

**CHILDREN'S AGENCY IN REDUCING POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK:  
CASE STUDY OF SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE, LUSAKA**

**BY**

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**MINI DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE**

**MSW SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY**

**IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND CRIMINOLOGY**

**AT THE**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**FACULTY OF HUMANTIES**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. Dr A. LOMBARD**

**DECEMBER 2020**

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK & CRIMINOLOGY

DECLARATION

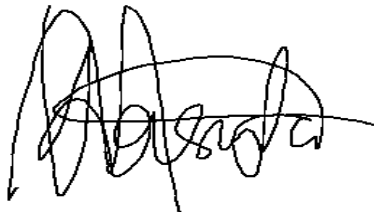
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22<sup>nd</sup> December 2020

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## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my father, Earnest Tapa Kasuta for inspiring me to take on the social work journey, providing guidance and ultimately for being my social work role model.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to thank and appreciate the following:

Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour for giving me the strength, wisdom and good health for sustaining me through this journey.

My research supervisor, Professor Antoinette Lombard, for her never ceasing guidance and support. She has been a pillar and fountain of knowledge and working under her supervision has been a great privilege.

SOS Children's Village Lusaka for granting me permission to conduct my research at the institution as this study would not have been completed without them.

The Children and members of staff at SOS Children's Village Lusaka for sparing and agreeing to respond to my questions for the study.

Finally, my gratitude goes to my fiancée for seeing me through this MSW journey; my family and friends for their support, prayers and counsel.

## **ABSTRACT**

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### **CHILDREN'S AGENCY IN REDUCING POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK: CASE STUDY OF SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE, LUSAKA**

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The Zambia Statistical Agency (ZSA) estimates the current population of Zambia to be at 17,885,422 (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). More than 50 percent (53.4 %) of Zambian population are children under 18 years (UNICEF, 2020). From the statistics, it can be deduced that Zambia has a huge dependency problem and many children have to struggle with access to basic needs such as food, shelter and education. Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and must be included in decision-making processes on poverty reduction and environmental risks (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200;201).

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

The Human Rights-Based Approach was the theoretical framework for the study. The researcher employed a qualitative research approach and the study was both explorative and descriptive in nature. The research design was an instrumental case study and the sample of ten participants was purposively selected from SOS Children's Village Lusaka. The participants included five children whom were in the alternative care programme and five key informants of whom three (3) were social workers and two (2) child development

specialists. Data was collected by means of semi-structured one-on-one interviews and data was analysed through themes.

Findings indicated that SOS Children's Village, Lusaka provides in all the basic needs of the children and protects them from poverty and environmental risks at the institution. Furthermore, adult's concept of the child influences how they allow child participation. Most key informants viewed a child to be in need of guidance and protection whilst a few viewed a child as having the ability to participate while being protected. Children's participation is mostly restricted to their housing environments while their participation in programme matters is more passive as their views are hardly asked or considered. The study concluded that children do not participate directly in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions. Thus, their agency to a large extent is not respected in participation. The study recommends that role players involved in the SOS Children's Village, Lusaka can promote children's agency and engage them in all the phases of the programme by developing their agency, upholding their human rights and engaging the larger community.

Key words: SOS Children's Village; child participation; child agency; poverty; environmental risks

## ACRONYMS

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IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
ZSA	Zambia Statistical Agency

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## CHAPTER 1

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### GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

#### 1.1 Introduction

The Zambia Statistical Agency (ZSA) (2020) estimates the population of Zambia to be at 17,885,422. From the total population, 9,033,248 (51%) are females and 8,852,174 (49%) are males (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). More than 50 percent (53.4 %) of Zambian population are children under 18 years (UNICEF, 2020). From the statistics, it shows that Zambia has a huge dependency load and many children have to struggle with access to basic needs such as food, shelter and education.

The poor educational foundation of many children from early childhood and “the weak social structures and associated problems of violence and abuse”, keep children trapped in poverty and socially and physically excluded from mainstream society (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:6). Furthermore, the most vulnerable people, which include children, are more likely to live in the most degraded environments (Hawkins, 2010:68), where they are exposed to environmental risks such as poor sanitation, pollution and lack of clean water.

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

Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and future. Involving children in discourses and decision-making processes on poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods broaden their human capital through their contributions, while they

are also developing new skills, responsibilities, acceptable ways of living and sharing space with others as well as tolerating and working with people who are holding views that differs from theirs (Katunga & Lombard, 2016: 200;201). It also expands their social capital by introducing them to diverse socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural networks, systems and resources that they might not have been privy to if they had not participated in poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods programmes (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200;201). Children have the right to participate in the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes that affect their current and future lives, and not be passive bystanders. Children have agency and should be recognised for the contribution they can make in reducing poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods and mitigating environmental risks for sustainable development in their communities. This study investigated how children’s agency is recognised in reducing poverty and environmental risks at SOS Children’s Village in Lusaka.

The concepts relevant to the study are as follows:

- **Child**

A “child” means a person who has attained, or is below, the age of eighteen years (Zambia's Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2016) (Constitute, 2018).

- **Agency**

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

- **Poverty**

In the context of this study, poverty is more than low income. It is also about social and physical exclusion, a sense of powerlessness, exclusion from decision-making and lack

of access to education, health care and clean and safe environments (Green, 2012:6). Poverty reduction is about giving people opportunities to access education, health care, water, and sanitation “to cope with the shocks of everyday life” (Green, 2012:10). These opportunities are embedded in human rights and recognition that children have agency to influence outcomes for a sustainable future.

- **Environmental risks**

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

### **SOS Children’s Village Lusaka**

SOS Children’s Village is an international organisation that is focussed around the welfare of children, adolescents and their families (SOS Children’s Villages international, n.d). The core focus of SOS Children’s Villages in Zambia and around the world is to create an environment where all children get an opportunity to grow up in a happy family, with all their basic needs met in accordance to their innate human rights. The programme achieves this by building resilience in households for instance through skills building of both the guardians and the children. This is supported by building capacities to enable children to take care of themselves and later be in position to support their families. Children are also provided with access to quality health care services, access to education and education support services such as the procurement of school uniforms, school shoes and the payments of school fees. SOS Children’s villages operates by specially tailoring interventions to children and their families that suitably resolve the different adversities and hardships that these different families are experiencing. The researcher used the SOS Village in Lusaka as research site and the Alternative Care Programme was the primary programme for this study.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework of the study

Poverty and environmental risks violate human rights and therefore a human rights-based approach was a suitable theoretical framework for the study. A human rights-based approach is a framework for facilitating sustainable human development outcomes embedded in international human rights standards and intended to promote and protect human rights (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1). It anchors programmes, policies, plans and processes of development in a system of rights, which promote sustainable development outcomes and people empowerment (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1).

The right to development recognises

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

UNICEF (2014:13) consolidates the 44 child-related indicators integrated across the 17 SDGs into five dimensions of children’s rights, namely the right to survive, to learn, to be protected from violence, to live in a safe and clean environment, and to have an equal opportunity to succeed. Promoting such a holistic approach to children’s rights means that children are not only seen as part of vulnerable groups but first and foremost, as individuals who have agency and whose participation is fundamental to any poverty reduction initiative.

Children’s rights are protected in the Constitution of the of Zambia (Zambia’s Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2016) (Constitute 2018) as well as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU, 1990), which Zambia has both ratified. The UNCRC (1989) makes provision for a thematic organisational model, where the rights of children are categorised into four themes: survival, protection, development and participation. It also makes provision for general principles in organising rights, known as general principles, that is, non-discrimination; best interest of the child, right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child (UN, 1989). In this study,

the organisation of child rights was based on the view of Heimer and Palme (2016:435) that the UNCRC organises the rights of children in terms of provision, protection and participation. This framework of organising of rights provides for an integrated analysis of the interrelationship between the rights of children and how it affects the construct of children's agency as rights-holders with a particular focus on children's right to participate in decisions that influence their current and future development.

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

Ending poverty in all forms is the highest priority of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). Elimination of child poverty is crucial for sustainable economic and social development (UNICEF 2014:12). For children living in poverty, inadequate healthcare, poor nutrition, poor quality education, social and physical exclusion and environmental risks restrict their 'aspirations and hopefulness' to 'create a more prosperous future' (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:7).

The 2030 Agenda includes global poverty goals that are specific to children. Therefore, poverty reduction measures have to be in place to report on in national progress reports on the SDGs. Increased household income through social grants is one measure to provide for children's rights to social security and curbing child poverty (SAHRC & UNICEF, 2016:6). In addition, children have the right to access social services and programmes on education and health care and protection against environmental risks such as pollution, poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water and violent environments to ensure that they are not left behind (UNICEF, 2018). Childhood constitutes both vulnerabilities and evolving capacities, which require a balance between children's protection rights and their participation rights. It is thus important to recognise that being a child does not automatically render an individual as helpless and/or passive in their environment. Children should be regarded as individuals with agency that can and want to participate in creating a sustainable future for themselves and others by giving inputs into the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes to achieve the intended outcomes.

A literature review indicated that there is little research evidence to indicate the extent that children are included in the conceptualisation, design, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of poverty reduction to attain sustainable development outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks. This could be thus attributed to the definition and understanding of the 'child' concept in Zambia; entailing what a child can or cannot do. A lack of a consensus among adults in the home, family and community and also at policy indicated that children are treated as passive beneficiaries of decisions made by adults, hence restricting their agency in decisions that affect them. Therefore, this study explored how children were involved in the conceptualisation, developing, implementing and evaluating programmes that are intended to reduce the impact of poverty and environmental risks on their livelihoods and well-being for a sustainable future. It was envisaged that the outcomes of the study would inform policy and practice on how the recognition of and respect for children's agency can be incorporated in programme conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks.

The research question for the study was as follows: How are children's agency recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed to reduce poverty and environmental risks in SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

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

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



## **1.4 Goal and objectives**

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

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

## **1.5 Research methodology**

The study used a qualitative research approach and was applied with exploratory and descriptive research goals (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:64;96). The research design was an instrumental case study (Mertens, 2010:324) of children and key informants' understanding on how children could reduce poverty and environmental risks in their respective communities and environments. A purposive sampling method was used to sample five children who are beneficiaries from SOS Children's Village in Lusaka, and five key informants which were social workers and child development specialists who work for SOS Children's Village. Data was collected by means of one-on-one interviews

which was guided by an interview schedule and analysed by using thematic analysis. The research methodology and ethical considerations of the study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

## **1.6 Division of research report**

Chapter one provides a general introduction and orientation to the study. The relevant concepts to the study are defined, the rationale and problem statement discussed and the research questions presented. Furthermore, the goal and objectives of the study are presented and the theoretical framework and research methodology of the study are outlined. Finally, an outline of the chapters of the research report are presented.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review. It includes an overview of the regional legislation, the legislative and policy context in Zambia regarding child welfare and poverty, global agenda affirming children's agency, human rights and child poverty and an overview of SOS Children's Village.

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

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

## CHAPTER 2

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### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review will include an overview of the regional legislation, the legislative and policy context in Zambia regarding child welfare and poverty, global agenda affirming children's agency, human rights and child poverty and an overview of SOS Children's Village.

Ekundayo (2015:143) affirms that children ought to enjoy all the rights that are enshrined in the constitution of the child's country, in all other domestic legislation and in the international and regional conventions or declarations. Today, Zambia is a signatory to two treaties that are specifically relating to children. These treaties are the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) (UN,1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU,1990). Globally, the UNRCR is the most comprehensive and widely used agreement regarding the welfare of the child as it is built on four main principles being, non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, the right to survival and development and lastly, respect of the views of the child (UNICEF, 2019). In order for Zambia to be in line with the treaties, the Zambian government has been trying to come up with a Children's Code Bill which is intended to be a legislative document. It comprises of all legal treaties, acts and codes for the protection and benefit of children. Sadly, however, Zambia has not yet completed this document and currently relies on the National Social Protection Policy which does not explicitly mention children's role in policy design and implementation.

South Africa on the other hand has developed progressive legislation in order to uphold children's rights, the Children's Act of 2005, promulgated in 2010, confirms the participation of children in matters that affect them (Sibanda, 2013:12). The Children's Act 38 of 2005 highlights in Section 10 that, "Every child who is of such an age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter concerning that child has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must

be given due consideration.” Thus, it is important to recognise children’s experiences and insights, as they are the change agents of their daily lives (Trent & Kotze, 2009:184). Through this recognition, especially if practised by strong and secure relationships with adults, resilience is developed.

In the contemporary world, women and children continue to be the most vulnerable despite some efforts across the globe to make the world more friendly and inclusive. However, unlike women, children are more vulnerable because their livelihoods entirely depend on their guardians, care givers and the state at policy level. This entails that if a state does not prioritise the best interests of the child, then children’s lives would fall deeper into crisis.

## **2.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR POVERTY REDUCTION**

In September 2000, Zambia joined other 188 countries in the World to become a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Based on the Millennium Declaration of the United Nations, the MDGs set human and economic development goals and targets to be attained between 1990 and 2015 (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017:82). However, by the end of 2015 Zambia was still one of the poorest countries in the world. Zambia is a landlocked developing country and the World Population Review (2018) states that “Zambia has a population of 17,750,478 people.” However, Zambia also has very high poverty levels and the Borgen Project (2017) shows that poverty in Zambia is at 60 percent and the worst manifestation of poverty is in the Zambian rural areas where over 83 percent of people in these areas are living under the poverty line. Poverty in Zambia has been exacerbated by the high levels of HIV, vulnerability and illiteracy to mention but a few.

The number of vulnerable households has also been on the rise and includes people with limited access to essential services that are necessary for human survival. This reinforces the intergenerational transfer of poverty and keeps these households trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty. Vulnerable groups currently include: female-headed households, child-headed households, persons with disabilities, orphaned children, the chronically ill and elderly people (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017:82). Vulnerability

hinders people and their communities from attaining development and it promotes poverty and inequalities.

Vulnerability barely means ‘poverty’ and Cannon (2008:4) brings out important arguments saying that “peoples’ livelihoods are their first line of defence”. What this entails is that the income generating activities and capital that people own determines the quality of life they can afford such as the schools that they can send their children to and the general quality of social services that they can afford. Collectively, income and capital contributes to the resilience and ability of these households to cope with challenges and disasters. Rodin (2014:13) states that to be “resilient is to be aware, adaptive, diverse, integrated and self-regulating”.

Zambia’s development agenda today is guided by the National Development Plans. Zambia has had three National Development Plans which are the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP), 2006-2010, the Sixth National Development (SNDP), 2011-2015 and the Revised Sixth National Development Plan (R-SNDP), 2013-2016. Currently, Zambia is implementing the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP), 2017-2021. Under this Plan, the Government will be in line with SDG number 1 by implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems to achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. This will ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, and access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017).

The Zambian government continues to make strides towards poverty alleviation and attain sustainable development through the use of different mechanisms such as the national development plans and the implementation of the social protection mechanisms. However, there is much to desire from the Seventh National Development Plan as it does not give clear guidance as to how it shall tackle child poverty and improve resilience.

The chronic nature of the prevalent poverty in Zambia has significantly eroded away people's ability to withstand shocks in the face of vulnerability and risks. As a consequence, traditional poverty reduction efforts have not resulted in significant gains

for the fight against poverty (Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, 2014:3).

Historically, social protection sector interventions in Zambia have been implemented without a coherent and harmonised policy framework resulting in uncoordinated and fragmented efforts to reach the poor. The absence of a policy has also meant there has been no comprehensive and robust monitoring and evaluation system to effectively evaluate the performance of key social protection programmes (Ministry of Community Development, Mother and Child Health, 2014:4). For instance, the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) is the priority social protection programme among many others such as the Farm Input Support Programme (FISP), Food Security Pack (FSP) and the Public Welfare Assistance Scheme (PWAS). The Social Cash Transfer programme is aimed at poverty reduction by supplementing vulnerable households with monthly income that is paid bimonthly so that they are able to access basic needs and services. The programme is targeted at rural poor aged 65 years and above, female headed households, child-headed households, persons living with disabilities or households with persons living with disabilities.

The Farm Input Support Programme (FISP) is aimed at supporting rural farmers by providing farming inputs (maize seed and fertilizer) at highly subsidised prices so that they may grow enough food to support their needs and have leftovers to sell and access other services. Food Security Pack (FSP) on the other end is aimed at providing farming inputs to those rural households that cannot afford to purchase the inputs.

However, the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCT) for instance has not been the most effective tool to be adopted as a poverty eradication strategy by government. Some policy analysts including the researcher here argue that this programme has done more harm than good to the rural societies. Among the reasons is that the programme has created dependency and recklessness among the beneficiaries because they don't seem to be sensitised enough to maximize on the income they receive. The Social Cash Transfer Programme has also had legal issues pertaining to corruption. For example, The Lusaka Times (2018) on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018 wrote that, "An audit has revealed that ZAMPOST diverted funds meant for the social-cash transfer program to purchase motor vehicles for

the same project". Further, the Zambia Daily Mail on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 reported that Zambia was planning on repaying the Department for International Development (DFID) £2.7 million.

The idea of social protection to reduce poverty in Zambian households has been around for many years. There is a clear relationship between social protection and poverty reduction. Social protection is usually referred to as systems that are concerned with managing, preventing, and overcoming situations that adversely affect people's social efficacy. Social protection programming in Zambia takes the form of social assistance, social security, protection and livelihood and empowerment. However, the success of these interventions is hindered primarily by the lack of funding. This means that there has been inconsistent and adhoc implementation due to limited resources. Secondly, In the current legislative framework, no explicit provisions exist for social protection.

The Constitution as the supreme law of the land in Zambia does not recognise economic, social and cultural rights in a way to make them justiciable (national social protection policy). Lastly, low budgetary allocations have been one of the major challenges with regards to social protection implementation. The government every year continues to reduce funding to social protection and youth related programming. KMPG (2019) shows that the budgetary allocation for social protection has reduced from 3.21% in 2018 to 2.52% in 2019 and 2.43% in the 2020 budget.

From above, it can be derived that children being the end users continue to be left out of social protection programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This poses as a challenge for social workers in Zambia to advocate for policies that are participatory in nature and put the best interests of the child as priority. Legislature must be put in place to support social protection including a functional monitoring and evaluation structure. Social workers are challenged to ensure that children participate and have a voice in policy making and intervention strategies to address poverty in a sustainable manner (Lombard, 2014:46).

Globally, children are more than twice as likely as adults to live in poverty, with a poverty headcount ratio of around 20 percent compared to nine percent among adults (African Child Policy Forum, 2018) states that poverty is rife where state institutions are weak,

where shocks and conflict are common or widespread, and where the state does not have the will or the means to take strong action on poverty reduction. Children living in such countries are likely to experience multiple deprivations and violence, and are likely to remain poor and raise their own children in poverty. Child poverty is a human rights matter. Zambia is committed to reduce poverty, especially amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised in society such as women and children however, the 2018 Child-friendliness Index and the African Report on Child Wellbeing (2018) state that Zambia is among the bottom nine “least child-friendly” countries and ranked 48th out of the 52 African countries, which can be attributed to Zambia not having an explicit Children’s bill or policy (African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), 2018). The commitment to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups such as children and women is embedded in SDG 1 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **2.3 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

It is commonly said that children today are tomorrow’s leaders and hence it is comparative that measures for a sustainable future are put in place. Therefore, a sustainable development framework is key in reducing child poverty and environmental risks. The impetus of sustainable development grew out of the need to create a balance between economic and social development. The rise of the third and fourth industrial revolutions meant that many states were primarily focused on economic development at the expense of the social aspect to development. Mapp (2008:23) notes that “a lack of social development creates situations in which violations of human rights can thrive.” Midgley (1995) cited in Elliott (2012:102) emphasised in order to achieve planned change for universal optimal life conditions, social development requires a connection between social and economic development. The researcher defines social development as the empowerment of people to be able to have equal access to opportunities that will enable them to grow both socially and economically.

Social development requires that people have access to good quality health services, education and opportunities that promote social security such as employment. Elliott (2012:103) states that social development is an “asset-based approach consistent with a



strength and empowerment perspective”. Social workers work as educators and mediators to facilitate empowerment of people with abilities to be able to use what is immediately available around them so that they can advance their economic standing and in turn have access to better social services.

Zambia is among several member states that aligned its development agenda with the Millennium Development Goals (2000) and the now Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). The SDGs seek to build on the MDGs and complete what wasn't achieved (UN 2015:3). Zambia's current National Development Plan (7NDP) has embraced an integrated multisectoral approach. The country has domesticated the SDGs, the AU Agenda 2063, among others, into its 7NDP. The SDGs revolve around human rights and focus on creating an environment in which even marginalised populations such as women and children are empowered to meet their development agenda. Rattey (2019) adds that SDGs and human rights are two sides of the same coin and that as states are achieving the set-out SDGs, they are also advancing human rights in the respective member states. The 5Ps of sustainable development summarise the goals of the SDGs and how the SDGs can benefit everyone in society regardless of their social-economic stature, religious affiliations or ethnic group among other. Diagram 2.1 below shows the 5Ps of sustainable development (UN, 2015).



**Diagram 2.1: Five Ps of Sustainable Development**

Source: UN, 2015

The five Ps for sustainable development; prosperity, people, partnerships, peace and planet will next be discussed in relation to children.

### 2.3.1 Prosperity

Prosperity is synonymous to wealth; and all factors required to create a meaningful and fulfilling life. The 2030 Agenda continues to wage war on poverty and hunger (Lombard, 2015). In the contemporary world, social and economic hardships have made it even harder for the majority of African households to live prosperous lives. HIV/AIDS, unemployment, political and economic instability, civil wars war, corruption, illiteracy and climate change among many other factors have all contributed to the rise in poverty levels. Children and the youth are currently the most affected because naturally they have the

least resilience to challenge these factors which could potentially lead to inter-generational poverty.

### **2.3.2 People**

Poverty and hunger hinder children from living fulfilling lives. Lack of proper nutrition promotes disease and could potentially lead to death. The government of the Republic of Zambia has introduced and is currently implementing a number of social protection policies to act as a safety net so as to safeguard the wellbeing of the vulnerable households and to also build resilience in these households. In the year 2002, Zambia implemented the Free Primary Policy which was aimed to mitigate the effects of poverty on illiteracy and school enrolments. UNICEF (2020) shows that Zambia has achieved near universal primary school completion levels - national statistics indicate a completion rate of 91.8 per cent at Grade 7.

However, transition rates from primary to secondary school continue to remain low at 67.5 per cent, mainly due to the lack of places to accommodate all primary school graduates (UNICEF, 2020). The other significant reason as to why the transition rates remain low is the high levels of poverty. Lack of good quality education challenges children's ability to compete as young adults in the contemporary world; it limits their options and abilities which ultimately threaten sustainability and promote an intergenerational poverty cycle.

Various studies on child poverty, that is, the reintegration of street children in Burundi by Crombach, Bambonye and Elbert (2014), the impacts of poverty on children and young people by Treanor (2016), and child poverty studies in Kenya and Macedonia by UNICEF (n.d.) concluded that children who are born in families living in poverty tend to have less resilience and suffer from being exposed to both personal and societal challenges. For instance, personal problems may include poor health, poor academic performance and exposure to vices such as drugs and crime. With regards to societal problems, these children have a higher chance of being subjected to social exclusion. Children growing up in poverty are directly exposed to risks in their homes and communities, including illnesses, crowding and family stress, lack of psychosocial stimulation, and limited resources, and they often experience more serious consequences to risks than children

from higher income families (Parker, Greer & Zuckerman, 1988 cited in Engle & Black, 2008:3).

### **2.3.3 Partnerships**

SDG Goal 17 is themed “Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development” and it entails that a successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships at global, national and local levels (UN, 2020). About three decades ago, Freire (1973:26) cautioned that people are becoming dehumanised through an “unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed”. The neoliberal focus of preparing children for school and then for employment operates in contrast to the long-established early childhood practice of operating from children’s strengths (Brown, 2015). This places children’s learning as an investment in the labour market of the future (Moss et al., 2016; Simpson, Lumsden, & McDowall Clark, 2015). Spolander, Englebrecht and Sansfaçon (2016:3) understand neoliberalism as a theory of political economic practises that propose that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms characterised by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade.

Today, different countries rely on each other to meet their respective needs and this is even more for the developing nations. They have to depend mostly on the developed nation and large corporations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to supplement their development agendas. However, most of these “Developed-Developing” nation partnerships are not truly committed to improving the livelihoods of the end-users (people at grassroot). Instead, they come masked in the form of neoliberal policies that ultimately promise immediate gratification at the expense of a sustainable future and the poorest of the poor have to pay for the consequences. The consequences of neoliberalism however have been the widening of social inequality and consolidation of wealth by the richest in society (Piketty, 2014 cited in Spolander, Englebrecht & Sansfaçon, 2016:3), thus neoliberalism is killing the welfare state.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has turned the world into what can be said to be a global village. With the impetus of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution, connectivity, information flow, collaborations

and developmental agendas have all become interconnected. Children yet again remain at risk as governments are striving for social and economic development so as to create an environment where the skill sets for these children will remain relevant. To escape the trap of poverty, the children and youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need a different set of skills to work in collaboration and harmony with the 4<sup>th</sup> revolution. Care, Kim, Anderson and Wright (2017:2) and Zucconi (2016:1) mention collaboration, creativity, self-awareness, technology and computer skills, critical thinking, communication and social and interpersonal skills, such as empathy, as imperative and highly valued to adapt to a fast-changing world. However, the responsibility of combating negative partnerships, neoliberal policies and corrupt leaders does not entirely rest on the adults today; it in fact calls for more participation and representation from the children because they in turn are twice as vulnerable and are capable of making meaningful contributions in decision making and implantation.

#### **2.3.4 Peace**

There is a direct relationship between peace and sustainable development. All developmental agendas thrive in environments that uphold peace, dignity, rule of law and the embracement of human rights. SDG 16, *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels* (UNDP, 2015), entails that all member states should fight for human rights, fight against all forms of violence to end conflict and insecurity. Peace however is not guaranteed; many factors today threaten peace such as corruption, violence, political affiliations, nepotism, tribalism, racism and religion; to mention but a few.

Zambia is not a stranger to the above threats to peace. The lack of peace threatens the opportunity for children to grow in a society where they can maximise on their efforts to grow, prosper and be better adults. Sustainability is threatened when children are exposed to bad vices such as gender-based violence or child abuse. The Lusaka Times on May 15, 2019 stated that, “according to the first quarter gender-based violence statistics by the Zambia Police Service, the nation recorded 495 child defilement cases.

While there is a reduction by 150 cases compared to the same period last year, the current figures remain unacceptably high.” This statistic meant that child defilement is occurring at an average rate of “6 defilement cases per day (one child defiled every 4 hours).”

UNDP (2017) states that more than 1.4 billion people, including half of the world’s extremely poor people, live in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The number is forecast to grow by a staggering 82 percent by 2030. The reality is that these affected people are focussing their energies on survival and sadly they wouldn’t use their energies to pursue the SDGs. Social workers in Zambia and the world over have to combat peace because the effects of vulnerabilities that rise out of a lack of peace could not only lead to disease and death but also to environmental degradation. The lack of peace in the family is one of the many reasons that has led to the increase of people and children living on street not only in Zambia but the world at large.

### **2.3.5 Planet**

Climate change can be said to be the global change in climate patterns around the world that has adverse effects such as global warming, land degradation and droughts; it also has social implications on different communities and societies around the world. Climate change affects food security because it leads to unpredictable rainfall patterns which disturb the food production cycle. This in turn threatens peace and weakens a community’s resilience. According to the Living Planet Report (World Wide Fund for Nature, 2010) in the year 2007, the global ecological footprint had already exceeded by 50 percent what the planet Earth could provide for. Peters (2011:289) argues that the overuse and depletion of resources and environmental pollution was unequally distributed across continents and countries due to the growing gap between the rich and the poor. Studies have shown that more than one third of the population of Kabwe, Zambia; that is over 76,000 people live in lead-contaminated townships out of which half of the children in these areas have elevated blood lead levels that warrant medical treatment (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (2011) reported that Zambia is one of the most forested countries in southern Africa, covered by nearly 50 million ha of forest (67%), storing an estimated 2.5 billion tonnes of carbon in above-and below-ground biomass. USAID (2012:4) adds on to say that “Zambia is the largest consumer of charcoal in the region and charcoal production provides livelihoods for a substantial number of people, employing an estimated 40,000 people in the sector”.

Children are the most vulnerable for the effects of climate change because they are naturally less resilient and do not have as much impact on the decisions made by adults. A joint qualitative study by UNICEF and the South African Department of Women, Children, and People with Disabilities, and the Department of Environmental Affairs, was reported as exploring the Impact of Climate Change on Children in South Africa (UNICEF, 2011, cited in Lombard & Viviers, 2014:81). The studies indicated that children do understand the relationship between climate change and how change can affect scarce resources, poverty, food insecurity, health, the economy and social and economic wellbeing (Lombard & Viviers 2014:81). Social workers are challenged to provide an enabling platform for children to express their views and give input with matters regarding the planet and climate change. Zambia was hit by its worst cholera pandemic between October 2017 and April 2018.

Climate change can impact vulnerable populations in society because it increases the probability of climate related diseases such as malaria due to rise in temperature in which mosquitoes thrive, waterborne diseases such as cholera, malnutrition due to the shortage of food and droughts and floods in areas. All these challenges infringe on the human rights of people and the poor and vulnerable populations are the least resilient towards these challenges. Therefore, Zambia has put in place climate relevant policies and strategies such as the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) 2007, Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) 2015, National Climate Change Response Strategy 2010, and National Policy on Climate Change 2016 (Zambia Climate Action Report 2016:9). Vulnerable populations have the right to be protected against social, economic and environmental risks. Therefore, in the context of child poverty and

environmental risks, a human rights-based approach was an appropriate theoretical framework for this study.

## **2.4 HUMAN RIGHTS AND CHILD POVERTY**

This section is aimed at illuminating the human rights situation of children in Zambia with an emphasis on child poverty, causal factors and the policies and programme responses put in place by the Zambian government and key cooperating partners such as the UN system and non-governmental organisations. It is imperative to start by defining key terms used in this discourse, that is, poverty, human rights and human based approach (HRBA), also referred to as the human rights-based framework which was adopted as the theoretical framework for this study. The ensuing discussion will move to highlighting the principles of the HRBA, followed by the situation on children's rights in Zambia. The later will lead logically into exploring the policies, programmes and legal framework that exist regarding children's welfare in Zambia and the recommendation that can be drawn from what is happening and what could be done to reduce poverty and improve the upholding and promotion of children's rights.

### **2.4.1 Definitions**

Poverty, human rights and a human rights-based approach are conceptualised as follows in this study:

- Poverty

Poverty is a multidimensional concept that does not have a single agreed upon definition. Often poverty is defined as complete lacking of or not having adequate material possessions to meet one's basic needs. Poverty in this discussion includes this reality (of lacking or not having adequate material resources) and also extends to include social, economic and political elements. Sen (1995) cited in Mowafi and Khawaja (2005) relates poverty to capability deprivation. Economic poverty refers to an individual or household's ability to afford basic needs and services. Economic poverty refers to a deficiency in the amount of financial resources a household has to meet its basic needs (Mowafi &



Khawaja, 2005:260). The social dimension of poverty includes aspects such as lack of social capital (social networks/relations) that one can draw upon for livelihood and moral support.

The study's definition of child poverty is anchored in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) which identifies children as poor if they are deprived in basic goods and services that are crucial for them to survive, develop, and thrive. Gatenio Gabel (2015) cited in Androff (2016:28) adds that human rights have been identified as a tool to advance social justice due to its normative basis in an international consensus consisting of declarations, covenants, and conventions.

- Human rights

Human rights can be said to all those universal rights that people are born with that ensure an acceptable life regardless of individual differences. Human rights delimit state power and, at the same time, require states to take positive measures ensuring an environment that enables all people to enjoy their human rights (Inter-Parliamentary Union and UNOHCHR, 2016:19).

- Human rights-based approach

HRBA is defined as a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights (UNICEF, 2016). Thus, HRBA seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress.

#### **2.4.2 Key principles and significance of HRB framework**

The Scottish Human Rights Commission developed what are commonly referred to as PANEL principles. The PANEL principles are underlying principles that are of fundamental importance in applying a human rights-based approach in practice. These are (Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2010:1):

1. Participation

2. Accountability
3. Non-discrimination and equality
4. Empowerment and
5. Legality.

The **participation** principle entails that everyone has the right to participate in decisions which affect their human rights. Individuals, including children, should participate in all decisions about the issues that affect them, including the care and support they receive from government departments and other service providers. The participation has to be active, free, meaningful and one that gives attention to issues such as access to information in a form and a language which the recipients understand.

**Accountability** is about effective monitoring of human rights standards as well as effective remedies for human rights breaches. For accountability to be effective there must be appropriate laws, policies, institutions, administrative procedures and mechanisms of redress in order to secure human rights. You also need to have a range of active government and non-governmental bodies which promote accountability for respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights.

**Non-discrimination and equality** demand that all forms of discrimination in the realisation of human rights must be prohibited, prevented and eliminated. There also must be deliberate prioritisation of those in the most marginalised/vulnerable situations, such as orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) who face the biggest barriers to realising their rights. Children who receive care and support services in many cases are amongst some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in society. Sometimes, such children are discriminated against in access to services and they are not given a chance to express their views. Social workers must pay particular attention to the protection and realisation of child rights in as much as they are provided with care and support services.

**Empowerment of rights holders** requires that individuals and communities should know their rights and they should be fully supported to participate in the development of policy and practices which affect their lives and to claim rights where necessary. Everyone,

including children, should understand what their rights are and how they can claim these rights. For this to happen, social workers and other change agents need to provide appropriate advocacy support.

From a human rights-based approach **legality of rights** demands for the recognition of rights as legally enforceable entitlements and is linked in to national and international human rights law. Therefore, service providers and all other accountable bodies must be sure that their practices and procedures are grounded in human rights law. There should be no opportunity for care providers to breach human rights of anyone.

Social workers in Zambia and the world over should now be challenged to even more apply rights-based approaches to social work practice. Key aspects in social work practice that have been identified as synchronous with human rights are challenging oppression (Reichert, 2011 cited in Androff 2016:28). Social workers must then strive to combat all social injustices and inequalities in their communities; social workers should advocate for child rights. It entails that children should participate in making decisions especially those that affect them Social work practice from a HRBA requires insight into the rights of children in Zambia as will next be discussed.

### **2.4.3 Situation on child rights in Zambia**

The Zambia Statistical Agency (ZSA) estimates current (2020) population of Zambia to be at 17,885,422. From the total population, 9,033,248 (51%) are females and 8,852,174 (49%) are males (Zambia Statistics Agency, 2020). More than 50 percent (53.4 %) of Zambian population are children under 18 years (UNICEF, 2020). This clearly indicates a high dependence ratio of too many young people who still need to be looked after by their family and government, which is not good for the economy of a poor country. Zambia is one of the most urbanised countries in sub-Saharan Africa. By last year, 2019, 43.1 percent of Zambia's population were living in urban areas and 56.9 percent were in rural areas (ZSA, et al., 2019:5).

Rural to urban migration, in search of employment and better living, is the major contributor to urbanisation. This is due to the fact that although unemployment is high and rising from 11.4% in 2018 (Central Statistics Office & Ministry of Labour and Social

Security, 2018) to 12.5% in 2019 (Central Statistics Office & Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 2019) the situation is worse in the rural areas than in urban areas. The overall national employment-to-population ratio was 30.9 percent, for males it was at 39.4 percent and with females it was at 23.2 percent. In both rural and urban areas, the employment-to-population ratio for males was higher than that of females. In 2019, only 31.4 percent of those in employment were in the formal sector while informal employment accounted for 68.6 percent. Youth unemployment was 17.9 percent, 5.4 percentiles above national rate in 2019 (ZSA, et al., 2019:23).

Rural out-migration and the attendant urbanisation has resulted in weakening of traditional extended family bonds and self-extraction of quality labour force from rural areas. This has contributed to poverty being much higher in rural areas (80.5%) than in urban areas (25%) (Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ), 2018). Children being the worst affected wherever poverty exists, child poverty in rural areas is higher and deeper than it is for urban areas.

As earlier defined, a poor child is one who is deprived of basic goods and services that are crucial for her/him to survive, develop, and thrive. Poverty is multidimensional. In Multiple Overlapping Deprivation Analysis (MODA) methodology, that was also applied to Zambia, child multidimensional poverty is defined as the deprivation in three to six of the following dimensions: *Nutrition, Health, Information, Child Protection, Education, Housing, Sanitation, and Water* (GRZ, 2018). The researcher will assess the child rights situation with regard to child poverty in Zambia by looking at some of these dimensions. It is also important to recognise that children's needs are age-specific and depend on different life stages.

The MODA analysis for children age 0-17 years in Zambia established that child deprivation is high and severe with 41% of children suffering from at least three deprivations at a time, experiencing four deprivations on average (GRZ, 2018). Differences in deprivation rates across areas of residence are significant. In rural areas 60% of children are deprived in three or more simultaneous dimensions compared with 10% only suffering this magnitude of deprivation in urban areas. The highest poverty rates

are found in Western, Northern and Luapula provinces with more than 68% of children deprived in three dimensions or more (GRZ, 2018).

**Nutrition:** Malnutrition is very high among children in Zambia and it continues to be an underlying cause of child death. It is quite visible especially for age 0 to 4 (61.7%). The 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey found that wasting (weight for height) among children aged 0-4 was 6.6% (Central Statistical Office, 2015). While poverty resulting in minimum meal frequency for infants age 6 months to 4 years is the main cause of high levels of malnutrition, there are other related factors that contribute. These include poor sanitation, which result in diarrhoeal diseases, lack of knowledge and skills to prepare meals from locally available foods and traditional beliefs that forbid eating of certain foods by children and women.

**Housing and sanitation** are still a problem for the majority of the Zambian households. This translates into 60% of children having to live in the homes that have no improved toilet facility or access to safe drinking water source. This situation emphasises the environmental risks that poor children are exposed to.

**Health:** The health status of a population is influenced by the economic, water and sanitation conditions under which it lives. In the case of Zambia, those aspects are not favourable. Zambia has made progress on child health and nutrition. Between 2007 and 2018 there was a 50 per cent reduction in maternal and under 5 mortality and a 40 per cent reduction in infant mortality (UNICEF, 2020). HIV and Malaria are among leading causes of death in many countries, with young children and pregnant women as the groups most affected. In Zambia, 11.1% of the population age 15-49 in Zambia are HIV positive. HIV prevalence is higher among women than men (14.2% versus 7.5%) (Central Statistics Office, 2019:260). Child protection entails ensuring that children live in an environment that protects them from violence, exploitation and abuse. Child labour and early marriages are among the vices affecting children in Zambia. Child marriage is high in Zambia. Twenty-nine percent of women aged 20-24 years were married before their eighteenth birthday.

It can be concluded that child rights should be protected by policies and programmes as will subsequently be discussed.

#### **2.4.4 Key policies and programmes to foster child rights in Zambia**

Governments must turn human rights from purely the international conventions and legal instruments they have acceded to into effective policies, institutional practices and behaviours that make human rights a reality for children. In this section, the key policies and other actions that the Zambian government has put in place with regard to safeguarding and enhancing the rights of the child, including elimination or reducing child poverty, will be discussed.

There are six key sectors that exemplify the efforts to fulfil and protect child rights in Zambia. These are health, education, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation, and child protection. All Zambians are equal in dignity and human rights and all these rights and freedoms are contained in the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the Republican Constitution (MCDMCH, 2014:10).

The mission of the National Health policy (2012) is “to provide equitable access to cost effective, quality healthcare services as close to the family as possible”. Like every resident in Zambia, children have access to all health services. However, the Zambian government has specialised service packages and approaches meant to meet the special situation/needs of children. For example, there is the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV meant to protect HIV exposed infants from getting HIV from their mothers during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding. HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) is done to both the father and mother during antenatal clinic attendance and the treatment that follows is free. Postnatal under-five services, which include vaccination and vitamin supplements are also offered free.

Poverty, disadvantage and vulnerability are generally passed from one generation to another just like affluence does. Discrimination against poor people is widespread and tolerated (African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), 2018:22). Education is one of the sure ways of eliminating intergeneration poverty. In Zambia education services exist at four levels: (1) early childhood, (2) primary, (3) secondary and (4) tertiary levels, which includes vocational skills training institutes, colleges and universities. Most children (those

aged 3 - 18) are covered by the first three levels, although some children who start school early (usually those from well to do families) enter the fourth level starting at age 16.

The Zambian government's education policy starts with a focus on the education of the child. The main education policy is titled *Education Our Future: National Policy on Education* (GRZ MoE, 1996). This policy covers all the four levels of offering mentioned above. It is not until 2019 that a policy for higher education (an extension of/extraction from the main policy referred to above) was developed as a stand-alone policy framework document (GRZ MoHE, 2019). Under the principles guiding the development of education in Zambia as outlined in the principal policy, education is correctly treated as a right. Under the principle of equality and equity, it is stated that

“Every individual in Zambia has a right to education. Hence it is a matter of fairness and justice that access to, and participation and benefit in the education system, be availed to all. The development of education will therefore seek to promote equality of access, participation and benefit for all in accordance with individual needs and abilities. Measures to promote equality will include to allocating resources to those in greatest need, proving support systems...” (GRZ MoE, 1996:3-4).

The education policy of Zambia allows the private sector, faith organisations and NGOs to participate in the provision of education services alongside government while the state retains the role of regulation and setting minimum standards like it does for the health and other sectors.

As alluded to earlier, the Zambian government faces challenges in allocating sufficient resources to the education sector that can make access to education a reality for all children in Zambia. As a result, special needy populations like refugee children that have been granted asylum in Zambia have been the responsibility of agencies such as the UNHCR to provide for their education infrastructure (in refugee settlements) and other requirements.

The Zambian government has implemented measures to support financially vulnerable children in order to promote equity in access to education at all levels. At early childhood

level teachers are being trained for pre-school and posted to primary schools to roll out the programme in government schools while others filter into privately owned schools. The Free Primary Education Policy (2002) has insured that government school fees have been waived at primary level to allow every child access to education. There is support given to vulnerable children who can afford fees and other requisites for secondary level through the Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare. However, availability of funds and access to this support remains the challenge. Inadequacy of mechanisms to identify urban poor and rural vulnerable children have compounded the targeting of available resources to the most deserving children. This reality has been acknowledged in the Higher Education Policy document (GRZ MoHE, 2019:6).

In order to address the disadvantage of girls who get pregnant before they complete primary and secondary school the Zambian government has introduced the Re-entry Policy (1997) to allow the girl child to return to school after delivery or upon withdrawal from early marriage.

There's an OVC Bursary Scheme implemented by the Department of Social Welfare in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. The challenge this scheme faces is mainly the funding which is released intermittently, which sometimes causes the school authorities to tell the OVC sponsored by the programme to stay away from attending lessons until their school fees have been settled.

There are some international and local NGOs who run programmes to support the education of vulnerable children in Zambia. Prominent among them are Plan International World Vision ChildFund (formerly Christian Children's Fund), Save the Children, Oxfam, Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED- which as the name suggests focuses on girl child education, SOS Children's Villages International and Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) – another NGO that focuses on provision of education to especially vulnerable girls and children with disabilities.

While there are many agencies assisting the child in Zambia, one challenge or weakness is that there is no forum where they all come together, probably under the umbrella of some relevant government ministry, and share their experiences and/or create linkages.



Such for an only exist on temporal basis where NGOs are receiving funding from one donor source to run a project in different sites.

## **2.5 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE INTERNATIONAL**

SOS Children's Village is an international organisation that is focussed around the welfare of children, adolescents and their families. The first SOS Children's Village was founded by Hermann Gmeiner in 1949 in Imst, Austria (SOS Children's Villages international, n.d). Gmeiner focused on rebuilding the lives of children who lost their homes due to the Second World War. SOS Children's Villages works in 136 countries and territories around the world (SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.). The core focus of SOS Children's Villages is to create an environment where all children get an opportunity to have a happy family, with all their basic needs met in accordance to their innate human rights. SOS Children's Village uses a family approach in implementing its interventions; majority of children under SOS's care are orphaned and abandoned children. The organisation provides quality alternative care, strengthens families, advocates for children's rights, teaches and trains, protects children in emergencies and provides information for children (SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.). The organisation achieves this through the use of its structure; the mother, brothers and sisters, the house, the village.

The SOS mother is a child-care specialist or professional who builds a close relationship with every child entrusted to her. This mother lives with and provides the security, love and stability that each child needs. The children live with their 'new' brothers and sisters and/or their biological siblings in the home which is run by the SOS mother. These brothers and sisters build a relationship for lifetime as they live and grow as a family. The SOS house is the shelter under which the mother and children live, each house is unique and is run by the members of the families to sustain and meet their specific needs for example, food, clothing, health and educational needs.

The different SOS families live together creating a supportive village environment where children can grow and experience childhood in a community-like environment which provides for and protects them (SOS Children's Village International, n.d.). SOS Children's Village provides for all the needs of the children; shelter, protection, education,

nutrition and family. The researcher used SOS Children's Village Lusaka as research site and interacted with the children, the mothers and the staff so as to get a comprehensive understanding of Children's Agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk at SOS Children's Village in Lusaka.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

In summary, various perspectives have been established with relation to the importance of children's participation in decisions that affect them especially with regards to poverty reduction and environmental risk. There have been some positive strides with ensuring policy and legislative frameworks in the region and Zambia is following suit. Children's agency in poverty reduction and environmental risk is a human rights issue and is it in alignment with the SDGs. However, there is need for much more research and literature on this subject.

## CHAPTER 3

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### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the research methodology, the empirical study and the research findings. It starts with the research approach and type of the study; followed by the research design, research methods, trustworthiness of data, pilot study, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. In the following section, the research findings are presented and discussed. The chapter ends with a summary.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

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

The study was both exploratory and descriptive in nature. The exploratory purpose was to answer the "what" question and thus gain insight into children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). The exploratory study enabled the researcher to gain insight into the situation, programme or community of the participants (Babbie, 2017:92). The study answered the question, 'How are children's agency recognised and respected in programmes aimed to reduce poverty and environmental risks in the intended programme?'

The purpose of the study was also descriptive and intended to answer the "why" and "how" questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). Thus, the descriptive study allowed the researcher to gather descriptive data through the participants' spoken or written words (Fouché & Delport, 2011:65). In the case of the intended study, children and key

informants involved in the programme explained the degree and nature of children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks present in service delivery.

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

### **3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH**

The study was applied research. The study aimed at solving specific practice problems and developing new knowledge on a practical situation (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95) relating to recognising and respecting children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. The knowledge was thus generated through the investigation of a practical situation which in turn, resulted in possible solutions that may be utilised in practice (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014: 74). The practical situation in the study was how children's agency is respected and recognised in the SOS Children's Village programme to reduce poverty and environmental risks. Furthermore, the applied findings could be used by organisations to advocate for children's rights and could be of value to policy makers in addressing policy challenges concerning children's participation in interventions that affected their well-being (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95).

### **3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher used a case study research design. A case study is a preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are posed and enables participants to share their stories due to close collaboration between the researcher and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). On the other hand, case study provides insights into an issue (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82). Case studies allow for the attainment of familiarity with the social world of a

small number of people, while identifying patterns and themes within the participants' worlds (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:320), as well as gaining new knowledge about a social issue (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). More specifically, the researcher will utilise an instrumental case study design to conduct the study, as it allows for the development of an understanding of a phenomenon with the goal of increasing the ability to generalise the findings to other cases (Mertens, 2010:324).

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

### **3.5 RESEARCH METHODS**

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

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

A study population refers to all the individuals or units of interest whom the researcher considers to be knowledgeable and relevant to the study (Hanlon & Larget, 2011:7). The study population for this study comprised of all the children who are beneficiaries from SOS Children's Village in Lusaka. The key informants included social workers and child development specialists.

In terms of sampling, the study used a non-probability sampling method. This means that the researcher used his own discretion in how the participants were to be selected.

Purposive sampling was used as the researcher identified and selected individuals that were knowledgeable about the researcher's interest in child participation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The sample included five children and five key informants of whom three (3) were social workers and two (2) child development specialists.

The study used the following criteria to select the research participants purposively:

➤ **Children**

Children willing to participate in the study should meet the following criteria:

- Age between 10 and 17.
- At least one year involved in the programme.
- Preferably male and female.
- Conversant in English
- Being able to share their views and experiences on the programme.

➤ **Key informants**

Key informants willing to participate in the study should meet the following criteria:

- Involved in the development and / or implementation of the programme.
- Familiar with the involvement of children in the programme.
- At least two years' involvement in/with the programme.
- Conversant in English.
- Preferably male and female

The researcher received permission from the acting regional programme manager to conduct the study at SOS Children's Village (see Appendix A). The acting manager assisted the researcher to obtain a list of participants who met the criteria. The researcher used the list to contact the possible participants until he met the required sample number. The acting manager was also available to assist the researcher to obtain more participants in the case that data saturation was not attained.

### **3.5.2 Data collection method**

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews, guided by interview schedules (see Appendixes B and C), was used to gather data. The interview was thus guided by predetermined questions, but the researcher and participants were allowed to pursue the themes differently (Davis, 2012:121). This method was suitable as it allowed the researcher to have flexibility, which led to more in-depth information (Greeff, 2011:352). Semi-structured interviewing, therefore, allowed for more natural interaction between the researcher and the participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2015:168).

Qualitative studies are guided by the criteria of data saturation which refers to the point where all the themes and categories have been saturated and therefore no further data have to be gathered (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:84). It is therefore important to note that a failure to reach saturation could have a negative impact on the research that was conducted (Fusch & Ness, 2015:1408). In the case of this study, the researcher did not have to recruit any additional participants as data has reflected saturation.

The interviews took place at a meeting place convenient for the participants which was at the SOS Children's Village in Lusaka. The venue was also a control measure to protect the children because it is against organisation policy for the children to associate with strangers outside the confinement of the institution. This is also because the majority of the children under SOS care come from 'child protection' related backgrounds. However, this did not affect the way in which the participants responded in the interviews as it was as a natural environment for everyone.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

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

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

- Step 1: Familiarisation

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

- Step 2: Coding

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

- Step 3: Searching for themes

Searching for themes does not mean that the researcher finds themes that already exist in the data, but rather, 'you are aiming to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of your data' (Clarke et al., 2015:236). In other words, the researcher develops themes which are comprehensible to the data and tells him/her a bit about the research question. Three theme levels are recommended, namely a) overarching themes, b) themes and c) sub-themes (Clarke et al., 2015:236).

- Step 4: Reviewing themes

The researcher has to determine whether the identified themes fit well enough with the meanings in the coded data. It requires that the researcher pauses throughout the process of generating themes in order to check where there is an appropriate fit between the themes and codes and each has a clear feature or "distinct essence – or central



organising concept” (Clarke et al., 2015:230). In reviewing the themes, the researcher decided not to change anything (Clarke, et al., 2015:238).

- Step 5: Defining and naming themes

This step required the researcher to write up a short description of the theme, which explained the core, the coverage, the scope, and the limitations of each theme. It also entailed naming the themes, particularly to capture the essence of each theme as well as to develop a creative ‘spirit’ in this process (Clarke et al., 2015:240).

- Step 6: Writing the report

Report writing happens simultaneously with the analysis and the definition of one's themes assists the researcher in identifying main points in presenting the themes (Clarke et al., 2015:241). Writing up of the research report should typically include the quotes from the researcher's key observations and the more expressive participants (Clarke et al., 2015:241) because strong evidence is needed to provide a clear understanding of participants' views and experiences on the studied programme.

### **3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF DATA**

Data quality was ensured by means of establishing trustworthiness. The four concepts that inform trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability/auditability and confirmability (Lietz & Zayas, 2012:191).

#### **3.7.1 Credibility**

In the process of establishing credibility, the researcher asks if there is a fit between the views of the participants and how he/she reconstructs and represents them (De Vos et al., 2011:420). The researcher ensured that the research participants' views reflected in the study's findings (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). The researcher was also aware of possible bias that may influence the credibility of the data (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). Credibility of findings was also enhanced by triangulating the data from two participant groups, children and key informants. In this regard, Drisco (1997, cited in Lietz & Zayas, 2012:193) states that data triangulation and observer triangulation are both important in reaching a

“completeness” or an exhaustive response to the research question’. The researcher also kept an audit trail of the research process and observations and debriefed by discussing the research and findings with a peer (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192).

### **3.7.2 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the consistency of the findings if the study was to be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One strategy to evaluate dependability, is auditability which encompasses the manner in which research procedures are recorded and permitting others external to the study, to observe and critique the study (Leitz & Zayas, 2010:191). For purposes of this study auditability was applied by the continuous supervision and critique of the research supervisor of the University of Pretoria.

### **3.7.3 Transferability**

In qualitative studies, findings cannot be generalised (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:195), but be applicable to other similar populations or settings that the research has been conducted in (De Vos et al., 2011:420). As an evaluation technique, transferability is therefore “achieved when the findings have applicability to another setting, to theory, to practice, or to future research” (Lietz & Zayas 2010:195). To increase transferability, researchers focus on how typical the participants in the context have been studied and how the findings apply to this context (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c:124). The researcher made use of thick descriptions to increase the transferability of the findings to other similar organisation settings by giving in-depth accounts of the phenomenon of child participation, and participants’ views on how children are recognised in conceptualising, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the programme for children (Lietz & Zayas, 2012:194).

### **3.7.4 Conformability**

Conformability implies that the participants and not the interest and the biasness of the researcher shaped the findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conformability therefore refers to the objectivity of the researcher which could be confirmed by others in

the findings of the study (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:421). Nieuwenhuis (2016c:125) highlights that research findings should reflect participants' true contributions, which confirms that the researcher should guard against being bias and allow his/her interest in the study to influence the research findings. To counteract possible bias, the researcher used reflexivity as a strategy to analyse possible self-interest and influence in the research study (Drisko, 1997 cited in Lietz & Zayas, 2012:192).

To remain aware of the research process and observations, the researcher also made use of an audit trail by keeping a diary indicating the research process from start to the final reporting on the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addition, confirmation of the findings was also strengthened by the triangulation of data.

### **3.8 PILOT STUDY**

Barker (2003:327) describes a pilot study as testing and validating an instrument by using a small group of participants to administer it. Therefore, the pilot study serves as a feasibility study before the research study is conducted in order to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the research methodology, sampling, data collection instruments and the data analysis (Strydom, 2011:237). A pilot study is also important for the reviewer to determine his/her own level of interviewing skills (Greeff, 2011:350). A pilot study conducted for the purposes of qualitative research is usually informal and the participants possess the same characteristics as those in the main study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394). This is a method of testing the measuring instrument that is to be utilised in the main study (Strydom, 2011:240). The first interviews with a key informant and child participant respectively served as the pilot study. No changes were required to the interviewing schedule and research process. Findings of the pilot study were included in the main study.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher was guided by a set of ethical values and principles that provided moral principles, rules and expectations on how to conduct himself towards the research

participants (Babbie, 2017:63). Data should not be obtained at the expense of human beings and therefore researchers should carefully manage all ethical aspects relevant to the study (Strydom, 2011:113). The University of Pretoria provided ethical clearance for the study (see Appendix D). The following ethical considerations were taken into account for the purpose of this research study:

### **3.9.1 Avoidance of harm**

There was no threat of physical harm but possible emotional harm to research participants of the study (Strydom, 2011:115). The study was about poverty and environmental risks and talking about the hardships would have potentially evoked emotional and disempowerment feelings, especially for the children. The key informants, on the other hand, would realise that they do not recognise the children's agency sufficiently which may have been disturbing to them. In order to avoid harm for the participants (in this context children and key informants), the researcher informed them through the informed consent and assent letters about the possible risks involved when they decide to participate in the research study (Babbie, 2017:65). The researcher ensured that consent was obtained from the participants; both the children and key informants. Each participant signed the assent and consent forms respectfully, thus indicating that they have understood and agreed to participate in the study.

### **3.9.2 Debriefing of participants**

Debriefing entails 'sessions during which subjects get the opportunity, after the study, to work through their experience and its aftermath, and where they have their questions answered and misconceptions removed' (McBurney, 2001 cited in Strydom, 2011:122). Debriefing offers an opportunity to clarify any matters or concerns about the research study (Strydom, 2011:122). The researcher debriefed the participants after the interview giving each participant opportunity to ask any questions that are related to this study. The programme manager was available to offer support to the children in case they needed. He was also available to offer support to the key informants (social workers) in the case that they needed it. However, there wasn't a need from any of the participants.

### **3.9.3 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Shielding the identity of the participants was considered as an important aspect in this study. The participants were known to the researcher and hence anonymity could not be guaranteed, only confidentiality. The researcher committed to confidentiality in that the research findings were not presented in a manner that could identify any particular participant (Babbie, 2017:67; Padgett, 2017:83). The upholding of confidentiality was indicated in the informed consent and assent forms that the participants signed upon agreeing to participate in the study. It is important to note that SOS Children's Village holds strict confidentiality ethics in order to protect and serve their children. The participant coded the participants as CP1-5 (for children) and KI1-5 (for key informants) in order to protect the identity of the participants.

### **3.9.4 Deception**

Deception entails the misleading of participants, purposeful misrepresentation of facts or keeping information from participants (Strydom, 2011:118). The researcher ensured that all the participants understood what the study was about and did not withhold any information that participants would want to know. Prior to the interviews, the researcher ensured that the participants fully understood the content of the informed consent/assent letter before they gave consent (sign) to participate in the study.

### **3.9.5 Informed consent / assent**

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

University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the organisation.

The researcher further ensured that the participants understood the contents of the informed consent (see Appendix F) and assent form (see Appendix G) and gave them the chance to ask and clarify were they did not understand. This was also a strategy to build a confidence inspiring environment for the participants and the researcher.

### **3.9.6 Dissemination of findings**

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

### **3.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study did not progress without limitations. The following limitations were encountered:

- Time was a major challenge because the study was carried out during the period in which the schools where closed in Zambia and SOS Children’s Village had sent most of the children on holiday (vacation). Some children who still have family ties had travelled to be with their families while the others were still on holiday as they had just written their exams. This posed as a major hinderance as it affected the research schedule. The researcher then had to schedule a two-day meeting with the children as soon as they resumed to normal operating. This is mainly attributed to the fact that the ethical clearance was received in the period when the children were on vacation. The data was not negatively influenced despite the loss in time.

- Access to internet and electricity was a challenge as the researcher was working in a rural area where network connectivity and electricity is limited. This meant that the researcher often had to travel to areas with better connectivity in order to access data sources for his study.
- Limited funds for data collection. The researcher was working in a different town from the research site which meant that he had to travel to meet the participants. The participants' unavailability during the school holidays made it even more expensive as he had to travel more times to conduct all the interviews.

### **3.11 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

The findings of the study are presented in this section. The biographical findings of the child and key participants are first presented and discussed, followed by a discussion of the themes that emerged from the findings.

#### **3.11.1 Biographical Information**

The biographical findings of child participants will first be presented and discussed, followed by the key informants.

##### **3.11.1.1 Child participants**

The biographical information of the child participants included gender, age, school attendance and grade, and number of years in the programme. This information is depicted in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Biological information of child participants**

<b>Child participants</b>	<b>CP1</b>	<b>CP2</b>	<b>CP3</b>	<b>CP4</b>	<b>CP5</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
<b>Age</b>	15	15	16	15	17
<b>In school</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Grade</b>	9	10	10	10	11
<b>Number of years in programme</b>	8	15	8	9	14

The table indicates that four children were female and one male. There were more girls as compared to boys because the programme has more females as compared to males which is also representative of the Zambian population. The average age of the children was 15 years. It is important to note that these children are under SOS' care and live at the institution as for most of them SOS is the only family that they know. They are kept and cared for at the institution until they complete their Grade 12 (matric) and are then moved to the youth facilities.

All the children were in school; one was in grade 9; three in grade 10 and one in grade 11. Two children have been in the programme for 8 years; one for nine years and two for 14 and 15 years respectively, with an average of 11 years.

### **3.11.2 Key informant participants**

The biographical information of the key informants included gender, age group, number of years with the organisation, and the phase of programmes involved in. This information is depicted in Table 3.2.



**Table 3.2: Biological information of key informants**

<b>Key informants</b>	<b>KI1</b>	<b>KI2</b>	<b>KI3</b>	<b>KI4</b>	<b>KI5</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
<b>Age group</b>	51-55	51-55	36-40	31-35	46-50
<b>Number of years with organisation / programme</b>	10	20	10	8	12
<b>Phase of programmes / intervention involved in</b>	Planning, Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	Planning, Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	Planning, Design, Implementation	Planning, Design, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation	Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The table above indicated that there was a total of five key informants (KI) of which four were female and one male. Two of the key informants were child development specialists (known as SOS mothers) and three were social workers. The table also shows that two key informants were in the age group of 51-55years, while one was in the age group of 36-40 years, 31-35 years and 46-50 years respectively with an average age of 45 years. The table further shows that two key informants have been with the programme for 10 years, while one was with the programme for 8 years, 12 years and 20 years respectively with an average of 12 years' involvement with the programme. Finally, the table shows that three key informants were involved in the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation whilst one key informant was only involved in planning, design and implementation, and another in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

### **3.11.3 Themes and Sub-Themes**

The themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data will be discussed in this section. Findings will be informed by the direct quotes of the participants and where applicable, substantiated by literature.

**Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes**

Theme	Sub-themes
1. Counteracting poverty and environmental risk	1.1. Provide for basic needs 1.2. Access to education 1.3. Access to clean water and environment 1.4. Providing a family
2. Contextualising children's agency in Alternative Care programme participation	2.1. Children's understanding of their agency in programme participation 2.2. Key informant's understanding of children's agency in programme participation
3. Hindering factors in recognising children's agency	3.1. Defining the child concept 3.2. Passive participation
4. Strategies for promoting children's agency	4.1. Consulting and engaging children in planning and decision-making on programme matters 4.2. Empowering children to participate without fear

### **Theme 1: Counteracting poverty and environmental risk**

The study was focused on the perception of children and the extent to which they participate in decision making of the programmes that are designed to alleviate children's poverty and environmental risk. SOS Children's Villages has been operating in Zambia since 1996 (SOS Children's Villages, 2020). SOS Children's Villages in Zambia runs the following programmes in order to achieve their overall goals; Strengthen families, Alternative Care also referred to as Care for children who cannot live with their families,

Education, Support for young people and Medical care. As indicated in Chapter One, the study was focussed on the Alternative Care Programme.

The study considered poverty to be a state of deprivation, a sense of lacking equal opportunities to good social and economic services such as education, shelter; including the fulfilment of basic rights such as the right to participate and to be heard (Green, 2012:6). Environmental risks include all those risks that result out of natural disasters that could potentially cripple one's ability to survive and prosper in their natural environment (Hawkins, 2010:68).

The following meanings emerged from the findings in reducing poverty and environmental risks; (i) access to basic needs, (ii) access to education, (iii) access to clean water and environment and (iv) to provide a family for the children. These sub-themes are discussed below.

### **Sub-theme 1.1: Provide for basic needs**

Article 27 of the UNCRC says that children and young people should be able to live in a way that helps them reach their full physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social potential (UNCRC, 1989). Shelter provides protection from natural hazards and general security to people. Access to shelter is a fundamental right that every person and especially child should enjoy. The findings indicate that the shelter that SOS Children's Village provides, meets the basic needs of the children.

Key informant 3 emphasised the link between providing for the basic needs of children and poverty reduction:

KI3: *"I think I'll start with the easing of poverty. We provide the children with food and shelter; we provide the children with health care."*

Child participant 2 summarised the children's living at the SOS Village as follows:

CP2: *"This programme is about helping children who are in need and like children have parents but their parents cannot afford them, like for clothing, food and education. They provide everything, clean water, good sanitation, there is*

*no poverty, we have three meals or five meals per day, clothing is always there.”*

Housing plays a critical role in providing stability to poor families (Cunningham, 2016). Adequate housing is one of the effective means to alleviate poverty because shelter is usually the most expensive item for households (Tibaijuka, 2010:1). SOS provides good shelter to all children in its care. Each house under SOS is run by a mother (child care provider/specialist) who ensures that every child is cared for and provided for all his/her essential needs and wants in order to live a happy and fulfilling life.

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Access to education**

Children have a right to education and Zambia has made strides in ensuring that all children have the opportunity to learn. Zambia has ratified many treaties that protect the right to education and it has also established education to be a key in attaining development and reducing inequalities. SOS ensures that all children have to attend education without fail as this is also one of its main principles; SOS has a school on its premises from kindergarten to grade 12.

The findings revealed that the SOS Children’s Village Lusaka is focused on accomplishing the right to education for children as everything related to education is provided for the children under the institution’s care; which is in line with SOS Children’s Villages International’s mission. The importance of education is indicated in the following words of key informants:

K12: *“The goal for ... them (children) is to achieve in education, cause really I’ve seen shelter has been provided for them (children). The key here is education.”*

K3: *“Basically, in terms of poverty we empower them with education because we believe that education is the greatest equalizer in tackling poverty for the children.”*

SOS shows their commitment to education by having their own school and skills training center:

KI5: *“We have a school which is kindergarten to grade 12 then we also have a skills training center. It’s like a rule or policy that every child staying with us has to be in school.”*

Children affirmed SOS’s commitment to education, saying that all is provided for in terms of education.

CP5: *“Every child here has to go to school; the school here has baby class [kindergarten] up to Grade 12. The mothers help us to do our homework and also there is a generator that they switch on when power goes so that everyone can study especially the ones writing exams. Here [SOS Children’s Village] they are strict about school.”*

CP2: *“By educating me, like since baby class I was here, I went to grade 7 I passed got 754. I wrote my grade 9, got 410 and now I’m in grade 110. They help us when you are in exam classes when there is no electricity, they will turn on the generator. And here at the hall we have prep from 18hrs to 20hrs.”*

It is important to note that the majority of children under SOS’ care is orphaned or from very vulnerable households that are unable to provide a quality life for these children. The strong commitment that is shown towards education is because SOS intends that these children should grow and become adults who are able to make rightful decisions and equally provide for their families. As reflected in the words of a key informant, SOS regards education as the key to a better future for the children:

KI3: *“Basically for us, in this department, our role is for us to make sure the young children, of course within SOS become responsible and independent members of the community who are able to contribute to the development of this country. Overall, it’s to help the young people [become] independent so that they can be able to stand on their own once they leave the care of SOS. Because they came here because of different circumstances. Others are orphans. It can be double, single. So, the situation they came in was a very desperate situation. In the end we want them to move out of this place*

*with the necessary skills, knowledge, education and be able to stand on their own.”*

The efforts shown above are in line with Zambia’s Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) and Zambia’s Vision 2030 (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017). Education in all its forms is expected to produce an efficient and inclusive labour force that enable all citizens to participate in and benefit from the nation’s economic growth (Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017:113). Article 28 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are: regardless of race, gender or disability; if they’re in detention, or if they’re a refugee (UNCRC, 1989).

### **Sub-theme 1.3: Access to clean water and environment**

The study revealed that SOS ensures that children have access to clean water and environment. Child participant 1 stated that: *“They don’t allow us to drink dirty water. They always cure it before drinking.”*

The commitment to provide clean water is evident in the words of a key informant:

KI3: *“In terms of clean water, we provide the children with clean water. We have our own boreholes here which are treated and access to clean water. So, the sanitation is very good for this institution, I think.”*

The findings also show that children do understand the importance of preserving the environment:

CP2: *“When you see papers, you pick, they also buy plants, you plant where there is space...trees are important because they help with the atmospheric conditions. For example, if there were no trees, we wouldn’t have air to breath because it also helps us with the breathing system and it also helps us with the shade, fruits example mangoes, guavas.”*

Zambia in the recent past has been challenged with environmental risks such as floods, droughts and the adverse effects such as cholera; the worst cholera pandemic in Zambia was in 2018. CDC (2018:556) recorded that “as of May 12, 2018, the outbreak had

affected seven of the 10 provinces in Zambia, with 5,905 suspected cases.” The environment is the habitat for human beings and it is their first source of capital. Environmental risks and hazards cripple people’s resilience and sadly poor people, women and children remain to be the most vulnerable against environmental risks. SOS has made strides to ensuring that children are empowered with basic life skills so that they are able to get the best out of their environment.

#### **Sub-theme 1.4: Providing a family**

Article 8 of the Human Rights Act protects one’s right to respect for private and family life (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). This extends to children irrespective of their race, religion, gender, disability or social-economic standing and/or differences that make people different. Children today are the most vulnerable composition of the population; unfortunately, many children around the world, including Zambia have been deprived of family due to HIV/AIDs, wars, poverty and hunger. SOS Children’s Villages Zambia (2020) states that 1,400,000 children in Zambia have lost either one or both of their parents. Lack of family support or structure makes it difficult for children to thrive and have access to the social protection and security that they need to attain a satisfying life.

The study showed that the concept of SOS care is to provide a family to children who have never had the opportunity to grow in a family. Child participant 1 stated that: *“They have given us an opportunity of life and school, to go to school, how to have a mother, how to receive love from a mother if you haven’t received before.”*

Some of the children under SOS care do not remember as to how they got involved in the programme as they were too young at the time by which the institution took them in. The study also revealed that SOS works closely with different partners such as the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services in order to find children that need to be helped and cared for. This was confirmed by all the key informants which means, as indicated in the next quote, that it is the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services that determines which children will be selected to go to SOS and when:

KI1: *“For us as SOS we just go to Social Welfare like maybe if we want 20 children then when we go there, it is now the task of Social Welfare to go around centers to see how many are capable of going to SOS then they will tell us to come back when they are ready.”*

The procedure explains the experience of CP2 saying: *“I travelled in a lot of orphanages.”*

SOS Children’s Village hosts children in ‘houses’ that are run and supervised by ‘mothers’ under the close supervision of the SOS administration. These houses are comprised of different children from different walks of life who then meet in the house and then become brothers and sisters through the rest of their life. They live as a family and operate as a “normal” family would. Children from different families are therefore socialised to form relationships that culminate in becoming a new family. This is reflected in the view of on child participant who said in the SOS:

CP4: *“It’s all about community teaching. But on my own, it’s all about; one, we come from different families here, so they teach us different ways of socializing with other people.”*

Becoming a family is embedded in being part of a household which, *“provides everything for me food, clothes, go shopping”* (CP3). In a nutshell, children are allowed to live and experience life as children should. However, children do have the right to decide if they want to be in the programme or not. Key informant 4 stated that:

*“Basically, we are trying to work in the best interest of the child. We ensure that they have a family or relatives to go to but if they don’t and have so much desire to go... we surrender them to the government.”*

In summary, findings indicate that poverty and environmental risks are almost completely eradicated as SOS has continued to be committed to provide and meet all the basic needs of the children. The children attend school, learn life skills and are raised in a protected environment.



## **Theme 2: Contextualising children’s agency in Alternative Care programme participation**

Findings indicated that children and key informants, and key informants among themselves, had different views with regards to their participation in decisions that affect them under the Alternative Care programme. As indicated in Chapter 1 children’s agency implies the child’s ability to make rationally sound decisions that affect and influence their lives and future (Gowrie SA research summary - Sense of agency, 2015). Children’s understanding of their agency and key informants’ understanding of child agency will next be discussed at sub-themes.

### **Sub-theme 2.1: Children’s understanding of their agency in programme participation**

Although children are invited to attend programme review meetings and donor-related and stakeholder workshops, they are not participating in decisions that affect them. The children’s perspective is that they attend as tokenism. Their views may be asked, for example, on their house parents, however, they are never asked to be part of the solutions and decisions on what should be done to matters of concern to them. Adults do not listen or respect their opinions and make decisions on their behalf. This in turn, hurts the children as their agency is not respected. The following quotes mirror the children’s views:

CP1: *“They make the decisions themselves. I can say what’s working well its cases of education are working well, what’s not working well I can say cooperation. some don’t get our opinions. ... Hurt (child feels hurt), like there is no attention for us, we are not cared for.... it’s designed for children to participate but not for them to follow what children are saying. Its (programme) just designed for them to just like know how children are or it feels just like they just design it for them to make children feel like they are there to support them. But, in the end it just feels like they are not. Because whatever you tell them, it does not happen.”*

CP2: *“Ahhh have only been asked like how they treat like since there are mothers in the houses, how they treat you, what they do? But we haven’t*

*been asked what you conclude to the thingy (programme). I haven't been asked about that, they don't ask us."*

CP3: *"We don't talk. Sometimes we have workshops, children will be there, mothers, directors, so we do not talk. you look this side, you see mother, you look the other side, you see director, so we are never free to talk."*

However, children do get to participate in activities in their respective houses and school activities such as cooking, sport and charity service. The responses below show how children get involved:

CP2: *"I participate, like if there are programmes like these ones (interviews) I participate. If they say we are going to another place like this, they buy food, you have to go to give children the other side (charity) you go, sports with other people I also participate in sports."*

CP1: *"Cooking, cleaning the house."*

The findings show that children do not experience that their agency is respected as they do not participate in the vital decision-making processes that affect and influence their lives and future. Children regard invitations to attend meetings and workshops at which key decisions are made as tokenism as they have not been enabled to participate and fear to express themselves fully.

Woodhead (1999), cited in International Institute for Child Rights and Development (2004:22), argues "that three elements influence children's development – the physical and social environment, the culturally regulated customs and child rearing practices, and the beliefs and values of the parents." This is a potential explanation of why the children feel that they are not free to participate or contribute in decisions that affect them. It is also important to note that these children come from different backgrounds and have all been exposed to extreme poverty and hardships; most of them being either double orphans and single orphans. O'Kane (2015) supports the comments by Woodhead stating that many factors could affect children's participation which include, but are not limited to cultural and religious beliefs, legal and political frameworks, household and organisational dynamics.

## **Sub-theme 2.2: Key informant's understanding of children's agency in programme participation**

The key informants had mixed responses with regard to children's participation, ranging from some to full participation. However, the majority of the key informants indicated that children do participate but not at their full capacity. In their view, it is rather the youth that participate more. These views are reflected in the following responses:

- KI5: *“As a person (the child) who is vulnerable and should be protected, yes. Then a child is a person who has the ability to make meaningful decisions of events of their life, here it can be yes, to an extent. Some are not able, maybe we can talk of those who are under the age of 10 because they have no ability to make some choices, some decisions even though some they can make so it's to some extent, others fully.... For example, the youths who choose their own college. The youths are also considered as another programme and the village another programme.”*
- KI2: *“They (children) participate highly at every stage. Because even the way you have come, I'm sure others have participated... If there's community work, visitors, school work, whatever it is. Like budgeting, monthly budgeting they do.”*
- KI3: *“I think they (children) do participate; they are very active. We have a youth council here. The youth council and children's council which basically represents the needs of the children and basically matters that affect them. So even as we are doing the planning, budgeting they basically inform us on what they think must happen. We involve them in the planning of activities, the budgeting and so I think on that one we are okay.”*

The UNCRC intends to uplift the standing of children in the societies. It has several articles that primarily speak to the importance of child participation and why care givers should create favourable conditions in which children can express their rights to freedom of speech. Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) states that

“State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.”

As pointed out in sub-theme 2.1 above, there are many factors that influence child participation. Organisational policy plays a crucial role as it determines the operations of an institution. According to the African Child Policy Forum (2018), Zambia is ranked as one of the least child friendly countries in Africa at number 48 out of 52, falling in the same category with countries like South Sudan. Amongst the reasons as to such a low rating is the lacking of a complete policy framework regarding children. Having legislation shows the degree to which a country or programme is committed to creating a better environment for children’s rights and privileges to be enjoyed.

There are many benefits for respecting child agency such as development of social competence and responsibility, self-esteem and self-determination. Besides being a right to participate; by not recognising that children have agency and not allowing them to participate, means they are not prepared for the future as reflected in the following key informant’s voice:

KI1: *“They (children) have the right to participate because you know they are upcoming children who in the future will be in charge. So, if you are not teaching them and allowing them, how will they (children) know? You know us old people at some point you will have to retire so that you leave space for the younger ones.”*

The findings indicate that adults’ concept of a child as being vulnerable versus having agency play a role in how they are engaged in programme participation. This is evidenced by the following key informant’s statements:

K14: *“Programming? In terms of programming, planning, I would say the participation is not that much. But in terms of the programme it’s 100% the children because the programme is about the children... In planning it’s less, it’s like 10%. Because people actually sit there to plan, it’s basically ceremonial. The participation in planning is not that much but they do participate at care giving. For example, career choice... when they are given money for a certain programme, it’s them who choose what programme to do and not us”*

K13: *“They are able to express themselves through the representatives in terms of planning, budgeting meetings...A child is one below the age of 18? 18. We take it as they still need the guidance and protection of the elders.”*

K15: *“They have (agency) though to some extent no. Because the programme is about the children and maybe where they do not understand then the policy of every decision we make has to be in the best interest of the child. So as long as we know this is the right decision for the child, we make the decision for them. Then there are cases where the child doesn’t want the decision to be made because of personal reasons and personal interest then we can make a decision for them.”*

Findings indicate conflicting views among key informants that children are able to participate in decisions that affect them, making a distinction between ‘child’ and ‘youth’. According to the 2006 National Youth Policy, youth is defined as a male or female person aged between 18 and 35 years (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2015). However, the 2015 National Youth Policy was aligned with the African Youth Charter where youth was seen as between the age of 15 and 35 (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2015:2). This may explain the discrepancy in the views of the child participants and the key informants as the children were all between the ages of 15 and 17 and hence of the view that their agency to participate in decisions on matters affecting them should be respected. On the other hand, key informants may have regarded them more as vulnerable children and not youth where they could be engaged in decision making on matter that affected them.

### **Theme 3: Hindering factors in promoting child agency**

SOS Children's Village International operates in 136 countries. It has 559 SOS Children's Villages where children who cannot live with their biological families grow up in a loving home (SOS Children's Village, n.d.). All the participants acknowledged that there are factors that hinder recognition and promotion of children's agency at the institution. One factor raised was how the child concept is defined by adults; perceiving children only to be vulnerable and in need of protection. Another factor is passive participation of children in decisions that affect them. These two factors will next be discussed as sub-themes.

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Defining the child concept**

Children are vulnerable and have the right to be protected, however, they also have the right to develop and participate in matters that affect them (UNCRC, 1989). The findings showed that the children are aware of their right to participate and be heard, but as opposed to being respected for their views, they instead experience being treated as vulnerable and in need of protection. This view is linked to the child concept of vulnerability as expressed by the following participant:

KI3: *"A child is one below the age of 18? 18. We take it as they still need the guidance and protection of the elders."*

This is not in line with Article 12 of UNCRC (1989) as children should be given opportunities to develop agency; they are eager to participate and they do not want to be viewed as entirely vulnerable despite their backgrounds. Child participants indicated the link between their agency and right to participate and having their views heard without fear:

CP4: *"We just want them (the institution) to give us our rights, for example, okey you know they are not complete, they are at 50%, when we are supposed to have 100%."*

CP1: *"It's really important because it will make me feel like I have people to support me, listen to my cries and opinions."*

CP5: *“Children know what they want and we have [the] right to freedom of expression and a right to contribute. So, it’s not fair sometimes because you feel scared to say because you are a bit scared of the big people.”*

Children’s right to be protected and at the same time be respected for having agency, is well captured in the following statement of a key informant:

KI2: *“They do have the right; it’s also helping although maybe we might differ but at the end of the day... I’d find that it’s worth it for them to participate.... What I would tell you is every child has that ability to participate in society even that right it’s coming though it comes by force to them. Yes, they’ve got the right to be protected and to be guarded. Every child has the right to contribute.”*

Key informant 1 indicated that it is very important that children are trained and given opportunities to participate; failure to enable them could have an effect on their ability to make decisions as adults in the future.

KI1: *“They have the right to participate because you know they are upcoming children who in the future will be in charge. So, if you are not teaching them and allowing them, how will they know?”*

The findings emphasise the role of social workers in upholding children’s rights As Ife (2012:205) indicates, social workers have a role to play in facilitating an enabling environment to uphold children’s right to participate in decision making process.

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Passive child participation**

Findings show that children are engaged as passive participants; they are present in meetings but their views are either not heard or taken into consideration in the decision-making process. Children’s views maybe considered to be ‘whistle blowers’ or to expose the happenings in the institution and hence children’s views are either not asked or not taken seriously and responded to. This ultimately creates an environment where children are not allowed to participate freely, efficiently and effectively. Child participants articulated their experiences as follows:

CP1: *“It’s (programme) designed for children to participate but not for them to follow what children are saying. It’s just designed for them to just like know how children are or it feels just like they just design it for them to make children feel like they are there to support them. But, in the end it just feels like they are not. Because whatever you tell them, it does not happen.”*

CP4: *“Whenever they make a meeting for us, they also want to be in attendance to hear all what we say, which hinders us from expressing ourselves freely or speak what we think towards the same thing.”*

The only place that the children experience that their opinion matters, is with regard to their family houses on matters such as the budget and plan for food and clothes, and also where they want to go for their youth club holidays.

CP5: *“The biggest participation we have is in our family houses where our mothers ask us to budget and plan for the house in terms of food and clothes. They (SOS) ask as where we want to do go for our youth camp or holidays otherwise, they decide for us.”*

In relation to the nature of participation that the children experience, K13 added:

*“In the past years, it was when they were requested to but these days yes. With the introduction of the child protection policy there’s been a lot of participation from the children. So essentially, like I’ve said they have a children’s council and a youth council and through those they are able to express themselves through the representatives in terms of planning, budgeting meetings.”*

The importance of child participation is emphasised by Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (2013:3) who state that, “a child cannot grow in dignity unless his or her wishes and feelings are sought and validated from the moment he or she arrives in care.” Effective participation ensures that better decisions are made, builds trust and long-lasting relationships and builds confident and independent individuals.



## **Theme 4: Strategies to recognise children's agency**

Findings revealed that children are confident and ready to participate actively. However, currently there is a common sense among the children that their participation in the programme is only used for reporting purposes. Both child participants and key informants indicated strategies to promote child participation and recognising children's agency. Suggested strategies include consulting and fully engaging children in planning decision-making on programme matters, and empowering them to participate freely and without fear of any consequences. These strategies will subsequently be discussed as sub-themes.

### **Sub-theme 4.1: Consulting and engaging children in planning and decision-making on programme matters**

The findings in this study corroborate with the observation by SIDA, (2009:4) that children are seldom recognised as a resource in decision-making processes. Instead, young people are systematically excluded from important arenas of decision-making and development processes (SIDA, 2009:4). This excludes children's perspectives which create possibilities of oppression. Findings indicated that children wanted to be engaged in meetings and decisions that concern them. This includes consulting them on the plans they are making for them. Therefore, in order for children's agency to be realised, children must be consulted according to their capacities as this will also build strong partnerships amongst the stakeholders. The views of the children below mirror their standing regarding engagement of children in planning and decision-making:

CP1: *"To include children in each and every meeting they have or decision they want to make upon us children or the environment for us to get to know whatever they are planning if it's good for us, it's going to help us in some way or not."*

CP2: *"They should be asking us whatever plans they are make concerning us they should be asking us what do you want? Can we do this for you guys or you don't want, or something else. Kuti che bayenda kuvichita chifukwa beve baona ati vilibwino but ise sitinavikonde (instead of them always doing*

*things because they see it fit but us as children we didn't like it). At least or sibana itane bonse bana bachitako involve baja bamene baona ati banga kambeko babili or batatu baba funsako banvelako ma views yabeve (even if they don't call all the children, they should at least involve those they think can articulate, 2 or 3 children so they can hear their views)."*

CP5: *"Children have a right to participation especially when a decision affects the child so we should feel free to contribute and say how we think and feel. That way children will be happier and maybe even the programme can be better."*

However, engaging children means that meetings must be planned at times where children are available to participate, and hence scheduled at times agreed with children well in advance.

KI4: *"We must be told in advance that we are planning. Sometimes we are just told we are having a meeting; can you find some children. It's quite difficult, we are also supposed to tell them in advance so that they are able to represent their friends well. To represent those that are in far places, let me say school and those that are around. Because some of them will just go there and sit. It also should be at a time when the children are not so much in school. They (donors) should consult the children to say when do you want the meeting to be held so that they prepare adequately."*

Furthermore, as key informant 3 indicates, the community must also take responsibility for engaging children in developing their agency:

KI3: *"I prefer children are supported through the community. We take the help there to the community."*

As Bruckauf and Cook (2017:10) note, children's interactions with the social hierarchy play an important role in determining their chances and outcomes in society. Therefore, social workers and care givers must facilitate opportunities for children to interact at relevant levels of the programme to share ideas, develop skills and execute right to be

heard as this will ensure that the interventions focussed around the child are more likely to be successful.

#### **Sub-theme 4.2: Empower children to participate freely and without fear**

The social workers (key informants) indicated that children have the right to participate and they should be encouraged to do so even more. Children do rely on care givers to ensure that structures are in place to ensure that their right to participate is respected and they are able to participate amicably. In turn, care givers rely on children's feedback to facilitate an enabling environment for their participation. The importance of feedback is reflected in the following outcry of a key informant:

KI3: *"Feedback. We don't get feedback about how they feel"*

Child participation therefore must be underpinned by opportunities that are embedded in preparing children to participate constructively to the benefit of the programme and the children. From the key informant's view, it can be argued that it becomes difficult for an institution, a family, a household or a team to know if the efforts that they have invested are actually appreciated and fruitful. A lack of feedback makes it difficult to realise shortcomings and to correct these accordingly. On the other hand, being empowered to give feedback in a manner that children feel they are respected and their agency recognised, will not only build their confidence to speak freely, but key informants in turn, will feel appreciated and motivated to hear and respond to children more effectively. The need to be empowered, is clearly captured in the following words of a child participant:

CP5: " The problem is most of us children are scared but if the big people (adults) empowered us and in a way to speak freely and contribute where we feel things should change, maybe things could be different."

The findings resonate with the plea by Mary Kalenga, 19 years old, who grew up in the SOS Children's Village in Lusaka. She stated at the European Development Days-2019 that,

“We need to ensure safe places for children to speak out, find support and to know their rights. It is high time we get engaged and consulted on matters that affect us as children and young people” (SOS Children’s Villages International, 2019).

Mary’s statement highlights the importance of bringing children to the decision-making table. It is of great importance that children and young people are incorporated in poverty reduction plans as they would provide alternative views that would reflect a more representative and inclusive plan for poverty reduction activities and strategies. Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA, 2009:12) supports the above in stating that a youth perspective “identifies age specific vulnerabilities, gaps and opportunities for investment, and it facilitates co-targeting of interventions, leading to synergies across sectors and ages.”

In a nutshell, to respect children’s agency entails that the decisions should not entirely depend on the ‘adults’ perceptions. Children’s agency is in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 themed “revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development”. It entails that a successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships at global, national and local levels (UN, 2020). The importance of creating partnerships at all levels could not be stressed more in terms of including children in decision-making. According to the United Nations, General Assembly, 2017 cited in United Nations (2018:12), “the pledges made in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and to reach the furthest behind first, as well as its affirmation to be people-centred, ensure that youth are included in all aspects of the Agenda.”

### **3.12 SUMMARY**

Chapter three presented the research methodology that was applied in the study. It indicated how the trustworthiness of the data was ensured, how the ethical principles applied to the study and it accounted for the limitations of the study. Four themes emerged from the findings namely; counteracting poverty and environmental risk, contextualising children’s agency in Alternative Care programme participation, hindering factors in recognising children’s agency and strategies in promoting children’s agency. The next chapter outlines the study’s key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 4

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### KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study and presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations. It will start by showing the degree to which the research goal and objects were achieved. The conclusions will be drawn from the key findings and thereafter, the recommendations will be made on the study.

#### 4.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

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

##### Objective 1

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

Objective one was achieved in Chapter 2 (see 2.2, 2.4 and 2.4.3). The researcher highlighted the legislative and policy context for poverty reduction, human rights and child poverty and the situation of child's rights in Zambia, all of which were in line with the human rights-based approach which was the theoretical framework of the study. Poverty was contextualised as a sense of powerlessness, exclusion from decision-making and lack of access to basic social services such as education, health care and clean and safe environments (Green, 2012:6) and environmental risks as an environmental justice issue which means, "the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment" (Hawkins, 2010:68). In Chapter 3 (see theme 1), the discussion on poverty and environmental risks focused on how it could be counteracted, namely by providing for

basic needs, access to education, access to clean water. a safe and clean environment and providing a family to the children in the SOS Village.

## **Objective 2**

- ✓ To explore and describe the goal and intended outcomes of programmes/interventions to reduce children's poverty and environment risks.

Objective two was addressed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5) and in Chapter 3 (theme 1). SOS Children's villages run multiple programmes specifically targeted at reducing poverty and environmental risks for children. The organisation provides quality alternative care, strengthens families, advocates for children's rights, teaches and protects children in emergencies (SOS Children's Villages International, n.d.). This study's focus was on the alternative care programme and in order for the organisation to meet its goal and intended outcomes, theme 1 revealed that SOS provides for basic needs, access to education, access to clean water and environment, and a family; by working closely with partners such as the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services as most of the children under the programme are either orphaned or from very vulnerable households that cannot provide a quality life for them.

## **Objective 3**

- ✓ To explore and describe how children are involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes/interventions.

Objective 3 was achieved in Chapter 3 (see sub-theme 2.1) where it was indicated that children are not involved in the conceptualisation, design and monitoring and evaluation of the programme, but mostly participate in the house and school activities. This can be attributed to the discrepancy between how children understood their agency and how the key informants (adults) understood children's agency. Although children are asked to attend meetings, they do not feel free to participate and thus feel excluded. Sub-theme 2.2 showed that key informants view children to be more vulnerable than having agency.

#### **Objective 4**

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

Objective 4 was achieved in Chapter 3 under theme 3. Two main factors stood out as influencing the non-recognition of children's agency in the manner that they participate in the programme. The first factor (see sub-theme 3.1) was 'defining the child concept'. Both key informants and children stated that the programme is not designed to hear children's views on the programme and therefore social workers have an important role to play in understanding and implementing children's right to participate in decisions that affect them. Furthermore, findings indicated conflicting views between the children and the key informants on child agency which could be attributed to the lack of clearly distinguishing between the concepts 'child' and 'youth'. The 2006 National Youth Policy defines a youth as any person between the age of 18 and 35 years old (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2015). The 2015 National Youth Policy aligns with the African Youth Charter and defines a youth as any person between the age 15 to 35 years old (Ministry of Youth and Sport, 2015) which aligns with the definition of a child in Zambia's Constitution of 1991 with Amendments through 2016 as anyone below the age of 18 years (Constitute, 2018). The second factor influencing how a child's agency is recognised or not, was 'passive child participation' (see sub-theme 3.2). The findings indicated that children could be viewed as 'whistle blowers' on broader programme matters and hence their participation was restricted to the house and school matters such as budgeting for the food they want to eat or the clothes that they want to wear. This creates an environment where children are not able to participate freely as they fear the possible consequences if they share their views.

#### **Objective 5**

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

This objective was accomplished in Chapter 2 (see 2.4.4) from a literature point of view. It was emphasised that every Zambian has human rights; this is contained in the Bill of Rights as enshrined in the Republican Constitution (MCDMCH, 2014:10). The objective was also addressed in Chapter 3 in theme 4 which suggested two strategies to recognise children's agency. The first strategy is consulting and engaging children in planning and decision-making on programme matters (see sub-theme 4.1). The findings were clear that children want to be involved in programme planning and decision-making. The second strategy is empowering children to participate freely and without fear (see sub-theme 4.2). Findings indicated that engaging children in interactions where they give their views freely, contribute to developing their confidence and ability to make decisions. This will prepare them to make responsible decisions as adults in the future and create opportunities and a system that encourages them to participate without fear which is aligned with the pledges made in the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind and ensure that youth are included in all aspects of the agenda (United Nations General Assembly cited in United Nations, 2018:12).

This objective is also achieved in this chapter, section 4.4.

### **4.3 KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

This section underlines the study's key findings and the conclusions drawn from these findings. The key findings will next be presented with their conclusions respectively.

- Findings indicated that SOS Children's Village provides in all the basic needs of children and protects them from poverty and environmental risks at the institution. The institution also teaches children the importance of caring for the environment and carry out several environmentally friendly activities such as planting of trees and ensuring clean and safe drinking water at all times.
- To conclude, the SOS Village applies a human rights-based approach as far as meeting the basic needs of children are concerned. The children enjoy the right to protection, good health, education and family life, among others. The institution is ready to tackle any environmental risks should they arise and to protect the



children living in the houses at SOS. Furthermore, the SOS Village ensures that children graduate to youth facilities at the age of 18 years or completing their secondary school (whichever comes first) and the institution continues to support them by either sponsoring their tertiary education, providing vocational training, carpentry, catering, tailoring and or entrepreneurship skills.

- Findings indicate that the adult's concept of the child influences how they allow child participation. The key informants differed in how they perceive a child. Most viewed a child as being in need of guidance and protection whilst others viewed a child as having the ability to participate while being protected. The children however indicated that they are ready to participate and desire for their views to be heard and respected.
- To conclude, there is a discrepancy among adults on the child concept and what he/she is able to do. Although this view is linked to the age of the child, age in itself is a confusing matter as important child-related policy documents, as indicated above, define age differently. Children want to participate and to be engaged but they are more likely to be viewed by care givers and social workers as vulnerable and in need of protection rather than for their agency which aligns with the child's right to participate in matters that concern them. Age influences how adults regard children's ability to participate and be recognised.
- Findings indicate that children are not given the opportunity to participate amicably in the programme phases, that is; conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. They are rather limited to participating in house-related matters such as budgeting for the food that they want to eat and the clothes they want to buy and wear, or the general amenities that they would want in their respective houses.
- It can be concluded that children do not participate directly in the programme phases. Thus, their agency to a large extent is not respected as they are not

included or well represented in the planning and decisions on the programme which suggest that their right to participate is violated. The implication is that the programme compromises having the maximum positive effect as there isn't much diverse views in programming from the children's perspective. Further, exclusion increases the risks that children will not develop the confidence and knowhow to participate in amicable decision-making as adults in the future. Developing child agency and including their views in all programme phases prepare them for a better and sustainable future.

#### **4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section of the chapter draws the recommendations from the key findings and conclusions of the study. As the following recommendations suggest, all role players at SOS Children's Village Lusaka, including caregivers, social workers, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, and the general community have a role to play in promoting children's agency and engaging them in all phases of the programme.

- Develop children's agency

Children's agency has to be developed by facilitating their growth and development into independent, resilient adults that are able to determine positive solutions towards any risks that they may encounter outside the care and supervision of SOS. This would also reduce dependency as children will be encouraged to apply their agency in being proactive and becoming productive citizens.

- Consensus on the child concept

SOS should have consensus among all role players on the child concept in relation how they define a 'child' and a 'youth'. This will bring clarity on the different levels at which children can participate in the programme. Furthermore, an efficient communication mechanism must be setup for children and adults to meet and share views, give feedback and discuss grievances on the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

- Uphold human rights and empowerment

The Ministry of Community Development and Social Services should closely supervise childcare facilities and establish a separate platform to monitor and evaluate the upholding of children's rights, and in particular the right to participate and develop their agency. Children's views are valid because they bring different perspectives to the governing board. Thus, children must be empowered and exposed to platforms where they are able to express themselves as this will not only reduce feelings of exclusion and powerlessness but also develop analytical skills as in the case of Mary Kalenga, a child who grew up at SOS Children's Village in Lusaka (SOS Children's Villages International, 2019). The Ministry should also consider establishing human rights desks in the communities where people could access information on human rights and where they could report violations of human rights, and in particular pertaining to children.

- Human rights education and community responsibility

Lastly, the community has a responsibility to ensure that children are no longer seen as passive recipients of decisions made by adults without consultation as this has also been a cultural issue. Thus, community members must be sensitised on children's rights, especially the right to participate. In addition, human rights education must be made mandatory and introduced in the school curriculum from early grades so that all people have the knowledge on human rights. This will ensure that the future generations are well aware of their inherent rights and will know how to and where to air their human rights grievances from a young age. Human rights education will also strengthen social workers in their task to uphold a human rights-based approach in service delivery and interventions.

#### **4.5 FURTHER RESEARCH**

Drawn from the findings and process of the study, this section will show possible further research areas in relation to children's agency in reducing poverty and environment risk.

- Children's rights are key to promoting sustainable development because they contribute to having an inclusive developmental approach in child welfare services.

Further research could be conducted on the state of children's rights in Zambia because not much research has been done in this regard

- There is need for social workers in Zambia and the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services to do research regarding children's agency in all child-welfare organisations in Zambia. This is because it will not only add to the body of knowledge on children's rights in Zambia, but also how different programmes (both NGO and government) can create an environment that is more suitable for children to enjoy their inherent right to participate and be included.
- A pilot study should be done in similar institutions to help encourage and facilitate the creation of uniform guidelines to facilitated child participation and develop children's agency across institutions.

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## APPENDIX 1: NOTIFICATION OF ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL



12 August 2019

Dear Mr M Kasuta

**Project Title:** Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk : Case Study of SOS Children's Village, Lusaka  
**Researcher:** Mr M Kasuta  
**Supervisor:** Prof A Lombard  
**Department:** Social Work and Criminology  
**Reference number:** 18227717 (HUM013/0719)  
**Degree:** Masters

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 12 August 2019. Data collection may therefore commence.

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

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Maxi Schoeman'.

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

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe  
Lefapha la Bomotheo

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



## APPENDIX 2: SOS PERMIT TO CONDUCT STUDY



9<sup>th</sup> May 2019

Mr. Mubanga Kasuta  
C/O Mr. Earnest T Kasuta  
Department of Social Work and Sociology  
University of Zambia  
P.O. Box 32379  
**LUSAKA**

Dear Mr. Kasuta

**Re: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY IN OUR ORGANIZATION.**

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2019 on the above mentioned subject matter and wish to advise that your request has been granted.

Yours sincerely



**Lillian Chilinde**  
**Acting REGIONAL PROGRAMME MANAGER**

cc: File

## APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT FORM



**Researcher:** Mubanga Kasuta  
**Tel:** 0963289734  
**E-mail:** fkasuta@gmail.com

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM Parents/Guardians**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

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

#### **Title of the study**

Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of SOS Children's Village, Lusaka

#### **Goal of the study**

To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

#### **What will happen in the study?**

If you give permission for your child to join the study, I will talk to him/her one-on-one, asking questions in relation to the goal of the study, that is; how they see their involvement and participation recognised in shaping the programme so that they can benefit from it to

reduce their poverty and environmental risks. Your child will be one of five children in the programme that I will be interviewing. The discussion should be between 45 and 60 minutes. With the child's permission, I will be voice recording the conversation so that I do not miss any important information that he/she shares. The interview will take place at SOS Children's Village on a date and time agreed with the organisation.

### **Risks and discomforts**

There will be no risks or danger to your child to participate in the study. Your child will know that he/she will have the freedom to not answer any question if they do not wish to respond too. I will be available after the interview to talk to the child on his/her experience of the interview. If needed, I will refer the child to speak to Madam Lillian Chilinde, the acting regional programme manager.

### **Are there any benefits for joining the study?**

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

### **Participants' rights**

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

### **Confidentiality**

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

### **Inquiries**

If you have any questions or want to discuss any aspect of the research with me, you are welcome to call me on 0963289734 or send me an e-mail at: [fkasuta@gmail.com](mailto:fkasuta@gmail.com).

## CONSENT DECLARATION BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby give permission for my child,  
\_\_\_\_\_ (write name of child) to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature parent/guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 4: ASSENT FORM: CHILDREN



## ASSENT FORM: CHILDREN

### Dear Participant

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




### What is a research study?

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

### If you join the study what will then happen?

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

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

**Is there anything to be afraid of** 

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



**Are there any benefits in joining the study?**

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



**Do you have rights in this study?**

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



**Who will know that you participated in the study?**

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




**What if you have any questions?**

You can ask any questions that you may have about the study. You can find me on my mobile phone at 0963289734 or email me at [fkasuta@gmail.com](mailto:fkasuta@gmail.com)

**Would you like to participate in this study?**



\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I will participate in the study.

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature Date



## APPENDIX 5: KEY INFORMANT CONSENT FORM



**Researcher:** Mubanga Kasuta

**Tel:** 0963289734

**E-mail:** fkasuta@gmail.com

### **INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: KEY INFORMANTS**

Dear Participant,

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

**Title of the study:** Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of SOS Children's Village, Lusaka

**Goal of the study:** To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in the SOS Children's Village, Lusaka.

**Procedures:** The study will use one-on-one interviews to collect data from participants. Each interview is expected to take approximately one hour. The interviews will be tape recorded with your permission. The tape recordings will be transcribed for purposes of

data analysis. Only the researcher and the study supervisor will have access to the tapes and transcripts which will be stored in a secure place by the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. If data is used again, it will be for research purposes.

**Risks and discomforts:** There are no known risks and discomforts that may be endured by participants in this study. The participants will be debriefed by me after the interview. If needed, they will be referred to Madam Lillian Chilinde, the acting regional programme manager of the organisation to discuss any discomfort that may have developed during the interview.

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

**Participants' rights:** Participation in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any question that they do not wish to respond to.

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

**Person to contact:** If participants have questions or concerns relating to the study, they may contact the researcher at 0963289734 or send an e-mail at [fkasuta@gmail.com](mailto:fkasuta@gmail.com)

## Declaration

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature parent/guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX 6: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE, CHILD PARTICIPANT

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Child participants**

**Goal of the study:** The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in the SOS Children's Village, Lusaka. [To determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and dangers in the environment.]

Participant number: CP .....

**Biographical information**

Male:  Female:

How old are you? .....

Are you in school? Yes  No

If yes, what grade are you in? .....

If no, what are you currently doing?  
.....

How long have you been involved in the programme/intervention? .....years.....  
months

**Questions:**

1. Can you tell me what the programme/intervention is all about and what it means to you?
2. How did you get involved in the programme/intervention?
  - Could you decide for yourself whether you wanted to join and do you have a choice to stay in the programme or not?
3. How does the programme/intervention help you to deal with problems in your life? [If vague, prompt what kind of problems they have in relation to poverty and environment risks such as pollution; no access to clean water, poor sanitation and violence).
4. How does this programme/intervention help you with

- Your school work?
  - Taking better care of your health?
  - Learning about clean water?
  - How to have a safe and clean environment?
5. Tell me about your participation in the programme/intervention. How do you participate, and what are the things you do?
6. What children's rights do you think the programme/intervention protect?
- How does the programme/intervention respect your right to participate and have a say in what the programme/intervention should look like and do for you?
7. What is your experience of how adults in the programme/intervention see a child?
- A child is a person who is helpless and must be protected. Adults know best what a child needs and should take decisions for her/him.
  - A child is a person who have ideas on how to approach and resolve society's problems such as poverty and unsafe and unhealthy environments. A child needs an opportunity to choose and decide what she/he wants and what is best for her-/ himself now and in the future. A child wants to be recognised and respected as a person who can speak for her-/himself and make decisions about things that involve them. [We call this agency.]
  - A child is a person who needs protection but who also have opinions that adults should listen to and respect. [Agency]
8. What of the programme/intervention do you think work well for the children, or do not work well for them, and why do you say so?
9. Have you ever been asked to give your ideas on any aspect of the programme/intervention – e.g. what the programme should include and do for you; or what you like or don't like about the programme?
- If so, in what way did you feel these ideas were heard and taken seriously by adults?
10. Do you have any example(s) where you had the opportunity to share your ideas on any aspect of the programme/intervention and your contribution was heard and considered / or not heard and considered?
- How does it make you feel if adults listen to your ideas and take them seriously?
  - How does it make you feel if adults do not listen to your ideas or not take them seriously?

11. What are the factors (things) that make it possible or difficult for you to participate in the programme/intervention in a way that you feel you, and your contributions are important and appreciated?
12. What can the organisation do to involve children more in the planning and decisions on the programme/intervention so that it can contribute to a better life for you?
  - What should the programme focus more on to reduce children's poverty and make the environment cleaner and safer for them?
13. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me on how children can contribute to the programme/intervention?

Thank you for participating in the study.

APPENDIX 7: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**Key informants**

**Goal of the study:** The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children’s agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in in the SOS Children’s Village, Lusaka.

Participant number: KI .....

**Biographical information**

Male:  Female:

How long have you been with the organisation? ..... years

How long have you been involved in the programmes/interventions? .....years..... months

In what age category do you fall?

20-25 years	26-30 years	31-35 years	36-40 years	41-45 years	46-50 years	51-55 years	56+ years
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In what phase of the programmes/interventions are you involved? (Tick all applicable.)

Planning / conceptualisation	Design of content	Implementation	Monitoring	Evaluation
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**Questions:**

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

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

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

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

17. In what way does the programme/intervention promote the children's access and rights to
- Education
  - Health care
  - Clean water,
  - Sanitation, and
  - A safe and clean environment?
18. How would you describe the children's participation in the programme/intervention?
- Do they participate out of their own initiative or only if they are requested, or told to participate?
19. Do you think children have a right to participate and make decisions on the programme/intervention that affect them?
- If so, are the children aware of their right to participate and influence decisions on the programme/intervention and why do you say so?
20. How do you see and approach the 'child' concept?
- As a person who is vulnerable and who should be protected.
  - As a person who has the ability to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence her or his life today and in the future [agency].
  - As a person who needs protection and who have agency.
21. To what extent would you say the children in your programme/intervention have agency if you look at their participation and involvement in decisions that affect them? The involvement refers to any one or more phases of the programme/intervention that is, planning/ conceptualisation of (new) ideas, the design of the content of the programme, the format and implementation of the programme/intervention, and the monitoring and evaluation of the programme/intervention.
22. Are children asked to give their views on the programme/intervention and if, in what way are these views considered and respected, or not?
23. Could you share any example where children have made inputs to the programme/intervention which were considered and respected, or not, in any of the phases of the programme/intervention [planning/ conceptualisation, the design, the implementation, the monitoring and evaluation].
24. What factors make it possible or difficult to recognise and respect children's contributions and decisions (agency) in relation to the planning/ conceptualisation,

design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme/intervention intended to reduce their poverty and environmental risks?

25. What in your view must change to recognise and respect children's contributions, decisions (agency) and participation in the respective phases [planning/ conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation] of the programme/intervention to reduce poverty and environmental risks?
26. Do you have any further comments that you would like to share on the topic that may benefit my study?

Thank you for participating in the study.