contribution is limited to the confines of our organisation policies.”*

Through a human right-based approach, social workers educate and raise awareness of asylum seekers and refugees’ human rights, empowering them to advocate for their rights. A participant pointed out that both social workers and communities have a role in upholding asylum seekers and refugees’ human rights:

P5: *“As social workers, we believe it is the duty of our communities to accept and accommodate asylum seekers/refugee as this can happen in any country, hence the need to promote and uphold human rights.”*

Lombard (2008:17) notes that extreme levels of poverty extend the role of social work beyond poverty alleviation into sustainable livelihoods. Social workers can promote social inclusivity and social development by harmonising social welfare and economic development (Patel, 2015:88). Lombard (2003:9) recognises the need for the social work profession to reinvent itself and pursue social entrepreneurship, as a creative and innovative way to address the vast unemployment faced by many people in South Africa. In short, social workers should be instrumental in building alternative systems that promote sustainable human development.

Midgley (2010:20) believes social workers can assist in the mobilisation of human capital for development, which has the potential to produce net economic gains to individuals and society at large. Through human development investment, members of the community can achieve self-esteem and personal empowerment, important for the building of social capital. Engaging in human capital formulation involves training residents and equipping them with technical skills, before they can think about job creation and taking over critical positions in the running of projects from external facilitators (Nthomang & Rankopo, 1997:214).

Development implies increasing the freedoms and capabilities of all people (Sen, 1999:4). For instance, social workers can promote community education as an agent

to eliminate the disempowering effects of ignorance in communities, by improving the literacy rates and productivity among women (Engelbrecht, 2008:168). The social work profession needs to actively promote literacy in poor communities as an overall strategy to tackle poverty, unemployment, inequalities and improve access to opportunity and inclusive economic growth (Lombard, 2011:232).

Subtheme 5.3: Awareness of legislation and policies that promote social and economic equality of asylum seekers and refugees

Most of the interviewed participants, reported they were using the Children's Act 33 of 2005 as amended, Refugee Act 1998 and the Constitution of South Africa and other organisational policies that pertains to asylum seekers and refugees. However, participants indicated that there is need for a diverse approach by social workers in their implementation of legislation and policies that support social and economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers require training in legislation to ensure that they effectively assist in promoting social and economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. A participant summarises the need for training as follows:

P2: *“The organisation should also institute training that focuses on how us, as social workers, tackle asylum seekers and refugees’ issues. We get stuck in most cases as we do not know how best to handle certain issues especially those which needs in-depth application of legislation. We need to know which organisation or authority to approach on particular cases.”*

The legislation and policies highlighted by the participants relate to both international and national levels. Good governance and the rule of law at the local, national, international levels are essential for sustained economic growth and the eradication of poverty and hunger. Good governance can be impeded by many factors, including lack of transparency, war and conflict, poor organisation, lack of technical capacity, poor motivation and corruption.

In South Africa, the government has designed top down programmes, with policies being enacted from the top without meaningful consultation with the affected groups,

in this instance, asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers should engage in 'dialogue' with asylum seekers and refugees to better understand their problems as a way of enhancing and protecting their rights (Ife 2001:177). Participation of clients empowers them and builds self-reliance and self-determination, crucial for sustainability of programmes. Social work is an inclusive profession which demands a collective approach to the promotion of socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. Therefore, partnership with Government departments and other organisations is vital to shape the socio-economic skills of asylum seekers and refugees and also ensure their voices are heard.

3.10 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the research methodology, the ethical considerations and limitations of the study. The chapter has also presented the empirical findings of the study. The main findings involved the themes exploring reasons for asylum seeking and refugee status and the challenges faced by them. Furthermore, findings highlighted the challenges encountered by social workers rendering services to asylum seekers and refugees, and strategies for social. The key findings from the study, conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the key findings, conclusions and recommendations from the study. The first section focuses on how the goal and objectives of the study were met. The following section presents the key findings of the study and conclusions drawn from the findings. Finally, recommendations are made and discussed.

4.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the study was to explore the contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central. This goal was attained through the following objectives:

Objectives 1

- To theoretically contextualise the social and economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees within the human rights-based approach.

This goal was achieved in Chapter two (sub-section 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5) where the plight of asylum seekers and refugees was discussed from a global and South African context. Section 2.3 and 2.4 summarised the common challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees, leading to extreme poverty, marginalisation, social exclusion and human rights abuses. From a socio-economic perspective, equalities for asylum seekers and refugees entail fairness in provision of social services and benefits, opportunities such as employment and education and development of legislation and policies that remedy limitations in law. In sub-section 2.5, the researcher discussed the human rights-based approach framework to understand social workers' contribution to promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

Objective 2

- To explore the extent to which social workers are informed and respond to the socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

This objective was accomplished in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.6) that explored the role of social workers in the context of asylum seekers and refugees. The discussion centred on social workers practicing in an environment of globalisation, and the need for them to practice within a human rights ethos. Social workers are challenged to move from the traditional remedial practice to developmental practice to realise the crucial role they play in policy making and research aimed at improving services to asylum seekers and refugees. The objective was also addressed in Chapter three. Empirical findings (sub-themes 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) presented strategies for social workers to promote socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. Strategies include, understanding socio-economic inequalities; addressing poverty and human capital development, and awareness to legislation and policies that promote socio-economic equality for asylum seekers and refugees. The section highlighted the active role social workers need to play to tackle poverty, unemployment, inequalities and improve access to opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees (Lombard, 2011:232).

Objective 3

- To determine how social workers can play an effective role in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees.

Objective 3 was realised in Chapter two, as part of the literature review (sub-section 2.6 and 2.7) which explores social justice and human rights as important values of social work to achieve social change and addressing socio-economic marginalisation of asylum seekers and refugees. Furthermore, social workers' commitment to equality and social justice, is enhanced through developmental social work, which at its core focuses on facilitating change, empowerment, capacity enhancement, self-determination and client participation (Midgley & Conley, 2010:312). The role that social workers can play in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees is closely aligned to the strategies mentioned in objective 2. Furthermore, the empirical findings highlighted that social workers can provide psycho-social

support; material assistance; statutory services and referral services to asylum seekers and refugees.

Objective 4

- To determine the challenges that social workers face in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

Objective 4 was achieved in Chapter 2 (sub-section 2.6) which highlights some of the challenges social workers encounter in rendering social services to asylum seekers and refugees from a literature perspective. These challenges include under-representation in strategic positions that enable the profession to participate in policy making. Social workers are also urged to shift their focus from clients' individual psycho-social problems and extend services to reducing households' financial vulnerabilities (Engelbrecht, 2009:165). Furthermore, social workers are poorly trained on issues of immigration, and therefore lack the awareness and insight essential for effective work with asylum seekers and refugees. Objective 4 was also achieved in the empirical study. In Chapter 3 (see theme 4 and its related sub-themes), participants highlighted a number of challenges hindering the promotion of socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees. The challenges included limited understanding of different asylum seekers and refugees' cultures, lack of funding resulting in less focus on asylum seekers and refugees, high caseloads and reduced staff compliment, and institutional and infrastructural challenges.

Objective 5

- To make recommendations on how social workers can improve provision of services to promote socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees.

This objective was achieved in the empirical study findings as well as in this chapter in section 4.4 below. In Chapter 3, theme 5, participants indicated various strategies that contribute towards the promotion of socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees. These strategies are as follows: understanding socio-economic equalities; addressing poverty and human capital development; awareness of legislation and policies and advocating for promotion of socio-economic equalities of

asylum seekers and refugees. These strategies are integrated in the recommendations in this chapter.

4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents all the key findings and conclusions drawn for each finding:

- The findings show that social workers have a clear understanding of who an asylum seeker and refugee are and per implication what challenges they face. Reasons leading to asylum seekers and refugees' migration stem from political instability, religious wars, civil war, and economic meltdown.
- In conclusion, for social workers to render effective services, they should understand the phenomenon of asylum seekers and refugees in order to know the full spectrum and context of issues they are faced with. This will enable social workers to develop appropriate interventions that will contribute to promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Findings highlight that asylum seekers and refugees struggle to secure documentation from the Department of Home Affairs. Due to lack of documentation, they find themselves excluded from active employment opportunities in South Africa. However, most participants cited that asylum seekers and refugees are denied employment opportunities, even in instances where they have asylum seeker and refugee permits. As a result, asylum seekers and refugees end up in the informal sector, where they engage in petty entrepreneurship enterprises to make ends meet. They are in frequent conflict with the law, as the sector is not well regulated. In supporting asylum seekers and refugees to secure documentation, participants highlighted that they refer undocumented asylum seekers to Lawyers for Human rights to advocate on the legality through provisions of the law in South Africa.
- To conclude, challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees in accessing documentation deny them socio-economic rights, which include the struggle to access banking and credit services, which is detrimental to their financial

security. In addition, it is detrimental to their health, education and the general well-being of their children because they need documents to access these services. This discrimination reduces the human dignity of asylum seekers and refugees and exposes them to other human rights abuses. This scenario challenges social workers to take up the advocacy role and facilitate the access to documentation by refugees and asylum seekers. Social workers are human rights workers, their practice must address issues of structural disadvantage (Ife, 2001:173).

- The findings indicate the contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees as emanating from the nature and type of services they provide in their organisations. The services include the provision of material assistance; statutory services; safe accommodation, and psycho-social support services. The findings also show social workers still focus mostly on traditional remedial practice, mainly focusing on clients' psycho-social needs.
- In conclusion, a wide spectrum of services are provided to asylum seekers and refugees and these services go beyond meeting their basic needs. However, these services are not sustainable due to the poor funding and budget constraints of the NGO sector. Social workers should afford asylum seekers and refugees opportunities to take care of their socio-economic needs by engaging them in a developmental approach, which entails the harmonisation of social development with economic development. For instance, through sustainable income generating projects and linking asylum seekers and refugees to job opportunities.
- The findings identified several critical government departments and organisations that social workers work with; either by referring asylum seekers and refugees for further outsourced services such as counsellors, therapists, advocacy, asylum seeker and refugee family tracking, documentation, accommodation and repatriation. The government departments and organisations that were identified as critical are the Department of Home Affairs (DHA), Department of Social Development (DSD), International Organisation

for Migrants (IOM), Lawyers for Human Rights (LHR), Jesuit Institute, United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the South African Red Cross Society.

- It can therefore be concluded that, providing meaningful interventions for asylum seekers and refugees requires strong partnerships between government, communities, NGOs, private sector and international agencies. The presence of active partnerships in the sector ensures that multi-pronged and multi-sectoral approaches are employed to address the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Problems experienced by asylum seekers and refugees are deep-rooted and complex, and therefore a single approach or agency cannot resolve them (Pierson, 2002:52).

- Findings pointed out that South Africa has well developed policies and legal frameworks to protect the basic rights of asylum seekers and refugees such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005; the Refugee Act 130 of 1998; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 and other organisational policies that pertain to asylum seekers and refugees. However, despite adequate policies and legal frameworks being in place, asylum seekers and refugees continue to be denied their socio-economic rights such as rights to work, education and health services.

- It is clear that there are adequate policies and legal frameworks that protect the socio-economic rights, promotes non-discrimination and access to social services for asylum seekers and refugees. However, there is a gap between policy formulation and implementation caused by inadequate infrastructural and institutional arrangements. Government is supposed to play a role based on the developed policies regarding asylum seekers and refugees to ensure the protection of their socio-economic rights and integration into the South African society. In practice, many asylum seekers and refugees do not enjoy these rights, starting with their struggle to obtain necessary legal documentation. Social workers should therefore work at policy level, which include policy advocacy, immigration research and policy making (Elliott & Segal, 2012:140).

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above-mentioned findings and conclusions, the following recommendations on how social workers can improve provision of services to promote socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees are made:

➤ **Training social workers in the developmental approach**

There is a need to train social workers in the practical application of a developmental approach in the rendering of services to asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers should move from their traditional remedial practice, mainly focused on clients' psycho-social needs, to implementing social investment strategies such as social entrepreneurship. NGOs should engage their asylum seekers and refugees' clients to participate in community based economic development activities. In this way, NGOs can bridge the socio-economic divide by transforming community development projects to have a business and economic function (Lombard, 2005:219).

Strong leadership is required of NGOs to foster an innovative environment and programmes that are not entirely leaned towards anticipating funding from government institutions and traditionally known funders. Active participation of asylum seekers and refugees is central in developmental social work in finding relevant solutions for their socio-economic challenges. Social workers at all levels should engage in continuous research to strengthen their practice and networks on issues that affect self-sustenance of asylum seekers and refugees.

➤ **Strengthening partnerships between government departments and NGOs**

Findings indicated that partnerships between government departments, including the Department of Social Development, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Education and Department of Health and NGOs are important to promote the plight of asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers have a role to play in partnering and networking with local organisations to ensure the human rights of asylum seekers and refugees are respected and that they are connected to opportunities.

Forums for dialogue should be developed where regular meetings are conducted between the social workers, asylum seekers and refugees, the relevant government departments and other stakeholders as required. During such meetings, these stakeholders should deliberate and address the respective expectations of one another as far as dealing with problems of asylum seekers and refugees is concerned and collectively finding solutions for challenges that they face. There is clearly a need to develop relevant programmes and establish on-going monitoring and evaluation strategies with emphasis on human rights principles, social justice as well as international and local laws, which will aid in meaningfully promoting socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees.

➤ **Advocating for promotion of asylum seekers and refugees socio-economic equalities**

Findings indicated that there are adequate policies and legal frameworks that protect the socio-economic rights of asylum seekers and refugees, promote non-discrimination against them and give them access to social services. However, asylum seekers and refugees face discrimination and human rights abuses despite legislation and policies being in place to protect their socio-economic rights. Social workers need to challenge structural social injustice, by advocating for the promotion of social inclusion and human rights for asylum seekers and refugees. Social workers should monitor and evaluate government interventions to ensure they are not palliative, and are intended to empower asylum seekers and refugees. Government should educate the South African society on issues of asylum seekers and refugees and any hate crimes against them. For instance, on the 5th of September 2019, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, addressed the nation condemning xenophobic attacks and resurgence of violence against foreign nationals, and encouraged dialogue and engagement as strategies to finding long-term solutions (RSA, 2019). The Refugee Act 130 of 1998 and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 make provision for socio-economic rights for asylum seekers and refugees. Social work is a human-rights based profession, therefore social workers are mandated to advocate and promote for the socio-economic rights of asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, poverty reduction is critical in ensuring socio-

economic rights and human security of asylum seekers and refugees. Increased job opportunities will enable asylum seekers and refugees to be self-sufficient, which, in turn will increase their self-worth, self-respect and freedom.

➤ **Further research**

Further research is recommended to inform the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for an integrated programme for asylum seekers and refugees of social protection, social services and development opportunities.

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APPENDIX A

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Goal of study

To explore the contribution of social workers in Pretoria Central in promoting social and economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees.

1. Biographical information

1. What is your sex?

Male	Female	
------	--------	--

2. What is your age?

20-24	25-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	
56-59	60+						

3. How long have you been working with refugees and/or asylum seekers?

2-5	6-10	11-15	16-19	20+	
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4. What is your highest educational qualification?

2. Interview questions

1. What do you understand by the terms 'asylum seeker' and 'refugee'?
2. What are the challenges asylum seekers and refugees report when they approach your organisation?
3. What services does your organisation provide to asylum seekers and refugees?
4. Are there any challenges you are faced with when rendering services to asylum seekers and refugees?
5. What is your understanding of promoting social and economic equalities?
6. What is your view on the contribution social workers play in promoting the socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees?

7. What do you understand about the human rights-based approach, and do you think it is relevant when working with asylum seekers and refugees?
8. Are you aware of any legislation or policies in South Africa or internationally that seeks to promote social and economic equality of asylum seekers and refugees?
9. Are there any other organisations you work closely with, locally and internationally to advocate for the promotion of socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees?
10. How do you think social workers can improve provision of services to promote socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees?

APPENDIX B



Faculty of Humanities

Department of Social Work & Criminology

30/10/2019

Student: Vivian Mukanyima Machokonye
Student Number: 13301188
Cell phone: 071 385 8423
Email: vivazm@gmail.com

Informed consent form

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in this study towards my Master's degree in Social work (Social Development & Policy) at the University of Pretoria. To successfully achieve the goals of the study the researcher is kindly requesting you as a registered and practising social worker to take part in this study. Please read through all the sections, to get an understanding of what you are consenting to. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the declaration on the last page of this letter.

1. Title of study

The contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central

2. Goal of study

To explore whether social workers in Pretoria Central contribute in promoting social and economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees.

3. Procedures

You are requested to participate in face to face interviews with the researcher. He will use a semi-structured interview schedule, comprising of a list of predetermined questions, which will guide the interview. This session will be conducted at a place convenient to you and will take approximately an hour. To ensure that your experiences are well captured, with your permission, an audio recorder will be used during the session. The research study will conform to the ethical guidelines and requirements of the University of Pretoria.

4. Risks and discomforts

The researcher will avoid exposing you to any risk and discomfort, by clearly explaining the goals and procedures of this study.

5. Benefits

There are no direct benefits or compensation to be derived from participating in this study. However, it is envisaged that your participation will inform social workers on what the gaps are in practice and how recommendations from the study can inform social work practice, education, research and policy in creating an enabling environment that promotes the socio-economic equalities for asylum seekers and refugees in South Africa.

6. Participants' rights

Participation in this study is voluntary and no participants' will be coerced to participate against their will. Furthermore, you are free to refuse to answer any questions, or to stop the interview at any time if you so wish, without any consequences.

7. Confidentiality

Your identity will be known to the Director/Manager of your organisation and the researcher, since you will be purposively selected. However, all information you provide during the interview will have a code or pseudonym assigned to it. Furthermore, the NGOs will be referred to by codes or pseudonyms and hence no participant will be attached to a specific NGO. After the completing the study, all the research data and or documents referring to this study, will be stored at the University of Pretoria in the Department of Social work and Criminology, for a minimum period of 15 years.

8. Right of access to the researcher

Should you wish to get in contact with the researcher on any matter related to the study, I can be contacted telephonically on 071 385 8423. Alternatively you can email me at vivazm@gmail.com

I understand what the study is about and why and how it will be conducted. I give voluntary consent to participate in the study.

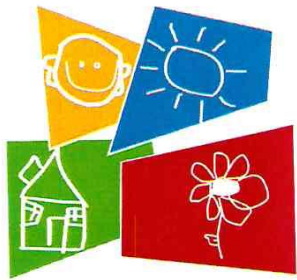
.....
Signature of participant

.....
Date

.....
Signature of researcher

.....
Date

APPENDIX C



Child Welfare Tshwane
NPO Reg No 001-612

Child Welfare Tshwane

72 Oates Street
Groenkloof
PO Box 503
Pretoria 0001

Tel: 012 460 6372/5
Fax: 012 460 6375

E-mail: info@childwelfare.co.za
www.childwelfare.co.za

Head Office
72 Oates Street
Groenkloof
Tel: 012 460 6372
Fax: 012 460 6375

Risk Assessment
Intakes
Tel: 012 343 9392
Fax: 012 343 8788

Therapy Unit
Tel: 012 343 0535
Fax: 012 343 8788

Adoptions
Tel: 012 460 6372
Fax: 012 460 6375

Atteridgeville
Tel: 012 373 8131
Fax: 012 373 8306

Bramley
Children's Home
Tel: 012 460 6372
Fax: 012 460 6375

Centurion
Tel: 0861 298 298
Fax: 012 343 8788

Olievenhoutbosch
Tel: 072 385 1030

Eersterust
Tel: 012 806 7046/7
Fax: 012 806 7283

Elandspoor
Tel: 012 754 5981/2

Mamelodi
Tel: 012 805 4056/7
Fax: 012 805 4997

Mid City
Tel: 012 322 5803
Fax: 012 343 1373

Affiliated to
Child Welfare
South Africa



CHILD WELFARE
SOUTH AFRICA

5 February 2016

Prof A Lombard
University of Pretoria
PRETORIA
0001

Dear Prof. Lombard

RE: PERMISSION LETTER FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES – MR VIVIAN MUKANYIMA MACHOKONYE

I, Ms Linda Nell, Director: Child Welfare Tshwane grants Mr Vivian Mukanyima Machokonye permission to involve the organisation with his research: "Social workers contribution in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central".

Kind regards


MS LINDA NELL
DIRECTOR: CHILD WELFARE TSHWANE

Chairperson Celest Van Niekerk • Deputy Chairperson Crystal Theron
Director Linda Nell

Unlocking the potential of vulnerable children and families

APPENDIX D

Catholic Women's League

DIOCESAN COUNCIL • ARCHDIOCESE PRETORIA



REGISTERED WELFARE ORGANISATION
REGISTRATION NUMBER - 001-679 NPO

Katolieke Vrouebond

RAAD VAN DIE AARTSBISDOM • PRETORIA

297 Jorissen Street
Sunnyside
Pretoria
0002

Tel: 012-343-0111
012-343-0112
Fax: 012-343-8575
086-620-0094
e-mail: cw/pretoria@wol.co.za

30 November 2015

Professor Antionette Lombard,
Department of Social Work and Criminology
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Dear Professor Lombard,

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Permission is herewith granted for Vivian Mukanyima Machokonye to conduct his reasearch for his Masters in Social Work (Social Development and Policy) at this organisation.

We have two social workers involved with working with unaccompanied minors, asylum seekers and refugees in the Sunnyside Area who will be able to assist in this research and meet the criteria. They are Dr. Frances van Velzen and Mr. Deon Bekker. Mr. Machokonye can contact them next year for the necessary arrangements.

Kind regards,

LOUISE RUCH
DIRECTOR

APPENDIX E

O Hamba Nami



Phone | Fax | Email:
Tel: 012 323 6688
Fax: aro012 323 6183
sedibahope@pen.org.za

Street address:
173 Bosman Street
Pretoria
0002

Postal address:
PO Box 416
Pretoria
0001

04-02-2016

To : Vivian Mukanyima Machokonye

RE : Research Study

This letter serves to confirm that you have been granted the permission to carry out your research study at PEN.

Looking forward to have you.

**Sincerely,
Mrs. T.P Nkosi
(Social Worker)**

PEN current account | bank: ABSA | account: 020 263 385 | branch: 63 20 05 | ref: OHN



APPENDIX F



28 January 2016

To: **Vivian Mukanyima Machokonye**

RE: PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW SOCIAL WORKERS IN FULFILMENT OF THE MINI-DISERTATION RESEARCH STUDY, FOR A MSW (SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY) STUDY.

This letter confirms that permission has been granted for you to interview social workers from Future Families Sunnyside, United Nations Programme, for your research study entitled:

“The contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria Central”.

Kind Regards

Lizette Nel-Buys
Social Work Manager
Future Families Sunnyside & Olievenhoutbosch Office
lizette@futurefamilies.co.za

Future Families

Postal Address
PO Box 209
Willow Acres
0095

Administration Office

Building 42B
CSIR
MeiringNaude Rd
Tel: 012 841 3223
Fax: 012 841 3228

Mamelodi&Mamelodi East

Ford Care Centre
Simon Vermooten Rd
Waltloo
Tel: 012 803 0103/2116
Fax: 012 803 5199

Eersterust & Nellmapius

406 Kawie Avenue
Eersterust
Tel: 012 806 4032
Fax: 012 806 4037

Olievenhoutbosch

5 Concerto Place
Extension 4
Tel: 082 095 0155

Sunnyside

Kutlwanong Democracy Centre
357 Visagie Street
Tel: 012 320 6838
Fax: 012 320 6859

Empowering families to create their own future

APPENDIX G



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities
Research Ethics Committee

9 May 2016

Dear Prof Lombard

Project: The contribution of social workers in promoting socio-economic equalities of asylum seekers and refugees in Pretoria central
Researcher: V Mukanyima Machokonye
Supervisor: Prof A Lombard
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference number: 13301188 (GW20160407HS)

Thank you for the well-written application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved** by the **Research Ethics Committee** on 5 May 2016. Data collection may therefore commence.

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

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

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

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

Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Panebianco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klashorst; Mr V Silthole