THE UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY BY POVERTY-ALLEVIATION

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

by

NATHANIEL PHUTI KGADIMA

Submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE (MENTAL HEALTH)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR WF VAN DELFT

2009

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DECLARATION

I declare that:

THE UNDERSTANDING OF POVERTY BY THE POVERTY-ALLEVIATION PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature   **Date**

N.P. Kgadima

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following special individuals are acknowledged for their contributions throughout the study:

1. My supervisor, **Prof. WF van Delft**, for his patience throughout this study. *Dankie* Prof.

2. **My family**, for their understanding and patience every time I could not be with them because of my academic commitments.

3. **Mrs**. **Sherifa Khan, Ms. Deliwe Menyuko**, and **Ms. Puseletso Pitseng**, for being the best classmates that I could ever ask for.

4. The **research participants**, for making this piece what it is.

5. My **bosses** and **colleagues** at Kalafong Hospital (Department of Social Work) for standing in for me every time I was away to focus on my studies.

6. My former colleague, **Mrs. Effie Molefe**, for always believing that I'm good. Somehow I believed her. Thank you *MaMolefe.*

DEDICATIONS

This piece of work is dedicated to my late grandmother, **MAPHUTI EVELYN KGADIMA**, who always believed in me. Thank you *gogo*- for everything. May your soul rest in peace

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIDA	: Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	: Civil Society Organisation
CSS	: Central Statistics Surveys
DQA	: Developmental Quality Assurances
ODP	: Organizational Development Plan
OECD	: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
HSRC	: Human Science Research Council
IFAD	: International Fund for Agricultural Development
NDA	: National Development Agency
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
OHS	: October Household Surveys
PLSD	: Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development
PPA	: Participatory Poverty Assessment
SALDRU	: South African Labour and Development Research Unit
SPII	: Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute
SPRC	: Social Policy Research Centre
UN	: United Nations
UNCRC	: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

SUMMARY

The war on poverty is South Africa's priority and challenge. Many poverty alleviation programmes have been established in South Africa in an effort to overcome poverty. However, poverty alleviation projects have had little impact on the poverty profile of the country. Poverty continues to be pervasive, intractable, and inexcusable.

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the personal definition of poverty as constructed by the poor themselves. In this study the researcher's main argument was that sustainable poverty reduction calls for effective strategies based on clear and consistent concepts and approaches. Different ways of understanding poverty lead to different ways of dealing with it. A common and clear understanding of poverty helps build a common agenda with development partners, linking specific causes of poverty in each setting with sustainable policies and action.

A qualitative study was conducted with fifteen (15) poverty-alleviation projects participants from three (3) different projects. Data was collected with the use of an interview guide. The participants' responses revealed that poverty, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. The participants attached varying and interesting meanings to explaining the concept of poverty. The study also shed some light on the current state of the poverty-alleviation projects.

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION

Introduction

The war on poverty is South Africa's priority and challenge. A developmental approach has been adopted to address the problem. This approach is built around the concept of social development, which is based on the principle that social and economic developments are interdependent and mutually reinforcing processes. Many poverty alleviation programmes have been established in South Africa in an effort to overcome poverty. However poverty alleviation projects have had little impact on the poverty profile of the country (Gathiram, 2005:125). Poverty continues to be pervasive, intractable, and inexcusable. Today extreme poverty ravages the lives of one in every four (4) people in the developing world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2001:31).

It is therefore important to question why poverty is worsening, despite all the efforts and energy being put into projects. As Remedy (1991:30) asks: "Why have the commitments of the national government not achieved greater results in the war on poverty? Is it because our preconceptions are off the mark? Do we understand the problem of poverty enough?" Remedy (1991:31) further indicates that "there is a prima facie case for questioning whether we really understand the basis on which we can claim to know what to do about solving the problem of poverty". According to Remedy conventional wisdom is based largely on assumptions about what it is like to be poor, the opportunities open to the poor and the potential ability of the poor to help themselves if left to do so.

In this study the researcher will argue that sustainable poverty reduction calls for effective strategies based on clear and consistent concepts and approaches. Different ways of understanding poverty lead to different ways of dealing with it. A common and clear understanding of poverty helps build a common agenda with development partners, linking specific causes of poverty in each setting with sustainable policies and action.

1.1 Problem Statement

As Alcock (in Becker, 1997:21) suggested: "It is arguably the issue of definition which lies at the heart of the task of understanding poverty. We must first know what poverty is before we can identify where and when it is occurring or attempt to measure it, and before we can do anything to alleviate it." This does not necessarily imply that finding the "right" definition of poverty in any way guarantees that a project will alleviate the poverty of the poorest. However, it appears to be a necessary first step which if taken with sensitivity to the real needs of the poor can go far towards ensuring the success of subsequent steps. Wilson and Ramphele (1989: 14) likened poverty to an illness-something which exists but presents in many different ways. "Treatment", according to Wilson and Ramphele (1989:14), generally requires careful diagnosis: " … we should be concerned with discovering the nature of its causes in order that we may think through as systematically as possible what action must be taken both to cure, or remove, existing poverty as well as to prevent further outbreaks of this scourge. Not only are there several different dimensions of material and non-material poverty but there is also a complex interaction between cause and effect, which makes it difficult to describe a state of

poverty without considering those factors, themselves aspects of poverty, that cause further misery"

In order to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty, it is essential to listen to the poor themselves. When they are given an opportunity to express their experience of poverty, the concept that emerges is clearer and starker than the one espoused by development professionals (Chambers, 1997: 104). Poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality, and this is often different to the outsider's perspective and the jargon sometimes used by academics, politicians and consultants whose knowledge of poverty often comes from books, television, documentaries, newspapers and questionnaire interviews with the poor (Davids, Maphunye, & Theron, 2005:37). Admittedly the poorest of the poor do not possess the overview of their condition or of the strategies to remedy them that development professionals are trained to have. However, until the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the poor were not asked where their poverty hurt most. Now the poorest of the poor are beginning to be heard as clients of a growing member of development efforts, and it is important when they say:

 "we are nearly always hungry; we have no water; we need land; we are often ill; even when our needs are listened to, we have no way of ensuring that our real priorities will be met, and no power to ensure that our village receives a fair share of development resources".

It is this dimension of popular participation which crucially adds to the understanding of poverty and hence to the development process (UN, 1999:08; OECD, 2001:37).

The strength of the poor needs to be recognized: their existing mental and physical skills; their culture, social structures and information networks, their knowledge of the rural physical, agronomic and meteorological environment, and their inherent good sense of what is most important for surviving in a difficult and unpredictable environment. If the development professionals really want to help the poor help themselves, they must know who the poor are, where to find them and how they seek their livelihood. The early attempts at grassroots community development worked through community leaders. Very few of them were representative of the disadvantaged in society, especially the poor. The professional language used to describe poverty and the development processes all too often creates a mindset that unconsciously biases development planning against the interests of the poor. This attitude typically does not lead development planners to choose projects that involve working with the poor. However the apparent inability of the poor to significantly form the projects can be remedied. Different groups have found different solutions, but in each case there are common characteristics. The most consistent finding is the need to eschew the destructive power of patronage and well-intentioned charitable hand-outs. What is essential both for success and the promotion of true human development is the need for donor organizations to trust the poor when they seek to assist, and to do so by being prepared to "work with the poor" as opposed to "for the poor". The distinction is subtle but fundamental (Remedy, 1991: 16-17, 22).

Poverty may be an obstacle to economic growth but the poor are not a liability. They are assets in the fight against poverty so far neglected by the development professionals. There is no evidence that the poor want to be poor. The poor deserve the development

professionals' trust and respect as business experts in their own environment. They do not need their charity patronizing advice. Yet, the unconditional social biases and prejudices that underlie the poverty cringe are real and primary reasons why it is so easy to fall into the trap of working "for the poor" rather than "with the poor" (Remedy, 1991:31).

The table (1) below summarizes the priorities of the poor and of the development professionals. The first three distinct but interrelated types of poverty- economic or material; health; and political- are those cited by the poor themselves. Under each type, specific facets are cited and listed in approximate descending order of priority. Development professionals cite five additional types of poverty, along with specific facets. Lack of institutions in rural areas capable of bidding for, managing and/or monitoring development resources, lack of infrastructure (principally roads and bridges, storage and market centres); lack of education; lack of housing; and environmental poverty, that is, living and working in a polluted and depleted environment (UN, 1999:6). In this study the researcher's argument is that the different understandings of poverty are both subtle and profound and go a long way to explaining why poverty alleviation projects have not contributed to development to the extent that they ought. Many stranded concepts of poverty reflect the reality of the poor but they make the tasks of identifying the poor and of monitoring programmes complicated. Some dimensions lack good measures and one strand may be inconsistent with others.

Table 1: Priorities of the poor and of the development professionals

Type of poverty	*Facet*
According to the poor	
Economic (Material)	• Lack of food • Lack of water in or near villages • Lack of land or clear title to land • Lack of productive resources and equipment • Lack of income-generating skills valued by the market • Limited access to markets, local and more distant • Lack of economically useful information (price etc) • Lack of bargaining and market power in those markets • Low incomes and low consumption from self-production • Lack of economic security or of back-up resources for emergencies
Health-related	• Poor health, low resistance to illness and disease • Lack of local health facilities and medicines • Lack of basic health information and practices
Political	• Lack of political power, often even at the local level • Lack of access to power centers to initiate, correct or improve political decisions
According to development professionals	
Institutional	• Lack of organized and recognized institutions to bid for/channel/monitor use of resources
Educational	• Lack of literacy/numeracy and other basic skills, and skills for adding economic value to work
Infrastructural	• Lack of basic access to infrastructural, transportation and storage facilities
Housing	• Lack of adequate, sound shelter and sanitation at affordable prices
Environmental	• A poor and deteriorating environment, from pollution, lack of clean air, water, erosion, deforestation, overuse if resources etc.

1.2 Goal and Objectives

1.2.1 Goal

To gain insight into the personal definition of poverty by the poor

1.2.2 The objectives of this research are:

To conduct a thorough literature study on the subject;

To explore the understanding of poverty by poverty-alleviation project participants; and

1.3 Research Methodology

The study is conducted within the qualitative paradigm. The qualitative research approach was chosen in view of the explorative nature of the study which aims to describe the personal understanding of poverty by the members of poverty alleviation projects (Green & Nieman, 2003:167). This approach was thought to be the most appropriate considering the objective of the study which is to describe, and understand, rather than explain, the understanding of poverty by members of poverty alleviation projects (Green & Nieman, 2003:167). One of the major distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher attempts to understand people in terms of their own description of their world. A qualitative approach focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals and it is sensitive to the context in which people interact with each other.

1.4 Data Collection Method/Research Instrument

This study will utilize what Rubin & Rubin (in Mouton, 2001:181-200) termed *cultural interviews*. According to Rubin & Rubin **cultural interviews** "are about hearing how

people see, understand, and interpret their world". In cultural interviews, the researcher spends most of the time listening to what people say rather posing detailed and focused questions. By contrast, topical interviews are focused on subjects that the interviewer has chosen, involve more active questioning and rapid exchange and are more concerned with matters of fact and less with shades of meaning than are *cultural interviews*. The interviews will be conducted with the aid of an interview guide (**Addendum E)** in the form of semi-structured, open-ended questions. The interview guide serves as a map for the path that would be followed by the researcher when dealing with the specific issues considered relevant to the field of study (Green & Nieman, 2003:172). Neuren (cited by Green & Nieman, 2003:172) points out that themes and concepts, rather than variables, serve as the analytical tools for qualitative studies. All the interviews were audio-taped with permission from the respondents. In cases where permission for tape-recording was not granted, extensive notes were taken.

1.5 Sampling

Poverty is multidimensional (OECD, 2001:18). Its dimensions cover distinct aspects of human capabilities: economic (income, livelihoods, decent work), human (health, education), political (empowerment, right, voice), and protection (insecurity, risk, vulnerability).

For the purpose of this study respondents should be involved in the projects which address these different dimensions of poverty. The researcher only considered projects in Atteridgeville, Pretoria. Atteridgeville is a township which is situated 20 km west of

Pretoria (Tshwane). The choice of the location was based on practical reasons of accessibility. The researcher is employed at Kalafong Hospital in Atteridgeville. For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sampling technique was used, namely, convenience sampling. A convenience sample is described by Henry (1990:18) as a group of individuals who are readily available to participate in a study. During the researcher's contact with the coordinators of poverty-alleviation projects it emerged that there was poor administration of projects. Convenience sampling was used with all the three projects because there was no record of participants. The co-coordinators indicated that the participants' commitment was not 'consistent'. However it was said that there are always a minimum of five participants at any given time and the researcher decided to involve five (5) respondents from each project. Although this method of sampling is certainly convenient, it is hardly representative but, as Henry (1990:23) puts it, in some cases it is the only method available.

A poverty-alleviation project was only included on account of the type of activities (food gardening, sewing, food support, heath care, and women empowerment) as well as having significant female involvement (Green & Nieman, 2003:170). Poverty is not gender-neutral. It is not far from the truth to say that when one speaks of poverty, one is speaking of women. Cultures often involve deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination against women (OECD, 2001:40; Remedy, 1991:11). According to Burkey (cited by Mavalela, 1999:22), the majority of community development projects are more popular with women than men. One of the reasons for this is that the majority of these projects are undertaken in rural communities where women are in the majority and so tend to be

more active in these projects than men.

1.6 Data Presentation

The data will be analysed using the approach of Rubin and Rubin (in Mouton, 2001:181-200). They describe it as follows:

"Data analysis begins while the interview is still underway. This preliminary analysis tells you how to redesign your questions to focus in on central themes as you continue interviewing. After the interviewing is complete, you begin a more detailed and fine-grained analysis of what your conversational partners told you. In this formal analysis, you discover additional themes and concepts and build towards an overall explanation. To begin the final data analysis, put into one category all the material from all your interviews that speak to one theme or concept. Compare material within the categories to look for variations and nuances in meanings. Compare across the categories to discover connections between themes. The goal is to integrate the themes and concepts into a theory that offers an accurate, detailed, yet subtle interpretation of your research arena. The analysis is complete when you feel that you can share with others what your interpretation means for policymaking, for theory, and for understanding the social and political world."

1.7 Terminology

Poverty

There is no universal definition of poverty. However in this research poverty will defined in terms of the basic needs approach. This is an international perspective on poverty,

especially in the context of the developing world, where millions of people live without access to clean (unpolluted) air and water, an adequate and balanced diet, physical and emotional security, and culturally and climatically appropriate clothing and shelter (Maphunye et al,2005:39). Burkey (in Maphunye et al, 2005:39) saw "basic needs" as things that an individual must have in order to survive as a human being.

Poverty-alleviation project

Poverty-alleviation projects are often synonymous with income-generating projects (IGP) in that self-help is one of the methods used in providing income or food needed to sustain a basic individual and/or community life (Mavalela, 1999:23). Verhagen (in Mavalela, 1999:23) sees self-help as any voluntary action undertaken by an individual or group which aims at the satisfaction of individual or collective needs or aspirations.

1.8 Structure of the report

The dissertation is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 is the general orientation to the study. It provides the rationale for studying the subject matter (poverty)

Chapter 2 will address the theoretical debate about the definition of poverty, both in South Africa and abroad. Another section will also be dedicated to the theoretical discussion of poverty-alleviation projects.

Chapter 3 will present the background information of the three (3) poverty-alleviation projects under study.

Chapter 4 will describe in detail how the study was undertaken

Chapter 5 is the discussion of research results

Chapter 6 will present the major conclusions drawn from the empirical findings as well as recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: THEORERICAL DISCUSSION

Introduction

One of the major problems with any study on poverty is that of description (Rose, 1972:6). It is the purpose of this chapter to enter into the debate on the definition of poverty, both from the international perspective as well as within the South African context. The debate will also confront the current state of poverty in South Africa as well as the South African poverty-line and the issue of poverty-alleviation projects.

2.1 Understanding poverty: Entering the debate

Huge amounts of money and millions of man-hours of 'expert' efforts have been put into poverty-alleviation projects both in South Africa and throughout the world. Yet the results for hundreds of millions of poor men, women and children have been discouraging in the extreme (Leger, 1984, in Burkey, 1993: xvii). Many poverty alleviation programmes have also been established in South Africa in an effort to overcome poverty. Despite these efforts, poverty has worsened in recent years (Gathiram, 2005:123). According to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) report on The State of World Rural Poverty (1992) nowhere in the Third World have poverty alleviation programmes realized their objectives, namely; poverty amelioration and redistributive justice. Instead poverty continues to rise (Wilson, Kanji & Braathen, 2001:21).

In this study the researcher will argue that sustainable poverty reduction calls for effective strategies based on clear and consistent concepts and approaches. Different ways of understanding poverty lead to different ways of dealing with it. A common and clear understanding of poverty helps build a common agenda with development partners, linking specific causes of poverty in each setting with sustainable policies and action. How poverty is understood often informs its intervention strategies. It is also the researcher's belief that if the focus of any activity is on alleviating poverty, then there should be a clear understanding of what poverty is. As Alcock (in Becker, 1997:21) suggested: "It is arguably the issue of definition which lies at the heart of the task of understanding poverty. We must first know what poverty is before we can identify where and when it is occurring or attempt to measure it, and before we can do anything to alleviate it." This does not necessarily imply that finding the "right" definition of poverty in any way guarantees that a project will alleviate the poverty of the poorest. However, it appears to be a necessary first step which if taken with sensitivity to the real needs of the poor, can go far towards ensuring the success of subsequent steps. As Oyen, Miller & Sammad (1996:234) put it:

"Why spend money to find out what we already know". The answer is that, it is necessary for one good reason. The particularity of what it means to be poor, combined with accurate information about the extent of poverty, raises consciousness in society in such a manner that can generate or strengthen actions to try and deal with the problem. One's definition of poverty is directly related to the interventions one might suggest to assist poor people in the community. If a person, for example, thinks poverty is an

economic condition, he or she may suggest an intervention to develop policies to assist growth in the economy, while also pursuing the creation of employment opportunities."

2.2 The Need for Defining Poverty

"*We are nearly always hungry; we have no water; we need land; we are often ill; even when our needs are listened to, we have no way of ensuring that our real priorities will be met, and no power to ensure that our villages receive a fair share of developmental resources"* (United Nations,1999)

The fact that there is extensive and often challenging literature which seeks to define poverty is ample testimony to the difficulties of doing so and may even be a warning that one should not attempt to be too precise about the matter (Mosley & Booth, 2003:93). According to Shostak & Gomberg (1965:12) poverty cannot be defined; it cannot be measured. "Who can measure a man's needs? A man's belongings": ask Shostak & Gomberg (1965:12). Even though most people recognize poverty when they see it, it is difficult to define it in universal terms and often impossible to attach figures, numbers or amounts to it (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006:2).

What is meant therefore by the term 'poverty'? According to Bradshaw & Sainsbury (2000:38) poverty is a widely used and understood concept but its definition is highly contested. The definition of poverty- and hence also its measurement is far from straightforward. Therefore the first thing to understand about poverty is that it is not a simple phenomenon that we can learn to define by adopting the correct approach. It is a

series of contested definitions and complex arguments that overlap and at times contradict each other. It is differently seen as a big phenomenon or a small phenomenon, as a growing issue or a declining issue, and as an individual problem or a social problem. Thus in understanding poverty the task is to understand how these different visions and perceptions overlap, how they interrelate and what the implications of different approaches and definitions are. In a sense we learn that the answer to the question- do you understand poverty? - is: that depends what you mean by poverty (Alcock, 1993: 4). The term "poverty" can be considered to have a cluster of different overlapping meanings depending on what subject area or discourse is being examined. According to Dennet, James & Watson (1982:115) the difficulties in defining poverty are in part technical; more fundamentally, however, the use of a definition involves choosing among the various theoretical assumptions about the causes of poverty which underlie competing definitions. Indeed, the definition, the measurement and the explanation of poverty are closely interdependent, as also are the policy implications which the social investigations may draw.

Almost every conceivable aspect of the lives of the poor has been scrutinized, dissected and laid open to public view. It appears that there is very little that we do not know. Siburn (in Becker, 1997:32) argues: "We know a great deal about the subject. We know why they are in poverty. We can document their experience and anatomize their attitudes…we have debated the concept of poverty, the economics and politics of poverty, the psychology and philosophy of poverty….there is little or nothing to say on the subject that is new; there are no new insights around, no breakthrough to report, and

very little by way of policy recommendation that has not already been recycled more than once." And yet if academics and others have provided so many of the answers, then why it is that government have failed to eradicate poverty and fear of poverty? The answer to this question draws us back into the politics of poverty: the ideological and political disagreements as to what constitutes poverty. It is therefore one of the purposes of this study to enter into the debate on the definition of poverty.

The term 'poverty' conjures images of starving children, overcrowded informal settlements and ragged street children. These images form the basis of many people's understanding of poverty. For the poor, poverty is a multifaceted reality. In order to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty, it is essential to listen to the poor themselves. When they are given an opportunity to express their experience of poverty, the concept that emerges is clearer and starker than the one espoused by development professionals (Chambers, 1997: 104). Poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality, and this is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon sometimes used by academics, politicians and consultants whose knowledge of poverty often comes from books, television, documentaries, newspapers and questionnaires interviews with the poor (Davids et al, 2005:37). Only the poor can know poverty; only they can understand it. The economist who tries to define poverty with statistics cannot know poverty- nor can the reporter who spends hours observing the poor, interviewing them, but retreating at night to the luxury of a filet mignon and the comfort of a clean motel room. Nor, indeed, can the social worker who injects himself- and his prejudices- into the neighborhoods of the poor by the day or even

by the year (Shostak & Gomberg, 1965:12). According to Wilson & Ramphele (1989:14) in seeking to define the phenomenon we must be careful not to confine our thinking to those characteristics that appear important to people living within the sheltered walls of an urban university. For this reason when the Carnegie Inquiry into Poverty and Development in Southern Africa began, research workers were not provided with a nice clean definition of poverty that they could measure, but were told instead to go out into the highways and byways of the country to meet people who endured poverty and those who lived or worked with them and to listen to what they, from their own experience understood poverty to mean and then to describe and try to measure that. Admittedly the poorest of the poor do not possess the overview of their condition or of the strategies to remedy them that development professionals are trained to have.

2.3 Major Perspectives on Poverty

If we recognize that poverty is essentially a contested concept, why is it that academics and politicians continue to seek an accepted definition? Why can't we simply agree to differ, or suggest perhaps that poverty, like beauty, is contained only in the eye of the beholder? This may, at least for some of the more academically minded, appear an attractive and indeed a logical means of avoiding entering into the cut and thrust of political debate. However it is in practice not a viable response (Alcock, 1993:4). If poverty is to be fully understood so that it can be defeated or reduced, myopic and piecemeal preoccupation with particular cultural and regional meanings of the word, arising from misconceived theory and ideology, has to be relinquished. Instead poverty has to be given a scientifically acceptable universal meaning and measurement. It has

also to be explained primarily in terms of the huge influence of international developments- the policies of international agencies and global corporations and the institutions of the world's economy and trade- on social class and on style as well as conditions of life in every country (Townsend, 1993:3).

What follows is an overview of major perspectives on poverty, namely, the basic needs perspective and the income perspective.

2.3.1 The basic needs perspectives

Let us begin first of all with the term 'needs'. The term 'needs' quite generally comprises all those goods and services that an individual needs for living at a given point in time. Depending on the individual preferences of the person, however, this quantity of goods and services is in principal unlimited. Therefore, one usually talks about a minimum amount of needs, because otherwise (almost) all people would be poor.

According to Burkey (1993:3) basic needs are those things that an individual must have in order to survive as a human being. Essentially, these are clean (unpolluted) air and water, adequate and balanced food, physical and emotional security, physical and mental rest, and culturally and climatically appropriate clothing and shelter. However defining what is basic is at the centre of most controversy about poverty. What is basic depends on who is defining it and also on the group for whom the resources are intended (Segal & Brzuzy, 1998:78). At such a high level of abstraction, one can indicate a number of needs in general (e.g. adequate health, some education, some income security), but it is

apparently not possible to specify a list at a useful degree of detail. In particular, the important question of how much (e.g. income security) is needed cannot be answered. Invariably, there are times in all people's lives when they feel they do not have enough. Self-definition of poverty, while valid in its own way, is not considered valid in the public policy arena. Instead poverty is defined in a qualitative and concrete way, based on a commonly agreed upon definition that can be applied evenly to all situations. Such a definition uses an absolute measure of poverty. The other side of the coin is a relative measure of poverty, which uses comparisons to determine if a person is poor, or not.

A group of development workers in Uganda differentiated between absolute poverty and relative poverty. They defined absolute poverty as the inability of an individual, a community or a nation to satisfactorily meet its basic needs and relative poverty as the condition in which basic needs are met, but where there is an inability to meet perceived needs and desires in addition to basic needs (Burkey, 1993:3). Poverty is a relative term because it can either describe the situation of an individual or family, or it can describe a whole community or society. In cases where poverty in a community or society is the exception, we talk about individual poverty (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006:2). As an individual characteristic poverty is defined as a condition of individual scarcity which frequently takes extreme forms. Individual poverty exists for those people "whose means are not sufficient for their aims". Somewhat differently formulated one could say: Poor is that person whose resources do not satisfy their needs. However Swanepoel & De Beer's (2006:2) view on the matter is that if there are hundreds or even thousands of other

families in a similar situation, we can no longer describe it as individual poverty. Then it becomes societal or community poverty.

2.3.2 Income Perspective

This perspective categorizes people as poor if their income falls below a defined income measure. The poverty income line is defined as the level at which households have enough income for a specified amount of food, housing and transportation. Depending on how sophisticated the analysis is, the income line is adjusted for regional variation (Davids et al, 2005:37). According to Berthoud, Brown & Cooper (1981:14) the poverty line is essential, both for research and for policy, to provide some sort of estimate of the scale of the problem and to provide a sound basis for indicating changes from year to year. Once a poverty line has been established, an inequality measure provides automatic recalibration (on a relative basis) to determine whether progress is being made towards the implied objective of reducing the extent of poverty.

Problems associated with the income perspective are that the very poor tend to depend on non-income sources of support (Davids et.al, 2005:38). According to Estes (1999:13) income poverty takes into account only money that flows directly to individuals or other economic units but not money obtained by individuals from informal work (i.e. the so-called "gray" economy) or from other legal sources (e.g. the so-called "black" economy).

2.4. Who are the poor?

If the development professionals really want to help the poor help themselves, they must know who the poor are, where to find them and how they seek their livelihood. However, the poor and the poorest are also differentiated in other ways, which are often regionally specific. In South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, a significant proportion of the poorest are physically disabled, elderly, or chronically sick. In South Asia, the incidence of rural poverty is strongly correlated with the lack of access to land. In much of Bangladesh and India, government policies (colonial and post-independence), caste discrimination, and population pressure, have resulted in unequal structure of landownership, with large numbers of people possessing no land at all. The poor generally own or lease some land, largely in order to grow food crops, but do not produce enough to meet their subsistence needs. Most small farmers have to find additional work to feed their families or else they have to lease out the small amount of land they might have to others to generate additional income. The poor can generally make ends meet, although some may experience periods of seasonal deprivation. The poorest households possess few fixed assets and generally depend on casual wage-labour as their major source of income; but for many months of the year they are unable to secure employment. Such households find it difficult to meet their subsistence needs and experience periods of under-nutrition. In rural Bangladesh, as White (Riddel & Robinson, 1995:12) observes, it is usually obvious who the poor are:

"*They live in a makeshift single roomed house; they have few and poor quality clothes; they have little in the house but a few cooking pots, plates and dishes; they may have no*

bed but sleep on bamboo mats; they have at best a few ducks and chickens, sheep or goats; they eat at most twice a day and may go without food all day at the lean times of the year ... the poor quality of their diet means that they commonly suffer from illnesses such as diarrhea and eye problems".

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the rural poor are mostly the families of small farmers, artisans and pastoralists, who are just about able to produce or sell enough to fulfill their basic consumption needs. In Uganda and Zimbabwe, the poorest generally have access to small plots of land but lack the means to cultivate it productively and, as a result, have to supplement their meager agricultural incomes with earnings from casual labour, or else go without the food they need. In Uganda there are marked differences between urban and rural areas: a large proportion of rural households, especially in the remoter northern region, are clustered in the lowest expenditure groupings, and two-thirds are classed as poor peasants. Although landlessness is generally not a problem in Uganda, the poorest households do not possess land in sufficient quantity or quality to provide an income to raise them above the poverty-line. In some areas, food and livestock are in short supply largely due to protracted civil and political instability; and in other areas alienation has resulted in large-scale out-migration (in Riddel & Robinson, 1995:12).

Narayan's (in Nafziger, 2006:167) study of numerous World Bank surveys and a report of a representative sample of 60,000 poor people from 60 developing countries during the 1990s asks two major questions: How do poor people view poverty and well-being? What are their problems and priorities? The poor see that:

"Poverty is multidimensional….Six dimensions feature predominantly in poor people's definition of poverty. First, poverty consists of many interlocked dimensions. Although poverty is rarely about the lack of only one thing, the bottom line is always hunger- the lack of food. Second, poverty has important psychological dimensions, such as powerlessness, voicelessness, dependency, shame, and humiliation. The maintenance of cultural identity and social norms of solidarity helps poor people to continue to believe in their own humanity, despite inhumane conditions. Third, poor people lack access to basic infrastructure-roads (particularly in rural areas), transportation, and clean water. Fourth, while there is widespread thirst for literacy, schooling receives little mention or mixed reviews. Poor people realize that education offers an escape from poverty- but only if the economic environment in the society at large and the quality of education improves. Fifth, poor health and illness are dreaded almost everywhere as a source of destitution. This is related to the costs of health care as well as to income lost due to illness. Finally, the poor rarely speak of income, but focus instead on managing assets- physical, human, social, and environmental- as way to cope with their vulnerability. In many areas, this vulnerability has a gender dimension".

2.5 Poverty in South Africa

2.5.1 The South African poor

Poverty has long been endemic in South African society. Reliable information on who are the poor and where they are living has been scant indeed. Poverty, especially amongst the majority Black population, appeared to matter little to the minority apartheid regime. In consequence, South Africa never had a government apparatus that would measure and

monitor poverty (Deng & Tjonneland, 1996:14). The earliest definitions of poverty in the South African context focused on whites and they were highly subjective. At the time of the first Carnegie Commission in the early 1930s the definition was largely based upon individual personal estimates of what constituted "a decent standard of living for white men" against varying traditional standards in different parts of South Africa (Oyen, Miller & Samad, 1996:232). In the context of South Africa it is clear that poverty is a profoundly political issue. It is also perhaps important to begin an assessment of poverty research in South Africa with explicit recognition of the political environment in which that research was or is being done. Against this background it is helpful to recognize that poverty research in South Africa can be divided into four time zones: before 1980; the decade when the shift taking place in the balance of power became manifest, though few people expected the transfer of power; the extraordinary period between President De Klerk's speech in 1990, announcing the beginning of fundamental political change, and the inauguration of President Mandela in the wake of South Africa's first democratic election in 1994; and the period of democratic government since then.

According to Deng & Tjonneland (1996:19) the historical problem of lack of reliable information about who South Africa's poor are and where they live has been rectified. The new government has set about establishing a new infrastructure that can measure and monitor poverty. In addition several well-established research organizations have undertaken studies of poverty; these include the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) and the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) at the

University of South Africa. During 1993 there were two major socio-economic surveys. One was the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD) undertaken by SALDRU and the other was the October Household Surveys (OHS) undertaken by the Central Statistical Services (CSS). The OHS was repeated in 1994. The PSLSD survey is probably the most comprehensive socio-economic survey to be undertaken in South Africa. It was based on a comprehensive range of topics with the intension of providing exhaustive coverage of any single subject. In other words, this was an integrated questionnaire aimed at capturing various aspects of living standards. Topics included demography, household services, household expenditure, educational status and expenditure, remittances and marital maintenance, land access and use, employment and income, health status and expenditure and anthropometry. In a study conducted by Kgadima & Ledwaba (2003) in Mankweng Township (Limpopo Province, South Africa) on The Role of Social Grants in Alleviating Poverty the respondents characterized poverty as no means to support oneself, low standard of living, unemployment, lack of food and lack of basic income.

In 1997 a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) was undertaken in South African (May, 1998). The purpose of the study was to discover the people's perception on poverty. The poor characterized *their* poverty as:

- *Alienation from kinship and the community*

The elderly without care from younger family members were seen as 'poor', even if they had a state old-age pension (which provided an income which is relatively high by local

standards). Similarly, young single mothers without the support of older kin or the fathers of their children were considered to be poor.

- *Food insecurity*

Households were children went hungry or were malnourished were seen as living in poverty.

- *Crowded homes*

The poor were perceived to live in overcrowded conditions and in homes in need of maintenance.

- *Use of basic forms of energy*

The poor were regarded as lacking a safe and efficient source of energy. In rural communities, women in particular, walked long distances to gather firewood.

- *Lack of adequate, paid, and secure jobs*

The poor lack employment opportunities are paid low wages and experience lack of job security. These are major contributing factors to their poverty.

In Australia the same question regarding the definition of poverty has been asked of over 1,000 participants in the first wave of a Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) longitudinal study of Department of Social Security (DSS) clients around September 1995 (Bradshaw & Sainsbury, 2000:15). The table below reflects the responses from the participants:

Table 2 : The Australians perceptions on poverty

Perceptions	%
Not having enough money to make ends meet	12.3
Not having enough to buy basics like food and clothing	41.9
Having to struggle to survive each and every day	26.4
Never having enough to be able to live decently	8.6
Never being able to afford any of the good things in life	6.7
Having a lot less than everybody else	1.8
Don't know	2.5

(Bradshaw & Sainsbury, 2000:15)

In the recent work by Clark and Qizilibash (SPII, 2007); to provide a definition of poverty, a random selection of "ordinary people" from disadvantaged regions in South Africa was made. Participants were asked how they themselves distinguished between poor and non-poor, with specific reference to the basic essentials required to "get by" as opposed to "live well". As a result of their work in three poor communities in South Africa, Clark and Qizilibash developed a ranking of the 30 most essential things reflected by the participants, namely:

1.	Housing/Shelter

2.	Food

3.	Water

4.	Work/Jobs

5. Money/Income

6. Clothes

7. Education/Schools

8. Health/Health Care

9. Electricity/Energy

10. Safety and Security

11. Transport/Car

12. Family and Friends

13. Sanitation

14. Infrastructure

15. Leisure/Leisure facilities

16. Land and Livestock

17. Own Business/Enterprise

18. Religion

19. Furniture

20. Happiness and Peace of Mind

21. Community Development

22. Love

23. Freedom/Independence

24. Better Life

25. Oxygen

26. Respect

27. Blankets

28.   Heat/Temperature

29.   Sexuality

30.   Sunlight

2.5.2 The South African Poverty Line: The Debate

There is a widespread consensus that poverty is one of the most urgent social and economic factors that has to be addressed in South Africa. As President Thabo Mbeki explains: "Endemic and widespread poverty continues to disfigure the face of our country. It will always be impossible for us to say that we have fully restored the dignity of all our people as long as this situation persists. For this reason the struggle to eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be a cornerstone of the national effort to build the new South Africa" (SPII, 2007). There is however little consensus about how to define poverty, let alone measure it. This raises questions about the ability of the state to develop policies and programmes that are able to address both the causes and the effects of poverty in the absence of universally acknowledged empirical data. This paucity of knowledge also retards understanding and knowledge about different kinds of poverty, which in turn affects the appropriateness of state intervention (Frye, 2005).

According to the Committee of Inquiry into Social Security (2002) appointed by the Department of Social Development South Africa does not have an official poverty line. A poverty line is a statistical representation of the value of all the goods and services considered necessary for either an individual or a household. In his national Budget

Speech in February 2005, the Minister of Finance, Mr. Trevor Manuel announced government's intention to adopt a national poverty line.

"*Given the urgency with which we view the need for eradication of poverty, we need to ask what kind of poverty definition and measure would ensure pro-poor poverty government policies*" explains the Minister. In the absence of such a standard, researchers, the government and others in civil society have adopted and used large and incongruent sets of lines, each based on its own assumptions and leading to varying conclusions. This has led many observers to see the absence of a poverty line as an obstacle to progress in the fight against poverty (Mail & Guardian, 2007; Frye, 2005).

Some people might say that arguing about definitions and measures of poverty is splitting hairs; that in a country such as South Africa, the presence of poverty is so obvious that there is no reason to undergo complicated processes to measure and quantify poverty-instead we should be concentrating on doing something to eradicate the causes of poverty and to alleviate its effects. While the existence of poverty in South Africa might be all too clear, it is also true that government is currently directing many billions of rands to social spending- and specifically on spending that is directed at poor people, such as the social grants programme. However, being able to measure aspects of poverty helps ground debate, and is essential as part of the design of policy and government interventions. Clarifying what we mean by poverty can contribute to effective poverty eradication in the following ways (SPII, 2007):

- By being able to measure poverty we can also begin to map geographically where poverty is more severe and so direct resources accordingly,

- By understanding the various dimensions of deprivations experienced by people living in poverty government can focus its resources on specific programmes, such as housing, and basic services and

- By having a poverty measure we are able at appropriate levels to evaluate whether the poverty programmes are effective in moving people out of poverty and improving their well-being, both in the short term and over extended period of time.

According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in collaboration with Mr. Andrew Whiteford, a South African economist, 57% of individuals of South Africa were living below the poverty income line in 2001, unchanged from 1996. Limpopo and Eastern Cape had the highest proportion of poor with 77% and 72% of their populations living below the poverty income line, respectively. The Western Cape had the lowest proportion in poverty (32%), followed by Gauteng (42%). The HSRC has estimated poverty rates for each municipality. The majority of municipalities with the lowest poverty rates are found in the Western Cape. These include Stellenbosch (23%) and Saldanha Bay (25%). The major city with the lowest poverty rate is Cape Town (30%). Pretoria and Johannesburg have somewhat higher rates of 35% and 38% respectively, while Durban has a rate of 44%. The poorest municipality is Ntabakulu in the Eastern Cape, where 85% of its residents live below the poverty line (HSRC, 2007).

2.5.3 The proposed poverty line by Statistics South Africa and the National

Treasury (2007)

When calculating national poverty lines as a statistical measure, the most common approach is to estimate the cost of a minimum basket of goods that would satisfy the necessary daily energy requirements per person over a period of a month. The daily energy requirement, recommended by the South African Medical Research Council (MRC), is 2261 kilocalories per person. Using the 2000 Income and Expenditure Survey data, Statistics South Africa has estimated that when consuming the kinds of foodstuff commonly available to low-income South Africans, it costs R211 per person every month (in 2000 prices) to satisfy a daily energy requirement of 2261 kilocalories. In other words, R211 is the amount necessary to purchase enough food to meet the basic daily food-energy requirements for the average person over one month. However households also need other goods and services beyond food to meet basic needs. This includes accommodation, electricity, clothing, schooling for children, transport and medical services, amongst other things. In some countries, poor households spend most of their monies on food and the food poverty line is therefore adopted as a national poverty line. Other countries have made a rough estimate of the non-food component as one-third of the food component, which is then added to the food poverty line to derive a national poverty line. Statistics South Africa has attempted to estimate the non-food component of a poverty line. This can be done based on the assumption that those non-food items typically purchased by household that spend about R211 per capita per month on food can be regarded as essential, as such households forego spending on food to acquire these non-food items. The cost of such essential non-food items amounts to R111 per capita per

month. Adding these figures together (R211 and R111) gives an estimate of the minimum cost of essential food and non-food consumption per capita per month. It gives a poverty line of R322 per capita per month in 2000-prices. This yields a poverty line of R431 per person in 2006 prices.

However it is important to note that a poverty line is not a measure of living standards, and an income above the poverty line is not an assurance that household members have access to an adequate consumption bundle. The poverty line indicates, rather, what is required for a household to be able to sustain a basic livelihood comprising minimum food requirements and other essential non-food items. Living conditions of households also depend importantly and directly on how households spend their resources and the extent to which all members of the household share in the resources of the household. If a household spends its money on poor nutritional food or consumption items that only benefit one or a few household members, other members suffer adversely (Statistics South Africa, 2007).

2.6 Poverty Alleviation Projects

2.6.1 An Overview

The war on poverty is South Africa's priority and challenge. Many poverty alleviation programmes have been established in South Africa in an effort to overcome poverty. The major poverty-alleviation programme in South Africa is the social security system. According to the report on the Social and Economic Impact of South Africa's Social Security System, it successfully reduces poverty, regardless of which methodology is used to quantify the impact measures (Economic Policy Research Institute, 2004). In

South Africa social grants are non-contributory and income tested benefits provided by the state for people with disabilities (Disability Grant for adults and Care Dependency grant for minors), elderly people (Old-Age Pension), and unsupported children who are unable to provide for their own minimum needs (Foster Care grants and Child Support Grant).

However, as has already been indicated elsewhere in this chapter the focus of this study is on community-based poverty alleviation programmes. Community-based poverty alleviation programmes have been established by various government departments and civil society organizations in South Africa. Despite all these efforts poverty has worsened in recent years (Gathiram, 2005:123). This section explores reasons as to why the problem has worsened. According to Gathiram (2005:123) an overview of literature suggests that poverty alleviation programmes internationally and in South Africa have generally focused on project-based interventions, with an emphasis on service delivery and economic development, particularly income-generation and employment-creation projects. Opinions differ on what income-generating projects are. For rural communities, self activities are synonymous with income-generating projects in that self-help is one of the methods used by women in providing income or food needed to sustain a basic individual and community life. They see income-generating projects as self-help because a group of people with common needs or problems such as unemployment come together and engage in activities that can contribute towards the improvement of their quality of life. Verhagen (in Mavalela, 1999:23) sees self-help as any voluntary action undertaken by an individual or group of people which aims at the satisfaction of individual or

collective needs or aspirations. According to Chigudi (Mavalela, 1999:23) income generating projects are small initiatives, utilizing limited financial and technical resources. Chigudi (1991:2) further explains that income generating projects are assisted by NGO's, which in most cases are women's organizations, and which is in turn supported by a donor or group of donors. The people involved in a typical income-generating project often have little technical expertise, because they are mostly volunteers. According to Mavalela (1999:23) the group might have been in existence for a long time or it may be newly constituted for a specific project. The group usually defines its objectives, for instance to create job opportunities by engaging in baking, brick-making, sewing and gardening.

Many efforts have also been made to analyze why the results of poverty-alleviation projects are so meager. A study carried out for CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) by a group of consultants, who interviewed approximately 150 rural development theorists and practitioners in Europe, Asia and North America, indicated seven main reasons for disappointing results of traditional rural development programmes (Leger, 1984, in Burkey, 1993:xvii), namely:

- Target groups are not homogenous;
- Technological options do not always correspond to the motivations of target groups and to the constraints of the environment;
- Equitable distribution of revenues and benefits may be a myth;
- Government and NGO's strategies for projects conception and implementation do not necessarily represent the aspirations and interests of target groups;

- The human and social factors are too often neglected;

- Projects are planned in a rigid manner based on an overly idealized economic, political and institutional environment; and

- The already existing or newly created organizations and entities do not foster efficient/effective project management.

Burkey's (1993:xvii) view on poverty alleviation projects is that all too many development professionals unconsciously believe that rural development will be achieved through the efforts of government and development agencies. They do not reflect on the possibility that sustainable rural development will only be achieved through the efforts of the rural people working for the benefit of themselves, their families and, hopefully, their communities. Government and agencies can assist this process. According to Burkey (1993:xvii) programmes and projects aimed at improving the socio-economic and health condition of the poor tend to be initiated, designed, and implemented from the 'top-down' by agencies and institutions without systematic consultation and involvement of the intended beneficiaries.

2.6.2 Design of a successful development programme

Eight critical issues emerged from the literature presented to the Social Summit and emanating from it, such as the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and other statements on poverty reduction. These issues are summarized below in a set of key questions, each with policy implications and technical ramifications (United Nations: 1999).

2.6.2.1 Type of programme or project

What kind of programmes, projects or techniques purporting to promote participatory development for the rural poor have been most effective? What has been the role of such approaches as micro-financing and other types of financing in support of people's efforts to alleviate poverty? What about the effectiveness of land reform as a technique?

2.6.2.2 Beneficiaries

Have rural participatory development programmes truly reached the poorest of the poor as recipients or have development resources merely been directed to areas of great poverty, reaching the more successful in those areas-local landlords, merchants, bankers, town spokespersons, municipal or regional officials, tribal chiefs, cooperative leaders and so forth, claiming to speak on behalf of the poorest?

2.6.2.3 Gender Issues

Have rural participatory development programmes paid due attention to women? Since women with young children unsupported by a man at home, constitute almost 70% of the 1, 3 billion persons estimated to be living in poverty, have participatory approaches included women not only as priority beneficiaries but also as full participants in the decision-making process, on a par with men? Have the efforts to include women in any way discriminated against or excluded the needs of men?

2.6.2.4 Participation Techniques

How were the poorest involved? At what stages? What techniques seem to have been most effective? What measures have been taken to ensure that the poorest were not bypassed by local leaders?

2.6.2.5 Cost/Benefit Factors

The most fundamental question that can be asked is: Is participation by the rural poor in integrated rural development indispensable to effective poverty alleviation, and if so, under what conditions? Does participation by the poor accelerate or retard attainment of the objectives of the development process? Important methodological issues and measurement issues need to be addressed regarding the direct net benefit derived by the poor from their participation in development activities. Attention should also be given to determining whether participation adds to the cost in time or money of a development programme, directly or indirectly; whether participation really has an impact on poverty alleviation; whether tangible benefits accrue to the beneficiaries as well as the economic development pay-offs.

2.6.2.6 Organizations and institutions

What organizations are most effective in participatory pro-poor rural development and at what level do they operate: the village/small-town level; the provincial capital level; the national and international/intergovernmental level? To what extent must a village grass-roots community organization already exist for participatory development to be effective? Are agricultural or other rural cooperatives or agricultural councils a good vehicle? What

is the role of non-governmental organizations, and at what level do they work most effectively? What roles are played by rural municipalities, provincial and national governments and development agencies?

2.6.2.7 Economic and political conditions

What economic conditions are necessary and sufficient for participatory development to take place effectively? In what political environments does participatory rural development seem to work best: full democracy or central autarchy, or some system in between? How crucial is it for the poor to be fully enfranchised for participatory development to work?

2.6.2.8 Replicability and sustainability

To what extent are successful participatory development approaches replicable in the same country or in other countries? Do such approaches last, or do they falter in time?

2.6.3 Poverty-alleviation projects and gender

According to Burkey (1993:65) the majority of community development projects are more popular with women, than men. The reason for this is that the majority of these projects are undertaken in rural communities and women who are always in the majority tend to be more active in income-generating projects than men. Men are in a minority because they have migrated to find work. Women are not only in the majority but they also have traditional experience in all productive activities even in those households where adult men are present. In most cultures they are responsible for planting, weeding,

watering, harvesting, transporting and sorting of crops and in addition to their roles as housewives, rural women are becoming the income-earners in their families.

Chigudi in Mavalela (1999:24) mentioned the following as constraints on women's income-generating projects:

- Women's projects are confined to the tiniest end of small scale enterprise. For instance, maybe 20 women engaged in uniform-making share one sewing machine;

- Income-generating projects are limited to traditional women's activities such as crocheting, baking, sewing, and so on and they lack diversity because the skills are based on traditional domestic skills which are learned at home;

- Many income-generating projects suffer from inadequate funding;

- In most cases, women combine their income-generating projects activities with domestic responsibilities;

- Women tend to be apologetic about making money. They usually include social elements as one of their objectives and sometimes find it hard to get rid of members whose contribution is negligible;

- Women have a tendency to copy existing income-generating projects;

- Projects suffer from a lack of baseline information about the socio-economic situation of the project beneficiaries and the economic requirements regarding of available markets for women's products, price of inputs, availability of raw material and so on. Even when baseline studies have conducted, they are often not incorporated into the initial project

design. A researcher is hired, but by the time the researcher presents his findings, the projects implementers have started their activities;

- Women often lack access to resources such as credit, training, and information;

- Surveys of women's income generating projects have indicated that donor agencies give less money and attention to women's income-generating projects than to large development projects; and

- Income generating projects activities are by and large stereotypical female areas that are usually time-consuming and have no income earning potential. For instance, if the financial goals do not work, they will be replaced by social goals. It is usually difficult to distinguish income-generation objectives from welfare objectives because participants will always identify earning money as a priority, but they will also include an element of community development as part of their project.

Conclusion

This chapter is in agreement with Alcock (1993:4) that poverty, like beauty, is contained only in the eye of the beholder. Many people, including academics, campaigners and politicians, talk about the problem of poverty, and underlying their discussion is the assumption that identifying the problem provides a basis for action upon which all will agree. However, as this chapter has revealed, people do not all agree on what the problem of poverty is; and thus, not surprisingly, the action they wish to encourage or to justify is not always the same. In order to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty, it is

essential to listen to the poor themselves. When they are given an opportunity to express their experience of poverty, the concept that emerges is clearer and starker than the one espoused by development professionals.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXT DESCRIPTION

Introduction

This chapter discusses legislation regulating welfare organizations in South Africa in order to understand the State's expectations from the welfare organisations. The brief background of the non-governmental organization which facilitates the three poverty-alleviation projects under study will also be discussed.

3.1 Legislation regulating Welfare Organizations in South Africa

The first welfare provisions in South Africa were enacted some hundred and fifty years ago in the ***Meesters en Diensboden Wet,*** 1856 (Act 15 of 1856). Thereafter a flurry of welfare related statutes were promulgated. The well-known welfare partnership between the state and the private sector that exists today had its origins in the Welfare Organizations Act, 1947 (Act 40 of 1947). Over the years the government had many good intentions – which al led to more formalization and control over all welfare activity in the country. The politics of the day substantially influence funding policies. These good intentions are chronicled in a number of enquiries, reports and policy documents such as Committee of Enquiry into the Financing of Voluntary Organizations (1989), Working Committee on Social Welfare Council (1991), Interdepartmental Consultative Committee on Social Welfare Matters and the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997). The newest funding policy is the Policy on Financial Awards to Service Providers 2004. Approved in February 2004 for implementation on 1 April 2005, this policy looks more broadly at the funding of service. It has the objectives of transformation of NGO services delivery as

well as the way they are funded. The policy seeks to promote accountability and good governance. (Smit, 2005:350)

In addition to state funding, there are other sources of funding agencies such as the South African National Lottery, the National Development Agency (NDA) and the corporate sector. According to Smit (2005: 355) corporate donors are increasingly selecting their own projects to fund directly. The South African National Lottery was founded in 1999 in terms of the National Lottery Act, 1997 (Act 57 of 1997). According to Smit (2005:356) the National Lottery has been controversial since its inception. Apart from interminable delays in distributing funds, there has been widespread criticism. According to Louw (in Smit, 2005:356) in the 2001-2002 funding cycle, barely half (R233 million) of the money available (R439 million was dispersed. Louw further stated that there is a lack of "…any clear developmental agenda informing the allocation of funding…" The National Development Agency was established in terms of the National Development Agency Act, 1998 (Act 108 of 1998) as a public entity listed under schedule 3A of the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), 1999 (Act 1 of 1999). The NDA was established, amongst other reasons, to grant funds to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) for the purpose of meeting the developmental needs of poor communities and to strengthen the institutional capacity of CSOs for long term sustainability (RSA,2005a:7)

However, 92 of the 101 organizations that responded to a question about their happiness with the manner in which the NDA and the National Lottery distributed their funds,

during an analysis by Smit (2005:357) of 232 NGO's operating throughout the Western

Cape Province indicated that they were not happy for reasons listed in Table 1 below.

Table 3: Reasons for unhappiness with Lotto and NDA for distribution of funds

	LOTTO n=133	NDA n=92
Allocated less than requested	46(36%)	2(0%)
Funding criteria unclear	39 (28%)	54(59%)
Process too lengthy	63 (47%)	33(36%)
Disagree with funding	19 (14%)	22 (23%)
Process too cumbersome	17 (13%)	29 (32%)
Uncertainty of funding	75 (56%)	(37(40%)
Political/other interference	4 (0%)	8 (1%)
Other	21 (16%)	24 (26%)

All Non-Governmental Organizations are currently required to register in terms of Non-

Profit Organizations Act 71 of 1997 (Non-Profit Organizations Act71/1997)

3.1.1 Objectives of the Non-Profit Organizations Act

The objectives of this Act are to encourage and support nonprofit organizations in their

contribution to meeting the diverse needs of the population of the Republic of South

Africa by:

• Creating an environment in which nonprofit organizations can flourish;

- Establishing an administrative and regulatory framework within which nonprofit organizations can conduct their affairs;

- Encouraging nonprofit organizations to maintain adequate standards of governance, transparency and accountability and to improve those standards;

- Creating an environment within which the public may have access to information concerning registered nonprofit organizations; and

- Promoting a spirit of co-operation and shared responsibility between government, donors and other interested persons in their dealings with nonprofit organizations.

3.1.2 Accounting records and reports

In terms of section 17 of the Act 1:

1. Every registered nonprofit organization must, to the standards of generally accepted accounting practice:

    a) Keep accounting records of its income, expenditure, assets and liabilities; and

    b) Within six months after the end of its financial year, draw up financial statements which must include at least:

        i. A statement of income and expenditure for that financial year; and

        ii. A balance sheet showing its assets, liabilities and financial position as at the end of that financial year.

3.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

All registered organizations are supposed to be monitored and evaluated through the Developmental Quality Assurances (DQA) process instituted by the Department of Social

Development. The DQA is a developmental approach, combining a monitoring tool with a capacity building developmental process. Fundamentally the DQA is intended to ensure that organizations are complying with legislation, policy principles, and international assessment instruments, and are delivering an effective and efficient service to at least a minimum standard level. The DQA model allows for this to happen within a developmental framework, but also makes provision for the more extreme situation where very poor, illegal, or abusive services/practices are delivered and should be urgently addressed by the authorities, and in extreme cases terminated. Because the DQA is a process and not a once off "inspection" or evaluation, it enables an ongoing process of monitoring within a developmental framework. In this way the actual process of monitoring is used for capacity building, but does not diminish the element of "watching" over people resources.

Developmental Quality Assurance is a process which aims to**:**

- Ensure that recipients are receiving effective and efficient services and are satisfied with their quality;
- Ensure that the South African Constitution and International Instruments which this country has ratified, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), are upheld and reflected within practice;
- Ensure that the appropriate legislation is upheld;
- Enable the organization/project to meet policy and minimum standard requirements;
- Identify service delivery challenges;

- Identify capacity building and resources needed to develop the project/organization and province; and

- Provide support and mentoring to achieve developmental goals of the organization/project.

3.2.1 DQA Process and Procedure

3.2.1.1 Preparation

The organization to be subjected to the DQA requires preparation and if necessary, support. The organization is asked to complete the internal DQA at least 1 month in advance of the DQA assessment. The internal DQA is a self-evaluation process, and it is particularly important that the organization is provided with the knowledge and skill to do this as effectively as possible. In most instances the manager and/or one of the senior professional staff would facilitate the internal DQA for the organization and it is important that these persons are equipped to do so with integrity and confidence. As the DQA assessment is based on principles, rights and minimum standards, the organization should be given sufficient information on these and be enabled to make sense of these in relation to their particular service as thoroughly as possible. The responsibility for ensuring and facilitating this preparation (to the extent requested by the organization) lies with the DQA authorities who work in partnership with the organization's manager. Once an organization has already undergone a DQA, they are expected to take responsibility for their own capacity building regarding information and knowledge of principles, policy, and minimum standards.

3.2.1.2 Assessment

The visit takes place over a period of 2-4 days. Three or four people are likely to be in the team which visits the organization/project.

The visit will include:

- A review of the physical site and general climate of the organization/project;

- Interviews and discussions with service recipients - based on "outcomes" according to the minimum standards.

- Interviews and discussions with staff on an individual basis and as a team- based on minimum standards;

- A review of the staffing structure, job description and staff assessment;

- Interviews and discussion with the manager/s;

- Where appropriate, interviews and discussion with the steering committee/management committee, or board;

- A review of files and the various documents listed in the internal DQA framework;

- At least two assessment meetings with the staff team to discuss their views, to give feedback as the assessment progresses, and indicate developmental areas and possible actions or programmes to address these; and

- An "assessment" meeting with the manager and senior staff to agree on and outline the Organizational Development Plan (ODP)

3.2.1.3 Mentoring

Once the DQA assessment is complete and ODP is finalized, the organization is assigned a mentor by the DQA authorities, who will:

- Provide support and guidance in achieving the ODP goals- as required and/or requested by the organisation;

- Facilitate the organisation's access to information on programme, material and financial resources;

- Provide support and guidance in crisis situations, as required and/or requested by the organisation;

- Follow-up on any violations identified in the assessment and monitor the organisation between DQA assessments; and

- Lead and facilitate the DQA review with the organisation.

The mentor is expected to build a professional, positive and supportive relationship with the organisation. He/she is a resource for and consultant to the organisation and should have the technical expertise to (a) gain the trust of the organisation, (b) build capacity at all levels, and (c) facilitate the organisation's ability to reach developmental goals and minimum standards. It is preferable, but not essential, that the mentor be one of the team members who undertook the DQA assessment of the organisation.

While the mentor is expected to act as a monitor, s/he only assumes an authoritative position over the organisation in circumstances where the organisation violates the law,

international instruments, or rights. At the heart of the DQA is a commitment to supportive development and capacity building from the DQA authorities.

3.2.1.4 DQA Review

The DQA review take places 8-15 months after the DQA Assessment- preferably no later than 12 months. The process is facilitated by the mentor working in close cooperation with the management and team of the organisation. Based on a framework the organisation and mentor review the following:

- Progress towards achieving policy principles and minimum standards;

- Progress towards achieving identified ODP goals;

- Whether the organisation has satisfactorily addressed any violations; and

- Whether there are any new violations to be addressed .

The DQA Review results in an "updated" report and ODP which is then monitored until the next full DQA assessment. If for any reason there is no appointed mentor, the DQA authorities would have to appoint someone to facilitate the DQA review .

3.2.1.4 Principles of DQA

i.   Non-judgmental Attitude

Although no evaluation process is entirely objective, the DQA should be based on an attitude of open-mindedness, without prejudices and preconceived ideas. The conclusions reached in the ODP should be the result of the internal DQA and the full DQA assessment, not individual opinions and biases.

ii.   Strengths-based

The DQA should, as a matter of priority, identity and build on strengths in the organisation and staff. However, this does not preclude the identification of weaknesses, or serious violations of rights. Weaknesses are identified in the process and ODP as developmental areas which require attention.

iii.   Diversity

The DQA team should be representative of the languages and cultures of the staff and service recipients within the organisation. The team should be able to conduct the DQA in the language/s of the organisation and with respect for cultural norms and practices. The DQA process is best served by a diverse team with regard to language, culture, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, profession/discipline and sector.

iv.   Appropriateness

Without losing its integrity, the DQA process and model should be adapted to be most appropriate within the environment and context of the organisation subjected to DQA, and within the resources available to follow-through on the ODP.

v.   Competency

The DQA should be carried out by a team who are skilled, knowledgeable and experienced, and who are accredited in DQA work.

vi. **Expertise**

At least one person on the DQA team (preferably the team leader) should have specific and "expert" knowledge, skill and experience with regard to the field of service delivery in which the organisation subject to the DQA process practices.

vii. **Rights-based**

The DQA should respect and protect the Human, Constitutional and Special Rights of individuals throughout the process and in finalizing the ODP. This is the core component which is subject to monitoring and thus violations of any kind and degree should be given priority and immediate attention, over and beyond "developmental" support and mentoring to the organization. Violations of rights by any member of the DQA team (should this occur) should result in withdrawal of accreditation and any further involvement in the DQA.

viii. **Participation**

The DQA is a participatory approach, where service recipients, staff and management, in partnership with the DQA team, play equally important roles in the assessment and ODP formulation. The DQA is not something done "to" an organization, but "with" an organization.

3.3 Responses to the questions by the poverty-alleviation co-coordinators

3.3.1 Process of engagement with project coordinator

The researcher first contacted (telephonically) six Non-Governmental Organisations in Atteridgeville to secure appointments with poverty-alleviation project coordinators. However, only three (3) organisations were willing to participate. The other three

facilitators indicated that their managers were taking too long to give them permission to participate in the study. During the initial meeting with individual coordinators they all requested the researcher to put his request (Addendum A) for their participation in writing so that they could submit it to their seniors for approval. The researcher also attached a copy of the interview guide (Addendum B). The coordinators' written responses were very vague and some of the issues were not responded to. The researcher had to arrange face-to-face interviews with the coordinators to get more clarity on some of their responses. The researcher was also able to have a personal interview with the manager of Project A and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Project C below to clarify the DQA process.

The information mentioned below was the best that the researcher could obtain from the personal interviews with all three coordinators.

3.3.2 Discussion of projects

3.3.2.1 Project A

Project A is a sewing group. The members of the group are part of the Isolabantwana-Eye of the Children Project. The project is facilitated by Child Welfare Tshwane. Child Welfare Tshwane is registered in terms of the NPO Act (17 of 1997) (Reg no: 001-612)

Vision of Child Welfare Tshwane

- To provide a safe home environment for every child in Tshwane

Core purpose of Child Welfare Tshwane

- To protect children and ensure that they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Goals and Objectives

- To establish and maintain working relationships on provincial and local level with government departments, Child Welfare South Africa as well as with academic and other institutions on macro level;

- To enhance and increase the public's awareness on a meso and micro level of developmental social services offered by the organization and enhance community involvement;

- To develop and implement a developmental social work business plan for the organization including all social work business units;

- To develop, communicate and monitor the implementation of standards for best practice for developmental social work;

- To provide leadership to social work managers and identify development needs of all social work staff;

- To implement training opportunities for social work managers and staff;

- To empower and capacitate previously disadvantaged organizations through skill transfer;

- To develop and manage a database for all social work activities as well as community and client profiles; and

- To contribute towards development of legislation, to develop policies and guidelines and social work manuals to facilitate best practice for social work service delivery.

The project was initiated in 1997 by the Child Welfare Society of South Africa It is a community-based child protection programme which advocates the prevention of child abuse and neglect of children. It involves the training and authorization of community members to complement social work duties to protect vulnerable children. Since the members of Isolabantwana are unpaid volunteers they decided to start a sewing project in order to get an income for themselves. They indicated that they sew garments and sell them to community members and share the profit. The project is facilitated by the social auxiliary worker from Atteridgeville Child Welfare.   The Atteridgeville Community Based Office lies approximately 9 kilometers west of Pretoria. Other services offered by the Atteridgeville office include statutory services, therapy services, foster care, adoptions and life-skills training. The sewing project was funded by the National Lottery as a once-off grant.   However the coordinator could not explain how they are accountable to the funders. There are also no documents specifically for the project. The facilitator could only produce the document explaining the Isolabantwana project. The document was drafted by Cape Town Child Welfare Society in 1997 and it was not adapted to the Atteridgeville situation. The facilitator explained that there are currently 22 women who are involved in the sewing project but she did not provide any of their personal particulars such as their ages and marital status. The project is not subjected to the DQA process but other activities of the facilitating organisation (Atteridgeville Child Welfare)

such as the statutory social work services are being evaluated and monitored through the DQA process because they are funded by the Gauteng Provincial Department of Social Development .

3.3.2.2 Project B

Project B is a gardening project. The project is facilitated by Zanempilo Home Based Care Training Centre for terminally-ill patients (mainly HIV and AIDS). The coordinator of the project gave a written background of the project as follows (unedited): "The main purpose of establishing the gardening project was to benefit from it and learn from it about gardening. We plant beans, spinach, beetroot, carrots and pumpkins. Some of the products are sold to the community. The project also aims to encourage the members to have the gardens in their backyards"

The project was established in February 2008. The Director of Zanempilo organized some free land at one of the schools in Attteridgeville. The coordinator acknowledged that they initially struggled because they "lacked knowledge in gardening". They even had to recruit a "professional gardener" to assist them. Six female care-givers of terminally-ill patients in the community are currently involved the project. They come twice a week from 9 o'clock in the morning to 12 o'clock midday. The facilitator indicated that she is not involved "in the financial side of the project and she could not respond to the questions relating to the accountability of the project to the stakeholders". The researcher, therefore, decided not to ask any questions relating to the financial

management of the project. However the issue will also be discussed with the participants.

3.3.2.3 Project C

Project C is a sewing and gardening project. The facilitator explained that the main objective of the project is to "alleviate poverty, induced suffering and affliction through income generation, job creation, encourage self employment". The project is facilitated by the Zimisele Economic Social Growth and Development Organization (ZESGDO). ZESGDO is a non-profit organization (NPO) registered with the Department of Social Development (Reg no: 024-918 NPO). The organization was established in Gauteng Province in Atteridgeville Township by the founder and the Executive Director, Mr. Patrick Rabalao in 2001.

According to the project-coordinator, ZESGDO has been instrumental in bringing about change, care and support, development and empowerment to 100 households with 2500 beneficiaries in the Atteridgeville area over the past years. In the late 2004 it was extended to other areas in- Soshanguve South (Gauteng), Mokopane and Polokwane (both in Limpopo Province), and Witbank (Mpumalanga).

Vision

Loving, caring and sustainable communities.

Mission

To improve the socio-economic lives of poor and vulnerable communities through support programmes in partnership with relevant organizations.

Values

- Honesty

- Respect

- Dignity

- Patriotism

- Transparency

- Passion

Aims and goals

- To ensure that Zimisele's work is done professionally

- To be a financially sustainable organization

- To secure and keep skilled human resources

- To build and sustain meaningful relationships

Objectives

- To take care of orphaned children, widows and HIV/AIDS infected and affected household.

- To provide relief through material assistance, food security and nutrition, and assistance to access government social grants.

- To facilitate skills development and promote sports, art and culture.

- To provide capacity building and training to strengthen children, youth, women, and communities.

- To alleviate poverty, induced suffering and affliction through income generation, job creation and encouraging self employment.

- To develop, innovate, integrate, and encourage rural communities to participate fully in the economy and social sphere.

  ▪ To strengthen environmental justice and land use.

.• To raise funds and sustain meaningful relationships locally, provincially, nationally and internationally through government, trusts , business, agencies and foundations.

- To propagate the gospel of Jesus Christ through social good so that communities understand God 's kingdom rights.

Programmes and activities

A. Child care and support

Target group; orphaned children, HIV/AIDS infected and affected communities

Age Group: 0-18 years.

Activities :

- Nutrition (food parcels and food gardens), clothing, blankets, and social grants

- Counselling, drop-in-centre (life-skills, health,, education, shelters)

- Recreational facilities

- Awareness campaigns

B. Youth Development

Target group: youth out and inside school from poor and vulnerable communities

Age Group: 17-35 years.

Activities :

- Sports, arts and culture, skills development and income generation

- Sports (soccer & netball) art & culture (drama, dance, music, craft, visual art and story/literature)

- Skills development (leadership, entrepreneurship/business and Bible/Word of God)

- Income generation (selling, competitions and events)

C. HIV/AIDS home-based care and education

Target group: people who are infected with HIV/AIDS & related diseases

Age group: All ages

Activities:

- Home-based care (disorganization in the home, nutrition, health, counseling, awareness, income generating).

- Education (life skills, counselling, dots support, peer education, moral regeneration), Bible/Word of God .

D. Women empowerment

Target group: Unemployed and abused women

Age group: 18 and above

Activities :

- Skills development (sewing, bakery, catering, tourism, hospitality, gardening, land use/farming, spinning, weaving, recycling, food processing, juice & soap making).

- Campaign & awareness (gender issues, women's rights, violence & abuse against women).

The project the researcher is interested in operates within the Women Empowerment directorate of ZESGDO. The facilitator could not say how many people are involved in the poverty-alleviation project. She is apparently not keeping any kind of register. The project is funded by the Women Empowerment Directorate of ZESGDO. The organization survives on donations from various sources, including the Department of Social Development, Gauteng Premier's Office. The organization's 2005/6 financial statement reflects that R35 585.26 was spent on poverty-alleviation programmes. The facilitator indicated that she is accountable to the CEO of ZESGDO who in turn is accountable to various stakeholders. The CEO of ZESGDO indicated that they are not subjected to the DQA process because they receive most of their funding from private donors .

3.4 Evaluation and Conclusion

Based on the extremely scanty information presented above, it is evident that there is poor administration of the poverty-alleviation projects under discussion. Although there are good policies to regulate welfare organizations in South Africa there seems to be a shortfall with regard to regulation of private donors since it has been indicated elsewhere

in this chapter that private donors are increasingly interacting directly with the organizations. The system could, if not checked, be manipulated .

The researcher was also able to observe a common pattern amongst the coordinators, namely:

i.   All the coordinators were not very comfortable with discussing the financial status of the projects. They all referred the researcher to their seniors who in turn referred the researcher back to the coordinators; and

ii.   There is no record of day-to-day activities of the project .

iii.   None of the three poverty-alleviation project is subjected to the DQA process. Despite the DQA being available to assist the NGO's in their endeavors to render efficient services there appears to be an underutilization of its policies and procedures. Although the study will not focus the reasons for these NGO's not being involved in a DQA process, it needs to be noted that this state of affairs merits attention.

iv.   With the scant information available on the three (3) projects it makes it nearly impossible to gain a deeper understanding of the function of any of the projects .

During an analysis of 232 NGO's operating throughout the Western Cape Province by Smit (2005) it was found that only 130 (58%) were familiar with the Public Finance Management Act, 1999 (Act 1 of 1999) (Smit, 2005:352). Out of 228 responses, only 118 (52%) organizations indicated an awareness of the new policy and 102 had read it. According to Smit (2005:352) these results are not reassuring since they reflect a lack of

financial acumen that is so much needed in order to partly neutralize the state of flux that exists in welfare funding.

Although there is a high indication of maladministration of the three poverty-alleviation projects studied, the researcher will, at this stage, not comment on the impact of the projects on the living conditions of the participants before talking to the participants themselves .

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the research methodology adopted. Research design, sampling methods, the data collection method, and ethical issues will also be addressed.

4.1 Type of research design

The study was conducted within the qualitative paradigm. It has become more and more difficult to find a common definition of qualitative research which is accepted by the majority of qualitative research approaches and researchers. Qualitative is no longer just simply "not quantitative research", but has developed an identity (or maybe multiple identities) of its own. Qualitative research is intended to approach the world "out there" (not in specialized research settings such as laboratories) and to understand, describe, and sometimes explain social phenomena "from the inside" (Gibbs, 2007: x). According to Richards (2005:34) "if you are working qualitatively it is usually because the question being asked does not clearly indicate what data you need to answer it. This does not mean you don't know what you are doing rather you are adopting a flexible approach to a situation to be understood. The situation has to be understood in its context, so the record must retain that context. Otherwise you risk losing that understanding".

The qualitative research approach was chosen in view of the explorative nature of the study aiming at describing the personal understanding of poverty by the members of poverty alleviation projects. This approach was thought to be the most appropriate considering the objective of the study which is to describe, and understand, rather than explain, the understanding of poverty by members of poverty alleviation projects. One of

the major distinguishing characteristics of qualitative research is the fact that the researcher attempts to understand people in terms of their own definition of their world. A qualitative approach focuses on the subjective experiences of individuals and it is sensitive to the context in which people interact with each other (Babbie & Mouton, 2001 in Green, 2003:167).

The qualitative approach was also thought to be appropriate because "poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality, and this is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon sometimes used by academics, politicians and consultants whose knowledge of poverty often comes from books, television, documentaries, newspapers and questionnaire interviews with the poor (Davids, Maphunye, & Theron, 2005:37). In order to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty, it is essential to listen to the poor themselves. Only the poor can know poverty; only they can understand it (Chambers, 1997: 104).

4.2 Sampling Procedure

The participants who were involved in the study were drawn from three different poverty-alleviation projects in Atteridgeville as discussed in Chapter 3. The choice of the location was based on practical reasons of accessibility because the researcher is employed at Kalafong Hospital in Atteridgeville.

For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sampling technique was used, namely, convenience sampling. A convenience sample is described by Henry (1990:18) as a group of individuals who are readily available to participate in a study. During the

researcher's contact with the coordinators of poverty-alleviation projects it emerged that there was poor administration of projects. Convenience sampling was used with all the three projects because there was no record of participants. The co-coordinators indicated that the participants' commitment was not 'consistent'. However it was said that there are always a minimum of five participants at any given time and the researcher decided to involve five (5) respondents from each project. Although this method of sampling is certainly convenient, it is hardly representative but, as Henry (1990:23) puts it, in some cases it is the only method available.

4.3 Method of data collection

The researcher first contacted the coordinators of the three (3) poverty-alleviation projects to request permission to conduct the study with the participants. The coordinators requested a written outline of the study before they could consider the researcher's request. A letter (Addendum A) was submitted personally to their individual offices and permission was granted. Therefore, the coordinators were also requested to provide background information on their individual poverty-alleviation projects which was covered in Chapter 3. All the participants were seen individually during an introductory interview to explain the purpose of the research as well as to request their consent for participation with each participant (See Addendum B for the proposed consent form). The first introductory interview took approximately twenty (20) minutes. Appointments for the interviews were arranged with the individual participants.

4.4 Research Instrument

This study utilized what Rubin & Rubin (1995:195) termed cultural interviews. According to Rubin & Rubin cultural interviews "are about hearing how people see, understand, and interpret their world". In cultural interviews, the researcher spends most of the time listening to what people say rather posing detailed and focused questions. In contrast, topical interviews are focused on subjects that the interviewer has chosen, involve more active questioning and rapid exchange and are more concerned with matters of fact and less with shades of meaning than are cultural interviews. The interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide in the form of semi-structured, open-ended questions. The interview guide served as a map for the path that would be followed by the researcher when dealing with the specific issues considered relevant to the field of study (Green, 2003:172). Neuren (cited by Green, 2001:172) points out that themes and concepts, rather than variables, serve as the analytical tools for qualitative studies. According to Holloway & Wheeler (1996:56) the interview guide focuses on particular aspects of the subject area to be examined. "Although researchers aim to gain the participants perspective they must remember that they need some control of the interview so that the purpose of the study can be achieved and the research topic explored" added Holloway & Wheeler (1996:56). The interview guide was divided into three (3) sections, namely the respondents' personal characteristics, the respondents' perception on poverty (and being poor), as well as the respondents' views on the poverty-alleviation projects (See Addendum C). The interview guide was written in English but it was translated into Setswana during the interviews.

4.5 The Interview Process

"The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe" (Patton, in Greenfield, 2002:209).

Usually qualitative research interviews tend to involve relatively little structure and control by the researcher. Digressions by participants are expected and are generally regarded as useful because they lead into topics that often are more productive than those that the researcher might have introduced. Getting participants back on track is done only if it becomes apparent that they are avoiding topics that need to be discussed and that are believed to be within their emotional tolerance for discussion (Yegidis & Weinbach, 1996:130).

4.5.1 Recording Interview Data

Before conducting an interview, the researcher should decide how the interview will be recorded. The following questions should help to determine to determine which form of recording is appropriate for the research (Greenfield, 2002:214):

- How sensitive are the issues you the researcher wish to address? If the roles were reversed, would the researcher feel comfortable being tape recorded?

- Does the researcher have the ability to record the interview in note form?

- Does the type of interview that the researcher is adopting require him/her to make notes to act as probes about certain topics as they arise?

- Does the researcher have the resources to have the tape recordings transcribed? This can prove very costly in terms of the researcher's own time or paying somebody to transcribe the interviews.

According to Greenfield (2002:214) three (3) possible options are (i) note-taking, (ii) tape-recording, or (iii) a combination of the two. The common way of recording interviews has been with the use of a tape-recorder. The interview can then concentrate on the topic and the dynamics of the interview (Kvale, 2007:93). Buchanan (in Greenfield, 2002:215) found refusals to allow tape recordings to be rare, describing tape recorders as now "accepted technology". However when participants deny permission to be taped, or when taping seems inappropriate, for instance in very sensitive situations, researchers generally take notes throughout the interviews, and these notes reflect the words of the participants as accurately as possible. As interviewers can only write down a fraction of the sentences, they select the most important words or phrases and summarize the rest. Patton (in Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:70) advises on conventions in the use of quotation marks while writing notes. Researchers use them only for full, direct quotation from participants. He suggests that researchers adopt a mechanism for differentiating between one's own thoughts and participants' words.

Initially the researcher proposed to audio-tape all the interviews and in cases where permission for tape-recording was not granted, extensive notes would be taken. However all the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable with the audio-tape. They

indicated that they are more used to note-taking, e.g. when they visit public offices officials take notes. Therefore extensive notes were taken during the interviews.

4.5.2 Types of Questions

When asking questions, researchers use a variety of techniques. According to Holloway & Wheeler (1996:58) in qualitative studies questions are as non-directive as possible but still guide towards the area of study which is of interest to the researcher. Researchers phrase questions clearly and aim at the participants' level of understanding. Ambiguous questions lead to ambiguous answers and questions with double meaning are best avoided.

Patton (in Greenfield, 2002:21) suggests that there are six kinds of questions that can be asked of people:

- Experience/behaviour questions: what a person does or has done.

- Opinion/value questions: to understand the cognitive and interpretive processes of people.

- Feeling questions: to understand the emotional responses of people to their experiences and thoughts.

- Knowledge questions: to discover factual information the participant has.

- Sensory questions: questions about what is seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled.

- Background/demographic questions: to identify characteristics of the person being interviewed.

The interview guide (See Addendum C) was divided into three (3) sections, namely the respondents' personal characteristics (background/demographic questions), the respondents' perceptions of poverty (and being poor), as well as the respondents' views on the poverty-alleviation projects (both can be categorized as opinion/feeling questions if we consider Patton's suggestion above).

4.5.3 Length and Timing of interviews

Field & Morse (in Holloway & Wheeler, 1998:56) advises that interviews should not be continued beyond an hour. However Holloway & Wheeler (1998:56) feel that the length of time depends on the participants. According to them the researcher must suggest an appropriate amount of time so that participants can plan their day. Other participants, particularly older people or physically weak people might need to break off after a short while, say 20 or 30 minutes. Participants such as children cannot concentrate for long periods of time.

All the interviews took approximately 1-2 hours. The interviews were arranged at the "participants' convenience". The researcher and the participants ensured that there were minimal disruptions, e.g. for those interviews which were conducted at the participants' houses, efforts were made that they were conducted when the participants' children were at school or there was someone at home to take care of them. During some of the interviews the participants agreed to "put their cell- phones on silent mode or switch them off completely".

4.6 The Ethical Issues

Apart from instrumentation and procedural concerns, collecting data from people raises ethical concerns. These include taking care to avoid harming people, having regard for their privacy, respecting them as individuals and not subjecting them to unnecessary research (Mellville and Wayne, 2001:49). Researchers have an obligation to ensure that participants' well-being and health are safeguarded and their human rights respected. This obligation is normally articulated as a set of principles, or standards or behavioural expectations and conduct that prescribe to researchers how to approach and conduct themselves when undertaking research projects, but more importantly how to engage with and treat research participants central to such research endeavors. These principles, standards or behavioural expectations and conduct are commonly referred to as "ethics". Per definition, "ethics" can be described as "a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or group, is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behaviour expectations about the most correct (and appropriate) conduct towards experimental subjects and participants, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students" (Yegides & Weinbech, in Alpaslan, 2008:1).

Ethical guidelines for social science research commonly concern the participants' informed consent to participate in the study, confidentiality of the participants, consequences of participation in the research project and the researcher's project and the researcher's role in the study (Kvale, 2007:20).

4.6.1 Informed Consent

According to Kvale (2007:27) informed consent entails informing the participants about the overall purpose of the investigations and the main features of the design, as well as of possible risks and benefits from participation in the research project. Informed consent further involves obtaining the voluntary participation of participants and informing them about their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Silverman (2001:271) further elaborates about what informed consent entails and states it is:

- Giving information about the research which is relevant to subjects' decisions about whether to participate in research project;

- Providing information (verbally and in writing) to the participants and ensuring that they understand the information. Where a person who has to give consent is not in command of the language used, the service of a translator must be arranged;

- Ensuring that participation is voluntary requiring written consent from participant who are legally competent;

- Obtain consent by proxy (i.e. from parents, guardians) where participants are not competent to agree (e.g. minors).

Qualitative researchers have inherent problems with informed consent. When the research begins they have no specific objectives for the research though they may have general aims or a focus. The nature of qualitative research is its flexibility, the use of unexpected ideas which arise during data collection and the prompts that are allowed during interviews. Qualitative research focuses on the meanings and interpretations of the

participants. The researcher develops ideas which are grounded in the data rather than testing previously constructed hypotheses. Therefore, the researcher is not able to inform research participants of the exact path of the research, and informed consent is not a once-and-forever permission but an ongoing process of informed participation (Ford & Reutter, in Holloway & Wheeler, 1996:43).

According to Holloway & Wheeler (1996:43) the process of informed consent is set firmly within the principle of respect for autonomy. This principle demands that participation is voluntary and that participants are aware not only of the benefits of the research but also of the risks they take. Participants must be informed throughout about the voluntary nature of participation in research and about the possibility of withdrawing at any stage. It is also useful for the researcher to anticipate the potential problems in the course of the research and consider their solutions. The researcher must be aware that the research might threaten participants, superiors or institutions, even if it is intended to have a positive effect. Kvale (2007:28) also adds that the consequences of an interview study need to be addressed with respect to possible harm to the participants as well as the expected benefits of participating in the study. This also involves the researcher's responsibility to reflect on the possible consequences, not only for the participants taking part in the study, but for the larger group to which they belong as well.

All the participants were seen individually during the first introductory interview to explain the purpose of the research as well as to request their consent for participation (See Addendum B for the proposed consent form). Surprisingly the participants preferred

to give verbal consent because they did not understand "why they should sign 'papers' if this (study) is only for your (the researcher's) studies". In the end the researcher agreed to their 'condition'-verbal consent.

4.6.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

According to Holloway & Wheeler (1996:46) qualitative researchers might be more intrusive than quantitative researchers. Therefore, the researcher needs sensitivity and communication skills. Usually anonymity is guaranteed, and a promise is given that identities will not be revealed. Qualitative researchers work with small samples, and it is not always easy to protect identities. To protect participants by ensuring their anonymity and treating the information they have shared confidentially, Holloway & Wheeler (1996:46) suggest the following:

- Change minor details so that informants cannot be recognized.
- Provide participants with pseudonyms (or let them choose a pseudonym). Only the researcher should be able to link participants' pseudonyms with their real names and identities on the tape recordings and transcripts carrying their stories.

Confidentiality is a separate issue from anonymity but also very important. Confidentiality implies that only the researcher and possibly a few relevant people (i.e. the supervisor, promoters, translator,) should be aware of the identity of participants. Yegidis and Weinbach (1996:34) state that the ethical principle of confidentiality aims to try to safeguard research participants from damage/hurt/injury/ injustice/discrimination

that might come to them if their identities are intentionally or accidentally associated with any of the data that are collected.

The participants' names were never used in this study. Since the researcher was working with a very small sample the findings were integrated and analyzed together to protect the identity of the participants. The possibility of project-alleviation coordinators (mis)interpreting the participants' views on the projects differently was also discussed with the participants.

4.6.3 The integrity of the researcher

The researcher as a person is critical for the quality of the scientific knowledge of and for the soundness of ethical decisions in an interview inquiry. Moral research behaviour involves more than ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it encompasses the moral integrity of the research, and the researcher's sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action. Through interviewing the importance of the researcher as a person is magnified because the interview is the main instrument for obtaining knowledge. Being familiar with value issues, ethical guidelines and ethical theories may help in choices that weigh ethical versus scientific concerns in a study. In the end, however, the integrity of the researcher-his or her knowledge, experience, honesty and fairness-is the decisive factor. The role of the interview can involve a tension between a professional distance and a personal friendship. Interviewer may identify with their participants so closely that they do not maintain a professional distance, but instead report and interpret everything from the participants' perspective- in anthropological terms, 'going native'. When under

pressure to deliver results, whether to a commercial employer or to their thesis, the researcher's show of empathy may become a means to circumvent the participants informed consent and persuade the participants to disclose experiences and emotions that they later might have preferred to keep to themselves or even 'not know' (Kvale, 2007:29-30).

No value judgments about the participants' actions and points of views were made under any circumstances even if they conflicted directly or indirectly with those of the researcher. The researcher was trained not to impose his personal value system on clients and this was conveyed to the participants.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Introduction

In chapter is going to present the data collected from fifteen (15) poverty-alleviation participants is presented.

5.1 The process of qualitative data analysis

This process of qualitative data analysis was very lengthy because the researcher had to make sense of copies of interview notes and move back and forth to extrapolate findings. Patton (in Alpaslan, 2007:3) adds that *"this process is not only lengthy but also messy".* It is also important (for the reader) to keep in mind that when it comes to the process of qualitative data analysis there is "no right way" and that there is no standard procedure for qualitative analysis. However this does not mean that it is not systematic and rigorous. The researcher should establish a plan on how to analyze the qualitative data.

The researcher has divided the data into themes and sub-themes. To support the data, quotation relating to each theme or sub-theme were incorporated.

5.2 Sample Characteristics

The data to be presented in this study was collected from fifteen (15) participants in poverty-alleviation projects. All the participants were females and the majority of them were single. However the majority of the single participants were involved in serious relationships. Their partners supported them financially. The participants' ages ranged from 24-45. The majority of the participants had reached matric but only a few managed to pass the matriculation examination. Some participants had managed to get one-year

certificates in various courses. All the participants were involved in the projects on a full-time basis.

5.2.1 Poverty and Gender

"Chinese men have to carry the burden of three mountains; oppression from outside, feudal oppression, and the burden of their backwardness... But Chinese women are burdened by four mountains, the fourth one being Chinese men! We should be careful not to burden women with a fifth burden; that of carrying most of the responsibility for community development! They should not be overloaded in the process" (Mao Tse Tung, in Burkey, 1993:64).

Although the researcher initially proposed not to analyze the participants' demographic characteristics, an exception would be made with regard to the participants' gender. It was interesting to note that all the participants were females. According to Remedy (1991:11) poverty is not gender neutral. It is also not far from the truth to say that when one speaks of poverty, one is also speaking of women. Culture often involves deep-rooted prejudices and discrimination against women. While studies of poverty have continued for more than a century, traditional definitions and forms of measurement have largely been gender-blind and have focused on poverty as experienced by households rather than individuals. This has the tendency of obscuring the poverty and deprivation women experience within affluent households and obscuring the extent to which women might experience greater poverty than other members of poor households. It also tends to

overlook the fact that poor households headed by women are over-represented in the figures of household poverty (Payne, 2001:1).

An understanding of gender relations is central to poverty analysis, since gender equality is essential for poverty eradication and sustainable development process. The reasons for this were well put during the International Conference on Population and Development (1994): "…as women are generally the poorest of the poor, eliminating social, cultural, political, and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite of eradicating poverty in the context of sustainable development" (Osman, in Sweetman, 2002:22).

Poverty in South Africa also has strong gender dimensions. For instance, the 2003 Human Development Report shows that, in 2002, about 50.9% of the poor were females, compared to 45.9% who were males. Moreover, what does emerge clearly from the South African household surveys is that households headed by women are more likely to be poor. For example, May's 1998 report showed that the poverty rate among female-headed households was 60%, while it was 31% among male-headed households. Similarly, Woolard (2002) found that a household headed by a resident male has a 28% probability of being poor (Mafoyane, 2002:6).

5.3 The participant's perceptions on poverty

"Poverty is not knowing where your next meal is going to come from and always wondering when the Council is gong to put your furniture out and always praying that your husband must not lose his job"(Mrs. Witbooi, in Mafoyane, 2002:28).

Poverty, like beauty, is contained in the eyes of the beholder (Alcock, 1993:4). This was evident in the participants' views of 'their poverty.' According to Chambers (1983:104) because poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality, and this is often removed from the outsider's perspective and the jargon sometimes used by academics, politicians and consultants whose knowledge of poverty often comes from books, television, documentaries, newspapers and questionnaires interviews with the poor. In order to understand the multifaceted nature of poverty, it is essential to listen to the poor themselves. Only the poor can know poverty; only they can understand it. When they are given an opportunity to express their experience of poverty, the concept that emerges is clearer and starker than one explored by development professionals.

- **The challenge**

However the issue of defining poverty also posed as a challenge to the participants. They just didn't know *"how to put (explain) it"*.

"..bodiidi ke bodiidi (Sepedi/Tswana-loosely translated as poverty is just poverty)" said one participant.

One participant even extended the issue further and asked: *"Why should you ask about us about poverty because we all know what it is, don't we?"*

The term poverty is taken for granted. Apparently it has become so common in our daily lives that it appears unnecessary to explain it. Even though most people recognize poverty when they see it, it is difficult to define it in universal terms and often impossible to attach figures, numbers, or amounts to it (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006:2).

- **The anger**

Some participants indicated that they were frustrated with the question because according to them *"the researcher knows what poverty is and there is nobody who doesn't know what it is"* and even asking *"how talking about it will help them"*. As Siburn (in Becker, 1997:32) argues: *"We know a great deal about the subject. We know why they are in poverty. We can document their experience and anatomize their attitudes...we have debated the concept of poverty, the economic and politics of poverty...there is little or nothing to say on the subject that is new; there are no new insights around, no breakthrough to report, and very little by way of policy recommendation* that has not already been recycled more than once".

It is the argument of this study that the issue of definition of poverty (arguably) lies at the heart of understanding poverty. We must first know what poverty is before we can do anything about it. This does not necessarily imply that finding the *'right'* definition of poverty in any way guarantees that a project will alleviate poverty. However, it appears to be a necessary first step which if taken with sensitivity to the real need of the poor can go far towards ensuring the success of subsequent steps.

Below are the participants' **personal understandings of their own poverty**. As it will be seen, their definitions overlap and at times even contradict each other.

- **Income Perspective**

The majority of participants defined poverty primarily in financial terms:

"To me poverty is simply not having money"

"These days you need money abuti (my brother)-it determines whether you are poor or not"

One participant even equated money- or lack of it- to death: *"If you have no money you are as good as dead"*

The income perspective categorizes people as poor if their income falls below a defined income measure. Many South African poverty surveys use income as away of defining poverty. In South Africa income is also used as the basis on which eligibility for grants and subsidies such as pensions and housing is calculated (Davids et al, 2005:38).

- **Lack of basic needs**

This perspective to the identification of poverty takes the income perspective one step further. It defines poverty as the deprivation of material requirements for the minimally acceptable fulfillment of basic human needs (Mbuli, 2008:23). *"Basic needs may also interpreted in terms of minimum specified quantities of such things as food, clothing, water...."* (Shaffer, cited in Mbuli, 2008:23).

Participants differed in what they referred to as basic needs. The table below represent some of the needs which were considered the *"must have"* by the participants.

Table 4: The participants' basic needs

Needs	Participant's views
Food	*"for me food is the source of life-you can't live without food"*
Shelter	"…before I can think about anything I should have place to stay first…"
Electricity	"In the informal settlement where we are staying you need electricity-paraffin is very expensive"
Clothes	"You can't go out without clothes-they don't have to be expensive"

This perspective on the identification of poverty takes the income perspective one step further. It defines poverty as the deprivation of material requirements for the minimally acceptable fulfillment of basic human needs (Mbuli, 2008:23). "*Basic needs may also be interpreted in terms of minimum specified quantities of such things as food, clothing, water...."* (Shaffer, cited in Mbuli, 2008:23).

The 1995 United Nations Copenhagen Declaration identified the following as basic human needs (Studies in Poverty & Inequality Institute, 2007):

1. Food

2. Safe drinking

3. Sanitation facilities

4. Health

5. Shelter

6. Education

7. Information

8. Income

These basic human needs correspond significantly with the socio-economic rights guaranteed in the South African Constitution, namely the right to:

1. Adequate housing

2. Health care services

3. Sufficient food and water

4. Social security, including social assistance for those who are unable to take care of themselves and their dependents.

- **Race**

Some participants attached race to their understanding of poverty: *"I think there shouldn't be any Black person who can come here and tell me that he/she doesn't know poverty because that would be a lie"*

According to Mbuli (2008:5) poverty in South Africa has a strong racial dimension. As May (in Mbuli, 2008:5) would argue, *"while it is not confined to one racial group, it is, however, concentrated mainly among Blacks. As it has been illustrated in the 2003 Human Development Report, in 2002, the percentage of Blacks, Coloureds, Asians and Whites who were poor was 56.3%, 36.1%, 14.7% and 6.9% respectively"*.

- **Low standard of education**

"To me not being able to go to school is the worst poverty…I wish I will just go back to school…I made my children to provide with all the necessary tools to ensure that they receive education" said one participant

There is strong correlation between the level of education and the standard of living in South Africa. According to Woolard (in Mbuli, 2008:6), in 1998, 58% of adults with no education were poor; 53 % of adults with less than seven years of education were poor; 34% of adults with incomplete secondary schooling were poor; 15% of adults who had not completed secondary school were poor, and only 5% of adults with tertiary education were poor.

- **Unemployment**

This was closely related to the participants' understanding of poverty in financial terms *"because you need work to get money…you can't always rely on other people"*.

Unemployment can best be defined as a "situation in which people who want jobs cannot find work at the prevailing rate" (Layard, 1994:62) whereas Sadie (in Mafoyane, 2002:3) describes the unemployed as *"members of the labour force or economically active population who do not have a job, either as employees or self employed persons, who are available for employment and are seeking work for pay or profit"*.

Poverty and unemployment are closely related in South Africa. According to Woolard (in Mbuli, 2008:6) the unemployment rate among those from poor households is 52% in comparison with an overall national rate of 29%. In addition, labour force participation is lower in poor than non-poor households. More than half of the working-age poor (or about 5 million adults) are outside the labour market. As a result the percentage of working age individuals from households below the poverty line who are actually working is significantly lower than the average. Only 24% of poor adults (about 2 million people) are employed, compared with 49% (or 8 million) from non-poor households.

The perceptions as discussed above are not necessarily confined to the South Africans. In Australia over 1,000 participants expressed their perceptions on poverty during the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) longitudinal study of Department of Social Security (DSS) clients around September 1995 (Bradshaw & Sainsbury, 2000:15).
The table below reflects their responses.

Table 5

Perceptions	Percentages

Not having enough money to make ends meet	12.3
Not having enough to buy basics like food and clothing	41.9
Having to struggle to survive each and every day	26.4
Never having enough to be able to live decently	8.6
Never being able to afford any of the good things in life	6.7
Having a lot less than everybody else	1.8
Don't know	2.5

(Bradshaw & Sainsbury, 2000:15)

However contrary to the opinion of Oyen et al (1996:232) that poverty in South Africa is a political issue none of the participants attached any political meaning to their understanding of poverty. This could be attributed to the fact that the majority of the participants defined poverty in terms of needs which they considered they "must have". In no instance did they mention anything related to politics.

5.4 How the participants became involved in the project

The participants gave varying reasons for joining or starting the projects:

"Initially my interest was with the home-based care and when the opportunity to start the vegetable garden project arose I was very happy to join in because the profit from the products will augment the monthly (R1000) stipend that we receive"

"Although we were volunteering at Iso (short-name for Isolabantwana) we also realized we need money so that's where the idea of the garden started"

"I was doing nothing at home so when my neighbour told me about the sewing project I decided to join in

"I was already running my small sewing business at home but I wasn't making any profit so I thought by joining other women who has the same interest was going to take me to another level"

According to Merrington (in Davids *et al*, 2005:71) NGOs should recognize their abilities (strengths) and limitations (weaknesses), and offer services according to their strengths rather than attempting to be "all things to all people". According to Mafoyane (2002:23) if a poverty-alleviation project is to succeed it must be undertaken by people who think alike and share the same ideas and objectives. Knowles (1998:230) also adds that projects are more likely to succeed when the objectives correspond to the priorities of the poor.

Let us re-visit the aims and objectives of the poverty-alleviation projects (see Chapter 3 of this study) in which the participants are involved:

• **Project A** is sewing group. They do not have their own aims and objectives but they operate under those of Child Welfare Tshwane. Surprisingly those objectives do not address poverty-alleviation much deal more with the policy and procedure of the agency in respect of social work procedure.

• **Project B** is a gardening project. The facilitator of the project gave a written background of the project as follows (*unedited*): "The main purpose of establishing the gardening project was to benefit from it and learn from it about

gardening. We plant beans, spinach, beetroots, carrots and pumpkins. Some of the products are sold to the community. The project also aims to encourage the members to have the gardens in their backyards. "

- **Project C** is a gardening project. The facilitator explained that the main objective of the project is to "alleviate poverty, induced suffering and affliction through income generation, job creation, encourage self employment"

The rationale for re-stating them was basically to check if they correspond with the participants' reasons for either starting or joining their respective poverty-alleviation projects. According to Visser (2007:224) one's definition of poverty is directly related to the interventions one might suggest to improve his or her circumstances. The participants' experiences (to be discussed in the next paragraph) will determine whether the participants *'joined or started the right projects'*, given their initial reason for joining the projects.

5.5 The impact of the projects on the participants' daily living situation

The participants shared both the benefits and the challenges that they experience.

- **Benefits**

"I joined the project in 2007 because I was doing nothing at home. I have learned so many new things from the training that we are send...it has really been a wonderful experience"

"I did the secretarial and computer course so joining the project has not only assist me financially but I am acquiring some administration skills"

"This is really better than staying at home. Here we come and talk and we have become more of a family..."

"...my children will never go to bed hungry. Sometimes we share the spinach"

"Whatever we share at the end of the month always comes handy because the R1000-00 stipend from the organization is very inconsistent"

"My gardening skills have improved tremendously since I became involved in the (gardening) project"

These are some of the positive stories shared by the participants and some of them reflect the important contributions that Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) make in the development of "South Africa and her people" (Davids et al, 2005:70). Merrington (in Davids *et al*, 2005:70) notes a number of advantages of NGOs as agents of grass-roots development:

1. They are good at communicating with and mobilizing the poor;

2. They employ participatory, bottom-up approaches in projects planning, implementation;

3. They are effective in assisting the poor to participate in matters affecting them and thus gain more control over the quality of their lives. This ability of NGOs to promote public participation enhances relations with the community they serve.

- **Challenges**

Although women's projects are innovative and useful, they are small in scale and have limited effect beyond the few women directly involved. Further criticism is that women's projects have a limited impact on the position of women, and even less on the social and economic process which structure gender equalities (Osman, in Sweetman, 2002:25).

Chigudi (in Mavalela, 1999:24; Mafoyane, 2002:24) identified the following constraints on women's poverty alleviation projects:

1) **Women projects are confined to the tiniest end of small scale enterprises, for instance, maybe 20 women engaged in uniform-making share one sewing machine.**

   One participant felt that *"if we were many more, maybe we would be making some money because we are only few…if two or three members can just decide to quit tomorrow then there won't be any project to talk about anymore"*.

2) **Women have a tendency to copy existing projects**

   "There are just so many similar projects around and where are we going to get people to buy our stuff" asked one concerned participant.

3) **The activities of poverty-alleviation projects are, by and large, stereotypical female activities which are usually time-consuming and have no substantial income earning potential. For instance, if the financial goals do not work they will be replaced by social goals. It is usually difficult to distinguish income – generating objectives from welfare objectives in that participants will always**

identify earning money as a priority, and they will also include an element of community development in the project *"I honestly think that we just wasting our time here coming here everyday. This gardening space is just so small"*.

4) **Poverty alleviation projects are limited to traditional women's activities such as crocheting, baking and sewing. Since these are based on traditional domestic skills which are learned at home, they lack diversity. The women do not venture or try new skills and prefer to stay with what is familiar to them.** *"I am not learning anything new here. We are doing the same thing everyday"* complained one participant.

5) **Many poverty-alleviation projects suffer from inadequate funding**
"The little money that we make from the jerseys that we sell is not enough to buy new sewing machines...if we can only get a sponsor" said one participant with desperation.

6) **Projects suffer from lack of baseline information about the socio-economic situation of project beneficiaries and the economic requirements of projects in terms of available markets for women's products, price inputs and availability of raw material.**
"I just think lack of more training is also hindering our progress...the problem is most of us don't even have matric" explained one participant.

Davids *et al* (2005:70) also noted certain limitations of the projects as agents of grass-roots development:

- Many projects are not innovative or flexible at all, but are based on well-known, established approaches originated by public sector agencies;

- The success of some NGO projects depends on complementary support from the public sector;

- NGO projects have limited self-sustainability because their activities are financed mainly by grants from donors, with limited government funding;

- NGO projects are mostly implemented sectorally and do not form part of a holistic programme strategy; and

- A lack of coordination of the efforts of individual NGOs hampers the spread of grass-roots development.

However, Davids et al (2005:70) indicates that despite these limitations, international donor agencies have been encouraging the growth of NGO projects, and have given more funds to them than to government. These international agencies are of the opinion that the empowering role of NGO's and their comparative advantage over bigger development agencies within the public and private sector outweigh their limitations.

5.6 The running of the projects (Project management)

Mafoyane (2002:33) also indicated that although many people (women in particular) get involved in some income-generating projects they do not become empowered by them. Many organizations mistakenly believe that meeting practical needs (such as food) will lead to the empowerment of members. As a result they see no need to directly address

strategic   gender needs (political, social, and economic). *"Although meeting practical needs is necessary as a long term strategy it often amounts to nothing more that treating the symptoms of a disease. To cure the disease strategic needs must be met"* (Ala, in Mafoyane, 2002:34).

Longwe (in Mafoyane, 2002:34) uses the criteria below to assess the degree a women's development project empowers women.

1) **Welfare:** Does the project meet material needs or improve immediate problems, for example food, income, shelter and health?

"*I'm able to bring something (spinach) for my children at the end of the day*" said one participant who is involved in the gardening.

"To be honest with you I have been involved with this sewing project for some time now but I can't show you anything from the project".

2) **Access:** Does the project provide better access to the means of production?

This means that the project must serve as a stepping stone to exposing women to more opportunities, for instance, making them more creditworthy, giving them more access to facilities and making them more knowledgeable.

"*I thought by coming here (joining the project) I would improve my sewing skills; instead we come here and just sit because there are no orders*" said one dissatisfied participant.

*"I did an introductory farming course at **Tombi Seleka Agricultural School** in Limpopo Province and the project help me to implement some of the things which I leaned during the course"* said one participant with pride.

3) **Participation:** Are women involved in the decision-making process, policy-making, planning and administration?

According to Davids et al (2005:151) participation entails more than merely involving or including people. In working with a community, involvement would mean allowing the community to take part in what an 'outsider' might be thinking and planning and might want to accomplish with the community. Real participation, therefore, implies that people are not passive spectators of something such as their own development, but a fully and have an equal voice in any efforts directed towards change.

Some participants were "*unhappy with their facilitators because they don't take them seriously*", whereas some were *"grateful that their facilitator is qualified to do the job because she is professional*". Apparently they hold weekly planning meetings where every participant expresses her views. One participant indicated that she "doesn't care about who does what as long as she gets her money at the end of the month".

4) **Control**: Do women have control over the end product of their labour?

This question refers to the whole process as well as to the end product. Mafoyane's (2002:36) understanding of control is that *"one can only regard oneself as empowered if one is able to influence and contribute towards the decision-making process and can access relevant resources"*.

The majority of the participants "*felt that their skills had improved tremendously since they became involved on the projects.*" Most of them underwent advance training to improve their skills. However some "*felt that they are just wasting their time*"

- **Leadership**

Henderson & Thomas (1989:181) indicate that because forming a group is risky for all involved, the facilitator may want to decrease the risk factor and may be tempted to take a leadership role to keep things on track. This can prove to be even more risky because a false cocoon is created in which to protect the members. This may reinforce people's doubts and they may stop owning the process. The facilitators should rather facilitate leadership skills by anticipating the task and associated difficulties, by discussing different possibilities, by providing information, by helping group leaders to find information, or by doing things with people to show them how. According to Henderson & Thomas the facilitator should give up the position of 'all-knowing expert', and the facilitator should become someone with 'practice capability' who is able to facilitate the group to use and realize its capability and potential to find its own means of meeting its needs and solving its problems.

Some participants were "*happy or satisfied with their facilitator*" whereas some were "*not entirely happy with their leaders*".

"When I joined this project I was particularly happy with the facilitators because I am also attending the same church with him. But I was disappointed to realize that he wasn't entirely honest with his dealings" complained one participant.

Davids *et al* (2005:70) states that in many projects NGOs do not effectively reach the poor. Instead their initiatives fall into the hands of local power elites such as municipal councillors, traditional leaders and community project in champions.

Summary

This chapter shed some light of the current state of the three poverty-alleviation projects under study. It also provided some insight on what the participants think about their own poverty as well as the poverty-alleviation projects in which they are involved.

In the next chapter conclusions and recommendations will be presented.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter aims at evaluating the research findings as discussed in Chapter 5. The researcher will also re-visit the goals and objectives of the study before presenting the major conclusions drawn from the findings. Finally recommendations will be made.

6.1 Goals and Objectives

6.1.1 Goal

- To gain insight into the personal definition of poverty by the poor

6.1**.2 Objectives**

- To conduct a thorough literature study on the subject

- To explore the understanding of poverty by poverty-alleviation project participants

6.2 Conclusion

The conclusions were drawn from the theoretical background (Chapter 2), detailed analysis of the three poverty alleviation projects under study (Chapter 3), as well as the findings discussed in the preceding chapter (5). Although it was never the purpose of this study to assess the projects, the context in which the participants understood poverty inevitably led to the discussion on the projects. The first section of the conclusions will be on poverty and the latter will be on the three-poverty alleviation projects .

6.2.1 Poverty

- Poverty is a contested concept. The conceptualizing, definition, and measurement of poverty in a community is like a mirror-image of the ideals of that community. It is therefore vital that the concepts, definition, and measurement of poverty be appropriate to the community in which they are applied.

- Although some participants questioned the "*purpose of defining what we already know"* others were very understanding and appreciated the opportunity to express their views on the matter.

- Poverty is not gender neutral. It is also not far from the truth to say that when one speaks of poverty, one is also speaking of women.

- Some participants struggled with the definition of poverty. This was not entirely surprising to the researcher because Swanepoel & De Beer (2006:2) have explained in the previous chapters that "…*even though people recognize poverty when they see it, it is difficult to define it in universal terms and often impossible to attach figures, numbers, or amounts to it"*:

- The majority of the participants understood poverty in terms of the basic needs perspective. However defining what is basic is always at the centre of the most controversy about poverty. What is basic depends on who is defining it. The majority of the participants   put 'food' on the top of the list of those things that an "individual must have in order to survive as a human being".

- Some participants defined poverty in monetary terms. One participant even equated money -or lack of it- to death.

- There is a relationship between poverty and race. Some participants felt that the Black population in South Africa is prone to poverty. As May (in Mbuli, 2008:5) puts it: *"...while it is not confined to one racial group, it is, however poverty is concentrated among Black."*

- The participants' understanding of poverty is not necessarily confined to their geographical location or the South African situation. Their understanding of poverty was similar to that of the Australians who participated in the Social Policy Research Center (SPRC) longitudinal study of Department of Social Security (Bradshaw & Sainsbury, 2000:15).

- It has also been established that there is a strong correlation between unemployment and poverty, especially among individuals who have a low standard of education .

6.2.2   Poverty-alleviation projects

- Participants became involved in the poverty-alleviation projects for various reasons which for most of them did not correspond with the aims and objectives of those projects. However it has been indicated in the previous chapters that projects are more likely to succeed when the objectives correspond to the priorities of the poor.

- With the scant information available on the three poverty-alleviation projects under study due to poor administration and record keeping, it was nearly impossible for the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the functions of the projects. Although there are governmental policies such as Developmental Quality Assurances (DQA) to assist NGOs in their endeavor to render effective services, there appears to be an

underutilization of those policies. None of the three poverty-alleviation projects is subjected to the DQA process . The facilitators explained that they only submit the annual narrative reports of their activities and audited financial statements.

- Most of the participants were benefited (materially (vegetables and money) from the projects in which they were involved. Some of the participants, for example, indicated that they joined their respective poverty-alleviation projects for "financial gains" whereas the capacity of those projects cannot meet their "financial expectations".

- However the participants expressed mixed feelings as to whether their involvement in their respective poverty-alleviation projects has exposed them to more opportunities beyond material gain. This conclusion was also reached by Gathiram (2005:126) states that poverty-alleviation projects can perpetuate the problem of poverty because they allow the maintenance of low-skilled work. There are limited opportunities for upward mobility and progress. Botes and Van Rensburg (in Gathiram, 2005:126) hold a similar view that in many poverty-alleviation projects the so called 'hard' issues (financial & material) are perceived as being more important for the successful implementation of projects than the 'soft' issues (such as community involvement, decision-making procedures, the establishment of efficient social components, organizational development, capacity-building and empowerment).

- Although most of the participants benefited materially from the projects that they are involved in, they still regarded themselves as unemployed. This came out during the participants' discussion of the relationship between poverty and unemployment.

Mafoyane (2002:24) also felt that poverty-alleviation projects are supposed to supplement an existing income.

- All the participants were involved in traditional women's activities such as small-gardens and sewing. These skills were learned at home and the majority of them were not exploring new skills. Only two participants had complemented their home skills with academic qualifications. One participant had a one-year certificate in a secretarial and computer course whereas the other one had a six-month certificate in an introductory farming course.

- The participants were also divided with regard to leadership and management issues in their respective projects. Some were not 'very concerned about their facilitators' or "didn't care about who does what" whereas some were "not happy" with the facilitators. Only a small number were 'fine' with the facilitators.

6.3 Recommendations

Based on the data obtained and the conclusions drawn, the researcher recommends the following:

- Although poverty seems so common in our daily life that it appears unnecessary to explain it, the researcher recommends more studies on the definition of poverty with the poor themselves. As Chambers (1997:104) & Davids et al (2005:37) would argue *"poor people have their own understanding and interpretation of their social reality. Only the poor can know poverty; only they can understand it".*

- A broader scope of poverty-alleviation projects to ensure that participants become more aware of the wider socio-political and economic context. Poverty-alleviation projects should address immediate material relief, while at the same time ensuring that people understand the wider context in which they live. They should also serve as an entry point for awareness-raising and social mobilization of communities in addressing the problem of poverty. An empowered, knowledgeable, and active society is needed to challenge poverty .

- A better implementation of the DQA process to promote good governance and strengthen the management and accountability of poverty alleviation projects.

- Although the researcher acknowledges the positive contribution that the Non-Governmental (NGOs) poverty-alleviation projects make to the community, there is a dire need to educate project facilitators as well as participants about the Participatory Development Model following Swanepoel's Community Development Model (1997) which includes:

    1. Making contact

    2. Needs and resources identification

    3. Planning

    4. Implementation

    5. Evaluation

This could assist the projects' facilitators in detailing the backgrounds of their projects. The researcher had some difficulty in grasping some of the information about the projects because of poor administration.

- The researcher agrees with Mbuli (2008:177) that if the South African government is to significantly reduce poverty it needs to create special economic opportunities for women. As has already been stated, women suffer disproportionately from the burden of poverty. Therefore, if the government were to improve the status of women by creating special economic opportunities (by, for example, broadening women's access to more training) for them, it would be addressing priority dimension of poverty.

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ADDENDUM A

Enquiries: Phuti Kgadima

                Department of Social Work

                Kalafong Hospital

Tel: (012) 318 6886

Fax: (012) 318 6603

Cell: 073 844 7098

Date: 09 June 2008

To: The Poverty-Alleviation Project Facilitator/Co-ordinators''

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Research Study

As a requirement of a master of arts in Social Work (Community Development) degree

with UNISA under the supervision of Prof. W.F Van Delft, I am conducting a study on

the personal definition of poverty by poverty-alleviation project participants. However I

need some background information on the projects which the participants are involved in.

The study is therefore not on the assessment of the project. I also like to humbly request

permission to engage the project participants in this study.

Attached please find the copy of the some of the issues that I would like to know about your project.

All information will be kept strictly confidential. Neither your name nor that of your project/organization will be identified in the study. Your honesty in answering questions will be highly appreciated and your decision to participate in the study is voluntary.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration

Yours faithfully

………………………………   ………………………..

Kgadima Phuti   Date

ADDENDUM B

Questions to facilitators/coordinators of Poverty alleviation projects

1.   Explain your role in the project

2.   Give us a brief background of the project.

3.   How were the beneficiaries involved in the planning and implementation of the project?

4.   Explain the criteria used to recruit the beneficiaries.

5.   How many people are currently involved in the project?

6.   To what extent are the beneficiaries participating in the day-to-day activities of the project?

7.   How is the project funded?

8.   What are your measures to promote accountability to all stakeholders?

9.   What are your measures to ensure the sustainability of the project?

ADDENDUM C

DECLARATION BY THE RESEARCHER

Enquiries: Phuti Kgadima

               Department of Social Work

               Kalafong Hospital

Tel: (012) 318 6886

Fax: (012) 318 6603

Cell: 073 844 7098

Date: 15 August 2008

To: The Poverty-Alleviation Project Participant

As a requirement of a Master of Arts in Social Work (Community Development) degree with UNISA under the supervision of Prof. W.F Van Delft, I am conducting a study on the personal definition of poverty by poverty-alleviation project participants.

In view of the fact that you are well-informed about the topic I hereby approach you with the request to participate in the study. Attached please copy of the interview guide (Addendum E) which will guide the interview

Should you agree to participate, you would be requested too participate in a face-to-face interview which will be arranged at your convenience.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-taped. The recorded interviews will be transcribed word-for-word. The audio tapes and the transcripts of the interviews will be destroyed on the completion of the study. Your responses to the interview will be kept strictly confidential. Should you feel uncomfortable with the audio-tape I'm also prepared to take notes during the interview. The notes will also be destroyed at the completion of the study. Your name will not be used anywhere in the study.

Please note that participation in the research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Should you agree to participate and sign the informed consent document below, indicating your willingness to participate, please note that you are not signing your rights away. If you agree to taker part, you have the right to change your mind at any time during the study. You are free to withdraw this consent and discontinue participation. However, if you do withdraw from the study, I would appreciate if you can grant me an opportunity to engage you in informal discussion with you so that the research partnership that was established can be terminated in an orderly manner.

You have the right to ask questions concerning the study at any time. Should you have any questions or worries about the study feel free to contact my supervisor, Prof. W.F Van Delft, at (012) 429 6739.

Thank you in advance for you your consideration

Yours faithfully

………………………….   …………………………..

Kgadima Phuti   Date

ADDENDUM D

DECLARATION BY THE PARTICIPANT

I, ………………………………….., ID number……………………………………of

(Residential Address)

………………………………………………

……………………………………………….

……………………………………………….

……………………………………………….

hereby consent voluntarily to participate in the above mentioned (Part A) project and that

the above-mentioned information was explained in a language understandable to me.

…………………………..   **……………………..**

Signature of participant   Date

ADDENDUM E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1.   Personal characteristics

1.1   Sexual Orientation

1.2   Age

1.3   Occupation

1.4   Marital Status

2.   On poverty

2.1   What is your understanding of poverty?

2.2   What is your understanding of being poor?

3.   On Poverty-Alleviation Projects

3.1   How did you become involved in the project?

3.2   How does the project impact on your daily living situation?

3.3   How are you involved in the day-to-day running of the project?

3.4   How does the project meet you daily needs?