THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES: FROM A NGO PERSPECTIVE IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE

by

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A mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

MSW: Social Development and Policy

in the Department of Social Work at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: Prof. Dr A. Lombard

November 2020

DECLARATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am a firm believer in the inherent capacity and potential of all human beings. Collaborating with refugees have shown me how resilience conquers, and individuals' lives change for the better. I am thankful to God, who provided me with the passion to serve and guided me every step of the way. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the following people:

- Dirk Steyn, my husband, for his support, understanding and motivation to complete this study.
- Rene and Elmarie Mulder, my loving parents, for their unconditional support, encouragement, and love throughout my entire life.
- Prof. Lombard, for her patience, kindness, and expert guidance throughout this study. I feel privileged to have conducted this study under her supervision and learning from such an experienced researcher.
- Penny Learmonth, for believing in me when I just started as a social worker in 2015. Thank you very much for all the opportunities, guidance and your support.
- Rizel van Rooyen, for her kindness, selflessness, support, and friendship this past year.
- My editor, representing Academic and Professional Editing Services (APES), for copyediting and formatting my report.

Lastly, I would like to thank each participant for taking the time to share your knowledge and experiences; without you, this study would be meaningless.

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to:

Sister Anna Maria (Marian) Moriarty

25 June 1948 – 22 August 2019

https://www.iol.co.za/pretoria-news/selfless-sister-marian-was-a-beacon-of-light-for-refugees-32796916

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FROM A NGO PERSPECTIVE IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE

by

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In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by state nations globally to eradicate poverty in all its forms, combat inequality, preserve the planet, create sustainable economic growth and foster social inclusion (United Nations [UN], 2015:5). Poor and marginalised societies, the key focus of social work, are more severely affected by environmental degradation and climate change (IFSW, 2015). Provided their ethical mandate to address a social injustice, social workers are compelled to respond to environmental injustices (Erickson, 2012:184). Sustainable development is intrinsically connected to environmental and social justice. The goal of the study was to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from an NGO perspective in the City of Tshwane.

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The research goals were both explorative and descriptive. The research design was an instrumental case study and data were collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 participants from various non-governmental organisations within the City of Tshwane. A thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data. The

findings revealed that social workers realise the link between sustainability and environmental justice although they are not currently intentionally involved in efforts to mitigate environmental injustices. Social workers lack the knowledge base on green social work that will enable them to adopt a green social work model for practice where both people and planet are important for sustainable interventions. The study concludes that social workers are significant in engaging communities in environmental justice projects promoting sustainable communities. Traditional social work roles should be adapted to fit the green social work narrative and promote environmental justice more intentionally. The study recommends increasing the awareness of green social work amongst social workers and also making more training available for social workers to familiarise themselves with an ecological approach and green social work as a practice model.

Keywords: Green social work; environmental social work; environmental justice; sustainable communities; sustainable development; NGO; City of Tshwane

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1   INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION

In 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [hereafter 2030 Agenda] was adopted by state nations globally. They intended to eradicate poverty in all its forms, combat inequality, preserve the planet, create sustainable economic development and foster social inclusion (UN, 2015:5). Social work is committed to contribute to sustainable development through the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development [hereafter Global Agenda] (2012).

The main dimensions of sustainable development are social, economic, and environmental development (UN, 2015). In sustainable development, both people and the planet, are equally important. Climate change and the rapid depletion of natural resources affect the lives of all people. The natural resource depletion and the adverse influence of environmental degradation and pollution undermine the ability of communities to develop (IASSW, 2016). Environmental disasters exacerbate existing socio-economic and cultural inequalities (Dominelli, 2014:344). This emphasises the link between social instability and the physical and human environment.

The four themes of the Global Agenda are interlinked, but Theme 3 refers to promoting environmental and community sustainability, which was the focus of intervention for the period 2017 to 2018. The commitment includes building community capacity to respond to environmental challenges and human and natural disasters (Global Agenda, 2012). It calls upon social workers to align their activities and programmes with development initiatives integrating the environment with human dimensions (IASSW, 2016).

In the framework of sustainable development, social work concerns itself with broadening the notion of the environment to include the natural world; therefore, shifting largely from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric focus (Gray, Coates & Hetherington, 2013:298). Social workers are compelled to act on environmental injustices because of their ethical mandate to address social injustice (Erickson, 2012:184). Social work engages in the environmental discourse contributing to human dilemmas, however,

despite having much to offer to the debate, lags in claiming the territory of the natural world (Dominelli, 2014:339; Besthorn, 2013:184).

The study intended to contribute to this debate by observing environmental concerns for sustainable communities through the lens of environmental justice, which incorporates social justice from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) perspective. The study's emphasis on the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice is, therefore, intended to contribute to sustainable communities and environments. This focus is aligned with the third theme of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (2012), promoting community and environmental sustainability. The relevant concepts of the study are as follows:

1.1.1 Social work and green social work

Social work in South Africa is underpinned by a developmental approach (RSA, 1997). The study embraces a developmental and green perspective for social work practice. Developmental social work 'affirms the social work profession's commitment to the eradication of poverty, recognises the link between welfare and economic development, and construes welfare as an investment in human capital rather than a drain on limited government resources' (Gray, Agillias, Mupedziswa & Mugumbate, 2018:2). Green social work transcends a narrow focus on poverty eradication. Social workers working in collaboration with local people in their communities is needed. This will develop empowering and sustainable relationships between them and their environments within a framework of human rights, social and environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:196).

1.1.2 Environmental justice

Environmental justice is important, ensuring that the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment is enjoyed by all. The world's poorest, vulnerable, and oppressed people often live in the most degraded environments with no control over resources (Hawkins, 2010:68). For this study, the inter-relatedness between environmental justice and community sustainability is based on the view of Schlosberg (2007:57) that 'environmental justice is not simply an individual experience', but 'embedded in one's community'.

1.1.3 Sustainable communities

Sustainable communities require that people function as stewards of their natural environment. According to Rainey, Robinson, Allen and Christy (2003:709), "...stewardship implies that current and future activities do not degrade local resources such that the community becomes less productive and/or less attractive over time." In this study sustainable communities are regarded as healthy and inclusive societies, who have access to water and sanitation, renewable energy for all, inclusive and safe housing, and food security (IASSW, 2016). Sustainable communities promote social, economic, and environmental justice by focusing on interventions eradicating poverty and combatting inequality whilst preserving the planet (UN, 2015:5). The study regards community participation as a vital device for sustainable communities (Schlosberg, 2007:57; 64).

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A shift to ecological justice is important in the discourse of environmental social work and social work's role in environmental and community sustainability as it embraces environmental and social justice in responding to environmental concerns. Adopting an ecological justice perspective does not automatically translate into employing the ecological approach as a theoretical framework for environmental social work. Dominelli (2012:8) contends that the 'deep ecological' approach still privileges people. This approach focuses on the interaction amongst individuals and social and physical environments; people act upon the physical environments, opposed to integrating the physical, social, economic, political and cultural environments.

Integrated environments are required for holistic social work practice intending to change existing 'inegalitarian social relationships, power relations and resource distribution systems' (Dominelli, 2012:8). In this study, the role of social workers was explored concerning how they are engaged in promoting environmental justice by integrating the environment into social and economic development interventions and/or activities. This included their role in advocating for service users, building community capacity, and working in partnerships for sustainable development outcomes. The study

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adopted green social work (Dominelli, 2012) as a theoretical framework. Dominelli (2012:8) defines green social work as that part of practice that:

> "…Intervenes to protect the environment and enhance people's well-being by integrating the interdependencies between people and their socio-cultural, economic and physical environments, and amongst peoples within an egalitarian framework that addresses prevailing structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power and resources".

1.3 RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The 2030 Agenda with its seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, emphasises that both people and planet are important in human development, leaving nobody behind (UN, 2015). The call for the integration of environmental preservation and human well-being is a growing movement of sustainable development (Erickson, 2012:187). Theme 3 of the Global Agenda (2012), 'promoting environmental and community sustainability', underpins the rationale for this study. The commitments of the Global Agenda align with the 2030 Agenda, which positions social work to contribute to sustainable development. Sustainable development includes social, economic, and environmental dimensions (UN, 2015) whilst implying a human and planet focus for social work.

Social work's longstanding focus on people-in-environment emphasises the interaction between people and their social environment (Besthorn, 2013; Dominelli, 2014; Erickson, 2012). Concerning sustainable development, the discourse on environmental social work gradually shifted to include environmental justice and the natural environment. This implies an ecological focus where social work observes environmental concerns through both an environmental and social justice lens. Poor and marginalised societies, the focus of social work, are more severely affected by environmental degradation and climate change (International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), 2015).

Provided their ethical mandate to address a social injustice, social workers are compelled to act in addressing environmental injustices (Erickson, 2012:184). To

contribute to sustainable communities, social work should integrate concerns of the natural environment with human development into existing social work practice models (Erickson, 2012:184), and develop integrated social and economic models, considering the natural environment (Dominelli, 2012). This study intended to explore the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice, contributing to sustainable communities.

1.3.1 The research questions

The following was the main study research question:

- What is the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

The sub-research questions were as follows:

- What are social workers' understanding of environmental justice?
- What activities and interventions are social workers engaged in that address environmental justice concerns?
- How do social workers contribute to sustainable communities?
- What strategies do social workers propose in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

1.4 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

The research objectives of the study were as follows:

- To conceptualise environmental justice and community sustainability in social work within the context of green social work.
- To explore social workers understanding of environmental justice.
- To explore and describe the activities and interventions that social workers engage in addressing environmental justice concerns.

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- To explore and describe social workers' contribution to sustainable communities.
- To propose guidelines for the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

1.5 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach with an interpretivist paradigm. This approach enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding regarding the observations of the research participants (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91, Rubin & Babbie, 2013:55) on social work practice and the link with environmental justice.

The research study was both explorative and descriptive (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). This is because the aim was to gain an understanding of environmental social work and ultimately to identify the roles social workers should perform in this practice. The type of research was both applied and basic as the researcher aimed to understand a specific phenomenon and contribute to the literature in social work and environmental justice (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94).

The research employed a case study design. A semi-structured interview schedule was employed as the data collection device. The researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants from specific organisations within the City of Tshwane, known for practising in the developmental domain. The researcher employed Creswell's six steps thematic analysis process (Creswell, 2014:197-220) to translate the data into meaningful information. A detailed discussion of the research methodology and the ethical aspects relevant to the study follows in Chapter 3.

1.6 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is divided into the following four chapters:

Chapter 1: General introduction and contextualisation

This chapter presents the general introduction and overview of the research study. It includes the key concepts of the study, an overview of the theoretical framework, the

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rationale and problem statement, the research questions, the goal and objectives of the study and a brief outline of the research methodology of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature review. It includes a discussion of environmental concerns on sustainable communities, environmental and social justice, and the role of social work in the environment. It also includes the theoretical framework of the study, indicating green social work.

Chapter 3: Research methodology, empirical study and research findings

Chapter 3 presents the research approach, type of research, the research design and research methodology which includes the population and sample of the study, the data method and instrument, the data analyses and trustworthiness of the data. It also discusses the ethical concerns relevant to the study and indicates the limitations of the study. The chapter also discusses the findings of the empirical study.

Chapter 4: Key findings, conclusions, and recommendations

The concluding chapter presents the evaluation of whether the research goal and objectives were achieved. The chapter provides conclusions and recommendations for future research as a conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The social work profession adopted a systems approach as part of practice, therefore focusing on the interactions between a person and the environment they live in, commonly referred to as person-in-environment (PIE) approach (Norton, 2012:299). Traditional person-in-environment approaches were only concerned about the well-being of people whilst the well-being of the planet and the sustainability of environmental resources was disregarded (Norton, 2012:300; Mckinnon, 2008:259). It became evident over the past decade that social work as a profession and social workers should do more to ensure the sustainability of communities and the environment (Dominelli, 2012:2; Lombard, 2008:156).

Mckinnon (2008:259) contends that social work as a profession should shift towards becoming a more environmentally embedded attempt. This is important because the traditional model of service delivery became ineffective in countering the influence of long-term exposure to social injustices, such as poverty, community disorganisation and environmental degradation (Lombard, 2007:295; Besthorn, 2013:37).

The social work profession gradually endures a shift from generic reactive practice to a preventative ecological justice approach. This approach also remediates the damage, ensuring the cycle is not repeated (Norton, 2012:301; Schmitz, Matyók, Sloan & James, 2011:3). The reason for the slow progress, according to Mckinnon (2008:259), can be attributed to the lack of professional debate in the profession and in academic journals, including the lack of literature available to social workers on a grassroots level. These shortcomings lead to a global delay in implementing developmental, environmentally just and ecological justice approaches. The lack of such approaches within the South African social work domain justified the need for this study.

Schmitz, et al. (2011:1) reason that the social work profession is ideally situated to further environmental justice. This includes preventing and remediating environmental degradation, ensure sustainability, and transform political, cultural and economic practices needed for a viable future for people and the planet. The South African

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developmental agenda for social and economic freedom and transformation emphasises Some key priorities. These include alleviating poverty and installing hope for a better future for oppressed, excluded, and marginalised people (National Development Plan [NDP], 2012). Social workers are vital in advocating for the needs of marginalised individuals, ensuring social change to create a better, more inclusive, socially and economically just environment for all inhabitants of Earth (Norton, 2012:303). The role of humans and social workers in this instance is to become caretakers of the environment to ensure life on Earth continues (Schmitz, et al., 2011:1).

Although the effects of environmental degradation and injustices influence everyone, poor communities are more vulnerable to environmental risks. Healy (2014:108) emphasises that service users from poor communities are more likely to be disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. Likewise, Rogge (2000:46) maintains that children from poor communities are at greater risk due to the combined effects of economic and environmental challenges. Special attention should be provided to ensure the protection of children from poor communities. This includes recognising the agency of children and the importance of having them engaged in matters that concern them. Lombard and Viviers (2014:82) affirm that children can produce their solutions to conquer adversities.

The roles that developmental social workers fulfil in communities, are crucial to ensure that injustices of the past are addressed and that intervention strategies counteract anti-oppressive practices, which include environmental injustices. Considering the changes in the climate and the influence it has on communities, it is warranted to investigate social work's role in promoting environmental justice to ensure a viable future for the planet and its people.

This chapter emphasises the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental justice when developing sustainable strategies for the holistic development of communities. Social workers are significant in human progress development by creating conducive community settings to develop social capital, people and community resilience, and social investment strategies, such as social entrepreneurship (Schmitz, et al., 2011:1; Norton, 2012:303).

The chapter starts with conceptualising the physical environment and sustainable communities. The ensuing section observes the link between environmental and social justice concerning sustainable communities. Next is a discussion on the theoretical framework of the study, followed by a discussion of the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice. Finally, the chapter ends with a conclusive summary.

2.2   PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Over the past decade, society was bombarded with information regarding the reality of climate change and the urgent need for the development of sustainable green energy sources (Mckinnon, 2008:257; Larsen, Sherman, Cole, Karwat, Badiane & Coseo, 2014:6). Alternative means of production and resource management is needed to secure the future of humans on this planet (Midilli, Dincer & Ay, 2006:3623). Aldrich (2011:595), Dominelli (2012:52, 86) and Wilson (2011:19) reiterate that because of society's uncontrolled patterns of consumption, the increased rate of globalisation, and an increase in the frequency and severity of natural disasters, the destruction caused to the planet meant to sustain all living things, became a runaway train. If nothing is done to remediate these negative effects, the future of people and biosystems are very uncertain.

Reports, such as the Stern review and the 2001 UN annual report on "The state of world population", and documentaries, such as An Inconvenient Truth (Mckinnon, 2008: 257; Hawkins, 2010:68) led to crucial environmental concerns requiring attention. The main environmental concerns society encounters include environmental degradation; climate change; industrial pollution; disproportionate consumption patterns; migrations caused by natural disasters; competition for scarce natural resources such as water; land and clean air; poor sanitation; chemical poisons and land use (Dominelli, 2012:8; Erickson, 2012:158).

Pollution and consumption patterns globally, increasingly threaten the world's limited resources. Their effects are rapidly spreading, emphasising that environmental concerns are evolving into global concerns (IFSW, 2015:105).

In the first chapter of her book "Green Social Work: From environmental crises to environmental justice", Dominelli (2012:1) maintains that the influence of environmental crises on populations across the world is becoming more and more severe. During December 2012, the 18th Conference of the Parties to the United Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Doha. The then UN Secretary General emphasised the environmental crises that the entire human race is facing (Alston, 2015:355). In no unclear terms, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, the then Secretary General of the UN, stated:

> "Let us be under no illusion. This is a crisis. A threat to us all…The window of opportunity to prevent the effects of climate change from spiralling out of our control is closing... [UN News Centre 2012, in Alston 2015]".

The statement of Mr Ban Ki-Moon urges social workers to respond to this challenge with a "conscientious foresight" in interventions, aimed at sustaining all aspects of human life. Alston (2015:361) affirms this statement by adding that the silence of the social work profession in the environmental sphere excluded professionals to contribute towards policy development, decision-making processes and the planning of preventative services.

Gray and Coates (2012:240) affirm that humanity is an intrinsic part of nature, therefore reiterating the importance of protecting the environment to sustain human life. Erickson (2012:184) adds to this notion that it is through the earth that people receive nutritional sustenance and access to land, water, air, and energy providing for their daily needs. The influence of climate change and natural disasters can be attributed to human activities with a 95% certainty (Alston, 2015:356), therefore urging society to change consumption patterns and to advocate for environmental justice.

Erickson (2012:14) suggests that the intrinsic desire of each human being to create a better life for themselves is the reason for environmental degradation. Therefore, the well-being of the earth is closely related to the satisfaction of human needs. As part of interventions and strategies related to environmental protection, human desire and consumption patterns must be addressed otherwise all work would be ineffective.

Dominelli (2014:133) contends that environmental injustices are rooted in environmental degradation and disasters, which can either be the result of human activity or nature. The unsustainable models of development, skewed power relations and the unequal distribution of resources affect marginalised communities the most (Dominelli, 2014:133). Climate change events cause an additional overwhelming burden to already vulnerable communities (Alston, 2015:356, Agoramoorthy & Hsu, 2015:23, Engelbrecht, 2008:166; Peeters, 2012:289).

Amidst climate and environmental disasters, social workers are usually involved in crisis responses to ensure that the immediate basic needs of victims are met (Alston, 2015:358). Social work has a role in crisis intervention. The challenge to render preventative services aimed at developing the capacity of people to mitigate the effects of climate change and minimise environmental degradation. This can be achieved by being more involved in policy planning (Alston, 2015:358). Besthorn (2014:13) conversely, advises that social workers should become "visionaries" and "doers" of the work required to mobilise communities to realise the goals of environmental justice.

Besthorn (2014:14) contends that climate change and environmental disasters are best addressed when those affected by the tragedy take part in the planning process of rebuilding. People participation is both inherent and a crucial part of any developmental approach to social work (Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014:382). Agoramoorthy and Hsu (2015:24) provide valuable information on how involving the local community can produce better and more sustainable results when addressing the effects of natural disasters.

Elliott (2011:102) asserts that social development approaches assist in minimising the divergence between the developed world and the developing world. It is, therefore, an appropriate approach to promote the global implementation of sustainable environmentally just programmes. For Dylan (2013:81), a social developmental approach to social service delivery underpins a promise of transformational change and therefore sustained existence of both human life and nature.

Sustainable development concerns building inclusive and socially just societies based on the principles of social, economic and environmental justice, which advocates for the protection of the natural environment and its resources for future generations (IASSW, 2016). The basis of sustainable development comprises the eradication of all forms of poverty; promoting equality in and amongst countries; protecting the planet; working towards sustained and inclusive economic growth; and fostering social inclusion, which is all interdependent (UN, 2015:5).

The apparent social and environmental consequences from the degradation of the global environment obstruct the ability of communities to achieve their potential and to provide expression to their human rights (IFSW, 2015:105). Sustainable development concerning the environment, focuses on empowering marginalised people; overcoming poverty and hunger; maintaining environmental sustainability; limiting the spread of life-threatening diseases; addressing maternal health and child mortality; improving basic education standards; and establishing partnerships with a range of stakeholders to improve quality of life and protect the ecosystem (Dominelli, 2012:150; Spitzer & Twikirize, 2014:375).

Hawkins (2010:68) presents a compelling case by reasoning that the aftermath of human consumption patterns and environmental degradation, resulted in the deterioration of all ecosystems on the planet, much like a virus without a cure. The link between nature and humanity leads to a renewed call for the necessary change in thinking for social work to consider the environment and educate social workers. This would lead to them becoming more conscious of ecological degradation. This includes the effects thereof on humanity. The effort should ensure realising social and environmental justice (Alston, 2015:358). Social justice is therefore equally important for sustainable communities as presented subsequently.

2.3   ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

According to Linhorst (2002:202), the domain of knowledge surrounding social justice is mostly based on the works of Rawls (1971) and includes two components of justice: individual justice and distributive justice. According to Banerjee (2005:9), social work as

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a profession broadly supports the notion that social justice indicates that poor, vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalised communities deserve better living conditions and life circumstances. Although social work supports the notion of social justice, the focus remains on equality and securing a sustainable future for the planet, people and animals by protecting the physical environments occupied (Dominelli, 2012:6). Social and environmental justice are pathways that can be used to secure a better future for not only poor and marginalised people but for all the inhabitants of Earth, which includes flora, fauna and the entire physical environment.

Social justice as a value supporting practice refers to the reasonable and equitable distribution of bargaining power, resources, and obligations across all of society (Visser, 2012:12). Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, and Strom-Gottfried (2013:424) cautions that the term social justice has diverse meanings in the various fields of practice. The observation that social justice includes promoting social and economic equality and defending the rights of the oppressed and marginalised is supported by the social work profession. According to Hepworth, et al. (2013:424), the notion supported by policymakers as social justice, means that benefits and burdens are shared equally amongst society.

Isbister (2001:7) emphasises that due to the unique needs of each person, equality for the sake of being equal in one dimension leads to inequalities in another dimension. Some of the guaranteed equalities have diverse inherent worth for various people and therein lies the fine balance of deciding what is socially just and equitable.

Solas (2008:126) asserts that the only way in which fairness and social justice can be decided is to use interpersonal comparisons. Some answers to promoting social justice can be found in the Code of Ethics of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). According to AASW (2002), social justice has four broad objectives, indicating equity, rights, access, and participation.

In summary, the AASW (2002) Code of Ethics emphasises that social justice requires the following from social workers:

- Promote the development of policies, practice and social circumstances that strengthens human rights and ensure access, equity, and participation.
- Act without prejudice and aim to eliminate all forms of discrimination.
- Empower and develop the potential of people in the pursuit of equitable access to social, political, and economic resources.
- Acknowledge social and political diversity and advocate for the respect of diversity in society, and public participation on all levels of decision-making processes.

Isbister (2001:26) contends that people can be unconcerned about the fate of another because their fate is connected due to them both being inhabitants of Earth. Promoting social justice is therefore not only an important part of ensuring own livelihood but also that of ensuring a sustainable lifestyle of a neighbour and the planet.

Lombard and Twikirize (2014:318) recognise the interconnectedness of social, economic and environmental development. They support Dominelli's (2012:18) statement that the only way to ensure sustainable lifestyles is through social workers engaging at local, national, regional, and global levels. Their roles would include to advocate for change, based on the moral values and ethics of social and environmental justice. Social and environmental justice is interrelated as the next discussion outlines.

2.4   THE LINK BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Environmental justice and social justice are embedded in human rights (IASSW, 2016; Solas, 2008:126). Environmental and social justice is interrelated within a sustainable development framework and hence when working towards promoting sustainable healthy societies. Besthorn (2013:35) summarises the relationship between environmental and social justice by stating that both have a shared interest in human beings and the natural world.

Social injustices are exasperated by human-made or natural disasters, with poverty as one of the worst human-made disasters (Dominelli, 2014:133). Environmental injustices cannot be addressed without addressing social injustices. Social injustices are closely linked to the degradation of the environment, especially when considering the disproportionately negative influence of natural disasters on the poor (Peeters,

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2012:287; Dominelli, 2014:133; Alston, 2015:356). Structural inequalities limit the ability of marginalised people to access needed resources to satisfy their basic human needs.

As a result, the marginalised population employs resources in their natural environment to meet their basic needs, such as chopping firewood to cook food. This, in turn, leads to deforestation and further environmental degradation. Specifically, within the South African context, the ability of communities to overcome adversity is significantly lower than in more developed countries due to a low level of economic development (Lombard & Twikirize, 2014:318).

The link between these two forms of justice indicates social work as a profession should intervene to facilitate efforts to achieve sustainable livelihoods of the current population and future generations. If social work remains relevant in contemporary society, social workers will inevitably attend to the natural environment. They would commit to sustainable communities by adopting a holistic approach integrating social, economic and environmental dimensions (Lombard, 2014:45; Besthorn, 2014:21; Rogge, 2000:52; Sewpaul, 2014:23).

In South Africa, wealth is redistributed through various social grants available to vulnerable population groups to mitigate the effects of social and structural injustices (Groundup, 2017). The 2019 budget speech confirmed the South African government's commitment to social development, whereby almost R 900 billion was allocated to social development, which includes R 246.5 billion allocated to social grants alone (South African National Treasury, 2019). The large budget allocation to social development for social grants is evident of government's commitment to preserve the right to life and counteract poverty.

Miller, Hayward, and Shaw (2012:271) emphasise that social justice emphasises human rights and needs, whereas environmental justice focuses on social inequalities arising from environmental concerns. The scarcity of natural resources also influences the relationships amongst countries. Resources in high demand and limited quantities, give rise to increased levels of tension (Dominelli, 2012:169, Sewpaul, 2014:359). Peeters,

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Dirix and Sterckx (2012:57) support this notion by stating that the global demand for resources far exceeds the capacity of the "ecosphere" to produce these resources.

Nordås and Gleditsch (2007:628) contend that the concern regarding rising levels of tension due to climate change is warranted as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges the link between conflict and climate change. Dominelli (2012:152) emphasises a similar point saying that conflict due to a scarcity of resources was simmering for quite some time. She indicates that maps containing information about spatial and population pinpoint areas where conflict could easily arise are due to shortages in resources (Dominelli, 2012:152).

Atapattu and Schapper (2019:111) maintain that the right to life, as stipulated in Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] (UN, 1966), is a supreme right. This right should protect both current and future populations from the negative effects of environmental degradation. Atapattu and Schapper (2019:111) quote Ramcharan (1985:310-311) concerning preventing dangers that threaten people:

> "…[Governments] as well as the global community, bears the duty to take effective measures to prevent and safeguard against the occurrence of environmental hazards which threaten the lives of human beings".

Environmental hazards thus infringe upon a person's right to life and the rights of future populations and the earth. Atapattu and Schapper (2019:111) further state that the right to life should not be interpreted narrowly concerning humans only, emphasising that any form of life lost because of environmental degradation or natural disasters, undermines the right to life. Inherently the right to life includes the right to health (Atapattu & Schapper, 2019:110), whilst environmental hazards and environmental degradation often negatively affect a person's health status. The only possible way to safeguard this right is by employing green social work methods to help people adapt amidst adversity and to change the current status quo to allow generations to come to life, health and access environmental resources. The subsequent section discusses green social work as a theoretical framework for social work practice in more detail.

2.5   GREEN SOCIAL WORK AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework supporting this study is Dominelli's (2012) green social work. The green social work approach can be defined as:

> "…the part of practice that intervenes to protect the environment and enhance people's wellbeing by integrating the interdependencies between people and their socio-cultural, economic and physical environments, and among people within an egalitarian framework that addresses prevailing structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power and resources" [Dominelli, 2012:8].

Green social work is therefore aimed at advocating for social, political, and environmental justice for all of humanity (Dominelli, 2012:2). Green social work embraces the developmental approach, deep ecology, and ecological social work, and elements from environmental social work (Dominelli, 2012:132). Green social work has an egalitarian focus that promotes inclusion, whilst balancing the needs of people and protecting the environment. Besthorn (2013:37) and Gray and Coates (2012:240) state that green social work represents a paradigm shift from the traditional multidisciplinary or environmental social work, focusing on the person-in-the-environment, to social work practice, emphasising both people and the environment. Besthorn (2013:37), Gray and Coates (2012:240) emphasise that any subject or area of a study investigating the interrelationship of people and planet is ecology and hence the recognition of ecological social work concerning the green social work paradigm.

Elliott (2011:102) contends that social development could be the potential link between social work in developing countries and developed countries. One of the key links could be the sharing of knowledge to ensure a global standard. Elliott (2011:102-103) further elaborates on the values and principles of social work, which links with green social work. A strong focus exists on human rights, strongly grounded in social and economic justice.

According to Dominelli (2012:198), to realise human rights, social and environmental justice and social inclusion, more equitable sharing of the benefits from the earth paired with new paradigms of production and consumption should be developed. In this,

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Dominelli sees a role for social workers in promoting change; research that emphasises on the suffering of the poor and marginalised; promoting robust resilience in communities through capacity building and developing partnerships (Dominelli, 2012:198).

The Children's Act 38 of 2005 (as amended) stipulates the rights of children and one of these rights is the right to participate in discussions or processes that concern their well-being. It is therefore important that children are included in the discussions surrounding the environment, social and environmental justice, and developing new strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change. Lombard and Viviers (2014:82) argue that children should be included in these types of discussions because children possess both the desire and intellectual capacity to contribute towards finding solutions to greening the profession. Gray and Coates (2012:239) emphasise an important aspect on which the liberal humanistic foundation of the social work profession is based on:

> "Underpinning social work practice is the belief that human beings have value as morally responsible agents and are owed certain good by society by virtue of their human dignity and worth".

Gray and Coates (2012:240) contest the humanistic foundation of social work by stating that humanity is intrinsically part of nature and that nature is the ultimate source of value. Linking this statement to the practice of green social work, it holds that the sustainability of human life relies on the protection of the natural environment, shifting from an enlightened self-interest towards an ecocentric approach (Gray & Coates, 2012:41).

Hawkins (2010:69) contends that the social work profession is vital in implementing operative global strategies to mitigate the effects of the environmental crisis the planet encounters and to respond to the resulting human rights concerns. In summary, green social work strengthens the values of developmental social work. It is embedded in a human rights-based approach aimed at facilitating equal access to services, social inclusion and participation. This includes justice across the social, economic, environmental and political domains to facilitate sustainable communities and contribute to sustainable development.

2.6   SOCIAL WORK AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development concerns developing healthy and inclusive societies, based on principles of social, economic and environmental justice, recognising the need to protect the environment and its resources for future generations (IASSW, 2016; Peeters, 2012:291; Boonen, Aerts & De Tavernier, 2012:43).

Peeters (2012:287) emphasises that sustainable social work must incorporate two crucial conditions. First, the present-day analyses of the environmental crisis are considered. Second, the links between the social-ecological agenda and the critical nature of social work must be acknowledged. In doing so, social work as a profession is ideally placed to address the concerns accompanying climate change concerns and justice (Peeters, 2012:287).

According to the Brundtland Report (in Alston, 2015:359), sustainability encompasses development that can satisfy the needs of present populations without compromising the ability of future generations to satisfy their own needs. Conversely, the IFSW (in Alston, 2015:359) advocates that the social work profession returns to its "radical roots". It recognises the importance of the natural and built environment to the social environment. It should develop an environmental responsibility amongst social service professionals (Alston, 2015:360).

The entire debate surrounding sustainability relates to the triple-P-concept, whereby sustainability is measured concerning people, the planet and prosperity (Peeters, 2012:292; Boonen, et al., 2012:44). When considering these aspects, people refer to costs and benefits for the populace, and public perception and opinion; planet refers to environmental influences and benefits; prosperity refers to the economic costs and the benefits from optimising processes (Boonen, et al., 2012:44). Baker (in Peeters, 2012:292) maintains that a fourth parameter, process, should be included, relating the participation of the public.

Peeters (2012:290) contends that social workers are to empower communities, build resilience, develop social capital, and engage in advocacy. Sewpaul (2014:22) urges

social workers to engage in political advocacy and activism, placing the social work profession within the political domain to inform practice and policy development.

Social work education and training are vital in promoting environmental justice and creating an environmental responsibility within the profession (Sewpaul, 2014:22). The much-needed paradigm shift can easily be facilitated by changing the perspectives of young social workers through adapting the social work curriculum to emphasise the correlation amongst the physical environment, social and environmental justice and human sustainability. It, therefore, moves away from the person-in-the-environment approach (Alston, 2015:359) to the person and the environment as emphasised by Peeters (2012:294).

Boonen, et al. (2012:43) note that sustainability is never really achieved as it remains an ideal that influences practice across all domains to continually improve. Society is characterised by uncontrolled consumption patterns and profit-driven processes environmentally unfriendly; it poses a threat to the sustainability of the current population and the sustainability of future generations. Already in 2007, the Living Planet Report concluded that the global environmental footprint exceeded the ability of the Earth to produce resources by 50% (World Wild Life Fund for Nature, 2010). Dominelli (2012:3, 10) supports this notion by emphasising that industrialisation led to poverty, social injustices, unsustainable consumption patterns and competition for scarce resources. The industrialisation also led to various industrial accidents, such as Chernobyl, which is referred to as the worst industrial accident of the last century (Dominelli, 2012:74).

Disasters, whether it be environmental, industrial, human-made, or natural, poses a severe threat to the sustainability of people and the planet (Dominelli, 2012:10). Therefore, social work as a profession and social workers as professionals should adopt a political agenda and political change agents to ensure a sustainable future for all. Peeters (2012:290) observes that sustainability can be achieved, or as Boonen, et al. (2012:43) describe, reach a desired level of sustainability, through implementing changes across all aspects of society to incorporate good governance, just distribution of wealth and benefits, and a commitment towards realising environmental justice. The specific roles for social workers within the field of sustainability are discussed below.

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2.7 SOCIAL WORK ROLES AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Gray and Coates (2012:9-13) state that social workers are significant in creating a developmental welfare atmosphere where social services are rendered. The roles of social workers practising within a developmental sphere do not contradict traditional social work roles but require that social workers be more attentive to the needs of service users. Traditional practice describes three methods of intervention, indicating casework, group work and community work (Weyers, 2011:10). Developmental social work does not call for the abolishment of these methods but urges social workers to adopt a new perspective for the implementation of these methods. Peeters (2012:292) contends that the change in thinking in social work is needed to ensure the profession's skewed human-centred approach, now includes the well-being of the planet.

One of the most prominent roles stipulated for social workers is the role of advocate (Peeters, 2012:290; Sewpaul, 2014:22). Lombard (2014:49) emphasises that paired with the responsibility of social workers to engage in advocacy, is the responsibility to disseminate information to the public to ensure every citizen is aware of their rights.

As part of advocacy, social workers advocate that social, economic, and environmental justice prevails. Social workers facilitating equality and working to safeguard justice, must, according to Isbister (2001:9), remember that "justice requires a level playing field without any artificial restrictions". Therefore, due to the complexity of human life and the concerns society face, justice cannot be addressed on one level alone and social work interventions within the field of justice concurrently render services at micro, mezzo and macro level.

Alston (2015:360) advises that the social work profession should bring to the forefront of human rights and social justice concerns in discussions regarding climate change and how these concerns affect poor and marginalised communities. Social workers, therefore, can influence policy development and programmes implemented amidst disasters. Social workers must represent and advocate for the inclusion of the observations of children during such discussions (Lombard & Viviers, 2014:82, Rogge, 2000:46).

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Sewpaul (2014:21-22) points to the function of culture in the justice debate. Although culture might hold significance in addressing injustices, it can also be responsible for upholding injustices. People are socialised into a culture and because cultures mostly respect or are assumed to respect the notion of no harm, few people question cultural practices. Social workers must be culturally sensitive in all instances but also be able to sensitively address cultural practices responsible for upholding structural inequalities, injustices, oppression, and marginalisation. Schmitz, Matyók, Sloan and James (2011:2) affirm that cultural practices can also have a positive effect and lead to entire communities being socialised as caretakers of the environment. Social workers can therefore employ cultural practices from one community to inform the cultural practices of other communities respectfully and sensitively when addressing environmental justice.

Due to the complexity of human life, it is a perplexing task to guarantee a level arena. As mentioned earlier, equal access to resources and services does not guarantee equality (Isbister, 2001:9). Social work can therefore be crucial in capacitating communities to optimally use resources, advocate for community education programmes and build resilience. Schmitz, Matyók, Sloan and James (2011:1, 2) assert that social workers' skillset places the profession in the ideal position to further environmental justice and sustainable development. Social workers can collaborate with a multidisciplinary team and mobilise various sectors, promoting holistic development.

Schmitz, et al. (2011:3) elaborate that social workers can further be significant in averting and remediating environmental degradation, facilitating sustainability, and guide political, cultural and economic practices towards a just sustainable future. Humans' ability to choose allows them the freedom to shape the future of the planet, people, and our joint prosperity, towards a life-affirming environment.

Sewpaul (2014:13) alludes that the lack of responsibility by governments for their complicity in human rights violations, especially within the South African context, hampers the implementation of developmental efforts. The deteriorating social and economic conditions leading to increased levels of insecurity and instability strengthens

human rights abuses and negatively influences the ability of the poor to be considered in policy planning and intervention strategies (Sewpaul, 2014:16; Isbister, 2001:9).

Green social work efforts are repressed when social work responses remain humanitarian and fail to address the complexities of human life (Schmitz, et al.; 2011:3). The time has come for social workers to accept their positions as leaders, change agents, activists, and community builders. They should not only influence the formulation of intervention strategies and policies but also communities to draw upon their capabilities and resilience to overcome adversity.

2.8   SUMMARY

Green social work is aligned with developmental social work. It is embedded in a human rights-based approach and embraces an ecological approach where both people and planet matter. Social and environmental justice are interrelated and equally important for social and economic inclusion and sustainable communities. Social workers have various roles to play in promoting environmental justice including advocacy and influencing intervention strategies and policies while drawing upon communities' capabilities and resilience to bring about change.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology and empirical findings of the study. This chapter presents the research approach, the type of research, research design, the population of the study, the sampling technique, data collection method, data analysis, trustworthiness of the data and lastly the pilot study. The ethical considerations and limitations of the study are then outlined. Next, the chapter presents and discusses the empirical findings of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

The following research question and sub-questions guided the study:

- What is social work's role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from an NGO perspective in the City of Tshwane?

Sub-questions:

- What are social workers' understanding of environmental justice?
- What activities and interventions are social workers engaged in that promotes environmental justice?
- How do social workers contribute to sustainable communities?
- What strategies do social workers suggest for promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

3.2   RESEARCH APPROACH

The study employed a qualitative research approach. The study analysed the deeper meaning of social workers' role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities which, according to Rubin and Babbie (2013:95), can only be achieved by employing a qualitative research approach. Employing a qualitative approach afforded the freedom to explore themes beyond predetermined operational indicators (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:95). This contributed to richer research findings as research participants

had the opportunity to share their professional observations on the research topic (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91). Fouché and Delport (2011:66) contend that inductive logic can be used to interpret and identify trends from the data.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:53) the nature and scope of social work's role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. The study explored the observations of social workers concerning social work's role, and the efforts already made, to promote environmental justice. According to Rubin and Babbie (2013:50), explorative research is a typical purpose of research when a new interest is examined. It was true in this study as most of the research available originates from scholars in developed nations, such as Europe and the United States (Dominelli, 2012:1; Schlosberg, 2013:39). A descriptive research purpose refers to an in-depth analysis of a phenomenon and describing what was observed (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:51). The study described social work's role within the field of environmental justice and sustainability.

The research paradigm that supported this study was interpretivism (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:55). The study aimed at understanding the observations and experiences of social workers within their specific contexts in the field of environmental justice and sustainability. The interpretivism paradigm is favoured by qualitative researchers because it is flexible and values subjectivity (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:56). As characterised by interpretivism, interviews were conducted with prior knowledge of the literature regarding the topic which, in turn, influenced the type of questions directed (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:62).

3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH

Basic and applied research complement one another as both intend to advance knowledge and formulate solutions to challenges faced in practice (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). This study predominantly employed applied research to contribute knowledge to a practice context (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). This was conducted by formulating new roles for social workers to promote environmental justice and green social work by

facilitating change towards sustainable communities from an environmental justice perspective.

3.4   RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative case study design. Fouché and Delport (2011:65) emphasise that the qualitative research design is aimed at obtaining the participant's experiences, perceptions, and explanations or interpretations of research participants. Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141) reason that a case study research design is the most suitable design when pursuing to clarify a field of practice and the research aims to inform future practice. Creswell (2013:98) maintains that cases with specific characteristics and within certain boundaries, and real-life cases, should be selected to collect accurate data. Therefore, in this study, research participants were purposefully selected to collect accurate and meaningful data related to social work's role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

Case study research designs can be divided into various categories (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:75). For this study, an instrumental case study design was employed. Instrumental case study designs attempt to explain specific cases, analyse existing knowledge and generate new information (Rule & John, 2011:8); therefore, it links to the basic and applied research methods. Instrumental case study designs can be helpful to collect information or data that can inform policy development by generating new theory and knowledge (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). Recommendations on specific roles for social workers to promote environmental justice could therefore influence the development of policies to promote sustainable social work practice.

Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141) caution that case studies cannot necessarily be generalised to all practice settings, therefore emphasising a limitation of this type of study. Case study designs can be helpful to acquire an in-depth understanding of the specific research topic, which in turn produces meaningful information (Creswell, 2013:98). This study intended to understand the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

3.5 RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, the study population, sampling methods, data collection methods, data analysis, quality of data and pilot study are discussed.

3.5.1 Study population and sampling

A study population comprises individuals from the universe of all potential participants that meet a specific criterion related to the study (Strydom, 2011a:223). The study population involved social workers working from a developmental approach and who engage in social and/or economic or environmental concerns or have an interest in the environment within an NGO setting in the City of Tshwane.

The organisations that were approached as research sites and their scope of services were as follows:

3.5.1.1 Future Families: Mamelodi and Olievenhoutbosch offices

Future Families is a registered NPO that renders a variety of developmental services to specific vulnerable populations residing in the City of Tshwane. Service rendering is focused on empowering families to create their own future (About us, 2019b).

3.5.1.2 CSC/CMR Vos Centre

Christian Social Council (CSC) is a registered NPO that renders services to families and children within Pretoria CBD (About us, 2019a). The focus of Vos Centre is child protection through children's court proceedings and family preservation services to ensure children receive the best possible care (About us, 2019a).

3.5.1.3 Catholic Archdiocese of Pretoria: Xaveri Movement

Xaveri Movement is an NPO part of the Catholic Archdiocese of Pretoria. They provide a variety of social services to vulnerable groups within the city centre. These groups include marginalised population groups, such as the homeless, migrants and people living in rural areas (About us, 2016).

3.5.1.4   Mercy House

Mercy House is a shelter for abused or trafficked women and renders psychosocial support services to this target group. They aim to help abused women rebuild their lives (IOL, 2018).

3.5.1.5   Rata Pretoria

As a registered NGO, Rata is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of all people through the protection of children against abuse, implementation of programmes to strengthen family bonds and to uplift communities through outreach programmes (About us, 2019c).

3.5.1.6   'You are not alone' (YANA)

YANA is a Non-Profit residential care facility registered with the Department of Health and the Department of Social Development. The care facility was established in 1984. It has two focus areas, indicating to provide residential care in a group home facility to people with a mental disability, and to offer a psychosocial rehabilitation programme to increase the general functioning of persons diagnosed with schizophrenia (About us, 2019d). The purpose of YANA's interventions is to empower marginalised communities.

According to Strydom (2011a:223), sampling implies the selection of a manageable number of participants that exhibit desired characteristics from the total population. Conducting interviews with all practising social workers within the City of Tshwane would not be possible within the period of this study and therefore a sample was selected for the study.

According to Strydom (2011a:223), sampling implies the selection of a manageable number of participants that exhibit desired characteristics from the total population. The sampling method the study employed was non-probability sampling as the entire population of social workers was not known to the researcher (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:197). The study participants were selected by employing purposive sampling (Strydom, 2011a:232) where only participants exhibiting the desired characteristics as indicated below were interviewed. Flick (2007:80) indicates that the sample population

should reflect and verbalise their experiences and be available for the duration of an interview and for follow-up questions or where clarification is needed.

Considering the observation by Flick (2007:80), 11 participants from the study population were selected who met the following criteria:

- Social workers with at least one year of practice experience.
- Social workers willing and able to conduct the interview in English.
- Social workers who engage in community activities and interventions promoting social and/or economic development.
- Social workers engaged in and/or are interested in environmental concerns, activities and interventions concerning the field of practice.

The study selected two social workers employed by the CMR/CSC; five from Future Families; one from Mercy House; one from Rata Social Services; one from Xaveri Movement; and one from 'You are not alone'. Permission letters to conduct the study were obtained from these organisations respectively (see Appendixes A-F).

The researcher approached supervisors from the various organisations to obtain written permission to research the organisation. The supervisors provided the researcher with the contact details of employees that met the sample criteria. The researcher made telephonic contact with the respective participants to introduce herself and provided a brief overview of the research goals and requirements. The researcher scheduled appointments with the selected participants to conduct the interviews. Interviews with participants were conducted at the various places of their employment.

Permission letters from the supervisors or managers of the various organisations, and the informed consent letters from the participants, were obtained.

3.5.2 Data collection methods

Data were collected through one-on-one interviews, using a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix G) as a research instrument. The semi-structured interview schedule comprised predetermined questions, mostly open-ended whilst guiding the

researcher to conduct a meaningful interview to obtain the true experience of the participants. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to probe the participants were needed to gain further insight or to clarify answers.

The researcher used an android device to record the interviews whilst she made short-hand notes to ensure that all the information is captured, including the body language of the participants. Permission was obtained to record the interviews after explaining the need for the recordings to all the participants (Flick, 2007:82).

The researcher confirmed with the participants whether they were willing and able to spend the estimated time (60 minutes) to conduct the interview. The estimated time was adequate to conduct the interviews, however, the researcher later had to follow-up through email to clarify some of the information. Member-checking was used with three participants to ensure that the data captured truly reflect the observations of the participants; the other participants did not respond.

The literature study was used to develop relevant and focused questions. The interview questions were provided to the participants before the interview to assist them to contextualise the topic and be prepared to provide relevant information during the actual interview (Greeff, 2011:352). The interview schedule did not have predetermined themes, but included aspects such as:

- Demographic area of service delivery.
- Participants' view on social workers' activities and interventions in environmental justice.
- Participants' view on social workers' role in social and economic activities and interventions.
- Suggestions regarding the roles of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

The benefits of employing interviewing as a data collection method were that the researcher obtained rich and descriptive data from the perspectives of the participants. Employing open-ended questions allowed the ability to probe and explore responses further (Greeff, 2011:342; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:93). The researcher did not experience

any of the disadvantages of interviewing. These disadvantages include distracted and impatient participants, inability to establish rapport with the participant(s), or conducting an unsuccessful interview due to the lack of maintaining balance and flexibility simultaneously (Greeff, 2011:349; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:93). This was because the researcher allowed the participants the freedom to share their observations but also be able to focus the participant's attention to the subject matter to ensure that the information is applicable.

3.6   DATA ANALYSIS

Analysing data, according to Wagner, Kawilich and Garner (2012:229), refers to the process of making sense of data in numerous ways. The reduction and display of data were employed to conclude or verify statements perused during the literature review. Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:397) concur that qualitative data analysis concerns reducing the volume of raw data and identifying significant patterns.

The study employed the six steps of thematic analysis below, as suggested by Creswell (2014:197-220) and Clarke, Braun and Hayfield (2015:230-245). In line with the case study research design, the study commenced with a brief description of each interview, followed by the analysis of data to identify themes from the responses.

- The researcher organised and prepared the data for analysis. The researcher employed a professional transcriber to transcribe the interview audio recordings. The researcher then compared her short-hand notes to the responses captured in the transcriptions and added some extra information in the margins of the transcriptions. Thereafter, the researcher listened to the recording whilst perusing the transcripts to ensure that the transcription was accurate. As aforementioned, the research also employed member-checking, by requesting some of the participants to peruse the transcriptions. This allowed the researcher the ability to confirm whether the participants' real observations and experiences were captured.
- Critically perusing the transcripts whilst listening to the audio recording again and systematically analysing the data. This was conducted to check the general ideas of

the participants and the depth of the information. The researcher also recorded general thoughts about the data in the margins of the transcripts.

- Data coding by writing a word representing a category in the margins of the transcripts. Coding assisted to identify patterns within the data because similar data segments were grouped. This step included using the coding process to generate themes or categories for the proposed study. The categories were used to formulate themes and sub-themes which informed the major findings of the study. The themes and sub-themes displayed multiple perspectives from the participants about social work's role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. Quotes were also used from the transcripts to support the themes.

- Presenting the themes of each participant through conveying descriptive information about each participant. Themes and sub-themes and any other information such as the biographic data of participants were presented in tables.

- Data evaluation and interpretation of the findings. The researcher reflected on how useful the data were in addressing the research goal and objectives and how the information links to the role of social work in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. Finally, the data were enclosed in the text to narrate the findings. The findings were submitted to the University of Pretoria in the format of this research report.

3.7   TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA

Data quality, or trustworthiness, is vital when conducting research, as it ensures that the research is valid and contributes to the field of knowledge (Nieuwenhuis, 2016:37). According to Nieuwenhuis (2016:80), qualitative studies should produce credible and trustworthy findings. It is of the utmost importance that the researcher accurately portrays the observations and experiences of the participants and not her own, as maintained in the definition of trustworthiness by Lietz and Zayas (2010:191). The trustworthiness of data in qualitative studies is therefore measured through credibility, transferability, and audibility (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

3.7.1 Credibility

Maree and van der Westhuizen (2007:37) reason that by employing resources by accredited scholars regarding reliability and validity, it is ensured that the research was conducted responsibly and ethically. The researcher completed a module on research methodology as part of the requirements for the degree.

The study employed accredited resources, contributing to ethical and responsible research being conducted. Nieuwenhuis (2016:80) contends that if validity or credibility can be established, it is sufficient, and the data can therefore be deemed as reliable. The researcher ensured that the description of the findings represented the reality, being objective and free from any possibility of personal bias. The study followed rich descriptions of the participants' observations, adding a level of generalisability and trustworthiness (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2007:37). These rich descriptions also enabled participants to recognise their contributions towards the study, which according to Lietz and Zayas (2010:191) is another way to establish credibility.

3.7.2 Transferability

Data quality can be measured through transferability, where the same results are achieved on various occasions and in diverse settings, therefore, the data are reliable. It is difficult to reproduce findings in qualitative studies as human nature changes over time (Maree & Van Der Westhuizen, 2007:37). The researcher attempted to mitigate this shortfall by providing detailed descriptions of the research process, allowing the reader to establish whether the conclusions from the research can be transferred to other settings within the field (Amankwaa, 2016:20).

The detailed descriptions should also enable future researchers to duplicate the study, considering that the research goals and objectives, sampling techniques, sample size, sampling criteria and the various NGOs are included in the description. Future researchers can therefore duplicate the study under similar circumstances and obtain results aligning with the results of this study, therefore, ensuring that this study has an elevated level of transferability.

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3.7.3 Auditability

Research cannot be considered trustworthy if there is no documentation to support the research process and the findings resulting from the research (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195). The researcher documented the entire research process as evident in the different chapters in this research report and full transcriptions of the interviews. The researcher was in contact with other students to discuss methods to promote the suitability of this study. The researcher was also guided by her research supervisor who monitored the research process.

3.8   PILOT STUDY

Before conducting the main study, a pilot study was conducted (De Vos, et al., 2011:394). The pilot study aimed to ensure that the research methodology chosen was appropriate and, most importantly, to determine whether the semi-structured interview schedule produced responses that would answer the questions posed in the main study. Yin (2014:96) remarks that the purpose of a pilot study is to refine the data collection method and clarify the research design. Conducting a pilot study could emphasise the feasibility of the research and provide deficiencies to the attention of the researcher. This process would allow the researcher to adjust the data collection device to ensure the efficiency and accuracy of the device in collecting the required data (Bless, et al., 2006:184). The pilot study was conducted with the first two participants in the study to evaluate the questions. The outcome indicated that the data collection device produced the required information and therefore it was not necessary to adjust the device.

According to Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards (2018:6), data corruption is less of a concern in qualitative studies and as a result, researchers can use some or all of their pilot data as part of the main study. The information obtained from the two pilot studies was therefore included in the findings of the main study.

3.9   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations according to Flick (2009:54), are formulated to regulate the relationship between researcher and research participants, ensuring that the research

is conducted in a just manner without causing participants' harm. Strydom (2011b:113) emphasises that research should be based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation, promises, well-accepted conventions and expectations amongst all parties involved in the research project. The study was ethically cleared by the University of Pretoria (see Appendix I). The following ethical aspects were considered to ensure the aforementioned aspects.

3.9.1 Informed consent

Before the collection of data, Flick (2009:59) cautions that it is important that the researcher is competent enough to explain to the potential participants the goal of the research study. Flick (2009:59) further maintains that the reason for the research to be explained to participants is for them to decide to voluntarily participate in the study. The researcher needed to use language and explanations reflecting the true objectives of the study.

Babbie (2013:32) maintains that participation in a study usually disrupts the participant's regular activities. It is, therefore, important that the participation is voluntary. They must understand the research aim and know how they will benefit from their participation. Babbie (2013:34) further explains that participants should sign a consent form, which outlines the goal of the research study, before participation, providing proof that they understood the purpose of the study. Before the start of the interviews, the purpose of the research was explained, and written consent was obtained from all the participants.

Informed consent was designed in a manner comprehendible for the participants (see Appendix H). The informed consent form also explained employing certain devices, such as the android recording device, the justification thereof, and the assurance that the information will be kept confidential. The participants were informed that the findings might be submitted to a journal for publication and that the transcriptions; the informed consent letters were to be stored at the University of Pretoria Department of Social Work and Criminology for 15 years.

3.9.2 Confidentiality

The social work community is small and numerous social workers in the Tshwane urban area know one another. It was impossible to guarantee anonymity, but data collected were reported, considering confidentiality (Braun & Clarke, 2013:64).

Israel and Hay (2009) in Creswell (2009:120) emphasise that the researcher should protect research participants, develop a trusting relationship, and promote the integrity of the research. Strydom (2011b:119) maintains that confidentiality is a continuation of privacy and the researcher should inform the participants of the possible limits of this principle. The researcher also had an obligation to explain to the participants how she ensured limited access to shared information (Strydom, 2011b:119). The researcher informed the participants through the informed consent letter that the information will be kept confidential and would only be shared between the researcher and her study supervisor.

3.9.3 Voluntary participation

The research participants voluntarily took part in the study as emphasised during the explanation of the informed consent letter (see Appendix H). Forced participation would result in invalid data and results obtained from the study would be considered irrelevant by other researchers (Fouché & Delport, 2011:116). Research participants, therefore, provided information free from coercion or any promises of rewards for their participation. Research participants were also made aware in the informed consent letter that they could withdraw from the study at any time if they so wish without any consequences.

3.9.4 Actions and competence of the researcher

Researchers are obliged to have adequate skills to undertake the research study, and constantly be aware of their ethical responsibility (Strydom, 2011b:123). This included being constantly aware of the social work code of ethics. The researcher professionally conducted herself by being on time for the interviews, being well-organised and respecting diverse cultural opinions (Strydom, 2011b:123).

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The researcher completed a research methodology module as part of the study programme which prepared her to conduct the required interviews. Furthermore, the researcher was under the supervision of an experienced research supervisor throughout the research process.

3.9.5   Avoidance of harm and debriefing

Strydom (2011b:113) emphasises that data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings. Avoidance of harm goes beyond efforts to repair or minimise harm, and therefore respondents were thoroughly informed. The researcher had the obligation to screen the participants for vulnerabilities and recruit other participants if needed. Fortunately, it was not the case in this study.

The researcher was aware that not all organisations within the Tshwane district work from a social developmental framework or promote environmental justice, as aligned with the SDGs (UN, 2015). As a result, the researcher was also cautious not to cause harm to any participant and to provide the necessary debriefing if any discomfort was inflicted. When referring to harm the researcher referred to causing the participant to be confronted with questions that could trigger feelings of incompetence (Strydom, 2011b:115). It was, therefore, the researcher's obligation to inform the participants beforehand that the research topic was not personal, but aimed to explore the topic and to work towards making social workers more active in promoting environmental justice. The goal of the research was also addressed in the informed consent letter.

Strydom (2011b:122) emphasises that after data were collected from a participant, the researcher should engage in a reflective process to work through the participant's experiences. In this study, none of the participants experienced any distress and there was no need for further discussions.

3.9.6   Publication of findings

Strydom (2011b:126) maintains that research should be presented in written format using language that can easily be understood by all potential readers. It is the responsibility of the researcher to convey the research findings and not use biased

language to influence the reader (Strydom, 2011b:126). The research findings resulting from this study was submitted to the University of Pretoria in the format of this research report. As indicated in 3.6.1, the findings may be submitted to a scientific journal for publication.

Bless, et al. (2006:146) indicate that research participants would want to use the research findings to inform their practice and policies. The researcher intends to provide the various participants with a summary of the research findings and the recommendations, which they could use to inform their practice.

3.10   STUDY LIMITATIONS

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the researcher was able to identify several limitations. The research was conducted with a small group of individuals, employed at NGOs within the City of Tshwane, their observations and experiences are limited to the environment where they practice. Interviews were conducted with social workers previously known to the researcher as the population of social workers within the City of Tshwane is small. It could influence the data; however, the nature of the research topic was explorative. This is a new topic in the social work field in South Africa. No discomfort from participants was sensed while sharing their observations openly. The challenge was in obtaining access to participants in the participating organisations to conduct the research. Although the supervisors and managers issued permission letters to the researcher to conduct the study in the respective organisations, the selected social workers could not all avail themselves for an interview either due to workload or time constraints. Therefore, the researcher had to recruit participants on more than one occasion, prolonging the study with some months.

3.11   RESEARCH FINDINGS

Demographic profile of participantsTable 3.1 provides the demographical information of the participants. Each participant was assigned a code to protect their identity and privacy, starting at P1 and ending at P11.

Table 3.1: Demographic profile of the participants

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11
Gender	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	M	F
Age group	36-40	36-40	47-52	24-29	53+	53+	41-46	30-35	53+	36-40	30-35
Highest qualification	BSW	BSW	BSocSc	BSW	BSocSc	BSW	BSW	BSW	BSW (Hon)	MSW	MSW
Years practising as a social worker	11+	7-10	11+	1-3	11+	11+	11+	4-6	11+	11+	7-10
Geographical area of practice	Urban	Urban	Semi-urban	Urban	Urban	Urban	Urban	Semi-urban	Urban	Urban	Urban

From the participants, nine were represented by females and two by males. The female dominance in the social work profession is in alignment with the population of social workers registered at the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) (Khunou, Pillay & Nethononda, 2012:122). Three participants were within the 53+ age group and another three participants were between 36 and 40. Two participants were aged 30 to 35; one participant was aged 47 to 52; another participant was between the ages of 41 to 46; the final participant was within the 24 to 29 age group. Most participants held a bachelor's degree in either social work or social sciences; one participant held an honours degree and two participants a master's

degree. Nine participants render social work services within an urban setting and three participants render services in semi-urban areas. On average, the sampled group had eight years of experience as a social worker.

3.12   KEY THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

This section presents the key themes and sub-themes emerging from the study. The findings are strengthened by direct quotes from participants and where relevant corroborated with literature.

The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the collected data are summarised in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Environmental degradation and community sustainability	1.1 Failing community infrastructures 1.2 Pollution and environmental exploitation 1.3 Limited access to safe water sources

2. Consequences of environmental injustices for communities	2.1 Increase in homelessness
	2.2 Human rights violations
	    2.2.1 Limited access to health care
	    2.2.2 Educational exclusion

3. Factors influencing the sustainability of communities	3.1 Lack of environmental awareness of service users 3.2 Limited partnerships in social service delivery 3.3 Narrow focus of social service discussion fora

4. Social work roles promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities	4.1 Social work roles promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities
	    4.1.1 Role of facilitator
	    4.1.2 Role of advocate/ lobbyist
	    4.1.3 Role of educator
	    4.1.4 Role of networker
	
	4.2 Projects promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities

3.12.1 Theme 1: Environmental degradation and community sustainability

Environmental degradation can be described as any hindrance within a person's social, economic, political spheres or environment, negatively influencing a person's quality of life (Norton, 2012:299). In poor communities, environmental degradation hinders community sustainability.

Participants indicated that the way society is organised contributes to the increasing rate of environmental degradation. These factors include, a failing community infrastructure, pollution, and environmental exploitation, discussed below as sub-themes.

3.12.1.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Failing community infrastructures

Findings indicate that most communities lack a crucial infrastructure due to the way society is organised and rural communities constructing their own infrastructure due to the absence of government initiatives. Proper sanitation and clean running water are a scarce commodity in these communities (also see Sub-theme 1.3). The most mentioned infrastructure failure is the shortage of affordable housing. A participant linked this to laws enforced during apartheid.

> P2:   "Associated with this challenge is the spatial configuration we have inherited as a result of the old group areas act".

The effects of these laws are therefore still experienced by impoverished families. Individuals from rural communities cannot afford to move to the city due to a shortage of affordable housing. As a result, urban areas are overcrowded by informal housing in shanty towns. The following quote confirms these findings.

> P10:   "These urban locations are overcrowded and also have clusters of informal housing".

Despite these challenges, the findings indicate that the perceived promise of a better life in cities or affluent urban areas is becoming a pull factor for people living in rural communities. This includes refugees and asylum seekers, triggering rapid population growth. The reality is that the infrastructure in cities is becoming overburdened concerning the water system, provision of electricity, waste collection, health care and education facilities, resulting in high levels of unemployment and poverty, as emphasised by the following quotes.

P2: "It is not only buildings but our water system, electricity, refuse collection system, all struggle to cope with the situation not to mention our health and education infrastructure".

P11: "…We are dealing with unmet expectations, refugees and asylum seekers believe that South Africa is the promised land, only to find that unemployment rates are sky high and that poverty is almost like the norm… the reality is that the system cannot cope with the very quick population growth".

Failure to maintain and upgrade infrastructure within communities widens the divergence between the rich and poor.

P10: "Amenities like parks, sport centres, malls, health facilities and schools are often limited and disproportionate, compared to total population residing in these communities... Often these communities lack recreational facilities and infrastructural maintenance, for instance repairing street lights and roads and cleaning drainages".

The findings of limited access to needed resources, specifically water and housing, deny communities security and sustainability, exacerbating the difficulties they already experience (Dominelli, 2012:45). De Beer and Swanepoel (2013:31) affirm that the need in poor communities are often too urgent. Planning for the construction of these informal communities fail to consider aspects, such as the availability of groundwater, and the state of soil erosion. This, therefore, means, directly exposing informal communities to the effects of environmental degradation. These types of shortages concerning housing, jobs, and water, can also lead to conflict (Dominelli, 2012:154). Enshrined in the South Africa Constitution (RSA, 1996) are the right to a safe environment, clean running water, and adequate housing; failure to maintain and enhance the community infrastructure threatens these basic human rights.

Literature, therefore, affirms the observations of the participants about the unequal distribution of resources and the influence thereof on communities and the environment. The participants could articulate the interconnectedness of the environment and the

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sustainability of human life as Erickson (2012:185) and Dominelli (2012:8) allude, emphasise how industrialisation leads to environmental degradation.

3.12.1.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Pollution and environmental exploitation

Findings identify pollution as one of the greatest threats to the sustainability of communities and that it affects the poor and marginalised most. This corroborates with research by Green (2012:167) and Hawkins (2010:68), emphasising that poor communities are more exposed to degrading environments and suffer the most. Findings further indicate that due to the lack of infrastructure, environmental pollution increases and contributes to inadequate living conditions such as poor air quality.

> P2: "People throw rubbish on the streets and the services that should address this type of pollution is absent within the community".

> P10: "Minorities are more likely to live in areas with poor air quality…"

Due to the lack of proper infrastructural planning, rural communities lack access to infrastructure, such as electricity, indicating that families have to use the available natural resources to meet their basic needs.

> P2: "In the rural areas the people chop down the trees to make fire with to cook their food or to stay warm in winter. The natural environment is one of the only resources available to them".

> P11: "…and I recall that winter being especially cold, they made a fire by cutting down one of the trees in the garden by the entrance".

The findings resonate with the view of Aldrich (2011:595) that the way modern-day society is arranged led to unsustainable and uncontrolled patterns of resource consumption. The natural environment is therefore exploited not only through pollution but also through irreversible environmental damage. The influence of environmental exploitation does not only occur by the hands of communities but also by large corporations pursuing easy solutions to dispose of harmful waste.

P2:   "…their livelihoods and health may be imperilled by resource extraction, [improper] waste disposal and pollution in their neighbourhoods, and also hazards in their workplace".

P 10:   "…exposure to harmful chemicals or other environmental hazards, contributes to infectious and chronic diseases and can negatively impact child development".

The findings emphasise that pollution not only leads to various health challenges but also environmental degradation, which affects mostly groups living in vulnerable conditions, such as poverty. Literature indicates that the effects of environmental degradation, infrastructure failures and social injustices disproportionally affects poor communities (Dominelli, 2012:129; Hawkins, 2010:68; IFSW, 2015). Pollution and infrastructure failures, therefore, worsen the plight of the poor. The findings indicate how pollution accelerates the rate of environmental degradation and is, therefore, a great danger to the sustainability of communities. This corroborates with an IASSW (2016) report on ensuring sustainability amidst environmental injustices. As also indicated in Sub-theme 1.1, the lack of infrastructure is a core factor in environmental degradation which emphasises the opinion of de Beer and Swanepoel (2013:31) that it concerns the lack of proper planning concerning infrastructure in informal communities.

3.12.1.3   Sub-theme 1.3: Limited access to safe water sources

Findings indicate that impoverished communities have limited or, in some instances, no access to safe water sources, which is one of the most important human needs. Communities deprived of clean water are not only exposed to various health challenges but limited access to water also threatens the sustainability of communities.

P9:   "…people living in informal communities… are exposed to living without access to water or sanitation and are often living near raw sewage".

P10:   "Some residents do not have access to fresh water and rely on communal water collection points, or resort to unsafe sources for their drinking water, for instance small rivers and dug out pits".

Access to water sources can sustain human life on various levels. Findings indicate that rural communities often have communal gardens or joint efforts to produce vegetables, which rely on access to water, as illustrated in the following quote.

> P5: "…they plant vegetables, in each and every household. And it benefits that household, they can eat from the vegetables, but some of the vegetables are supplied to all the schools and the projects within that are a...".

Findings emphasise how access to water is essential for communities and that they will travel great distances to access water sources if needed.

> P10: "In the absence of safe tap water in most cases, these communities have to travel considerable distances to look for water… [and] cooking fuel in the absence of electricity… Burst sewages are also a common occurrence…"

As one of the most noticeable benefits, access to water and sanitation facilities is crucial in the prevention of communicable diseases, especially in communities where the population density is high. Water- and disease-related concerns are major obstructions to sustainable development (Batterman, Eisenberg, Hardin, Kruk, Lemos, Michalak, Mukherjee, Renne, Stein, Watkins & Wilson, 2009:1023). The findings emphasise that water connects communities and that social workers have no choice but to bring the ethical management of natural resources into their daily practice. The following quotes illustrate how water connects all people and why it is important to preserve water sources and the need to manage natural resources.

> P5: "Nature preservation or environmental preservation is important, like water, they cannot just dump things in rivers, because for some communities, their drinking water comes from these rivers".

> P2: "As most challenges affecting communities are based on environmental injustices, social workers do not have a choice but to pay more attention to the critical role of the environment and try to sustainably manage these resources".

One participant linked the shortage of access to clean water and sanitation to infrastructure failures and the neglected maintenance thereof.

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P2:   "The water contamination in Hammanskraal or Vaal River is just one window into the failures of infrastructure and environmental quality that have threatened the [sustainability] of communities across South Africa".

Literature by Batterman, et al. (2009:1023) indicates that the shortage of water and sanitation creates several threats to the sustainability of human life. The findings indicate the lack of access to clean water and the health risk on a local level. The planning of infrastructure as de Beer and Swanepoel (2013:31) refer to, require collaborations on the local level and beyond.

The nature of water, as a resource flowing through various countries and even continents, emphasises the importance of collaboration amongst countries to keep water sources clean (Dominelli, 2013:157). The findings imply that communities are not engaged in preserving water sources despite constant exposure to water shortages. Various authors (Atapattu & Schapper, 2019:232; Fraser, Dougill, Mabee, Reed & McAlpine, 2006:115) emphasise the importance of community participation in decision-making processes to address environmental concerns. Green social work is, therefore, aimed at empowering individuals to secure their own future, whereby ownership of developmental activities should be taken up by the community. Community sustainability is also reliant on considering indigenous knowledge, as this has built up the resilience of communities over time (Wairire, Zani, Machera & Mutie, 2014:90). In conclusion, the following quote from Hawkins (2010:69) emphasises the needed adaptations within the social work profession to actively realise environmental justice and sustainability.

"To be relevant in the contemporary world, social work must move beyond our traditional focus on social and economic justice. We must actively advocate for environmental justice and pursue sustainable development so that all people can live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment".

3.12.2 Theme 2: Consequences of environmental injustices for communities

The findings indicate that environmental injustices not only affect the relationship between person and environment but also have negative effects on interpersonal

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relationships. Findings specified that family systems experience changes due to an increased need to migrate for work. Environmental injustices and degradation coupled with infrastructure failures, such as housing, contribute to an increased risk to become homeless. Families and individuals living on the street lack access to proper sanitation facilities, which is not only detrimental to their health but also leads to environmental degradation. The participants concurred with Hawkins' (2010:68) statement that environmental injustices lead to human rights violations and influence the sustainability of communities. These findings are elaborated on in the sub-themes.

3.12.2.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Increase in homelessness

Findings indicate that environmental injustices combined with poor community planning, concerning infrastructure and housing, lead to an increased risk of homelessness. Due to historical factors (which is beyond the scope of this work) individuals are forced to leave their family to seek employment. The lack of affordable housing within cities leave a substantial number of these individuals homeless as they live too far from home to travel daily.

Individuals, such as abused women who are institutionalised in care facilities could find themselves on the street after their discharge. This is due to the lack of adequate and affordable housing. Not all facilities have an exit strategy to empower abused women to become self-sufficient. Findings indicate that the lack of affordable housing is especially detrimental for women as they are exposed to abuse. When refugees cannot pay their rent in temporary shelters, they risk ending up on the street. The following quotes illustrate these challenges, especially emphasising the plight of vulnerable groups.

P2: "People are forced to leave home at 3am to get to work or else they join the homeless on the streets and stay in parks for four nights a week rather than travel home. Homelessness is a big problem as there are no shelters for poor people and especially for poor migrants".

P5: "…the department's policy says 3 to 6 months …if there's nowhere she [the abused woman] can go in six months' time, we can't discharge her to the streets because the condition will worsen [she will go back to the abuser

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and the abuse will continue]. So, I work with them at their pace just encouraging them, maybe some of them if they're interested in a certain type of skill, by the time they leave, we make sure that we get them a starter pack [to start their own business]".

P11: "If we do not pay rent on their [refugees] behalf, they will end up on the street, being exposed further to the possibility of persecution or xenophobic attacks… We once had a family camping outside [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] UNHCR's offices in the middle of winter. We had to intervene, the family had four children under the age of five, obviously there was no sanitation facilities and they had very little to eat…"

Additionally, socially excluded population groups, such as individuals with a mental disability, are also at a higher risk of becoming homeless.

P4: "Mentally ill people are discharged without following the proper follow-up care procedure [due to the unavailability of infrastructure such as homes or institutions that can provide the necessary follow-up care], people with a mental disability or who have experienced a psychotic episode are often not able to adhere to their treatment regime [for which homes are needed]".

Due to the lack of formal housing in or near cities, in townships numerous individuals live in overcrowded informal settlements. Dwellings in informal settlements are constructed with any materials available, for example wood or corrugated iron. The following quote enlightens on the housing problem within informal communities.

P10: "These urban locations, are overcrowded and also have clusters of informal housing in the form of shanty towns. The housing is not professionally constructed to face the different weather patterns, for instance residents commonly use coal to warm up their homes in winter… and illegal electric connections, posing direct threats to human life".

The inferior dwellings that the people construct cannot withstand severe weather patterns, is not safe, and living conditions in such dwellings are detrimental to the health of inhabitants. The heavy rain in South Africa in December 2019 caused severe flooding.

Informal settlements in Mamelodi were destroyed (BBC, 2020), emphasising the vulnerability of poor communities lacking adequate housing.

Infrastructural injustices, such as scarce accommodation is what Dominelli (2012:27) refers to as a social crisis which inhibits self-reliance and resilience within marginalised communities. Being homeless exposes individuals to a vast range of injustices, not to mention their exposure to extreme weather conditions caused by global warming. Furthermore, the findings emphasised the importance of follow-up care procedures and exit assessments, when service users are discharged from care facilities such as a shelter for abused women, to mitigate the injustice of becoming homeless due to negligence. Access to adequate housing is a right conferred to everyone concerning Sec. 26 of the Constitution (RSA,1996). When people are forced to live on the streets this right is infringed which links with the following sub-theme regarding human rights violations.

3.12.2.2   Sub-theme 2.2: Human rights violations

Social work as a profession has a longstanding tradition of mitigating injustices people experience (Hawkins, 2010:68; Patel, 2015:25). Green social work builds on this tradition by addressing human rights violations. Findings emphasise two human rights violations that influence the sustainability of communities, indicating access to health care and education. Findings indicate that certain vulnerable groups in communities are more susceptible to the influence of injustices.

2.2.1   Limited access to health care

Findings indicate that marginalised groups have severe difficulty in accessing needed health care services. The availability of service providers is limited in informal communities, resulting in long waiting periods and insufficient stock of medication. The following quote illustrates how marginalised population groups are denied medical care.

> P6:   "Another thing is also access to health care, like for example Zimbabweans, they don't have clinic cards and also the way they are treated at the hospitals".

Discrimination was institutionalised, legalised, and internalised during the apartheid regime. Even though South Africa became a democracy in 1994, discrimination captured a new form based on cultural differences, excluding certain population groups (Patel, 2015:352). The exposure to discrimination is reflected in the following quote:

P7: "I refer the client to the clinic only to find that she won't get the same services there, because there's a don't care attitude or because of discrimination…"

Combined with the various forms of institutionalised discrimination, the lack of resources further hampers the sustainability of communities. The following quotes illustrate how infrastructural failures intensify human rights violations.

P7: "…the healthcare workers are also overwhelmed because of the numbers of people coming to seek medical attention and most of the times you will find that there is a lack of resources and manpower".

P9: "There are limited numbers of health facilities and schools, which are leading to fighting over access to services and also compromising the quality of services offered thereof".

Findings indicate that a lack of access to needed medical services halters progress and denies communities the opportunity to become sustainably due to basic needs not met. Families and individuals living in poor communities are denied a better future because of empty promises by politicians.

2.2.2 Educational exclusion

Findings indicate that despite basic education being one the rights of children in South Africa, educational exclusion still occurs, creating detrimental results for the sustainability of communities. Concerns, such as not having a birth certificate, are preventing children from having access to education. In the case of migrant children, for example, the language barrier in schools causes these children to fail grades. The following quote illustrates how parental neglect to obtain birth certificates for children leads to educational exclusion.

P1:   "And the other thing, I think maybe this is due to the parents' neglect, there's a lot of children who doesn't have documentation. Now it's becoming a problem with Department of Education, because you cannot place the child at the school, if the child doesn't have a birth certificate or doesn't really have a clinic card".

Educational access is also hampered by the number of schools in communities. The following quote illustrates one participant's frustration with the educational system.

P2:   "Another social injustice is the lack of educational infrastructure within easy range of families".

The lack of educational infrastructure cripples the sustainability of communities by contributing to school drop-outs and high unemployment rates. Schools in rural communities offer education in the local language and children speaking another language find it difficult to adapt and succeed in obtaining a basic education. The following quotes illustrate how language barriers can exclude children from obtaining an education, eventually excluding them from the job market.

P1:   "So, you cannot place that child in a location or rural places because you won't be doing any justice to this child. First of all, the language at school is African but the child is speaking Afrikaans".

P6:   "Because of the language barrier youth also drop out of school, and because they didn't complete school, they cannot access basic jobs".

Communities became accustomed to a lack of resources and infrastructure in communities. According to participant P7, lacking services are accepted as the norm in some informal communities.

P7:   "People living in these informal settlements accepts these injustices because they have never been exposed to a better life, for them it is the way of life whereas we see it as an injustice".

In contrast with the aforementioned quote, participant P10 shared that in some communities, people became frustrated with the poor service delivery and hence they demand change.

> P10: "Service provision protests are a common occurrence in these improvised communities, for instance politicians promise better housing, health care, schooling, water, electricity and quality of life to residents".

Social service delivery can be difficult in communities due to gatekeepers as stated by participant P6:

> P6: "I think that certain people are gatekeepers and that is what makes it difficult [to deliver services]".

Concerning Section 27 of the Constitution (RSA, 1997), everyone has the right to access to health care services and social security, such as appropriate social assistance from the government to support themselves and their dependents. Emergency medical treatment may also not be refused. Concerning Section 29 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996) all people have the right to, amongst other things, basic education in the official language of their choice (as far as reasonably practical). Whether service users accept or protest the current situation, communities excluded from accessing basic rights suffer a great injustice.

The sustainability and quality of life in communities without access to education not only hampers their economic ability but often also their ability to preserve nature. To pretend the poor must be responsible for environmental conservation is neither sustainable nor self-sustaining. It cannot be expected of the poor to spend their livelihoods on the environment of the future. To address the issue of community sustainability and environmental justice, equal access to basic education is required to develop an inclusive South Africa with shared opportunities for growth and to create a shared responsibility towards environmental protection.

3.12.3 Theme 3: Factors influencing the sustainability of communities

Sustainable communities are characterised by community members using natural resources in a manner that can sustain their livelihood but also the livelihood of future generations (Peeters, 2012:293). The participants indicated that environmental awareness and the general attitude towards environmental protection influence the sustainability of communities. Factors that influence the sustainability of communities are the lack of environmental awareness, limited partnerships in social service delivery, and a narrow focus of DSD discussion fora, considered subsequently as sub-themes.

3.12.3.1   Sub-theme 3.1: Lack of environmental awareness of service users

The findings reveal that the level of environmental awareness in communities relates to conditions of poverty. Informal communities struggle to gain access to energy resources and therefore relies profoundly on the natural environment to sustain them. The findings indicate that communities lack knowledge of how environmental protection links to the sustainability of their livelihoods as they use natural resources to the point of exhaustion. The following quotes illustrate the interaction between poor communities and the natural environment.

> P2:   "People throw rubbish on the streets [due to the absence of municipal services collecting refuse] …".
>
> P6:   "…I think the thing of the environment, take for instance chopping down trees… they use trees so that they can be able to get wood to make fire to cook their food...".
>
> P2:   "The natural environment is one of the only resources available to them [to use towards their survival and fulfilling their basic needs]".

Participants acknowledged the importance of protecting the natural environment as the sustainability of future generations is at risk. The following quote captures the nuance of developmental social work, focusing both on developing the service user and the available resources within the person's environmental context and doing it responsibly to ensure sustainability.

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P3:   "… we are always of the view that when we provide developmental services, we look at the person in his environmental context, meaning that we don't segment the person from the environment... So, sustainability it's about balancing the resources in the community as well as internally so".

The findings indicate that although from a service provider perspective the intention is to promote environmental awareness, it is still not filtering through to a community level where environmental awareness is still lacking. The lack of environmental awareness or protection on a community level links to the unavailability or denied access to required resources. It is therefore impossible for individuals living in poor communities to focus on environmental conservation as their livelihood depends on using such resources (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2013:31). Programmes implemented to mitigate the degradation of the environment must incorporate joint management of natural resources, as community buy-in is vital for community sustainability. Wali, Alvira, Tallman, Ravikumar and Macedo (2017) emphasise stewardship and community empowerment, establishing that the best result can be achieved when communities participate in the planning of environmental protection initiatives.

3.12.3.2   Sub-theme 3.2: Limited partnerships in social service delivery

Participants indicated that they have to collaborate with various stakeholders to render services, contributing to sustainable communities. Although various government departments were mentioned, the emphasis of the findings was on the Department of Social Development (DSD) as a stakeholder. Participants indicated constraints in the partnership in that DSD is perceived as a funder instructing NGOs to perform certain functions on their behalf.

P3:   "Let us start by saying we are rendering services for the Department of Social Development".

P5:   "DSD funds us, almost one third of our funding comes from DSD".

Participants disclosed that in some instances, DSD does not provide services to some or all service users in their service area due to factors, such as lack of knowledge or lack of motivation, as emphasised in the quote below.

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P9:   "DSD is mandated to provide services to these clients [refugees, asylum seekers or migrants], however they lack knowledge and sometimes motivation to provide services".

Participants emphasised that social workers from DSD do not attend meetings where social workers discuss difficult cases and find solutions to best assist service users.

P1:   "…we are trying to meet with different professionals to form a multidisciplinary team, DSD, the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Education, but in most cases, it is only social workers from NGOs pitching for those appointments, for those meetings, other people don't even bother".

P11:   "Take for instance our Johannesburg office we have contact with two DSD national managers, we are promised a lot of things, for instance trainings and contact details of the relevant social workers, but nothing ever comes of it".

As opposed to supporting NGOs, DSD imposes unrealistic expectations whilst policies are not aligned to meet these expectations, especially as required in the case of a working partnership. Not all DSD managers have a background in social work, which further complicates the working relationship between NGOs and DSD.

P1:   "…It's the same within our social work department… Department of Social Development on the national level, regional or local NGOs, we are not on the same thinking regarding how we deal with issues of the client… And I think the other problem is because most of the people who are on a management level regarding the issue of the Department some of them, they're not even social workers. They don't understand how the social work profession [is implemented on the ground level], so that is the biggest concern that I have".

P8:   "…they need to develop policies that actually are for social workers and are for communities".

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Whilst findings emphasise the lack of support and partnerships, especially with DSD, participants acknowledge attempts to facilitate discussion opportunities, although within its own limitations as outlined in the subsequent sub-theme.

3.12.3.3   Sub-theme 3.3: Narrow scope of social service discussion fora

The findings indicated that fora provide opportunities for discussions and capacity building, however, the scope is narrowed to case management and social services related to shelters and vulnerable groups in communities.

P1:   "It's like now normally have got the forum, it's the Pretoria Central Court, where we trying to meet with different professional multidisciplinary team… but in most cases is only [NGO] social workers pitching for those appointments… other people don't even bother".

P2:   "…we collaborate with the member organisations of the Tshwane Homelessness Forum in so far as possible… Much good work is being done, unfortunately the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. Furthermore, too much of the good work seems to be charity based rather than developmental and sustainable".

P5:   "We have the Gauteng shelter network and it is run by the Department of Social Development where they organise capacity building".

P11:   "Our social workers attend community forums, one in the city centre, one in Mamelodi and one in Kungwini. Two of these forums are actively organised by the Department of Social Development. We joined these forums to provide services to hidden refugee and asylum seeker communities within the greater Tshwane".

Participants established a function for DSD in contributing to sustainable communities by including social and environmental justice themes into discussion fora. Participant P10 identified a role for DSD concerning promoting environmental justice as follows:

P10:   "The Department of Social Development should strike partnerships with all key stakeholders in communities... act as a safety net for those needing

socio-economic interventions… [by] collaborating with … [all] stakeholders to address environmental and health-related challenges, [by] enhancing [the] understanding of environmental and health-related issues at the community level, [by] providing accessible and culturally appropriate opportunities for low-income, minority and linguistically isolated stakeholders to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes, [by] providing information, tools and resources to stakeholders, [and lastly by] improving methods for identifying, addressing, tracking and measuring progress toward achieving environmental justice".

The limited focus of discussion fora on environmental concerns, emphasises that most of the service deliveries remain reactive rather than developmental. It is evident from the findings that participants observe the partnership between NGOs and DSD as important to promote environmental justice and sustainable communities in Tshwane.

3.12.3 Theme 4: Social work roles and projects promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities

Findings indicated that in certain instances, participants disregard their occupation as promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities, although the outcome of their work is developmental. These roles and projects aim to promote the well-being of the current generation but also to secure the well-being of future generations. Developmental social work aims to enhance the holistic well-being of communities, therefore improving not only the social sphere of life but also the economic, the political and the natural environment for people to lead healthier lives (Hawkins, 2010:69). Dominelli (2012:8) describes numerous roles for social workers working within a green social work framework; these roles include advocates, organisers and therapeutic workers.

3.12.3.1 Sub-theme 4.1: Social workers' roles in promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities

According to Mapp (2008:158), social workers have a significant role in facilitating development in communities. Social workers are crucial when initiating social change,

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contributing to all spheres of life to promote sustainable communities. Participant P3 stated that sustainability is to help service users overcome problems; the following quote emphasises the purpose of sustainable social work.

P3:   "Changing people from brokenness to wholeness".

In rendering social services facilitating wholeness, social workers assume various roles during intervention strategies. The following quotes illustrate how participants articulated the broad scope of social workers' roles and tasks in practice:

P4:   "It therefore requires that social workers perform a lot of roles: creating awareness, advocating for human rights, facilitating support groups, facilitating skills training, being a therapist, carer and supporter, raising funds, and a lot of other things".

P3:   "…we are a child protection organisation doing different things depending on the needs".

P1:   "…because sometimes I feel, you know, there are some things that we are doing actually it was not supposed to be done by the social worker… but it looks like everybody now, when there is a crisis regarding the child, they are dumping everything to the social worker".

In promoting environmental justice and sustainability, social workers conduct activities, extending beyond traditional social work roles. Developmental social work focuses on service user empowerment; therefore, the aim is always to produce meaningful and lasting change by facilitating socio-economic development and well-being. The roles of facilitator, advocate, educator, and broker emerged as the most prominent roles that social workers perform to promote environmental justice and contribute to sustainable communities.

3.12.3.1   Role of Facilitator

As multidisciplinary professionals, social workers facilitate change promoting people's well-being and hence sustainable development. In shifting focus to promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities, findings indicated that social

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workers must alter their mindset to facilitate sustainable change. The ensuing statement summarises this shift in focus:

P3: "So, we really need to change our mind to say as social workers we are facilitators of change and change in the sense that the change that we bring to a person will be lasting".

Furthermore, social workers should not be absorbed in administrative concerns but rather be at the forefront where services are required as articulated in the following quote.

P1: "…we are focusing more on administrative issues, instead of like doing the therapeutic part of it, because of all changing things".

In contributing to sustainable communities, participant P3 emphasised that social workers should not take the responsibility from service users but link them with resources to empower them to engage in finding solutions:

P3: "…you see now you are exposing the parent to the resources that will be able to help and also giving her the responsibility to take action, you know… We are just giving you [the service user] power, the power must be in your hand not the social worker. The social worker is just a helper, somebody who must facilitate change so that you achieve your vision".

As indicated by Wairire, et al. (2014:28), social work is an empowering profession and discipline intended to unlock the potential of service users (Wairire, et al., 2014:28). The facilitator's role is aligned with the objectives of green social work; service users have the opportunity to take ownership of their development and be in control of developing their prosperity (Wali, et al., 2017). Fraser, et al. (2006:115) indicate that service users should be included in the change implementation process and therefore the facilitator's function provides them with a platform to influence the interventions implemented to deal with environmental injustices. In a green social work model, social workers that service users have the autonomy to decide what their needs are and to decide on the most appropriate method to address these needs (Grobler & Schenk, 2008:35).

3.12.3.1.2 The advocate

The participants expressed the need for social workers to perform the role of advocates for individuals to prosper. Although the participants did not pertinently mention that social work advocacy should include the protection of the planet, it is implied in the principle of green social work, protecting marginalised people residing in degraded environments. Dominelli (2012:359) maintains that green social work is specifically aimed at mitigating the effects of marginalisation and oppression, emphasised by the observations of the participants. The findings confirm that advocacy is crucial to the abolishment of oppressive practices and social and economic exclusion of vulnerable population groups.

Advocacy does not only concern ensuring that vulnerable groups gain access to needed services or resources but also to ensure that the voices of these groups are heard and specific policies are developed to end the oppression. Advocacy relates to the role of educator as the created awareness of environmental injustices lead to new insights and understandings of the requirements of these communities. The following quote illustrates how advocacy can be employed to create an inclusive and more just society:

> P2: "Within church structures there are Justice and Peace committees in most areas of the diocese and some of them are quite active in outreach and advocacy… We try to ensure the fair treatment of all people across different races, ethnicities and incomes by [advocating] for change in the laws, regulations and policies that affect their environment".

Advocacy is crucial when campaigning for marginalised individuals and groups' right to access services, such as health care and primary education, and protest against social and environmental injustices, illustrated in the following quotes:

> P9: "Children of these communities were also denied access to education, despite the right to education for all being enshrined in our constitution, however this has now been taken through the court system and all children can access the schooling system".

P4: "We also assist them with accessing services, and advocate for them with service providers".

P9: "We provide assistance and advocacy on behalf of these marginalised communities…"

P10: "The organisation can play lobbying and activist roles to bring the social injustices to the fore… advocacy to actively speak out for social justice and sustainable development".

Advocacy is a powerful device that can change the narrative of social service delivery not only on a local level but also at a national level. Policies must support activism and advocacy; therefore, social workers must influence and contribute to policy development in implementing their role as an advocate for justice. Participant P2 mentioned the link between injustices and policies, with the associated challenge to set change in motion.

P2: "Not much change has happened yet and one feels that we have little impact [most] of the time. But the work is ongoing and policymakers already have the tools to address these injustices and to develop policies with disadvantaged communities in mind".

Concerning green social, advocacy should become an integral part of a social worker's activities (Dominelli, 2012:25). Injustices continue and hence, as activists, social workers must pursue injustices and advocate for change and justice to promote the sustainability of communities (Hoefer, 2012:33).

3.12.3.1.3 The role of the educator

Participants shared that the communities they work in are characterised by elevated rates of illiteracy. Intervention programmes focus on educating community members on basic life skills, which they could expand to include awareness and education on the protection of the environment to promote community sustainability. The following quotes provide examples of programmes that participants facilitate to educate their respective communities on sustainability.

P5:   "We've got programmes such as the life skills programme, where we teach them about various things like communication, self-esteem, self-confidence, being confident, and parental skills, because some of them tend to neglect their children, so parental care is also very important".

P7:   "…we are educating them on important life skills to succeed as an adult…"

P8:   "So we try and educate them in terms of their rights and how to interact with other peers".

The quotes above illustrate that participants focus on the social environment. Community education as a practice model for developmental social work can assist social workers to fight environmental injustices due to a lack of knowledge. The following quote illustrates how social workers can perform the function of an educator to reduce discrimination contributing to unstable communities.

P9:   "…it is an uphill battle to educate the local community on xenophobia and to understand that they come here because they had no choice, not because they want jobs".

Although the quotes indicate that participants could identify life skills as a platform to include environmental concerns in their role as educator, they failed to mention what should be included in doing so. Impoverished communities are proportionally more exposed to degraded environments (Hawkins, 2010:68). Social workers can, therefore, provide communities with information that the natural environment is not a renewable resource but rather a resource needing to be protected and managed responsibly. It is, therefore, needed to connect the role of educator with the practice of green social work.

3.12.3.1.4 The role of networker

Participants indicated that social workers, familiar with resources in the community, link resources and refer service users to the required resources. In the role of networker, social workers strengthen the resource base of communities. This traditional role of social workers was emphasised by participants as follows:

P3:   "…we give them food or refer to relevant resources in the community…"

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P6:   "Further in terms of our employability programme, we link people to other organisations".

P3:   "…we are not of the view that we need to remove the children on the spot, we need to remove the children as the last resort, so what are the resources that we can use in the environment, in the community…"

Although the quotes indicate that participants value the role of the networker, they have not identified an environmental focus for themselves as networkers. Participants emphasised that the role of networker requires knowing the community and the stakeholders in the community. Participant P6 captured the importance of being resourceful aptly:

P6:   "Another thing I would say is getting to know your community; to know the stakeholders in the community as well, I would say that is very important. So, when you start at an organisation you need to reach out to other organisations and to know what they do, their roles and roles".

Networking emphasises collaboration and partnerships for sustainable outcomes as the following quotes allude.

P7:   "So, it's all about working together… Even including the councillors within the community… they must also be part of this because they know the community better than we do in terms of resources as well as the needs of the people…"

P10:   "…strike partnerships with all key stakeholders in communities to reduce poverty and initiate sustainable community driven responses to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS…"

Developmental social work relies on partnerships (Patel, 2015:330). It is evident from the responses from the participants, that a need exists to refine the social work roles within the green social work paradigm. Social workers and communities should be educated on the importance of the interaction between people and the environment (Norton, 2012:299). Such education will ensure future generations to become self-sustainable and to attempt to preserve and expand the natural environment.

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In conclusion, social work roles were defined and explained by various scholars, with an emphasis on roles, such as educator, advocator, broker, and facilitator (Weyers, 2011:100). Although the findings indicate that the participants regard these roles as important in promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities, their responses do not reflect how they will promote environmental justice in their respective roles. Most participants acknowledged that social workers need a mind shift to become more focused on environmental injustices in communities. As participant P6 said:

> "The social worker is just a helper, somebody who must facilitate change so that you achieve your vision. So, we really need to change our mind to say as social workers we are facilitators of change and change in the sense that the change that we bring to a person is lasting".

3.12.3.2 Sub-theme 4.2: Projects promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities

Most participants specified that the cycle of poverty will continue unless a meaningful change is introduced into the family system. The participants shared their observations regarding meaningful change such as employability programmes and entrepreneurship training that help families to break the cycle over poverty. To contextualise the section that follows, the subsequent quote provides insight into the importance of implementing sustainable projects.

> P6:   "And if there are sustainability programmes the vicious cycle of poverty can be broken and people can be self-sustainable and not depend on the state anymore".

The following quotations represent the participants' observations regarding the cycle of poverty.

> P1:   "…I always say sometimes it looks like a curse, like you're being cursed from the first generation until I don't know where. Yes, so I think with the lifestyle changing some they really manage to get out of the situation, maybe the education is also playing a huge role now".

P5: "Therefore, if these measures [entrepreneurship and employability trainings] are not in place, the cycle of poverty will continue, and their children would be in the same position they are in now. And if there are sustainability programmes the vicious cycle of poverty can be broken and people can be self-sustainable and not depend on the state anymore".

P6: "We believe that we really need to teach people how to fish, not give them fish because next time I am not here the client is suffering…"

Wairire, et al. (2014:28) emphasise that social development interventions should empower individuals and communities to be custodians of the environment. Participant P6 affirms the commitment of social work to social development as follows:

P6: "I think it's a matter of a mind shift more than anything else and embracing the social developmental framework… so that we live that Integrated Service Delivery Model [values], nothing more".

The above quote resonates with the view of Peeters (2012:292), emphasising the call for the social work profession to incorporate developmental values in everyday service delivery. Findings further revealed that social workers often do not realise that the work they are doing, is developmental. The participants mentioned projects where vegetable gardens are one of the most popular community projects to promote sustainability, not only for household use but also to sell.

P6: "…we provide such training now and also employability, so if they attend our training they can start their own small businesses even if they are just selling fruit or vegetables".

P5: "They are participants, they plant vegetables, in each and every household. And it benefits that household, they can eat from the vegetables, but part of it is supplied to all the schools and the projects with vegetables in that are a…".

Participant P3, rightly mentioned that developmental programmes should be based on the needs within the community.

P3:   "You know community development projects are initiated based on the needs of the community".

The findings corroborate research by Peeters (2012:29), Phillip and Reisch (2015:90) and Mckinnon (2008:264) by emphasising the need for the profession to undergo a paradigm shift to incorporate environmental concerns into everyday social work practice. Social work roles, such as advocate and facilitator, are relevant within the domain of environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:7). Midgley (2014:102-103) poses a challenge that social service professionals should accomplish more to empower service users to create sustainable projects.

3.13   SUMMARY

The chapter provides an overview of the research methodology, the ethical considerations applicable to this study and the study limitations. The themes emerging from the empirical findings included the following: environmental degradation and community sustainability; consequences of environmental injustices for communities; factors influencing the sustainability of communities; and social work roles promoting environmental justice and sustainable communities. Chapter 4 presents the key findings, recommendations, and study conclusions.

CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes by presenting the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The researcher indicates how the goal and objectives of the study were met. The subsequent section presents the key findings of the study, followed by the conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, recommendations from the study are made, including proposed guidelines for social workers to promote environmental justice for sustainable communities.

4.2 Goals and objectives

The goal of this study was to explore and describe social workers' role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from an NGO perspective within Tshwane. The goal was achieved through the following objectives:

4.2.1 Objective 1: To conceptualise environmental justice and community sustainability in social work within the context of green social work

This goal was achieved in Chapter 2 (see Sub-sections 2.3 and 2.4) where a theoretical analysis of environmental justice was conducted. The link between environmental and social justice is the shared interest of both forms of justice in human and environmental well-being (Besthorn, 2013:35). Environmental injustices simultaneously cause and effect social injustices, creating an infinite loop of causal nexus. Environmental and social justice are both embedded in human rights (Dominelli, 2012:169).

The Brundtland Report (1987) (see Sub-section 2.4) describes sustainability as development meeting the needs of the population without compromising the ability to provide in the needs of future populations, therefore emphasising the importance of environmental protection. The sustainable development framework includes people, planet, prosperity, partnerships, and peace (UN, 2015). The spirit of green social work, as outlined in Sub-section 2.5, enables social workers to integrate the needs of people

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with the protection of the environment providing rise to a more eco-conscious profession (Dominelli, 2012).

4.2.2 Objective 2: To explore social workers' understanding of environmental justice

The objective is addressed in Chapters 2 and 3. The literature review emphasised that the social work profession is experiencing a paradigm shift to become more environmentally orientated (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). The study, therefore, anticipated that not all social workers would be familiar with the objectives of green social work, which was indeed the case (see the theme in Chapter 3). The participants specified their understanding of environmental justice. The findings revealed that the participants comprehend the link between social and environmental injustices. These injustices indicate marginalisation, social exclusion, and the unavailability of needed resources. These included aspects, such as pollution (see sub-theme 1.2), infrastructural failures (see Sub-theme 1.1), and inadequate water and sanitation resources (see Sub-theme 1.3).

The findings, therefore, indicated that the participants understand environmental justice as advocating for the scarce resources and ensuring that all population groups have equal access to the needed resources (see Sub-theme 4.1.2). The participants acknowledged that communities contribute towards environmental degradation by cutting down trees (see Sub-theme 1.2), by contaminating water sources (see Sub-theme 1.3) and littering (see Sub-theme 1.2). This degradation relates to structural injustices as the underprivileged are disproportionally more distressed by environmental injustices. The findings further indicated that environmental degradation affects the sustainability of communities (see sub-theme 3.1).

4.2.3 Objective 3: To explore and describe the activities and interventions that social workers engage in when addressing environmental justice concerns

The literature study includes examples of social workers advocating in the interest of communities to reduce the negative influence of social and environmental injustices (see Sub-section 1.2 and 2.2). The AASW (2002) asserts in its code of ethics that the

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social workers facilitate change through influencing policies to address the needs of communities and to protect communities against injustices. The objective was also addressed in Chapter 3, theme four, where the findings indicated that social workers are engaged in activities promoting environmental justice and sustainability. These activities were mostly unintentionally aligned with the objectives of promoting environmental justice. The objective was also dealt with in Sub-section 4.2 where participants revealed projects they are engaged in, addressing environmental injustices.

The activities included mostly vegetable gardens, beading projects, entrepreneurship training and life skills coaching (see Sub-theme 4.2). The participants could identify how the roles of educator, advocate, facilitator, and networker could be aligned with environmental justice objectives (see Sub-theme 4.1). The findings also indicated the importance of community buy-in as a factor for the successful implementation of projects (see Sub-theme 3.1). The participants emphasised that the lack of training from DSD contribute to their inability to implement green social work (see sub-theme 3.2).

4.2.4 Objective 4: To explore and describe social workers' contribution to sustainable communities

Based on the literature presented in Chapter 2 (see Sub-section 2.4), social workers contribute towards sustainable communities through fulfilling roles, such as facilitator, educator, advocate, and networker to protect the environment and promote sustainability. The research findings in Chapter 3, Sub-theme 4.1, indicated what the participants describe as social work's contribution towards sustainable communities, rooted in creating independence from the welfare system and building the capacity of service users. The participants identified initiatives, such as vegetable gardens and employability training, as ways of breaking the cycle of poverty.

4.2.5 Objective 5: Recommendations on the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities

This objective was addressed in Sub-section 4.4 of this chapter. The objective was informed by the roles and activities identified through the literature review in Chapter 2 and also through the input from the participants in Chapter 3, Sub-theme 4.2.

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4.3   KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The key findings from this research study and the conclusions drawn from these findings are presented below:

- Findings indicate that social workers do not yet fully include environmental justice in their daily social work activities. Although social workers are involved in projects related to the environment, they still have to establish the link between social work and environmental justice in their projects and interventions. The shift to include the environment in social work practice only realised recently. This contributes to the limited training available in this field and general lack of knowledge of social workers regarding green social work and environmental justice.

The conclusion, therefore, is that green social work and environmental justice is in the starting phase of implementation by NGOs in the City of Tshwane. The knowledge base amongst social workers concerning green social work lacks, as social workers are not trained in this field; continuous professional training opportunities are unavailable. It is of utmost importance that the knowledge and skill base of social workers in Tshwane is expanded to enable them to incorporate environmental justice into daily practice and render meaningful contributions to sustainable communities. Social workers have a limited understanding of green social work that could be supplemented by introducing regular continuous professional development (CPD) training on the subject matter.

- The findings illustrate that social workers realise the negative influence that communities have on the natural environment and the effects of the degrading natural environment on the quality of life of vulnerable populations. Participants emphasised the negative influence of pollution on the sustainability of communities and vulnerable communities. The participants also emphasised how communities' poor socio-economic ability influence their access to social services. Poor and marginalised communities are proportionally more exposed to infrastructural failures, such as contaminated water sources, and lack of municipal services. These communities rely on natural resources to survive.

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The conclusion is that social workers realise the connection between communities and the natural environment, and the importance of incorporating environmental justice whilst advocating for social justice. Promoting sustainable communities requires that social work adopt green social work as a practice model, focusing on integrated social and economic interventions that consider the environment.

- The findings reveal that communities are still very reliant on natural resources for their everyday needs. The findings also indicate that community attitudes towards the environment directly influences the level of community sustainability. Due to the lack of needed resources such as energy, the communities have no choice but to use the resources in the natural environment. This, in turn, causes further environmental degradation that contributes to a higher level of poverty. Furthermore, communities are also unaware of alternative ways of living due to elevated levels of illiteracy.

Social workers have a significant role in engaging communities in environmental justice projects promoting sustainable communities. Social workers are substantial in communities to address environmental degradation and the protection of the environment to contribute to sustainable communities. Social workers are well-positioned to mobilise communities for social change, including changing negative attitudes towards the environment for sustainability projects. The elevated levels of illiteracy contribute to the difficulty in engaging communities to adopt alternative, more environmentally just practices.

- The findings emphasised that the participants mostly engage with communities in the roles of facilitator, networker, educator, and advocate to combat environmental injustices. These roles enable social workers to advocate for the needs of communities through changing policies for sustainable outcomes.

It can be concluded that traditional social work roles as aforementioned can be employed to promote the green social work agenda towards sustainable communities. Green social work guides social workers to focus on balancing the needs of

communities with that of the natural environment, ensuring they can live together in harmony.

- Findings emphasised that DSD forums have a limited scope and do not address concerns of the environment. Furthermore, the findings indicate that community forums are mostly attended by social workers working at NGOs and not so much DSD.

It can be concluded that DSD is not ready to respond to environmental injustices. Furthermore, DSD does not honour the partnership with NGOs by not attending community forums intended to serve as a platform to expand the scope of services such as including an environmental justice focus in service delivery and interventions.

4.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings identified green social work and environmental justice as a novel approach concerning South African social work. Participants engaged in green social work practices are mostly exploiting it unintentionally. It was evident that they lack knowledge and skills regarding green social work. Based on the key findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made to guide social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities:

- The NGOs should adopt green social work as a practice model to render holistic services, which integrate social and economic development by considering the environment in promoting sustainable communities
- NGOs must adopt a green approach in their operations by limiting the use of paper, implementing green energy sources and also engage in recycling efforts not only in a professional context but also to promote such practices within their service areas
- Increase awareness amongst social workers regarding green social work by making CPD training available and a priority

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- Inclusion of green social work in the social work curricula of undergraduate programmes will ensure that graduates are prepared to implement green social work in practice. This includes adopting a green approach to social work education, to minimise the carbon footprint and encouraging students to implement projects that empower service users to use recycled materials to generate an income

- Social workers should create environmental awareness programmes in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and primary schools that emphasise the importance of clean and safe environments and that people should live in harmony with the environment

- Mobilise communities to advocate for environmental justice and their right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment

- Facilitate engagement of communities in environmental awareness and cleaning campaigns to understand the importance of preserving the natural environment and counter the negative influence of humans on the environment

- Finally, the study suggests a pilot study of an NGO that adopted a green social work practice model to evaluate the outcomes of interventions in promoting environmental justice and sustainable outcomes

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSION LETTER FROM FUTURE FAMILIES

NPO 084-926
PBO 930034781

14 August 2018

Dear Prof Lombard and Ms Mulder

Thank you for the request for Ms Mulder to complete her research at Future Families offices in Olievenhoutsbosch and Mamelodi. I am happy to grant approval for the research and look forward to receiving the results of this research.

I wish Ms Mulder well in her research – it is never an easy task.

Yours sincerely

PD Learmonth
Executive Director

Administration Office
Building 10A
CSIR
Meiring Naude Rd
Tel: 012 841 3223
Fax: 012 841 3228
Postal Address
PO Box 209
Willow Acres
0095

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

Olievenhoutbosch
5 Concerto Place
Extension 4
Tel: 082 095 0155

Musina
10 Harper Road
Musina
Tel: 082 671 9166

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

Johannesburg
South Point Corner
87 De Korte Street
Braamfontein
Tel: 061 016 5464

Empowering families to create their own future

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APPENDIX B: PERMISSION FROM RATA SOCIAL SERVICES

Rata SOCIAL SERVICES

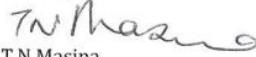NPO Registration: 001-618NPO   NPC Registration: 2001/002289/08   www.rata.org.za

University of Pretoria
Faculty of Humanities

To whom it may concern

Rata social services granted permission to Simone' Mulder to conduct research.

Looking forward to discuss the topic with her.

T.N Masina
Programme Manager
Registration no: 10-14472

APPENDIX C: PERMISSION FROM CMR PRETORIA-SENTRAAL GEMEENSKAPSENTRUM

CMR PRETORIA-SENTRAAL GEMEENSKAPSENTRUM

(012) 440 8854; (012) 341 2318 ⌂ 116B Joubert Street, Sunnyside
Fax(012) 440 8854; 086 771 2292 E:sentraal@cmrn.co.za Web: www.cmrn.co.za NPO Reg nr. 015-913

GAUTENG
Child Centre
T: 012 333 0421
Child Protection
Centre
T: 012 386 1049
Daspoort
T: 012 379 5860
Derdepoort
T: 012 800 4866
Moot
T: 012 331 3644
Roodeplaat
T: 012 808 1455
Soshanguve
T: 012 799 3887
Valhalla
T: 012 660 2366
Wonderboom
T: 012 567 4551
Pretoria-North
T: 012 546 0650
Pretoria-West
T: 012 386 1049
PRETORIA CENTRAL
VOS Community
Centre
T: 012 341 2318
Lynnwood
T: 012 348 0003

LIMPOPO
Louis Trichardt
T: 015 516 5115
Messina (Musina)
T: 015 534 0245
Warmbad (Bela-Bela)
T: 014 736 2557

NORTH WEST
Brits
T: 012 252 3207
Rustenburg
T: 014 592 0455

2018-08-13

To whom it may concern

We as CMR Vos centre of hope hereby Simone Mulder permission to conduct her research at our office.

Regards
N.Mashao

Manager

[signature]

2018 -08- 13

CMR Pretoria - Sentraal
116B Joubert Street, Sunnyside, Pretoria
T: 012 440-8854
E: sentraal@cmrn.co.za NPO nr 015-913

APPENDIX D: PERMISSION FROM MERCY HOUSE

MERCY HOUSE
(014-682 NPO)

TEL: (012) 329-6682

email: mail@mercyhouse.co.za

407 Flowers Street
CAPITAL PARK
P. O. BOX 24279
GEZINA
PRETORIA   0031

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Permission is hereby given to Simone Mulder to conduct research in the field of social services at Mercy House Shelter for Victims of Gender Based Violence.

Sr Colleen Wilkinson

Sr Colleen Wilkinson
Director
Merc y House

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APPENDIX E: PERMISSION FROM XAVERI

XAVERI

Xaveri Movement South Africa | Chama Cha Waxaveri Africa ya kusini Mouvement Xaveri Afrique du Sud

P.O. Box: 8149   Tel: +27 12 326 5311
Pretoria 0001   Fax: +27 12 325 3994   Date: 08 October 2018
South Africa   Email: info@xaveri.org

Submitted by email: Simone@futurefamilies.co.za

To Whom It May Concern,

In response to the request that I have received from **Simoné Mulder**, student number **u10688014** University of Pretoria, in which she sought permission to conduct research at Xaveri South Africa for Portfolio Examination, in a project titled, Social Work's Role in Promoting Environmental Justice for Sustainable Communities, which entails what she called "observation company research", and having reviewed the study protocol,

I, Mr Martin MANDE, in my capacity as director of Xaveri South Africa, do hereby grant permission for Miss Mulder to conduct the research at Xaveri SA.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the above-mentioned number.

We look forward to seeing you on and offer a very warm welcome.

Sincerely,
Martin MANDE
Xaveri South Africa
Director

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APPENDIX F: PERMISSION FROM YANA

YANA
You Are Not Alone

Pretoriase Vereniging van Persone met
Skisofrenie, hulle Familie & Vriende

Pretoria Association of Persons with
Schizophrenia, their Family and Friends

YANA
Posbus/PO Box 23783
Gezina
0031

Kontak/Contact::

(012) 330-1797 / (012) 330-1917

hannetjie@yana1.co.za

www.youarenotalone.co.za

6 June 2019

University of Pretoria

Faculty of Humanities
To whom it may concern

YANA granted permission to Simone Mulder to conduct research.

Regards,

Hannetjie Kelderman
Manager
NPO 011 353

APPENDIX G: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Social workers

The goal of the study is to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities

Section A: Biographical Information

1. What is your gender?

Female:		Male:		LGTBIQ:	

2. What is your age group?

Under 24	24-29	30-35	36-40	41-46	47-52	53+

3. What is your highest tertiary qualification?

   ....

4. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?

1-3	4-6	7-10	11+ years

5. In which sector do you work?

   Government ☐

   Non-Profit Organisation ☐

   Parastatal ☐

   Other. (Please specify) ....

6. In which one of the following geographical areas do you work?

   Urban ☐   Semi-urban ☐   Rural ☐

Section B: QUESTIONS

1. What environmental injustices are common in the communities that you are working in?
2. Who are mostly affected by these injustices, and why do you say so?
3. How is the sustainability of these communities affected by environmental injustices?
4. What programmes and interventions are you, and your organisation/department engaged in, that promote sustainable communities and environmental justice? What impact to they make in terms of what has changed or is in the process of changing?
5. Who are your collaborating with as partners in promoting sustainable communities and environmental justice? Who do think you should engage as partners?
6. You have shared your views on what environmental injustices are prevalent and how it affects the sustainability of communities. How do you think, does it influence and challenge the role of social workers to shift focus to more sustainable practice that consider the environment, especially in the context of developmental work?
7. What suggestions do you have in preparing and guiding social workers to play a role in contributing to sustainable communities and promoting environmental justice? What will be enabling factors to succeed, and what will be challenges in this regard?
8. Do you have any further comments on the research topic that we have not discussed, but what you think could strengthen the research findings?

APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT

Faculty of Humanities

Researcher: Simone Mulder
Tel: 012 320 6838
E-mail: simmuldr@gmail.com

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

1. **Title of the study:** The role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from a NGO perspective in the City of Tshwane

2. **Goal of the study:** To explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

3. **Procedures:** The study will use one-on-one interviews to collect data from participants. Each interview is expected to take approximately 1 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.

4. **Risks and discomforts:** There are no known risks and discomforts that may be endured by participants in this study.

5. **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.

6. **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.

7. **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.

8. **Person to contact:** If participants have questions or concerns relating to the study, they may contact the researcher at 012 320 6838 or email her at simmuldr@gmail.com

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

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.

----------------------   --------------------------------   -----------------------------
Date   Place   Participant's signature

----------------------   --------------------------------   -----------------------------
Date   Place   Researcher's signature

APPENDIX I: CONSENT FROM THE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Faculty of Humanities
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee

1 September 2020

Dear Ms Mulder

Project:	**The role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from a NGO perspective in the City of Tshwane**
Researcher:	**S Mulder**
Supervisor:	**Prof A Lombard**
Department:	**Social Work and Criminology**
Reference number:	**10688014 (HUM20180809HS) (Group research)**
Degree:	**Masters**

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

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 1 September 2020. Data collection may therefore commence.

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

Sincerely

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

cc: Prof A Lombard (Supervisor and HoD)

Research Ethics Committee Members: **Prof Innocent Pikirayi (Deputy Dean);** Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr A-M de Beer; Dr A dos Santos; Dr P Gutura; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr D Krige; Prof D Maree; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Prof D Reyburn; Prof M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa

Room 7-27, Humanities Building, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)12 420 4853 I Fax +27 (0)12 420 4501 I Email pghumanities@up.ac.za I www.up.ac.za/faculty-of-humanities

APPENDIX J: LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR

Nr: 0019326

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LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Research report title:	The role of Social Workers in Promoting Environmental Justice for Sustainable Communities: from an NGO Perspective in the City of Tshwane
Author:	Simoné Steyn
Institution:	University of Pretoria
Date Issued:	9 November 2020

This document certifies that the manuscript listed above was edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style. Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process. Documents receiving this certification should be English ready for publication; however, the author has the ability and choice to accept or reject our suggestions and changes.

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SAFREA Exco Member http://www.safrea.co.za/pages/121-Meet_the_Committees