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Kanengoni, Joice

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ZIMBABWE'S WELFARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME: THE CASE OF GUTU DISTRICT IN ZIMBABWE.

A research report presented to

The Department of Social Work

School of Human and Community Development

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In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in Social Development

By

Joice Kanengoni

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own unaided work, and that I have given full acknowledgements to the all sources utilized.

…….. …….

Joice Kanengoni Date

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ABSTRACT

The social welfare assistance programme is the most established social assistance programme in Zimbabwe. The programme provides assistance in cash and/or in kind to vulnerable groups who lack the means to support themselves. These include older persons, mentally and physically handicapped and dependants of indigent persons. The objective of the programme is to alleviate poverty. There are challenges in meeting this objective as cash benefits given under public assistance are unpredictable and often inadequate to meet basic needs of the poor. Whilst in the past the social welfare assistance programme has been a fairly effective programme in alleviating poverty, it is not clear whether this is still the case given the economic challenges the country has been facing since 2000. This study explored the perceptions of the recipients of social welfare assistance in Gutu District, Zimbabwe, about the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's Social Welfare Assistance Programme in alleviating poverty. The study adopted a qualitative approach and a case study design was used. The study population consisted of recipients of Social Welfare Assistance and two key informants, the Head of the Department of Social Welfare in Gutu and the Administrator of Gutu District. Participants and key informants were selected using purposive sampling. Separate semi-structured interview schedules for participants and key informants were used to collect data. Data was collected using in-depth face to face interviews. Thematic content analysis was used to analyse data. The findings of the study revealed that participants understood the objective of social welfare assistance as that of alleviating poverty. Regarding the strengths and outcomes of the programme, the participants revealed that the programme enabled them to meet their basic needs and that it had also empowered them to be self-reliant. The main challenge faced by participants was that they did not receive their benefits regularly due to budgetary constraints on the part of the state. It is recommended that the government should prioritise providing support to the poor by ensuring adequate budgetary support for the Social Welfare Assistance Programme. This study contributes to our understanding of social welfare assistance and its contribution to poverty alleviation. In addition, the research findings have the potential to inform the activities of civil society institutions that engage in advocacy work with and on behalf of the poor.

KEY WORDS

Social assistance, social welfare assistance, poverty, recipients, Gutu District, Zimbabwe