

**CHILDREN' S AGENCY IN
REDUCING POVERTY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK:
CASE STUDY OF ISLAMIC RELIEF SOUTH AFRICA'S ORPHAN SPONSORSHIP
PROGRAMME**

By

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“Whatever is in the heaven and on earth, does declare the praises and glory of Allah: to Him belongs dominion, and to Him belongs praise; and He has power over all things”. (Al-Qur’ān, 64:1).

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ABSTRACT

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Children are vulnerable and need protection from harm. Children is often only perceived from this view and not recognised that they have agency to participate in matters that concern them which is also their right. Poverty and environmental risks restrict children's 'aspirations and hopefulness' to 'creat[e] a more prosperous future' (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:7). Children have the right to participate in matters that concern their best interest (Hall, Richter, Mokomane & Lake, 2018:47).

The goal of this study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship programme

A qualitative research approach was adopted for the study. The research design was an instrumental case study and data was collected by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews. Purposeful sampling was used to select five key informants and five child participants from Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship programme. Data was analysed through theme analysis.

The findings of the study indicated that child participation is generally restricted to the planning and implementation phases of the programme which is related to how key informants perceive the child concept. Furthermore, to mitigate child poverty and environmental risks, the programme assists children with school fees, transport money, food, clothes and clean water. Furthermore, the children engage in cleaning campaigns and are educated on how to stop pollution. The study concludes that children's agency is recognised and respected by hearing their views, but excluded from decisions about matters that affect them.

The study recommends child consultation and participation from the conception phase of the programme throughout the implementation and evaluation phases of the programme, and continuous training of caregivers on child agency and children's right to participation.

KEY WORDS:

Children

Child agency

Child poverty

Environmental risks

Islamic Relief South Africa

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRWC: African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

ACERWC: African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Children

AU: African Union

ABCD: Asset-Based Community Development Approach

DFID: Department for International Development

ECD: Early Childhood Development

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

UNHBRA: United Nations Human Rights Based Approach

AI: Artificial Intelligence

IASSW: International Association of Schools of Social Work

ICSW: International Council on Social Welfare

IFSW: International Federation of Social Workers

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

4TH IR: 4th Industrial Revolution

IRSA: Islamic Relief South Africa

NGOs: Non- Governmental Organisations

NPAC: National Plan of Action

CHAPTER ONE:

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

The National Plan of Action (NPAC) for Children in South Africa 2012-2017¹ (RSA, 2012:47) expresses commitment to protecting and enhancing natural resources and assets for the benefit of children. In order to ensure a better quality of life for children affected by poverty, the NPAC stipulates that they should receive social grants and other social services, have access to ECD programmes, basic education and health care (2012:89).

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

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

Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and future. Involving children in discourses and decision-making processes on poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods broaden their human capital through their contributions, while they are also developing new skills, responsibilities, acceptable ways of living and sharing space with others as well as tolerating and working with people who are holding views that differs from theirs (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200;201). It also expands their social capital by introducing them to diverse socio-economic, political, environmental and cultural networks, systems and resources that they might not have been privy to if they had not participated in poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods programmes (Katunga & Lombard, 2016:200;201).

Children have the right to participate in the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes that affect their current and future lives, and not be passive bystanders. Children have agency and should be recognised for the contribution they can make in reducing poverty, creating sustainable livelihoods and mitigating environmental risks for sustainable development in their communities. This study investigated how children’s agency is recognised in reducing poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa’s Orphan Sponsorship Programme.

The key concepts relevant to the study are as follows:

- **Child**

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

- **Agency**

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

- **Poverty**

In the context of this study, poverty is more than low income. It is also about social and physical exclusion, a sense of powerlessness, exclusion from decision-making and lack of access to education, healthcare and clean and safe environments (Green, 2012:6). Poverty reduction is about giving people opportunities to access education, healthcare, water, and sanitation "to cope with the shocks of everyday life" (Green, 2012:10). These opportunities are embedded in human rights and recognition that children have agency to influence outcomes for a sustainable future.

- **Environmental risks**

In a sustainable development and human rights framework where SDGs and human rights are intertwined (UN, 2015), environmental risks are regarded as an environmental justice issue which means "the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment" (Hawkins, 2010:68). Environmental risks can derive from physical and

social environments and for purposes of this study will focus on poverty, the lack of access to clean water, poor sanitation, pollution, and violence.

- **Islamic Relief South Africa (IRSA)**

The study is conducted in a Faith-Based Organisation called Islamic Relief South Africa. Islamic Relief South Africa has three offices across South Africa. Islamic Relief South Africa head office is in Cape Town with other offices in Johannesburg and Durban. The researcher chose to conduct the study in IRSA Johannesburg Office located in Fordsburg.

IRSA is an international relief and development charity that empowers women, promotes inclusion and provides development programmes to address the root causes of poverty and improve lives in a sustainable way and in so doing, it contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Islamic Relief South Africa, 2017:26). IRSA has two programmes for children, namely, the Orphan Sponsorship Programme (OSP) and the Orphans Endowment Waqf Fund (OEWF) programme (Islamic Relief, [sa]). The premise of the Orphan Sponsorship Programme is that thousands of orphaned children remain vulnerable to poverty and sickness and lack of proper shelter which, in turn, leave many of them displaced, and living in institutions or in inadequate housing (Islamic Relief South Africa, [sa]).

The lack of adequate housing and proper education exacerbates OVC poverty, violate their rights and contribute to environmental risks. IRSA believes in protecting and fulfilling children's' rights (Islamic Relief South Africa, [sa]) which correlates with the OVC programme's objectives to enhance the overall quality of life and wellbeing of the OVC and their families. IRSA achieves this by improving education results of the OVC above the national average, and by promoting child protection and a secure and safer home environment for OVC (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2018:5). The right to opportunities to access education and shelter supports OVC to cope with the shocks of everyday life (Green, 2008:10).

IRSA has nine areas where OVC access the programme located in Ennerdale, Lawley, Kapok, Hehae, Hopefield, Mountain View, Fordsburg, Simunye and Fine Town. However, this study is conducted in Fordsburg, the IRSA Johannesburg office.

1.2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The human rights-based approach was utilised as a suitable theoretical framework for the study to explore how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions that are aiming to reduce their poverty and environmental risks. Poverty and environmental risks violate human rights. Therefore, the choice of the theory is in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, which "enshrines a duty to alleviate poverty" (Republic of South Africa, 2013:12). A human rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for facilitating sustainable human development outcomes embedded in the international human rights standards and intended to promote and protect human rights (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1). It anchors programmes, policies, plans and processes of development in a system of rights, which promote sustainable development outcomes and people empowerment (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1).

The right to development recognises

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

Rights that facilitate the participation of children are protected in the Constitution (RSA, 1996) as well as in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)(UN, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU, 1990), which South Africa has ratified both of them. The UNCRC (1989)

makes provision for a thematic organisational model, where the rights of children are categorised into four themes: survival, protection, development and participation. It also makes provision for general principles in organising rights, known as general principles, that is, non-discrimination; best interest of the child, right to life, survival and development, and respect for the views of the child (UN, 1989). In this study, the organisation of child rights is based on the view of Heimer and Palme (2016:435) that the UNCRC organises the rights of children in terms of provision, protection and participation. This framework of organising of rights provides for an integrated analysis of the interrelationship between the rights of children and how it affects the construct of children's agency as rights-holders with a particular focus on children's right to participate in decisions that influence their current and future development.

1.3. RATIONALE AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

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

The 2030 Agenda includes global poverty goals that are specific to children. Therefore, poverty reduction measures have to be in place to report on in national progress reports on the SDGs. Increased household income through social grants is one measure to provide for children's rights to social security and curbing child poverty (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014:6). In addition, children have the right to access social services and programmes on education and health care and protection against environmental risks such as pollution, poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water and violent environments to ensure that

they are not left behind (UNICEF, 2018). Childhood constitutes both vulnerabilities and evolving capacities, which require a balance between children's protection rights and their participation rights. It is thus important to recognise that being a child does not automatically render an individual as helpless and/or passive in their environment (UNICEF, 2018). Children should be regarded as individuals with agency that can and want to participate in creating a sustainable future for themselves and others by giving inputs into the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes to achieve the intended outcomes.

A literature review indicated that there was little research evidence to indicate the extent that children are included in the conceptualisation, design, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating of poverty reduction to attain sustainable development outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks. A study by UNICEF (2014:13) indicates that adults see children as vulnerable and not as individual who have agency and who has the right to participate in matters that concern them such as poverty and environmental risks. Therefore, this study seeks to explore how children are involved in the conceptualisation, developing, implementing and evaluating programmes that are intended to reduce the impact of poverty and environmental risks on their livelihoods and well-being for a sustainable future. It is envisaged that the outcomes of the study will inform policy and practice on how the recognition of and respect for children's agency can be incorporated in programme conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of outcomes that reduce poverty and environmental risks.

The research question for the study was as follows:

- How are children's agency recognised and respected in programmes aimed to reduce poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme?

The study was informed by the following sub-questions:

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

1.4. RESEARCH GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal and objectives of the study are as follows:

1.4.1. Goal of the study

To explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship programme

1.4.2. Objectives of the study

- To conceptualise poverty and environmental risks of children within a human rights-based framework.
- To explore and describe the goal and intended outcomes of the programme to reduce children's poverty and environment risk.

- To explore and describe how children are involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
- To explore and describe the factors that influenced the recognition and respect / non-recognition and disrespect of children's agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.
- To make recommendations on how children's agency can be recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, and implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the programme?

1.5. RESEARCH METHODS

The study utilised a qualitative research approach (Fouché & Delpont, 2011: 64) and, in alignment with the exploratory and descriptive purpose of the study, used an instrumental case study design to gain new knowledge about a social issue and to produce new knowledge that may inform policy development (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). Purposive sampling technique (Strydom & Delpont, 2011:392) was applied to select five (5) children and five (5) key informants that contained attributes that served the purpose of the study best and met the sampling criteria. One-on-one interviews, guided by a semi-structured interview schedule and predetermined questions (Greeff, 2011:352), served as the primary data-collection method for the study.

The study has been ethically cleared by the University of Pretoria and permission to conduct the interviews was granted by IRSA. Participation in the study was voluntary and all participants gave their informed consent/assent to participate in the study. All participants agreed to confidentiality. The thematic data-analysis process was used to analyse the research data (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:224). A more detailed description of the research methodology will be presented in Chapter Three.

1.6. DIVISION OF THE STUDY

This research report is divided into four chapters. Chapter One provides the general introduction and orientation of the study, including the rationale and problem statement; a brief overview of the theoretical framework and research methodology; the goals and objectives of the study; the research questions and the chapter divisions. Chapter Two provides a literature review on the research topic. It includes a discussion on children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk and the human rights-based approach as theoretical framework for the study. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and presents the empirical findings of the study. Finally, Chapter Four presents key findings, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Children are able to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their lives today and in the future if they are presented with opportunities to express their views and experiences (Gowrie South Australia, 2015). Furthermore, debates around the relationships between children and adults have pointed at adults' attitude as posing problems to the promotion of children's rights to autonomy and participation.

A study by Church and Mashford-Scott (2011:18) indicate that adults engage children and set boundaries for them, instruct them on what to do, and set rules and regulations to maintain order each time they interact. As a result, children's rights to autonomy and participation are limited (Church & Mashford-Scott, 2011:18). According to Skovdal and Daniel (2012:155), adults' reliance on Jean Piaget's theory of developmental stages poses problems to the promotion of children's rights to autonomy and participation because the theory views children as not complete until they reach a certain socially constructed age of maturity.

Environmental injustices such as pollution and poor sanitation violate people's rights (Hawkins, 2010:70) and hence can influence and threaten children's lives, despite their capabilities. The reality attached to poverty is confirmed in the 2019 statistics which showed that nearly 60% of South African children still lived below the poverty line, and 30% of South African children did not have access to piped water on-site and 20% live in an overcrowded household (Isaacs, 2019:1). Compared to 2018 statistics, it shows that sixty five percent (65%) of children live below the "upper bound poverty line (with a per capita income below R1, 138.00 per month), and 30% are in households where no adult had employment" (Hall, et al., 2018:131). Both years' statistics show that South African children live in poverty and face problems related to unemployment of caregivers, lack of access to clean (piped) water and overcrowding.

This reality has been confirmed by the study of Vasanti (2010:2) who states that poor communities in South Africa face challenges, including high rate of unemployment, which contributes to their plight in addition to the lack of clean water and sanitation.

South Africa promotes children's rights through its Constitution (RSA, 1996) and other legislations such as the Children's Act 38 of 2005 which promotes the protection, development and well-being of children (Sibanda, 2010:3); the South African Schools Act that calls for the establishment of a Representative Council of Learners at every public school (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996) and the National Health Act 61 of 2003, cited in Eveleigh and Vogel (2015: 281), is the first effort by government to protect child participants in health research. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights provides children with the right to basic education, shelter, healthcare services and social services (RSA, 1996). Children's rights are not only recognised nationally, they are also recognised in the national and international treaties such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC (OAU, 1990).

Despite legislation and conventions confirming children's rights and ability to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their lives, there are still not enough evidence that children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes that are aimed at reducing their poverty and environmental risks.

This literature review starts with an overview of the global, national and regional agendas affirming children's agency. Next, the sustainable development framework is discussed. This is followed by a discussion on child poverty and poverty interventions and then the human rights-based approach, which informs the theoretical framework of the study. The focus is then shifted to legislation and policy framework that promote children's rights. The following discussion is about children's participation, followed by the role of NGOs in promoting children's rights. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary.

2.2. GLOBAL, NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AGENDAS AFFIRMING CHILDREN'S AGENCY

Various global, national and regional agendas have been adopted in response to vast inequality and injustice internationally and within South Africa. All the agendas seek to realise people's human rights with much emphasis on children's rights (African Union [AU], 2015). The realisation of children's rights requires eliminating poverty and inequality, preserving the planet and creating inclusive and sustainable economic growth, all of which fall within the wider framework of the 2030 Agenda (Chiwara & Lombard, 2017:572).

The 2030 Agenda seeks to realise human rights for all through the attainment of 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets (United Nations, 2015:5). To align the SDGs to children, UNICEF (2014:13) identified 44 child-related indicators which are incorporated across the 17 SDGs and which are expressed in five dimensions of children's rights, including the right to survive, to learn, to be protected from violence, to live in a safe clean environment and to have equal opportunity to succeed. The latter is linked to SDG number one that calls for nations to eliminate extreme forms of poverty and to provide social protection systems.

The 2030 Agenda recognises further that more than 80% vulnerable people including children live in poverty and must be empowered (UN, 2015:7). The 2030 Agenda recognises the importance of realising the 5 P's notably people, planet, peace, partnerships and prosperity for sustainable development outcomes that benefit all. Child poverty is a human rights matter (SAHR & UNICEF, 2014). To this end, the 2030 Agenda seeks to act upon the 5 P's in order to end poverty and hunger; protect the environment from degradation, and harmonise social, economic and technological progress with nature (UN, 2015:5).

Peace, security and development are interlinked because sustainable development cannot be realised without peace and security (UN, 2015:13). Ending poverty and hunger is necessary for the promotion of children's right to education and balanced nutrition. Agenda 2063, the Africa we want [hereafter Agenda 2063] envisages to end wars in Africa by 2020 and promote peace and security because people's rights are at stake when the environment is degraded and wars and political instabilities prevail in countries (AU, 2015:17). It is equally crucial to protect the environment through sound and sustained management of the planet's natural resources so that development can be sustainable in order to support the current and the next generation (UN, 2015:13).

The goal of ending poverty and hunger and protecting the environment fall within the framework of Agenda 2063. Aspiration 6 calls for the active involvement of all people (including children) in decision-making (AU, 2015). Agenda 2063 aspires to see all African people, including children achieving a high standard of living, quality of life, sound health and well-being (AU, 2015:2). The eradication of poverty is Africa's determination and requires that the continent undertakes social and economic transformation in one generation and build a shared prosperity (AU, 2015:2). Africa is also determined to become a well-educated and skilled nation, underpinned by science, technology and innovation for a knowledge society (AU, 2015:2). As a result, no child will miss school due to poverty or any form of discrimination (AU, 2015:2).

The Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, Fostering an Africa Fit for Children further affirms that children, have to be the drivers of Africa's renaissance. However, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Children (ACERWC, n.d:2) argues that in order to allow children to take charge of Africa's future, their full potential has to be unlocked by fully protecting and realising their rights. Thus, as guided by the principle of 'nothing about us without us' (Agenda 2063, paragraph 47) cited in the Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 stresses that "all the citizens of Africa will be actively involved in decision-making in all aspects, because children's views are not monolithic, but a diversity of childhood experiences, comprising of differences in gender, age, ability, the urban/rural

divide, minorities as well as indigenous communities, children heading households, migrant and refugee children”(ACERWC, n.d:19).

Social workers play a central role in poverty eradication and, in addressing the various needs of individuals, families and communities through diverse programmes and services (Lombard, 2014:45). These services should be aligned with the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development (2012), which echoes a call for practitioners to fight poverty and promote people’s right to human dignity and worth.

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development supports the International Labour Organisation’s [ILO] Social Protection Floors as it secure “essential health care, as well a basic and income security during childhood, adulthood and old age” (ILO 2012, cited in Lombard, 2015:485). Furthermore, the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development recognises that decent employment contributes to the fight against poverty, promotes social inclusion, development, and equality (Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, 2012, cited in Lombard, 2015:485).

South Africa has committed itself to alleviate poverty through the Framework for Social Welfare Services that presents social assistance and relief services as a strategy to provide a safety net for people who cannot care for themselves or may be too young, too old or sick to take care of their basic needs (RSA, 2013:32). In this regard, the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 makes provision for the non-contributory cash transfer programmes, such as the Child Support Grant, targeting eligible children living in poverty in order to meet their basic needs (RSA, 2015:34). To highlight the unprecedented levels of child poverty, Hall et al. (2018:139) reveal that in 2018, there were 12 273 900 children receiving a Child Support Grant in South Africa.

The provision of the Child Support Grant has enabled children to access education, health care and basic nutrition but it is still not effective in promoting the right to education and health care of many other children who are living in poverty (Hall et al., 2018:131). The Global Agenda for Social Work recognises that the realisation of human’s rights to end

poverty and hunger and protecting the planet from degradation are important in fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies (IASSW, IFSW & ICSW, 2018:9-10).

The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) underpins social work's commitment to a developmental approach to fighting poverty and inequality. Developmental social work is embedded in a human rights-based framework (Patel, 2015:82) and promotes social change, use of strengths, empowerment, capacity enhancement, self-determination and client participation (Midgley & Conley, 2010:13). Social workers are challenged to ensure that vulnerable groups such as children participate and have a voice in policymaking and intervention strategies to address poverty in a sustainable manner (Lombard, 2014:46). To effectively address poverty and inequality, the discussed agendas must be anchored in sustainable development that is next discussed.

2.3. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The statistics depicting child poverty in South Africa contradicts the principle of leaving no one behind in relation to sustainable development. The achievement of sustainable development must include a balance of three dimensions: social, economic and environment (United Nations, 2015). Vallance, Parkins and Dixon (2011:343) indicate that sustainability efforts are currently failing to meet the needs of the poor and that wider developmental goals should include the fulfilment of people's basic needs everywhere, including children. The notion of human development is universal and must be attained for all, without anyone being left behind (Human Development Report, 2016).

The claim that the earth is borrowed from children (Eurochild, 2017:3), emphasises the importance of children, inter-generational equity and justice, and continued sustenance of development that will benefit children. However, sustainable development is under threat from external circumstances like environmental risks, poverty and violations of children's rights. It is at this juncture that the sustainable development framework can be put into use to ensure that children's rights are included in the combatting of poverty and environmental risks.

The social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development are below.

2.3.1. Social dimension of sustainable development

UNESCO (2010:13) states that no social phenomenon is as comprehensive in its assault on human's rights as poverty as it erodes and nullifies social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education. In this way, promoting a holistic approach to children's rights means that children are not only seen as part of vulnerable groups but first and foremost, as individuals having agency and who therefore should be treated with respect, which in turn, is fundamental to any poverty reduction initiative. All the above children's rights are realisable within a sustainable development framework if the social dimension of sustainable development is linked to the economic and environment pillars of sustainable development (McKinlay, 2004:101).

Children in poverty lack opportunity to access education that is crucial for children in terms of achieving human capital and most important for children to fight poverty. Green (2012:6) states that the lack of human capital means that children miss the opportunity to attain knowledge that is indispensable to fight child poverty. Human capital complemented by physical capital such as land, provide potential opportunity for parents to unlock their capabilities to provide for their children through income generation activities (McKinlay, 2004:101). However, poor people hardly get access to physical capital which is an important economic dimension for sustainable development that can reduce child poverty.

2.3.2. Economic dimension of sustainable development

Economic sustainability is best described by the 2030 Agenda to create sustained economic growth, technological innovation and high levels of growth (UN, 2015:23). The involvement of children in economic activities is vital for sustainable development,

eradication of child poverty and environmental risks. In this regard, Taylor and Wu (2009:8) point out that child income poverty is closely linked to adult unemployment and in 2016, more than a quarter of South Africa's economically active population was unemployed. For this reason, physical resources such as land on which economic activities depend, should be made available to children's care givers so that they can become entrepreneurs and provide an income for their households (Van der Berg & Moses, 2012:129).

It is widely recognised that the reduction of child poverty is crucial for sustainable economic and social development (UNICEF, 2014:12). Thus, the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs recognises that growth and development should particularly benefit children (OWG, 2014:24). Sustainable development needs to meet all the required activities including activities that depend on social resources, economic resources and intellectual resources to enable children to reach their full potential and live a satisfactory life (McKinlay, 2004:59-60).

To achieve this, the focus of development should not be linked to economic activities alone that extract and process resources but rather on the improvement of infrastructure that has a very positive result for children's future, for example, when a child has transport to go to school (McKinlay, 2004:59).

Social and economic capitals are integrated dimensions that should consider the environment for sustainable development outcomes.

2.3.3. Environmental dimension of sustainable development

The environment is an important dimension of sustainable development on which people depend to meet their daily needs (McKinlay, 2004:92). However, the earth is at great risk due to human behaviour and the Fifth Assessment Report of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) shows with certainty that in 2013, 95% of global warming was the result of human activities through greenhouse gas emissions and land

degradation (Alston, 2015:356). Despite the revelation, the transnational corporations continue to cause environmental problems due to lifestyles that create social injustices and threaten the survival needs of present generations as well as that of future generations because of the use of the environmental resources for economic production (McKinlay, 2004:92). It is therefore important that societies are made aware of environmental issues in order to sensitise them to aspects that may affect them directly (Nothando, 2018:11). According to Nothando (2018:12), an effective teaching approach is crucial for improved understanding in order to develop a positive attitude to the environment.

The world has started to acknowledge that children participate fully on the on-going debate on climate change. Hence, Lombard and Viviers (2014:80) point out that in 2011, during the 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate change (COP17) in South Africa, when particular attention was drawn to the widespread impact of climate change on vulnerable groups, especially children, they (children) had the opportunity to speak out with their own voice on climate change since they are likely to bear the brunt of climate change although they contribute least to the problem. However, it is still not sufficient for the world to only acknowledge children and discuss their problems; the world should rather facilitate an enabling environment to enable children to present their own problems from their own perspectives.

In summary, environmental risks can pose threatening forces to sustainable development for children and it is at this point that measures that mitigate environmental risks must be implemented to the benefit of children. Such measure includes child poverty interventions.

2.4. CHILD POVERTY AND POVERTY INTERVENTIONS

Various studies on child poverty, namely, the reintegration of street children in Burundi by Crombach, Bambonye and Elbert (2014), the impacts of poverty on children and young people by Treanor (2012), and child poverty studies in Kenya (2017), and Macedonia by UNICEF (2008), conclude that children who are born in families living in poverty tend to

have less resilience and suffer from being exposed to both personal and societal challenges. For instance, personal problems may include poor health, poor academic performance and exposure to vices such as drugs and crime. As for societal problems, these children have a higher chance of being subjected to social exclusion.

KNBS and UNICEF (2017:6) indicate that child poverty negatively influences a child's physical, cognitive and social development. This impacts upon their level of education and their productivity and contribution to the economy. It is likely that children living in poverty become adults in poverty, resulting in a maintained intergenerational cycle of poverty (KNBS & UNICEF, 2017:6). This cycle emphasises the need for correction through education and development that will, in turn, improve the resilience of the household and the quality of life that will be provided to the children (KNBS & UNICEF, 2017:6). It is, therefore, a challenge to civil society, NGOs, government, social workers and other technocrats to promote, provide and advocate for better policies and interventions to alleviate child poverty and poverty at large (KNBS & UNICEF, 2017:6).

The 2030 Agenda urges UN member states, including African countries, to come up with implementable mechanisms that will see poverty and food insecurity eradicated by 2030 (UN, 2015). Though that is the case, it is still estimated that over 233 million Africans are battling with unsustainable food production, malnutrition, hunger and poverty (Nkrumah, 2019:2). Poverty in this context may be defined as a denial of means to attain a sustainable livelihood (Townsend, 1962:211). This implies that large fragments of the population who are deemed poor are those who lack adequate access to food, housing, education and quality health care. Ironically, although children often carry the burden of these deprivations, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (2011:34) indicated that the voice of this vulnerable group is often silenced or underrepresented in the formulation and implementation of interventions which seek to address poverty and environmental risks, thus giving top-down decision-making the primary role. Fraser, Doughill, Mabee, Reed and McAlpine (2006:122) highlight the importance of moving away from top-down decision making towards a bottom-up approach, which encourages participation and empowerment of the local communities, including children. It is imperative to add that a

lack of participation makes children more prone to the effects of environmental hazards and endemic hunger since their experiences and fears are not adequately represented.

Importantly, to ensure that social justice, which has been described by Anderson, Shinn, Fullilove, Scrimshaw and Fielding (2003:56) as the promotion and assurance of equal access to resources and opportunities for all citizens, especially children, is realised, specific interventions and programmes, such as the Asset-Based Community Development Approach (ABCD), the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes, to mention a few, can be implemented in order to effectively combat poverty.

2.4.1. The Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD)

The Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD) is an efficiency approach that challenges developmental interventions that focus on people's deficiency (Nel, 2015:511). It is a useful framework to understand the strength of vulnerable community which is constituted of both children and adults, in order to plan and implement sustainable community development strategies (Nel, 2015:511).

ABCD identifies both visible and invisible assets and promotes knowledge on community assets and strengths to aid the poverty mitigation process (Nel, 2015:511). It informs the practice model which focuses on community participation which in turn, grants community members equal voice in decision-making (Nel, 2015:514). The question to ask is that of finding out whether children are included or adults take decision on their behalf. The Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD) believes in people's ability to cope despite their challenges, and is done in a more bottom-up approach and compliments the sustainable livelihood (SL) approach (Nel, 2015:511).

2.4.2. The sustainable livelihood approach (SLA)

The sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) gives social workers the tools and insight to understand livelihoods and particularly the livelihoods of the poor (DFID, 2001). It includes

the five key capitals, namely, human, social, financial, physical and natural capital (Krantz, 2001:21).

SLA is a top-down approach but, if applied using the bottom-up approach in combination with the ABCD approach (Nel,2015:515); they doubtlessly enhance community ownerships and participation and therefore place emphasis on beginning at the individual level and eventually adopting resolutions reached at policy and community level (DFID, 2001). ABCD assets/capitals have the ability to capacitate poor people and enable them to engage with the world should these assets be made available to them (Nel, 2015: 515). However, vulnerable people, including children, lack access to these assets and other claiming rights such as rights to claim against the state for various grants, claims against household for foods that must be provided by their families and claims against the community for communal resources and services (Nel, 2015: 516).

2.4.3. Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Nair and Radhakrishnan (2004:227) define Early Childhood Development as a method designed to provide all-inclusive development to children between the ages of 0-8 years. Deming's (2009:111) definition of ECD is more linked to programmes that promote children school readiness by promoting the cognitive and social development through the provision of basic social services to enrolled children and their families. There are many more programmes that can be used in combination with ECD programme to ensure the best outcomes; examples of some of these programmes are health programme, nutritional programme and psychosocial development (Deming, 2009).

The ECD programme appears to be effective in combatting poverty as indicated by the findings of a case study by Nair and Radhakrishnan (2004:227), who found that a parent focused, or child centred help provided to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, play a key role in combating the detrimental effects of poverty on child development. Church and Mashford-Scott (2011:16) confirm that children develop necessary positive social skills for the on-going relations with peers during their early ages. Thus, through ECD

programmes, children can be well prepared to deal effectively with the impacts of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

2.4.4. The 4th Industrial Revolution (IR)

Wager and Dombrowski (2014:100) define the 4th Industrial Revolution or industry 4.0 as the changes of the technological economic and social system industry (socio-technical production system) which entails the use of technology whereby humans have to collaborate with machines (Robots) to produce goods and services in automated processes. However, the current debate around 4th Industrial Revolution focuses much on the fear associated with it, especially around job losses rather than the advantages that it could provide. At the present moment, fear of losing jobs seems inevitable, unless future employees are prepared to gain new competency in linguistic and mathematics skills to interface with the machines (Wager & Dombrowski, 2014:100).

For South Africa, as it is the case for other developing countries, the 4th Industrial Revolution (4th IR) with its digitisation and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithms means a lot for the future of work for the next generation of children if they are not prepared in science and technology (Vale, 2018:1). In some instances, the 4th Industrial Revolution through its techniques of collecting data and surveillance, data on children who are involved in programmes/ interventions may be made easily available (Vale, 2018:2). At the same time, the technology-based solution of the 4th Industrial Revolution has the ability to increase people's problems as it replaces the work of the less skilled and conflicts over land and scarce wealth would increase between poor people (Vale, 2018:1).

In relation to the environment, the 4th Industrial Revolution presents both the benefits and the challenge to the environment, for example, the use of robotics to tackle the issue of global warming provides some benefits (Corfe, 2020:18). However, the 4th IR means further exploitation of the earth's natural resources to manufacture advanced devices which will in turn, increase greenhouse gases and cause environmental damages (Wahid,

Zahoor & Ali, 2017:2).The exploitation of the earth creates social injustices for the most poor and vulnerable people who inhabit degraded environments and put the earth resources at great risks because of the greater human demand for the earth's resources which exceeds its ability to regenerate (Hawkins, 2010: 262).

NGOs in South Africa have for many years, implemented interventions that are aimed at promoting children's rights. All interventions need to be conducted within a human rights-based approach which focuses on putting people (children) at the centre of development in an effort to promote the socio-economic rights of children (Kasambara, 2018:18). It is within this context that the study adopted the human rights-based approach as its theoretical framework.

2.5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

As indicated in Chapter One, a human rights-based approach was adopted as conceptual framework for the study. A human rights-based approach facilitates sustainable human development outcomes embedded in international human rights standards and intends to promote and protect human rights (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1).

It anchors programmes, policies, plans and processes of development in a system of rights, which promote sustainable development outcomes and people empowerment (UN HBRA Portal, 2018:1).

It is important that NGOs adhere to the human rights-based approach as far as the promotion of children's rights is concerned. Upholding children's rights requires that NGOs understand the countries legislative frameworks and policies governing the work with children. It is also important that they have an understanding of the international and regional treaties which is subsequently discussed.

2.5.1. Legislative and policy frameworks that promote children's rights

South Africa guarantees children's rights through its Constitution which is the supreme law, and the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 with the mandate to protect children. The

Constitution of South Africa affords certain rights to children apart from the political rights which can be exercised by children at the age of 18 (Lombard & Viviers, 2014:11). Furthermore, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides for the right to education under section 29(1) (a) of the Constitution (RSA, 1996). Section 24(a) (b) (l) and 28 (1) (d) confirm children's rights to protection, to live in a safer environment and to be protected from maltreatment as well as environmental degradation.

Apart from the Constitution, South Africa has a number of domestic legislations to ensure that children's voices are heard. For example, the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 under Section 11 (1) states that a Representative Council of Learners at the school must be established at every public school, enrolling learners in the eighth grade and higher. Similarly, the National Health Act in its Section 71 calls for a review of the consent requirement for child participation in health research even though this section provides the rights to participation to children with parents or legal guardians only (Vogel, 2015: 28). In the same way, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 stipulates that "Every child that is of such age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter ... has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration." These child rights are also found in the international and regional conventions and treaties.

According to Hall, (2016:122) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child provides for the right to education under Article 11(3) (a) The right to housing and participation are found in the International Conventions under Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that "every child has the right to a standard of living adequate for his/her development" and obliges the State "in cases of need" to "provide support programmes, particularly with regard to ... housing" (Hall, 2016:129). Similarly, aspiration 10 of the African Children's Charter recognises child's rights to participation. In its articles 4(2) and 7, it highlights that, the views of children matter and must be heard (ACERWC, n.d:19).

Even though the Constitution provides children with the right to housing and the UNCRC obliges States to provide support programmes, particularly with regard to housing, this right is not fully protected as many children households in rural areas are not developed and children live in overcrowded rooms which in turn, impact negatively on them and undermine their needs and rights, especially to protection and privacy. Likewise, Hall (2016:131) observes how overcrowding undermines child rights; she argues that everyone has the right to privacy and good health which falls under the child protection system.

However, these rights are violated when children do not have enough space to wash or change in private and communicable diseases can spread more easily in overcrowded conditions. Hall (2016:131) gives more examples of how child's rights are undermined due to overcrowdings; she argues that children are at greater risk of sexual abuse, especially where boys and girls have to share beds, or children have to share with adults and that they cannot do their homework if other household members want to sleep or watch television. Children's participation is vital because, it is through participation that children are enabled to enjoy all the rights that are enshrined in the Constitution and in domestic legislations, and international and regional conventions or declarations (Ekundayo, 2015:143).

In South Africa, children enjoy the right to participation whereby in any judicial and administrative proceedings that have the potential to affect them, their voices are heard either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, and in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law (Boezaart, 2013:2). To make this practical, the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 makes provision in South Africa through judicial courts, for appointing of attorneys to represent children and get information from them if they are not of age and maturity.

Similarly, section 50 (1) (b) enables courts to also obtain children's views through a report written by qualified professionals in order to recognise children's experiences and insights, as they are the change agents of their daily lives (Trent & Kotze, 2009:184).

Through this recognition, especially if practised by strong and secure relationships with adults, resilience which is defined as a system's capacity to absorb disturbance and re-organise into a fully functioning system is therefore developed (Cutter, Barnes, Berry, Burton, Evans, Tate & Webb, 2008:599).

Relationships with significant others are core to children's healthy psycho-social development (Masten & Obradovic, 2007:7) which in turn, allows better participation for children in, for example, early childhood development programmes that can protect them from poverty and environmental risks. However, although children understand their situation much better and are able to provide a unique perspective on their situation to help adults understand how to better protect them from poverty and environmental risks, in most instances child participation may mean adult participation which disregard children's views as second to those of parents even when there is a clause in the Children's Act that gives a child an opportunity to express his/her views (Claassen & Spies, 2017:77).

Similarly, Heimer et al. (2018:317) argue that children's voices are not heard and many social services interventions/programmes targeting children focus on partnerships with parents. They further argue that, in this type of relationships, children involvement is subjected to parents' consent unlike in court matters, where parents' consent is not necessary when child is at high risk (Heimer et al., 2018:317). The above examples indicate that the problem to child's participation is the adults' assumptions that they should do more for children and not with children (Viviers, 2010:25).

The discussion has contextualised participation of children as a right which is embedded in various legislations, conventions and declarations pertaining to children. Children's right to participate is further elaborated in the following section.

2.6. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

While talking about child participation, the issue of power should not be ignored. Child participation with adults is much based on power imbalances whereby adults are

considered as powerful and being the ones to invite children to participate as they are considered as the less powerful (Fleming, 2012:3). In this way, adults interact with children in a way that they do not give them voice but instead consult with them in a controlling manner to ensure that their professional identities are not threatened (Fleming, 2012:3).

Providing the opportunity to children to participate in programmes which directly affect their lives is important, especially for disadvantaged children who learn through participation with others how to take up the struggle against discrimination and oppression and to fight for their equal rights in solidarity with others which in itself is a fundamental democratic right (Hart, 1992:6).

Child advocates have different views when it comes to child participation; some see children as having potential to save society, many say that children's participation is naive and that they do not have the decision-making power of adults, whereas others feel that children should be protected from undue involvement and responsibility in the problems of society and that they should be allowed to have a carefree childhood (Hart, 1992:6). To direct child participation, children's rights to participation has been classified in specific steps.

2.6.1. Classification of children's rights to participation

Children's rights to participation have been classified into eight steps that show the level of their participation when they interact with adults. Nilsson, Björkman, Almqvist, Almqvist, Björk-Willén, Donuhne, Enskar, Gronlundo, Huus and Hvit (2014:1) identify eight steps related to child's rights to participation as follows:

1. Manipulation
2. Decoration
3. Tokenism
4. Assigned but informed

5. Consulted and informed
6. Adult-initiated, shared decision with adults
7. Child-initiated and directed
8. Child-initiated, shared decision with adults.

Nilsson, et al. (2015:2) state that in the fifth step, child participation in decision-making is subjected to adults' deliberation whereby adults can still decide whether children's contributions make sense or not. But in the sixth step, children fully participate in decision-making and make meaningful contributions. Viviers (2010:7) statement about the inclusion of children in the decision-making process to only mark their presence without having any influence validates the fifth step whereby children's contributions have to be deliberated by adults before they are acknowledged as meaningful. Children's level of participation as indicated above depends greatly on their development stage and cognitive ability, thus how they experience the world based on their developmental level (Nilsson, et al., 2015:2).

IRSA plays a role in making children aware of their rights, fighting poverty and environmental risks and adheres to policy and legislation that covers child protection. It fills the gap through provision of social assistance and the implementation of diverse programmes to support poor families.

2.7. THE ROLE OF IRSA IN PROMOTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

IRSA implements an Orphan and Vulnerable Children's (OVC) programme that intends to enhance the overall quality of life and wellbeing of the OVC and their families. Islamic Relief South Africa has for many years been addressing the root causes of poverty and has improved lives in a sustainable way through integrated programmes that helped communities become self-sufficient by tackling multiple issues and in turn, contribute to SDG one, namely to reduce poverty (Islamic Relief South Africa, 2017:26).

IRSA asserts that thousands of OVC remain vulnerable to poverty and sickness and lack of proper shelter which, in turn, leaves many of them displaced, living in institutions or with inadequate housing (Islamic Relief South Africa, [SA]). IRSA believes further that education is a tool that can support OVC. However, it confirms that many of these children are without education, security and stability and have to deal with the constant life-threatening situations which imply that Orphans and Vulnerable Children have a smaller chance for a brighter future (Islamic Relief South Africa, [sa]).

The lack of adequate housing and proper education continue to contribute to environmental risks and poverty and violates children's rights to privacy. Thus, IRSA believes in protecting and fulfilling children's' rights, especially by providing the opportunities to children to access education and shelter as it allows children to cope with the shocks of everyday life (Islamic Relief South Africa, [sa]). IRSA belief that education is crucial for the future of the OVC is shared by SAHR and UNICEF (2014:6) which state that poor educational foundation of many children from early childhood and "the weak social structures and associated problems of violence and abuse", keep children trapped in poverty and socially and physically excluded from mainstream society. IRSA works towards improving education results of the OVC above the national average, and by promoting child protection and a secure and safer home environment for them (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2018:5).

In terms of child protection, IRSA has care workers who regularly visit the orphaned homes to make sure that they are well taken care of by their guardians. The care workers report back to offices in their respective areas if there is a reason to be concerned about a particular child or home (Iman, 2019/07/24). It is worth mentioning that the Children's Act No. 38 of 2005, section 110, allows anyone to report any suspected case of abuse or neglect. To this end, IRSA as a Faith-Based Organisation aligns its work with the views of Islam and the Islamic principles in relation to protection, that is of prohibiting anyone from causing harm and abuse to another person as the Prophet (PBUH) said: "There is not to be any causing of harm, nor is there to be any reciprocating of harm" [IbnMajah] (Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2016:10).

With reference to the creation of a safer environment, Iman (2019/07/24) states during child protection induction training that IRSA strives to create good living conditions for OVC and their families in order to curb any life stressor that may jeopardise the progress of children as well as their families. However, most work and emphasis are on children's immediate social environment though IRSA does focus on some environmental-related work.

As far as the social environment is concerned, the organisation ensures that OVC are in a safe environment by improving its policies to ensure their protection and beneficiaries (Iman, 2019/07/24). IRSA also keeps healthy relations and work closely with community leaders, Ward Councillors as well as Municipalities where the rights holders (beneficiaries) are based, and where it carries out its humanitarian work. In that way, IRSA promotes community self-reliance as in the absence of the organisation and the care workers, community leaders are always there to look out for the residents (Iman, 2019/07/24).

Iman (2019/07/24) further states that IRSA has from its inception been committed to address the causes of climate change whereby it helps find sustainable energy alternatives, transportation, agricultural activities and livelihoods and support local and government efforts to develop climate friendly policies and work with some of the most vulnerable people in the world to help them adapt to the effects of climate change.

Iman (2019/07/24) indicates some of the work that the organisation does in cases of problems caused by environmental degradation, is fundraising to assist beneficiaries with building materials in order for them to build proper houses that would withstand in times of flooding.

2.8. SUMMARY

In summary, Dylan (2013:120) acknowledges that sustainable development has led to a greater focus on child poverty through linking social and environmental justice to economic growth and has brought together divergent groups with manifold interests in the service of environment protection and human rights. Various dimensions have to be taken into consideration when involving children in decision-making processes on poverty reduction and protection against environmental risks. Despite the global, national and regional agendas affirming children's agency and their active role that they play in reducing poverty, children are still not involved in decision-making because of how adults perceive them.

Many programmes/services are being implemented by the South African government and NGOs. These programmes are imperative, as they are holistic and inclusive in nature. However, to be sustainable, they have to be implemented and delivered within a human-rights based approach and should foster child participation in the conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of programmes that affect their current and future lives. Furthermore, children involvement in programmes/interventions that are aiming at reducing poverty and environmental risks is limited because of adults' assumptions that children should be protected until they reach a certain age.

South Africa is making an effort to deal with many social, economic and environmental issues through the Constitution which mandates government to respect, protect and promote children rights. It has done this through the development of policy and programmes/interventions that are seeking to promote children's agency, reduce poverty and environmental risks. However, the world economic system continues to create socio-economic and environmental problems. The excessive exploitation of natural resources is seen as a problem to ecological stability together with wars and instabilities that are also causing problems to socio-economic stability.

Finally, provision of opportunities to children to access education is the only way to attain human capital which in turn, enables them to fight poverty and environmental risks. Human capital for children at the time of 4th Industrial Revolution should put greater emphasis on science and technology whereby mathematics and linguistic skills are crucial in order for them to be able to interpret the coded language of the 4th Industrial Revolution.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND FINDINGS

3.1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the research methodology that was utilised in the study and its findings. The chapter begins with an outline of the research approach, research type and the research design used for the study. The research methodology then follows, including the population and sampling, the data collection methods, the data analyses, and how the trustworthiness of the data was secured. The next discussion focuses on the pilot study, followed by the ethical aspects that guided the study, and the limitations of the study. The following section will present and discuss the empirical findings of the study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

The research question that guided the study was:

- How are children's agency recognised and respected in programmes aimed to reduce poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme?

The following sub questions informed the research question:

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

- What must change to recognise and respect children’s agency in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme?

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The qualitative research approach was used in this study as it allowed for the understanding of the phenomena from the participants’ point of view (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:64). The qualitative research approach is relevant to the study as it allows the researcher to obtain undiluted quality information based on the meaning and experiences of research participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2014: 471). The researcher intended to understand children’s agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks from children and key participants’ point of views.

The study was both exploratory and descriptive. The exploratory purpose intends to answer the “how” question and thus gain insight (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95) into children’s agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. Furthermore, the exploratory study enables the researcher to gain insight into the situation, programme or community (Babbie, 2017:92).

The study’s descriptive purpose intends to answer the “why” and “how” questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95) and allows the researcher to gather descriptive data through the participants’ spoken or written words (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:65). Children and key informants involve in the programme explain the degree and nature of children’s agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks present in service delivery.

The study used an interpretivism paradigm as it departs from a human rights framework which informed the researcher on the type of questions to ask (Maree, 2016:55). The interpretivism paradigm is used when it allows the researcher to understand social reality through the eyes of different participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60) and in the case of the study, children and key informants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:60). In the context of this study,

the researcher wanted to understand how children are involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

3.3. RESEARCH TYPE

The study used applied research because it aimed at solving specific practice problems and develops new knowledge on a practical situation (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95) relating to recognising and respecting children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risks. The knowledge is generated through the investigation of a practical situation which in turn, results in possible solutions that may be utilised in practice (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014:74).

The study focused on how children's agency is respected and recognised in solving poverty and environmental risks that affect them. The applied findings could be used by organisations to solve problems related to children's rights (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). It is envisaged that the study's findings could be of value to policy makers (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95), in addressing policy challenges concerning children's participation in interventions that affect their well-being.

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a case study design and more specifically an instrumental case study design as it allows for the development of an understanding of a phenomenon with the goal of increasing the ability to generalise the findings to other cases (Mertens, 2010:324), provides an in-depth and detailed account of a case in a real-world context (Creswell, 2014:97) and has the ability to enable participants to share their stories due to close collaboration between researcher and participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82).

According to Nieuwenhuis, (2016b:82), a case study is a preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are posed and enables participants to share their stories due to close

collaboration between the researcher and participants. Furthermore, a case study provides insights into an issue (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:82).

Case studies allow for the attainment of familiarity with the social world of a small number of people, while identifying patterns and themes within the participants' worlds (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:320), as well as gaining new knowledge about a social issue (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:321). Additionally, a case study is specifically "useful when exploring those situations in which the interventions being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes and provides insight into an issue or help to refine a theory" (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b: 82). Therefore, it assists the researcher "to learn more about a little known or poorly understood situation" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:141).

3.5. RESEARCH METHODS

This section provides a detailed breakdown of the research methods that were utilised in this study. Firstly, the study population and sample criteria will be discussed, followed by the data collection, the data analysis, and how the trustworthiness of the data was secured.

3.5.1. Study population and sampling

The study was conducted at IRSA, a local NGO in Johannesburg. The research population consisted of children and key informants who were all care workers that are involved in the IRSA programme called Orphan Sponsorship Programme.

According to Strydom (2011:223), study population refers to individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics. The researcher used a non-probability sampling method and a purposive sampling technique based on specified criteria to collect data (Maree, 2016:85). Once the research study was approved, the regional programme's officer at IRSA produced a list of all the care workers that were employed at IRSA,

Johannesburg office at the time of the study and a list of all the children from the nine areas that are the beneficiaries of the programme.

As the research population was too large, the researcher selected one area as research site that is Fordsburg. Fordsburg serves a child population of 55 children with seven care workers. Five (5) children and five (5) care workers were purposely selected for interviews. The director of IRSA gave permission to the researcher to access the lists of all the participants. The regional programme's officer at IRSA appointed one care worker to assist the researcher with calling the participants (children and care workers) from the lists. The process of calling participants was done in the presence of the researcher and based on the selection criteria below; the first five children and five care workers to confirm their participation were selected.

The following criteria were purposefully used to select five children willing to participate in the study:

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

Criteria that applied to select five care workers willing to participate in the study were as follows:

- Involved in the development and / or implementation of the programme.
- Familiar with the involvement of children in the programme.
- At least two years' involvement in/with the programme.
- Conversant in English.
- Preferably male and female
- Willing to share their views and experience on the programme.

The researcher was not allowed to interview the children without the presence of a family member and a staff member of IRSA.

3.5.2. Data collection method

Data was collected by means of one-on-one semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule with predetermined questions (See Appendix A). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to have flexibility in expanding on questions, which led to more in-depth information (Greeff, 2011:352) and more natural interaction between the researcher and the participants (Rubin & Babbie, 2015:168).

The qualitative study was guided by the criteria of data saturation which refers to the point where all the themes and categories have been saturated and therefore no further data had to be gathered (Maree, 2016:82). The ten (10) participants that the researcher purposely selected were sufficient as interviews began yielding repetitive data as Maree (2016:82) alludes to.

3.5.3. Data analysis method

In this study, the researcher adopted thematic analysis to analyse the research data. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that allows the researcher to develop codes and themes. It is flexible, allowing the researcher to respond to data as they engage in it (Clarke et al., 2015:224). Thus, using thematic analysis, the researcher developed codes and themes (Clarke, et al., 2015:224). The researcher followed the six-step process of data analysis as described by Clarke, et al. (2015). The six-step process unfolded as follows:

- **Step1: Familiarisation**

The interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants to capture their verbatim expressions. The researcher listened to the audio records and then transcribed the interviews. The researcher familiarised himself with the data by reading at least twice

the transcribed data from a curious and critical perspective, asking why the participant answered the question in a particular manner (Clarke et al., 2015:231).

- **Step 2: Coding**

Coding began with a close reading through of the data and the identification of short phrases, which could be semantic or latent in nature (Clarke et al., 2015:235). The researcher systematically identified and labelled the features from the data that were relevant to the study and research question (Clarke et al., 2015:230). The researcher made space available on the right side of the transcripts to be able to code the data related to the research question. The researcher read the transcriptions carefully and followed the suggestions of Clarke et al. (2015:235) that it is preferable to start firstly with the latent coding, to search for the deeper meaning and afterwards shift to the semantic phrases that are on the surface.

- **Step 3: Searching for themes**

The researcher aimed to create a plausible and coherent thematic mapping of the data (Clarke et al., 2015:236). The researcher developed themes which emerged from the data and presented information to respond to the research question. Four themes and sub-themes emerged from the data captured from the one-on-one interviews.

- **Step 4: Reviewing themes**

Theme review is crucial in order to determine whether the selected themes are appropriate for the study (Clarke et al., 2015:230). The researcher embarked on themes review by determining whether the identified themes aligned with the meanings in the coded data. The researcher paused throughout the process of generating themes in order to check where there was an appropriate fit between the themes and codes and each had a clear feature or “distinct essence or central organising concept” (Clarke et al.,

2015:230). In reviewing the themes, the researcher adapted some themes to improve alignment with the coding.

- **Step 5: Defining and naming themes**

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

- **Step 6: Writing the report**

The researcher wrote up the themes and sub-themes as discussed in section 3.11 of this chapter. The researcher added the perspectives of participants through verbatim representation of participants' expressions (Clarke et al., 2015:241). Participants' demographic data including gender and age were presented in a table (see Table 3.1).

3.6. DATA QUALITY

Data quality was ensured by means of establishing trustworthiness. The four concepts that informed trustworthiness were credibility, transferability, dependability/auditability and conformability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

3.6.1. Credibility

Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings of a study accurately represent the contributions of the participants (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). Furthermore, the researcher obtained an in-depth understanding and insight from participants on the research topic (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014:258). To achieve this, the researcher had an in-depth interview with the participants which lasted for an hour. The researcher was aware of possible bias that might influence the credibility of the data (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192).

Therefore, the researcher kept an audit trail of the research process and observations and debriefed by discussing the research and findings with a peer (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192).

3.6.2. Dependability

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

3.6.3. Transferability

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

3.6.4. Conformability

Conformability implies that the participants and not the interest and the biasness of the researcher shaped the findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Conformability

therefore refers to the objectivity of the researcher which could be confirmed by others in the findings of the study (Schurink, Fouché & De Vos, 2011:421). Nieuwenhuis (2016c:125) highlights that research findings should reflect participants' true contributions, which confirms that the researcher should guard against being bias and allow his/her interest in the study to influence the research findings. Throughout the process, the researcher had a written reflection journal which was used to reflect on how his perspective and viewpoints may have influenced the research. This was important in order to counteract possible bias (Drisko, 1997 in Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192).

3.7. PILOT STUDY

The pilot study serve as a feasibility study before the research study is conducted to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the research methodology, sampling, data collection instruments and the data analysis (Strydom, 2011:237). Barker (2003:327) describes a pilot study as testing and validating an instrument by using a small group of participants to administer it.

A pilot study was important for the researcher to determine his own level of interviewing skills (Greeff, 2011:350). The first interviews with the child and care worker respectively, served as the pilot study. The pilot study showed that both children participants and care workers did not easily understood the questions. However, due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, the researcher followed up with probing questions to simplify questions for participants. In addition, the researcher explained the research key concept that is 'agency', 'child poverty and environmental risks' from time to time to enable participants to express themselves freely

3.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher was guided by a set of ethical values and principles that provided moral principles, rules and expectations on how to conduct himself towards the research participants (Babbie, 2017:63). Ethical considerations stressed that data should not be

obtained at the expense of human beings and therefore the researcher attended to all ethical aspects relevant to the study (Strydom, 2011:113).

The researcher sought permission to conduct interviews at IRSA and permission was granted (see Appendix B). Ethical clearance was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria (see Appendix C). The ethical principles that guided the researcher will be discussed below:

3.8.1. Avoidance of harm

The study presumed no threat of physical harm but was aware that the topic could possibly cause emotional harm to research participants related to the study (Strydom, 2011:115) as it might have triggered negative experiences underpinning the involvement of children in the programme or difficulties that they have to deal with as care workers. The study was about poverty and environmental risks and talking about the hardships might have evoked emotional and disempowerment feelings, especially for the children. Care workers on the other hand, might have realised that they do not recognise the children's agency sufficiently which might have been disturbing to them. The study did not pose any physical harm. In order to avoid emotional harm for the participants (in this context children and care workers), the researcher informed them through the informed consent and assent forms about the possible risks involved when they decided to participate in the research study (Babbie, 2017:65).

3.8.2. Debriefing of participants

Debriefing entails "sessions during which subjects get the opportunity, after the study, to work through their experience and its aftermath, and where they have their questions answered and misconceptions removed" (McBurney, 2011 cited in Strydom, 2011:122). Debriefing offers an opportunity to clarify any matters or concerns about the research study and therefore, it is best to debrief participants directly after the interview (Strydom, 2011:122) which is what the researcher has done. Furthermore, in the case where follow

up was required, the children were going to be referred to the social worker at Ennerdale Civic Centre and care workers to the director of the studied programme at the organisation should they have further inquiries. However, neither children participants nor care workers were referred as they did not require so.

3.8.3. Anonymity and confidentiality

Shielding the identity of the participants was considered as an important aspect in this study. The participants were known to the researcher and hence anonymity was not guaranteed. Confidentiality was guaranteed through the presentation of the research findings. Findings were not presented in a manner that any particular participant could be easily identified. To achieve this, participants were given codes in data reporting to guarantee confidentiality (Babbie, 2017:67; Padgett, 2017:83).

The researcher verbally informed the participants that the information that they share would be kept confidential and asked them to sign consent/assent forms. The consent/assent forms indicated that confidentiality will be upheld. Additionally, IRSA has a confidentiality policy that all staff abides by. In this way, staff who sat in the interview room agreed to abide by the organisation's policy which the regional programme's officer clarified and they were not allowed to talk in the interview room. Although the researcher prepared an informed consent form in the case he would need an interpreter (see Appendix D), it was not necessary as everyone understood and could express themselves in English.

3.8.4. Deception

Deception entails the misleading of participants, purposeful misrepresentation of facts or keeping information from participants (Strydom, 2011:118). To avoid deception, the researcher ensured that all the participants understood what the study was about by explaining to them the research key concepts. The researcher did not withhold any information that participants wanted to know. Prior to the interviews, the researcher

ensured that participants fully understood the content of the informed consent/assent forms before they gave consent to participate in the study.

3.8.5. Informed consent/assents

The researcher is responsible for and has an obligation to thoroughly explain the study to the participants in order to establish a platform for informed consent (Babbie, 2017:65; Strydom, 2011:118). Care workers and children participants were given informed consent forms before the actual interviews (see Appendix E). Informed assent is a term that is used to convey an agreement to participate in research from those who are not yet eligible to enter into a legal contract (Ford, Sankey & Crisp, 2007: 20).

Children gave assent to participate in the study while parents and guardians signed informed consent forms (see Appendixes F and G). Informed consent/assent forms included the researcher's intention to audio-record all interviews for which the participants gave permission. Participants were informed that the University of Pretoria will store the research data for a period of 15 years and that the data might be used for further research.

3.8.6. Dissemination of findings

Dissemination of research findings explains to the participants what the researcher will do with the findings once the project is completed, how the findings will be made available to the public and whether the researcher intends to publish the findings (Bak, 2004:35). The informed consent/assent forms included that once the project is completed, the research findings would be submitted to the University of Pretoria in the form of this research report, and possibly be submitted to a scientific journal for publication and possible conference papers. Should it be necessary, a hard copy will be submitted to IRSA.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The interpretation of the research findings should consider the following limitations of the study. The study was conducted in Fordsburg; Johannesburg office. This is one of the nine areas of IRSA from where 5 children out of 55 were selected. Therefore, the findings do not represent how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in the Fordsburg area. In addition, the possibility that care workers gave biased information to protect their organisation cannot be excluded. Furthermore, the possibility that children did not feel free to answer the questions because of parents and staff's presence in the interview room cannot be excluded. Finally, the researcher could have influenced the data by explaining the key concepts of the research to the participants and in doing so, prompted them what to say.

As findings indicate, the researcher managed to get rich data from participants, which to an extent countered the possible limitations of the study.

3.10. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section discusses the empirical findings of the study. The biographical information of the participants will first be discussed, followed by the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study.

3.10.1. Biographical details of research participants

In this section, the biographical information of the participants will be presented; firstly the detail of the children, followed by the care workers. The code allocated to child participants is CP, and for the care workers as key informants of the study, KI, followed by the number of the respective participants.

Table 3.1 below presents the age, gender, grade at school and years of involvement in the programme under study of the child participants. In the final row of Table 3.1, the

researcher indicated who of the family, along with IRSA staff member, joined the child in the interview in order to contextualise the interview.

Table 3.1: Biographical information of child participants

Participants	CP1	CP2	CP3	CP4	CP5
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female
Age	15	13	16	15	13
Grade	10	6	9	11	8
Years (Y) and months (M) involved in the programme	9Y 8M	6Y 5M	15Y 6M	4Y	2Y
Adults joining in the child interview	Guardian and IRSA staff	Mother and IRSA staff	Guardian and IRSA staff	Mother and IRSA staff	Mother and IRSA staff

All the children were in school. One child was in primary school in grade 6 whereas the other four was in high school in grades 8, 9, 10 and 11 respectively. As far as their ages are concerned, two children were 13 years old, two were 15 years and one was 16 years. In the case of CP3, the participant age does not correspond with the years and months of involvement in the programme. Unfortunately, the researcher was not in a position to follow this up with the child but interpreted it as the number of years that the child's family been assisted by the organisation. Excluding CP3, the years of involvement in the programme ranged from 2 to 9 years which on average reflects that children are more likely to engage in the programme long term than short term.

Table 3.2 below presents the care workers' gender, age, years involved in the programme, the phase of the programme that they are involved in, and the years engaged with the organisation.

Table 3.2: Biographical information of key informants (care workers)

Participants	KI1	KI2	KI3	KI4	KI5
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age	41-45	31-35	46-50	31-35	51-55
Years (Y) and months (M) involved in the programme	6Y 10M	10Y 9M	5Y 0M	9Y 5M	7Y 1M
Phase of the programme	Monitoring and implementation	Planning and monitoring	Planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring	Implementation and evaluation
Years involved in organisation	6	10	6	9	7

Table 3.2 indicates that care workers' age is above 30 years which points to the level of responsibility required to work with children in the programme. Two participants were between the ages of 31 and 35 years. One was between the ages of 41 and 45 years, another one was between the ages of 45 and 50 years and only one was above the age of 50 years. Care workers' years in the organisation were equal to their years of involvement in the programme. However, they were involved in different phases in the programme. Only one participant was involved in all the phases of the programme, namely planning, design, monitoring, implementation and evaluation. Three participants were involved in two phases, of whom one in monitoring and implementation (KI1), one in planning and monitoring (KI2) and one in implementation and evaluation (KI5). Only one participant (KI4) was involved in only one phase of the programme, namely monitoring.

3.11. KEY THEMES AND SUB THEMES

In this section the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data are presented. The findings from the interviews will be complimented with direct voices of participants and where applicable, integrated with literature. The themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
1. Conceptualisation of a child	
2. Services that promote environmental justice and sustainable communities	2.1. Services that help to alleviate poverty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with school fees • Assistance with transport money • Assistance with food and clothes 2.2. Services that promote environmental justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with clean water • Education on how to stop pollution • Cleaning campaign
3. Children's participation in the programme	
4. Factors influencing child recognition and respect	4.1. Factors that show recognition and respect for child agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of children's views and decisions • Children have the opportunity to express themselves and give their opinions 4.2. Factors that show non-recognition and disrespect for child agency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion from decision-making

Theme 1: Conceptualisation of a child

Key informants and child participants had different views on the child concept. Key informants see children mostly as vulnerable and in need of adults' protection. They perceived them as likely to be abused and bullied and not having the power to defend themselves. The following views reflect the sentiments of key informants:

KI3: *Yes, they do need protection.*

KI1: *I think I'll go for number one as a person whose vulnerable and should be protected because a child is vulnerable she can't protect herself even when somebody is doing something wrong she can't fight back because she doesn't have that power so that's why I'll take A.*

KI4: *Definitely they should be protected like some of them are disabled and some of them they cannot speak for themselves and some guardians are bullying and then we are the one who are protecting them.*

Key informants had different views on whether children's age plays a role in participating in decision-making and also at what age it would be appropriate for them to participate:

KI2: *Not 7 years, 13 years, you said 13 years...7 years is too young...13 years is young but too much better.*

KI3: *...No, no I don't think that a child of 17 years is able to make meaningful decisions and choices about event that influence his/her life today and in the future...*

Child participants had different views on how adults see them in the programme. Some said that adults see them as persons who have ideas which correlate with key informants' view that they could participate in decisions from a particular age. However, child

participants were of the opinion that adults consider themselves as more knowledgeable and that they should take decisions on behalf of children. These views are captured by the following two participants:

CP2: *Yes, they (adults) see us as persons who have ideas.*

CP3: *Yes, that one that they (adults) know best and they do take decisions.*

The findings that children are vulnerable and need to be protected from harm resonates with section 24(a) (b) (l) and 28 (1) (d) of the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) which confirms children's rights to protection, to live in a safer environment and to be protected from maltreatment as well as environmental degradation. The findings show that a child's age is considered to be an important factor when deciding when a child has the mental capacity to make decisions. These findings corroborate the observation of Skovdal and Daniel, (2012:155) of Jean Piaget's theory of developmental stages that children are not complete until they have reached a certain age of maturity. This view, however, can be challenged in relation to the study's premises that children have agency and the right to autonomy and participation. The findings thus contradict the research findings of Gowrie South Africa (2015) which assert that children are able to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their lives today, and in the future if they are presented with opportunities to express their views and experiences. The findings show that although children are perceived as persons with ideas, adults in the programme still doubt their knowledge with regards to making decisions. Although children are perceived as persons who have ideas, they are not always allowed to participate in decisions about programmes that affect them. The findings confirm the view of Hart (1992:6) that,

“Child advocates have different views when it comes to child participation; some see children as having potential to save society, many say that children's participation is naive and that they do not have the decision-making power of adults, whereas others feel that children should be

protected from undue involvement and responsibility in the problems of society and that they should be allowed to have a carefree childhood”.

Theme 2: Services that promote environmental justice and sustainable communities

The findings indicate that the programme includes services that alleviate poverty, namely assisting with school fees, transport money, food and clothes. Furthermore, services that promote environmental justice include assistance with access to clean water, education to stop pollution and cleaning campaigns. These services are next discussed as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 2.1: Services that help to alleviate poverty

Poverty is visible in children’s areas that are underdeveloped and neglected (UNICEF, 2015:2). Findings indicate that children received assistance in terms school fees, transport money, food and clothes as will next be discussed.

- **Assistance with school fees**

Findings revealed that children did not worry about school fees because they were helped in this regard through the programme which enables them to access education as indicated in the following quotes:

CP4: *It helps me because I don’t have to worry about paying school fees*

CP5: *I don’t have to worry about my school fees.*

KI4: *We do help them with schools fees and if the child does not attend the school we need to know from the school why the child is not going to*

school and then if it because of fees we do give fees and then if a child finishes metric we do fund tertiary education.

The findings show the important link between poverty alleviation and section 29(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996) and article 11(3) (a) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child's position on providing children the right to education. The programme provides children with the opportunity to go to school which, in turn, enables them to attain human capital which is essential to be prepared to actively participate in the economic sector and earn a sustainable livelihood that would lift them out of poverty. Green (2012:6) affirms that access to education is crucial for the attainment of human capital and that it is the most important tool to fight poverty. Opportunities to access the market and get decent employment are supported by the research findings of KNBS and UNICEF (2017:6) who state that the cycle of poverty is broken through education and development which will, in turn, improve the resilience of the household and the quality of life that will be provided to the children.

- **Assistance with transport money**

Findings from the key informants indicated that children are assisted with transport money which enables them to access health care services, including meeting doctors and collecting medications.

KI1: *In health care when they go to the clinic, we do provide for transport money for the kids to go to take the treatment, maybe when it is the guardian who needs to take a taxi to go with her [posing a bit], and we also have the hospital when one of my OVC we took him there at Nelson Mandela you know that hospital because I've got an OVC who is disable so we did also take her there. Islamic transport come to the beneficiary house and take him to the hospital and when she finishes take him back home.*

K12: *Health problem, we do provide, those who are going to clinics not local clinics, they go to Bara or Saint Joseph, we provide them with transport money to go and meet the doctor.*

K15: *The organisation gives them transport money and they go to where they collect their medication...*

In the absence of child participant voices on this sub-theme, they were clearly not aware that the programme provides access to health services by being assisted with transport money. In a study by McKinlay (2004:59) on sustainable development, she concluded that a child's future is affected when the child does not have transport to access school or health care.

- **Assistance with food and clothes**

Findings indicated that children are assisted with food and clothes. Participants' views capture how children benefit from support with food and clothes.

CP1: *It is all about supporting children who are poor who cannot afford to go to school and put food on the table and like have clothes...*

CP2: *I go there and they help me with food and clothing...the foods that they are giving me, gives me energy to like become more useful in life like to write my homework if like I become lazy and faint and then I don't write my home work for school.*

CP3: *They bring food parcels and they help the household with what we don't have, what we need yeah.*

CP4: *It benefits me monthly because we have access to foods.*

KI1: *So we give them food so that when they go to school they must eat.*

KI2: *Okay, in terms of education they are staying near school the only thing that we do for them we provide them with foods and stationary.*

KI3: *We also try that they go to school they have food in their stomach...*

Access to food plays a big role in limiting child hunger and malnutrition due to poverty in the family. Findings of a study by Nkrumah's (2019:2) indicated that an estimated over 233 million Africans are battling with unsustainable food production, malnutrition, hunger and poverty. South Africa is no exception. The 2030 Agenda has called upon UN member states, including South Africa and other African countries, to come up with implementable mechanisms that will see poverty and food insecurity eradicated by 2030 (UN, 2015). The findings on preventing hunger connect to the 2030 Agenda's "supreme ambitious and transformational vision for a world free of poverty, hunger, disease and want, where all life can thrive; free of fear and violence; a world with universal literacy, equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels, to health care and social protection, where physical, mental and social well-being are assured" (UN, 2015:7).

Sub-theme 2.2: Services that promote environmental justice

It emerged in the study that environmental justice is promoted through assisting with clean water, education on ending pollution and a cleaning campaign. Participants mentioned that they conducted campaigns to highlight some environmental problems that may be caused by lack of clean water and educate on what pollution can do to biodiversity if people litter. These campaigns and education will promote environmental justice as people (children) will fulfil their human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment (Hawkins, 2010:68). Two categories emerged under this sub-theme and are presented below.

- **Assistance with access to clean water**

The most vulnerable and poor people, which include children, are more likely to live in the most degraded environments where they are exposed to environmental risks such as poor sanitation, pollution and lack of clean water (Hawkins, 2010:68).

Child participants indicated that they get water from the organisation whenever they are in need of water. Key participants confirmed that they give children water when there is no clean water available where they live. The programme's assistance with clean water was widely acknowledged by participants:

CP1: *When there is no water where I stay like sometimes I go to one of the Islamic Relief branches and ask for water there.*

CP2: *Like they can come and like bring us bottles of water that we can keep in the house, if you need water you just take from the house.*

KI3: *Clean water, we had given people begs, it's 8 little whereby when a track come they put there it was plastic can but it carries 8 little so it helps the family so that they can have water.*

KI4: *When there is no clean water is where we give them water ... or we give them the tank and then.*

KI5: *If there is a drought they suppose to arrange a borehole or build a stand pipe where they stay ... especially at Mountain View during summer water is scarce we give them plastics that contains eight little.*

The findings indicate that the community's access to clean water from the pipe even in the city is not guaranteed. Islamic Relief South Africa support in providing clean water to

the community corroborate the research findings of a study by Isaacs (2019:1) that 30% of South African children do not have access to piped water on-site.

- **Education on how to stop pollution**

Child participants indicated that they are taught how to end pollution. This includes understanding the consequences of polluting, not littering and picking up litter that is lying around in their community. They are made aware that pollution can destroy biodiversity. Child participants expressed their experiences on being educated on ending pollution as follows:

CP2: *They might say you must stop polluting because you might like kill the fish and all the animals in there.*

CP3: *Yes, it does, it asks, pick up all the papers that you see lying around because that is also what causes pollution and anything that is filthy just throw around you.*

Findings to protect the environment from pollution correlate with the study findings of Nothando (2018:12) which states that an effective teaching approach is crucial for improving the understanding in order to develop a positive attitude towards the environment. The findings further confirm Almqvist et al.'s (2007:9) statement that children who are motivated and interested to interact with their natural environment seem to perceive themselves better able to control what is happening to them.

- **Cleaning campaigns**

Key informant participants indicated that the programme includes cleaning campaigns as a way to promote children's access and right to a safe and clean environment. The programme joins efforts with other stakeholders with the aim of raising awareness about

health problems which is also linked to a lack of clean water as discussed in 2.2.1. Participants' views are reflected in the following statements:

KI3: *We do cleaning campaign together with Osizweni.*

KI5: *Hygiene and environmental workers they do cleaning campaign to raise awareness about different illnesses that are caused by a lack of clean water.*

The findings on cleaning campaigns show that children are made aware through the campaign of the negative impacts of the environment. Nothando (2018:11) states that it is important that societies are made aware of environmental issues in order to sensitise them to aspects that may affect them directly. The findings highlight the importance of partnerships between stakeholders in order to find a holistic solution to environmental injustices. Vasanti (2011:90) argues that decentralising services and establishing new partnerships will ensure a holistic approach to service delivery.

In summary, children have the right to access social services and programmes on education and health care and protection against environmental risks such as pollution, poor sanitation, lack of access to clean water and violent environments to ensure that they are not left behind (UNICEF, 2018). Research indicates that no social phenomenon is as comprehensive in its assault on human's rights as poverty as it erodes and nullifies social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education (UNESCO, 2010:13).

Theme 3: Children's participation in the programme

Key informants and child participants expressed their views regarding child participation in the programme. Key informants indicated that children are called to participate in the implementation of the programme on particular activities such as national book day where they compete, read and answer questions. Key participants' views regarding children's participation in the programme are captured in the following narratives:

K12: *...we involve children if we have like their programme let say discussion or maybe we have national book day we involve children in their activities that when we involve them.*

K15: *...when we have a book day we call them on a book day then we make a competition. They answer the questions and then we make them read.*

Child participants have not mentioned the book day but referred to the role they play in the implementation of the programme through fundraising activities and sport events. They said that they help to set up, go to the playground and play during the sport event as reflected in the following quotes:

CP3: *I would go to Islamic Relief, we used to go for fundraising and for function and staff and then like what we used to do we used to help them set up or they would come fetch us to show us more about how Islamic is working and what, what...*

CP2: *Sometimes they take us to a playground where we go and play.*

Not all key informants agreed on the involvement of children in the planning phase of the programme. One key informant said that they involve children in planning which contradicts another key informant's view that they do not plan along with children.

K13: *...the children were part of the planning because we (key informants) were planning with them and then we wrote all the documents and stuff like that ne...yeah we plan with them, we do everything with them.*

K14: *No, we do not plan together with children we plan together with Makolis [A NGO that works in partnership with IRSA]...*

The contradicting views of key informants on children's involvement in planning show the lack of understanding what child involvement in programmes means. The responses of children on participation, equally shows a lack of clarity on what participation in planning implies on matters that affect their lives. Hart (1992:6) notes that providing the opportunity for children to participate in programmes which directly affect their lives is important, especially for disadvantaged children who learn through participation with others how to take up the struggle against discrimination and oppression and to fight for their equal rights in solidarity with others which in itself is a fundamental right.

The findings of the programme are aligned with the findings of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (2011:34) stating that the voice of vulnerable groups, which includes children, is often silenced or underrepresented in the formulation and implementation of interventions that affect their lives. The findings did not provide evidence that children's participation is recognising in relation to their agency. Furthermore, findings on children are right to participate in matters that concern their agency is recognised by engaging them in all the phases of programmes.

Theme 4: Factors influencing child recognition and respect

Factors that influence child recognition and respect range on a continuum of showing recognition and respect to indicating non-recognition and disrespect. These factors are next discussed as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 4.1: Factors that show recognition and respect for child agency

Findings indicated factors that contribute to recognition and respect children include considering their views and decisions, and having the opportunity to express themselves and give their opinions. These two sub-themes will next be discussed.

- **Consideration of children's views and decisions**

Key informants generally agreed that they consider children's views, suggestions and decisions.

KI1: *We [key informants] do take their views or their suggestion into consideration...*

KI4: *We [key informants] do respect and consider their like decisions.*

KI5: *We [key informants] supposed to respect any view from them as the concept says a child must be respected.*

Child's participants CP2 confirmed that key informants consider their views and decisions:

CP2: *We can tell them what is happening and then they would respect our decisions.*

The findings that children's views and decisions are considered resonate with the Children's Act 38 of 2005 which stipulates that "Every child that is of such age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter ... has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration." Furthermore, findings show that while children give their views on programme matters, it is not always taken into consideration when decisions are made. These findings concur with the view of Heimer et al. (2018:317), arguing that children's voices are not heard. Many social services interventions/programmes that target children focus on partnerships with parents as opposed to recognising the child's contributions to programmes (Heimer et al., 2018:317).

- **Children have the opportunity to express themselves and give their opinions**

ey informants confirmed that child participants have the opportunity to express themselves and give inputs into the programme as reflected in the following quotes:

KI1: *We [key informants] usually give them the chance to express themselves.*

KI4: *They have right to give their ideas and we do listen to their ideas...*

Child participant CP3 expressed the opportunity for children to give their views rather as a strong articulated expectation.

CP3: *They [key informants] make you give your own opinion...*

Although the findings show that children express their views and give their inputs, it signal what Fleming (2012:3) alludes to that adults interact with children in a way that they do not give them voice but instead consult with them in a controlling manner to ensure that their professional identities are not threatened.

Sub-theme 4.2: Factors that show non-recognition and disrespect for child agency

Findings in this sub-theme show that children can give their views but are excluded from decision-making, as the following discussion points out.

- **Exclusion from decision-making**

The findings of key informant participant KI3 contrasts the findings of other key informant participants who were of the view that children's decisions are taken into consideration in the programme (see sub-theme 4.1).

KI3: *Yeah they have right to participate because they come here on their own, they decide to come on their own, but on making decisions*

regarding the programme they [children] can give their views but I don't see children making decisions.

As indicated in sub-theme 4.1, child participants give their views and their views are respected and considered by some key informants. However, the findings revealed that not all key informant participants appraise children's ability to make decisions. In their classification of the level of children's participation when they interact with adults, Nilsson et al. (2015:2) include in the sixth step that children fully participate in decision-making and have meaningful contributions to make.

3.12. SUMMARY

Chapter three focused on the research methodology. It has provided an overview of the research methodology utilised in the study and presented the ethical principles that guided the study. The research findings were presented in four themes and sub-themes. The themes included conceptualisation of a child, services that promote environmental justice and sustainable communities, children's participation in the programme, and factors influencing child recognition and respect.

The key findings of the study will be presented in Chapter 4, followed by the conclusions and recommendations made from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR:

KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the study. The chapter will focus on the extent to which the goal and objectives of the study were achieved. In addition, the key findings are presented, followed by the conclusions drawn from the study. Finally, the researcher will provide recommendations based on the findings and conclusions.

4.2. GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was to explore and describe how children's agency is recognised and respected in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risks in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship.

The goal of the study was attained by achieving the following objectives:

Objective 1

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

This objective was achieved in a discussion in Chapter Two (see sub-section 2.3). Poverty was identified and summarised as social and physical exclusion, a sense of powerlessness, exclusion from decision-making and lack of access to education, health care and clean and safe environments (Green, 2012:6). Environmental risk was identified and summarised as an environmental justice issue which means, "the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment" (Hawkins, 2010:68).

Furthermore, poverty was referred to, as a social phenomenon that “can comprehensively violate human’s rights, erodes and nullifies social rights such as the right to health, adequate housing, food and safe water, and the right to education” (UNESCO, 2010:13). In Chapter Three, the child concept was explored from the research participants’ perspective (see theme1). Key informants see children as vulnerable and in need of protection. Although children’s views are respected, there was not general agreement among key informants that children should participate in programme decisions that affect them.

Objective 2

- To explore and describe the goal and intended outcomes of the programme to reduce children’s poverty and environment risk.

This objective was achieved in Chapter Two (see section 2.7) where the IRSA’s Orphan Sponsorship Programme has been discussed. The goal of the programme is to enhance the overall quality of life and wellbeing of the OVC and their families and to protect and fulfil children’s’ rights, especially by providing the opportunities to children to access education and shelter as it allows them to cope with the shocks of everyday life. The objective was also explored in Chapter Three (see theme 2). The empirical findings indicated that the programme included services that alleviate poverty and promote environmental justice. Services that alleviate poverty included assisting children with school fees, transport money, food and clothes. Services that reduce environmental risks included assisting children with access to clean water, education to stop pollution and cleaning campaigns. These services, in turn, promote children’s right to education, health care, balanced nutrition, and to live in a clean and safe environment.

Objective 3

- To explore and describe how children are involved in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

This objective was discussed in Chapter Three (see theme 3) and only partially achieved. The empirical findings pointed out that child participants participate in two phases (planning and Implementation), though not all key informants agreed on child's participants' involvement in planning.

Objective 4

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

This objective was addressed in Chapter Two (see section 2.5.1), quoting from the Children's Act, 38 of 2005 that, "Every child that is of such age, maturity and stage of development as to be able to participate in any matter ... has the right to participate in an appropriate way and views expressed by the child must be given due consideration". The objective was also discussed in Chapter Three (see theme 4). Empirical findings indicated that key informants respect and consider child participants' views and that they have the opportunity to express themselves. Furthermore, non-recognition and disrespect are shown to children if they are excluded from decision-making.

Objective 5

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

This objective was achieved in this chapter by means of the recommendations made in section 4.4.

4.3. KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the key findings of the study and the respective conclusions on the findings.

- Findings of the study indicated that children are perceived as vulnerable persons who need to be protected from harm. Furthermore, the child's age determines her/his mental capability to make decisions. Findings indicated that children's knowledge of the programme are doubted by some key informants and as a result, they are not always allowed to participate in decisions that affect them, even if they are perceived to have ideas that can contribute to the programme.
- It can be concluded that the level of child participation in a programme is interlinked with how an adult (key informant) defines the child concept. The more the child concept is related to vulnerability, the lesser the child's agency will be supported. Child participation will therefore be determined on different levels, ranging from allowing children to contribute their views, hearing their opinions to influence programme changes, to allowing them to make decisions on matters of the programme that affect them. This approach shows the link between the rights of a child to protection versus a right to participate.
- Findings indicated that the programme includes services that alleviate poverty, and promote environmental justice. Children are assisted with school fees, transport money, food, clothes and clean water. The programme also educates children on how to stop pollution and conduct cleaning campaigns to raise awareness of environmental risks.
- - The conclusion is that the programme includes services that promote children's rights and access to education, health care, balanced nutrition and to live in a safe and clean environment. It can be further concluded that the programme help child's participants and the community to be aware of environmental risks.

- Findings indicated that children do not participate in all the phases of the programme. Key informants lack understanding what participation in the programme means and child participants are equally uncertain on what participation implies in relation to matters that affect their lives. Children are mostly involved in the implementation phase of the programme through particular activities such as national book day, through fundraising activities and sport events. Although there is some indication of engaging children in planning of activities by hearing their ideas, they are not recognised in decisions about the activities that they may want to engage in.
 - It can be concluded that children's participation is limited to engaging and benefiting from services and activities that protect them against poverty and environmental risks. The programme allows children to contribute their views and organise events which show recognition and respect, but their agency is not fully realised in all the phases of the programme by excluding them from decisions on matters that concern them.

- Findings indicated that child participants get an opportunity to express themselves and give their opinions and that these views are considered and respected. However, children are generally not included in decision making which is linked with care givers' (key informants) perception of the child concept which is mostly associated with their age.
 - It can be concluded that children's agency is recognised and respected, though at a limited level and mostly in the planning and implementation phases of the programme. Furthermore, the caregivers' perspective of a child determines the level of participation of the child; it influences how they listen and hear the children's views, and how they act upon these views by integrating it in decisions related to services and activities that concern the children.

4.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study indicate that the programme promotes child participants' right to education, health care, nutrition and to live in a safe environment. They get the opportunity to express their views which are respected and considered, albeit not in all phases of the programme. The researcher recommends the following guidelines on how children's agency can be recognised and respected in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the IRSA's Orphan Sponsorship Programme.

4.4.1. Change mind set of child concept

In order to fully recognise child's agency, it is imperative that caregivers at the Islamic Relief South Africa change their mind set. They should recognise that children have agency, irrespective of age, the capacity to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence their life today and in the future (Gowrie SA, 2015). Children must be engaged as partners with the ability to contribute meaningfully to mitigate their poverty and environmental risks.

4.4.2. Find a balance between children's right to protection and their right to participate

The programme promotes children's right to access social services and protect them from environmental risk. Although upholding children's right to protection is crucial for Islamic Relief South Africa to live up to the goal of the programme, they should focus on children's right to participate in all phases of the programme.

The programme coordinator at IRSA should make certain that key informants consult with children from conception throughout the implementation and evaluation of the programme.

4.4.3. Continuous training on child participation

Children's participation goes beyond allowing children the opportunity to present their views and respecting and recognising those views. Key informants (care givers) must know what child participation means in relation to child agency in order to understand how to involve children in all the phases of the programme. It is therefore recommended that the head of department at IRSA organises and provides continuous training on child participation to key informants

4.4.4. Create an enabling environment to facilitate inclusion of children's views in decisions-making

Child participants have ideas, but they cannot make any impact if their ideas are excluded from decision-making. It is crucial that Islamic Relief South Africa through its body facilitate the inclusion of child participants' views in decisions on mitigating poverty and environmental risks.

4.4.5. Further research

An explorative study on effective child consultation strategies to engage children in the conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases of the IRSA Orphan Sponsorship programme.

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SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Child participants

Goal of the study: The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children’s agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in Islamic Relief South Africa’s Orphan Sponsorship Programme [To determine how children are engaged and participating in programmes that are intended for them to reduce poverty and dangers in the environment.]

Participant number: CP

Biographical information

Male: Female:

How old are you?

Are you in school? Yes No

If yes, what grade are you in?

If no, what are you currently doing?

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

Questions:

1. Can you tell me what the programme/intervention is all about and what it means to you?
2. How did you get involved in the programme/intervention?

- Could you decide for yourself whether you wanted to join and do you have a choice to stay in the programme or not?
3. How does the programme/intervention help you to deal with problems in your life? [If vague, prompt what kind of problems they have in relation to poverty and environment risks such as pollution; no access to clean water, poor sanitation and violence).
 4. Does this programme/intervention help you
 - To do better in your school work
 - Taking better care of your health
 - Learn about access to clean water, and
 - How to have a safe and clean environment?
 5. Tell me about your participation in the programme/intervention. If you participate, do you participate because you want to and are allowed to do so, or because you are told to do so?
 6. Do you think you have the right to give your views and make decisions on the programme/intervention? Why do you say so?
 7. What is your experience of how adults in the programme/intervention see a child?
 - A child is a person who is helpless and must be protected. Adults know best what a child needs and should take decisions for her/him.
 - A child is a person who has ideas on how to approach and resolve society's problems such as poverty and unsafe and unhealthy environments. A child needs an opportunity to choose and decide what she/he wants and what is best for her-/himself now and in the future. A child wants to be recognised and

respected as a person who can speak for her-/himself and make decisions about things that involve them. [We call this agency.]

- A child is a person who needs protection but who also have opinions that adults should listen to and respect. [Agency]
8. Do you have ideas on the programme/intervention that you will be willing to share if you had the opportunity to do so? These ideas can be about the planning and content of the activities of the programme/intervention; how it is presented to you – do you e.g. sit and listen or actively participate; how it benefit you or can benefit you, and what can be changed to meet your needs.
9. Have you been asked to give your ideas on the programme/intervention and if so, in what way did you feel they were listened to and taken seriously by adults?
10. Do you have any example(s) where you had the opportunity to share your ideas on any aspect of the programme/intervention and your contribution was heard and considered / or not heard and considered?
- How does that make you feel if adults listen to your ideas and take them seriously?
 - How does that make you feel if adults do not listen to your ideas or take them seriously?
11. What are the factors (things) that make it possible or difficult for you to participate in the programme/intervention in a way that you feel you, and your contributions are important and appreciated?
12. What ideas do you have to engage children more in the planning and decisions on the programme/interventions that it can contribute to a better life for you - with less poverty and a safer and cleaner environment?

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

Thank you for participating in the study.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Key informants

Goal of the study: The goal of the study is to explore and describe how children’s agency is recognised and respected in programmes/interventions aimed at reducing poverty and environmental risk in Islamic Relief South Africa’s Orphan Sponsorship Programme.

Participant number: KI

Biographical information

Male: Female:

How long have you been with the organisation? years

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

In what age category do you fall?

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

Planning / conceptualisation	Design of content	Implementation	Monitoring	Evaluation
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Questions:

1. What is the goal and the intended outcomes of the programme/intervention for the children?
2. What choices do the children have with regard to joining and staying in the programme/intervention?
3. To what extent does the programme/intervention help children to ease the burden of poverty and possible environmental risks (such as pollution; no access to clean water, poor sanitation and violence).
4. In what way does the programme/intervention promote the children's access and rights to
 - Education
 - Healthcare
 - Clean water,
 - Sanitation, and
 - A safe and clean environment?
5. How would you describe the children's participation in the programme/intervention? Do they participate out of their own initiative or only if they are requested, or told to participate?
6. Do you think children have a right to participate and make decisions on the programme/intervention that affect them?
7. If so, are the children aware of their right to participate and influence decisions on the programme/intervention and why do you say so?
8. How do you see and approach the 'child' concept?
 - As a person who is vulnerable and who should be protected.
 - As a person who has the ability to make meaningful choices and decisions about events that influence her or his life today and in the future [agency].
 - As a person who needs protection and who have agency.
9. To what extent would you say the children in your programme/intervention have agency if you look at their participation and involvement in decisions that affect them? The involvement refers to any one or more phases of the programme/intervention that

is, planning/ conceptualisation of (new) ideas, the design of the content of the programme, the format and implementation of the programme/intervention, and the monitoring and evaluation of the programme/intervention.

10. Are children asked to give their views on the programme/intervention and if, in what way are these views considered and respected, or not?
11. Could you share any example where children have made inputs to the programme/intervention which were considered and respected, or not, in any of the phases of the programme/intervention [planning/ conceptualisation, the design, the implementation, the monitoring and evaluation].
12. What factors make it possible or difficult to recognise and respect children's contributions and decisions (agency) in relation to the planning/ conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of a programme/intervention intended to reduce their poverty and environmental risks?
13. What in your view must change to recognise and respect children's contributions, decisions (agency) and participation in the respective phases [planning/ conceptualisation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation] of the programme/intervention to reduce poverty and environmental risks?
14. Do you have any further comments that you would like to share on the topic that may benefit my study.

Thank you for participating in the study.



Prof A Lombard
Tel: (012) 420-2325
E-mail: antoinette.lombard@up.ac.za

11 June 2019

Dear Madam

Conduct a research study in our organisation

We hereby confirm that Mr Hassan Bukuru is authorised to conduct a research study in our organisation.

Mr Hassan Bukuru has 2 months within which to complete his research study i.e. July and August 2019.

He will have to do our mandatory screening and also complete our Child Protection training prior to conducting any interviews with the children.

Once the Child Protection training is concluded Mr Hassan Bukuru has permission to approach children and key informants to participate in the research study. Because participation is voluntary, the children and key informants can decide whether they want to participate in the study or not. If they do, they will complete an informed consent or assent (children) form which will inform them exactly what the research is about.

We will assist in arranging access to the participants. This includes obtaining permission from the parents/guardians to engage their children in the study.

We look forward to receiving feedback once the research is completed.

Yours in the service of Humanity

Yusuf Mohamed
Chief Executive Officer



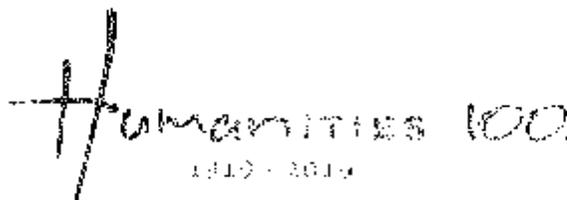
Islamic Relief
South Africa

Cape Town: 396, main Haron Road, Lansdowne
Johannesburg: 157 Barry Hertzog Ave, Emmarentia, Ext 1
Durban: 3rd Floor, Legend House, 534 Peter Mokaba Ridge, Overport

Tel: 021 696 0125 / Fax: 021 696 1763
Tel: 011 485 0152
Tel: 031 209 2638 / Fax: 031 207 9141



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA



Research Ethics Committee

15 July 2019

Dear Mr H Bukuru

Project: Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Orphan Sponsorship Programme, Islamic Relief Organisation
Researcher: H Bukuru
Supervisor: Prof A Lombard
Department: Social Work and Criminology
Reference Number: 18197592 (HUM020/0619)
Degree: Masters

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

The application was *conditionally* approved by the Research Ethics Committee due to the following:

- Clearly discuss and distinguish between the two groups of participants with regard to processes that will be used for the selection of participants as well as for conducting interviews. As there are two groups of participants, Section 11 of the ethics application form must be revised to reflect the two groups separately. (To facilitate the administrative process and make changes to the application, Log onto your UP Forks, access the ethics application platform and download your application. If will download in Word format. Using track-change mode, make the necessary changes to the ethics application, then upload the revised form together with the required supporting documents (also e-mail the information to PGHuman10s@up.ac.za).
- It is recommended that the declaration of consent be on a separate page to enable the participants to retain the information sheet.
- Considering that the participants will be 10 years old, please clarify why a high literacy level is required.
- Please clarify whether the consent for assistants refers to the key informants.

Faculty of Humanities
 Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
 Telapho la Morija

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KI Harris; Mr A Gibbs; Dr L Blackland; Dr K Broeyer; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A Cos Sanius; Dr R Hesaell; Ms ICT Govindar Arindray; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Pellegrini; Dr D Rayburn; Dr M Soer; Prof E Telford; Prof V Thebus; Ms H - see; Ms D Motalape

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance Approval

Appendix D: Letter of informed consent for research assistant for child participants



20/12/2020

Researcher: Hassan Bukuru
E-Mail: a3shadyasa@yahoo.com
Tel: 0799598214

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER **Research assistant for child participants**

Introduction

My name is Hassan Bukuru. I am a master's student in social work at the University of Pretoria. As required by the Islamic Relief Organisation, I have to engage a community worker when I interview the children. I approach you in this capacity to be a research assistant. If you are willing to assist, you will need to give your informed consent and to subscribe to a code of ethics that respects participants' rights as outlined in this form. Please take time to read through this letter as it gives information on how the study will be conducted and the rights of the study's participants.

Title of the study

Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

Goal of the study

To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

Procedures

I will conduct one-on-one interviews in English with children in the Orphan Sponsorship Programme, Islamic Relief Organisation at Fordsburg. You can assist me in explaining to the child the procedure if he/she may have any uncertainty about my role as researcher. It is anticipated that each interview will take about 45-60 minute to complete. The interviews will be voice recorded so as to ensure that the researcher does not miss any important information.

Risks and discomforts

There will be no risks or danger to the child to participate in the study. The child will know that he/she will have the freedom to not answer any question if they do not wish to respond too. The researcher will be available after the interview to talk to the child on his/her experience of the interview. You can assist the researcher to debrief the child and

if needed refer the child to the social worker to discuss any discomfort that may have developed during the interview.

Benefits

You will receive no benefits as community worker for joining the child in the interview. There are no monetary or other rewards for child participants in this study.

Participants' rights

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any point, if they so wish, without any negative consequences for themselves and their households. The child's parent or guardian will give informed consent for his/her participation. In addition, the child will give assent if he/she agrees to participate in the study.

Confidentiality

Please note that all information that is gathered in the study must be treated as confidential. Participants' names and other personal information may not be given to anyone and will not appear in the publication of the research findings. I will use the information that participants share in writing a report on the study for the University of Pretoria and for academic journals. After I have completed the study, I will submit all information to the University of Pretoria where it will be safely kept for 15 years, after which it will be destroyed.

Right of access to the researcher

If you have any questions or would want me to explain anything further, you are welcome to phone or text me on 0799598214. You can also send me an email on the following address: a3shadyasa@yahoo.com

Consent declaration

I _____ hereby acknowledge that I have read and understood the contents of this letter and agree to render my services as a research assistant in a manner that respects participants' rights.

Signature research assistant

Date

Signature researcher

Date

Appendix E: Letter of informed consent for key informants

20/12/2020

Researcher: Hassan Bukuru
Tel: 0799598214
E-mail: a3shadyasa@yahoo.com

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY: KEY INFORMANTS

Dear Participant,

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

Title of the study: Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

Goal of the study: To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in the Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

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

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

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

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

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

Person to contact: If participants have questions or concerns relating to the study, they may contact the researcher at: 0799598214 or email him at a3shadyasa@yahoo.com

Declaration

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

Signature parent/guardian

Date

Signature researcher

Date

Appendix F: Letter of informed consent for parents and guardians

20/12/2020

Researcher: Hassan Bukuru
Tel: 0799598214
E-mail: a3shadyasa@yahoo.com

INFORMED CONSENT FORM Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent/Guardian,

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

Title of the study

Children's agency in reducing poverty and environmental risk: Case study of Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

Goal of the study

To explore and describe how children's agency influence reducing poverty and environmental risk in the of Islamic Relief South Africa's Orphan Sponsorship Programme

What will happen in the study?

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

Risks and discomforts

There will be no risks or danger to your child to participate in the study. Your child will know that he/she will have the freedom to not answer any question if they do not wish to respond too. I will

be available after the interview to talk to the child on his/her experience of the interview. If needed, I will refer the child to speak to a social worker at Ennerdale civic centre (0113559200).

Are there any benefits for joining the study?

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

Participants’ rights

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

Confidentiality

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

Inquiries

If you have any questions or want to discuss any aspect of the research with me, you are welcome to call me on 0799598214 or send me an e-mail at: a3shadyasa@yahoo.com

CONSENT DECLARATION BY PARENT/GUARDIAN

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

Signature parent/guardian

Date

Signature researcher

Date

Appendix G: Letter of assent for child participants

ASSENT FORM: CHILDREN

Dear Participant

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

What is a research study?



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

If you join the study what will then happen?

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

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

Is there anything to be afraid of?



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

Are there any benefits in joining the study?



You will receive no money or gifts if you participate in the study. If you agree to participate in the study, you will help me to understand how children participate in programmes that affect them.

