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Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State

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School of Human and Community Development

Faculty of Humanities

In partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the Degree Master of Arts in Social Development

By

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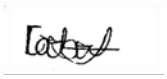
March 2025

DECLARATION

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Nthatisi Nkoebele



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I am nothing without God, who has been and remains faithful and my people, whose legacy and strength I carry in my heart.

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This report is dedicated to my parents mme Sarah and ntate Mothae Nkoebele, who gave up so much for me and my siblings. I am the girl I know I am today, because of you. I love and value you more than you will ever know. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

ABSTRACT

Non-governmental organisations can play a significant role in alleviating poverty in rural areas. This study aimed to explore the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in eradicating poverty in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State. A qualitative research approach was adopted, employing a case study research design and a purposive sampling technique to select participants. The sample comprised thirteen individuals: nine from three NGOs, three from the Department of Social Development, and one local economic development manager in the Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview framework. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data, using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for thematic analysis. The study found that NGOs are critical in efforts to eradicate poverty in Qwa-Qwa. Community Nutrition and Development Centres, creating short-term employment, and collaborating with other agencies are some strategies that NGOs employ to combat poverty in Qwa-Qwa. NGOs faced challenges such as funding, support from stakeholders, and a lack of volunteers, which adversely affected their capacity to adequately respond to poverty issues in Qwa-Qwa. Importantly, it is essential to support NGOs in rural areas with the necessary financial resources through multi-stakeholder collaborations to effectively alleviate poverty. Additionally, NGOs require resources such as funding, collaboration, skills development, effective partnerships, and an understanding of community assets to tackle poverty. This study concluded that NGOs, government, and private partners must be intentional and pragmatic in their approach to poverty eradication. NGOs also need to be equipped with the requisite skills to address complex poverty challenges. Lastly, communities are not passive recipients; they possess inherent assets that are valuable in the fight against poverty. Therefore, NGOs should be regarded as catalysers for poverty eradication efforts in rural communities, and every effort must be made to support their initiatives.

Keywords: Qwa-Qwa; Non-Governmental Organizations; poverty eradication; rural development; collaborations; stakeholders; funding; community.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABCD	- Asset-Based Community Development
AFRONGO	- African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations
AU	- African Union
DSD	- Department of Social Development
EPWP	- Expanded Public Works Programme
ETDP-SETA	- Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
IRDSS	- Integrated Rural Development Sector Strategy
MAP	- Maluti - A- Phofung
NDA	- National Development Agency
NDP	- National Development Plan
NGO	- Non-Governmental Organization
NMW	- National Minimum Wage
SDG	- Sustainable Development Goals
Stats SA	- Statistics South Africa
SLA	- Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SRD	- Social Relief of Distress Grant
TVET	- Technical and Vocational Education and Training,
UN	- United Nations
WANGO	- World Association of Non-Governmental Association

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This chapter situates the study in context by introducing the topic and its relevance. It is organised into eleven sections. These include the background to the study, statement of the problem and rationale for the study. This chapter will also cover research questions, aim, objectives, significance of the study and definition of key concepts. Lastly, the study will detail the research methodology, organization of the research report and summary of the chapter.

1.1 Background

The World Bank Group reports that approximately 700 million people live on less than $2.15 per day, meaning they live under the extreme poverty line. In addition, abject poverty can be found in some parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. This area is characterized by volatility, conflict and rural areas (World Bank Group, 2024). About 80% of the world's population lives in extreme poverty, most rooted in rural areas of Africa (Beegle & Christiaensen, 2019). In South Africa, poverty is estimated at 62.7%, while accessing basic services such as water and electricity remains a challenge (World Bank Group, 2024). Equally, most of the poor in South Africa are in rural areas (Du Toit, 2017). It is estimated that the rural poverty headcount ratio is roughly 81.3% compared with urban areas at 40.7% (Bila, 2021). Thus, targeted interventions are needed to address poverty, especially in rural areas.

Francis and Webster (2019) opine that rural communities in South Africa face dire poverty, unemployment, and a lack of adequate development. They are also disadvantaged by a lack of access to basic services, and little to no economic base (Nicolaides & Dludla, 2023). Although South Africa has experienced positive economic growth in the past, this has not been enough to eradicate poverty, inequality, and unemployment (Ngubane et al., 2023). For this reason, multisectoral intervention strategies are needed to assist in eradicating poverty, inequality, unemployment, health awareness, and skills scarcity. Moreover, sustainable long-term projects must be implemented to solve social problems in rural areas (Suárez Roldan et al., 2023).

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are noteworthy in providing environmental awareness campaigns, skills development, advocacy, health-related services, food parcels to the poor, and other services (Makofane & Selepe, 2022; Siziba, 2014). NGOs in South Africa

include Save the Children, Kagiso Trust, Lovelife, Gift of the Givers, SA Red Cross Society, Word Vision, and Khulisa Social Solution (Wango, 2024). However, they do not have poverty eradication programmes; if such programmes exist, they are usually indirectly related to other programmes.

NGOs play a significant role in fighting poverty in developing countries (Fuseini et al., 2022). They positively provide income, improve health and educational outcomes, reduce food insecurity, and sustain livelihoods (Kabonga, 2023). In recent times, NGOs have focused their efforts on development programmes. Resources have been directed to and through NGOs by all sectors, including private, public, and international funders (Tshiyoyo, 2023). This has led to an increase in the growth of local NGOs in developing countries. The importance of NGOs lies in their ability to provide basic services to those in need and have close links with poor communities in rural areas (Tshiyoyo, 2023). In addition, NGOs respond to failures by the state and other stakeholders in providing basic social and economic services (Deserranno et al., 2020).

Although NGOs play a critical role in development efforts and service delivery, poverty in South Africa remains a major challenge, thus the need for deliberate pro-poor efforts to effectively address poverty.

1.2 Statement of the Problem and Rationale for the Study

The legacy of apartheid is characterised by racially segregated settlements and resource distribution, resulting in rampant poverty and inequality (Lephakga, 2017). During apartheid, the poor were shifted to the peripheries of both urban areas and the margins of the country in Bantustans. Thus, many of South Africa's poor are found in rural areas (May & Woolard, 2023).

Challenges facing rural areas in South Africa stem from inequalities rooted in colonialism, underinvestment in services, unemployment, and poverty (Marais, 2023). Qwa-Qwa, which is under the Maluti-A-Phofung (MAP) municipality in the Eastern Free State, was reported as the most poverty-stricken area in the Free State province (Denoon-Stevens & Mocwagae, 2019). Statistics South Africa also details that approximately 60 % of households in Qwa-Qwa live on less than R1650 per month (StatsSA, 2025). Moreover, 42% of the community in this region is unemployed. Youth unemployment stands at 53% in Qwa-Qwa, and many young people are either unemployed or not engaging in any economic opportunities. Interestingly, Qwa-Qwa has sufficient and arable farmlands, but poverty still persists in this area (Tsotetsi & Omodan, 2022).

The current challenges in Qwa-Qwa include an unstable municipality that is unable to meet the basic community needs due to political infighting and corruption. Maluti-A-Phofung is experiencing significant challenges that are negatively impacting the well-being of its people (Khaile, 2023). A lack of service delivery, financial sustainability, poverty, and unemployment place severe constraints on the municipality (Marais, 2023). Moreover, Qwa-Qwa had a functional industrial park, which employed many of its residents. However, this has since aged and no longer serves as a special economic zone. The lack of investment and poor service delivery, such as water and electricity, have also resulted in the closure of many factories around Qwa-Qwa, resulting in persistent poverty (Mollo, 2022). Thus, poor governance, corruption, and a lack of implementation have restricted poverty eradication interventions (Ramnath, 2015).

South Africa has one of the largest social assistance programmes in Africa (Patel et al., 2023), which play a role in poverty reduction. This includes social grants for older persons, people with disabilities and children. Furthermore, the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant was introduced to unemployed adults to mitigate against COVID-19 in 2020 (Patel et al., 2023). Importantly, social grants have been shown to have positive effects on poverty and inequality (Köhler & Bhorat, 2021; World Bank, 2018). Most importantly, social grants are an important source of income for many South African households, especially in rural areas (Maluleke, 2020). To this end, many households in Qwa-Qwa depend on social grants (MAP, 2025). The importance of social grants cannot be overstated however, households need alternative means of sustaining themselves in the long term to emancipate themselves from poverty.

The National Development Plan (NDP) views NGOs as important stakeholders. The persistence of poverty and unemployment is a major challenge in South Africa, despite government efforts through redistributive policies and legislation (National Planning Commission, 2011). The NDP is a comprehensive policy document whose primary goal is to reduce poverty, inequality, and unemployment by the year 2030 (NPC, 2011). This requires multiple stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs, academia, and community members, whose contributions are important in the realisation of the NDP (NPC, 2011). Importantly, the NDP acknowledges rural poverty and aims to implement effective land reform programmes, rural employment, and expand agricultural activities in rural areas to boost rural economies (NPC, 2011). However, South Africa struggles with the implementation of policies that are already in place and meant to eradicate poverty, redress past injustices, and have a positive impact on the poor and vulnerable in rural areas. With five years to go until 2030, it should be

interesting to see if the government will indeed be able to meet its deadline of reducing poverty, inequality, and unemployment, especially in rural areas.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) in the Free State has collaborated with NGOs to implement their poverty eradication initiatives by giving vulnerable households access to meals and development programmes (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). Furthermore, the department facilitated the process of linking cooperatives with economic opportunities. Approximately R9.6 million was spent in the 2022/23 financial year to support and sustain existing Community Nutrition & Development Centres (CNDCs), with the establishment of four centres underway (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). The failure of the executives of Social Development to specify what development initiatives the department had engaged in, apart from food security, is worrisome. In addition, the department is not specific about what NGOs they are referring to, as these are important in creating employment and income generation (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). Moreover, CNDCs provide a temporary safety net as they are dependent on funding to remain operational (Department of Social Development, Free State, 2023). CNDCs are important in fighting poverty however, the Department of Social Development needs more sustainable poverty eradication initiatives, in collaboration with NGOS, to support communities in the long term.

Many rural communities in South Africa are confronted with poverty, unemployment, and insufficient development. They are further disadvantaged by limited access to essential services, including water and sanitation, healthcare, poorly maintained road infrastructure, and a minimal economic base. NGOs in rural areas offer a range of services that the government is often unable to provide. Therefore, NGOs are critical in-service delivery because they are flexible and responsive to the needs of local communities. Moreover, NGOs' ability to understand and respond to community needs can be expanded to fighting poverty, especially in rural areas.

The World Bank approximates that 63.5 per cent of the South African population lives in poverty, and this has mainly been attributed to poor job creation (World Bank, 2025). Furthermore, Bila (2021) indicated that the rural poverty headcount ratio in South Africa is twice that of urban areas. Poverty and social exclusion are more pronounced in rural areas in South Africa, with a lack of service delivery, development and poor infrastructure. As such, NGOs, through their ability to work with communities at the grassroots level, have the potential

to fight poverty and drive sustainable development projects aimed at improving people's livelihoods. Therefore, adequate support from government and private partners can help ensure that NGOs amplify economic opportunities and help rural communities sustain their livelihoods.

Some studies show that NGOs' efforts have helped decrease poverty in developing countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (Dahie, 2019; Garba, 2013). Similarly, a study by Ngumbela and Mle (2019) indicated that NGOs played a critical role in community well-being in the Amathole district in the Eastern Cape. However, their interventions were not directly focused on poverty, but contributed to combating poverty by creating employment opportunities. Therefore, more studies are needed to explore NGOs and their impact on poverty eradication, particularly in rural areas.

Therefore, it is on this premise that this study sought to explore the role NGOs play in poverty eradication and to inform transformative social policies on poverty eradication, particularly in rural areas.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. What poverty eradication interventions are NGOs currently using and why?
2. What challenges impede NGOs from implementing poverty eradication strategies?
3. What resources do NGOs need to successfully implement poverty eradication?

1.4 Aim

This study aims to explore the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication in Qwaqwa in the Free State Province.

1.5 Objectives

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To understand poverty eradication interventions employed by NGOs in rural Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State
2. To explore the challenges NGOs experience in implementing poverty eradication strategies in rural Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State
3. To determine the resources NGOs need to implement poverty eradication interventions in rural Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State

1.6 Significance of Study

According to Tsotetsi and Omodan (2022), rural economic development was not stable in Qwa-Qwa, resulting in youth engaging in crime and other anti-social activities instead of being actively involved in paid work. Moreover, the authors found that the community of Qwa-Qwa had access to arable land; however, a lack of social and farming facilities negatively impacted the enhancement of livelihoods. This study focused on food security and economic development, not poverty eradication.

In a study of multidimensional poverty, Nishimwe-Niyimbanira (2020) found that Qwa-Qwa is deprived in almost all dimensions of poverty and ranked as one of the highest in South Africa. Therefore, the study recommended that poverty eradication efforts in rural areas such as Qwa-Qwa need to be prioritised. However, the study did not indicate how multidimensional poverty could be addressed in Qwa-Qwa.

Lekhanya (2015) opines that social entrepreneurship is critical in ensuring local communities' economic development. This was confirmed by (Mosotoane, 2022), who found that social entrepreneurship was equally important and positively impacted community development in Makwane village in Qwa-Qwa. Similarly, (Matebese, 2022) found similar results in Bloemfontein, Free State. Moreover, engaging rural communities in business initiatives requires an intentional, multisectoral collaboration between government and non-state actors. Currently, there does not seem to be a legal framework specifically for social enterprises which can create employment in South Africa, thus making it difficult to regulate.

Poverty was reportedly higher in former homelands (Transkei, Ciskei, Qwa-Qwa and Natal), especially among Black people who suffered during apartheid, where the majority remain unemployed (Kheswa, 2017; World Bank Group, 2018). Challenges facing rural areas, particularly Qwa-Qwa, are inequalities rooted in colonialism, underinvestment in services, a lack of service delivery, poor infrastructure, unemployment, and poverty (Marais et al., 2023). Thus, NGOs in rural communities can provide multiple services that the government is often unable to and connect communities and the government through advocacy (Tsheola, 2017 as cited in Makofane & Selepe, 2022). Importantly, NGOs understand community needs and can implement beneficial programmes based on these needs.

In the researcher’s knowledge, there have been a few studies on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa. The above studies focused on economic development, food security and social entrepreneurship for employment and economic development in Qwa-Qwa. However, they did

not offer insights into how or who can effectively tackle the issue of poverty in Qwa-Qwa. In an area plagued with high unemployment and poverty rates, Qwa-Qwa needs viable solutions to fight poverty, which requires deliberate effort from NGOs, government and private partners. Thus, the study aimed to investigate the role of NGOs in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa, in the Eastern Free State.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

The following section provides key concepts that are used in this study and clarified below:

1.7.1 Poverty

The World Bank defines poverty as a state of deprivation where a person is unable to meet their basic needs. Poverty also extends to a lack of access to education, social exclusion, healthcare and basic infrastructure needed to live a healthy and productive life. This definition will be was used to understand and analyse poverty in Qwa-Qwa.

1.7.2 Non-Governmental Organization

According to the United Nations, any private organisation independent of government control can be termed an NGO, if it is a not-for-profit, non-preventive and non-political party. A non-governmental organisation is established locally, nationally, or internationally to address issues that enhance people's well-being. Furthermore, NGOs can also be regarded as charitable, service-oriented, participatory, and empowering. Therefore, for this study, the term NGO referred to organisations selected for the study.

1.7.3 Poverty eradication

Poverty eradication refers to the pooling of all necessary resources needed to put into effect programmes and policies which are pivotal to end multidimensional poverty (United Nations, 2023). In this study, poverty eradication referred to efforts made to assist vulnerable communities escape poverty in Qwa-Qwa.

1.7.4 Rural Development

Rural development can be defined as economic and social efforts meant to foster growth, improve the quality of life and develop rural residents (Atkinson, 2017). In this research study, rural development involved strategies that were used to improve rural areas.

1.7.5 Stakeholder

The stakeholder theory defines stakeholders as groups or individuals who have the potential to influence or be influenced by organisations with specific objectives (Freeman, 2010).

Stakeholders in this study referred to all partners (public, private, civil) involved in poverty eradication efforts to help improve people's livelihoods.

1.7.6 Community

A community can be defined as a group of people that share similar characteristics, surroundings and lived experiences (Cobigo et al., 2016). In this study, the community referred to people who reside in the same environment, sharing similar challenges.

1.8 Overview of the research methodology

This study applied a qualitative research approach, using a case study design. Using a semi-structured interview guide, one-on-one interviews were used to explore stakeholders' views on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa. Before data collection, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the Wits University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), certificate number SW24/07/04. Thereafter the researcher prepared the pretest research instrument. The sample included NGO staff and managers, Community Development practitioners and managers, and Local Economic Development managers on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa. A purposive sampling technique was used to identify participants. Lastly, the data was analysed using thematic analysis.

1.9 Organization of the Research Report

This report is divided into six chapters, which include:

Chapter 1: This chapter introduces the aims, research questions and the rationale for the study.

Chapter 2: This chapter covers the literature review, which provides relevant literature, both locally and internationally.

Chapter 3: This chapter provides a detailed theoretical framework which articulates the framework of the study.

Chapter 4: This chapter will elaborate on the methodology, which includes an overview of the design, participants, instruments used, the procedure followed and the methods of data collection and analysis. This section also consists of the strengths and limitations of the study.

Chapter 5: This chapter will present and discuss findings from the study.

Chapter 6: This chapter will provide the main conclusions of the study and present recommendations moving forward.

1.10 Summary of the chapter

This chapter introduced and covered the background of the study. This included the statement of the problem and the rationale for the study. It also discussed the research questions, aims, and objectives, as well as the significance of the study. Also, a brief overview of the research methodology, data collection, and analysis was highlighted. The following chapter will discuss the literature review.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature on the South African government's efforts in eradicating poverty, NGOs in South Africa and their respective functions, NGOs and poverty eradication, NGOs in rural areas and overall NGO challenges. The chapter also unpacks research questions according to previously mentioned themes.

2.1 International and regional NGOs

International NGOs have existed since the early 18th century (Davies, 2014). The advancement of globalisation amplified the significance of NGOs as countries struggled to solve problems on their own (Makofane & Selepe, 2022). As such, NGOs have influenced policies, advocacy and advancing human rights globally. They include Oxfam, Save the Children, and Doctors Without Borders, to name a few (Noh, 2024). Poverty poses a serious challenge, impacting many developing countries. As such, about 80% of the world's population lives in extreme poverty, and most of this poverty has its roots in rural areas in Africa. Abject poverty is also prevalent in rural parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, riddled with volatility and conflict (World Bank Group, 2024).

NGOs emerged in Africa due to the service delivery failures of governments and the private sector. The first NGOs in Africa were affiliated with either churches or missions and played a key role in service provision (Cullen et al., 2022). Accordingly, NGOs continue to play an important role in service delivery and development initiatives in Africa (Forkuor & Agyemang, 2018). What is also important to note is that large-scale development cannot take place without the state and supporting institutions, and NGOs are critical institutions that can facilitate this. Developing countries appear to have more NGOs than any other region in the world. This is due to the significant role NGOs play in socioeconomic development in both developing and developed nations. Countries such as Rwanda, Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Angola, Sudan, and Somalia are part of Network Operator Groups (NOGs) in Africa. This network supports organisations through events, skills training, and technical assistance. Additionally, organisations in these African countries focus on societal transformation and provide services through collaborations with both continental and international partner countries in and outside the continent (Chege, 2017).

African countries and the African Union (AU) have committed to working with NGOs and other stakeholders to work towards achieving the African Union's 2063 Agenda (United Nations, 2025). The African Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (AFRONGO) supports and empowers NGOs throughout the African continent. They serve as a regional and international association dedicated to sustainability, peace, human rights, social justice, and human development within African communities. This council enhances NGOs' ability to effectively address the challenges faced by various communities across the continent.

NGOs are considered important development partners and promote poverty eradication and reducing inequality as per the Sustainable Development Goals (Mlambo et al., 2021). Equally, NGOs can assist governments in working with communities, as they often engage in rural development initiatives (Erdiaw-Kwasie & Alam, 2016). Owing to this, NGOs in Africa have historically played a significant role in service delivery and development initiatives in many impoverished African countries. As such, capacity building and support from various stakeholders are key in ensuring that NGOs continue to effectively serve vulnerable communities.

2.2 Government's efforts in poverty eradication

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is one of South Africa's key programmes meant to provide poverty and income relief through temporary work opportunities for unemployed people in South Africa (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2018). This is a national programme that covers all areas of government and state-owned entities (SOEs). EPWP projects employ workers temporarily within the government, contractors, or NGOs (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2018). Although this type of employment is meaningful and allows recipients to support themselves and their families, it remains short-term and falls short of providing long-term employment, which can permanently mitigate against poverty in many households and communities.

The literature also suggests Local Economic Development (LED) as an intervention for poverty eradication and job creation (Maluti-A-Phofung [MAP], 2025). Community gardens and small communal projects must be supported as they have the potential to generate income. LED initiatives also drive micro and small business opportunities and job creation to sustain and improve livelihoods (Ragolane, 2024). A study by Mahlalela (2014) in Mbombela, Mpumalanga, found that implementing 'rural' LED initiatives can effectively focus on alleviating poverty and supporting small businesses, especially in rural areas. However, this is challenging and is yet to be understood and effectively implemented.

The National Minimum Wage (NMW) Act 9 of 2018 was legislated on the 1st of January 2019, and it mandates that no worker employed in South Africa may earn below R25.42 per hour. This includes vulnerable sectors such as domestic and farm workers. These workers employed under the EPWP are entitled to R15.16 per hour (Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, 2018). Additionally, the Integrated Rural Development Sector Strategy (IRDSS) is another important initiative that the government has adopted to improve the lives of people living in rural areas (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development, 2022). The main objectives of IRDS include addressing poverty, inequality, and unemployment; dealing with a lack of understanding of rural development by government and non-governmental role players; addressing the poor investment and maintenance of infrastructure in rural areas; and focusing on the lack of intergovernmental and rural governance resulting in poor coordination and integration of interventions by local, provincial, and national government departments as well as the private sector (Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development., 2022).

To demonstrate this, a person working a 40-hour shift will make R1016.8 per week and subsequently make R4067.20 per month. Despite this, the average cost of food for households came to R5,433.70, which is more than the NMW (Libera, 2025). Therefore, the NMW is effective in covering the basics for most households; however, it remains insufficient to meet all household needs.

The Estina Dairy Farm project is another example of an initiative that was spearheaded by the Free State Department of Agriculture, meant to create employment and empower small-scale farmers in Vrede, a farming town in the Free State (Nicolson, 2022). Unfortunately, due to grotesque mismanagement of funds, lack of experience and due diligence on the part of the department, the project never materialised, and it is the recipients who suffered the most. Thus, for rural development initiatives to be actualised, there needs to be accountability, transparency, thorough and meaningful engagement between the public, private and beneficiaries, before, during and after projects are initiated. The Estina dairy project had the potential to create meaningful employment and upskill small-scale farmers, while boosting the local economy of this farming town; however, this was unfortunately not the case for the people of Vrede.

The South African government has attempted to mitigate poverty through various programmes and legislation stated above; however, poverty persists, especially in rural areas. Thus, NGOs, through their ability to connect with communities at the grassroots level, can assist rural

communities in poverty eradication through various context-specific interventions, in collaboration with public and private partnerships.

2.3 NGOs in South Africa

South Africa has more NGOs than any other country in Africa, these include both registered and unregistered NGOs (Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014). These NGOs range from small community organizations, humanitarian organizations, early childhood centres, and environmental action groups to very large activists and advocacy organizations that take part in research and engage with the government at the highest level (DG Murray Trust, 2025). They include international organizations such as Save the Children, World Vision, Action Aid, Oxfam, ActionAid International, SOS Children's Villages, and Salvation Army, to name a few (Wango, 2024). Lastly, NGOs have initiatives that target the youth, elderly, women and children, social welfare, education, and other humanitarian activities for the poor and disempowered (Tsinga-Mambadja et al., 2024).

In 2023 alone, 270,313 NGOs were registered with the Department of Social Development. Moreover, 7 billion rand was allocated to support NGOs across the country (South African Government, n.d.). Therefore, NGOs have and will continue to play an important role in shaping and implementing participatory democracy. NGOs also remain important in providing basic services to poor communities in rural areas (Tshiyoyo, 2023). Moreover, NGOs are also able to provide social and economic services to poor communities (Adzakor Wisdom Kofi, 2024).

2.4 NGOs and their Functions

NGOs can provide direct services such as shelter and aid, educational awareness campaigns, advocate against corruption, and promote accountability by government officials (Abiddin et al., 2022). Furthermore, NGOs also seek to promote sustainable development through capacity-building and empowerment initiatives. Lastly, NGOs are also lauded for promoting community agency by facilitating participatory processes in communities (Korten 1990 as cited in Abiddin et al., 2022).

NGOs are viewed globally as policymakers and deemed more efficient and cost-effective in providing services and accessing people living in poverty (Mlambo et al., 2021). Similarly, NGOs are important in developing countries due to their advocacy for policy changes, as well as providing services in areas where governments have failed (Volmink & van der Elst, 2019).

In some regions where the state has abandoned its mandate to provide effective public services, NGOs are all that communities have (Nega & Schneider, 2014).

It should be noted that NGOs have a unique ability to localise Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to local contexts (Hassan et al., 2019; Nwauche & Flanigan, 2022; Reddy, 2016). Therefore, the relationship between NGOs and the government is critical for sustainable development. This is because NGOs and governments play a strategic role in development activities, which affect the recipients (Banks, 2021). NGOs also complement the state, where they provide services which the government is unable to and assist the state in policy implementation (Brass, 2022). Equally, NGOs can also oppose the state when human rights violations, through fraught policies, are being implemented and negatively impacting communities or when there is a failure to implement pro-poor policies that will benefit the vulnerable and poor (Ismail & Kamat, 2018). This makes NGOs a critical development partner, which can implement initiatives that can benefit local communities.

South Africa faces a triple burden of poverty, inequality, and unemployment, and as such, NGOs can respond to poverty through intentional and sustainable poverty eradication initiatives. Addressing these challenges requires responsive sectors, which include the public, business, civil society, and academia. NGOs also have trained personnel that facilitate and implement not only service delivery but also development initiatives as well (Gooding, 2017). Importantly, after three decades of democracy, many rural communities around the country, especially rural communities such as Qwa-Qwa, remain entrapped by persistent poverty.

2.5 NGOs and poverty eradication

NGOs have the potential to be key role players in poverty eradication globally, and they are also viewed as enablers of change by addressing the multidimensional aspects of deprivation (Abdullahi, 2019; Ngumbela & Mle, 2019). Their diverse initiatives include education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and community development, contributing to poverty eradication (Ayoo, 2022). Development scholars have shared doubts about NGOs' impact and effectiveness on poverty eradication (Cordeiro & Nyaruwata, 2016; Kang'ethe & Manomano, 2014). NGOs are further criticized for being donor-dependent, corrupt, and answerable to foreign donors, who have preconceived theories of poverty and subsequently pose as vehicles for neoliberal ideologies, thus making them incapable of reducing poverty (Nega & Schneider, 2014; Niyonkuru, 2016; Sakue-Collins, 2021). The literature is rich on NGOs and their

dependence on donors. However, NGOs need funding to remain operational, thus making donor funding an unavoidable reality. Moreover, NGOs must adhere to donor directives, which in part allow them to implement some projects, which may yield positive outcomes.

NGOs also contribute to poverty eradication through services such as micro-credit, provision of domestic animals, housing, education loans, and scholarships for students from poor backgrounds (Fuseini et al., 2022). A study by Mago and Hofisi, 2016, established that some NGOs in rural Zimbabwe had some success in poverty eradication through their income-generating projects. Similarly, a study in Bangladesh also found that high unemployment was mitigated by NGOs' income-generating programmes (Ghalib et al., 2015; Christensson, 2017). Although microfinance by NGOs has been cited as effective in poverty eradication, its impact is still questionable and differs from one country to another; importantly, it differs from urban to rural areas, indicating that although microfinancing has a positive impact, it's impact is varied (Samer et al., 2015). Therefore, the issuing of cash loans cannot reduce poverty; however, this needs to be accompanied by intentional training on how to manage finances (Uddin et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is critical to encourage the poor to start businesses to generate income and sustain themselves against poverty. However, with NGOs struggling to secure funding, the issuing of cash loans may not be sustainable. Importantly, NGOs acting as micro-lenders put them at the centre of exploiting and generating income from the poor, thus contradicting their pro-poor stance.

To make a meaningful impact on poverty eradication, NGOs need to have knowledge, skills, and a firm grasp of complex societal processes (Fuseini et al., 2022; Tshiyoyo, 2019). A study by Amofah and Agyare (2022), in rural Northern Ghana found that poverty eradication projects cannot succeed if they do not address people's basic needs. In addition, Nsah (2024) also found that NGOs in Cameroon were not effective in their poverty eradication programmes because they did not involve the beneficiaries in decision-making. As a result, the meaningful involvement of NGO employees is important in bringing contextual knowledge about communities and development (Cwaile, 2023). Similarly, Kabonga (2023) opines that volunteers positively impact NGO-driven community development as they have direct access to the community. To this end, it is challenging to have projects that alleviate poverty without a contextual background, directly influencing how initiatives will be received.

NGOs are closer to communities and closely reflect their needs, using a participatory approach, involving the community in their development, thus ensuring the sustainability of projects,

even after the organization has left (Nega & Schneider, 2014). Importantly, NGOs need to have the expertise to ensure sustainable development, which is contextual and reflects the lived experience of communities. Some NGOs in Qwa-Qwa are actively involved in fighting poverty through CNDCs, creating short-term employment and connecting communities to employment opportunities offered by other agencies. Indeed, this is important and plays a positive role in the well-being of communities and needs intentional effort from government and private partners to ensure that it.

2.6 NGOs in rural areas

Challenges facing rural areas, particularly Qwa-Qwa, are inequalities rooted in colonialism, underinvestment in services, unemployment, and poverty (Marais, 2023). Therefore, NGOs can play an important role in poverty eradication in rural areas.

NGOs are noted as key agents in poverty eradication and improving communities (Dahie, 2019). Addressing rural challenges requires a multisectoral strategy, which includes exploring means of revenue and innovative service delivery models which speak to the rural context and leadership that embraces collaboration and transformation (Mubangizi, 2023). The collaboration of the state with NGOs can bring about structural transformation in rural areas. Also, NGOs are closer to communities and closely reflect their needs, using a participatory approach and involving the community in their development, thus ensuring the sustainability of projects, even after the organization has left (Abiddin et al., 2022; Dzapasi & Tarusikirwa, 2023; Nega & Schneider, 2014).

According to a study by Ngumbela and Mle (2019), NGOs were critical in community well-being in the Amathole District in the Eastern Cape. However, their interventions were not directly focused on poverty, but they also made an important contribution to poverty eradication by creating employment opportunities. Therefore, employment opportunities created by NGOs are instrumental to poverty eradication. However, the types of employment created are often short-term.

The literature also places great emphasis on LED as an intervention for poverty eradication and job creation in rural areas (MAP, 2022). Community gardens and small communal projects must be supported as they have the potential to generate income. LED initiatives drive micro and small business opportunities and job creation to sustain and improve livelihoods (Matebese, 2022; Meyer, 2014; Mosotoane, 2022). LED initiatives also drive micro and small

business opportunities and job creation to sustain and improve livelihoods (Mahlalela, 2014). Equally, a study by Mahlalela (2014) in Mbombela, Mpumalanga found that implementing LED initiatives focus on alleviating poverty and supporting small businesses and promoting sustainability, especially in rural areas. Therefore, LED in collaboration with NGOs can help create employment, identify and upskill entrepreneurs and create sustainable rural economies among rural communities.

2.7 NGO challenges

NGOs are not immune to global economic trends. Due to the nature of NGOs, they depend on funding to serve communities. Therefore, funding is critical to the functioning of organizations (Agere, 2014). Consequently, the prospects of NGOs in Africa succeeding are often slim, without funding (Agere, 2014; Maboya & McKay, 2019). The persistent lack of funding NGOs encounter is well-documented in the literature (Kabonga, 2023; Kermani & Reandi, 2023; Kusmanto, 2013). Indeed, NGOs need to diversify their funding models and explore other means of funding to curb the over-reliance on donors (Abou Assi & Trent, 2015; Adegoke, 2024; Kabonga, 2017; Khieng & Dahles, 2015; Mitchell, 2014; Mpofu & Govender, 2022; Omeri, 2015). Changing donor priorities also impedes NGOs' functioning as they must refocus their activities to align with donor directives (Gotsadze et al., 2019; Lawrence, 2020; Maboya & McKay, 2019).

Funding challenges are especially pronounced in small rural NGOs. This is because funders use very rigorous criteria that do not consider the context within which NGOs operate in rural areas (Kermani & Reandi, 2023). Moreover, it is challenging for small NGOs to attract funding opportunities, jeopardizing their operations. Consequently, to get and keep funding, NGOs tend to move away from their mission and vision, negatively impacting the communities they serve (Kermani & Reandi, 2023). Similarly, Chanase (2023) also notes that NGOs tend to abandon their mission, in favour of donor funding to remain viable. This creates an over-dependence on donors and could harm poverty reduction efforts due to a lack of sustainability, unpredictable and inconsistent funding (Kabonga, 2023).

Ratlabyana et al., (2016) also states that the biggest challenge facing NGOs in South Africa is a lack of funding. This is despite government efforts to try and support NGOs. Equally, the South African government does not seem to adequately address the funding needs of NGOs (Mlambo et al., 2021).

NGOs also grapple with the lack of personnel, who are essential in the implementation of programmes (Mavee, 2022). Haque (2002 as cited in Ibrahim & Alagidede, 2020). NGOs need to periodically capacitate their personnel with the required skills needed in the development discourse (Mothusi et al., 2018). A report by the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP-SETA) found that NGOs cannot retain staff due to a lack of competitive salaries and staff benefits, due to a lack of funding.

The economic challenges South Africa faces are such that youth who volunteer in organizations often get paid significantly less than they ought to (Mati, 2017). However, volunteering forms an important aspect of acquiring skills and gaining work experience, improving their employment prospects as a result. To this end, the issue of funding in NGOs poses a serious challenge because smaller NGOs rely on volunteers. These volunteers are often not paid and subsequently leave to find employment opportunities, where they will be remunerated (ETDP-SETA, 2021).

A lack of financial support from the government and SETA was also cited as a challenge within the NGO sector (ETDP-SETA, 2021). NGOs also struggle with a lack of skilled human resources and project duplication, which negatively influences the implementation of programmes (Kwao & Amoak, 2022; Pallas & Sidel, 2020; Uddin et al., 2020). Human resource challenges such as job insecurity (Baluch & Ridder, 2021; Mer & Virdi, 2021; Zbuchea et al., 2019), salary dissatisfaction (Du Toit Née Renard & Snelgar, 2015; Skhosana, 2020; Zulu et al., 2017) and a heavy workload negatively impacted NGOs. Apart from funding challenges, NGOs need to contend with jaded, underpaid staff who play an instrumental role in implementing programmes in communities. Unfortunately, the lack of funding and mismanagement remain a stumbling block for many NGOs and could render them incapable of eradicating poverty.

The current challenge, however, is the emergence of NGOs that operate for a short period and close due to funding maladministration and a lack of funding, leadership, and good governance (Banks, 2021; Rooderick et al., 2016; Shava, 2019). Moreover, the lack of funding means that rural NGOs need to significantly reduce the operations and services they can provide in poor communities (AbouAssi, 2012 as cited in Makofane & Selepe, 2022). The issue of funding remains a common thread throughout the literature, it is therefore evident that alternative and innovative means of funding need to be explored. This is to ensure that NGOs remain operational and can implement poverty eradication initiatives and other programmes effectively.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and negative impact on the South African labour market and resultant unemployment (Köhler, 2023). Many people in the informal sector lost their jobs and the already unemployed had to rely on SRD grants, which was R350 to support themselves and their families. This resulted in a significant increase in poverty due to the high unemployment rate (Köhler, 2023). Many NGOs responded during the pandemic by offering food parcels to the poor and vulnerable; however, heavy restrictions often resulted in operations being halted. NGOs also had to rely on the Temporary Employer-Employee Relief Scheme (TERS), a wage subsidy meant to save jobs due to the pandemic. Sadly, many people are yet to receive their TERS wages, due to blatant mismanagement and corruption by many employers. The Department of Labour has to date recovered R2.5 billion rands from employers who claimed from the TERS fund (Comins, 2024). Ironically, the very NGOs that met the needs of many communities before and during the pandemic had to close because of COVID-19 and corruption from TERS fund mismanagement, resulting in more unemployment.

The literature is not definitive on whether NGOs can have a positive impact on poverty eradication. Furthermore, there is not much written on how NGOs can be effectively used to eradicate poverty in rural areas. The fact that the government is still grappling with poverty 30 years into democracy shows the need for a different, intentional, and collaborative approach. This approach requires role players who are well-versed in community needs and embrace development and sustainability to facilitate upward mobility and the overall well-being of communities. As a result, this study aimed to understand the role NGOs can play in poverty eradication.

2.8 Summary of the Chapter

A literature review of the study was presented to contextualise the study globally, regionally and nationally. Legislation relevant to the study was also highlighted. The role of NGOs, their challenges, together with poverty eradication strategies which were previously and are currently being used, also formed part of this chapter. The following chapter will discuss the theoretical framework used in this.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3. Introduction

This section will provide a detailed discussion of the theoretical framework that was deemed suitable for this research. According to Luft et al., (2022) theoretical frameworks assist in interpreting the phenomenon being studied. As a result, three approaches will be presented to enhance our understanding. of the research topic. This study adopted the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), the Community Development Approach and the Asset-Based Community Development Approach. These three approaches were chosen because they complement each other in both their strengths and weaknesses.

3.1. Sustainable Livelihood Approach

The basic tenets of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) are understanding the livelihoods of the poor, factors that limit or enhance livelihood opportunities (Serrat, 2017). SLA is people-centred, participatory, multilevel, and sustainable in collaboration with other stakeholders. Moreover, it can aid development projects and evaluate ongoing operations and their influence on maintaining livelihoods (Serrat, 2017). This approach highlights how critical institutions, societal norms and policies are to development initiatives. It also posits that policies can only be effective in the presence of appropriate institutions that can implement them (Serrat, 2017). SLA is applied to poverty eradication through understanding what prevents the poor from improving their lives and supports activities based on actual needs. Poverty is multi-dimensional therefore, improvement in one dimension may have a positive impact on the other. Lastly, the poor know and often understand their needs better than most, thus, they need to be involved in the design of initiatives aimed at improving their outcomes (Krantz, 2001).

The antecedents for SLA are livelihood and sustainability as concepts. The concept of livelihood is defined as “the means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets and intangible assets” (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p. 9). In addition, “a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Scoones, 1998, p. 5). As a result, SLA provides a conceptual and programme framework for poverty eradication and sustainability. It denotes the importance of the resilience of livelihoods to remain sustainable over time.

Advantages of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach

The SLA framework aids in organising factors that inhibit or enhance livelihood opportunities and their relatedness (Serrat, 2017). Central to this framework is the idea that different households are different and have access to different assets. Also, the poor often make trade-offs with the following livelihood assets:

•Human capital, e.g. health, nutrition, education, capacity to work and knowledge and skills

•Social capital, e.g. networks and connections, formal and informal groups, shared values, and decision-making

•Natural capital, e.g. land and its produce, water, trees and forest products and environmental services

•Physical capital, e.g. secure shelter, roads, water and sanitation, tools and equipment for production, seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides

•Financial capital, e.g. savings, wages, pensions and credit and debt (formal and informal)

The above list contains options that are considered important to ensure the sustainable livelihoods of individuals, families, or groups. Concerning the poor and disadvantaged, public and private sectors will invest in one or more of these assets to improve livelihoods (Gai et al., 2018; Serrat, 2017)

A livelihood is not merely about surviving but also about giving people access to resources that will improve their well-being. SLA addresses poverty by exploring ways to sustain livelihoods effectively. This approach acknowledges that poverty is complex, and its eradication requires active participation from people at the grassroots level and institutions. In addition, all stakeholders need to understand what needs to be done (Morse & McNamara, 2013). This approach acknowledges the importance of poverty eradication, but it also requires intentional, active participation that is impactful and long-term (Morse & McNamara, 2013).

The SLA approach focuses on improving development policies and strategies used in rural areas. It also assists in identifying and addressing challenges experienced in rural settings in accessing assets needed for survival (Gibbens & Schoeman, 2020).

Disadvantages of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach

According to Sen (1999), capabilities include processes that enable autonomy of actions and decision-making and existing opportunities that people have. Thus, people's livelihood

strategies, coupled with assets and capabilities, are informed by context. Context includes policies, history and socioeconomic factors (Scoones, 1998). Therefore, context can either have a positive or negative impact on livelihoods.

Contexts such as political instability negatively impact people's ability to access sustainable livelihood opportunities. Furthermore, historical factors such as colonialism systematically impact institutions and their ability to foster or form barriers to sustainable livelihoods. As such, institutions have a direct and indirect impact on sustainable livelihoods. Institutions, embedded power relations and historical contexts sometimes impede sustainable livelihoods (Scoones & Wolmer, 2003). People's lived experiences and the assets and capabilities thereof are also linked to their contexts. Some people fail to have sustainable livelihoods because of their context and not because they lack inherent capabilities. Therefore, the poor cannot be expected to make do with what they have, as this is directly linked to institutions which are often anti-poor and reproduce poverty and inequality, especially in developing countries.

Although SLA is holistic in its approach to poverty, it falls short of considering the overarching economic environment, which impacts livelihoods and sustainability. A weak or stagnant economy has a ripple effect, ultimately affecting people's livelihoods. Interestingly, research has also indicated that economic growth does not always translate into employment and subsequent poverty eradication. SLA must consider national and international political economies to make a meaningful impact.

The sustainable livelihoods Approach (SLA) provides the foundation for long-term poverty eradication by enhancing the resources people already have. It is not a solution in itself; however, it is holistic and offers a connection between enabling environments and livelihood strategies employed by the poor to survive poverty, which are relevant to this study.

3.2 Community development approach

Community development is often defined as a process where community members rally together as a collective to act and find solutions to common problems. The concept is broad and is applied to many practices involving civic leaders, activists, citizens, and professionals to enhance and build strong, resilient communities (Rakotoarison et al., 2019). The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) affirms community development as an intervention approach to implement development programmes to improve community members' lives. It also considers the socio-economic factors that play a critical role in the development of communities.

Community development is also a recognised professional discipline, which is a practice-based academic discipline that promotes participatory action, social justice, and economic opportunities. Importantly, community empowerment remains a key factor of this approach (Banks, 2021); O'Brien et al., 2024).

Advantages of the Community Development Approach

Community development is a holistic approach that considers communities as experts in their lived experiences and recognizes their values, community knowledge and wisdom (Dahal & White, 2022). Community development programmes are spearheaded by communities at every stage, from decision-making to selecting appropriate actions on issues affecting them (Buye, 2021). Furthermore, community development is focused on the redistribution of power back to communities to address inequality and poverty. This approach empowers people to have the necessary capacity to improve their lives (Hasan, 2022).

The community development approach includes different techniques of operating and working with communities. These approaches include the needs-based approach, problem-solving approach, participatory approach, welfare approach and rights-based approach (Nel, 2020).

Community development asserts that every community has resources, and it is important to understand how these resources can be mobilised to eradicate poverty. This theory is important for this study as it attempts to understand how organizations develop strategies to mobilise resources for the well-being of the communities they serve.

Disadvantages of the Community Development Approach

Community development places heavy emphasis on community participation and the involvement of community development practitioners to bring about meaningful change in community settings (Mtika & Kistler, 2017). The context within which many communities live is important in determining the success of community development interventions.

Developing countries face many challenges, which are often influenced by the global economic system. The lack of resources, especially in rural areas, is a real challenge for many communities (Moloto et al., 2020). Community members must grapple with taking care of their families with little to no resources and a lack of service delivery. As such, community initiatives may sometimes fail because they do not adequately address everyone's felt needs.

Community development practitioners are central in ensuring that initiatives are implemented and owned by communities (Moeti & Mokoena, 2017). This places some power, to a degree, in the hands of the practitioners and gatekeepers who may influence the direction of the envisioned projects. As such, some projects may not be in the best interest of the community and may serve only those in power. Projects are meant to empower and help communities to become self-sufficient and not tick boxes that projects have been implemented, which do not benefit communities.

Practitioners have expertise and may also connect communities with other stakeholders (Morshedzadeh et al., 2022). Misaligned stakeholder expectations may create tensions between practitioners and communities. Thus, outside interference, such as political pressure or external donor expectations, can negatively impact communities. Therefore, the locus of control must be adequately shared among all stakeholders. Furthermore, a thorough needs assessment needs to be conducted before any interventions can take place. It is critical to ensure that practitioners implement initiatives aligned with community needs and that adequate consensus is reached to ensure sustainability among community members. Lastly, a fine line exists between working in collaboration with the community and doing things for the community, thus disempowering them.

The importance of initiatives/projects that serve to benefit communities and meet their felt needs cannot be overstated. However, typical programmes and related projects therein are time-bound. Entering communities is both challenging and time-consuming; other processes related to the implementation of initiatives may be slowed down as well (Kadariya et al., 2023). Some interventions are necessary in certain communities, and dynamics that exist within community systems may also pose a challenge, thus compromising the project time frame.

Community development has also become synonymous with service delivery aimed at meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable (Moeti & Mokoena, 2017). Many communities in South Africa still need government interventions and services to meet their personal as well as development goals. The overreliance on the state needs to be gradually reduced to foster empowerment and self-sufficiency among communities. Therefore, community development engenders conscientious communities to shape their development with assistance from external resources, identified by the community (Luka & Maistry, 2012).

3.3 Asset-Based Community Development Approach

In their seminal work on successful communities and community-building efforts in vulnerable neighbourhoods, McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) incorporated Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) in their work. ABCD aims to mobilise and draw upon the inherent skills and resources of individuals and communities to enhance their well-being. This approach contends that communities have local assets that can be used to create opportunities and improve their conditions. Assets are not just personal attributes and skills; they also include relationships between people. Therefore, through personal engagements and networking, community members become active participants in development instead of inactive recipients.

Advantages of Asset-Based Community Development Approach

Asset-based community Development (ABCD) focuses on identifying and enhancing the assets and strengths to facilitate positive change in communities (Scott et al., 2020). The following assumptions are related to ABCD, namely community engagement, asset mapping, asset mobilisation and capacity building (Omodan, 2023).

Community Engagement: Community engagement is an important factor which impacts positive and meaningful transformation (Omodan, 2023). This assumption emphasises that communities can identify their strengths, assets and resources (Misener & Schulenkorf, 2016). Moreover, community engagement enables members to come up with unique solutions to their problems. Through effective engagement and collaboration, community members can take ownership of their development and address their challenges (Omodan, 2023). This assumption denotes that when communities are engaged in their development, they can take control and bring about meaningful changes in their environments.

Asset mapping: Asset mapping entails identifying inherent strengths and resources within a community. This component recognises that communities have unique assets that can be used to foster positive changes (Omodan, 2023). Through the identification of these assets and resources, communities can work together to come up with solutions that use these assets as leverage. The ABCD approach, through identifying community strengths and assets, can foster resilience and help empower communities.

Asset mobilisation: this stage involves resources and strengths, identified through asset mapping, to address community challenges (Xu & Maitland, 2017). As a result, community assets can be used to bring about change. Collaboration is important in communities to ensure that solutions are developed, based on strengths and resources. Importantly, this enables

members to move away from a position of having deficits to a strength base (Roof & McVee, 2020). This approach empowers communities to mobilise resources to bring about positive changes and create lasting solutions to their challenges.

Capacity Building: developing skills, knowledge base and resources to bring about positive changes in communities is an important aspect of capacity building (Nel, 2015). To implement and sustain change, communities need to be capacitated. The community is thus empowered to look within, for capabilities and resources to become self-sufficient instead of depending on external aid (Omodan, 2023). ABCD enables communities to become empowered with skills and knowledge to adequately respond to challenges and subsequently become self-sufficient.

This approach views assets of lower-income communities as important, and these can be amplified by additional resources from the outside. Thus, external resources will be more effective if the local community is fully invested and can also identify additional resources they need.

Apart from individual assets, local institutions located in communities are also important and make up the asset base of communities. One of the goals of ABCD is to facilitate and strengthen ties between communities and local institutions (Alevizou et al., 2016). These include businesses, public institutions, non-profit organizations, and social services agencies. Incorporating these institutions is critical to the process of community development. Therefore, a community that mobilizes its asset base in its entirety will be involved and invested in local institutions.

Poverty eradication requires a multi-sectoral approach, whose sole purpose is to empower and facilitate communities to be self-sustaining. NGOs, as previously mentioned in the literature, play a key role in connecting communities with resources and as such, they can also play an active role in poverty eradication initiatives.

Disadvantages of the Asset-Based Community Development Approach

The idea that communities have assets and can drive their development almost fails to recognise the historic socio-political impacts of some communities. Some communities have little to no assets due to gross inequality and poverty, which impacts their asset base and level of participation in community initiatives. Making people's assets take centre stage and owners of their development almost negates the system from addressing poverty and inequality.

The failure to implement pro-poor policies is one of the many reasons people remain in dire poverty, especially in South Africa. The idea of communities owning their assets and poverty eradication strategies puts the responsibility squarely on communities to emancipate and develop themselves. Therefore, systems that cause and maintain poverty and inequality need to be adequately addressed if such approaches are to work in rural communities in South Africa.

Poverty is a multi-layered phenomenon, and at times, community assets and capabilities are not enough to make a meaningful and lasting impact on communities. Although assets from lower-income communities are critical in this approach, they are not enough to mitigate development challenges such as poverty (Rakotoarison et al., 2019). Therefore, pro-poor policy implementation, coupled with meaningful community engagement and the inherent assets people have, is critical to eradicating poverty.

The theories above are useful for understanding poverty holistically and give practical and context-specific solutions to poverty eradication. They not only consider individuals and their assets, but they also consider organizations, policies, and development in poverty eradication. Therefore, the nexus between organizations, i.e. NGOs and poverty eradication, using these theories is critical to this study.

Asset-based theory is relevant to this study because it enables communities to see their capabilities and strengths, thus empowering rural communities to realise their strengths, assets, and abilities. It is important to ascertain how NGOs navigate the assets communities have and how these are used to come up with poverty eradication interventions.

3.4 Theoretical framework to guide the study

The above theories are relevant to this study because they recognise communities as having agency, assets and a willingness to engage in matters related to their development. The disadvantage of one theory is complemented by the advantage of another theory, making it relevant to this study. Indeed, these theories are pragmatic to the study, however the SLA theory is holistic and helps in understanding livelihoods, particularly those of people in rural areas. Furthermore, it also denotes the roles NGOs play in helping people living in poverty to access sustainable livelihoods. SLA also views people as having assets, which can be nurtured by NGO strategies to help people help themselves. Qwa-Qwa has many rural communities, plagued by poverty and unemployment.

Therefore, the SLA helps us to understand the roles NGOs play in navigating poverty and its complexities, especially in rural areas.

3.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter discussed the theoretical framework that underpinned this study. The SLA, community development and ABCD theories, their advantages, disadvantages, as well as their relevance to the study were detailed in this section. This study sought to use relevant theories that help explain the dynamics related to the topic. The following chapter focuses on research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology used in the study. A qualitative research approach was adopted, which impacts the sampling method, the type of research instrument, data collection and how data will be analysed. The sampling methods, research instrument, data collection and analysis and the pretesting procedures are also discussed. The chapter also discusses issues around trustworthiness and ethical considerations. Lastly, the limitations and delimitations of the study are also explained.

4.1 Research methodology

Research scholars annotate worldviews as philosophical dispositions about the world and thus, guide the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Therefore, studying social phenomena cannot proceed without accompanying theoretical paradigms (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Shah et al., 2013). Paradigms are lenses used to view life and provide several assumptions about the nature of reality. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a paradigm includes four important elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology (Creswell, 2013).

Ontology describes 'the nature of reality' or what kind of world is under investigation (Crotty, 2020). Epistemology specifies how we know what we know, and thus, the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (Sol & Heng, 2022) Moreover, the methodology defines the practical ways the researcher does the research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Lastly, axiology relates to the personal values and biases researchers bring to the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The ontological perspective that the researcher adopted came from the notion that each organization understood and responded to poverty in its respective way, based on its subjective viewpoints. In addition, to explore these subjective viewpoints, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather insight into poverty eradication initiatives used by NGOs in rural communities in Qwa-Qwa. Lastly, participants in the study needed to be treated with respect and their identities protected. As a result, before the commencement of the interviews, the researcher sought permission to conduct interviews by contacting and visiting organizations and getting permission letters. Moreover, informed consent before the interviews was sought to ensure that participants understood that their inputs would be handled with respect.

4.1.1 Interpretive Research Paradigm

The interpretive research paradigm derives truth from people's subjective experiences. Furthermore, this paradigm acknowledges the existence of multiple truths and realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Using this paradigm, the researcher and participant co-create meaning through their subjective relationship (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Thus, the researcher's perspective of reality impacts the study and must be explored and addressed (Creswell & Miller, 1997).

The study aimed to explore the role of NGOs in Qwa-Qwa in poverty eradication. This task was also intended to discover and understand NGOs' roles from their point of view, in their context. As such, an interpretive paradigm was an appropriate fit for the study and through a qualitative research methodology.

4.1.2 Qualitative Research Approach

The three research approaches often used in social sciences namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. Thus, this study made use of a qualitative research approach to gain thick insights into the role NGOs played in poverty eradication in rural areas of Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State. The qualitative research approach is used for inquiring into a social problem and allows the researcher to: form a holistic picture, analyse and report detailed accounts of participants' views, and conduct research in its natural setting (Creswell & Miller, 1997). This approach is also inductive, as it is open and flexible, and it attempts to look for new insights into a phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The disadvantage of the qualitative research approach lies in the fact that researchers are subjective in their analysis and interpretation of the findings. As such, different people can provide different interpretations of the same phenomenon being studied based (Mwita, 2022). Therefore, qualitative research is a relatively subjective approach.

Poverty is a complex phenomenon, and NGOs' views on how to address it in rural settings are essential (Simpson Reeves et al., 2020). Equally, qualitative methodology can provide a holistic picture of NGOs' roles in poverty eradication. Importantly, this approach can also bridge the knowledge gap into what is not known about poverty eradication in rural areas, through participants' perspectives. Therefore, this study had its underpinnings within the interpretive research paradigm. As such, the study used a qualitative approach, with an exploratory case study research design. This was because case studies can explore phenomena in their respective contexts (Yin, 2009).

4.1.3 Research Design

A research design is a layout of how the researcher will conduct the study (Babbie et al., 2001). According to Yin (2009) the case study design has 3 approaches: explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive. Firstly, the explanatory approach focuses on explaining phenomena by probing how and why an event has occurred. This approach is useful when testing theories or hypotheses. Secondly, the exploratory approach focuses on exploring new phenomena, and it is useful when the researcher wants to investigate a topic in which little is known. Lastly, the descriptive approach is used to describe phenomena and is frequently used to meticulously elaborate on a case.

This study used the exploratory case study approach because it investigates situations and processes, and it answers the "what", "how", and "why" questions of the case being studied (Poulis et al., 2013). The role NGOs play in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa required the researcher to adopt an exploratory lens to understand the topic in detail. Moreover, exploratory case studies are apt to cover topics in business organizations and social institutions (Welch et al., 2022).

A case is defined as a contemporary phenomenon occurring within its real-life context (Yin, 2014). Cases can be studied as single or multiple sub-units of analysis, these can be individuals, projects, programmes, corporations, roles, or locations within the same case. A key principle of a case study methodology lies in defining the case and phenomenon being studied. Thus, researchers must describe the case in detail and be circumscribed by time and place to ensure accuracy and feasibility (Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007). The study aimed to explore NGOs (cases) and their role in rural poverty eradication (phenomenon) in Qwa-Qwa (context); therefore, a case study is best suited for this study.

The main challenge with this design is that the study cannot be generalised due to the limited sample size, and that participants were not randomly selected. This limits the data and what can be known about this phenomenon. However, case study design is useful when the researcher wants an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon or case in its context. Importantly, this design allows multiple similar cases to be studied concurrently (Rashid et al., 2019). Thus, three organizations were selected to form part of the research study by the researcher.

The aim of case study research is to generalise to the larger population; however, it is to explore phenomena in their contexts thoroughly. As a result, objectivity was not the goal of this research

design. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the role of NGOs in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa.

4.1.4 Research Site

This research took place in Qwa-Qwa which is situated in the Eastern Free State and falls under the Maluti-A-Phofung local municipality, which is the biggest municipality in the Thabo Mofutsanyane District. The municipality is divided into 35 wards, and some of these wards are rural villages, which operate under the authority of traditional chiefs (StatsSA, 2025). The overall unemployment rate is 41%, while the youth unemployment rate is 53% (StatsSA, 2025). Due to the persistent poverty in this area, this was deemed an appropriate site for this research.

4.2 Population

A population is defined as a group or individuals targeted for a specific study with similar characteristics (Creswell, 2014). According to Bless et al., (2013) a population consists of people needed to achieve research findings. Furthermore, the research problem should be directly or indirectly associated with the population. The population for this study includes all NGOs involved in rural poverty eradication programmes in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State. The National Development Agency recorded 66 organizations involved in the poverty alleviation sector in the Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality area (NDA, 2025). Therefore, it is against this background that the study was undertaken.

4.3 Sampling

According to De Vos et al. (2011), sampling is described as taking any segment of a population as a representative of that population. Non-probability sampling was used for this study. Non-probability sampling selects elements based on the availability and willingness to participate in the study. Furthermore, the chosen elements must be typical of the population being studied (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Under non-probability sampling, a purposive sampling method was used. A purposive sample contains characteristics that are relevant to the study. Three NGOs, a Social Development manager for Community Development, Community Development practitioners and an LED manager from the municipality. Moreover, this sample was based on the researcher's judgment in seeking the best cases for the study to produce detailed and rich data (Morse, 2010; Patton, 2002).

This study focused on three NGOs in Qwa-Qwa whose programmes were aimed at poverty eradication. The sample size consisted of two employees and one manager/CEO from each of the three selected NGOs in Qwa-Qwa, one Social Development manager for Community

Development, two Community Development practitioners, and one LED manager from the municipality. All participants had to be working directly in poverty eradication initiatives in their organizations, with communities in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State.

The recruitment process involved identifying and targeting potential participants, followed by providing information to participants for the proposed study (Negrin et al., 2022). Participants in this study were recruited based on their age, level of education, position/role at the organizations and years of experience. In addition, organizations had to work in the poverty eradication sector, with rural communities in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State.

Initial contact was made with the Department of Social Development for a database on NGOs involved in poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa through the Community Development Manager at the Department of Social Development. The issue of the POPI Act and the use of people's private contact details required the researcher to first obtain permission to contact potential organizations, which were central to the study.

The researcher contacted the Department of Social Development in Qwa-Qwa to obtain a database of all listed NGOs. Based on the database, three NGOs were identified, and initial visits were made to introduce the researcher to potential participants, explain the objectives of the study and ascertain if they met the inclusion criteria for the study. The inclusion criteria included age, the highest level of education, position/role and years of experience at the organization. In addition, organizations had to have been involved in poverty eradication initiatives with rural communities in Qwa-Qwa. Also, all potential participants had to be working in poverty eradication initiatives at their organizations. This included volunteers, part-time and permanent staff.

The researcher handed out and went through the PIS to organizations to further elaborate on the study during the initial visit. Finally, organizations that indicated interest in the study were asked for permission letters per the non-medical ethical guidelines of the University of the Witwatersrand before interviews were scheduled.

Table 4.3.1 Composition of the research sample

Organization/Department	Number
NGO A NGO B NGO C	3 3 3
Social Development Manager: Community Development	1
Community Development Practitioners	2
LED Manager from the Maluti-A-Phofung Municipality	1

Table 4.3.1 above denotes where (organization/department) participants were selected from and the number from each organization or department.

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify organisations. This, unfortunately, limited the data somewhat; however, insights from these cases enriched the understanding of poverty eradication in rural contexts. Furthermore, external validity could not be applied to this study; nonetheless, insights regarding poverty are the objective of this study, and generalising to the entire population was not the intent of the research.

4.4 Research instrument(s) and pre-testing of the research instruments

The study made use of two semi-structured interview guides, one for NGOs and the other for the Department of Social Development and LED (see Appendix 3A and 3b). A semi-structured interview guide is essential for conducting semi-structured interviews. Such a guide contains open-ended questions that help steer the interview process. Additionally, the interview guide includes key topics and subtopics that are prepared in advance. A carefully crafted interview guide ensures that the interviewer remains focused on the original research questions. Therefore, the researcher must be able to ask appropriate questions, interpret answers, and actively listen while having a firm grasp of the study. Two sets of interview guides were used in this study: one for NGOs and the other for the Department of Social Development and LED managers, as well as community development practitioners. The researcher utilised an

interview guide to navigate the conversations with participants (see Appendix 3a and 3b). Clarity was maintained throughout the interviews, and participants were permitted to speak in Sesotho, their first language, to fully engage in the interview. The interviews were subsequently translated into English for analysis.

4.5 Pre-testing of the research instruments

In this research, the researcher applied a semi-structured interview guide to collect the data. Before the data collection, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the Wits University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), certificate number SW24/07/04. Thereafter, the researcher prepared the pretest research instrument. Pretesting entails replication of the data collection technique that is going to be used in the study on a smaller sample to identify potential problems with the data collection instrument (Hurst et al., 2015). A pretest in qualitative research is often done by interviewing individuals or groups with similar attributes to the target population. The interviews must also include all study material, which will be administered, e.g. consent forms. This process is important in identifying errors and language issues. Furthermore, it serves to ensure that study materials and appropriate questions are being used (Hurst et al., 2015).

The researcher identified one organization in Qwa-Qwa that shared similar characteristics with the target population. The data collection material and interview guide for the study were used to interview at least two members of the organization, one employee and the manager/CEO, to ascertain whether there were challenges with the instrument. The pre-testing interviews were conducted and measured what the researcher intended to aimed to measure, as a result, nothing from the interview guide was changed.

4.5 Method of data collection

This research study adopted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to collect data. Therefore, semi-structured interviews are a predominant means of data collection in qualitative research. Interviews are also used to understand a participant's beliefs or accounts of a particular topic (De Vos et al., 2011). In addition, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to gain in-depth knowledge and evidence from interviewees. These interviews are also flexible and adaptable, enabling researchers to track the study and ask follow-up questions (Ruslin et al., 2022). In this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to collect data from NGOs, the Department of Social Development, and LED from the municipality in Qwa-Qwa in the

Eastern Free State. A semi-structured interview guide, with open-ended questions, was also used to help navigate the interviews.

Semi-structured interviews are useful in collecting data; however, they also have limitations. To protect the privacy of individuals during interviews, researchers need to explain the procedure beforehand to participants (Ruslin et al., 2022). The researcher obtained informed consent and went through the form before interviews started. The researcher also explained that the interviews would be recorded, participant identities would be kept anonymous and that they were allowed to stop the interview at any point if they felt the need to. This information was also contained in the consent form that the participants signed before the interview started (see Appendix 2).

Participants' beliefs, attitudes and the interviewer's legitimacy often impact the interview. The context of the interview may also limit the response. The researcher ensured that the interview process was convenient by having participants choose a place, time and date convenient for them to be interviewed. As a result, all participants chose to be at their place of work during office hours at their respective organizations in Qwa-Qwa. Lastly, before commencing the interviews, the researcher obtained informed consent from participants and informed them that they could use any language in which they felt comfortable expressing themselves so that their responses would not be limited. Consequently, one participant spoke isiZulu while the others spoke both English and Sesotho during their interviews, which were later translated for analysis.

Researchers must code data meticulously and securely store the information provided (Cozby & Bates, 2024). Before the interview started, the researcher explained that the interviews would be recorded using the researcher's mobile device as detailed in the consent form (see Appendix 3a). The interviews averaged between 50 minutes to an hour and a half in duration. Importantly, the recorded interviews were stored in a password-protected cloud, accessible only by the researcher and their supervisor, upon request.

4.6 Method of Data Analysis

The researcher applied thematic analysis method to analyse the data. Thematic analysis involves the identification of patterns or themes within qualitative data sets (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This type of analysis also allows researchers to better understand the data (Elliott, 2018).

Thematic analysis can either be inductive or deductive (Braun & Clarke, 2006 as cited in Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). The inductive thematic analysis is directly related to the research questions or the researcher's interest. Conversely, deductive thematic analysis is guided by the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Braun and Clarke (2006) present a six-phase framework, which is important for analysis. It is important to note that thematic analysis is not linear, as it requires moving back and forth between emerging themes. The six-phase framework is detailed below.

1. Becoming familiar with the data: In this initial step, the researcher transcribed all the recorded data. This was followed by carefully reading each transcript from the data set the data a few times before coming up with initial codes.
2. Generating initial codes: Interesting features were created systematically from the collected data set and organised into codes.
3. Observing for themes: Emerging themes were formed from combined codes. The data was then organized according to each emerging theme.
4. Reviewing themes: The emerging themes were assessed to ascertain if they related to the excerpts in the coded data set. This was used to create a thematic blueprint from the data.
5. Definition of themes: As the analysis continued, the themes were refined, and the analysis began to paint a clear picture of the data set and allowing for the definition and naming of themes.
6. The final report: This final step made use of quotations from participants, analysed the said quotations in the final report and related these to the research questions and literature thereof. This step told a story of the presented data, using quotes to give the data validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The study was deductive because the researcher interviewed the participants with no preconceived notions of what they might share. Accordingly, as the data was being analysed, it began to answer the research questions, and the data was grouped into the themes. As a result, the themes and subsequent subthemes were organised according to the research questions of the study.

This method allowed the researcher to prepare and interpret data. Furthermore, this method was appropriate for this study because it allowed for the linking of themes and subthemes with the interview transcripts. As previously mentioned, poverty is a complex phenomenon, and

thus, different ideas and inputs from NGOs regarding poverty were important to gain an in-depth insight into how NGOs responded to poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa.

4.7 Trustworthiness of the study

The concept of validity is more commonly accepted in quantitative research than in qualitative research. Thus, qualitative research holds a different standard for judging the quality of the research. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) the four criteria used to judge the soundness of qualitative research include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.7.1 Credibility

Qualitative research aims to depict phenomena being studied from the participants' point of view. Therefore, participants are the only ones who can authenticate the credibility of the results (Shenton, 2004). Researchers need to spend sufficient time with participants to understand their reality. In addition, strategies such as follow-ups, avoiding bias and reporting both positive and negative findings provide an opportunity for being critiqued (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Miles and Huberman (1994) also assert that to enhance credibility, the researcher as a research instrument needs to possess the following skills: familiarity with phenomena being investigated and research context; triangulation using theory and skills in conceptualising data; investigation skills; and the ability to use a multidisciplinary approach.

The study was conducted in Qwa-Qwa, with organizations implementing poverty eradication interventions. The researcher would make follow-ups if appropriate and used similar set of questions to gather data from the participants to enhance credibility of the findings. In addition, the researcher was familiar with the phenomenon being studied and possessed the necessary knowledge to conduct the research.

4.7.2. Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which the research findings can be transferred to other settings and produce the same results (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The results cannot be generalised, and transferability cannot be guaranteed; however, the researcher can enhance transferability by thoroughly describing the context and assumptions important to the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989 as cited in Shenton, 2004). The study took place in a rural setting, and the context has been laid out previously, therefore, the assumption that NGOs would be effective in eradicating poverty in Qwa-Qwa was tested.

4.7.3 Dependability

Dependability is described as achieving similar results, where the same study can be replicated in the same environment, using similar approaches with similar participants (Shenton, 2004). Poverty is a complex phenomenon; however, poverty in the rural South African context shares similar characteristics. Therefore, this study may be replicated in rural contexts by using the same study design, integrating the theoretical framework, and data collection methods and analysis to ensure quality, which can be replicated in a similar setting.

4.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is defined as the extent to which research results validate the expected findings. Therefore, the researcher must keep a record of all the information used in the study, including recorded interviews and transcripts. Moreover, the researcher has to thoroughly audit the data and determine bias and distortion (Shenton, 2004). Thus, copies of the interview recordings and transcripts have been kept safe on a password-protected cloud by the researcher and made accessible upon request.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics refers to a set of principles that guide what is right and wrong when conducting research (Praveen & Showkat, 2017). Research involves people, and as such, researchers need to anticipate ethical issues which may arise because of the research. This study involved human participants and always upheld their integrity. Every effort was taken to ensure that participants understood the objectives of the study and their roles, through informed consent forms and discussing these before the interview commenced. Importantly, the researcher adhered to the Wits Ethics non-medical guidelines for research under protocol number: SW24/07/04.

The following was taken into consideration for this study:

4.8.1 Voluntary participation

This research study involved working with people; as such, measures were put in place to ensure that participants were protected. The researcher obtained an ethical certificate from the Wits Ethics non-medical committee under protocol SW24/07/04 (see Appendix 5). Furthermore, participants must be informed in writing about the study and their roles therein (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). As such, a participant information sheet was shared with participants to understand the purpose of the study and other related information (See Appendix A). Participants could also ask questions and get clarity before agreeing to take part in the research.

4.8.2 Informed Consent

Participants were contacted, and all necessary information about the study was shared. Furthermore, participants indicated whether they wished to take part in the study through consent (Appendix 2) or if they chose not to participate (Praveen & Showkat, 2017). The participant information sheet was timely shared with the participants, and those who agreed to participate signed the consent form. The researcher also explained the information sheet content and consent forms before the interviews commenced. This was to ensure that participants understood their roles in the study and were also allowed to ask questions for clarity.

4.8.3 Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity

Confidentiality in research aims to ensure that all the information shared by participants will not be accessed by any third party (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Therefore, to protect the privacy and identity of participants, pseudonyms were used and any information which could identify participants (Itzik & Walsh, 2023). Importantly, the researcher ensured that all devices containing raw data were password-protected and only shared this with her supervisor or any member of the academic staff, where necessary.

4.8.4 Non-maleficence

Non-maleficence speaks to the safety and well-being of participants and must be the primary concern of the researcher (Praveen & Showkat, 2017). Research must do no physical, emotional, professional, or psychological harm to participants taking part in the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). For this study, the researcher used their research skills, treated participants with respect and avoided using questions which were sensitive, or which brought their organizations into disrepute.

No participants experienced emotional discomfort during the interview due to direct or indirect experiences related to the topic. If this had happened, participants would have been referred to the Department of Social Development in Qwa-Qwa to the social workers for counselling. The social workers' contact details were as follows: Ms Rose Taole or Mr Lerato Mohlomi at the Department of Social Development, FDC Building, Phuthaditjhaba, Qwa-Qwa; Telephone number: 058 713 2877 and none were referred as this need did not arise.

4.8.5 Debriefing

Debriefing is a process where the researcher discusses the data immediately after it is collected (McMahon & Winch, 2018). In addition, debriefings allow participants to reflect on their

experience of the interview, what worked well and how the researcher can improve the process of data collection (Macdiarmid et al., 2020). Following all interviews, all participants were allowed to reflect, ask questions and get clarity on anything they were unsure of.

4.8.6 Sharing of research findings

The researcher must share all findings of research, whether they are positive or negative. As such, all the information collected was recorded, and any additional notes and materials were disclosed during data analysis. The researcher clarified to all participants that once the research study had been examined, they would share the findings and additionally share a soft and hard copy of the research upon request.

4.9 Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations describe any constraint which may occur while doing research, which is outside the researcher's control. Delimitations involve any elements which may affect the study, over which the researcher has control (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The onus was on the researcher to address challenges that may arise so that they do not impact the study's outcome.

Table 4.9.1 Limitations and delimitations are presented in the table below

No.	Limitations	Delimitations
1	The sampling method (non-probability) does not include everyone	Case study research offers in-depth data on units studied. The aim is not to generalize to the entire population but rather to understand phenomena in detail.
2	Researcher bias and participants giving socially appropriate responses	I informed all participants that there is no right or wrong answer. This allowed the participants to be free and answer the questions honestly
3.	Accessing NGOs in different areas around Qwa-Qwa	Prior arrangements had to be made by the researcher to be able to access all NGOs as they were all located in different villages, far from one another. Access was often a challenge due to the state of the roads in some villages. Also, busy schedules meant that appointments had to be adhered to by the researcher. Lastly, rainy weather conditions could have posed a challenge in accessing the

		organizations; however this was not the case during data collection.

4.10 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlined the research methodology which was used in this study. This section detailed the research approach, population sampling and design. The research instrument used in the study was also discussed, coupled with pre-testing of the research instrument. The method of data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations and mitigating factors thereof, were also discussed in this chapter. The following chapter will present and discuss the main findings from the study.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5. Introduction

This study aimed to explore the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication through a case study of Qwa-Qwa in the Free State. Thus, this chapter will detail the findings from the interviews conducted. The chapter will begin with a profile of the participants who were interviewed. Furthermore, a framework for discussing the findings will be presented in tabular format. Lastly, the findings will be addressed per the sequencing of the framework table.

5.1 Biographical Profiles of Interview Participants

The following table depicts the participants' profiles according to their respective ages, education levels, roles and years of experience

Table 5.1.1 Research Participants Profiles

Participants	Age	Highest level of education	Position/ role	Years of Experience
1	56	University	Director (Founder)	18
2	54	University	Coordinator	4
3	32	Grade 12	Volunteer	2
4	56	University	LED Manager	27
5	44	University	Community Development Practitioner	5
6	37	University	Community Development Practitioner	13
7	52	University	Deputy-Director	27
8	Preferred not to say	College	Director (Founder)	7
9	21	University	Deputy-Chairperson	2
10	Preferred not to say	Grade 12	Treasurer	7
11	38	University	Director	16
12	35	University	Operational Manager	9
13	25	University	Project Coordinator	5

Table 5.1.1 illustrates the respective profiles of the participants who were interviewed from different organizations and government departments.

The lowest qualification among participants was a Grade 12 certificate, and the highest was a Masters degree. Most participants (*N=9*) had university degrees, which is in line with the literature on skills needed by NGO staff. The years of experience varied from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 27 years. Equally, the age distribution ranged from 21 to 56 years among those who indicated their ages.

The staff of any organization are key to its operational mandate and success (Hellmuth, 2014). Building and maintaining a sustainable NGO needs a staff contingent that is knowledgeable with skills in project management, proposal writing, fundraising and monitoring and evaluation (Inamdar et al., 2018; Ngumbela & Mle, 2019). It is also important for staff to keep up with the latest trends in the poverty eradication sector (Muzambi, 2019).

The effectiveness of service provision by NGOs necessitates staff with relevant qualifications, in line with the sector. In addition, staff who have been with NGOs for longer periods have experience and insight into what skills deficiencies exist in their organizations (Muzambi, 2019).

5.2 Presentation of themes

The interview data is presented in a framework for in-depth analysis and discussion of findings. Table 5.2.1 below presents emerging themes, sub-themes and sub-sub-themes which will be further analysed in the findings section of this research report.

Table 5.2.1 Themes emerging from the findings

Themes	Subthemes
What is poverty	Poverty in Qwa-Qwa Unemployment in Qwa-Qwa Poverty eradication strategies
Challenges NGOs experience in poverty eradication	Funding Support from stakeholders Lack of volunteers The community Corruption

Resources needed to eradicate poverty	Funding Skills development Collaboration Community assets

5.3 Discussion of findings

This section will provide a comprehensive overview and interpretation of the research study's findings. Importantly, the themes and their associated sub-themes will be analysed in detail.

5.3.1 Theme 1: What is poverty

The first theme looked at poverty and poverty eradication interventions that organizations in the NGO and government sectors engaged in. This theme is further divided into three sub-themes, and each of the sub-themes will be individually analysed.

5.3.1.1 Subtheme 1: Poverty in Qwa-Qwa

Many of the participants (*N=7*) in the study detailed their observations of poverty in Qwa-Qwa. One participant elaborated on a village he visited, which was extremely poor. He mentioned that:

> *so the houses I went to, maybe about 150....walking in the village. But then I found that there was nobody working there. They survive with R350...they survive on R350....maybe there is an elderly grandmother...maybe a disability grant. But then this community is poverty stricken...yeah here in Qwa-Qwa… It was also the first time being in a place like that. It is very hard. It's very hard in some places.* (**Participant 6)**

Similarly, two other participants respectively opined that:

> *So, eh, poverty right now compared to the 90s and early, early, late 90s, right now, I won't say it's worse. It's more than worse, because if there, let me talk about percentages. If you know the poverty level here in Qwa-Qwa was 20% at that time. Today I'd say to you, it's 95%. It's more than tripled, it's more than tripled so it's …if I was to resign from my job today, today, I leave my job, it means I won't be able to work anymore until I die* **(Participant 4)**

> *but poverty is hammering our community, it is heartbreaking. The situation that we're living in people being unemployed. I remember when you're speaking about a very*

painful thing, we went to another school and we got there, we realised that there are needy kids who go to bed on empty stomachs, and when you think sleeping on an empty stomach as a child, haai. I remember I was heartbroken, and I said, do such situations still exist? I was amazed but such situations are alive and well **(Participant 3)**

According to Nishimwe-Niyimbanira (2016) Qwa-Qwa was one of the poorest areas in the province. Some of the challenges residents encountered included poor service delivery, especially water and electricity, high youth unemployment and corruption by officials. Similarly, Phuthaditjhaba, the capital of Qwa-Qwa, is also characterised by a high rate of unemployment and poverty. This further exacerbates the challenging living conditions of the people of Qwa-Qwa. As a result, abject poverty in Qwa-Qwa remains despite numerous efforts made by the government.

An interesting notion emerged from almost all participants in the study. They viewed poverty as a "state of mind". This is what they alluded to:

Poverty, it is that state. It is that state of lack. But to me it is a state of the mind. Yes, here because there are a lot of people who are poor, who can't think how to get out of that poverty? **(Participant 1)**

Poverty is there, but some people create their own poverty, from their thinking, because we have the idea of poverty in our heads, we as people, Black people, we don't want to stand up for ourselves. **(Participant 3)**

Also, I can say poverty is a state of mind, it is a state of mind because if ever I have a small garden, I can do something out of it, each and every day, you managed to sell 100 bunches of spinach. Every day we are selling R100 and that R100 in 7 days, you've got R700 so then if ever it's not for organization, it was for me, you can imagine. I can be able to provide the family. I can say majority, it's a state of mind, I don't know. And when you have a small garden you can eat with your kids, you understand? **(Participant 8)**

Fix the mentality of our community members from that era that they are left behind with the concept that they not will create things for them. There is no, I would say there is no vision of creating employment for your fellow members of the community and again, I think that is what is creating a lot of poverty. **(Participant 12)**

Being in a state of poverty increases the preoccupation with financial resources for survival, more than anything else (Stoop et al., 2019). People living in poverty do not have the luxury of thinking about anything else, except their economic situation. Thus, their behaviours and choices often perpetuate poverty (Stoop et al., 2019). Equally, constantly worrying about money shapes and forms linkages people living in poverty see between unrelated things (Shah et al., 2018). For this reason, it seems that people living in poverty do not have the time or the resources to think about how to get out of poverty.

As noted above, most participants perceive poverty as a state of mind. For the most part, Brooks (2024) in his analysis of Hegelian poverty, asserts that monetary and material possessions do not determine people's poverty. As a result, anyone can have a poverty mindset, including the wealthy. Although this may be true, poverty is a multipronged phenomenon that negatively impacts people's overall well-being and ability to thrive. Importantly, South Africa's racially divisive apartheid past has systematically disadvantaged the majority and perpetuated poverty, especially in rural areas (Osinubi & Simatele, 2024). One may agree, to a degree, that indeed the idea of poverty of the mind exists. However, people living in poverty cannot think their way out of poverty, especially because the political economy of South Africa was never inclusive to begin with.

A state of constant poverty can alter the way people think and perceive situations. The SLA approach states that people's livelihoods are impacted by their assets, the economy, and the environment. Equally, the ability to make a living is influenced by poverty, unemployment, and lack of service delivery (Matyana & Thusi, 2023).

The people of Qwa-Qwa face challenges such as access to water and electricity, unemployment, and the inability to use land for agricultural purposes. This impacts their natural (land), physical (water, tools and equipment for production) and social capital (networks and participating in decision-making). Importantly, the SLA considers these assets critical to ensuring sustainable livelihoods (Gai et al., 2018; Serrat, 2017). Therefore, SLA helps us to understand the livelihoods of people living in poverty.

The idea of poverty of the mind, as previously stated, renders SLA moot. This is despite livelihoods being directly impacted by external factors that people cannot control (Serrat, 2017). As such, SLA makes a compelling case by attempting to understand the livelihoods of people living in poverty and the factors that impede or enhance livelihood opportunities (Serrat,

2017). Also, SLA acknowledges that poverty is complex and that its eradication requires active participation from people and institutions.

It is interesting to note that nowhere does this theory state that individuals alone are responsible for emancipating themselves from poverty. This is because SLA recognizes the importance of public, private and civic partners and the important role they play in empowering communities, especially in rural areas.

The community development approach also considers community members as experts in their own lived experience, values, knowledge and wisdom (Buye, 2021b). Importantly, it recognizes community resources and attempts to mobilize them to eradicate poverty. For this reason, communities have resources that must be tapped into and cultivated by practitioners to help eradicate poverty.

Lastly, ABCD identifies and amplifies assets and strengths to foster positive changes in communities (Scott et al., 2020). This theory focuses on what communities inherently have instead of what they lack. Thus, Chen et al., (2024) found that pooling community resources, mobilizing their assets, and active participation augment poverty in rural areas.

A common theme among the above-mentioned theories is the recognition of community assets and resources despite living in poverty. These theories also emphasize nurturing these assets and resources to effect change while collaborating with public, private and civic partners. Although poverty of the mind is indeed unique to this study and requires further research, it lays bare how practitioners working in rural areas perceive poverty. Arguably, how practitioners perceive poverty in rural areas may directly influence how they respond to poverty eradication initiatives.

The fact that almost all participants mentioned poverty of the mind as one of the causes of poverty is an interesting and important finding. The above finding also underscores the importance of how people in different areas perceive poverty and this needs to be explored further.

5.3.1.2 Subtheme 2: Unemployment

Qwa-Qwa has a high level of unemployment and subsequent poverty (Membretti et al., 2023). This sentiment was echoed by many participants who also mentioned the high prevalence of unemployment.

The problem in Qwa-Qwa, in terms of poverty, is the fact that there are no job opportunities, enough job opportunities created for young people, even if it's not young people, those who are above the age of youth. There aren't a lot of jobs that are created. **(Participant 5)**

"when you look at people in Qwa-Qwa, there are many people that are not working". **(Participant 7).**

I mean, we we don't have Quantity surveyors. We don't have civil engineers to fix the road because if I'm a civil engineer and I was born and bred in Qwa-Qwa when I go home, where will I find employment? **(Participant 11)**

young men sitting at tuck shops, you don't even have to read about it, you can see yourself with your own naked eye. Last year, there were 2, now they are 5. So, the main question is I know you were doing matric last year, you were at school last year, now you are sitting at a car wash, doing 1,2,3, what are you eating? What are you doing? **(Participant 9)**

"Oh, ok. In Qwa-Qwa, I would say there is no employment". **(Participant 12)**

Participants in the study all echoed unemployment as a major challenge in Qwa-Qwa. Thus, the issue of unemployment remains one of the biggest challenges in South Africa, especially among the youth. Also, unemployment impacts the financial well-being of households, especially when they need to consider essentials such as nutrition, transport, education, etc (Durojaye & Mirugi-Mukundi, 2020). A report on the social profile of the youth by Statistics South Africa indicated that in 2014, youth unemployment stood at 36.8% while in 2024, it stood at a staggering 45.5% nationally (StatsSA, 2025). Comparatively, Qwa-Qwa had an overall unemployment rate of 41,8%, with youth unemployment of 53%, more than the national unemployment rate (StatsSA, 2025). This paints a bleak picture for the youth of Qwa-Qwa and consequently exacerbates poverty in the area.

Qwa-Qwa was once a hub of factories pre-1994, and they employed many of its residents (Marais, 2023). Today, many of those factories have closed, primarily due to an inconsistent supply of water and electricity by the municipality. Consequently, unemployment increased significantly because of the closure of the factories (Membretti et al., 2023). A shadow of what they once were, factories that used to employ many residents in Qwa-Qwa are dilapidated and remain unused.

5.3.1.3 Subtheme 3: Poverty eradication strategies

Participants in the study highlighted some poverty eradication strategies that are either being used in their respective organizations or that can be used to help in curbing poverty in Qwa-Qwa. The following excerpts came from them:

> *You see, you see, we are bringing change for instance that enterprise we are speaking about which is now already making money. And they are going to expand very soon. Because they want to put a new stock, 200 chickens.* **(Participant 1)**

> *I think maybe the ideas that they can use, the first one is to come together and come up with certain strategies, of what they can do because one might have a certain idea that ok, I want to have pigs or I want to own cows and the other one might say this is not their strength but we can concentrate on farming, we can plant you see but with the community, the first thing I think planting is a very important thing that in every yard, they must have their own little crops* **(Participant 2)**

> *those who want to have chickens but come together, and sell, those who want to have pigs, and so on, yes in that way, if the community can do that, it can alleviate poverty* **(Participant 2)**

> *For example, a person who has a garden can ask young people to come and help, they can plant and when it's time to harvest, let's say they have spinach, they can wash it and sell it for R15, I'm talking about crops, maybe another one has livestock, those many cows have milk.* **(Participant 3)**

> *We address poverty eradication through the CNDC, whereby in the community members come and eat from Monday, for five days Monday to Friday. What DSD, what we have done is DSD to try to manage this situation. I'll talk about the community where I work in, in Namahali, we have encouraged the members of the community to, to have their own gardens, household food gardens so that they know when there's shortage of food they have, they can go. At the at their, at their back yards, and then they will come up with something. So that is what we encouraged, yes, we managed to encourage members of the community to do that and they were provided with seeds from various stakeholders like African Conservation Trust.* **(Participant 5)**

> *And in their gardens, they now have their own gardens. Agriculture was here and they gave them seeds, people in this village. So that they can plant, regardless of the size of*

your plot. Once they have produced, you can eat and sell to people, if they want to. If you have a seed, you give your neighbour the seed so that they too don't go hungry and it becomes that thing and it spreads like that. **(Participant 10)**

Most participants (*N*=9) mentioned food gardens as a strategy to alleviate poverty. Organizations were also supported by the other stakeholders, who gave community members seeds and other resources to start their food gardens.

The South African constitution recognizes the right of citizens to access food. Section 27(1)(b) in the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996) states that everyone has the right to access sufficient food and water and that the state must reasonably ensure that legislation to achieve this is implemented. According to Vávra et,. al (2018), home food gardens in rural areas are essential in providing households with income from surplus production and mitigating food insecurity. They are also easy to access by households that do not have sufficient resources (Gwacela et al., 2024).

Mdiya and Mdoda, (2021) and Vávra et al., (2018) assert that home food gardens in rural areas are essential in providing households with income from surplus production and mitigating food insecurity. They are also easy to access for households who do not have sufficient resources (Gwacela et al., 2024).

A study by Tsotetsi and Omodan (2022) also found that Qwa-Qwa has adequate arable land for farming; however, the lack of agricultural skills, resources and support remains a challenge. Although some organizations actively support the community in establishing food gardens, more support in the form of skills development and resources is needed from other stakeholders such as the Department of Agriculture, the municipality and local government.

The importance of communities creating sustainable livelihoods for themselves cannot be overstated. People living in rural areas bear the brunt of unemployment, inequality and poverty (Mbajiorgu & Odeku, 2023). It is therefore important to engage them actively by mobilizing their assets and providing the necessary resources from NGOs, government and private partners. Food gardens help to ensure that people and their families are food secure. They also serve as a source of income, where surplus produce can be sold to support households (Maredia et al., 2023).

The principles of community development include sustainable community development, using community resources, amplifying social relations, community ownership and agency towards

the environment (Opačić, 2021). SLA and asset-based community development approaches underscore sustainable livelihoods using community assets in collaboration with government and private partners. These approaches use collaborative efforts between different stakeholders to bring about positive changes in the lives of poor communities. Some NGOs in Qwa-Qwa are already establishing food gardens together with communities and other stakeholders. Therefore, food gardens present an alternative way people can use their assets, in collaboration with the government and NGOs, to alleviate poverty.

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South Africa, like many countries, aspires to achieve Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The No Poverty and Zero Hunger development goals can be achieved when communities are empowered to sustain themselves through food gardens. Not only do they provide food security to households, but they can also serve as an additional source of income. Therefore, there needs to be an intentional collaborative effort between public, civic and private partners to help support and transform Qwa-Qwa to become self-sufficient and sustainable.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Challenges NGOs experience in implementing poverty eradication strategies in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State

The second theme focused on challenges in poverty eradication in the NGO and government sectors. The second theme is subdivided into five sub-themes, which will be discussed in detail.

5.3.2.1 Subtheme 1: Funding

Civil society organisations encounter several challenges; however, a lack of sustainable funding is more prevalent. This sector also has management and organisational capacity challenges to effectively oversee the functioning of organizations (National Development Agency, 2023). Participants had the following to say regarding funding:

> *we have many years without being funded, we only have two years to being funded anyway* **(Participant 1)**

so with the little money we had as a department, because we have R3.5 million for the whole province **(Participant 7)**

So, it is quite a challenge for us as NPOs because many institutions don't cover salaries or stipends for volunteers. So I still need to source out funds for them to be able to join our organization **(Participant 12)**

Participants in the study struggled with getting enough funding to meet the needs of communities that rely on their programmes and services. As such, it is important to note that the overreliance on donor funding by NGOs indeed makes it challenging to design and implement quality projects (Batti, 2014). Also, they often depend on a single donor for funding, and when that donor fails to fund them, NGOs struggle to secure new funding, and this results in programmes being prematurely terminated (Batti, 2014).

Shava (2019) found that because NGOs lack adequate funding, they forego much-needed staff development and training. This has unintended consequences on poverty eradication projects. This is because unskilled personnel and inadequate monitoring and evaluation result in the failure of projects. Importantly, NGOs' lack of skilled personnel also impacts their ability to fundraise and become sustainable. The managers in this study (*N=5*) have a minimum of 7 years and a maximum of 27 years of experience in the NGO sector. A manager at an NGO must ideally have a Bachelor's degree or higher qualification in administration related to the NGO field. Furthermore, managers need to have strong strategic and administrative experience in the sector (Bordelon n.d, as cited in Muzambi, 2019). The managers in Table 5.1.1 above seem to have the minimum required qualifications and years of experience in the NGO sector. Therefore, it is assumed that they equally possess the required skills to manage and sustain their organizations.

To this end, communities in rural areas that need poverty eradication initiatives bear the brunt of staff who do not understand development and implement projects as a box-ticking exercise to donors.

Kang'ethe and Chivanga (2015) found that community ownership of projects means that projects will remain operational even after funding has stopped. Thus, people will keep the projects running by generating funds and alleviating poverty themselves. Thus, creating an alternative sustainable source of income, and not being donor-dependent.

Many NGOs in Africa usually operate without understanding the basic principles of community development (Abiddin et al., 2022). Consequently, organizations fail to identify and meet the needs of communities. Moreover, they inadvertently end up implementing projects that do not align with development. This means that poverty eradication programmes will not be effective, and sourcing funding becomes a futile exercise.

Communities can only start sustainable projects if they have community development practitioners who are well-versed in the subject and able to support and build their capacity. It was not clear how well participants understood community development and its principles or what strategy they used when working with communities. This is something that needs to be ascertained to ensure that NGOs understand community dynamics to respond effectively to their needs.

5.3.2.2 Subtheme 2: Financial support from stakeholders

The importance of collaborating with stakeholders and establishing sustainable relationships

> *and there needs to be a solution, in other words, we as a community with all stakeholders must come together and see what we can do…yes, the organization alone won't meet the needs of the community, so it's important for us as an organization to collaborate with other stakeholders. it helps a lot* **(Participant 2)**

> *But we are disadvantaged here, a lot because funders are reluctant to help us, now I consider a funder to be a massive resource, for them to help me, that's number one, two, it's not a resource, it's a case where, but it's still a problem, a shortcoming on our side, we don't understand that LED needs you to make ties, ties, partnership* **(Participant 4)**

> *So even bringing, what do you call them, projects inside, because once they know the organization, like now there was an agriculture project here, we were able to… agriculture came here because they knew the work that I do. They told me there is a project that is coming and asked me to identify people. So they are able to work at the end of the month they are earning that stipend so it is how we alleviate poverty* **(Participant 8)**

Grimble and Wellard (1997) describe stakeholders as a collective with a common interest in a particular subject matter. This includes public, private and civil society, whose mandate is to serve communities (Lyon et al., 2017).

Two participants from NGOs emphasised the importance of stakeholder relationships and their positive benefits. NGOs play a pivotal role in community empowerment, service delivery and advocacy (Hazara, 2016). Furthermore, Ditlev-Simonsen (2022) opines that most stakeholder collaborations with NGOs have a positive impact. Stakeholders do not just collaborate with NGOs; they must align with the strategic goals of the organization. This means that stakeholders need to align with poverty eradication initiatives and support NGOs by making resources available for NGOs to make a positive impact in Qwa-Qwa.

NGOs, together with other stakeholders, play an important role in eradicating poverty and reducing inequality per the Sustainable Development Goals (Mlambo et al., 2021). Stakeholders provide much-needed finances, among other things, for NGOs to remain operational to provide beneficiaries with the services they need (Mpofu & Govender, 2022).Therefore, effective engagement between NGOs and stakeholders is critical and a requirement for the sustainability of NGOs (Asogwa et al., 2024).

NGOs also work with stakeholders that are relevant to their context. These include local government and the private sector. It is important to note that NGOs in rural areas do not have access to a lot of the resources they need to serve communities (Schiller & De Wet, 2019). Equally, there is a need for stakeholder partnerships to help deal with social issues, especially because most NGOs lack resources (Schiller & De Wet, 2019). SLA denotes institutions, organizations and legislation as important because they shape people's livelihoods. An important aspect of SLA is also in strengthening working relationships with stakeholders to support people living in poverty.

Apart from individual assets, local institutions located in communities are also important and make up the asset base of communities. One of the goals of ABCD is to facilitate and strengthen ties between communities and local institutions (Alevizou et al., 2016). These include businesses, public institutions, non-profit organisations, and social services agencies. Incorporating these institutions is critical to the process of community development. Therefore, a community that mobilizes its asset base in its entirety will be involved and invested in local institutions.

On the other hand, one participant mentioned the lack of stakeholder relationships in LED, which is essential for them to support the most vulnerable: "*So, those partnerships but we don't have partnerships with donors or funders, we don't have ties*" **(Participant 4)**. The inability to build and nurture stakeholder relationships is detrimental to people living in poverty, especially

in areas like Qwa-Qwa. Stakeholder engagement and support are important for NGOs (Zeleke et al., 2024). Conversely, the absence of collaborative partnerships is a substantial challenge preventing NGOs from accomplishing their goals and objectives (Weldegebriel, 2022). LED is an important partner in the fight against poverty. As such, their inability to build and nurture relationships with stakeholders and communities is worrying, especially in the context of Qwa-Qwa.

To help communities become sustainable and empowered and to build on their assets, there needs to be a coordinated and deliberate effort to get all stakeholders on board. The lack of stakeholder relationships in the LED office is concerning and unfortunate as it undermines poverty eradication efforts and makes eradicating poverty in Qwa-Qwa a near-impossible task.

5.3.2.3 Subtheme 3: Lack of volunteers

Volunteering is considered an essential human resource component in the NGO sector (Mikołajczak & Bajak, 2021). This is because volunteers augment staff shortages in most NGOs. People usually volunteer due to altruism and internal motivation (Burns et al., 2006).

> *They want money, they tell you they won't volunteer. At the end of the month, they are expecting something. And others don't have the knowledge that if you group yourselves as a team, and you do something and have patience in what you are doing, it's going to bring something. That's where you are going to be able to put bread on the table. So people don't have patience,* **(Participant 10)**

> *Our biggest challenge is we have volunteers, but you know, volunteers have families that they have to, you know, make means* **(Participant 12)**

> *No, people don't volunteer, all they think is money* **(Participant 3)**

> *So number two, eh the majority of people here are are, they don't understand volunteering, you understand. We are short of many volunteers, we need manpower, a lot. Yes, I don't know* **(Participant 8)**

There was a consensus among all participants (*N=13)* that the lack of volunteering was due to people needing to be paid and, in turn, organizations not having funds to do so. It is, therefore, important for NGOs to understand why people volunteer and have intentional and effective strategies to recruit and retain staff (Dallmeyer et al., 2024).

Volunteering is unpaid work that individuals carry out with NGOs and communities. The idea that people do not volunteer at NGOs in Qwa-Qwa needs to be understood in context. This is

to say, due to the high rate of unemployment, poverty and poor service delivery in the area, volunteering seems insignificant. People are looking for means to make a living and support their families and might not have the time to volunteer for free. Indeed, volunteering is a noble and altruistic act; however, it is dependent on people's contexts. Thus, although NGOs need volunteers to carry out some operations, they need to look at other ways of attracting people to their organizations.

Research indicates that most volunteers were found in urban areas. In addition, volunteers were mostly unemployed and actively looking for employment, hence (Fondling et al., 2023). This indicates the need for some form of compensation for volunteers, especially in areas characterised by poverty and unemployment.

One participant mentioned that the reason they cannot retain volunteers is that they do not have stipends for them. Stipends are viewed as an incentive, which may positively impact individual motivation and skills attainment (Mbukwana & Ayandibu, 2023).

On a positive note, volunteering can help young people gain experience to enter the job market (Fondling et al., 2023). It also helps access employment through internship opportunities. Community development theory, SLA and ABCD place emphasis on active community participation and ownership to eradicate poverty. This requires people to volunteer their time and resources to participate in matters that impact their well-being. Their will to participate in community matters must come from them, and this is contingent upon how invested they are in community matters. Based on this, people living in poverty are usually concerned with meeting their needs and not so much about volunteering their time and skills to NGOs.

5.3.2.4 Subtheme 4: The community

Poverty eradication cannot take place without active participation from the community. Participants had the following to say regarding this:

> *so the community, we are encouraging them, its part of breaking the cycle of poverty,… In other words, they must learn to help themselves, that's why we focus in the assets, the talents, the skills of the people. Because if they can take care of each other, that person is going to get well. That's what they should do. And we use a bottom-up approach, we actually meet them half-way. It's like your system, if they give you pills, they help you out, and food also help you out. So when we talk to communities, you can do things on your own and call us when you are done. (***Participant 7)**

Fix the mentality of our community members from that era that they are left behind with the concept that they not will create things for them. There is no, I would say there is no vision of creating employment for your fellow members of the community and again, I think what is creating a lot of poverty **(Participant 12)**

Lack of support from the community. Even when I say I'm asking them to help, they have a mentality that ok, they should get something in return whereas they are also helping themselves, **(Participant 10)**

The above excerpts indicate a lack of ownership, support and an unwillingness from communities to help themselves and break the cycle of poverty. Many rural areas in South Africa are characterised by unemployment, poverty, and a lack of service delivery. Therefore, these conditions make it difficult for people to meaningfully engage in community initiatives that foster cohesion, espoused by SLA, ABCD and community development approaches. People living in poverty have to grapple with meeting their basic needs, and thus, participating in community-related projects seems like a futile exercise (Nyathi et al., 2024).

A substantial number of South African municipalities face poor service delivery and access to basic services (Mamokhere, 2022). Section 152 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that one of the objectives of local government is to encourage community participation and community organizations' engagement in local public matters. Equally, Section 16 (1) of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act No. 32 of 2000) states that municipalities are mandated to create a culture of inclusion and community participation in matters of the municipality. Thus, community participation is not only contingent upon NGOs; the municipality must also be actively involved. It is important to note that South African municipalities are notorious for poor service delivery, Maluti-A-Phofung in Qwa-Qwa notwithstanding (Matloga et al., 2024). This negatively impacts any participatory efforts by communities.

Community participation is perceived as an important component of community development. Therefore, community participation positively impacts community development. Also, community participation can turn passive citizens into active and effective citizens with some agency to influence decisions that impact their well-being (Mansuri & Rao, 2013, as cited in Atinga et al., 2019). The goal for community development, SLA and ABCD approaches is to have active, sustainable communities that are engaged as a collective and using their assets to enhance their living conditions. As participants previously mentioned, communities seem

disengaged and uninterested in working with NGOs to make positive changes and eradicate poverty.

Communities that are constantly facing service delivery issues, a non-responsive municipality and poverty may not see the significance or the need to participate in community-led projects, as is the case with Qwa-Qwa. Consequently, the idea of sustainability, poverty eradication and empowerment seems far-fetched. It is therefore imperative that the municipality, together with NGOs, collaborate in engagement efforts to encourage communities to take part in matters that affect them.

5.3.2.5 Subtheme 5: Corruption

Corruption is a challenge that affects many countries globally. Participants also had the following to say about corruption:

> *Now of late, in my belief. All these things of tender systems of systems, these things of corruptions, they are contributing towards poverty..* (**Participant 1)**
>
> *when we implement poverty strategies. Corruption, corruption, this government is corrupt. And it's moving and it's not everyday language that we are used to. They are even afraid to say, I tell them that if we can stop stealing the state's money. Because I'm one person who is not going to charge you, I'll tell you. Stop stealing the money* **(Participant 7)**
>
> *Like we work during a very difficult time, corruption is there. Another person will ask themselves, if they come to my organization, and give them this much, what am I benefitting in return? You understand,. So, I think the problem lies there. As to who you are and what kind of relationship do I have with you. So then if ever you help me, what are you going to benefit, yet you are working, it is your daily responsibility. But you want to get something from me. I think that's the problem but the other small ones, they are there for us, yes*, **(Participant 8)**

It is challenging enough that NGOs have a myriad of challenges, however, corruption additionally erodes an already fragile sector whose goal is to serve the poor and vulnerable. Corruption poses a significant challenge in developing countries (Han et al., 2022). Therefore, the negative impact of corruption has a ripple effect on the poor and the organizations that serve them. If monies meant for organizations are being siphoned with impunity, it is always the poor who suffer.

NGOs support communities where the government is unable to, and they need monetary support to stay operational. A case in point is the ongoing court battle in Gauteng, South Africa, where NGOs had to take the Department of Social Development to court for failing to pay them for services rendered (Steyn & Mutandiro, 2025). This places NGOs in limbo, with many either on the brink of collapse or closing. The reasons for failure to pay NGOs seem unsatisfactory and place vulnerable people, who depend on services rendered by these organizations, in jeopardy.

NGOs are a critical component, working closely with the government and other stakeholders. Therefore, corruption destroys state institutions and undermines the democracy and economy of a country (Salahuddin et al., 2020). Corruption can cause an increase in poverty and undermine poverty eradication efforts by NGOs. As a result, for communities to become self-sustaining, empowered and autonomous, transparency and accountability are required from the government and other stakeholders.

5.3.3 Theme 3: Resources NGOs need to implement poverty eradication interventions in Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State

The third and final theme focused on the resources needed to eradicate poverty. This theme is divided into four sub-themes, which will be discussed.

5.3.3.1 Subtheme1: Funding

NGOs need resources to remain operational and serve communities. A key resource that is required to keep NGOs afloat is funding and this was echoed by all participants in the study (*N=13*). Organizations in Qwa-Qwa view funding as an important resource and this was clear from some of the excerpts below.

Foundation we have many years without being funded, we only have two years to being funded anyway **(Participant 1)**

Uh, number 1, yeah, it's lack of funds, lack of funds, that is the one I think is the biggest challenge because if we have certain funding, it will help the organization to have more personnel **(Participant 2)**

*And sometimes you find that the department is busy funding the same organizations...they funded them last year and this year they are still funding them.... even though they misuse funds...***(Participant 6)**

So…so the biggest challenge we have it's it's funding **(Participant 11)**

Funding remains a serious challenge for NGOs and is also compounded by the stringent criteria set by donors. More importantly, donors have a say in how and where the funds must be spent. As such, NGOs cannot use donor funding for any other purpose other than that set by donors (Kabonga, 2023).

The Department of Social Development has policies and processes it follows to fund NGOs. This is to ensure that NGOs render and deliver services to communities and remain accountable (National Development Agency, 2023). It is therefore surprising that the department continues to fund non-compliant organizations that fail to meet the needs of communities in Qwa-Qwa.

Funding for NGOs in South Africa is not consistent, jeopardizing their sustainability and ability to serve communities (Maboya & McKay, 2019). As a result, this creates competition among organizations, vying for the same resource (National Development Agency, 2023). This may result in organizations deviating from their mission and vision to access funding. The unintended consequences of this may result in organizations having programmes for the sake of funding, and not so much to benefit the community. This was highlighted by one participant: *We may have more money, but which is intended for a particular purpose. You can't divert the money from any other funder to do that…Unless we can get a funder, which says I fund this* **(Participant 1)**

5.3.3.2 Subtheme 2: Skills development

Qwa-Qwa is surrounded by natural resources such as land and water, thus making agriculture a viable source of employment, especially for the youth but also an opportunity to upskill the youth in this area. This is what participants had to say:

> *Know their skills. Give them skills... give them, of course financial capital will also be needed, but most skills* **(Participant 1)**
>
> *Yes and again when it comes to youth development, we also link young people with skills programs* **(Participant 5)**
>
> *Skills development, What is needed is a skill development, you understand… Skill development is going to open up the mentality of a human being,* **(Participant 8)**

Skills development in agriculture is a critical component in empowering the youth and promoting agriculture, especially in rural areas (Langa, 2020). Also, skills development requires a multisectoral approach and collaboration from the government, private sector, educational institutions, labour unions and NGOs (Fourie et al., 2024). Qwa-Qwa is surrounded

by natural resources, thus making agriculture a viable option for job creation for sustainability and poverty eradication. NGOs already have skills programmes that they offer to communities, in collaboration with other stakeholders. However, an area such as Qwa-Qwa needs intentional multisectoral support from local and national governments as well as the private sector to bolster agriculture and create sustainable employment therein.

Skills development has the potential to produce small-scale farmers who can also contribute to improving the economy of Qwa-Qwa; as such, practical solutions need to be introduced. Therefore, TVET, which stands for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, engenders skills development, services and livelihoods (Afeti, 2024). TVET colleges in South Africa are not only practical in terms of skills development, but they increase employability, amplify sustainable livelihoods and promote community well-being and poverty reduction (Mcgrath et al., 2016; Mcgrath & Powell, 2023). Qwa-Qwa has TVET and an agriculture school, which can be used to develop skills, especially in the agricultural sector. This is a practical and useful way of ensuring that young people are equipped with the skills they need to become employable, start their cooperatives or become small-scale farmers, and improve their livelihoods.

The idea of multiple stakeholders coming together to initiate agriculture is enshrined in the community development, sustainable livelihoods and ABCD approaches. These approaches highlight the importance of working together with communities for activities that are meant to sustain them and fight poverty. These approaches also help to redistribute power and address inequality and poverty.

Furthermore, community development is also focused on redistributing power to address inequality and poverty. This approach empowers individuals and groups to have the capacity to improve their lives (Hasan, 2022).

5.3.3.3 Subtheme 3: Collaboration

Collaboration among communities, the private and public sectors is critical for community development. To eradicate poverty, communities, with their assets, need to be self-sustaining, engaged and willing to take part in community-related activities.

> *So that any information which arrives at the latest, and mind you were also collaborating with with, with, with those agencies like SEDA because they give us direct information at any stage, which is new information to be shared with the people.* (**Participant 1)**

you understand, so in actual fact., the vision says we must integrate with other stakeholders.....so we have to do it, besides the fact that we do it in a grassroot level **(Participant 6)**

We are trying to conduct seminars and everything together but we are not in partnership. If maybe yes, that's the correct word. If we have partners, if if we partnered and we have partnership and they know. After this stage we go to me and take the beneficiaries and we say that develop them. That could work for us **(Participant 12)**

The partnerships between NGOs and donors are vital in helping to deliver services, share information and avoid resource duplication among donors and NGOs (Mpofu & Govender, 2022). One participant mentioned the integration of services, and this is important because NGOs alone cannot meet the needs of communities; thus, collaborating with other stakeholders is key.

Research has also found that competition for funding prevents NGOs from working together due to limited resources (Jabbour Al Maalouf et al., 2025). However, some participants *(N=9*) in this study mentioned the value of collaboration. This could be because NGOs in rural areas have few resources; therefore, pooling resources and working together benefits organizations and communities.

Collaborative efforts among NGOs and stakeholders ultimately benefit communities. These communities are afforded additional benefits from multiple stakeholders to help them so they can help themselves. Consequently, communities can gain skills, information and resources they need to either start, implement or build on already existing initiatives.

5.3.3.4 Subtheme 4: Community assets

Community assets need to be identified and nurtured to increase people's capacity and improve their well-being. McKnight and Kretzmann (1993) define assets as "gifts, skills and capacities" of "individuals, associations and institutions" within a community (p. 25). Participants had the following to say about community assets:

and that they need to lead us, and they need to take ownership because we cannot tell them what to do...because it's community development, we don't decide for the community, the community needs to decide for themselves **(Participant 6)**

People must use their talents, must use their assets. That's what we're promoting, solidarity, Ubuntu, let's us help each other live and move forward, **(Participant 7)**

> *And something that disadvantages us as people, we don't want to do things for ourselves, if you have a look now, a person has a house yet they rent out their house for someone to come and sell, I don't know what I'm going to call it* **(Participant 3)**

On the one hand, participants recognise the assets that communities possess and the importance of capacitating and empowering communities; on the same breath, participants also perceived communities as lacking agency in matters that affect them.

Community development approach builds on assets that already exist to improve people's living conditions and foster sustainability. People in Qwa-Qwa face some serious challenges; however, with adequate support from stakeholders, they can take part in activities that alleviate poverty and are sustainable.

A lack of agency by community members was also highlighted as a challenge. Communities in rural areas often lack adequate resources needed for survival. This, coupled with poverty, inequality, and unemployment, renders people hopeless and helpless. Therefore, community apathy, as displayed in some communities around Qwa-Qwa, needs to be understood in context.

The idea of empowered communities, who actively participate and fully engage in their communities, is ideal for community development, asset-based community development and sustainable livelihood approaches. Rural communities and their plethora of challenges require skilled practitioners who understand the importance of these approaches and related challenges. Importantly, rural communities such as Qwa-Qwa need an intentional, practical approach, especially from local government.

The community development, asset-based and sustainable livelihood approaches underscore the importance of active community participation, embracing and acknowledging inherent community assets and using institutions to help communities achieve sustainable livelihoods. The most fundamental aspect of these approaches lies in the community as an entity with endless possibilities, in collaboration with NGOs, government and private partners. The community needs to be seen, understood, and supported in context.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed data collected from participants. The data was presented according to themes that emerged during the interviews. The themes were further discussed under different sub-themes. The study found that indeed, poverty and unemployment are a challenge in Qwa-Qwa. The different poverty eradication strategies used by NGOs and

development partners were also discussed. and that NGOs engaged in poverty eradication initiatives to mitigate this. NGOs encountered numerous challenges in addressing poverty, including a lack of funding, support from stakeholders, a lack of volunteers, the community and corruption. These challenges impacted their ability to respond adequately to community needs. Resources that were needed to eradicate poverty were also discussed in detail, and they included funding, skills development, collaboration, and community assets. These findings were compared with the available literature. The following chapter concludes the study and focuses on the main findings, recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER 6

MAIN FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6. Introduction

This study sought to explore the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication through a case study of Qwa-Qwa in the Free State. This final chapter will detail the main findings, conclusions, and recommendations for all the relevant stakeholders. It will close with concluding remarks and prospects for future research.

6.1 MAIN FINDINGS

The study's objectives will be used to highlight the main findings of the study.

6.1.1 Poverty eradication interventions employed by NGOs in Qwa-Qwa

This study found that poverty was indeed a challenge in Qwa-Qwa, and NGOs have some poverty eradication strategies, meant to meet the needs of communities in Qwa-Qwa. In some instances, NGOs initiated poultry cooperatives, which in turn provided employment and some income for community members. An interesting finding from this study was the notion of poverty of the mind, attributed to communities in Qwa-Qwa living in poverty. The idea of poverty of the mind made it challenging for NGOs to help communities in addressing poverty. The Department of Social Development's strategies were CNDCs, linking communities with stakeholders for employment, training and entrepreneurial opportunities. The Department of Social Development also partnered with stakeholders in the relevant sector to encourage communities to have food gardens to alleviate poverty and be food secure.

6.1.2 Challenges NGOs experience in implementing poverty eradication strategies

The most critical challenge NGOs experienced was a lack of funding to plan and implement poverty eradication initiatives. Stakeholder support was viewed as important and positively impacted communities by providing employment opportunities. It is important to note that LED experienced major challenges in building stakeholder relationships, including NGOs.

Volunteers were also viewed as an essential human resource, and the lack thereof was a major challenge for all NGOs in this study. The fact that NGOs did not have enough funding meant that they could not offer stipends to volunteers, and this was one of the reasons people in a poverty-stricken area like Qwa-Qwa did not volunteer. Moreover, community apathy, agency and an overall lack of participation in NGO-related projects were also a challenge.

Lastly, corruption, poor governance and a lack of resources were also challenges highlighted by NGOs in this study. The mismanagement of funds meant for NGOs for poverty eradication

efforts was viewed as a challenge. This was evident when the Department of Social Development in Gauteng was taken to court due to its failure to pay NGOs for services rendered, following the signing of service agreements with the department (Pongweni, 2025). The Gauteng Care Crisis Committee instituted legal action in 2024 against the department following their failure to pay NGOs for services rendered on the department's behalf, forcing some NGOs to close (Pongweni, 2025). NGOs are plagued with serious funding challenges, and yet the Gauteng DSD had to be taken to court to comply with their policies and guidelines. NGOs have previously been shown to render essential services where governments are unable to, to serve the poor and vulnerable. The fact that, to date, some NGOs have yet to be paid is shocking to say the least. DSD's mandate is to help alleviate poverty and build resilient and sustainable communities, still they had to be taken to court to force them to do the right thing. The lack of compliance on the part of DSD and the blatant disregard for an adjudicated matter are disheartening and compound the funding challenges within the NGO sector, forcing NGOs to explore other sources of funding, often to the detriment of their vision and mission.

6.1.3 Resources needed to eradicate poverty

Funding was once again highlighted as a critical resource for NGOs for all their poverty eradication interventions. Skills development, especially in agriculture, was also found to be important for organizations to respond to unemployment and poverty in Qwa-Qwa. Equally, skills development among youth was also found to be important in addressing unemployment. Collaboration between the government, public partners and the community was found to be important in addressing community needs. In addition, this study found community assets as an important aspect needed to alleviate poverty. Communities needed to actively participate in poverty eradication efforts meant to develop, empower and sustain them.

This study underpins the sustainable livelihood, asset-based community development, and community development theories. This is because they emphasise communities having agency, and assets and using them to cultivate sustainable livelihoods and not on what they lack. These theories also recognise participatory action as key for communities on issues that affect them, poverty being one of them in this study.

These theories also emphasise the importance of collaboration between communities and organizations, local government and private partners. Therefore, communities alone cannot plan, implement and evaluate their projects on their own. They need to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to actualize their initiatives to ensure sustainability.

Lastly, sustainable livelihood, asset-based community development and community development theories must be incorporated into all poverty eradication strategies. Importantly, these holistic theories focus on resilience and view communities and stakeholders as critical elements to achieving poverty eradication and sustainability.

6.1.4 Overview of NGOs' general experiences in poverty eradication

All organisations positively contributed to poverty reduction; however, the lack of support from the Department of Social Development was evident in all interviews. The organisations interviewed worked in various sectors, including agriculture, local economic and community development. All these organisations do commendable work in Qwa-Qwa; however, the challenges faced in Qwa-Qwa, primarily due to inadequate service delivery, complicate their operations. One NGO's work relied on internet connectivity, and the frequent power outages in Qwa-Qwa posed a serious challenge to one of their projects. Conversely, another NGO maintained a substantial vegetable garden and sold its produce to some supermarkets in Qwa-Qwa. This not only creates employment for the local community but also serves as an alternative source of income for the organisation to stay afloat. However, a lack of consistent water supply also jeopardised their operations, which is ironic because Qwa-Qwa is surrounded by two dams, yet some communities remain without water to this day.

One NGO regarded Social Development as their 'mother body'; however, they were not adequately supported. Yet, when an MEC or minister visits for a site inspection or if they require documentation for various reports, they reach out to them, despite not having received funding for years. The most disheartening point raised was the corruption surrounding NGOs obtaining funding. An unspoken 'quid pro quo' condition accompanies this funding. Similarly, another NGO noted that they are frequently sidelined because they are vocal, often challenging the authorities, and have chosen to seek alternative funders to sustain their organisations.

An interesting aspect among some NGOs is the lack of collaboration between these organisations and the Maluti-A-Phofung municipality. Qwa-Qwa is plagued by numerous challenges; however, the municipality lacks a dedicated office that collaborates with NGOs to tackle the various issues communities face. The LED office is situated within the municipality and has also emphasised the absence of partnership with local NGOs in Qwa-Qwa. This reflects poorly on the municipality, which has been grappling with violent service delivery protests and a lack of development in Qwa-Qwa for years. NGOs, which operate within communities, possess the expertise to assist the municipality in addressing some of these problems.

All organizations seemed to agree that community members were passive recipients of services and had no interest in emancipating themselves from poverty. Although it was acknowledged that the people of Qwa-Qwa are jaded because of poor governance and unfulfilled promises by the government, organizations believed that communities needed to use their assets and empower themselves to escape the poverty trap, instead of constantly waiting for assistance. This was referenced above as 'poverty of the mind', which gained consensus among all organizations.

An interesting fact that emerged from some NGOs was the diversification of services to appeal to different donors. Although these NGOs were in the poverty eradication sector, due to a lack of funding, some had to explore other programmes in different sectors, such as health and education, to attract funders. Donors often have terms and conditions associated with funding organizations, and it was interesting to see how organizations had to adopt different approaches to appeal to funders. To this end, these additional programmes were primarily meant for the local communities that NGOs served. One wonders if NGOs can remain true to their visions and missions, given the ever-changing funding landscape.

6.2 Conclusion

Poverty eradication strategies used by NGOs in Qwa-Qwa include CNDC, creating short-term employment and collaborating with other agencies to offer employment opportunities to community members. The lack of funding is the main challenge NGOs grapple with, negatively impacting their ability to adequately address community needs. Coupled with this, a lack of volunteers, critical in carrying out NGO functions, poses a significant challenge to NGOs.

LED, which is critical in creating employment to boost local economies, is not actively engaging with NGOs and other stakeholders, such as DSD, which is concerning, especially because Qwa-Qwa is plagued with high rates of poverty and unemployment. The mismanagement of funds and corruption are also other challenges that impede NGO functioning in Qwa-Qwa.

The main resources NGOs need to eradicate poverty include funding, skills development and training in the agricultural sector, especially in regions such as Qwa-Qwa can yield positive outcomes for communities in the form of employment and boosting the local economy.

The lack of funding opportunities often puts NGOs in an untenable position of compromising their visions and missions to get donor funding. The lack of transparent funding criteria from

DSD often creates confusion because NGOs are often defunded without any explanation. Furthermore, NGOs deemed 'unfit' for purpose get funded, yet they do not deliver on their mandate.

The LED in the municipality is responsible for economic empowerment and job creation in Qwa-Qwa, yet they do not have strong ties with NGOs, which work with communities that the municipality also works with, as well as lack ties with DSD. LED cannot work in a silo because they must engage with communities in Qwa-Qwa, and this can only be done through meaningful collaboration with the already mentioned stakeholders.

The lack of service delivery also puts NGOs under pressure because they cannot carry out their operations without water and electricity. Thus, the lack of service delivery has a ripple effect on NGOs and communities because NGOs are unable to create employment and carry out their work; at the same time, communities engage in violent protests to access basic services. Notwithstanding issues of service delivery, communities around Qwa-Qwa are apathetic and unresponsive to initiatives by NGOs. Community members are not active participants in NGOs' efforts because of constant dissatisfaction with local leaders and the promises that were previously made and never fulfilled.

Communities can only be receptive to NGOs' efforts if DSD, LED and all other stakeholders come together and form strategic partnerships, meant to improve the lives of the poor and vulnerable. This can be done through transparent and effective funding initiatives and deliberate collaborative efforts for resource allocations to deserving NGOs, actively engaged in fighting poverty in Qwa-Qwa.

6.3 Recommendations

This study aimed to explore the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication as a case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State. The following recommendations are made:

6.3.1 Recommendations to NGOs

NGOs in Qwa-Qwa are actively taking part in poverty eradication initiatives; however, they need more support from the government and private partners. NGOs also need to be well-versed in community development theories to better understand community dynamics, especially on complex issues such as poverty. Participants mentioned poverty of the mind as a challenge in communities when coming to eradicate poverty, this idea needs to be tested through further research.

Although NGOs are doing their best to implement poverty eradication programmes, these need to be intentional, practical and sustainable. Importantly, NGOs need to be more visible to attract volunteers to engage and assist in their community operations.

The lack of funding poses a serious challenge to the survival of NGOs; as such, other sustainable means of raising funds must be explored. The idea of diversifying programmes to attract funders, without deviating from their mission and vision, needs to be explored. The strengthening of fundraising capabilities by NGOs is also an important aspect that can inject funds into NGOs.

Qwa-Qwa is surrounded by natural resources, making agriculture a practical solution to eradicating poverty by providing food security through readily accessible sources of food. Food gardens are a viable option for food security, and surplus produce can be sold as a means of making income. Collaboration with other stakeholders in mobilising communities to have gardens must also be explored.

6.3.2 Recommendations to stakeholders

6.3.2.1 SETA

SETA is mandated to develop skills and learning programmes across different sectors. It is therefore critical that NGOs are offered the necessary skills and training they need to respond to community needs adequately. NGOs are based in communities composed of different people, from different backgrounds, with various needs, and they need to know and understand how to respond. In addition, skills such as fundraising, grant writing are also critical for many NGOS and SETAs, through their various learning programmes, can address this need, more so for NGOs working in rural areas.

6.3.2.2 Department of Social Development

The Department of Social Development plays a key role in poverty eradication efforts in South Africa. DSD is not only a funding entity for NGOs, but it must also be viewed as a resource to help empower vulnerable communities through working with CDPs and the integration of services with other departments. The department needs to strengthen its funding model for NGOs and ensure that deserving NGOs are funded. The selection criteria on which organizations get funding need to be transparent and accessible to all. Moreover, DSD needs to engage and lobby other departments to work with and fund NGOs working in other sectors, such as health, education, agriculture, etc. to alleviate funding pressure.

6.3.2.3 Department of Agriculture

NGOs in rural areas with access to arable land can greatly benefit from small-scale farming initiatives. Although the Department of Agriculture has supported farming initiatives, this needs to involve private partners such as Agri-SA and other stakeholders in this sector, for example, to donate farming implements. In addition, these stakeholders can also offer training to small-scale farmers so that they can, in turn, create employment opportunities for community members and subsequently boost the local economy of Qwa-Qwa through such initiatives.

6.3.2.4 Local Economic Development

Local Economic Development needs to be accessible, visible and at the forefront of community development. The resuscitation of factories in Qwa-Qwa needs serious consideration for reviving the economy of Qwa-Qwa. In addition to improving the economy, factories can provide employment opportunities as well. Therefore, the municipality needs to play an active role in ensuring consistent service delivery to attract investment into Qwa-Qwa. This can only happen with the right leadership, support and oversight from local government and private partners.

6.3.2.5 Treasury

The National Treasury is responsible for making sure that funds allocated to all government entities are spent wisely. On the other hand, every year, billions are returned to the national treasury unspent. Many NGOs in rural areas, such as Qwa-Qwa, desperately need funding, but, due to poor governance, some of these funds are returned to treasury, to the detriment of poor communities, which in turn negatively impacts poverty eradication. Therefore, treasury needs to play an active and intentional oversight role in ensuring that monies dispensed to government departments are spent on the intended beneficiaries, especially in departments that are directly dealing with vulnerable communities, such as DSD. It cannot be that every year billions are returned to treasury and it is business as usual, while the poor continue to suffer and fall deeper into the poverty trap.

6.3.2.6 Institutions of higher education and learning

Institutions of higher learning in Qwa-Qwa, through their community engagement initiatives, can play an active role in providing theoretical and practical knowledge to organizations on sustainable livelihood, asset-based community development and community development theories. This is to ensure that NGOs know and understand how to respond to community needs within contexts.

6.3.3 Recommendations to the community

Poverty eradication efforts need receptive communities that are willing to take part in their development. NGOs need to find a different approach in engaging communities to foster participatory action, meant to effect change. Equally, communities have many untapped assets that NGOs and other stakeholders need to explore to emancipate people from poverty.

It is indeed true that communities have become jaded towards development initiatives, due to unfavourable socioeconomic conditions. As a result, poverty eradication cannot happen without the buy-in from the recipients, and organizations need to work with communities, using their inherent assets and capabilities.

6.3.4 Recommendations for social work and practice

The Department of Social Development's mission is to build resilient citizens and provide integrated services that are sustainable. Although social workers work within the mezzo and macro sectors, due to alarming caseloads and a general shortage of social workers, it is becoming evident that social workers alone cannot work alone to address the challenges communities face. Therefore, the professionalisation of community development is at an advanced stage, paving the way for community development workers, whose sole mandate is working with and empowering communities. CDPs work closely with communities, NGOs, and other agencies using community assets to help build resilient and economically active communities that can sustain themselves. The work NGOs do can be further amplified by CDPs to help fight poverty and help communities build and sustain initiatives that can positively impact their well-being.

CDPs can also advocate and advance policies on poverty eradication as mandated by the National Development Plan and Sustainable Development Goals. Stakeholders such as institutions of higher education and training can also play a pivotal role by ensuring that social work and community development students are taught and engaged in meaningful, evidence-based praxis in various organizations throughout their training as social services professionals to help fight poverty and other social ills that communities in South Africa face.

6.3.5 Recommendations for further research

The nature of poverty is complex and must be understood in context. Therefore, large-scale provincial or national multi-exploratory case study research on the role NGOs play in rural areas in poverty eradication is needed. This study could also adopt a quantitative element to understand the number of NGOs involved in poverty eradication, both provincially and

nationally. This will assist in gaining a better understanding of how NGOs can be used as a catalyst in poverty eradication. Also, the issue of funding remains a serious challenge for many NGOs, thus, it would also be interesting to understand the funding models NGOs in rural areas use and the fundraising activities they engage in to stay operational. This study could also adopt a mixed-method approach, to firstly ascertain NGOs that are actively involved in fundraising initiatives and the why can be answered using a qualitative approach. Lastly, communities are the recipients of NGO programmes; with a multitude of assets and as such, their participatory engagement in poverty eradication initiatives or lack thereof, needs to be better understood to respond appropriately to their felt needs. This could potentially be achieved through a qualitative research approach to gain a thick description of communities in their various contexts.

7. Conclusion

Poverty remains a global challenge, especially in developing countries, and South Africa is no different. Poverty in rural areas is especially challenging, necessitating poverty intervention strategies that are sustainable. NGOs play a critical role in bridging the service delivery gap, where the government is unable to respond. As such, more funding and resources need to be made available for the continuity of services.

This study shed some light on the strategies NGOs use, their challenges and the resources needed to eradicate poverty. NGOs indeed play a critical role in poverty eradication in rural areas, albeit without adequate support from the government and private partners. Also, there are a few studies that focus on poverty eradication efforts and the role NGOs play in Qwa-Qwa, and this study was an important first step in understanding poverty eradication efforts in Qwa-Qwa.

It would also be interesting to learn and understand fundraising models used by NGOs as an alternative means of getting funding. Thus, future studies should consider the roles NGOs play in the development sector and how this can mitigate socioeconomic challenges, especially in rural areas.

An interesting finding from this study's participants was the idea around poverty of the mind, which was perceived as a negative trait, preventing people from emancipating themselves from poverty. This concept is worth looking into as it speaks to community apathy and the negative impact it has on poverty eradication efforts by NGOs and other stakeholders. Future research

needs to look at communities living in poverty, their perceptions of their lived experiences and how these impact poverty eradication initiatives, if at all.

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APPENDIX A



Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State

Participation Information Sheet (PIS)

Dear Sir / Madam

My name is Nthatisi Nkoebele. I am a Masters student in Social Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Emmison Muleya. I am conducting a research study about NGOs' role in rural poverty eradication in Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State. The study title Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State

I am inviting you to take part in an interview, where we will be exploring and discussing your views on poverty eradication in Qwa-Qwa. If you decide to take part in the study, I will interview you for about an hour. The interview will take place at your place of work at a time suitable to you. The face-to-face interview be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. The interview will then be transcribed, and your personal identifying details will not be included. This data will then be stored in a password-protected cloud for two years and deleted after five years. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything.

The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life OR some of the questions asked may make you feel sad or upset. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time.
If you need some support or counselling services following the interview, these are available free of charge at the Department of Social Development. The name of the counsellor is Ms Rose Taole or Mr Lerato Mohlomi, and the contact details for the counselling service are Department of Social Development, FDC Building, Phuthaditjhaba, Qwa-Qwa; Telephone number 058 713 2877.

This research study will be written up as a research report. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
Nthatisi Nkoebele

Researcher:
Nthatisi Nkoebele, 450221@wits.ac.za, +27 (0) 078 090 2954
Supervisor:
Dr Emmison Muleya, Emmi.muleya@wits.ac.za, +27 (0)11 717 4480

APPENDIX 2



CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State

Name of researcher: Nthatisi Nkoebele

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded	YES	NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report/ manuscript/book chapter	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report)	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date

APPENDIX 3a

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE for NGOs

SECTION 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

Kindly respond to all questions

The interview guide consists of 5 sections.

Mark with an "X" where relevant

NB: All information gathered will be kept confidential.

Section A

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Age	

Gender

Male	
Female	
Rather not say	

Educational level

Never attended school	
Grade R-Grade 6	
Grade 7-Grade 12	
College	
University	
Other, specify	

Position/Role at NGO	
Years of Experience in NGO	

APPENDIX 3b

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE for KEY INFORMANTS

SECTION 1

INSTRUCTIONS:

Kindly respond to all questions

The interview guide consists of 5 sections.

Mark with an "X" where relevant

NB: All information gathered will be kept confidential.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Age	

Gender

Male	
Female	
Rather not say	

Educational level

Never attended school	
Grade R-Grade 6	
Grade 7-Grade 12	
College	
University	
Other, specify	

Position/Role	

Years of Experience	

SECTION 2

1. What poverty alleviation interventions is the government/municipality currently using and why?

a) Please tell me a little bit about what you do?
b) What is your understanding of poverty?
c) What is your understanding of poverty in Qwa-Qwa?
d) What poverty alleviation strategies is your department/unit currently engaged in?
e) Why do you the department/municipality has chosen this intervention/approach?

2. What challenges impede the government/municipality from implementing poverty eradication strategies?

a) What challenges do you face as a department/unit in eradicating poverty?
b) What do you think can be done to address these challenges?
c) How has the department/unit managed to address these challenges?
d) Do you think enough is being done to eradicate poverty in Qwa-Qwa and why?

3.What resources does the government/municipality need to successfully implement poverty eradication?

a) What resources does your department/unit in general need to eradicate poverty?
b) What kind of resources does your department/unit need to help eradicate poverty in Qwa-Qwa?
c) Which stakeholders can play a role in providing these resources?
d) What role can the community play in poverty eradication strategies?
e) What resources do you believe communities have that can help eradicate poverty?
f) How can community resources be mobilised to help eradicate poverty?

APPENDIX 4A



University of the Witwatersrand,

School of Human and Community Development, Department of Social Work

1 Jan Smuts Avenue,

Braamfontein 2000,

Johannesburg,

South Africa

16 July 2024

Mrs. Susan Lakaje

Pusetso Ya Setjhaba

6004 Matsikeng Village

Phuthaditjhaba 9866

South Africa

Dear Ms Nkoebele

Re: Permission to Conduct Research at Pusetso Ya Setjhaba

We are pleased to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 16 July 16, 2024, requesting permission to conduct research at our organization, Pusetso Ya Setjhaba. We appreciate your interest in studying the **Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State**, with a focus on our efforts in Qwaqwa.

We hereby grant you permission to conduct your research at our center. We agree to participate in your study and facilitate your research activities as outlined in your letter.

You are welcome to interview a designated member of our organization, and we will ensure that the necessary arrangements are made to accommodate your schedule.

We acknowledge the importance of maintaining confidentiality and anonymity for our staff and organization, and we appreciate the measures you have outlined to ensure this. We also understand that participation is voluntary and that our staff can withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

Please coordinate with our office to arrange a suitable time for the interview. We look forward to contributing to your research and to the valuable insights it may provide into the role of NGOs in poverty eradication.

Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Suzan Lakaje

Chairperson

Pusetso Ya Setjhaba

073 863 0380

suzanlakaje7@gmail.com

APPENDIX 4B

AGAPE FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CELL: 081 590 3563/ 073 296 5474

E-mail: agapefordevelopment@gmail.com
Registration: 166273 NPO / 930055102 PBO

P.O.BOX 15461
WITSIESHOEK
9870

16 July 2024

Nthatisi Nkoebele
University of Witswatersrand,
Scchool of Human and Community Development
Department of Scocial Work
I Jan Smuts Avenue,
Bramfontein 2000,
Johannesburg,

South Africa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEW RESEARCH AT MY ORGANIZATION

The above matter refers. I am glad to inform you that after discussion with my leadership, we have come to the conclusion to grant you permission to conduct Research with our Organization Under the Topic: Exploring the role of NGOs in Rural Poverty Eradication: A case study of Qwa-Qwa in the Eastern Free State. Ms Nkoebele can interview us, permission is granted.

Feel Free to contact me and Mr Mollo PZ to get the information you require for your research. We will be happy if you can furnish our organization on the findings you have made or results of your Research.

I hope you will find this in order

Kind regards,



Mr. Moloi

APPENDIX 4C

MACRO INFORMATIVE YOUTH AGENCY (MIYA)
Office Block 02
Tshiya Eductaion Resource Centre
Date 19-07-2024

University of the Witwatersrand,
School of Human and Community Development,
Department of Social Work
1 Jan Smuts Avenue,
Braamfontein 2000,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Dear Ms Nkoebele

Permission Granted for Research at Macro Informative Youth Agency

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated July 16, 2024, requesting permission to conduct research at Macro Informative Youth Agency (MIYA Lab) as part of your study, Exploring the Role of NGOs in Rural Poverty Eradication: A Case Study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State. We appreciate your interest in our work and your focus on our efforts in Qwaqwa.

We are pleased to grant you permission to conduct your research at our center. We support your study and will facilitate the necessary research activities as outlined in your request. You are welcome to interview a designated member of our organization, and we will make the necessary arrangements to accommodate your schedule.

We acknowledge the importance of confidentiality and anonymity for our staff and organization and appreciate the measures you have put in place to ensure this. We also understand that participation is voluntary and that our staff members may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Please coordinate with our office to schedule a suitable time for the interview. We look forward to contributing to your research and to the valuable insights it may offer on the role of NGOs in poverty eradication.

Should you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,
Joss Letseli
0677881474
jossletseli@gmail.com

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: SW24/07/04**
PROJECT TITLE	Exploring the role of NGOs in rural poverty eradication: A case study of Qwaqwa in the Eastern Free State
INVESTIGATOR	**NKOEBELE N**
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	SOCIAL WORK
DATE CONSIDERED	16 SEPTEMBER 2024
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	APPROVED UNCONDITIONALLY
RISK LEVEL	LOW RISK
EXPIRY DATE	30 SEPTEMBER 2027

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 **CHAIRPERSON**
(DR L PETERSEN)

cc: Supervisor: DR E MULEYA

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature **Date** 30 / 09 / 2024

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES