CHILDREN'S AGENCY IN REDUCING POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK: CASE STUDY OF LERATO HOUSE, TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

BY

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ABSTRACT

CHILDREN'S AGENCY IN REDUCING POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK: CASE STUDY OF LERATO HOUSE, TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

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South-Africa's government has adopted several global, national, and regional developmental agendas to combat systemic inequalities in the country. The developmental agendas should consider the role of children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child (ARCWC) and is therefore bound through international treaties to protect and promote children's rights (Hall, Richter, Mokomane & Lake, 2018:48).

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach, and the type of research was applied. The research design was a case study, and a purposive sampling method was used to sample five child participants and five key informants from Lerato House. Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews.

The findings show that children's agency is recognised and respected in the planning and implementation phases of the programme, while there is a lack of children's participation in the conceptualisation phase and little participation in the monitoring and evaluation phase. The study concludes that children's agency was more likely to be recognised and respected when staff have been trained to work with children and

when children were allowed to provide their input into programmes. The study recommends that children's agency be recognised and developed by preparing and allowing them to participate in all the phases of programmes at Lerato House aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks.

KEY WORDS

Child

Child agency

Poverty

Environmental risks

Participation

Lerato House

Tshwane Leadership Foundation

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CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1. Introduction

South Africa has a population of 57 million, of which 19.6 million (35%) are children (Statistics South Africa, 2018). In 2017, 65% of children lived below the "upper bound poverty line (with a per capita income below R1, 138 per month)", and 30% were in households where no adult had employment (Hall et al., 2018:131). The Child Support Grant, which more than 12 million children received by mid-2018 (Hall et al., 2018:131), has an impact on their poverty, but only as a means of temporarily alleviating it.

Many children experience a poor educational foundation in early childhood and "the weak social structures and associated problems of violence and abuse" keep children trapped in poverty and excluded both socially and physically from mainstream society (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:6). Furthermore, the most vulnerable people, including children, are more likely to live in environments where they are exposed to environmental risks such as poor sanitation, pollution, and lack of clean water (Hawkins, 2010:68). The National Plan of Action (NPAC) for Children in South Africa 2012-2017[1] (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2012:47) expresses commitment to protecting and enhancing natural resources and assets for the benefit of children. To ensure a better quality of life for children affected by poverty, the NPAC stipulates that they should receive social grants and other social services, have access to ECD programmes, basic education and healthcare (2012:89).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development seeks to realise human rights for all through the attainment of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets (UN, 2015). Children are the stakeholders inheriting and shaping future societies and as Eurochild (2017:3) rightfully claims, "We have not inherited the Earth from our parents, but we have borrowed it from our children". This claim emphasises the importance of children, inter-generational equity and justice, and a continued focus on progress to ensure development in children. However, equity and justice for children is threatened by external circumstances like environmental risks, poverty and violation of their rights.

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[1]The National Plan of Action for Children 2012-2017 is currently under review by the Government and until such time that a revised or new version is published, the commitments in the current plan of action are used as a point of reference.

Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and future. Involving children in discourses and decision-making processes on poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods broadens their human capital through their contributions, while they are also developing new skills, responsibilities, acceptable ways of living and sharing space with others as well as tolerating and working with people who are holding views that differ from theirs (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200-201). Involving children in these processes also expands their social capital by introducing them to diverse socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural networks, systems and resources that they might not have been privy to if they had not participated in poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods programmes (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200-201). Children have the right to participate in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes that affect their current and future lives, and not be passive bystanders. Children have agency and should be recognised for the contribution they can make in reducing poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods and mitigating environmental risks for sustainable development in their communities. This study investigated how children's agency is recognised in reducing poverty and environmental risks in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The concepts relevant to the study are as follows:

- **Child**
A child is a person under the age of 18 years (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996).

- **Agency**
Agency refers to a human being's capacity to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their life today and in the future, irrespective of age (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015). To exert agency, people must be presented with opportunities to express their views and experience being capable and valued as human beings and citizens of their communities (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015). In this study, unless otherwise indicated, agency means the agency of children.

- **Poverty**
In the context of this study, poverty is more than low income. It is also about social and physical exclusion, a sense of powerlessness, exclusion from decision-making and lack of access to education, healthcare and clean and safe environments (Green, 2012:6). Poverty reduction is about giving people opportunities to access education, healthcare, water, and

sanitation "to cope with the shocks of everyday life" (Green, 2012:10). These opportunities are embedded in human rights and recognise that children have agency to influence outcomes for a sustainable future.

- **Environmental risks**

In a sustainable development and human rights framework where SDGs and human rights are intertwined (UN, 2015), environmental risks are regarded as an environmental justice issue which means, "the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment" (Hawkins, 2010:68). Environmental risks can arise in physical and social environments, and for the purposes of this study, these risks pertain to poverty, the lack of access to clean water, poor sanitation, pollution, and violence.

- **Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation**

The Tshwane Leadership Foundation (hereafter referred to as TLF) consists of 10 projects which started in 1993 (Tshwane Leadership Foundation, 2016). All these projects aim to build strong urban communities that are socially inclusive and non-discriminatory. TLF's focus includes the development of policy to create an enabling environment for people's inclusion and protection of their rights. Lerato House is a TLF project and provides transitional and safe residential care to at least 70 girls per year. The amount of time spent at Lerato House depends on various factors, such as whether the girls are South African or refugees, the holistic well-being of their families and if it is possible to be reunited, as well as whether there are other residential care facilities available that can host and care for these girls on a longer-term basis. The Tswelelang foster home that forms part of the programme is an example of where young girls will stay if they cannot be immediately reintegrated with their families. The programme is presented in cycles and ranges from family reunification services, individual counselling, life planning, therapy to educational and training support. In addition to facilitating opportunities for education and social skills training, Lerato House seeks to break the cycles of victimhood and poverty of vulnerable girls and in so doing focuses on restoring and empowering them to take up their place in society (Tshwane Leadership Foundation, 2016).

1.2.   Theoretical framework

Poverty and environmental risks violate human rights. A human rights-based approach was thus a suitable theoretical framework for this study. Such an approach anchors programmes,

policies, plans and processes of development in a system of rights, which promotes sustainable development outcomes and people empowerment (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1). The right to development recognises

> that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from (UN, 1986:1).

A human rights-based approach makes a society socially fairer and is the basis upon which social justice can easily be accomplished (Wronka, 2016:5). Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 2, the International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) recognises the importance of including in the human rights-based approach the notion of a developmental child rights approach (IICRD, 2007:4). This approach was developed to challenge the perspectives of professionals on their views of children not only being passive recipients of services, but active right-holders with the agency to make decisions on programmes and interventions affecting their current and future development (IICRD, 2007:5). Thus, a theoretical approach embedded in a human rights-based approach is imperative in investigating how children's agency is recognised in reducing poverty and environmental risks.

1.3.   Rationale and problem statement

Ending poverty in all forms is the highest priority of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [hereafter 2030 Agenda] (UN, 2015). Elimination of child poverty is crucial for sustainable economic and social development (UNICEF 2014:12). The progress that South Africa has made in the past two decades in reducing the extent of poverty and social exclusion and their effects on children (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:4), especially through social grants, is significant but not sufficient in eliminating the trap of poverty. For children living in poverty, inadequate healthcare, poor nutrition, poor quality education, social and physical exclusion, and environmental risks restrict their "aspirations and hopefulness" to "creat[e] a more prosperous future" (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:7).

The 2030 Agenda includes global poverty goals that are specific to children. Therefore, poverty reduction measures have to be in place to accommodate national progress reports on the SDGs. Increased household income through social grants is one measure to provide for children's rights to social security and curbing child poverty (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:6).

In addition, children have the right to access social services and programmes on education and healthcare, as well as the right to access protection against environmental risks such as pollution, poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water and violent environments to ensure that they are not left behind (UNICEF, 2018). Childhood constitutes both vulnerabilities and evolving capacities, which require a balance between children's protection rights and their participation rights. It is thus important to recognise that being a child does not automatically render an individual as helpless and/or passive in his/her environment. Children should be regarded as individuals with agency who can and want to participate in creating a sustainable future for themselves and others by providing input in terms of the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes to achieve the intended outcomes.

A review of the available literature indicates that there is little research evidence as to the extent that children are included in the conceptualisation, design, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of poverty reduction to attain sustainable development outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks. Therefore, this study explored how children were involved in the conceptualisation, developing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of programmes that were intended to reduce the impact of poverty and environmental risks on their livelihoods and well-being for a sustainable future. It is envisaged that the outcomes of the study will inform policy and practice on how the recognition of and respect for children's agency can be incorporated in programme conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks.

The research question for the study was as follows: How is children's agency recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed to reduce poverty and environmental risks in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation?

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

- What are the goals and intended outcomes of programmes/interventions to reduce children's poverty and environmental risks?
- How are children involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?
- What factors influence the recognition and respect/non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?

- What must change to recognise and respect children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?

1.4. Goal and objectives

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency was recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The objectives of the study were as follows:
- To conceptualise and contextualised poverty and environmental risks of children within a human rights-based framework.
- To explore and describe the goal and intended outcomes of programmes/interventions to reduce children's poverty and environment risks.
- To explore and describe how children were involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.
- To explore and describe what the factors were that influenced the recognition and respect/non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.
- To make recommendations on how children's agency can be recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

1.5. Research Methodology

The researcher made use of the qualitative research approach in this study. This assisted her in gaining a holistic and in-depth understanding of this particular research phenomenon (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005:82); that of understanding from children's and key informants' points of view how children's agency is recognised and respected in reducing poverty and environmental risks in the intended programme of Lerato House. The study was both exploratory and descriptive in nature, answering what, why and how questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96), which enabled the researcher to develop an understanding of the participants' views on how they are involved or uninvolved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme. The researcher used a case

study design. The value of using the case study design was in its strategy when "how" and "why" questions were posed, which enabled participants to share their stories due to close collaboration between the researcher and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82).

The population for the study included 16 young female children living in Lerato House, as well as 14 key informants involved in the programme. A sample of five children and five key informants were purposively selected to participate in the study. Data was collected through one-on-one interviews which were semi-structured (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:92). Data analysis took place through thematic analysis according to the steps of Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015:45). A more comprehensive discussion of the research methodology and the ethical considerations relevant to the study will be presented in Chapter 3.

1.6.   Division of the research report

The research report consists of four chapters:

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the research study. The relevant concepts to the study are defined, the rationale and problem statement discussed, and the research questions presented. Furthermore, the goal and objectives of the study are presented along with a brief overview of the theoretical framework of the study and the research methodology.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review. The discussion includes themes related to children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk, giving an overview of the global, national and regional agendas affirming children's agency. The chapter also presents the sustainable development framework, child poverty and poverty interventions, as well as child participation and resilience.

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, including the research approach, type of research, research design, the population and sample, the data collection method, quality of data and data analysis, the ethical aspects of the study and the limitations of the study. Furthermore, the empirical findings of the study are presented and discussed.

In Chapter 4, the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

As indicated in Chapter One, 19.6 million (35%) of the South African population are children (Statistics South Africa, 2018), of whom 65% lived below the "upper bound poverty line, with a per capita income below R1 138,00 per month" in 2017 (Hall et al., 2018:131). Poverty is one of the severest human rights challenges in the world today, which makes its eradication almost impossible. However, the Child Support Grant has played a vital role in protecting children from some of the effects of poverty, but only on an alleviation level (Hall et al., 2018:131).

Today in the 21st century, children and vulnerable groups are not only faced with the challenge of poverty, but also that of the rise in severe climate change (Kang, Khan & Ma, 2009:1665). Unfortunately, vulnerable groups, which include children, are prone to living in less than ideal environments (Hawkins, 2010:68), which makes their exposure to environmental risks, such as pollution, a lack of clean water and their right to live in a safe and clean environment, more apparent (UNICEF 2014:13). Many children, especially those in developing countries, are deprived of being brought up in healthy and prosperous environments. Shubert (2013:1) states that every year, three million children under the age of five years old die because of environment-related diseases. Children's futures are also under threat due to the misuse of natural resources and other irreversible ecological damage caused by human-related activities (Shubert, 2013:2).

The 2030 Agenda seeks to realise human rights for all through the fulfilment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets (UN, 2015). However, there can be no "sustainable development, prosperity or peace without equity, giving each child a fair chance to develop and having a better future" (UNICEF, 2015). This means that all children, including those who are left behind or disadvantaged, should be included, and given opportunities to participate in matters that concern them, their families and broader society. However, prosperity and peace for children is threatened by external factors, the most significant of which are environmental risks, poverty, and violations of their rights.

Children should enjoy and participate in all the human rights that are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa (1996). The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, approves the participation of children in matters and decisions affecting them, calling it a fundamental right (Sibanda, 2013:12). Participation of children in poverty reduction and sustainable

livelihoods programmes will eventually broaden their human capital as they bring forth their own contributions and realise their responsibilities as they work with people who hold different views to them (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200-201). Furthermore, children's social capital is developed while being introduced to various socio-economic, environmental, political, and cultural networks and resources (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200-201).

Anti-poverty programmes have the potential to develop and maximise children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. Various anti-poverty interventions, such as National Food Nutritional Programmes, Early Childhood Development and Child Support Grants, have been developed and implemented to ensure that social justice, which means the equal distribution of resources and opportunities for all, especially children, is accomplished (Anderson, Shinn, Fullilove, Scrimshaw & Fielding, 2003:56). Children have agency and should be included in decision-making when it comes to programme development with the goal of reducing poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods, and mitigating environmental risks for sustainable development in their communities. This study investigated how children's agency is recognised in reducing poverty and environmental risks in programmes of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The chapter will firstly present a human rights-based approach as the theoretical framework for this study, followed by a discussion regarding the global, national and regional developmental agendas affirming children's agency. Poverty, child poverty and sustainable development will be contextualised next, with the aim of describing why sustainable development is needed to eradicate poverty in all its forms. The emphasis will also be on the pillars of sustainable development and its multi-dimensional nature. The ensuing discussion will focus on the environmental dimension of sustainable development as creating and developing hope and resilience in children to be able to withstand poverty and environmental risks. Child protection and participation will be discussed next, followed by the imperative nature of anti-poverty interventions towards alleviating child poverty. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2. Theoretical framework: a human rights-based approach

South Africa has adopted various global, national and regional agendas to address and bring an end to various forms of discriminations by upholding equal rights for all. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights lays the foundation for justice, peace, and freedom for all people across the globe by emphasising that human rights should be equal, inclusive and unchangeable (United Nations Population Fund, 2014). The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, Chapter 2, "enshrines the rights of all people in our country and it

affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom". More specifically, South Africa's Constitution "enshrines a duty to alleviate poverty" (1996). As the number one priority of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), poverty is the most serious human rights challenge confronting the world today. Poverty is intertwined with environmental risks (Bhaiseni, 2017:25), which means that environmental risks equally violate human rights. Accordingly, a human rights-based approach is an appropriate theoretical framework for this study. A human rights-based approach is a "conceptual framework for facilitating sustainable human development outcomes embedded in international human rights standards and intended to promote and protect human rights" (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1). It anchors programmes, policies, plans and processes of development in a system of rights, which promotes sustainable development outcomes and people empowerment (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1).

Human development is embedded in human rights (UNICEF, 2016). Recognising this approach leads to a more sustainable human development outcome. Evidently, the process of change and sustainable human development ought to be "participatory, accountable, and transparent, with equity in decision-making and sharing of the fruits or outcome of the process" (Uvin, 2010:170). This means that individual self-sufficiency and respect for the dignity of people, including the most marginalised and those who are left behind, should be prioritised in developmental matters in order to create opportunities for participation and the equal distribution of rights. Thus, the right to development is

> ...multidimensional, integrated, dynamic and progressive. Its realisation observes the full observance of economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. It further embraces the different concepts of development of all development sectors, namely sustainable development, human development, and the concept of indivisibility, interdependence, and universality of all human rights (Uvin, 2010:165).

The right to development is an unquestionable human right. All people, including children, are allowed and should be encouraged to participate in economic, social, cultural and political progress, in which all human rights and essential freedoms can be fully respected (Uvin, 2010:164). The human rights-based approach to development argues that any theory of change or developments towards transformation that are being endorsed must be "participatory, accountable, and transparent, with equity in decision-making and sharing of the fruits or outcome of the process" (Uvin, 2010:171). In other words, opportunities for participation should be created. Participation should include the poorest of the poor, those who are most excluded or discriminated against, minorities and vulnerable groups, with the aim of establishing dignity, hope and autonomy. Rights that enable the participation of

children are protected in the Constitution (1996), as well as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU, 1990), which South Africa has ratified. The rights of children, as provided by the UNCRC (1989), are categorised into four themes: survival, protection, participation, and development. In this study, the organisation of children's rights is based on the view of Heimer and Palme (2016:435) that the UNCRC organises the rights of children in terms of provision, protection and participation. Provision in relation to children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks refers to the child having his or her basic needs met, such as the right to health care, the right to food and the right to education (Quennerstedt, 2010:621). Protection, on the other hand, refers to the right of the child to be guarded from dangerous practices aimed against him or her; for instance, protection against sexual exploitation, neglect, or emotional, physical and psychological abuse. Lastly, participation is the right that the child has to be listened to and respected with regards to decisions which affect his or her life, as well as the right to have access to information (Quennerstedt, 2010:621; Heimer & Palme, 2016:4). It is important to note that participation does not mean that a child has decision-making rights or power solely based on the child's own discretion, as discussed by Heimer and Palme (2016:4). It rather means that the child should be able to be enthusiastically involved in decision-making opportunities within his or her community and express their opinions on matters that concern them. Thus, a holistic approach, comprising the social, spiritual, emotional and physical capital of human beings, needs to be continually encouraged to make sure the agency of the child is built and respected. Agency refers to a human being's capacity, irrespective of age, to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence his or her life today and in the future (Lady Gowrie Child Centre In., 2015). To exert agency, people must be presented with opportunities to express their views and experience being capable and valued as human beings and citizens of their communities (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015).

A holistic approach to human rights includes various aspects as mentioned above. Additionally, a holistic approach to children's rights includes the 44 child-related indicators, which are integrated across the 17 SDGs (UNICEF, 2014:13). The five dimensions of children's rights include the right to survive, to be protected from violence, to live in a safe and clean environment, to learn, and to have an equal opportunity to succeed (UNICEF, 2014:13). Promoting such a holistic approach means that there should be a growing focus on perceiving and encouraging children

as individuals who have agency. The UNCRC, which has become the most broadly endorsed human rights treaty, emphasises that children are not mere 'things' who belong to their parents or guardians, but capable individuals with their own rights (UNICEF, 2008). Childhood is separate from adulthood up until the age of 18 years, and children should be protected and be allowed to grow, develop, and play. However, protection should not be seen as a means of defining children as passive, vulnerable beings without the ability to make meaningful choices (UNICEF, 2008). Participation of children in the development of anti-poverty initiatives is vital and imperative towards reaching successful programme outcomes. Thus, an interrelationship between the rights of children and how it affects the construct of children's agency as rights-holders ought to be continuously invigorated, with a particular focus on the children's right to participate in decisions that influence their current and future development.

The International Institute for Child Rights and Development (IICRD) elaborates on the importance of a developmental child rights approach (IICRD, 2007:4). The developmental child rights approach is a conceptual framework that was developed to assist professionals and families in changing their views, practices and perspectives towards children as being right-holders, with a developmental, bottom-up approach that builds on children's developmental processes and invests in children's own assets (IICRD, 2007:5). The developmental child rights approach extends the usefulness of the rights-based approach, as it activates protective instruments and local assets in generating empowering and inclusive environments for children's development, protection and participation (IICRD, 2007:5). In other words, the developmental child rights approach creates an improved and in-depth understanding of various elements associated with children's abilities to make meaningful choices. The International Institute for Child Rights and Development provides a few examples of the difference between rights-based and developmental rights-based approaches (IICRD, 2007:5):

Rights-based approach	Developmental rights-based approach
Work towards results and processing targets.	Motivate accountability and responsibility.
Rights always imply commitments of the state.	Highlights and emphasises children's agency.

Involves holistic projects and programmes.	Involves the above-mentioned together with building assets and skills.
Rights can be realised with empowerment and capacity building.	Identifies and seeks gaps in rights that should be filled.

In conclusion, a child rights-based approach is more than just referring to a few articles of the CRC. It is about treating children as people rather than 'objects' – with dignity and respect for their capabilities. The five dimensions of the rights of the CRC ought to be remembered at all times: the right to survive, to be protected from violence, to live in a safe and clean environment, to learn, and to have an equal opportunity to succeed (UNICEF 2014:13; Wernham, 2007:13). Children ought to always participate in decisions that impact and influence their current and future growth. The following section will elaborate on the various agendas, legislation and treaties which gives children a better opportunity to participate in decisions that impact their lives.

2.3. Global, national and regional agendas affirming children's agency

South Africa is known for and characterised by vast inequalities, an unemployment rate that remains worryingly high even more than two decades after political liberation, and various social injustices. In response to these problems, Government has adopted various global, national, and regional developmental agendas to direct efforts towards fighting the war of inequalities and work collectively with non-government organisations, the private sector and civil society, towards promoting equality. These developmental agendas and legislation are clearly relevant to the consideration of children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. South Africa has signed and ratified both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child (ARCWC), which shows the country's commitment to protecting and promoting children's rights as endorsed in these treaties (Hall et al., 2018:48). Child poverty is a human rights issue where the state, parents, and family need to work towards the realisation of children's rights (Hall et al., 2018:48). The UNCRC includes four general principles which command families and the state to ensure that all children are given maximum protection and opportunities to grow. These general principles include non-discrimination (Article 3); the right to life, survival and development (Article 5); child participation (Article 12); and the best interests of the child (Article 4), which means that children are social actors and unique right holders (Hall et al., 2018:49; Liljekvist, 2018:9).

The UNCRC organises the rights of children in terms of provision, protection and participation (Heimer & Palme, 2016:435). However, tension exists between the protection of the child and the child's ability to participate in making meaningful choices related to his or her own life. Liljekvist's (2018:13, 30) argues that labelling children as vulnerable human beings because of their need for protection can become a defining characteristic under a welfare model that restricts a child's capacity to exercise his or her rights. However, focussing on child participation highlights the notion of involving children in processes and decisions that will benefit their well-being holistically (Liljekvist, 2018:13, 30). Heimer, Nasman and Palme (2017:316) agree that when a child is seen as being vulnerable or in need of protection and "followers of their care-givers", their opportunity to participate in processes and decision-making decreases. The welfare system needs to focus not only on protection and provision, but also on participation. Protection without participation leads to the possibility of leaving children to be more vulnerable and without a voice (Heimer et al., 2017:26). This organisation of rights suggests an all-round view of children's welfare with an emphasis on child agency, as well as accentuating the five overarching parts of a child's well-being as set out by the 2030 Agenda. These five areas, according to UNICEF [sa], monitoring the situation of children and women, include that "every child survives and thrives, every child learns, every child is protected from violence and exploitation, every child lives in a safe and clean environment and every child has a fair chance in life". The SDGs yield to all the rights as entrenched in the UNCRC and will be discussed next.

2.3.1. Relatedness of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to human rights and children

The 2030 Agenda seeks to realise human rights for all through the fulfilment of the 17 SDGs and 169 targets, while outlining a determined agenda especially for children. The 17 SDGs strive towards creating sustainable change, as well as a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children, safeguarding their environments, and protecting them from maltreatment and harm (UNICEF, 2015:2). The United Nations conference on sustainable development intensified the agreement between the member states that sustainable development cannot be realised without key aspects, such as inclusivity, people-centeredness, and involving the voices of youth and children in decision-making processes (UNICEF, 2014:5). UNCRC, the SDGs, and Liljekvist's (2018) arguments are interconnected; provision, participation and protection of children are regularly referred to in the UNCRC, the SDGs and Liljekvist's as benchmarks for creating a sustainable and transformed future.

The UNCRC was drafted and adopted in 1989, however, millions of children across the world are still trapped in extreme poverty, extended inequalities, and injustices that deny them their rights (Bhardwaj, Sambu & Jamieson, 2017:22). One of the significant roles of the 2030 Agenda is to set "deadlines" for the realisation of these rights (Bhardwaj et al., 2017:22). For example, all people (children) have the right to clean water and sanitation as proposed by Goal 6, and the targets underpinning this include the restoration and protection of water ecosystems, such as rivers, wetlands, mountains and forests by 2020; the attainment of international cooperation and local participation in strategising the improvement of water and sanitation management by 2030; and achieving universal access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030 (United Nations, 2018:11, 12). Water scarcity and poor sanitation are increasingly widening the gap between poor families and their rights to food security, educational opportunities, and livelihood choices across the world and especially in Africa, with more than two billion people not having access to fresh water resources (United Nations, 2018:11,12). Child poverty and children's risk in terms of environmental hazards are human rights matters and social workers and professionals in the human rights sector have an obligation to combat these global, national, and local injustices. The National Development Plan (RSA, 2012) can act as a source of valuable insight in addressing some of these issues.

2.3.2. The National Development Plan

The National Development Plan (NDP) is a strategic framework and holistic approach developed with the goal of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality in South Africa by 2030 (RSA, 2012:25). South Africa is committed to alleviating and ultimately eradicating poverty through legislation, policies, treaties, and intervention strategies. Nevertheless, the degree of implementation and the success of these efforts ought to be reviewed when considering the current statistics of poverty in South Africa, which indicate that poverty is on the rise. Even though there was a decline in the poverty levels from 2006 to 2011, it rose again in 2015 (Stats SA, 2015). According to the National Poverty lines (Stats SA, 2019:4), the inflation-adjusted national poverty line from 2011 to 2019 increased. In 2015, an individual needed a minimum of R441 per month to be able to have the sufficient nutritional energy intake per day, whereas in 2019, an individual needed R561,00 per month to be able to have a sufficient nutritional energy intake per day (RSA, 2019:4). These statistics are worrying as they show that the NDP is struggling to adhere to its goals of eliminating poverty and reducing inequality. On the contrary, the NDP highlights the importance of citizens being active in their own development and that all sectors, including legislation and policies, should channel the fruits of development to the poorest and most marginalised first (RSA, 2012:27).

This calls for a more in-depth integration of South Africa's legislative framework, national policies and treaties built on the human rights-based framework.

2.3.3. South African legislation and children's rights

South Africa's overarching and progressive legislative framework supports children's participation as a right (Viviers & Lombard, 2012:10). Domestic legislation came into effect after democracy in 1994, allowing for the participation of children in matters affecting them. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996) placed a legal obligation on school systems to include children, for example, within the development of the school's code of conduct and in school governance. The National Health Act 61 of 2003 (RSA, 2003) requires service users (including children) to provide their consent towards decisions that will affect them, while the Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, makes provision for the views and wishes of the child to be considered through enabling them to participate (Section 10) in matters affecting them (Viviers & Lombard, 2012:10). Hall et al. (2018:55) indicate that the level of child participation is led by their maturity and age and that allowance is made for children to participate through legal representation. Provision, protection, and participation are evident in the legislation, which is confirmed by the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, through the Children's Act 38 of 2005. This legislation shows the progress that the South African government has made in developing comprehensive child protection systems. However, even though progress has been made since political liberation in 1994, South Africa's developmental policies are still embedded within the tokenistic developmental state, which shows that there is a long road to travel in reaching the targets as set out in the Africa Agenda 2063 (African Union [AU] Commission, 2015).

Welfare services since 1994 represent a fundamental change, slowly moving away from residual services towards developmental social work. On the other hand, one needs to take into account the fact that the state also continued "tokenistic welfare policies", which depicts a state that does not radically change existing systems, but only extends the inheritance of apartheid or current welfare policies, such as social grants or older persons' grants (Bond, 2014:1). Receiving a social grant or even more than one grant is not enough to satisfy the desire of families with children to move out of poverty. This is where the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa should enforce holistic transformation through being the highest binding authority. Changes in South Africa have been driven largely by the significant alterations in the socio-economic and political situations, which demanded legislation and policy to make social welfare services receptive towards the marginalised, the poorest in

society, and the most vulnerable, such as children and women (Department of Social Development, 2013:8). The White Paper for Social Welfare was adopted in 1997 as a welfare policy to drive the process of social welfare service transformations (Department of Social Development, 2013:8). An example is the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004, which makes provision for social relief grants for the most vulnerable in society, such as the cash transfer programmes through the Child Support Grant, targeting children living in poverty (Department of Social Development, 2015:34). These grants assist caregivers to meet the basic needs of children. In 2018, 12 273 900 children received a child support grant, while 416 000 received a foster care grant and 147 000 received a care dependency grant, highlighting the levels of child poverty (Hall et al., 2018:131,139). Social workers have a pivotal role to play and a specific responsibility towards the alleviation and eradication of poverty, as well as addressing several needs of individuals, families, children, and communities (Lombard, 2014:45). Child poverty violates children's rights to sustainable development as will be discussed in the following section.

2.4. Poverty, child poverty and sustainable development

Statistics show that the level of child poverty in Africa opposes the principle and 'belief' of leaving no one behind when referring to sustainable development. According to Koehler (2017:212), major procrastination in relation to fulfilment of the UN's poverty agenda have been evident over the years. Poverty should have been eradicated by the year 1990 already, when reviewing the UN's developmental decades, or by the year 2005, or 2015 (Koehler, 2017:212). Three UN General Assemblies prove that poverty eradication remains a major challenge (United Nations, 1996:2; United Nations, 2008:3; United Nations, 2018:3). The timeframe to address poverty as the world's major human rights issue is everchanging, with the current 'deadline' at 2030. Koehler (2017:121) highlights that agendas and policies are 40 years late. This is despite the noteworthy improvements that Africa has made, as the Africa Sustainable Development Report (2017:17) indicates a 15% decline in poverty rates since 1990.

Eradicating extreme poverty remains a predominant goal and theme in both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015) and the African Agenda 2063 (AU Commission, 2015). Both these agendas have the potential to lay the groundwork to eradicate poverty and inequality through sustainable development (Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2017:17). Nonetheless, a challenge for implementing agencies, governments and society at large is to look beyond the surface and tackle the structural roots of poverty. Koehler (2017:216) provides the '5 Rs' criteria as projected in many other

social policies and ultimately a unique method of excavating deeper, which includes "redistribution, regulation, social rights, resource consciousness and relationality." The two 'Rs' which have received less to no consideration are regulation and relationality. Koehler (2017:216) fervently argues that little has been shown towards the need of major economic powers, such as private-owned companies or international trades to be regulated, together with an absence in relationality. Unfortunately, the 2030 Agenda has not made obvious reference towards the complicated issue of power relations, and transformation is at stake if eradication of poverty is not addressed through tackling structural inequality in relation to access to social, economic and political power (Koehler, 2017:217). Sustainable development is not merely a balance of social, economic and environmental dimensions; it is also reliant on the affairs of political spheres. The political component has been added as a vital element towards sustainable development (Kibuka-Sebitosi, 2017:274). Nevertheless, reaching a balance between these four spheres is questionable, especially if the political sphere of South Africa remains predominantly focused on power, which is either shared or not.

In 2012 when the world population was 7,1 billion, one in every eight people lived in extreme poverty, which amounts to a total number of 888 million people (Africa Sustainable Development Report, 2017:16). In 2015, 736 million people lived on less than R28,33 per day, which is an indication of living in extreme poverty (Global Poverty: Facts, FAQs…2020), thus showing a decline in the total number of people from 2012 to 2015 living in extreme poverty. Factors which generate poverty, according to the UN World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen 1995, include issues such as social exclusion, a lack of participation and recognised unemployment (Koehler, 2017:211; Overcoming poverty…2018:33). Poverty eradication has often been linked to creating jobs. Koehler (2017:216) calls decent work a twin to eradicating income poverty. The South African Poverty and Inequality assessment report also indicates the importance of participation in economic activities, which leads to a decline in poverty (Overcoming poverty…2018:14). However, as mentioned by Green (2012:6), poverty cannot only be viewed as a lack of financial resources. Poverty includes wider challenges, such as a lack of adequate and quality education, social and physical exclusion, feelings of powerlessness, no involvement in participation opportunities regarding matters which affect them (children), and a lack of access to proper health care and safe environments (Green, 2012:6). Child poverty or children stuck in poverty, on the other hand, is the result of a trickle-down effect from families that have been trapped in poverty over generations. Treanor (2012:1) indicates that children born in families who live in poverty lean towards having less resilience and are prone to remaining in poverty throughout adulthood. These children predominantly face educational,

societal, familial, and personal challenges. The intergenerational cycle of poverty needs to end through education and various developments, which should recover household resilience and improve children's well-being. Kenya National Bureau Statistics (KNBS) and UNICEF (2017:6) call for "NGOs, civil society, business, government and social workers to collaborate and take hands in developing, promoting, providing and advocating for innovative and advanced policies and implementation strategies to increase sustainable development in alleviating and ultimately eradicating child poverty and poverty at large." The pillars of sustainable development will be discussed in the following sub-section.

2.4.1. Sustainable development and its pillars

As stated earlier in this chapter, sustainable development dimensions do not only encapsulate social, economic, and environmental matters. Recently, according to Kibuka-Sebitosi (2017:274), Zondi and Mthembu (2017:275) and Mignaqui (2014:58), the political component has been added as vital for sustainable development to take place within the South African political context. Sustainable development is multi-dimensional (Mignaqui, 2014:71) and it has been a dominant central point in developmental studies. Kibuka-Sebitosi (2017:275) reasons that the political will of the government and its people has become critical for effective sustainable development. Serrat (2017:31), on the other hand, adds that the cultural dimension of a society is not just an instrument towards sustainable development, but the basis thereof. Interestingly, Kavaliku (2005:24) emphasises that the social, economic and environmental dimensions, together with the influence of political and cultural components, should all be equally considered in the making of sustainable development policies, because it is the interdependence of these dimensions and components which holistically influences the development and implementation of these policies. Unfortunately, the efforts involving sustainability are currently not meeting the needs of the poor (Vallance, Perkins & Dixon, 2011:343). Sustainable development, as the United Nations defines it, is "the social, economic, and environmental process of balancing production and consumption so as to meet current needs while preserving Earth's resources for future generations" (Hawkins, 2010:74). As earlier indicated, the earth is borrowed from children (Eurochild, 2017:3), which are our future generation, thus emphasising the importance and pivotal role children play in conserving the earth through developmental initiatives.

Sustainable development aims to achieve social justice, an interconnectedness and continuing steadiness in the international network between the Earth, people (children) and the economy (Hawkins, 2010:73). This shows the link between the global economy, social

problems and the growing ecological calamity. Development, in most cases, is driven forcefully at the cost of imperative factors, such as the environment. However, a change in paradigm thinking must take place that considers a development plan that does not compromise on the three dimensions and which includes the participation of children (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:274). South Africa reached the stage many years ago where the sustainable development framework could be put into use effectively to ensure the inclusion of children's rights in the combatting of poverty and environmental risks on social, economic and environmental levels (Eurochild, 2017:3).

2.4.4.1 The economic dimension of sustainable development

A better life for all would come from the start of the radical transformation and restructuring of South Africa's economy (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:135). The concept of 'transformative economy' is used as a catalyst to bring about essential change by focussing more on manufacturing, industrial development, the creation of employment opportunities and high-level economic construction (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:138). The transformation of power relations, which is evident within the political field, is needed to reach real economic development and move away from development for some, while others only experience underdevelopment (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:138). Moreover, economic policies, such as neoliberal policies, make it difficult for children and marginalised groups to participate due to the fact that capitalism caters more for well-resourced groups (Strydom, Spolander, Engelbrecht & Martin, 2017:145).

South Africa has adopted neoliberal policies, which provide freedom to (some) people to participate in market competitions, free trade and labour flexibilities. In the same category as neoliberal policies, the capitalist economy is a profit-based economy, where resources grow through reallocation to the rich (Strydom et al., 2017:145). This makes the rich richer and the poor poorer. Such growth does not take into consideration the environment or the needs of the socially and economically excluded. The Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic policy is an example of how the South African Government tried to stabilise the economy to facilitate global and regional integration; however, the policy embraced a neoliberal economy, which did not succeed (Patel, 2015:75).

Economic sustainability is best described by the 2030 Agenda as the creation of sustained economic growth, technological innovation and high levels of growth (UN, 2015). Sustainable development, eradication of child poverty and environmental risks can be achieved when involving children in economic activities. Altenhoener (2009:589) uses an interesting example which emphasises the importance of education as a "sub-category" in

involving children and minority groups in economic activities. The author indicates that access to high-quality education has a direct impact on social integration and opportunities for children and minority groups to participate in economic life and activities (Altenhoener, 2009:589,597). Other key stakeholders, such as government, civil society and non-governmental organisations, play a crucial role in the achievement of sustainable development, eradication of child poverty and environmental risks. Child poverty and children's exposure to environmental risks, such as pollution and crime, include structural factors, such as poor and limited access to education, the lack of demand for unskilled labour and economic opportunities that are mostly available in big cities located far from where the families of these children live. These challenges make it difficult to actively participate in the economy. According to 2012 statistics, 30% or 5.5 million children in South Africa live in households where no adults are employed (Van der Berg & Moses, 2012:129). In 2018, the statistics increased and 5.9 million children in South Africa were reported to live in households where no adults were working (Children Count, 2020; Hall & Sambu, 2018:139). These growing statistics are worrisome when considering the fast-paced global technological growth, which has the potential to leave children and vulnerable groups behind when not sufficiently planned for. Growth and development should predominantly benefit children (OWG, 2014:24), but a serious threat, such as the Fourth (4th) Industrial Revolution, awaits and could be detrimental to the future of children if they are not adequately prepared and educated. The reduction of child poverty is crucial for sustainable social and economic development (UNICEF, 2014:12). However, the risks that the 4th Industrial Revolution holds for inclusive economic development should not be overlooked in a study on child participation in reducing poverty and environmental risks.

2.4.4.1.1. Fourth (4th) Industrial Revolution

The term 'industrial revolution' refers to the changes in social, economic, and technological systems in the industry (Dombrowski & Wagner, 2014:100). The previous three industrial revolutions had their own challenges and opportunities, but it is known that the 4th Industrial Revolution could hold major implications if not well-planned for (Zucconi, 2016:1). A change and development in skill sets for children is imperative in facing the 4th Industrial Revolution, which emphasises the need for developing resilience in children from an early age so that they will be able to contribute to the reduction in poverty and environmental risks.

Care, Kim, Anderson and Gustafsson-Wright (2017:2) and Zucconi (2016:1) mention the importance of stimulating and developing different types of skills within the children and youth of today to enable them to better flourish and adjust to a fast-changing world. Skills which are important and highly valued in managing complex decisions include creative

thinking, information technology and computer skills, teamwork, critical thinking, self-awareness, communication skills, and social and interpersonal skills, such as empathy and compassion (Care, Kim, Anderson & Gustafsson-Wright, 2017:2). These will foster a spirit of Ubuntu and a more humane, peaceful, sustainable, and prosperous future for all. When the Internet-of-Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI) meet, everyday household appliances will start interfacing with each other and determine individuals' preferences and tastes even before they realise they have them (Tan & Shang-su, 2017:6), which will in turn lead to disconnecting interaction between people. Few have questioned what this will mean for social relationships and the core value of Ubuntu. Vale (2018:1) highlights that there is little indication of local writing and thinking on the deeper topics related to the 4th Industrial Revolution and argues that for the average South African citizen, the local is everything. To plan and govern this transformative change in a people-centred and sustainable manner, person-, people- and community-centred interventions are needed (Zucconi, 2016:4). Ballantyne, Wong and Morgan (2017:5) highlight that social presence, meaning the degree to which a person is "present and real", is what carries relationships. With a future that involves artificial intelligence and machine-to-machine communications, the likelihood of less human involvement and interaction impends the basic existence of people, leading to the importance of the social dimension of sustainable development.

2.4.4.2 The social dimension of sustainable development

The social dimension of sustainable development, in some instances, is not perceived as being as important as the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Nevertheless, according to Missimer (2015:13), social sustainability is as equally significant as the economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and therefore needs to be understood clearly. Social sustainability is "when formal and informal processes, systems, structures and relationships actively support the capacity of future generations to create healthy and liveable communities" (Missimer, 2015:14). Moreover, Missimer (2015:14) describes "[s]ocially sustainable communities" as being "equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provid[ing] a good quality of life". Therefore, such developments seek to enhance the well-being of their people. To elaborate, Torjman (2000:3, 9) explains that three of the primary concerns of the social dimension of sustainable development are (1) social investment, such as health and education, (2) the development of nonviolent and caring communities through social capital, as will be discussed below, and lastly, (3) poverty alleviation.

No social phenomenon is as forceful in its assault on human rights as poverty (UNESCO, 2010:13), and children are mostly the first to bear the brunt of the effects of poverty. In 2018, the total population of children aged 0 to 18 years in South Africa was an estimated 34% (Hall et al., 2018:106). These children mainly live in low- and middle-income communities, and their exposure to societal problems is tangible and has major implications towards their developmental needs. However, these children are potential change agents for sustainability and are individuals who have agency, which is fundamental to any poverty reduction intervention. Masten and Obradovic (2007:8) indicate that from an early age, children who have overcome hardships or hard conditions effectively report a higher and more positive view towards their own agency, self-worth, confidence and the ability to strive towards success. In other words, they have a more positive view regarding their access towards social capitals. Midgley (2014:108) highlights an important point in that a community's strength resides in its social relationships and social networks, and as such, resources beyond the community can be accessed through these relational ties with the end goal of promoting social and economic well-being. Strengthening social capital and social relationships amongst children and the communities they reside in is reliant on participatory methodologies through the inclusion of children in community activities and local organisational decision-making processes (Midgley, 2014:109). Ungar (2013:1745) agrees in stating that social capital and building social relationships between communities and their children is necessary for sustainable development. Thus, sustainable social development needs to be improved to ensure that children have agency to escape the clutches of child poverty and environmental risks.

2.4.4.3 The environmental dimensions of sustainable development

Environmental sustainability was recognised for the first time in 2005 as one of the three pillars of sustainable development at the World Summit on Social Development (UNDP, 2016:43). However, it all started at the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992, which lead to the 'United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change' (UNDP, 2016:43). This was a major benchmark towards sustainable development for all. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015 raised deep concern for environmental sustainability and climate change, together with the Paris Agreement on climate change, where 195 member states committed in writing to actively act on reducing carbon emissions (UNDP, 2016:43). The Human Development Report of 2016 indicates that the environment has become such a concerning factor that three of the 17 SDGs are devoted to attaining environmental sustainability, with various industries being called to incorporate environmentally friendly practices in their service delivery (UNDP, 2016:43). A clear example of this, as the United Nations Environmental

Programme (UNEP) (2018:42) indicates, is the popular increase in 'green services and products', such as the removal of plastic straws in restaurants and the replacement of these straws with more environmentally friendly paper straws to assist the earth by reducing non-biodegradable products.

The earth's ability and competence to carry the weight of human activity is in deep distress and food insecurities, lack of access to clean water and inequalities are increasing (Besthorn, 2013:33). Hall et al. (2019:161) indicate that over 6 million children live in households that do not have access to clean water on nearby premises and need to spend hours walking to fetch water, which takes time out of their school and homework activities. Economic development through the use of neoliberal policies, at the cost of the environment, remains the leading driving force, and these policies are still the dominant economic model used globally, as mentioned before in this chapter. Because of the profit-seeking nature and short-term solutions attached to these policies, children and the pro-poor suffer the most (IASSW, ICSW & IFSW, 2018:12). Development at the cost of the environment is unsustainable and leads to the degradation of the environment, forests and natural resources. There needs to be a paradigm shift from this unsustainable consumption to sustainable practices (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:276). Dylan (2013:62) argues that the growing consideration of climate change is influenced by the realisation of the interrelationship between humans and the environment and the welfare that exists between the two entities, meaning how humans consider the environment in their daily activities and decision-making processes. Thus, the disadvantaged and marginalised countries bear the brunt of the worst climate change effects despite having contributed the least to the problem. The growing issue of climate change and the impact it has on children should be viewed in relation to other developmental burdens, such as HIV/AIDS, fast urbanisation, high levels of poverty and inequality (Lombard & Viviers, 2014:80). Climate change holds a detrimental threat for human development. This global issue will continue to have a serious impact on children and their right to development, protection, participation, adequate standard of living, health, education and freedom from discrimination (Lombard & Viviers, 2014:81; Marshall & Aboagye, 2014:21). This is the reason why integrating environmental sustainability in development approaches and policies is vital for the future and healthy growth of Africa's children. Inclusion and participation of children in these policies is also a key aspect towards sustainable development. Lombard and Viviers (2014:82) have indicated that children are proficient and able to contribute to the mitigation of climate change, especially because they will be the recipients of future disasters if not alleviated today. Reduction in global warming is conceivable. Advocacy, communication and stakeholder inclusion and participation are essential in addressing and mitigating climate change and increasing the protection of the

environment (UNDP, 2016:18). Lombard and Viviers (2014:82) likewise specify that children can bring exceptional perceptions in strategies combating environmental issues and they should take a place in participating in social, economic and environmental development initiatives.

The notion of sustainable human development for all is universal and no one, especially children, should be left behind (UNDP, 2016:9). Hence fundamental change is needed in the model of global power related to social, economic and environmental dimensions to end poverty, inequality and climate change (Zondi & Mthembu, 2017:141). These issues did not happen 'by the way'; they have always been structural and systemic in nature. Hope and resilience are thus key in building child agency and ensuring that through hope creation and resilience development, amongst other such developments, children will not be left behind.

2.5. Hope and resilience as key indicators for child agency

Hope is an essential building block and predictor for increasing the psychosocial well-being of South Africa's youth. According to Guse and Vermaak (2011:528), hope is evident amongst South African adolescents over different population groups, which confirms the strong relationship between psychosocial well-being and hope. Despite the complexity of South Africa's socio-cultural and socio-economic context, Guse, De Bruin and Kock (2016:6) indicate that youth growing up in violent communities viewed hope as imperative in dealing with these challenges, showing the increased belief in hope and resilience in the South African context.

There is a growing understanding that hope is, by default, automatically linked to Eurocentric and individualistic theories and perceptions. These theories can be described as having goal-directed behaviours and actions towards achieving something meaningful and the power with which to pursue it (Cherrington, 2018:502). Hope within the context of South Africa's implementation of Ubuntu, needs to move towards being studied from an Afrocentric perspective (Cherrington, 2018:502-503). Hope can be described as "a future-directed emotional network of systems that drives the individual and generates probabilities for enhanced well-being" (Cherrington, 2018:504). In other words, hope is "a socially constructed emotion" (Scioli, 2007:137). Cherrington (2018) explores children's perspectives in rural South Africa through participatory strategies, with the aim of explaining the importance of building and fostering individual hope in the context of Afrocentric worldviews. He concludes that hope is a multifaceted and multi-layered experience. The framework introduces five levels of hope (Cherrington, 2018:504, 510; Scioli, 2007) as follows: the foundational level refers to biological motives where a child needs to experience attachment with significant others who care about them to have their basic needs met in order to deal

with life's challenges and experience a sense of agency to confidently participate in building a resourceful future for themselves and surrounding communities. The second level is contextual hope, which refers to psychological and socially external relationships that children draw from to support and guide their hope, with the goal of children taking ownership and responsibility to finally build their own hope, which constitutes the third level. At this level, children feel self-confident and autonomous enough to foster the hope that they have maintained through learning from others, but also through characteristics they have adopted via other hopeful people. The fourth level is called relational hope where children will not only focus on their own level of hope, but actively participate with other children to transform their hope into action. Lastly, level five is collective hope, where the need is to see the community's well-being and togetherness increased through the sharing of hope. In summary, the framework argues that hope is relational and an enhancement to one's psycho-social well-being; it should encourage communities and children to search for a better quality of life on various levels. Relationships with significant others fit well within level one of Cherrington's framework and are core to the advanced and increased psycho-social well-being of children (Masten & Obradovic, 2007:7). As a consequence, increased psycho-social well-being leads to stronger resilience within children.

Bojer, Lamont, Janitsch, Dlamini and Hassan (2007:5) claim that the strength and resilience of South Africa is dependent on the well-being and health of her children, taking into account the pivotal role of providing, protecting and allowing the participation of children in building a resilient and hopeful country. Resilience is a "system's capacity to absorb disturbance and re-organise into a fully functioning system" (Cutter, Barnes, Berry, Burton, Evans, Tate & Webb, 2008:599) or "a person's capacity to adapt, recover from or remain strong in times of hardship" (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012:156). However, individuals are only as resilient or successful as the communities in which they find themselves (Ungar, 2011:1742), showing the value of the well-known phrase, "No man is an island". Resilience also characterises children as active and socially competent beings who can enthusiastically construct their world in a way where agency is developed; they should not be seen merely as passive recipients of services (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012:155). However, being mindful of the structural injustices left from apartheid and socio-economic issues, one needs to take into consideration that children living in poverty might have bigger challenges in exercising their rights, practising their agency and growing into healthy human beings. This is why resilience building is pivotal to strengthening South Africa's children. Skovdal and Daniel (2012:158-159) mention a few resilience strategies which can build child agency and protect children from poverty and environmental risks: satisfactory medical attention, building strong family relationships, early childhood development programmes embedded in relevant cultural

storytelling, prenatal care and nutritional programmes. Manyena, Fordham and Collins (2008:324) take a different viewpoint and include that children's involvement in disaster risk reduction activities can contribute to the improvement of resilience in the communities they live and serve. However, these strategies will have little positive effect if not practised in conjunction with the role of the political economy, household environments, community-based systems, social capital and participation of children in decisions affecting them (Skovdal & Daniel, 2012:160; Masten & Obradovic, 2007:7). Thus, emphasising the importance of balancing the notion of protecting children, but also allowing them to participate in decisions that affect them, such as anti-poverty interventions, as will be discussed in more detail below.

2.6. Anti-poverty interventions towards alleviating child poverty

The adoption of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) brought about the development of services, programmes and policies with the aim of focussing on the best interests of the child, as stipulated in Article 4 of the UNCRC and Section 7 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (Richter & Rama, 2006:10). However, children's voices are still too underrepresented when it comes to the design of programmes and interventions addressed at combatting poverty and environmental risks. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2011:34) indicates exactly this, and mentions the key role of children as being able to participate and raise their voice when it comes to the planning, formulation and implementation of anti-poverty programmes and interventions. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA) and the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic approach, are frameworks in which key anti-poverty policies found their expression (Ruhiiga, 2013:11; Madikizela & Ntshaka, 2010:5). However, they failed in their achievement due to neoliberalism and capitalism. Since 1994, the unemployment rate increased from 20% to 27.6% in 2018 (Stats SA, 2018), together with the rise in inequality at 0.69 Gini-coefficient with 1 being the highest level of income inequality. This makes South Africa the most unequal country in the world (Bond, 2014:1). The issues of unemployment and inequality have left the poor, including children, overwhelmed and shocked.

Implementable mechanisms are vital when working towards eradicating poverty, child poverty, unemployment and food insecurities by 2030. The SDGs are advising African countries and UN member states to conceptualise more effective strategies for reaching this goal (UN, 2015:202). Various anti-poverty interventions have been developed and implemented to ensure that social justice for all, especially children, is accomplished

(Anderson, Shinn, Fullilove, Scrimshaw & Fielding, 2003:56). These anti-poverty interventions are discussed in the following sub-section.

2.6.1. National School Nutritional Programmes

In South Africa, 9 million children in 20 000 public schools receives a daily meal through the National School Nutritional Programmes (Devereux, Hochfeld, Karriem, Mensah, Morahanye, Msimango, Mukubonda, Naicker, Nkomo, Sanders & Sanousi, 2018:1). In Cherrington's (2018:506) research study, one of the children mentioned in a participatory strategy that "food makes us have hope because when we have no food, we will have no hope forever". Food was also seen as being related to being strong and feeling healthy: "Food means hope to me because I eat and grow healthier" (Cherington, 2018:507). A strong belief and conviction President Nelson Mandela had during his presidency concerned the care of children and thus, in 1994, the National School Nutritional Programme (NSNP) was introduced under the Reconstruction and Development Plan as an anti-poverty intervention (Devereux et al., 2018:10). Devereux et al. (2018:2, 7) mention five theories of change which focus intensely on poverty reduction and employment. The authors argue that the increase of food security at schools, which leads to better school attendance, improved learner cognition and educational opportunities. This means that the intentional investment in human capital motivates the children of poor households out of intergenerational poverty, as they are more likely to be productive in adulthood. Local employment is a second benefit of school feeding programmes, as it enables local community members to prepare food at the participating schools. More than 50 000 individuals have been employed in South Africa as food handlers within the NSNP intervention (Devereux, Wheeler & Martinez, 2010:8). The NSNP is an extremely important social protection tool within South Africa's social protection system (Devereux et al., 2010:12; Devereux et al., 2010:4). Nevertheless, children who receive poor nutrition from birth up until the age of two risk irreversible developmental delays (Department of Social Development, 2015:26). This calls for a bigger expansion of the NSNP towards early childhood development.

2.6.2. Early Childhood Development

A nation's development is dependent on the effort extended to human capital development within the youngest of the young through early childhood initiatives (Department of Social Development, 2015:18). Early childhood development (ECD) is thus best described as an intervention which provides inclusive and non-discriminatory child-related education and development to children between 0 to 8 years of age (Nair & Radhakrishnan, 2004:227).

ECD interventions should be used in conjunction with other programmes to maximise their fullest potential, such as through school (nutritional) feeding programmes, equal access to health care, social assistance interventions (social grants), psychosocial development of the child and family, as well as disaster relief programmes (Deming, 2009:111). The combination of these programmes should lead to children being better prepared for primary school due to an improvement in social and intellectual development (Deming, 2009:111).

The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (Department of Social Development, 2015:21) is in favour of the potential that early childhood development interventions have in combating South Africa's key development challenges, such as poverty and inequality. Nevertheless, ECD services are not always competent and resourceful in their quality of service delivery and the poorest children are usually at the receiving end of these poor services. Dawes, Biersteker and Hendricks (2012:56) encourage a community development approach in attaining government support for increased funding and resources, with the end goal of improved service provision and accessibility to the poorest of the poor. The quality of life for a child and the contributions the child makes to society as an adult will translate into improved social development of that society, especially if the child receives a chance to participate in decision-making opportunities and builds resilience through ECD programmes and healthy family relationships. The child support grant is of value in promoting these healthy family relationships through lifting the burden of families to provide financially for their children (Naicker, 2016:213).

2.6.3. Child Support Grants

The family remains the primary unit responsible for childcare, with the state's responsibility being the provision of support, through avenues such as the Child Support Grant (CSG). Social assistance is provided to the families through the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 and comprises aid such as the foster care grant, the care dependency grant and the CSG (Hall et al., 2018:131, 139). For the purpose of this study, the CSG will be discussed in more detail.

The "upper bound poverty line" refers to "per capita family income below R1, 138 per month", as described by Hall et al. (2018:131). As earlier indicated, according to these authors, 65% of South Africa's children lived below this poverty line in 2017, with a shocking 30% of the households' adults having no means of extra income, thus being unemployed. The CSG makes an impact on the weight of poverty by aiming at supplementing existing household income (Development Policy Research Unit, 2010:9, 10), showing that the CSG is one of the policies that the government has implemented fairly effectively, predominantly

reaching the poorest of the poor. However, the response to the basic needs of children was only met on an alleviation level (Naicker, 2016:213). Even though the CSG is one of the largest social grants in terms of the number of people it is reaching, that of 12 million children, its value is only R410 per month since October 2018, which is not enough to cover the costs of caring for a child's basic needs (Hall et al., 2018:30, 120).

To ensure a better quality of life for children affected by poverty, the National Plan of Action (NPAC) for Children in South Africa 2012-2017 (Department of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, 2012:89) stipulates that children should obtain and have equal access to social grants and other social services, be enrolled into ECD programmes, be provided with basic education and health care, and benefit from school nutrition programmes. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach can create the possibility for poor households and children to access these services through the five key capital assets.

2.6.4. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach

Social workers and professionals working in the human rights field need tools and insights to understand the livelihoods of people, and especially the livelihoods of the poor. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) can assist professionals in this matter (DFID, 2001). The SLA does not substitute other tools, such as participatory development, for example, but has the ability to connect people and the general environment with the goal of influencing the outcomes of livelihood approaches (Serrat, 2017:22). The SLA provides a thorough and holistic view into people's resources, referring to them as the five key capital assets; specifically, these are human, social, financial, physical and natural capital assets (Krantz, 2001:21). These capital assets should be utilised in conjunction with families to improve their livelihoods. Serrat (2017:25) takes it a step further and stresses the importance of the SLA in creating a platform where the micro links with the macro and the formal with the informal, while remaining context-specific to allow local perspectives to be revealed in policy frameworks. This therefore mobilises local communities, and particularly children, encouraging them to raise their voices in policy formation which can expand livelihood assets and possibly open up ways in generating and improving access to employment through various interventions.

2.6.5. Asset Based Community Development Approach

The Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD) is an approach used to assess the sustainable development of communities based on their assets, strengths, and

potential. The approach captures the multiplicity and differences that describe the reality of people's everyday lives and places the focus not on what people lack and their needs, but rather on the community's coping and survival mechanisms, in spite of constraints, lack and unforeseen circumstances (Nel, 2015:511). The ABCD approach starts with establishing the current status of the community and what is in the community (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001:151). However, where analysing needs is a key task of the community development process (Eloff & Ebersohn, 2001:151), the ABCD process starts with identifying the strengths, capabilities, and assets within the community. Assets mentioned here are both visible and invisible. Examples of visible assets include land, tools and livestock, whereas human capacity, values and people's strengths, are known as invisible assets (DFID, 2001). The ABCD approach improves community ownership and involvement. The bottom-up approach is used in this instance as one starts where the individual is, with the aim of progressing towards adopting resolutions at policy and community levels (DFID, 2001).

2.6.6. Employment generating interventions

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) clarifies that the detrimental effects of loss of income, joblessness and unemployment can be associated with poverty, social exclusion, and hopelessness (Antonopoulos, 2009:4). The EPWP can be defined as "…a nation-wide programme drawing significant numbers of unemployed people into productive work accompanied by training so that participants increase their capacity to earn an income" (Friedman & Bhengu, 2008:22). In 2004, to mitigate chronic unemployment, the Government of South Africa introduced the EPWP, which is informed by the White Paper for Social Welfare 1997 and the National Development Plan (Antonopoulos, 2009:5). This programme firstly focuses on providing income support and employment opportunities to poor and unemployed people. The objective is to deliver public and community assets and services through the labour-intensive market with the aim of addressing economic empowerment through job creation (Henderson, 2017:3). Secondly, the EPWP fulfils "an important policy intervention requirement for targeted inclusion of marginalised groups into the former labour market" (Chakwizira, 2010:241). However, the rapid increase in population, which threatens the capacity to provide affordable or free skills training and education for all, especially youth, demands the rapid expansion of the programme. Chakwizira (2010:245) agrees and includes concern for the limited scale of employment opportunities and the short-term duration of employment making it a challenge to have enormous and long-lasting impact on joblessness at a national and household level. Thus, the EPWP should be combined and implemented together with other anti-poverty interventions. Even though the EPWP is mostly

targeting unemployed youth and adults, it contributes to the development of the whole family unit, which includes children.

Social workers are challenged to ensure that children participate and have a voice in policy-making and anti-poverty intervention strategies to address inequality and injustices in a sustainable manner (Lombard, 2014:46). As a result, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 appeals for the inclusion of the participation of children in matters and decisions that affect them (Sibanda, 2013:12), which will ultimately broaden their human capital as they provide their own contributions towards eliminating poverty and reducing their risk to environmental ills.

2.7. Summary

In summary, various elements need to be taken seriously when involving children in decision-making processes on poverty reduction and protection against poverty and environmental risks. Children should enjoy and participate in all the human rights that are enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. The Constitution is also responsible for upholding the rights of all, by ensuring access to resources such as education, health care services, and clean water. The human rights-based approach was an appropriate theoretical framework for this study, as it is based on international human rights that deal directly with the promotion and protection of human beings, including children. The global, national, and regional agendas, such as the UNCRC and the ARCWC, affirm children's agency and right to play an active role in reducing poverty and environmental risks. Child poverty and children's risk towards environmental hazards are human rights matters, and social workers and other professionals have a responsibility to combat these global, national, and local injustices.

Statistics portraying these injustices and child poverty in Africa opposes the principle of leaving no one behind. Implementing agencies, governments and society at large should look beyond the surface and tackle the structural roots of poverty. Using the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development as a mechanism and foundation of tackling these issues is imperative; one should not underestimate the influence that the political and cultural components have on uprooting these structural origins. Fundamental change and transformation in the model of sustainable development is needed to end poverty, inequality and climate change, and significant mechanisms such as hope, psychosocial well-being and resilience have the potential to vigorously influence these required changes.

Fostering hope within South Africa's children and youth is seen as a crucial building block for increasing the psychosocial well-being and resilience the country needs in order to be better equipped in dealing with prominent and complex socio-economic issues. Strategies include the delivery of satisfactory medical attention services, building strong family relationships, early childhood development programmes embedded in relevant cultural storytelling, and nutritional programmes, as well as involving children in participating in anti-poverty interventions which directly affect their quality of life.

Anti-poverty programmes, as mentioned in this chapter, include the National School Nutritional Programme, Early Childhood Development, the Child Support Grant, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, the Asset Based Community Development Approach and Employment Generating Interventions. However, these programmes and interventions designed to combat poverty and environmental risks could increase their consultation with children in order to learn about what affects them. Children and their participation are the foundation on which programmes should be developed and implemented to ensure sustainable development, prosperity and peace for all.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter focuses on research methodology and the empirical study that was undertaken to explore and describe how children's agency was recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks. The research was guided by the following question:

- How is children's agency recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation?

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

- What are the goals and intended outcomes of programmes/interventions to reduce children's poverty and environmental risks?
- How are children involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?
- What factors influence the recognition and respect/non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?
- What must change to recognise and respect children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programmes/interventions?

The chapter discusses the research approach that was used, the type of research, the research design and research methods. Furthermore, it presents the population and sampling, the data collection method utilised, the data analysis and the quality of the data, the ethical aspects of the study and the limitations. The empirical findings will be presented and discussed. Finally, the chapter will be concluded with a brief summary.

3.2. Research approach

The study used a qualitative research approach which allowed the researcher to understand the phenomena from the participants' points of view (Fouché & Delport, 2011:64), with the focus being on understanding children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks from children's and key informants' points of view. Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to obtain undiluted quality information based on the meaning and experiences of children and key informants that are assigned to the programme (Rubin & Babbie, 2014:471).

The study was both exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory purpose was to answer the "what" question and thus gain insight into children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). This enabled the researcher to gain insight into the situation, programme or community (Babbie, 2017:92) which in the case of the study, was the programme at Lerato House,

The descriptive purpose of the study was to answer the 'why' and 'how' questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). Thus, the descriptive study allowed the researcher to gather descriptive data through the participants' spoken or written words (Fouché & Delport, 2011:65). In the case of this study, children and key informants involved in the programme explain the degree and nature of children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks that affect them.

The study used an interpretivist paradigm, as it departed from a human rights framework which informed the researcher of the type of questions to ask (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60). Furthermore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to understand social reality through the eyes of different participants and, particularly in this study, children and key informants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60). In the context of this study, the researcher wanted to understand how children are involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

3.3. Type of research

The study was an applied type of research, which aimed at solving specific practice problems and developing new knowledge on a practical situation relating to recognising and respecting children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). Knowledge was generated through the

investigation of a practical situation which in turn resulted in possible solutions that may be utilised in practice (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:74). The study focused on how children's agency is respected and recognised in solving poverty and environmental risks that affect them. Furthermore, the applied findings can be used by organisations to solve problems related to children's rights (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). The study's findings could also be of value to policymakers in addressing policy challenges concerning children's participation in interventions that affect their well-being (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95).

3.4. Research design

The researcher used a case study design. A case study is a preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are posed and enables participants to share their stories due to close collaboration between the researcher and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). On the other hand, case studies provide insights into an issue (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82); they allow for the attainment of familiarity with the social world of a small number of people while identifying patterns and themes within the participants' worlds (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:320), as well as gaining new knowledge about a social issue (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). More specifically, the researcher utilised an instrumental case study design to conduct the study, as it allowed for the development of an understanding of a phenomenon with the goal of increasing the ability to generalise the findings and transfer them to other cases (Mertens, 2010:324).

The advantages of a case study design are that it provides an in-depth and detailed account of a case in a real-world context (Creswell, 2014:97) and it can enable participants to share their stories due to close collaboration between the researcher and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). Additionally, the case study is specifically "useful when exploring those situations in which the interventions being evaluated have no clear, single set of outcomes and provides insight into an issue or help to refine a theory" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). Therefore, it assisted the researcher "to learn more about a little known or poorly understood situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:141).

3.5. Research methods

Methods are the tools that the researcher uses to collect data and are influenced by the research question, aim and theoretical framework (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:51). Qualitative research methods seek to gather deeper meanings attached to particular human experiences, gathering theoretically richer observations (Rubin & Babbie, 2015:46). The research methods will be discussed next.

3.5.1. Study population and sampling

The study population is known as the total persons, events or other sampling components with which the research problem is concerned (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:199). At the time of the study, 16 children were staying in the residential facility at Lerato House. The key informants included one social worker, one programme coordinator, one centre manager, two house mothers, three volunteers and three social auxiliary workers; thus, totalling 14 key informants. Key informants are the people who are involved with the implemented programme and are known for their expertise in the programme or their power to make decisions on the programme (Fouché, 2011:467). The total population for the study, which included children and key informants, was thus 30 individuals.

Sampling is the process of selecting certain elements from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, the researcher can direct the results back to the population from which they were chosen (Maree, 2016:36). The sampling approach was non-probability, as the participants were not randomly selected and were identified through purposive sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:197). Purposive sampling is based on the researcher's knowledge of the population to select participants that will be able to provide the best information to address the purpose of the research (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:198). Five child participants and five key informants were selected for the study according to the following sampling criteria:

➢ **Children**

Children who participated in the study should have met the following criteria:
- Age between 10 and 17,
- At least one year involved in the programme,
- Preferably male and female,
- Conversant in English,

- Able to share their views on and experiences in the programme.

> **Key informants**

Key informants who participated in the study should have met the following criteria:
- Involved in the development and/or implementation of the programme,
- Familiar with the involvement of children in the programme,
- At least two years' involvement in/with the programme,
- Conversant in English,
- Preferably male and female,
- Willing to share their views on and experience in the programme.

Written permission to conduct the study was obtained from Lerato House (see Appendix A). The researcher asked the programme manager and the centre manager at Lerato House to assist her with selecting the respective sample groups based on the above-mentioned criteria. When a list was made available of the possible participants, the researcher was guided by the two managers on how to approach the participants, after which the researcher reached out to them. The first five participants in the respective sample categories who met the sampling criteria and who were willing to participate in the study were included in the study.

3.5.2. Data collection method

Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews, and took an average of 45 – 50 minutes to complete. Interviews are a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks participants questions to collect data and learn about the views of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:92). This method was suitable as it allowed the researcher to have flexibility, which led to more in-depth information (Greeff, 2011:352). The interview was guided by predetermined questions (see Appendix B), but the researcher and participants were allowed to pursue the themes differently (Davis, 2012:121). Semi-structured interviewing, therefore, allows for more natural interaction between the researcher and the participant (Rubin & Babbie, 2015:168).

Qualitative studies are guided by the criteria of data saturation, which refers to the point where all the themes and categories have been saturated and therefore there is no need for further data (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:84). The researcher found sufficient data saturation by the fifth interview of the respective participant categories and did not

have to recruit any further participants to interview. The interviews took place at a meeting place convenient for the participants. Lerato House made available the office of the social worker, the office of the programme manager and the children's rooms for the interviewer to conduct the interviews.

3.5.3. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that allows the researcher to develop codes and themes. It is flexible, allowing the researcher to respond to data as they engage in it (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:224).

The researcher followed the six-step process in analysing data as described by Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015: 231-241).

- Step 1: Familiarisation

The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants to capture their verbatim expressions and then transcribed. The researcher became familiar with the transcribed data by reading it twice from a curious and critical perspective, asking why the participant answered the question as he/she did (Clarke et al., 2015:231).

- Step 2: Coding

Coding begins with closely reading through the data and identifying short phrases, which can be semantic or latent in nature (Clarke et al., 2015:235). The researcher systematically identified and labelled the features from the data that were relevant to the study and research question (Clarke et al., 2015:230). The researcher made space available on the right side of the transcripts to be able to colour-code the data related to the research question. Clarke et al. (2015:235) suggest that it is preferable to begin with the latent coding, then to search for the deeper meaning, and finally shift to the semantic phrases that are on the surface.

- Step 3: Searching for themes

Searching for themes does not mean that the researcher finds themes that already exist in the data, but rather that the researcher is "aiming to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of your data" (Clarke et al., 2015:236). In other words, the

researcher develops themes which are comprehensible to the data and tells him/her a bit about the research question. Three theme levels are recommended: (1) overarching themes, (2) themes and (3) sub-themes (Clarke et al., 2015:236). However, the researcher only identified themes and sub-themes in the current study.

- Step 4: Reviewing themes

The researcher had to determine whether the identified themes fit well enough with the meanings in the coded data. It required of the researcher to pause throughout the process of generating themes in order to check if there was an appropriate fit between the themes and codes and if each had a clear feature or "distinct essence – or central organising concept" (Clarke et al., 2015:230). In reviewing the themes, the researcher may decide not to change anything, or discard all and re-start the theme development process (Clarke et al., 2015:238). In the final analysis, the researcher identified six themes with sub-themes.

- Step 5: Defining and naming themes

This step requires the researcher to write up a short description of the theme, which explains the core, coverage, scope, and limitations of each theme. It also entails naming the themes, particularly to capture the essence of each theme as well as to develop a creative 'spirit' in this process (Clarke et al., 2015:240). The researcher presented an overview of the themes in Table 3.3, followed by a detailed discussion of the respective themes and sub-themes.

- Step 6: Writing the report

Report writing happens simultaneously with the analysis and defining of one's themes (Clarke et al., 2015:241). The writing up of one's report should typically include the quotes from the researcher's key observations and the more expressive participants (Clarke et al., 2015:241) because strong evidence is needed to provide a clear understanding of participants' views on and experiences in the studied programme. All the research findings have been substantiated by the direct quotes of research participants as indicated in section 3.9. below.

3.6. Data quality

Data quality was ensured by means of establishing trustworthiness. According to Elo, Kaariainen, Kanste, Polkki, Utriainen, and Kyngas (2014:2), trustworthiness refers to when the research findings mirror as closely as possible what the participants meant to say. The four concepts that inform trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability/auditability and confirmability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

3.6.1. Credibility

In qualitative studies, the researcher obtains insight and an in-depth understanding on the research topic from participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:258). In the process of establishing credibility, the researcher asks if there is a fit between the views of the participants and how they reconstruct and represent them (De Vos et al., 2011:420). The researcher ensured that the research participants' views were reflected in the study's findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). The researcher made sure that she was aware of possible bias that may influence the credibility of the data (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). To protect against bias, she sent her first two pilot interviews to her supervisor so that she could be guided and made aware of the manner in which she asked questions. The researcher used the strategy of member checking by referring the findings to available participants to clarify whether their meanings were presented according to their perspectives (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:194). One participant was willing to review the findings of her interview and agreed with what was written. Credibility of findings was also enhanced by triangulating the data from two participant groups – children and key informants. In this regard, Drisco (1997, cited in Lietz & Zayas, 2010:193) states that "data triangulation and observer triangulation are both important in reaching a 'completeness' or an exhaustive response to the research question". The researcher also kept an audit trail of the research process and observations, and debriefed by discussing the research and findings with a peer (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192).

3.6.2. Dependability

Dependability refers to the consistency of the findings if the study is to be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One strategy to evaluate dependability is auditability, which encompasses the manner in which research procedures are recorded and permits

others external to the study to observe and critique it (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). For the purposes of this study, auditability was applied by the continuous supervision and critique of the research supervisor from the University of Pretoria.

3.6.3. Transferability

In qualitative studies, findings cannot be generalised (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195), but they can be applied to other populations or settings that are similar to where the research has been conducted (De Vos et al., 2011:420). As an evaluation technique, transferability is therefore "achieved when the findings have applicability to another setting, to theory, to practice, or to future research" (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). To increase transferability, researchers focus on how the participants in the context have typically been studied and how the findings apply to this context (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:124). The researcher made use of thick descriptions to increase the transferability of the findings to other similar organisation settings by giving in-depth accounts of the phenomenon of child participation and participants' views on how children are recognised in conceptualising, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating in the Lerato House programme (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:194).

3.6.4. Conformability

Conformability implies that the participants shaped the findings of the study and not the interest and the bias of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conformability, therefore, refers to the objectivity of the researcher which could be confirmed by others in the findings of the study (Fouché, De Vos & Schurink, 2011:421). Nieuwenhuis (2016c:125) highlights that research findings should reflect participants' true contributions, which confirms that the researcher should guard against being biased and allowing her interest in the study to influence the research findings. To counteract possible bias, the researcher used reflexivity as a strategy to analyse possible self-interest and influence in the research study (Drisko, 1997 in Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). To remain aware of the research process and observations, the researcher made use of an audit trail by keeping a diary indicating the research process from the start to the final reporting on the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, confirmation of the findings was strengthened by the triangulation of data.

3.7.   Pilot study

The pilot study serves as a feasibility study before the research study is conducted in order to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the research methodology, sampling, data collection instruments and the data analysis (Strydom, 2011:237). Such a study is also important for the reviewer to determine his/her own level of interviewing skills (Greeff, 2011:350). A pilot study conducted for the purposes of qualitative research is usually informal and the participants possess the same characteristics as those in the main study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394). This is a method of testing the measuring instrument that is to be utilised in the main study (Strydom, 2011:240). The data collection instrument can be tested and validated by administering it to a small group of participants (Barker, 2003:327). In this study, the very first interviews were conducted with a key informant and child participant respectively, which served as the pilot study. The researcher did not change any of the questions, however, in some instances, she needed to simplify the wording and shorten the questions for the child participants. Examples of the questions that were posed to the participants were Question 5 asking, "Tell me about your participation in the programme/intervention. If you participate, do you participate because you want to and are allowed to do so, or because you are told to do so?" The researcher also asked, "Can you tell me a bit about the things happening at Lerato House?" Before she asked question 8, she first asked, "What programmes work well/do not work well in Lerato House?" This question assisted the child participants to better understand the ideas they have on the programme and what they would be willing to share. Findings of the pilot study were included in the main study.

3.8.   Ethical considerations

The researcher was guided by a set of ethical values and principles that provided moral principles, rules and expectations on how to conduct herself towards the research participants during the data collection (Babbie, 2017:63). Data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings and therefore researchers should handle all ethical aspects relevant to the study (Strydom, 2011:113). As indicated earlier, the researcher received written permission from the CEO of Tshwane Leadership Foundation to approach potential research participants for the study. The study was cleared by the Faculty of Humanities' Ethics Committee at the University of Pretoria

(see Appendix C). The following ethical considerations were taken into account for this research study.

3.8.1. Avoidance of harm

There was no threat of physical harm to research participants of the study, but emotional harm was possible (Strydom, 2011:115). This is because the study was about poverty and environmental risks and talking about the hardships that the research participants encounter could have evoked feelings of disempowerment, especially for the children. The key informants, on the other hand, could have realised that they do not recognise the children's agency sufficiently, which could have been disturbing to them. To avoid any emotional harm in the participants, the researcher informed them through the informed consent and assent letters about the possible risks involved when they decided to participate in the research study (Babbie, 2017:65). Fortunately, no child or key informant presented with any form of emotional harm that became known to the researcher.

3.8.2. Debriefing of participants

Debriefing entails "sessions during which subjects get the opportunity, after the study, to work through their experience and its aftermath, and where they have their questions answered and misconceptions removed" (McBurney, 2001 in Strydom, 2011:122). Debriefing offers an opportunity to clarify any matters or concerns about the research study; it is therefore best to debrief participants directly after the session, as was done in the case of this study (Strydom, 2011:122). The researcher debriefed some of the participants who needed it and asked for more discussion time after the interview. Two key informant participants mentioned that during the interview, they also felt debriefing took place and realised the importance of debriefing. Two child participants wanted to have further non-research related discussions after the interviews. The researcher was not informed of any child participants needing a follow-up session with either the researcher or the social worker. The key informants who needed a more in-depth debriefing would have been referred to the director of Tshwane Leadership Foundation. However, none of the key informants required that.

3.8.3.   Anonymity and confidentiality

The participants were known to the researcher, hence anonymity could not be guaranteed, only confidentiality. The researcher committed to confidentiality in that the research findings were not presented in a manner that would identify any particular participant (Babbie, 2017:67; Padgett, 2017:83). To shield participants' identities, they were allocated pseudonyms. The upholding of confidentiality was indicated in the informed consent (see Appendix D) and assent forms (see Appendix E) that the participants signed before interviews were conducted.

3.8.4.   Deception

Deception entails the misleading of participants, purposeful misrepresentation of facts or keeping information from participants (Strydom, 2011:118). The researcher ensured that all the participants understood what the study was about and did not withhold any information that the participants wanted to know. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher ensured that the participants fully understood the content of the informed consent/assent letter before they gave consent (by signing the form) to participate in the study. The researcher did this by taking 10 minutes before the interview to have an in-depth discussion regarding the content to make sure that all participants fully understood and had ample opportunity to ask any questions.

3.8.5.   Informed consent/assent

The researcher is responsible for and has an obligation to thoroughly explain the study to the participants in order to establish a platform for informed consent (Babbie, 2017:65; Strydom, 2011:118). Informed assent is a term that is used to convey an agreement to participate in research from those who are not yet eligible to enter into a legal contract (Ford, Sankey & Crisp, 2007:20). The legal guardian was requested to provide their informed consent for participation of the children. The letters of informed consent/assent stated that all interviews would be audio-recorded and transcribed, and that all information would be treated with confidentiality. Participants were informed verbally and through these letters that the research data would be stored at the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years.

Taking into consideration the ethical issues with regard to children under the age of 18 years, the researcher provided an opportunity for all the children she interviewed to express their views and concerns whether they would like to participate in the study or not. One child mentioned that she does not like being asked to many questions. The researcher allowed her to take a break during the interview and reassured her that if she does not want to answer any particular questions, she could use the word "skip".

3.8.6. Dissemination of findings

Dissemination of research findings explains what the researcher will do with the findings once the research project is completed, how the findings will be made available to the public and whether the researcher intends to publish these findings (Bak, 2004:35). In the case of this study, as the project neared completion, the researcher submitted the research findings to the University of Pretoria in the form of this research report. The research findings may also be submitted to a scientific journal for publication and be used for possible conference papers. This information was included in the informed consent form.

3.9. Empirical findings

The empirical findings of the research study will be presented in the following sub-sections: the biographical data of the research participants will be presented first, followed by the main themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data.

3.9.1. Biographical information of the research participants

The researcher interviewed six key informants and six children. The biographical information of the two categories of participants will be presented in the following sub-sections. Real names of participants have been replaced by codes for the sake of confidentiality. Key informants' codes are 'KI' followed by the participant number and child participants are coded 'CP' followed by the participant number.

3.9.1.1. The biographical information of key informants

The biographical information for the key informants is displayed in Table 3.1 below and includes their age, sex, the duration they have been with the organisation, the duration

they have been involved in the programme and what phases of the programme they are involved in.

Table 3.1: Biographical information of key informants

Key Informants	Age group	Sex	Years in organisation	Years & months involved in programme	Phases of involvement
KI1	36-40 years	Female	10 years	10 years	Design of content & implementation
KI2	36-40 years	Female	7 years	6 years	Implementation, monitoring & evaluation
KI3	20-25 years	Female	13 years	6 years, 2 months	Implementation
KI4	41-45 years	Female	14 years	3 years, 1 month	All of the phases
KI5	36-40 years	Female	3 years	3 years	Planning, implementation & monitoring
KI6	36-40 years	Female	4 years	1 year, 6 months	Planning & monitoring

The researcher interviewed key informants between the ages of 20 and 45 years, all of whom were female. No male was interviewed, due to the nature of Lerato House being a place of safety for abused young girls and the appropriateness of women staff to deal with the girls. Some of these women also serve as house mothers, which indicates the reliance on women as caretakers of these girls. The key informants have been with the organisation for a period between three and 14 years, with an average of eight and a half years at the organisation. They have been involved in the programme between one and a half and 10 years and, on average, four years and nine months.

All of the key informants have been involved in the implementation of the programme. Three were involved in the planning/conceptualisation of the programme, four were

involved in the monitoring of the programme and two were involved respectively in the design and evaluation of the programme.

3.9.1.2.   The biographical information of the child participants

The biographical information of the children included whether they are male or female, their age, if they attend school and which grade they are in if they attend school. If they do not attend school, the biographical information included what they are currently doing and how long they have been involved in the programme.

Table 3.2: Biographical information of child participants

Children	Age	Sex	Involvement in programme	School Grade
CP1	11 years	Female	1 year	Grade 5
CP2	14 years	Female	4 years	Grade 7
CP3	14 years	Female	3 years, 6 months	Grade 8
CP4	15 years	Female	2 years	Grade 7
CP5	15 years	Female	1 year, 3 months	Grade 9
CP6	17 years	Female	3 years, 3 months	Grade 10

As indicated in the table, all the participants were female as Lerato House only provides for girls. The children were between the ages of 11 and 17 and have been involved in the programme for a period between one and four years. All of them attended school; there was one in Grade 5, Grade 8, Grade 9 and Grade 10, and two in Grade 7.

3.9.2. Themes and sub-themes

The following table indicates the six themes, respective sub-themes and categories that emerged from the study. Direct quotations from the participants will be used to substantiate the findings and, where applicable, will be verified by literature.

Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-Themes		
Theme 1: Factors influencing children's poverty and environmental risks	1.1. Difficult and abusive family circumstances 1.2. Inability of parent(s) to financially sustain the family 1.3. Limited access to education prior to living at Lerato House		
Theme 2: Access to services that uphold human rights	2.1. Access to education (school) 2.2. Access to healthcare 2.3. Access to environmental rights 2.4. Access to a safe and clean environment		
Theme 3: Participation of children in the programme	3.1. Involvement of children in planning of activities 3.2. Involvement of children in the implementation of the programme		
Theme 4: Contextualising the child concept and child agency	4.1. A child is vulnerable and in need of protection 4.2. Children need protection and have agency		
Theme 5: Factors influencing child recognition and respect	5.1. Factors contributing to showing recognition and respect	5.1.1. Willing and trained staff to work with children 5.1.2. Receiving feedback from children on the programme	
	5.2. Factors contributing to showing non-recognition and disrespect	5.2.1. Misbehaving and rebellious children 5.2.2. Untrained staff who do not know how to work with children	
Theme 6: Suggestions to recognise and respect children's agency through their participation	6.1. Provide children with more psycho-social support 6.2. Allow time for children to provide their inputs 6.3. Provide staff and volunteer training and		

| | debriefing |
| | 6.4.   Increase group meetings with children |

Theme 1: Factors influencing children's poverty and environmental risks

Child participants and key informants indicated that factors which mainly influence children's poverty and environmental risks are rooted in their upbringing and can relate back to their families of origin. Findings show that children who are raised in families with no or little support, an abusive parent(s) or no access to education or basic needs are prone to be more vulnerable to poverty and environmental risks than children who receive love and care and who have a strong family support system to guide them through life and the decisions they need to make. Most of the child participants highlighted their struggles owing to mothers not being able to provide for their basic needs, due to neglect or abuse of the child or weak health of the parent. The findings will be discussed in the sub-themes to follow.

Sub-theme 1.1.: Abusive and challenging family circumstances

The findings point out that the children were at Lerato House due to abusive and challenging family circumstances, resulting in their removal either through a social worker or the police. These findings were articulated by both child participants and key informants, as can be seen below.

CP5:   *"…my mom beated me."; "Then I was bleeding since from last night and then I went to school, I think the social worker came to me and they said: Am I on my period. I said not, then she checked for me and my bum and then she called my mom and my mom said she never, she doesn't care."*

KI1:   *"…The child was sexually abused by the stepfather. The mother was not even present. The mother was at the hospital. She had a baby."*

KI3:   *"…maybe a police officer finds them in the community where a child is in crisis…"*

KI5:   *"…from what I've seen from their families – it could be domestic violence from the family…"*

These children predominantly face familial, and personal challenges. Griggs and Walker (2008:20) affirm that linkages have been made between poverty and higher rates of child abuse and neglect. Treanor (2012:1) indicates that children born to

families who live in and are exposed to poverty are prone to remaining in poverty throughout adulthood.

Sub-theme 1.2.: Inability of parent(s) to financially sustain the family

Some child participants expressed their views regarding financial struggles experienced in their family being the reason why they needed to live at Lerato House. However, the move to Lerato House was never a long-term plan for these families, due to the fact that some of these participants expressed insight, love and care towards their mothers, understanding that they did not have the financial means to support them despite trying to attain employment. These conditions also contributed to mental health challenges such as depression, which influences opportunities to work and earn an income. The child participants' lived realities are presented below.

> CP3: *"She had depression, like now it's affecting her very bad because then she has to go to work and when she goes to fetch medicine, they keep on telling her to come back to the hospital, they have to do check-ups and she has to stay in there while she's working, then she can't work. Then she goes back to work from the hospital, they have another worker."*

> CP5: *"…my mom didn't, she didn't have enough money to pay for hot water…"*

> CP6: *"…my mom has been struggling to get a job, for a very long time…so I ended up here because of the job issue…so most of it is just financial issues…"*

Child participant 5 was heading a household for her siblings. She experienced coming to Lerato House as a relief of the burden of caring for younger siblings.

> CP5: *"…I don't have to wash dishes before I go to school, cook for my younger brothers…when I come to Lerato, I just wake up, I bath and I find my food ready, then I'm up to school and then after school I get my food and I eat and I study. Then at home it is a bit busy than, time to study you won't get it that much...when I came to Lerato House, no one is shorting of food, don't have to sleep without food."*

Statistics show that 5.9 million children in South-Africa live in households where no adults are working (Children Count, 2020; Hall & Sambu, 2018:139). The findings indicate that Lerato House is giving the children an opportunity to live a better future. Hall and Sambu (2018:137) remark that lack of money is closely related to reduced access to education and physical environments, which poses a threat on children's safety and child poverty. Griggs and Walker (2008:18) confirm that children who are being brought up in financially constrained environments have a lower probability of financial success later in their lives. The study's findings are thus supported by Children Count (2020); even though money is not the source of all happiness, it is needed to provide households with the opportunity to have access to needed services. Income poverty is often closely linked to physical and social environments that pose a threat to the personal safety of children, as well as poor health and an inability to access quality education (Children Count, 2020).

Sub-theme 1.3.: Limited access to education

Findings indicated that children came to Lerato House to receive an education. As the children come from deprived and poor family contexts, being at Lerato House eases the burden of the family to ensure that the child receives an education and a better life. As one child participant highlighted, she was placed in Lerato House to receive education and finish school.

> CP3:   *"…the only thing I came here for was just to go to school, finish my school and go to university. Find a work and go back and check my family."*

The findings indicated the link between poverty, family support and education. Poor educational outcomes link to child poverty (Griggs & Walker, 2008:14). In addition to poor education, findings indicated that living at home in poverty could deprive children of having an education while Lerato House gives them that opportunity.

> KI5:   *"To ease the burden of poverty? I think this programme, it helps them because they are getting education…if they are not able to send their children to school, maybe they* [the children] *can try to do something, so that it will be minus in their finances."*

Child participants and key informants indicated that access to education was a core reason for children to come to Lerato House:

CP5:   *"…I chose to stay here 'cause of school..."*

CP6:   *"…the only way I could go to school was that I should come here. Because they deal with that, so I came here."*

KI4:   *"I think most of the kids that comes to us, they are so deprived of that education. And that is not good for the kid. Kid must go to school."*

KI6:   *"…let's say maybe she was not going to school, so they will start, like, we'll motivate the child to go to school."*

Findings reveal that education is a major component of the programme which children benefit from at Lerato House. Every child has the right to education. Education provides the life and social skills necessary for leading a fulfilling life with multiple opportunities and in the future, secure a job (Lee, 2013:1). Altenhoener (2009:589, 597) concurs that access to high-quality education has a direct impact on social integration and opportunities for children and minority groups to participate in economic life and activities.

In summary, poverty has a vast impact on child neglect and one of the wider challenges of poverty includes limited access to education (Green, 2012:16). Income poverty translates to child poverty and a higher exposure to environmental risks.

Theme 2: Access to services that uphold human rights

The findings indicate that the services that the children receive from Lerato House meet their basic needs and hence promote their rights. Child participants articulated that they have access to health services, shelter, food, education, safety, and environmental rights. These rights will be discussed in the next sub-themes.

Sub-theme 2.1.: Access to education (school)

All the key informants reiterated how integral it is for these children to attend school and be provided with access to education. They also indicated that Lerato House has partnerships with schools in the surrounding area, such as the Progressive Christian School, where if they present the necessary Children's Act documents, the Department of Social Development can assist Lerato House with additional funding. Besides schooling, the key informants elaborated on other relevant programmes that involve educational development, such as skills development programmes. One of the

first things that Lerato House does when girls arrive at the facility, in addition to counselling, is to make sure that schooling is a top priority for the girls. These sentiments are reflected in the following views of key informants:

KI1: *"…when they come here, we make sure they get registered at school, so they get the right for the education and their right is met."*

KI3: *"Whenever a girl is here, first things first after they receive counselling and whenever they are fine, they are always taken to school…Lerato House always make sure that girls are in school. That's priority."*

KI5: *"They help them with documents [Section(s) 151, 152 of the Children's Act 38 of 2005] and then access to education."*

Some of the key informants and child participants added that it is not only access to education in terms of schooling that they receive, but additional support in terms of tutors coming to Lerato House to assist them after school hours:

KI2: *"And if a child is not doing well at school, they look for people to come and help them. We have people from Rosebank College who always come on Thursday to help with homework."*

KI6: *"…we even help them with homework in the house."*

CP1: *"…because there are people here who can help me with my work, like for example, Afrikaans…"*

CP3: *"…they bring tutors from different colleges…those people who wanted to come, then they help us with our studies."*

CP5: *"Oh, there are students, about ten or nine, then when we have homework, they can help you…on Sundays there's some tutors that come to teach us…"*

Key informants mentioned the extra mile they would go to help these girls receive their matric, together with other programmes they implement at Lerato House to give them an education and enhance learning in different ways:

KI3: *"…we also have schools where girls can be taken to the night school, where a girl can attend school in the evening and then in the afternoon they do programmes on crafts and art or whatever they do…they also come downstairs for computer research."*

KI4:   *"Even those that are old, they are 17 and 18, they have never gone to school, we try ABET* [Adult Basic Education Training]*….that adult training, we try the ABET so they go through that in a way that they'll end up getting matric...we also have different programmes at home."*

A child participant articulated what access to education can mean to her or children in general:

CP6:   *"I think also that* [education] *will help with dealing with the issue of poverty, because you know education is the most important thing, and that education is the only way out of any situation…what you're going to use it in life for. So, I think that is a nice way of getting yourself out of poverty…"*

Findings reveal that both children and key informants understand the importance of education. Quennerstedt (2010:621) highlights how integral the right to education is in meeting the basic needs of a child. Access to education, including adult basic education, is an integral human right, as stated in the Bill of Rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996). Lifelong learning and economic opportunities remain to be found in education which is a dominant socio-economic right (Hall et al., 2018:149).

Serfontein (2015:2280) points out that education in itself does not provide a means to survival, but quality education can develop knowledge and provide access to information, which forms the basis for children or adults to uphold other rights. Furthermore, having access to education develops an enabling attitude within individuals to achieve a more appropriate and fitting way of life (Serfontein, 2015:2280). Lerato House provides the girls with the opportunity to partake in educational activities:

CP3:   *"In the end you'll make it. We have a girl, she's in the University of Pretoria now, she's doing...no, I can't say that, it's long, I don't know, but it's law, something in law, and it's her third, second year this year and she's doing well…she used to stay here."*

The contribution of education leads to poverty reduction and is vital in developmental programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks (Melin, 2001:16). Irish Aid (2007:4) emphasises that education equips people and communities with the

knowledge and skills needed in a vigorous world, leading to education being a crucial component in the decline of poverty.

Sub-theme 2.2.: Access to healthcare

The findings indicated that the girls living at Lerato House have access to free holistic healthcare services, including medication, doctor visits and healthcare education. In addition, healthy meals, spiritual activities as a means to develop well-being and access to overall healthcare are available to the children of Lerato House. A child participant presented an example of what access to healthcare meant to her in terms of an accident that happened to her when she was in Grade 5 and which she can only solve now that she is in Grade 9 and has the opportunity to access health services.

> CP5: *"When I was in Grade 5 I was cleaning my ears with stick matches. I didn't know that there was something called earbuds. I didn't know my mom didn't buy for me, so it was really itchy, so I was cleaning then a that stick fell inside my ears and then I took it out in January. I told my mom and my mom said I must just put my head upside down and then it will come out then I even forgot about it. Then last year started being itchy when I was cleaning my ear with an earbud, I could feel I was going deeper, then I told Lindi* [pseudonym], *then she took me to the hospital, then it was removed."*

Child participants presented insights on the way they receive healthcare services:

> CP1: *"They give us healthy things, they give us things like for using for your body, for your health, sometimes they give us medicine though."*

> CP2: *"If I'm sick, I go and tell the house mother and then if it's really bad, they say I must be absent at school so I can call to the clinic and check-up what's wrong."*

> CP3: *"…they get medication, they get treatment, they make sure that we are safe…they bring people to test is, like that, if you have, if you have HIV…then they say it's your choice if you want to."*

> CP5: *"…they'll take me to a hospital, and they'll give me medicine…here at Lerato House, I'll sleep, and they'll really take good care of me when I'm really sick."*

Related to well-being and health, participant CP6 mentioned spiritual well-being as important for good self-care.

> CP6:   *"…we have devotions from 6pm to 7pm, so that's another way of taking good care of yourself…and they give us toiletries."*

The key informants indicated that relationships with health facilities, educational health talks and healthy meals are important ways in which Lerato House facilitates access to healthcare.

> KI1:   *"Then we provide healthy meals, like breakfast, lunch, fruits, dinner…"*

> KI2:   *"We also work with Dr X* [pseudonym] *.... You know government hospitals, you will stay there, and the child is in pain you know, and you wait. So, at least we have Dr X [pseudonym] … on our side, so we will call her and make an appointment and she will say, bring the child…There are these other ladies, they also come here to make their educational health talk with the children."*

> KI3:   *"…we have a relationship with a doctor called Dr X* [pseudonym]*, …. Whenever the girls are sick, they will book an appointment and we will take them there. We have another relationship with the Sediba health clinic…then they take them there also."*

> KI4:   *"…we have Sediba Hope clinic, they send a nurse every Tuesday to come and talk to them about health. So, anything to do with personal health, including women's health…they talk to them about sexual relationships…they get training about, um, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS…"*

Two key informant participants mentioned the importance of sanitation in terms of the young girls' menstrual cycles and bathroom duties. They felt that it is vital to teach the girls about sanitation and personal hygiene, especially during menstrual weeks. However, the findings indicated that some of the girls do not practice personal hygiene during their cycles and present a challenge for house mothers trying to make the girls comply with certain sanitation rules:

> KI2:   *"When they are on their periods, you tell them, please roll the pads nicely and cover it and put it in the dustbin. But no, you go there you know, you'd be shocked...here, you see a mess…we are trying and*

> then we shout, but we keep on teaching them that they need to behave like this."

KI4: *"…make sure that when you're in periods, that you put the pads in the right place and not everywhere, and make sure to change in time."*

KI6: *"…we teach them to clean so then they can clean."*

Findings indicate that building relationships through partnerships with stakeholders is one way to provide these children with access to healthcare services. The findings are supported by Steinitz (2009:17) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989); children have a right to access quality healthcare facilities. However, Steinitz (2009:17) elaborates that a single organisation cannot achieve these broad and long terms goals alone, and that partnering with other local, provincial, or national government or like-minded service providers is key to rendering quality health services.

The National Adolescent and Youth Health Policy (Department of Social Development, 2017:5) explains a few critical objectives aimed at increasing access and knowledge on adolescent and youth health. These six objectives are: (1) the use of youth-orientated programmes and technologies to enhance youth well-being and health; (2) the provision of in-depth and combined sexual and reproductive health services; (3) the importance of providing resources to test and treat HIV/AIDS, but also programmes aimed at prevention; (4) the reduction of violence and substance abuse; (5) the reduction of risk of obesity, malnutrition and the promotion of healthy eating and (6) to empower youth and adolescents to be responsible when it comes to their own mental and physical health and well-being, and to encourage their engagement in health policy and programme development (Department of Social Development, 2017:5). Lerato House has shown their involvement in three of these objectives, namely the provision of resources to test and treat HIV/AIDS, the promotion of healthy eating and the use of youth-orientated programmes to enhance well-being and health. Girls should have access to the necessary knowledge and facilities to handle their menstrual cycles with hygienic measures in place and with self-respect, however, little emphasis is placed on teaching young girls in rural areas how to manage their menstruation (Mahon & Fernandes, 2010:1). Lerato House's investment in educating children on sanitation and the improvement of their overall hygiene can bring health benefits to broader society, as UNICEF (2014:10) indicates.

Sub-theme 2.3.: Access to environmental rights

Having access to environmental rights, such as safety and clean water and environments, is more evident for the girls living at Lerato House when compared to the communities that they came from, as the findings indicated. There were also different perceptions that the children and key informants had pertaining to access to safe and clean environments.

A child participant mentioned how vital it is to bathe in little water, as various peoples suffer from a lack of water:

CP2: *"…when we bath, we shouldn't bath for a very long time, because in the rural areas people lack water so we must not waste water."*

Another child participant articulated the manner in which she used to take a bath at home, with only having access to cold water and how it changed when she was placed in Lerato House:

CP5: *"Like when I was at home, in the morning we used to bath with cold water… when I came to Lerato House, I just had to, I thought I was gonna bath with cold water but when I checked everything was, the water is hot…"*

The child participants mentioned the education they receive on clean water, which correlates with theme 2.1.: having access to education. Lerato House provides the opportunity for the girls to be educated on the importance of saving water. Child participant 3 indicated that when she was living at home, she did not have an interest in what it means to save water. Child participants articulated their experiences with education related to clean water as follows:

CP1: "*She told us we must save water."*

CP3: *"…*she explained everything to us about saving water…*it benefits me a lot, because when I was at home, I didn't care about that* [saving water]. *I would do anything because I didn't have much knowledge about these things.*"

CP5: *"They sometimes bring a lady that is called Ms Earth, she comes and she tells us how to keep water safe, how to not misuse water, 'cause sometime in the future we won't have water anymore."*

There were two perceptions regarding having access to a clean and safe environment and the responsibility of maintaining it. One perception was that responsibility should be taken to clean the more immediate community environment, while the other perception was responsibility for the broader community environment. Regarding the broader community environment, a few child participants and a key informant referred to the need to take responsibility by picking up litter and playing a more significant role in the community:

CP2:   *"…sometimes we go to other places and we go and pick up papers."*

CP3:   *"They once took us to this wetland, not sure where it was, we helped clean the wetland, we picked up papers. All about having a safe environment."*

CP5:   *"So whenever I am passing and I see a paper, I just have to pick it just to make a difference of something…everywhere you go...you're also helping the community when you pick up…"*

KI2:   *"…with the girls, just to clean papers on the streets…we go out and clean…once we went to another park, then we are cleaning there too."*

With regard to the perception of responsibility for the immediate community environment, a child participant and a few key informants reported on the access they have to a safe and clean environment at Lerato House:

CP3:   *"I have a responsibility to look after the house…"*

CP6:   *"…coming to being safe, we have a security downstairs, he does know about this place, so he makes sure it is fine…our housemothers always checks our places, if we haven't cleaned properly, she will tell you…"*

KI3:   *"…by making sure that safety is provided for them by appointing a security guard for them to ensure that they are safe, and the students are always there to check in them if they here. The house mother is also there to ensure that the girls are safe."*

KI4:   *"We encourage girls to clean, because we believe that these girls they're growing up they need to know how to clean."*

KI6:   *"We teach them to take responsibility of the cleanness of the house. So, we teach them how to clean…"*

One key informant mentioned that Lerato House should be relocated to a better environment:

KI5*:*   *"…for now I can say it's safe, but I wish there can be another better environment. We are trying our best because we think for now it's safe but if there can be another better one to move to."*

All people have the right to clean water, as proposed by Goal 6 of the SDGs (United Nations, 2018:11,12). The findings emphasise that poor children or children living in rural areas bear the great burden of poorer living conditions and little access to services, such as water and sanitation (Hall et al., 2018:145). Likewise, Omarova, Tussupova, Hjorth, Kalishev and Dosmagambetova (2019:1) remark that residents of rural areas are in most cases under more strain than people living in urbanised environments.

To live in a safe and clean environment is one dimension of children's rights and providing a safe environment is crucial to a child's development and happiness (UNICEF, 2014:12, 13). However, as mentioned in the findings, there is also a responsibility given to the girls to take care of the immediate and broader community. Girls are encouraged to pick up litter in the broader community because littering, whether on a small or large scale, can have detrimental effects on the environment for years to come (Revermann, [sa]). Thus, picking up litter is admirable behaviour and developing self-motivation will increase environmentally responsible behaviour (Furusa, 2015:4).

Theme 3: Participation of children in the programme

Both the key informant participants and the child participants indicated that children participate in the planning and implementation of the programme. There are factors that are linked to the children's involvement, such as the type of activity taking place, especially if it is in the interests of the children, their emotions relating to being listened to or not, as well as identifying and using the girls' talents in order to improve involvement in the implementation of the programme. The findings will be discussed in the two sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 3.1.: Involvement of children in planning of activities

The findings revealed that children are involved in the planning of activities, especially the planning of the holiday programme. Children are asked to provide suggestions in the planning phase, together with the guidance of the key informants. The following findings elaborate on the children's and key informants' involvement and participation in planning.

> KI1: *"…if it is a school holiday and then we ask them what they want to do during the school holiday and then, they tell us, no, we want to do this. Because, before it was not like that…tomorrow we are going to the zoo and that is final. You* [the child] *don't have a say, you can't say anything."*

> KI3: *"…and then we sat down and asked them what programmes they want to do, so let us plan our holiday programme. Then they came up with programmes and then we did 1,2,3,4 and then okay. They said they enjoyed the swimming more and they don't want to be in the house most of the time, because holiday they want to go out. So, when we plan the second holiday programme, we plan programmes that are mostly outdoors so that we go out, 'cause that is what they wanted."*

> KI4: *"So we said yes we can have our own* [holiday programme], *so we sat down and planned our holiday programme with the kids."*

> CP6: *"I'll give an example of a holiday programme, right? They allow us to give suggestions, for example, if you are not happy with the programme that they do, they give us a platform to actually come up with suggestions."*

Before, the children were told to attend a holiday programme arranged by another organisation. The children did not actively participate in the planning of this holiday programmed and mentioned that they did not have fun.

> CP4: *"I don't like the holiday programme that we're going to. It is boring. They must not take us to that holiday programme, we must do our own...it was nice* [doing our own holiday programme]…[we] *did a lot of stuff."*

CP6:   *"I remember last year we had a problem, the previous holiday programme that the company actually came up with was not exactly really good for us, we didn't have fun…"*

The findings show that responses to the activities are more positive when children are asked to participate in the planning of them:

CP2:   *"It makes me special, and it makes me see that actually I mean something…"*

CP3:   *"I feel like I matter. Like I'm also there for a reason."*

However, not all the children felt equally engaged important because they feel they are not listened to.

CP1:   *"Uh, so next time, I won't give them advice then…like, eish, kind of mad."*

CP5:   *"It just make you feel like no one can hear you, you're in the corner alone."*

In addition to the holiday programme, there are group work sessions or meetings the girls attend and participate in. During these activities, children are given the responsibility to design the course of the meeting through planning beforehand what items should be added to the agenda for discussion.

CP3:   *"…we bring in agenda points."*

KI2:   *"We tell them that they must come with agenda points and one of them must write the minutes."*

KI4:   *"Before you know, they finish to plan the whole thing….one of the girls take minutes, one of the girls will be the chairperson…"*

The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, approves the participation of children in matters and decisions affecting them as a fundamental right (Sibanda, 2013:12). Children should be able to be actively involved in decision-making opportunities in their communities and should be able to express their opinions on and participate in matters that affect them (Heimer & Palme, 2016:4).

O'Kane (2013:10, 11) mentions three levels of participation: (1) consultative participation, where children are primarily consulted to inform adults on better decision making; (2) collaborative participation, where there is a greater partnership between adults and children with the key focus to work on the development of programmes or

projects; and (3) child-led participation where children have the chance to advocate for themselves. According to the findings, Lerato House follows a collaborative participation style where children are involved in the planning of the activities.

Sub-theme 3.2.: Involvement of children in the implementation of the programme

Lerato House is primarily a temporary safe care facility which provides different services to vulnerable girls. Thus, the findings show that Lerato House, as a programme, has sub-activities that are implemented to assist with a healthy development of the well-being of the girls. Moreover, the findings indicated that emphasis is placed on the unique talents of the girls as a way to involve them in the implementation of various programmes or activities.

CP1: *"On August we have feast of the clowns…It's like a place where we perform things...almost like a talent.*"

CP5: *"…we were singing and dancing at Lerato House birthday and then on the ninth* [Women's Day], *me and Jane* [pseudonym], *we're going to talk about how Lerato House, about Lerato House and then we also dance and sing."*

CP6: *"So usually they have events for their work things, so they ask me to do cards for them, for visitors that are coming to the company or something, because they know I'm creative…"*

KI1: *"Yes, they do. Implementing the activities, they do, because when they are planning, they do implement by doing all those things.*

KI2: "*So, they have talents and different talents…If you are in the kitchen cooking, she* [the child] *will come and help you."*

Involving children in the implementation of a programme shows good practice, as it enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the programme (Child Protection Unit, 2003:2). Jamieson, Bray, Viviers, Lake, Pendlebury and Smith (2011:19) point out that the participation of children in the implementation of any programme or activity is essential. Freeman, Raffan and Warwick (2010:4) highlight using talents and gifts to enhance the involvement of children.

Theme 4: Contextualising the child concept and child agency

The findings indicated that there are different perceptions between the key informant participants and the child participants when it comes to understanding the child concept and child agency. For key informants, the child concept is influenced by the childrens' vulnerability and need for protection on the one hand, and on the other hand their age and level of maturity. Child participants put more emphasis on children having agency and needs to be able to freely express themselves and be listened to. Both protection and agency are evident in the data as will be discussed in the next two sub-themes.

Sub-theme 4.1.: A child is vulnerable and in need of protection

All the key informant participants expressed their view that children are vulnerable and need to be protected. The key informants also viewed themselves as playing crucial roles in the child protection sphere.

KI2: *"Yeah, I see them as vulnerable and they need to be protected…we are all vulnerable, so, we all need help. They are vulnerable and need to be protected in all ways."*

KI3: *"So, I feel that they are still vulnerable…they can't protect themselves."*

KI4: *"…'cause a child is a vulnerable person, and who should be protected..."*

KI5: *"…sometimes you think they are vulnerable, because sometimes they cannot speak for themselves…they need us to protect them…"*

KI6: *"…they are vulnerable to anything…"*

Two participants pointed out that age and level of maturity are further indicators of how a child Is viewed.

KI4: *"Depending on their age, their maturity is different."*

KI5: *"…depends on how they mature in their mind…"*

Reasons for the child participants' vulnerability were attributed to the harsh situations that they are exposed to.

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KI1:   *"It depends on, you know, the circumstances where the child is. It can be that it can lead to vulnerability…"*

KI3:   *"When a child is being exposed to a situation that is harmful to them or a situation that is not safe…"*

From a vulnerability perspective, it implies that adults need to play the roles of mentor and teacher to guide children through life.

KI3:   *"…children are developing beings…they still need to be taught what is right and what is wrong and what should be done and what should not be done."*

KI5:   *"I can't say they can* [make] *meaningful choices, because some need to mentor in order to make the meaningful choice."*

KI6:   *"So that is why we as parents, we need to always make sure and to teach them…"*

Findings resonate with the view of Quennerstedt (2010:621), who states that children need to be protected against harmful practices, such as sexual exploitation and emotional, physical and psychological abuse, as it is their right. Jekielek, Moore, Hair and Scarupa (2002:1) observe that children, especially youth who are at risk and who come from poor and struggling backgrounds, need caring adults who can offer support and guidance. However, UNICEF ([sa]) on "What is the Convention on the Rights of a Child?", avers that children should not be viewed as passive and vulnerable beings who do not have the ability to make meaningful choices. When children are only protected with no ability to partake in matters affecting their lives, they are left to be more vulnerable and without a voice (Heimer et al., 2017:26). Liljekvist (2018:13, 30) argues that labelling children as vulnerable human beings because of their need for protection can become a defining characteristic under a welfare model that restricts a child's capacity to exercise his or her rights.

Sub-theme 4.2.: Children need protection and have agency

All the child participants indicated that a child is a person who needs protection, but who also has opinions that adults should listen to and respect. The findings indicate that children's understanding of agency includes their ability to make choices.

CP2: *"…we do need protection, but sometimes, we've got something to tell them, so it's also right that they listen to us."*

CP3: *"…we have opinions, like we can give them our opinions, and they should listen to us and we have a right to be protected, safe from harm."*

CP6: *"…a child needs protection, but they need to express themselves…"*

Adults should not make decisions for and about children's career choices, as mentioned by child participants.

CP3: *"You'll find a parent will say, you are going to be a doctor, and maybe you are academically fine, you can do it, but then you won't feel comfortable with that thing."*

CP5: *"…let's say some parents like I want to be a tennis player, then they choose for me to be a nurse, I should also tell them that if they choose for me something that my passion is not into, they won't get the results that they think they will get…"*

On the other hand, findings indicate that children at Lerato House do get some choices on activities such as playing:

CP5: *"…they will actually* [give] *you a choice if you want to play or you don't want to then you just choose for yourself."*

CP 3 acknowledged the help she receives from Lerato House in terms of involving others to build confidence as a role in developing agency.

CP3: *"They bring motivational speakers here to tell us we are valuable, we can do it, and I think it is helping me a lot."*

Children have the right to be protected, as founded in the UNCRC (1989). It is important to note that providing opportunities for children to express their opinions does not mean that a child has decision-making rights or power solely based on the child's own discretion, as discussed by Heimer and Palme (2016:4). It rather means that children should be able to be enthusiastically involved in decision-making

opportunities within their community and permitted to express their opinions on matters that concern them.

Agency refers to a human being's ability to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence her or his life today (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015). To develop agency, children must be presented with opportunities to make choices and express their views (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015).

Theme 5: Factors influencing child recognition and respect

Findings indicate factors that contribute to child recognition and respect, as well as factors showing non-recognition and disrespect. Furthermore, findings showed the importance of having informed staff in relation to the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Lerato House, as well as in receiving feedback from children on the programme.

The two sub-themes with their respective categories will be discussed below.

Sub-theme 5.1.: Factors contributing to showing recognition and respect

UNICEF (2011:23) emphasises the importance of showing recognition and respect to children, especially of their opinions and ideas. Recognition can be seen as an essential human need (Thomas & Loxley, 2007:120). The key informants had different views on what factors make it possible to show recognition and respect towards the young girls. Their views are presented below in two categories: (1) willing and trained staff and (2) receiving feedback from children on the programme.

5.1.1.: Willing and trained staff to work with children

The willingness of staff to work with the children and the importance of trained staff were crucial for the key informants to show recognition and respect towards the children in relation to their participation, the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

> KI1: *"…we went through the training…about the child participation and also during the child protection week, uh, they attend different workshops on their rights…. we don't give up on them…"*

> KI4: *"…it's the willingness of the staff…they have rights also as children so we are willing to listen…you really need to have training about kids…you have to have to be skilled of working with children."*

Some of the staff at Lerato House realise the importance of getting extra help through asking volunteers to assist with taking the children out on Saturdays to do window-shopping and to spend some time out of the apartment.

> KI2: *"…but now what we do is we have students that will take them out…the extra help…"*

Having trained staff contributes to ensuring respect towards children and securing a child-friendly environment (Steinitz, 2009:26). Steinitz (2009:19, 78) continues that, especially in care management programmes, staff training should particularly focus on communication with children, understanding their rights and child protection issues. The training of programme staff improves their capacity to work with children. The trained staff team can be made up of trained volunteers, employed staff or part-time social workers and psychologists, however, the willingness of staff and their expertise contributes significantly to how a programme is implemented (UNICEF, 2006:35). Training all staff means better outcomes for working with children (Tassoni, Smith, Boak, Butcher, Daly, Eldridge, Horne & Runciman, 2006:23).

5.1.2.: Receiving feedback from children on the programme

Receiving feedback from the children assists the key informants in showing recognition and respect towards the girls as it contributes to relevant planning and a better understanding of how they want things to be.

> KI3: *"If I don't get feedback from them, then I can't plan…it's their feedback and evaluations for how they want things next to be and what they really enjoy."*

A child participant mentioned the opportunity she receives to provide her opinion and present feedback on her experiences in Lerato House.

> CP3: *"They ask you, talk to you, how do you feel about this place."*

The findings are in line with the view of the National Institute for Health Research (2016:8), which states that children should be involved in the evaluation of programmes that they engage in. Involving children in evaluation and providing opportunities to receive feedback is one of the best ways to determine whether the programme they are involved in or the services rendered to them are making an impact (Participation Works, 2008). However, children should voice their concerns or present their feedback with respect (USAID, 2010:8) to show their commitment to participating constructively.

Sub-theme 5.2.: Factors contributing to showing non-recognition and disrespect

The findings show the challenges that the key informants and children face, and which contribute to showing non-recognition and disrespect towards their peers and staff, and from the key informants to the children. These challenges include misbehaving and rebellious children and untrained staff who do not know how to work with children.

5.2.1.: Misbehaving and rebellious children

Both key informants and child participants articulated that the misbehaviour of children and/or rebellious children contributes to factors that show non-recognition and disrespect towards children.

> KI1: *"…an indecisive child, you know, makes it difficult…she was supposed to go to the psychologist, and she hide, and she was just hiding. I think if two or three times."*

> KI2: *"…they will go against our rules, then that makes it difficult."*

> KI5: *"…if they are kids who are disrespectful in a way, it can be challenging...wanting to beat a staff...in a rebellious way."*

> CP2: *"When other girls don't behave."*

> CP6: *"…but the girls sometimes don't cooperate, there are some girls who do but not all of them."*

Challenging behaviour of children makes it impossible to achieve goals and is harmful to the child and to the adults who work with these children; it adds to the adult experiencing feelings of inadequacy (Kaiser, 2014:7, 8, 14). It also adds to staff experiencing deeper levels of stress, self-doubt and negative thoughts regarding the children (Rogers, 2009:7). Unfortunately, the continuous and increasing emotional and behavioural challenges of children, coupled with violent actions directed at staff members, contribute to the level of difficulty that staff experience, which could lead to higher staff turn-over (Colton & Roberts, 2006:133). However, staff who work with children who have emotional or behavioural challenges should have professional training on how to provide therapeutic services and assistance to these children (UNICEF, 2006:35). This will be further discussed in 5.2.2. and sub-theme 6.4.

5.2.2.: Untrained staff who do not know how to work with children

Findings indicate that staff who do not know how to work with children are not trained in understanding the rights of children and how to speak to and behave towards children. Findings further indicated that if the staff do not understand children, it is usually due to a lack of knowledge of their rights and how to communicate with them.

> KI4: *"It's the staff who don't understand children…lack of knowledge….it's the staff they don't know children's rights…"*

> KI6: *"…I think most of the time we command."*

Child participants echoed the findings on communication, indicating that some of the staff shout at them.

> CP4: *"…we once told them, then they said we must stop complaining and stuff, so now if we have anything that they do to us…we just keep quiet, even the house mothers, we just keep it to ourselves… If I can say that the children are doing this they start shouting at us…"*

> CP6: *"…she's always shouting, she has a temper…"'*

The findings indicate that not all staff at Lerato House know the best possible ways to deal with children. Fice Youth (2010:9) emphasises that specific training should be provided to staff who work with children so that they will be better able to take care of their responsibilities. Such responsibilities include how children should be disciplined as USAID (2010:8) points out that children should not be disciplined in a way that can have a negative impact on their dignity.

Theme 6: Suggestions to recognise and respect children's agency through their participation

The child participants and key informants voiced various suggestions on how they think children's agency can be recognised and respected through their participation and implementation of the programme. Suggestions involved providing more psycho-social support as requested from the child participants, raising more awareness of children's rights, allowing sufficient time for children to provide their inputs, making sure that the staff working with the children are trained and receive debriefing and to increase the number of group meetings held per month. These sub-themes will be discussed in more detail below.

Sub-theme 6.1.: Provide children with more psycho-social support

Child participants expressed a need to receive additional psycho-social support:

> CP1: *"Sometimes they can help them solve their problems, help them and talk to them."*

> CP6: *"…it's just maybe the counselling needs to be continued…the social worker is supposed to be doing, because she's always so occupied with the work she cannot do it."*

Receiving psycho-social support is underpinned by child participants' wanting staff to believe and trust them if they speak:

> CP4: *"They should believe us and trust us if we say something."*

Psycho-social support is a process of assisting individuals, whether adults or children, to recover after experiencing hostile life events through working with the individual's feelings, thoughts and emotions and with the external environment and relationships of the person (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE], 2016:8; UNICEF, 2008:2). Providing psycho-social support to children will likely increase their overall well-being, allowing for improved respect between children and carers (UNICEF, 2008:3). UNICEF (2006:55) mentions that training staff in psycho-social support is key for adults working with children.

Sub-theme 6.2.: Allow time for children to provide their inputs

Findings showed that the key informants understand that children need time to provide their inputs and opinions.

> KI4: *"sometimes we are in a hurry, we just come up with a plan. We sit as staff; we do the planning and we don't involve the children."*

> KI6: *"…we should also give them like more maybe more time…we must always consider that thing of giving them their space so that they can also give their inputs…they must also bring up their opinions."*

Insights into providing children with opportunities to participant corroborate with literature. USAID (2010:9) reports that staff or guardians of children should learn how to better listen to children and allow time for their considerations. The Children's Act 38 of 2005, as amended, provides for children's views and opinions to be heard and

considered by means of empowering them to participate in topics and events affecting their lives (Viviers & Lombard, 2012:10). Also, children have the right to be listened to and to be respected in terms of decisions that can have a major impact on their lives (Quennerstedt, 2010:621; Heimer & Palme, 2016:4).

Sub-theme 6.3.: Staff and volunteer training and debriefing

Key informants provided insights into what is required to make sure the children are taken good care of, such as working in line with the Children's Act and children's rights, as well as the need that key informants have to undergo debriefing sessions.

> KI1: *"…maybe also we need debriefing, 'cause we hardly debrief, we hardly go through those debriefing sessions…I think if we can also work in line with the Children's Act and follow it the way it is, somewhere somehow it will make a difference to make the lives of the children."*

> KI4: *"…the staff to continuously think about the rights of the children…in Africa, we must have a long way to go in terms of children's rights, children's participation…"*

While volunteers at Lerato House are expected to support the staff, they often become a burden when they do not want to participate and assist with the work that needs to be done.

> KI3: *"So now when we get different types of volunteers, it becomes a burden again when other groups don't want to participate, they don't want to help uh, plan activities, they just want to be sitting around."*

The findings indicate that key informants have insight on where to get guidance when it comes to working with children; they know to refer to the Children's Act and to be cognisant of children's rights. Training is vital for successful job performance (Ntjana, 2014:24). As mentioned earlier, the trained staff team can be made up of trained volunteers and employed staff (UNICEF, 2006:35); being trained will result in better outcomes when working with children (Tassoni et al., 2006:23).

Debriefing entails "sessions where individuals get the opportunity to work through experiences and any aftermath they could have experienced, and where they have

their questions answered and misconceptions removed" (McBurney, 2001 in Strydom, 2011:122). As indicated by a key informant, debriefing is necessary for the staff so that they will be better able to recognise and respect children's agency. For Rogers (2009:9), working with children who are not one's own biological children can be extremely stressful; having colleagues or other professionals to talk too can ease the burden as opposed to carrying the weight by oneself.

Sub-theme 6.4.: Increase group meetings with children

Findings indicate that the children can be recognised and respected through having meetings with them.

CP3:   *"Meetings, because we can usually sit together and discuss things…and it does make a change"*

CP6:   *"I feel they should continue…we used to have these programmes where we have these groups – Tuesday groups – which were happening, but I don't know, they're not happening recently now…and I feel it should be happening more often, maybe we should start talking to them again because we did have these groups and they were really nice."*

The value of children attending meetings, as highlighted in the findings, is supported by Participation Works (2008:1), which states that when children attend meetings, it results in an empowering experience, especially if their input is valued and respected. Usually in these meetings, discussions revolve around what is happening in the life of the child and what is needed to ensure a successful future for them (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003:14). Being involved is what is most important to them (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2003:15). Meetings can have a positive effect on children, especially if they are involved in the planning and are given some responsibilities during the meetings (McLeod, 2008:177). The findings clearly indicated that the child participants have a need to participate in group meetings and for these meetings to continue.

3.10 Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research methodology, the ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study. Several themes were discussed, which included factors such as children's involvement and participation in the various phases of a programme/intervention, different perspectives on the understanding of the child concept, vulnerability and protection and suggestions on how to recognise and respect children's agency in the design, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the programme/intervention

CHAPTER FOUR: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the research study. It commences with discussing the manner in which the research goal and objectives of the study were met. The next section will present and discuss the key findings of the study, followed by the conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, recommendations will be made based on the findings of the study.

4.2. Goal and objectives of the study

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency was recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The goal of the study was achieved through the following objectives:

Objective 1:
- To conceptualise and contextualised poverty and environmental risks of children within a human rights-based framework.

This objective was achieved in Chapter Two (see sub-section 2.2), where poverty is described as being intertwined with environmental risks (Bhaiseni, 2017:25). As in the case of poverty, environmental risks violate human rights. The researcher further explained that the human rights-based framework is a "conceptual framework for facilitating sustainable human development outcomes embedded in international human rights standards and intended to promote and protect human rights" (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1). Adjacent to the human rights-based framework is the developmental child rights approach, which is a conceptual framework that was developed to assist professionals and families in changing their views, practices and perspectives towards children as being right-holders, with a developmental, bottom-up approach that builds on children's developmental processes and invests in children's own assets (IICRD, 2007:5). Poverty is often linked to a lack of household income; however, as was

mentioned by Green (2012:6) in sub-section 2.4, poverty cannot only be viewed as a lack of financial resources. Poverty is also a lack of adequate and quality education, social and physical exclusion, feelings of powerlessness, no involvement in participation opportunities regarding matters which affect them (children), and a lack of access to proper healthcare and safe environments, which is an infringement on basic human rights. Sub-section 2.1 indicated that children's rights are threatened by external factors such as environmental risks. In Chapter Three (see theme 2.3), participants stated the importance of taking responsibility for their immediate environment, such as making sure that Lerato House remains clean and tidy, as well as taking responsibility to clean environments further away from Lerato House, such as wetlands or parks. These activities stimulated the children's awareness on environmental matters.

Objective 2:
- To explore and describe the goal and intended outcomes of programmes/interventions to reduce children's poverty and environmental risks.

This objective was addressed in Chapter Two (see sub-section 2.7) where a few anti-poverty interventions towards the alleviation of poverty were discussed. Children's voices and participation are crucial in the development of interventions, policies or programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks; however, as mentioned by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2011:34), their voices are still too underrepresented. Sub-section 2.7.1 to 2.7.6 briefly provide literature on the goals and outcomes of these interventions and conclude with the role of social workers to ensure the participation of children in policy-making and anti-poverty interventions to address inequality and injustices in a sustainable manner (Lombard, 2014:46). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 appeals for the inclusion of the participation of children in matters and decisions that affect them (Sibanda, 2013:12). In addition to this, Chapter Three (see theme 3.1) provided insights into the participants' positive feelings when they are granted permission to participate in matters that affect them and, in contrast, the effect it has on the children when they do not feel equally engaged.

Objective 3:
- To explore and describe how children were involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

The objective was achieved in Chapter 3 where participants provided practical examples of their understanding and involvement in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes at Lerato House. The two sub-themes (sub-theme 3.1 and 3.2) included their involvement in the planning of activities, as well as their involvement in the implementation of the programme. The participants explained their participation in planning various activities, such as the Lerato House holiday programme, but also elaborated on a previous holiday programme that they needed to attend, where they played no role in the planning of the activities. Chapter Two (sub-section 2.2 and 2.5) refers to Skovdal and Daniel (2012:155) and UNICEF ([sa]) on "What is the Convention on the Rights of a Child?", who clearly indicate that children should not merely be seen as passive recipients of services without the ability to make meaningful choices. They should be provided with opportunities to make meaningful choices. Sub-theme 3.1 revealed that children also participate in the planning of group meetings, where responsibility is given to them to develop the agenda and course of the meeting. Sub-theme 3.2 elaborated on involving the children in the implementation of the programme by using their unique talents and gifts. Freeman, Raffan and Warwick (2010:4) use the notion of using the talents and gifts of children to enhance their involvement in programmes. Further, the findings from sub-theme 5.1.2 explained the importance of receiving feedback and evaluation from the children to enable better preparation on how the children want things to be. No specific views on conceptualisation and monitoring of the programme were reflected in the findings. The literature study in Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.1) explained the importance of children's involvement in programmes. Participation of children in poverty reduction and sustainable livelihood programmes will eventually broaden their human capital as they bring forth their own contributions and realise their responsibilities (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200, 201). Children have agency and should be included in decision-making when it comes to programme development with the goal of reducing poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods, and mitigating environmental risks for the sustainable development of their communities.

Objective 4:

- To explore and describe what the factors were that influenced the recognition and respect/non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

The objective was achieved in Chapter Three. Participants provided different factors that influenced the recognition and respect/non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions. Findings in sub-theme 5.1.1 were indicative of the importance of having willing and trained staff when working with children as an enabling factor in showing respect and recognition. Steinitz (2009:26) confirms the importance of having trained staff in programmes to ensure the necessary respect towards children and secure a child-friendly environment. Findings from sub-theme 5.1.2 indicated that the key informants valued receiving feedback from the children as it helped them to better show respect and recognition towards the girls. The feedback assisted the key informants to do better and more proper planning. Sub-theme 5.2 provided insights on the factors which contribute to the disrespect and non-recognition of children's agency. As per sub-theme 5.2.1, the participants revealed their challenges with misbehaving and rebellious children and in sub-theme 5.2.1, the issue of untrained staff who do not know how to work with children was uncovered. The importance of showing recognition and respect to children is emphasised, especially of their opinions and ideas (UNICEF, 2011:23), but also that the challenging behaviour of children adds to staff experiencing deeper levels of stress, self-doubt and having negative thoughts regarding the children (Rogers, 2009:7), which contribute to disrespecting and not recognising the children. The objective was further discussed from a literature perspective in Chapter Two (see sub-section 2.2), where Uvin (2010:164) indicated the importance of respecting children in their participation in economic, social, cultural, and political activities.

Objective 5:

- To make recommendations on how children's agency can be recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

Objective 5 is discussed in this chapter in section 4.4 below. The objective was informed by the suggestions the participants provided in Chapter Three (see sub-themes 6.1 to 6.4) on factors that influence child recognition and respect.

4.3.   Key findings of the study and conclusions

The key findings and conclusions drawn from the findings will be discussed in this section.

- Findings indicate that poor family support and an inability to sustain the family financially are contributing factors to influencing child poverty and environmental risks. The participants pointed out that they had been sexually and physically abused by family members, which is why a social worker, or the police placed them in Lerato House as a temporary safe care option. The children also indicated that they are placed in Lerato House due to parents not having a job or not being able to provide financially, or who cannot ensure that their children have access to proper education.

- ➢ It can be concluded that the children placed in Lerato House have in most instances experienced trauma. They therefore need psycho-social support to increase their overall wellbeing, allowing for improved respect between children and carers (UNICEF, 2008:3). In response to the needs of the children, the programme at Lerato House provide access to quality education, meaning attending school, but also training in life skills, financial literacy and stimulating thoughts on future graduate and employment opportunities.

- Involving children in the planning phase of a programme, as well as allowing them to play a role in implementation, shows how vital participation is, as presented in the findings. Participants indicated that they received opportunities to provide input when planning had to be done on specific interventions and how it makes them feel when their voices are heard. They also pointed out the lack of interest when activities are planned without their participation, and how that made them feel. Additionally, findings revealed that children's talents are used as a means to encourage their involvement in implementing various interventions.

- ➢ The conclusion is that participation is regarded as important at Lerato House, but mostly in the design and implementation phases. Lack of participation in the conceptualisation phase or little participation in the monitoring and evaluation phase indicate that the children do not actively participate in influencing the programme in terms of what could be redesigned or added to it. By joining only in the designing

phase, it means that the idea or project is provided to them and they only participate in planning and implementing the programme or project. Although this level of participation creates some ownership of the activities by the children, it does not necessarily mean full commitment as they did not have the opportunity to participate in conceptualising the programme or project, which in principle would have also included a monitoring and evaluation plan. The use of children's talents in all phases of a programme or intervention can significantly increase their confidence and agency, as these talents already come naturally to them.

- Findings revealed that there is a mutual understanding between the key informants and the child participants that children need protection and that protecting them is their right. However, there was a disagreement between the two parties in terms of vulnerability and agency. The key informants saw children as primarily vulnerable and unable to speak for themselves and make meaningful choices without the support and mentorship of adults. The findings included placing emphasis on the child's maturity and age. The child participants explained that they should be given more opportunities to be listened to, as they have valuable contributions to make and have opinions.

➢ In conclusion, there is still little agreement between children and adults about children's agency or their ability to make meaningful choices. Adults continue to view children, in some instances, as passive recipients of services, with little agency and who play no active role in shaping their own future. Children should not be seen as passive recipients of services but as having the capacity to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their life today and in the future (Lady Gowrie Child Centre Inc., 2015; Skovdal & Daniel, 2012:155). This also includes having a broader representation of children's voices in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

- The findings presented factors that contribute to showing recognition and respect of children's agency in participating in programmes that affect them. The two main factors illustrating respect, according to the participants, included the importance of having staff who are trained and have the necessary skills in working with children, as well as having the required knowledge on, for example, the Children's Act and children's rights. Another factor that showed recognition and respect is allowing children to provide their input on programmes. It contributed in enlightening the

staff on what the children need to make more informed decisions in matters that concern them. In addition, the findings also revealed that when staff are not trained in working with children, it contributes to showing non-recognition and disrespect in ways such as shouting at the children and being commanding. The staff might lack knowledge due to not receiving training in children's rights. On the other hand, rebellious children made it difficult for the staff to show recognition and respect, as their behaviour is interpreted as not showing respect to the adults in the programme.

➢ It can be concluded that staff, volunteers or any individual that works with children need to be adequately trained to ensure that children's agency is recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions. There are various training opportunities available in the childcare sphere but choosing the most applicable and constructive training should be first priority. On the other hand, children should be taught more on matters such as respect for others, self-respect, behavioural change, dignity, and life skills, such as financial literacy. It is not only a school's responsibility to educate children and facilitate their development, as the study highlights the importance of further interventions such as psycho-social support and group meetings as will be discussed next.

• The findings showed different ways in which children's agency can be recognised and respected when it comes to the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes at Lerato House. Suggestions involved the children asking for more psycho-social support, providing them enough time to give their input on the programme, making sure that the staff and/or volunteers working with the children are trained and receive debriefing, and increasing the number of group meetings held per month that include the staff and children.

➢ Showing recognition and respect involves taking into consideration the needs and requests from both the child participants and the key informants. Staff and/or volunteers need to be trained, but a key aspect is that they undergo debriefing to ensure that they receive the required assistance to better take care of the children, but also to ensure healthy wellbeing for themselves. Children need more psycho-social support and opportunities to be heard through the inputs they give to ensure a holistic approach to children's rights, including the right to survive, to be protected

from violence, to live in a safe and clean environment, to learn, and to have an equal opportunity to succeed (UNICEF, 2014:13).

4.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made by the researcher on how children's agency can be recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions that contribute to reducing poverty and environmental risks.

4.4.1. Training of staff and volunteers

Findings from the empirical study indicated that there is a lack of training of staff and volunteers in working with children. Training should include a more in-depth understanding of the child concept, children's rights, and legislation such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005. Training on children's rights should include aspects such as children's agency and participation strategies. In addition, programme/project management training will highly benefit the organisation in the required skills to ensure that the organisation as a whole keeps afloat with the demanding challenges faced in the 21st century, such as the 4th Industrial Revolution. Project management skills include designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and methods of evaluation.

The executive management team should be responsible for ensuring that training opportunities are in place. Training providers could include external companies in a specialised field, or internal professionals such as social workers or volunteers with specialised skills. A skills development facilitator (SDF) should develop a Workplace Skills Plan and Annual Training Report (WSP-ATR) to keep record of training that took place, as well as creating structures and processes that can run automatically to ensure a knowledgeable staff, which in the end is a huge gain for the organisation. However, to submit a WSP-ATR, the organisation needs to be registered with a Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), such as Education Training and Development Practices (ETDP), so that grants can be provided to assist with training costs. The Skills Development Levy Act sees to it that these grants are made available.

4.4.2. Preparing children for participation

The findings indicated that children are involved and participate in the planning and implementation of programmes and that in some instances, they are encouraged to provide feedback on the programme. However, there is little evidence in the findings that children are actively involved in the conceptualisation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the programme. Preparing children for participation in the conceptualisation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the programme should result in developing a sense of ownership, agency and responsibility within the child.

Outside of their obligation to ensure that the children attend school, Lerato House has the opportunity to strengthen the children's agency, once they have been placed in the programme, through psycho-social support and additional training and education. Findings indicated that children have a need to receive psycho-social support. The social worker can play a vital role in providing these services; however, social workers usually have heavy workloads. It is recommended that one or more final-year social work students be placed at Lerato House to assist the social worker with psycho-social support and other services. Student social workers can develop activities for a life skills training manual for the social worker that she can use in her sessions with the children, such as conflict resolution and management skills, emotional intelligence, and appropriate behaviour. Children, on the other hand, should be given responsibilities within these sessions to complete in their own time prior to attending a psycho-social support session. It is essential for the social worker who has consistent responsibilities at Lerato House to deal with these girls' psycho-social wellbeing so that trust can be formed through relationship building.

4.4.3. Support from and involvement in the community

The findings indicated that Lerato House has access to volunteers and various volunteering opportunities. These different support structures should be used in a manner that optimally benefits Lerato House and the children, but also the community through engaging the children in community activities.

The findings pointed out that the children participate in picking up litter in their immediate and broader surroundings. Creating awareness for a clean and healthy environment should be an ongoing activity to reduce environmental risks for the

children while promoting environmental justice. Furthermore, Lerato House can work with volunteers and, in addition, partner with other organisations that do outreach work, so that the children can join their excursions to communities where they can contribute and, in doing so, learn to become responsible citizens.

4.4.4. Develop communication platforms

Group meetings, as pointed out in the findings, were seen as an important activity that the children would like to participate in more regularly. Weekly group meetings should be increased. In these group meetings, children should be given the responsibility to develop the ground rules for the meeting, but also the house rules on what is acceptable and what is not. This might change on a monthly basis. If these rules are developed and enforced by the children and the house mothers, there should be a higher compliance rate. The children should also provide their views on what the consequences should be if they do not comply with the rules. Children should be taught to keep each other accountable and responsible regarding the choices they have made, for example, developing an accountability chart where children can evaluate each other and give feedback at these weekly group meetings.

Another ad-hoc opportunity can include the allocation of special event days where the children have the responsibility of designing and planning activities and leading the group meeting in terms of Lerato Houses' programmes or interventions. Even though the findings stipulate that children have responsibilities in terms of certain meetings where they take minutes and set-up the agenda, these additional events will give them the opportunity to raise their voices on matters affecting them and to make recommendations where they accept responsibility for implementation and, in doing so, further develop their sense of agency. The challenge to the children should be to come up with suitable solutions to problems they experience, or services and activities that they would like to see in place. Their efforts should be supported in obtaining the resources they need to achieve their goals. Resources could include finances, but also other assets and capital such as human capital resources, physical and natural capital. Teaching responsibility at a young age is pivotal for the children to grow into confident adults and responsible citizens.

4.4.5. Debriefing opportunities for staff and volunteers

The study highlighted a lack of support amongst the staff or volunteers at Lerato House. Staff and volunteers need to undergo debriefing sessions at times. Debriefing is essential to remain focused and to recognise and respect children's agency. It is recommended that all staff and volunteers undergo debriefing sessions at least once a month and that the professional providing these services be independent and thus preferably not closely related to the children or staff at Lerato House. This provides the necessary security to staff and volunteers to develop a trusting relationship with the facilitator, thus allowing them to experience debriefing as essential and valuable. In the case of there being no budget for an external facilitator, it is suggested that a professional volunteer with the required skills is sought to provide the debriefing services. Debriefing is crucial to ease the burden and weight of working with children who have experienced trauma. It also assists in removing misconceptions about children's responsibilities so that better-informed decisions can be made.

4.4.6. Further Research

It is recommended that Lerato House does a pilot project with an existing programme or a newly selected programme by the girls to explore their participation and agency in all phases – that is, the design, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the programme/intervention.

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APPENDIX A

Research Ethics Committee

19 July 2019

Dear Mrs S Crouse

Project Title:	Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation
Researcher:	Mrs S Crouse
Supervisor:	Prof A Lombard
Department:	Social Work and Criminology
Reference number:	29063991 (HUM010/0619)
Degree:	Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 19 July 2019. 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.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

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

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Booyens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Soer: Prof E Taljard: Prof V Thebe: Ms B Tsebe: Ms D Mokalapa

TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

Working with Churches and Communities for Urban Transformation

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP AND RESOURCES FOR:

WOMEN & GIRLS IN CRISIS

CHILD PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

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TINUS NIENABER
(CHAIRPERSON)
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30 May 2019

For attention: Prof. A Lombard

Dear Prof Lombard,

RE: PERMISSION TO DO RESEARCH AT TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION – SIMONE CROUSE
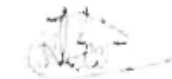
I am writing this letter to confirm that Simone Crouse will be permitted to do research at Lerato House, under the auspices of Tshwane Leadership Foundation, in line with her studies for a Master's degree in Social Work.

She will do five semi-structured interviews with key informants (including key staff, volunteers), and five semi-structured interviews with young girls residing at Lerato House.

She has to ensure that she has informed all participants clearly about the expectations, the process, and how the results will be shared with them.

We have no objection to her engagement with Lerato House, and wish her all the best in her studies.

Best wishes,

Wilna de Beer
CEO: Tshwane Leadership Foundation
072 759 4797

We see healthy and vibrant communities flourishing in God's presence.

APPENDIX C

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Key informants

Goal of the study: The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the case-study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

Participant number: KI …..

Biographical information
Male: ☐   Female: ☐
How long have you been with the organisation? ……. years
How long have you been involved in the programmes/interventions?
…….years……. months
In what age category do you fall?

20-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	36-40 years	41-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	56+ years

In what phase of the programmes/interventions are you involved? (Tick all applicable.)

Planning / conceptualisation	Design of content	Implementation	Monitoring	Evaluation

Questions:

1. What is the goal and the intended outcomes of the programme/intervention for the children?

2. How do the children get involved in the programme?

   ➢ What choices do the children have with regard to staying or leaving the programme/intervention if they so which?

3. To what extent does the programme/intervention help children to ease the burden of poverty and possible environmental risks (such as pollution; no access to clean water, poor sanitation and violence).

4. In what way does the programme/intervention promote the children's access and rights to
   • Education

- Health care
- Clean water,
- Sanitation, and
- A safe and clean environment?

5. How would you describe the children's participation in the programme/intervention?

   ➢ Do they participate out of their own initiative or only if they are requested, or told to participate?

6. Do you think children have a right to participate and make decisions on the programme/intervention that affect them?

   ➢ If so, are the children aware of their right to participate and influence decisions on the programme/intervention and why do you say so?

7. How do you see and approach the 'child' concept?

   ➢ As a person who is vulnerable and who should be protected.

   ➢ As a person who has the ability to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence her or his life today and in the future [agency].

   ➢ As a person who needs protection and who have agency.

8. To what extent would you say the children in your programme/intervention have agency if you look at their participation and involvement in decisions that affect them? The involvement refers to any one or more phases of the programme/intervention that is, planning/ conceptualisation of (new) ideas, the design of the content of the programme, the format and implementation of the programme/intervention, and the monitoring and evaluation of the programme/intervention.

9. Are children asked to give their views on the programme/intervention and if, in what way are these views considered and respected, or not?

10. Could you share any example where children have made inputs to the programme/intervention which were considered and respected, or not, in any of the phases of the programme/intervention [planning/ conceptualisation, the design, the implementation, the monitoring and evaluation].

11. What factors make it possible or difficult to recognise and respect children's contributions and decisions (agency) in relation to the planning/ conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme/intervention intended to reduce their poverty and environmental risks?

12. What in your view must change to recognise and respect children's contributions, decisions (agency) and participation in the respective phases [planning/ conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation] of the programme/intervention to reduce poverty and environmental risks?

13. Do you have any further comments that you would like to share on the topic that may benefit my study?

Thank you for participating in the study.

APPENDIX D

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Child participants

Goal of the study: The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the case-study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation. [To determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and dangers in the environment.]

Participant number: CP …..

Biographical information
Male: ☐   Female: ☐
How old are you? …………………..
Are you in school? Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes, what grade are you in? …………..
If   no,   what   are   you   currently   doing?
……………………………………………………………………..
How long have you been involved in the programme/intervention? …….years……. months

Questions:

1.   Can you tell me what the programme/intervention is all about and what it means to you?

2.   How did you get involved in the programme/intervention?

> ➢ Could you decide for yourself whether you wanted to join and do you have a choice to stay in the programme or not?

3.   How does the programme/intervention help you to deal with problems in your life? [If vague, prompt what kind of problems they have in relation to poverty and environment risks such as pollution; no access to clean water, poor sanitation and violence).

4.   How does this programme/intervention help you with

- Your school work?
- Taking better care of your health?
- Learning about clean water?
- How to have a safe and clean environment?

5. Tell me about your participation in the programme/intervention. How do you participate, and what are the things you do?

6. What children's rights do you think the programme/intervention protect?

> How does the programme/intervention respect your right to participate and have a say in what the programme/intervention should look like and do for you?

7. What is your experience of how adults in the programme/intervention see a child?

> A child is a person who is helpless and must be protected. Adults know best what a child needs and should take decisions for her/him.

> A child is a person who have ideas on how to approach and resolve society's problems such as poverty and unsafe and unhealthy environments. A child needs an opportunity to choose and decide what she/he wants and what is best for her-/ himself now and in the future. A child wants to be recognised and respected as a person who can speak for her-/himself and make decisions about things that involve them. [We call this agency.]

> A child is a person who needs protection but who also have opinions that adults should listen to and respect. [Agency]

8. What of the programme/intervention do you think work well for the children, or do not work well for them, and why do you say so?

9. Have you ever been asked to give your ideas on any aspect of the programme/intervention – e.g. what the programme should include and do for you; or what you like or don't like about the programme?

> If so, in what way did you feel these ideas were heard and taken seriously by adults?

10. Do you have any example(s) where you had the opportunity to share your ideas on any aspect of the programme/intervention and your contribution was heard and considered / or not heard and considered?

> How does it make you feel if adults listen to your ideas and take them seriously?
> How does it make you feel if adults do not listen to your ideas or not take them seriously?

11. What are the factors (things) that make it possible or difficult for you to participate in the programme/intervention in a way that you feel you, and your contributions are important and appreciated?

12. What can the organisation do to involve children more in the planning and decisions on the programme/intervention so that it can contribute to a better life for you?

> What should the programme focus more on to reduce children's poverty and make the environment cleaner and safer for them?

13. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me on how children can contribute to the programme/intervention?

APPENDIX E

04/06/2019

Researcher: Simone Crouse
Tel: 082 941 7233
E-mail: simonecrouse14@gmail.com

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Simone Crouse. I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria in the programme MSW Social Development and Policy. I am doing a study to determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and environmental risk. In this study, I would like to talk to your child to hear how they see their involvement and participation in the programme to ensure that they benefit as intended by the programme. Your child will have the opportunity to say whether he/she wants to participate in the study, and whatever the decision it will be respected. If your child is willing to participate, he/she will sign an assent form that contains the following information.

Title of the study
Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation

Goal of the study
To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in the Case Study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

What will happen in the study?
If you give permission for your child to join the study, I will talk to him/her one-on-one, asking questions in relation to the goal of the study, that is; how they see their involvement and participation recognised in shaping the programme so that they can benefit from it to reduce their poverty and environmental risks. Your child will be one of five children in the programme that I will be interviewing. The discussion should be between 45 and 60 minutes. With the child's permission, I will be voice recording the conversation so that I do not miss any important information that he/she shares. The interview will take place at Lerato House on a date and time agreed with the organisation.

Risks and discomforts
There will be no risks or danger to your child to participate in the study. Your child will know that he/she will have the freedom to not answer any question if he/she does not wish to respond too. I will be available after the interview to talk to the child on his/her experience of the interview. If needed, I will refer the child to speak to the Director, Ms. W. de Beer of the organisation or to the center manager, Ms. E. Mashego of Lerato House.

Are there any benefits for joining the study?
Your child will not receive any money or gifts for his/her participation. The study is intended to recognise that children's views are important and that they should be listened at to ensure that programmes that are designed and implemented for them, serve their best interests.

Participants' rights
Even if you give permission for your child to participate in the study, he/she will still have the choice to indicate whether he/she wants to participate. If your child agrees to participate, he/she will sign an assent form to indicate that he/she fully understands that participation is voluntary, and what his/her rights are. If your child agrees to participate, but at any time during the interview, decide to withdraw, he/she will be welcome to do so without any consequences.

Confidentiality
The information that your child will share with me, will be treated confidentially. Nobody will be able to see which information was provided by which participant. I will use the information obtained from the study to write a research report for submission to the University of Pretoria and for academic journals. Your child's name, as in the case of all the other participants' names, will not be displayed in any of these documents. I will give participants an imaginary name to protect their identity. When the study is complete, I will submit all my research information to the University of Pretoria for safe keeping for 15 years where after it will be destroyed. If data is used again, it will be for research purposes.

Inquiries
If you have any questions or want to discuss any aspect of the research with me, you are welcome to call me on 0829417233 or send me an e-mail at: simonecrouse14@gmail.com.

CONSENT DECLARATION BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

I, _____, hereby give permission for my child,

_____ (write name of child) to participate in this study.

_____
Signature parent/guardian

_____
Date

_____
Signature researcher

_____
Date

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

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—— 1919 - 2019 ——

Department of Social Work
& Criminology

24/05/2019

Researcher: Simone Crouse
Tel: 082 941 7233
E-mail: simonecrouse14@gmail.com

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Participant,

My name is Simone. I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria in the programme MSW Social Development and Policy. I am doing a study to determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and environmental risk. Your participation in the study will assist me to understand the topic and achieve the goal of my study.

Title of the study: Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

Goal of the study: To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in the Case Study of Lerato House, Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

Procedures: The study will use one-on-one interviews to collect data from participants. Each interview is expected to take approximately one hour. The interviews will be tape recorded with your permission. The tape recordings will be transcribed for purposes of data analysis. Only the researcher and the study supervisor will have access to the tapes and transcripts which will be stored in a secure place by the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. If data is used again, it will be for research purposes.

Risks and discomforts: There are no known risks and discomforts that may be endured by participants in this study. The participants will be debriefed by me after the interview. If needed, they will be referred to the Director, Ms. W. de Beer of the organisation or to the center manager, Ms. E. Mashego of Lerato House to discuss any discomfort that may have developed during the interview.

Benefits: Participants will not receive any incentives for being involved in the study. The study will benefit the participants indirectly in that they will contribute to social work theory regarding social work and environmental justice.

Participants' rights: Participation in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any question that they do not wish to respond to.

Confidentiality and anonymity: Information collected in the study will be treated confidentially and the names of participants will not appear in the research report or the scientific journal in which the results will be published. Findings will not be presented in a way that could be directly linked to any specific participant.

Person to contact: If participants have questions or concerns relating to the study, they may contact the researcher at 082 941 7233 or email her at simonecrouse14@gmail.com

Declaration

I, …………………………………………….., understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being conducted.

_____   _____
Participant   Date

_____   _____
Researcher   Date

APPENDIX G

01/06/2019

ASSENT FORM: CHILDREN

Dear Participant

My name is Simone Crouse. I am a master's student at the University of Pretoria in the programme MSW Social Development and Policy. I am working with other students in a study to determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and dangers in the environment. We involve children in the study, and I chose to use your programme for my study. Please read carefully through this form because if you agree to join the study, you will have to say so in writing.

What is a research study?

A research study is a way to find out new information about something. Nobody can force you to participate in a research study if you do not want to. You therefore have a choice to participate in the study or not and if you choose not to participate, that is OK.

If you join the study what will then happen?

If you agree to participate in the study, I will talk to you for about 45 to 60 minutes at a place where you feel comfortable to sit and talk. I will ask you questions on the programme that you are engaged in. Questions will be about whether you get the opportunity to tell what you like or do not like about the programme, what it means to you to be in the programme; whether joining in the programme has made a difference in your or your family's live or contributed to any changes in the environment. You will also be asked to say how you think children should be engaged to make sure that their views and ideas are included and respected in programmes that are intended to reduce poverty and environmental dangers.

I will make notes when we talk, but it will be hard for me to talk and write at the same time. If you allow me, I would like to voice record the interview. I will then listen to the recording and type everything that you and I said. If you want to, I can play the recording back to you and /or let you read the manuscript (my notes) or read it with you, to make sure that you feel happy about what we have talked about. The voice recording and all my typed notes on the interview will be kept safely at the University of Pretoria for 15 years.

Is there anything to be afraid of?

There is nothing to be afraid of in participating in the study. The researcher does not have any intention to cause harm to you. If you do feel that the researcher asked or say something that may hurt you, you can speak to the coordinator in charge of the programme or anyone else in the programme that you know you can trust. Remember that you can decide at any time to stop participating in the study. If you do, nothing will happen to you.

Are there any benefits in joining the study?

You will receive no money or gifts if you participate in the study. If you agree to participate in the study, you will help me to understand how children participate in programmes that affect them. That will further help me to find better ways to include children's views and ideas in programmes that is intended to reduce poverty and dangers in the environment.

Do you have rights in this study?

Yes, you have. Even if your parent or guardian gave permission that you can participate in the study, it is still your choice, and nobody can force you to participate if you do not want to. Even if you agree to participate, you still have the choice to excuse yourself anytime if you do not want to continue. Furthermore, you have the right to not answer any question that make you feel uncomfortable. No one will be upset if you do not want to participate in the study and you will not be punished if you decide not to participate. Children's rights are very important.

Who will know that you participated in the study?

Your parents or guardian will know that you may join the study because they will give their permission that I may ask you to join the study. However, they will also know that it is still your own choice and that you will have to agree if you want to participate. The coordinator of the programme at the organisation will also know that you may participate in the study as he/she will provide me with the names of children that I could approach as possible participants. If you decide to participate, your parents or the organisation will not know what you have said to me. You can choose an imaginary name, so if I write about the findings of the study, nothing that you said will be linked to your name. Your identity will thus be protected. Only the researcher will know what you have said, and her study supervisor will have access to the voice recordings and notes on the interview.

What if you have any questions?

You can ask any questions that you may have about the study. You can find me on my mobile phone at: 082 941 7233 or email me at simonecrouse14@gmail.com.

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Would you like to participate in this study?

_____ Yes, I will participate in the study.

_____ No, I do not want to participate in the study.

Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher	Signature	Date