

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF ORPHANS IN THE MBERENGWA DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE

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Since the turn of the millennium Zimbabwe has witnessed a raft of socio-economic and political challenges, exacerbated by the devastating effects of the HIV and Aids pandemic. This diminished the government's ability to provide safety nets to vulnerable groups. The responsibility for orphan care has been shifted to the community, which has become the core focus of intervention initiatives by devising local-level coping mechanisms to deal with the orphan care crisis. The study explored the contribution of social entrepreneurship in meeting the needs of orphans in the Mberengwa district. The study concludes that the income-generating projects based on social entrepreneurship principles in Mberengwa play an important role in poverty alleviation and social protection, and particularly in meeting the needs of orphans. However, this cannot be achieved without the supportive role of government in promoting private-public partnerships.

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## **THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF ORPHANS IN THE MBERENGWA DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Children, particularly orphans, have been hardest hit by the acute socio-economic and political problems in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium (UNICEF, 2011). The unfavourable socio-political and economic climate characterised by hyperinflation, the lack of economic growth, the high and rising levels of unemployment, food shortages and increasing levels of poverty have impacted adversely on the ability of orphans to access their needs (National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe, 2012). They have also diminished the government's ability to provide safety nets to vulnerable groups, including children orphaned mainly by HIV and Aids. Consequently, communities have become the core focus of intervention initiatives through devising local-level coping mechanisms to deal with the subsequent orphan care crisis (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2005).

The paper will discuss the contribution of social entrepreneurship through income-generating projects to meet the needs of orphans in the Mberengwa district. These needs stem from: severe financial hardships, malnutrition, neglect, ill-treatment, abuse, child labour, dropping out of school, lack of food, clothing and blankets, inability to obtain birth certificates, and the stigma and discrimination associated with being an orphan (Matshalaga, 2004). The paper begins with an overview of the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political context with a focus on how this impacts on social protection in the country. This is followed by a discussion on the theoretical framework of the study and of income-generating projects and social entrepreneurship. The next section is an overview of the research methods adopted for the study and the presentation of the research findings. Finally, the findings are discussed and conclusions are drawn.

### **THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT IN ZIMBABWE**

The political and socio-economic context in Zimbabwe has a profound bearing on the citizens' access to social services, goods and economic opportunities (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010). The prevailing socio-economic environment in Zimbabwe is the result of a combination of factors, including activities linked to land reform, sanctions and structural adjustment programmes (Africa Economic Development Institute, 2009).

In 2000 the government introduced the fast-track land reform programme aimed at correcting the discriminatory colonial era land imbalances (Moyo, 2011). Britain and the United States led other countries in the Global North to impose sanctions on the country (Moyo, 2011). International financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank also withheld financial support and froze lines of credit to the country (Moyo, 2011). This resulted in a crippling economic crisis comprised of a balance of payments deficit, shortage of fuel and basic commodities, and the rise of the black market, low

agricultural and industrial production, galloping inflation, high levels of unemployment, increased emigration and a non-functional social welfare system (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010).

Faced by the orphan care crisis, the Zimbabwean government promulgated the six-tier orphan care policy in 1999 (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2005). The Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy regards the responsibility to care for orphans as part of a partnership between the state, the nuclear family, the extended family, the community; and foster care and institutional care (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008).

As a result of the socio-economic situation and the HIV and Aids epidemic, all children in Zimbabwe became potentially vulnerable (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008). As a result of the economic downturn the state lacks resources to provide care and social security to orphaned children (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010). Because of lack of resources foster care programmes are inadequately funded and child-care institutions are nearly non-functional (National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe, 2012). The political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe has seriously eroded the country's social assistance system, resulting in public assistance benefits being further eroded by inflation to levels where they can be described as non-existent (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010). In 2008 the transport costs incurred by beneficiaries to access their benefits were greater than the value of the benefits themselves, which consequently resulted in beneficiaries stopping to claim their benefits, and hence to the unofficial suspension of the public assistance programme (Triegaardt & Kaseke, 2010). This bears testimony to the government's inability to provide social assistance to vulnerable groups of society, including orphans. At the same time the high cost of living, high levels of unemployment and shortage of food and other basic commodities in Zimbabwe have diminished the economic means of families to provide care to orphaned children (both nuclear and extended families). As contended by Matshalaga (2004:4), "Before the advent of AIDS, orphans were usually absorbed within the extended family network. The extended family as the traditional social security system in many African countries has been weakened because parents, aunts and uncles are dying of the disease."

With the resurgence and recovery of the Zimbabwean economy since 2009, the government, in association with NGOs, has embarked on social protection programmes aimed at providing relief from deprivation and averting social exclusion, improving livelihoods and promoting social equity amongst the poorest and most vulnerable members of society (Moyo, 2011). These programmes are coordinated on local level through the Child Protection Committees at district, provincial and national levels (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008).

Communities, especially in rural areas like Mberengwa, have taken the initiative and responsibility for meeting the needs of orphans in their areas. However, this becomes a challenge, especially considering that individual and community structures have been weakened as a result of the severe strain on the extended family, not only because of HIV and Aids, but also as a result of migration, demographic changes and a trend

towards sustaining the nuclear family (Matshalaga, 2004:5). The responsibility for orphan care has therefore been tacitly shifted towards the community.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The conceptual framework for the study was social development and in particular the strengths-based perspective. In the context of this paper, “the social development process forms a part of a larger multifaceted process comprised of economic, social, political, cultural, environmental, gender and other dimensions which are integrated and harmonised” (Midgley, 2014:15). Social development emphasises the importance of social investment in enhancing people’s wellbeing and investment-oriented practice strategies such as “human capital programmes, social capital and community-based programmes, asset accumulation interventions and social protection”, which “link economic and social programmes and promote inclusivity and participation” (Midgley, 2014:12). Social development is embedded in the strength-based perspective, which encompasses fundamental characteristics such as empowerment, human rights, participation, self-reliance and sustainability as well as harmonising social and economic development (Patel, 2005).

The strengths-based perspective enables communities to recognise their inner resources, skills and capacity for growth (Midgley, 2010; Payne, 2005). Saleebey (2006:12, 197) points out the link between problem analysis as a significant component of the strengths perspective and how it “relates to the communities’ decision to address the problems affecting them by utilising locally available resources”. The study explored the realisation of the inherent strengths of communities in Mberengwa to find their own solutions to the problems and challenges as embedded in the strengths perspective (Saleebey, 2006). The Department for International Development (DFID) (2010) reports that the indigenous people in Zimbabwe have developed local coping mechanisms aimed at attaining, retaining and sustaining their livelihoods in the absence of state support through the utilisation of different natural, social, human, physical and financial capital (Department for International Development, 2010).

## **INCOME GENERATION AND SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The common denominator in the definitions of social entrepreneurship is the creation of social value rather than shareholder wealth (Abu-Saifan, 2012, Karanda & Toledano, 2012; Mair & Marti, 2005). Austin Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006:39) distinguish between social and commercial entrepreneurship: “The fundamental purpose of social entrepreneurship is creating social value for the public good, whereas commercial entrepreneurship aims at creating profitable operations resulting in private gain.” In essence, social entrepreneurship refers to the creation and distribution of social wealth, and social entrepreneurs are not motivated by economic gain. In social entrepreneurship initiatives the ventures utilise all the market-related approaches to generate profit, but the main objective is creation of social wealth, hence the not-for-profit perspective should be evident in the income-generating projects.

In the context of the income-generating projects in Mberengwa district, social entrepreneurship was seen to involve the merging of social interests with business practices to effect social change by combining social and economic value for wider value-cooperation possibilities (Karanda & Toledano, 2012), that is, providing for the needs of orphans. In order to explore the entrepreneurial nature of the income-generating projects in Mberengwa, the study adopted a model of entrepreneurship designed by Sahlman (1996).

This model succinctly incorporates the key elements of social entrepreneurship by creating a linkage between the interrelated components of the people (P), the context (C), the deal (D) and the opportunity (O), which Sahlman (1996) called the PCDO model. The model proffers that these components are interdependent and situationally determined; therefore the entrepreneur needs to manage the fit and adapt to new circumstances.

The *people* refers to those who actively participate in, or who bring resources into, the venture (Sahlman, 1996), including skills, knowledge, attitudes, contacts, goals and values. This resource mix contributes centrally to success (Austin *et al.*, 2006). In this study the people refers to the villagers who are involved in the day-to-day running of the projects.

The *context* refers to those elements outside the control of the entrepreneur that influence the success or failure of the social venture such as the socio-economic and political environment, technology, social movements such as migration and the availability of labour, environmental regulations and natural disasters (Sahlman, 1996). The study's context included the socio-economic and political environment in Zimbabwe, natural disasters and the availability of resources and capital needed for the projects.

The *deal* refers to "the substance of the bargain that defines who in a venture gives what, who gets what, and when those deliveries and receipts will take place" (Sahlman, 1996:151). In this study the deal included the extent to which the orphans' needs were met, the tangible benefits given to the orphans, the distribution of these benefits, social cohesion and the development of stronger social ties.

The *opportunity* refers to "any activity which requires the investment of scarce resources in hope of a future return" (Sahlman, 1996:140). In this study the opportunity refers to the income-generating projects themselves, which include honey harvesting, nutrition gardens, peanut butter production and brick production. The link between the PCDO model and social entrepreneurship is embedded in the features of social entrepreneurship, which include social value and social transformation, not-for-profit motives, alleviation of social problems and playing the role of change agent (Mair & Marti, 2005).

As change agents, social entrepreneurs deal with particular social issues using different approaches, strategies and ideologies (Seelos & Mair, 2005). Within the African context Kartzeinstein and Chrispin (2010:101) state: "Entrepreneurship that develops economic and social benefits within the grassroots of African society may allow Africans to

rebuild their society in bite-size pieces and avoid the problems that a sea of money dumped into a society frequently causes.” An insight into the most prominent social entrepreneurship initiatives such as the Grameen Bank, Sekem and the Institute for One World Health reveals the common feature of alleviating social problems and improving the lives of disadvantaged groups of people (Seelos & Mair, 2005). Against this background, the study explored how communities in Mberengwa contribute to social entrepreneurship by taking care of orphans through income-generating projects.

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept in Zimbabwe. Despite the existence of the income-generating projects that benefit orphans in the communities, no studies have been conducted to explore their possible impact on social and economic development at the community level. The study therefore explored the broader interplay of entrepreneurial activities embedded in community initiatives such as income-generating projects to determine the link between social entrepreneurship and meeting the needs of orphans.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study (Katungu, 2013) used a qualitative research approach in exploring “what” and “how” questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95) on the contribution of social entrepreneurship in meeting the needs of orphans in the Mberengwa district in Zimbabwe. The type of study was applied research (Neuman, 2000) and the research design was a collective case study (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). The sample included two villages in the Mataga area in Mberengwa district which had income-generating projects that assist orphaned children, namely Mataga Ward 17 and Ruzivo.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling and included four key informants (representing the District Social Welfare Officer, the Chief Executive Officer of the District Council, the District Child Welfare Coordinator, and a teacher from a school where the majority of beneficiaries learn), 10 villagers (community members) and six orphaned children. Data were collected from the children and key informants through one-on-one interviews, while focus group discussions were used to collect data from villagers.

Semi-structured interview schedules were used in both the data-gathering methods. The data were analysed in line with Creswell’s (2009) qualitative data thematic analysis model. The trustworthiness of the data was promoted by ensuring the findings met the basic tenets of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). In as far as credibility is concerned, the researcher managed the risk of research reactivity and bias by interviewing the participants in their natural environment (Padgett, 2008). In addition, the researcher developed self-awareness by keeping notes on the research process (Leitz & Zayas, 2010). In terms of transferability, the researcher identified key findings that could be applicable to similar rural settings in Zimbabwe (Leitz & Zayas, 2010). To enhance dependability, the researcher described and documented the research processes in detail, thus enabling a future researcher under the same circumstances to repeat the study and to arrive at similar results (Shenton, 2004). The researcher ensured confirmability by recording and transcribing the interviews, and

documenting the participants' direct responses (Shenton, 2004). The study obtained ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria.

### **Findings of the study**

The first section of the findings outlines the biographical details of the participants in the study. This is followed by a discussion of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the integrated research data.

### **Biographic profile**

The research sites under study in Mberengwa were the nutrition garden project in Mataga and the honey-harvesting project in Ruzivo.

Of the villagers, six participants were female, while four were male. In both the key informant and children categories, the gender was equally represented. The age of child participants ranged from 15 years to 18 years old. The age of the ten community members, ranged from 21 to 45, and the age of the four key informants ranged from 30 to 60 years.

### **THEMES AND SUB-THEMES**

Similar themes and sub-themes emerged from the data for the respective participant groups and will be presented next in an integrated manner.

#### **Theme 1: Social entrepreneurship as a means to care for orphans**

The two income-generating projects under study, i.e. the honey-harvesting and nutrition garden projects have a number of specific features which make it possible to provide for the needs of the orphans in their communities, as outlined below.

#### ***Not-for-profit initiatives***

The honey-harvesting and nutrition garden projects operate on a business model which involves record keeping and daily reporting, and the capturing of transactions. Furthermore, the projects themselves are profit oriented, but the profit is utilised to cater for the orphans' needs.

A community participant of the nutrition garden project explained as follows:

*“After selling our produce, we calculate all the money that we used from the seed, manure and other inputs. After that we see how much profit did we make, then we put it on the side and then we buy for seeds for the next planting season. The profit that remains is not for us, but for the orphans here in Mataga.”*

A key informant concurred:

*“In these projects the profit generated is not for consumption by those who run them, but for the benefit of the orphans.”*

The produce from the nutrition garden and the honey project is sold to members of the community, the local school and traders at the local business centre. The Mataga nutrition garden project also recently developed an agreement with a local supermarket which operates throughout Zimbabwe to supply it with fresh vegetables every week. The

projects do not incur any transport costs as the customers buy the products on site. The local supermarket has also agreed to send a truck on a weekly basis to fetch the fresh produce from Mataga village. The produce from both projects is sold at market value. Dees and Anderson (2003) make the point that the broader definition of social entrepreneurship encompasses business expertise and the application of market-based skills in the non-profit sector.

A close look at the operation of the Ruzivo honey harvesting and the Mataga nutrition garden projects reveals similarities with the Sekem project in Egypt in that the profits from Sekem's business are used to fund institutions such as schools, an adult education centre and a medical centre (Seelos & Mair, 2005), whilst the profits from this project are used to provide orphans with food, education, healthcare, clothes and shelter.

### ***Alleviation of poverty***

The purpose of selling the products is captured in the words of the participants:

A key informant:

*“There are five key elements that the projects focus on. When they sell their products, their target is to provide the orphans with food, education, healthcare, shelter and clothes. That is all they want to do.”*

A community member of the honey project:

*“We provide the children with help on things such as school fees, school uniforms, and building decent houses for them.”*

A child participant:

*“The most important benefits that we get from the projects is food, school fees, uniforms, houses and safety. We know that the people of the community are taking care of us. If we were not getting this help, we would not be going to school and we should be sleeping without eating anything.”*

This finding is in line with the International Monetary Fund's (2015) view that projects which alleviate social problems in developing countries are targeted at the provision of food, clothes, shelter, healthcare, education and other physical means of living and improving one's life. These areas of support were observed as the key pillars of the benefits that the income-generating projects are providing to the orphans in Mberengwa.

### ***Social value and social transformation***

The income-generating projects are in tandem with the view of Austin *et al.* (2006:39) that “The fundamental purpose of social entrepreneurship is creating social value for the public good”. This is evidenced by the following quotes from participants.

A community participant of the nutrition garden project:

*“For us the most important thing is that we want to make sure that the orphans in this community are protected before we worry about our own welfare.”*

A child participant said:

*“I think the projects have made me to be where I am today. I can go to school, eat three times a day and sleep in a nice house. When my father and mother died, we didn’t have a life like that because things were difficult for them.”*

Forsyth (2006) states that social value is noted through the social benefits that accrue to the children as a result of the profits created from the income-generating projects and the fact that the community members place a great deal of consideration for the children’s welfare before their own.

### ***The change agent role***

Findings show that the members of the income-generating projects have become change agents within their communities, because they were able to identify opportunities, identified suitable strategies and made positive changes in the lives of the orphans.

A key informant stated:

*“Members of these projects are the major role players and they have made a positive impact not only on the children, but in the district and the nation at large. A very important part of their intervention is that they realised that the government was lacking capacity to help the orphans and they chipped in...”*

The view of a community participant in the honey project:

*“Personally I am satisfied by the role that we play in the community. The District Child Welfare Coordinator calls us the change agents of the community because what we do is a big job. We make it possible for the children to go to school and have food to eat in their houses.”*

As indicated by Austin *et al.* (2006), change agents focus on addressing development issues, meeting community social needs or responding to market failures, and social enterprises. The role of the income-generating projects in playing the change agent role in the communities cannot be overemphasised. The beneficiaries have seen a real change in their lives in as far as food, education, healthcare and protection are concerned.

## **Theme 2: Social entrepreneurship and social protection**

The findings pointed to the relationship between social entrepreneurship and social protection. In linking social entrepreneurship and social protection, five attributes in line with Gandure (2009) were identified which make up social protection programmes, namely predictability, consistency, transparency, sustainability and quality. The ensuing discussion indicates the relation of these attributes to social protection.

### ***Predictability***

As beneficiaries, the children receive their food parcels on the last Saturday of the month. Their school fees are paid on the opening day of each term of the year and they receive their uniforms on the first day of the first and third school term respectively.

### ***Consistency***

The children have a sense of certainty that they will receive their benefits in accordance with predetermined intervals, as in the case of the school fees, which are paid at the beginning of each term.

### ***Transparency***

The programme is available to all orphaned children in the respective villages who meet the selection criteria of having lost both parents.

### ***Sustainability***

The programmes strive to have long-lasting effects and benefits for the children mainly because they are run and controlled by the communities themselves. The community strives to provide the best form of benefit they can afford. The children consider the benefits to be of a high quality and sustainable as their needs are being met.

### **Theme 3: The development of income-generating projects**

In as far as the development and running of income-generating projects is concerned, three sub-themes emerged. The discussion below will indicate that community associations and structures made it easier for community members to come together and share their experiences and thoughts on issues affecting their communities. This ultimately led to the formation of the income-generating projects. In addition, Child Protection Committees (CPCs) were established to care for orphans in their living environments.

#### ***Community Burial Societies***

Because of the high and escalating death rate in the village, mainly as a result of HIV and Aids, the community members in Ruzivo village formed a burial society in 2000 to help each other with funeral expenses and burial arrangements. As the burial society grew, the members had a meeting and realised that their efforts were ending with the funeral and that no programmes were in place to help the orphans who were often left without parental care, no source of income and no support from the extended family. A community participant of the honey project explained the community's modus operandi as follows:

*“We initially came up with an idea of informally adopting the orphans within the communities, but we realised that there would be challenges so we decided to help them whilst they remain in their homesteads, and this led to the idea of starting the honey project.”*

#### ***Women's Rotational Credit and Savings Clubs***

The women's rotational credit and savings club contributed to the formation of the nutrition garden project in Mataga village. The women run their rotational savings club in which they take turns to give each member a certain amount of money monthly on a rotational basis.

A member of the project explains as follows:

*“Our club had 12 women and the rotation would run throughout the year and each member received contributions rotationally every month. During each member’s turn, the whole group would sit down and plan how the lump sum would be utilised. It was mainly used to buy household goods and part of it would be saved for family emergencies. In 2004 the club partnered with the Mberengwa Rural District Council and this resulted in the formation of the Mataga Nutrition Garden Project. We also shared a common nutrition garden, but everyone had their own portion which they tendered for household consumption. In 2004 we asked for land from the chief and started the nutrition garden project for the orphans in our village.”*

### **Child Protection Committees (CPC)**

All the key informants identified a strong link between the income-generating projects and Child Protection Committees (CPCs) in the villages. The CPCs are coordinated by Save the Children and the Mberengwa District Council, and have a very close relationship with the income-generating projects as they all aim at protecting the children and ensuring that their needs are met and rights respected. The Mberengwa District Council realised that the communities were already organised and had ideas to help the orphans in their communities, and hence took on the role of providing technical support and coordination through the CPCs.

A key informant summarised their role:

*“A Child Protection Committee is a group of individuals who are selected in each village based on their passion, vision and commitment to orphans and vulnerable children. This group works with various stakeholders conducting different activities which aim at providing social, psychosocial and economic support to the OVC. These CPCs are elected from within the communities and members including teachers, traditional leaders, religious leaders, villagers, and other elected representatives. Their duty is to coordinate various activities which benefit not only orphans, but all children in the communities.”*

### **Theme 4: Meeting orphans’ needs**

The income-generating projects play a significant role in enabling the children to meet their needs. In line with the 2004-2010 National Action Plan for OVC (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008), these needs include food and nutrition, education, shelter, healthcare and sanitation, protection from abuse, and birth registration; these needs will be briefly discussed below.

With regard to food and nutrition, a key informant described the orphans’ food security as follows:

*“What I want you to know is that due to economic challenges in the country, persistent droughts and high cost of living, most households in this area are accustomed to the 1-0-1 and 0-1-1, whilst some even go for the 0-0-1 meal pattern. However, the orphans can afford the 1-1-1 pattern because of these projects and also food hand-outs from NGOs.”*

In clarifying the meal patterns, the key informant indicated that this is a tacit coding that developed in the community to describe meal patterns; 1-1-1 means one meal in the morning, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. Accordingly, 0-0-1 means one meal in the evening only. This realisation bears out the assertion by the National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe (2012:10) that rural communities adapt to innovative meal patterns as a coping mechanism to deal with food shortages.

As far as education is concerned, the children are able to access education through support from the income-generating projects. The two projects that were studied are paying school fees for a total of 40 children in both primary and secondary schools. Without the support from the projects, these children would otherwise not be able to attend school, as they have no visible means of support and were unable to be included in the government's Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). The impact of educational support is evident in the following quotes:

A key informant:

*"In 2012 the projects in whole district of Mberengwa reached a total 19 783 through services like paying for their school fees, educating them on HIV and Aids as well as other services. The CPCs have continued to provide orphans and vulnerable children with a continuum of quality and comprehensive support."*

A community participant:

*"In terms of education, right now in 2013 we are paying school fees for 20 children, 9 boys and 11 girls. We don't only pay school fees but we also buy uniforms for them. All of that money comes from the honey project. The Mberengwa District Council also pays for other OVC who are not in the BEAM scheme."*

In terms of shelter, a child participant captures the impact:

*"The house we live in was built for us by the community. We used to live in a house made of poles and mud but now we are living in a house made of bricks."*

With regard to clothing, a community participant of the nutrition garden projects reports:

*"We buy school uniforms and also clothes to wear at home. At the end of the year we also buy them clothes for Christmas."*

With respect to healthcare and sanitation, the income-generating projects, through the child protection committees, coordinate the activities and collect information on healthcare, awareness raising and figures related to the fight against HIV and Aids.

In terms of protection from abuse, the communities have taken a leading role in the protection of children. The CPCs are mandated with the task of monitoring, recording and reporting all forms of child abuse in the communities. This critical role is conducted with the cooperation of the Mberengwa District Council, Save the Children, police and the traditional leadership. Besides recording, reporting and monitoring child abuse in the communities, the CPCs also conduct awareness programmes in the villages and also work with child-led groups in raising awareness of children's rights.

A community participant of the honey project describes the protection of children's rights as follows:

*“We want to make sure that the orphans are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. They were left behind by their parents so we do not want them to be exposed to secondary abuse.”*

Muronda (2009) argues that one of the greatest challenges faced by orphans is emotional stress as a result of abuse and watching their parents die. It is therefore the duty of those caring for orphans to ensure that they are protected from all forms of abuse.

Most of the orphans are left by their parents without birth certificates to prove their identity. This poses a challenge in terms of access to basic services through state programmes or NGOs. The importance of a birth certificate in child protection is evident in a key informant's statement:

*“Without a birth certificate, a child cannot be admitted at school, cannot be registered for public assistance and social protection schemes ... The CPCs have done a great job in helping the children to get birth certificates. In 2012 alone they helped 25 children to apply for birth certificates.”*

### **Theme 5: The role of community strengths in the day-to-day running of the projects**

The communities demonstrated strengths which enabled them to transcend the difficult micro- and macro-economic environment and start initiatives to help the orphans in their communities. These strengths include resilience, community relations, and opportunities for participation and contribution.

To underscore resilience as a critical strength leading to the effective running of the projects, a village participant in the nutrition garden observed:

*“One of the things which made us to continue fighting is because we have perseverance. It was very difficult when we started because we did not have reliable buyers for our vegetables. The people who live here in Mberengwa are very poor and they couldn't afford to buy our produce even when the prices were low. But we kept on fighting because we knew what we wanted to achieve and by God's grace, our project is doing well.”*

Community relations also play a critical role in the projects as members of the projects are able to work together in relationships based on mutual respect, trust, tolerance, support and endowing the common good. Community members demonstrated strong social ties at various levels and this enabled them to develop a common understanding and a shared vision, as is reflected in the words of one participant of the honey project:

*“If you look at the members of our projects you will realise that we are related in different ways which include by blood, by marriage, some are neighbours, some share the same totem and some go to the same church. This made it easy for us to understand that we need to take care of these orphans. All of us have a*

*relative or a family member who has died of the disease and we know that one day we will also die, so we want our children to be care for when we die.”*

Equally significant is opportunities for participation. Each of the members of the income-generating projects has a defined role which they exercise based on their ability, experience, age, physical strength and passion. A community participant of the honey and nutrition garden projects highlighted the roles for different age groups as follows:

*“In the project different age groups have different roles so the younger members do the irrigation of the garden, security and harvesting, while the middle-aged members do record keeping and the older members concentrated on distribution of benefits. Each member participates in a different way depending on their age and physical strength.”*

Saleebey (2006) indicates the importance of utilising existing or created opportunities for participation of communities in projects by delineating roles and contributions for each member of the group.

### **Theme 6: Utilisation of capital and local assets in the development and running of the projects**

The income-generating projects made use of, and contributed towards, various forms of capital, including natural, social, human, physical and financial capital.

Natural capital, which consists of resources such as land, air, water and biodiversity (Department for International Development, 2010), played a fundamental role in the development of both projects. The support from traditional leaders in both projects was recognised in the following quotes from participants.

A community participant of the honey project:

*“We had the ideas and we had already developed the plan, but our main challenge was the space to operate from. As you know, you can’t just build an apiary without getting authority from the responsible authorities. Fortunately for us, we just approached the village head and he was more than happy to provide us with the space.”*

A community participant of the nutrition garden project:

*“For us to start this project we approached the Headman and [he] offered us this piece of land so that we could start our project. He didn’t hesitate to give us the land because he knows that our aim is to help the vulnerable children in his village.”*

Social capital played a critical role in the development of the projects. The Department for International Development (2010) defines social capital as social resources, including networks, group membership, trust and access to wider social institutions in society. The burial society, rotational savings club and child protection committees (see theme 3) demonstrate the level of social capital in the villages.

The strength of social capital is evident in the words of a community participant of the honey project:

*“In our village one person’s problem is the community’s problem. If one person goes to bed hungry, we believe it is our responsibility to help them. It was easy for us to start the project because we understand each other, we know each other personally, we share the same culture, beliefs, traditions and our lives are very much connected.”*

A key informant noted:

*“The people who live here consider each other to be related in one way or the other ... They share so many things...If you want to really know the level of connection, someone can brew the traditional beer for the whole community and people will drink for free. This allows them to be united so it helps when they run their projects.”*

The projects utilised human capital in the form of locally available skills in all aspects of the projects as they developed and continue to utilise it for their day-to-day operations. The Department for International Development (2010) defines human capital as skills, knowledge, health and ability to work, and states that human capital is a critical ingredient which can make the difference between success and failure of the development process.

Community participants of the honey and the nutrition garden projects, respectively, reflected on human capital as follows:

*“We designed home-made bricks and logs to build an apiary and the builders offered their services free of charge as a way of contributing. Youths in the villages provided their labour...”*

*“We run our own financial affairs and keep records of our profit and expenditure. We have a committee with a treasurer who has accounting skills and he handles the cash flow.”*

The projects use physical capital in the form of road networks, buildings and energy to transport their produce to the markets, which the Department for International Development (2010) refers to as the infrastructure and goods that support livelihoods such as transport, energy, tools and buildings. The local dam provides them with the water they use for daily running of the projects.

The projects utilised financial capital to a lesser extent compared to the other forms of capital. As noted by Rainey, Robinson, Allen, and Christy (2003) financial capital refers to economic capital, which includes the financial resources and institutions that communities need to have in order to achieve their economic goals. To start their honey project, the Ruzivo village received monetary assistance from Save the Children and Mberengwa District Council to purchase building materials for the apiary as well as to market the honey. The Mataga nutrition garden project received money to buy the first seed and pesticides, *“and since then, they are doing it on their own”* (Key informant).

### **Theme 7: Orphan care within traditional structures**

In the Mberengwa community an orphan is viewed as a child who belongs to the whole community. This is in line with Mushunje's (2006) argument that traditionally, children have been viewed as central to society. Therefore, their protection has been rendered an issue of particular concern to the whole community. A study by UNICEF (2011:15) articulates this aptly:

*“A 2006 study discusses an African belief that once a child is born, he or she is assumed to belong to the whole community, with members of the community sharing the responsibility for providing nurturance to the child, especially during times of crisis. Accordingly, some societies have a traditional structure of assigning responsibility to care for orphaned children who do not have available extended family care, such as village chiefs taking children into their own homes on a temporary or permanent basis.”*

Participants indicated that because the income-generating projects originated in the community and are run by the members of the respective villages, they instil a great deal of responsibility and ownership in the community, and this is a critical aspect leading to the success of the projects. While the technical support received from the District Council and Save the Children strengthened the community programmes, the projects are wholly owned and run by the communities.

### **DISCUSSION**

The state's responsibility to care for orphans and vulnerable children has shifted to communities, which have to mobilise their own resources. However, within the context of a development approach, government has a role to play alongside other partners (Midgley, 2010). In alignment with the social development principle of partnership, government, civil society and the business sector have a collective responsibility to deliver services. Patel (2005) indicates that social development is essentially people-centred and it promotes citizen participation as much as it strengthens the input of communities in decision making, which is integral to human development. The findings of this study indicate the involvement of the community in addressing the problems that affect them. Although communities in Mberengwa have taken responsibility for the care of orphans, they still need to take a more active role in making the government accountable for its role in social development by becoming an active partner in caring for the orphans in the communities.

The findings show that the income-generating projects in Mberengwa link social and economic goals as community members participate in the productive economy to enhance the welfare of disadvantaged members of the community. As argued by Patel (2005:29), “Social investment in programmes that enhance people's welfare through their participation in the productive economy are the most effective ways of enhancing people's welfare and achieving economic development.”

As demonstrated by the findings of this study, the income-generating projects in Mberengwa are significant poverty-alleviation and social protection mechanisms which

tap into communities' strengths to address social problems in the community. In line with Patel (2005:30), the study highlights that the social development perspective sets goals that lead to tangible improvements in people's lives and these goals include primary healthcare, primary education, nutrition, basic housing, life skills training as well as tangible social and economic returns. It also provides empowerment and self-reliance, which is based on the notion that people should be connected to one another and with their environment in ways that enable them to be more effective in their individual and joint efforts towards creating a better life (Department of Social Development, 2011).

In the Mberengwa district traditional community practices are extended to the care and protection of orphans. The two communities in Mberengwa have embraced the objectives of the National Orphan Care Policy as highlighted by the Republic of Zimbabwe (1999) by devising community based mechanisms to care and protect orphans. This is related to the social development principle of universal access, which stipulates that social services and benefits should be available to all vulnerable groups and that no individual or group should be deprived of such access because of a lack of resources or knowledge of how to access the services (Gray, 2006:S56). This is also closely connected to the principle of bridging the micro and macro divide in that the communities in Mberengwa respond to a national problem of orphans in need of care by devising local-level strategies (Department of Social Development, 2011). Patel (2005:30) reinforces the macro impact of the social development approach by emphasising comprehensive and universalistic interventions and progressive change.

The study's findings resonate with Midgley's (2010) view that the strengths-based perspective enables communities to recognise their inner resources, skills and capacity for growth. Furthermore, findings illustrate that being committed to a common cause such as caring for orphans is key for the community to initiate projects without external intervention or support as they identify the assets and resources within their environment and utilise them to achieve their desired goals (Midgley, 2014).

Another fundamental perspective of the social development approach is that it promotes social integration and sustainability, which in turn enable communities to develop programmes and plans with greater success (Patel, 2005). The communal ownership of resources in rural areas such as land, roads, dams and biodiversity makes it easier for the development of initiatives that benefit the community. This is evidenced by the fact that the projects do not have to pay for the land, water and marketing of their produce. The principle of partnership enables each member of the community to play their role in the development process and this is mostly achieved through negotiation. As noted by Saleebey (2006), the strengths that the communities build on include sharing similar common traits, which makes it easier for them to understand each other's problems as well as the virtues and assets which bring them together.

People are bound by similar social, cultural, kinship and environmental ties, and the more they are connected through social ties, the more likely they are to understand each other and work together to achieve common goals. (Gittel & Vidal, 1998). The findings

demonstrate that the link between social capital and social development is supported by the principle of empowerment, which entails that power relations shift towards people achieving greater control and influence over decisions and resources that impact on the quality of their lives through increasingly interdependent relationships (Department of Social Development, 2011). Midgley (2014) confirms that through social capital the cooperative social relationships within communities allow them to have control over their decisions and choices. The contribution of social capital to the development of the projects is also implicit in the contention of the World Bank (2011) that social capital in the form of institutions, relationships and norms shapes the quality and quantity of a society's social interactions.

In order to take ownership of projects, community members have to be involved from the outset and engage in all the phases of the project. Where there is a sense of community ownership, it is easier to maintain sustainability of the projects as the projects cannot rely on external support. The social development principle of participation indicates that people should be fully engaged in their own processes of learning, growth and change, starting from where they are and moving at their own pace (Department of Social Development, 2011). This is substantiated by Lombard (2003:250), who argues that the 'African entrepreneurial route' towards micro and small enterprises can be achieved through projects, especially the shift from a community project to small enterprise, which occurs when a project moves from a 'survivalist' to an income-generating and profit-making enterprise, hence advancing sustainable social development.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The income-generating projects based on social entrepreneurship principles in Mberengwa play an important role in poverty alleviation and social protection, and particularly in meeting the needs of orphans. The shift of the responsibility for orphan care from the government to communities has been to a large extent a result of lack of financial and other resources on the part of the government. Community-based orphan care programmes go a long way towards meeting the needs of orphans. However, the government has an important role to play in social development. As such, the government of Zimbabwe should revise the National Orphan Care Policy (1999) and continue to update the National Action Plan for OVC (2005) so that more responsibility for orphan care can be placed on community-based initiatives in partnership with the government, which can play a supportive role. The National Action Plan for OVC should prioritise closing gaps in legislation that render children more vulnerable and outlawing practices harmful to children (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008). The study showed in particular the value of the support that the projects receive from the business sector. It is recommended that government facilitate an enabling environment by promoting private-public partnerships to encourage the private sector to fund orphan care programmes in communities.

If communities are expected to look after vulnerable OVCs, there is a need for government to strengthen traditional orphan care structures throughout the country to

enable them to play a leading role in the orphan care programmes within their own communities. This is in line with one of the strategies of the National Action Plan for OVC, namely to strengthen community based initiatives (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2008). It is recommended that the government and NGOs develop a strategy to support the *zunde ra Mambo* concept, which means that traditional leaders are enabled to play their traditional role of holding communal resources in trust for the benefit of vulnerable members of the community, particularly orphans. The communities in Mberengwa are testimony to the impact of having partnerships and support on all community levels and across sectors. Considering the similarities between Mberengwa and other rural communities in Zimbabwe, this concept can be replicated in other parts of the country and regions as a way of promoting community-based orphan care initiatives.

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