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## Feminization of poverty, social entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods: Voices of social work students in South Africa

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### ABSTRACT

*Social entrepreneurship projects have been recognized as a major source of supplementing income and reducing poverty in female-headed households in contemporary South Africa. The study involved a short survey with 120 social work students who were involved in policy analysis and evaluation of women-led entrepreneurship projects in the province of Gauteng, South Africa between September and November 2019. This was followed by a review of policy analysis reports submitted by 40 students who consented. These 40 were drawn from the group of 120 students initially surveyed. The participants of the study were registered final-year social work students at one selected university in Gauteng province and who had a practice connection to women-led entrepreneurship projects in their home communities. All the participants gave their verbal and written permission to participate in the study. After all the data was put together, quantitative data was analysed using a spreadsheet and thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. Underscored by the sustainable livelihood approach, this paper deliberates four themes which distilled from the data: establishment of multi-stakeholder networks, tapping on infrastructure to produce goods, paying it forward and enhancing skills development. The paper calls for social workers to adopt a sustainable livelihood approach in practice as it presents a positive social development strategy that can assist poor women to work towards economic self-reliance.*

**KEY TERMS:** feminization of poverty, social entrepreneurship, women, empowerment, South Africa, sustainable livelihoods

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## INTRODUCTION

It is widely acknowledged by social science scholars in contemporary South Africa that engaging in partnerships and implementing macro intervention projects in communities is fundamental to the training of social work students (Raniga & Seepamore, 2017). In fact, the Council for Higher Education (2015) qualification standards for the Bachelor of Social Work reiterates the student-community-university partnerships as an intentional prerogative set for the training of social work students. One of the major challenges in the COVID era is the preparation of graduates to respond effectively to the health crisis, which has impacted the livelihoods of female-headed households in serious ways. The Council for Higher Education (2015) maintains that in developing national standards for social work education, cognisance must be taken of the structural and economic factors that contribute to poverty, unemployment and inequality that historically has existed in South African communities. Social work has always had its radical and emancipatory functions directed at promoting human rights, social justice, respecting human dignity, enhancing economic self-reliance, and advocating for universal human rights while balancing these against cultural diversities in both Global South and North countries. Social workers witness daily the impact of political decisions, legislations, and policies on the lives of poor women. Social workers are in strategic positions to contribute to the development of transformative interventions, legislation, and public policies to challenge distorted development and to bridge any dichotomies between micro and macro challenges facing women in low-income communities.

## DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE PARADIGM

The developmental social welfare paradigm was adopted in 1997 as a policy response to eradicate poverty and promote economic self-reliance of individuals, groups, and communities (White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997). The developmental social welfare paradigm emphasizes that social development is contingent on economic development (Midgley, 2014). It stresses that economic development will have very little meaning if it is not accompanied by improvements in the psychosocial wellbeing of people challenged by poverty (Gray 2006). The National Development Plan Vision 2030 promotes this preventive approach and emphasizes sustainable development involving poor people as active participants in economic development projects rather than making them dependent on state cash transfer grants (Midgley, 2014; Gray, 2006; Raniga, 2018).

Social entrepreneurship projects have been recognized as a major source of supplementing income and reducing poverty in female-headed households in South Africa (Raniga, 2018). The number of women engaged in social entrepreneurship projects has increased in the past decade because of access to business training and mentorship facilitated through women-led business forums. Considering that social work students are expected to help poor women break the cycle of poverty and meet their economic goals, this paper adds empirical evidence to the fields of social development and feminization of poverty. Using qualitative methodology, we present evidence from 120 social work students who were involved in facilitating women-led entrepreneurship projects in one province in South Africa. Underscored by the sustainable livelihood approach, this paper presents four themes that emerged from the data and distilled through students' reflective reports: establishment of multi-stakeholder networks, tapping on infrastructure to produce goods, paying it forward and enhancing.

For the context of this paper, the authors argue that the integration of a sustainable livelihood approach in social entrepreneurship projects can assist poor women to work towards economic self-reliance. This article contributes to the body of knowledge in two ways: 1) by providing a nuanced understanding of the feminization of poverty from the perspectives of students, and 2) by encouraging academic debate about the significance of the National Development Plan in the integration of social entrepreneurship projects. This article begins with deliberations on the National Development Plan (NDP) as an integral foundation for teaching social policy to social work students. The discussion that follows provides insight into the feminization of poverty and the role of social entrepreneurship projects. An overview of the sustainable livelihood approach and its connection to the study is presented. Following the research methodology section is the presentation and discussion of the themes. The final section synthesizes students' reflections on sustainable livelihoods and women empowerment and highlights key implications for the sustainability of entrepreneurship projects.

## Feminization of poverty and social entrepreneurship

There is a dearth of empirical evidence that poverty is increasingly feminized both in Global South and North countries (Moghadam, 2005:2; Hurlburt, 2018; Cheteni, Khamfula & Mah, 2019). The term "feminization of poverty" refers to an increase in relative levels of poverty among women and/or female-headed households caused by the limitations of neoliberal economic policies (Frye, 2007; Phoko, 2011; Raniga, 2018). Feminization of poverty is a dominant feature in most of the developing world where gender discrimination and exclusion are rampant (McFerson, 2010). Even though women comprise more than 50% of the world population; it has been established that women make up over 70% of the poor in Global South countries (Cheteni, Khamfula & Mah, 2019). Lombard (2019) posits that whilst there are significant differences in the life experiences of different groups

of women in various countries; they share the same intersectional challenges of race, class, and gender, which is closely connected to structural systems in society such as weak governance, traditional restrictions on women's access to the property and violent civil conflicts.

The interaction of these three factors has had a negative impact on the status, condition, and welfare of women in Sub-Saharan Africa. McFerson (2010) argues that feminization of poverty results in hunger, lack of shelter, illiteracy, inadequate health care and lack of social security for women.

The main causes of poverty among women in Sub-Saharan Africa include low literacy levels, lack of job opportunities in the formal economy, income insecurity and social exclusion (McFerson, 2010). Ringson (2019) adds that this can be conceptualised as income poverty, asset poverty, opportunity poverty and access poverty. Most of the Sub-Saharan African nation-states have implemented public policies as blueprints to mitigate the challenges associated with the feminization of poverty.

In South Africa, the Review of the White Paper on Social Welfare in 2016 and the National Development Plan Vision 2030 were commendable policy rollouts to address gender inequality and the socio-economic imbalances that affect women. Whilst much was expected from the NDP in mitigating the feminization of poverty in South Africa, research undertaken by Cheteni, Khamfula & Mah (2019) conclude that girl children and women are still grossly exposed to the feminization of poverty.

According to Chant (2014) and Terreblanche (2012), the feminization of poverty in South Africa is associated with the triple developmental challenges: unemployment, gender inequality and poverty. According to Basal, Garg and Sharma (2019), there is a dire need for social work practitioners to help facilitate women-led entrepreneurship projects through access to loans, business skills training and enactment of affirmative policies and legislation. This study focused on how social policy education and the implementation of social entrepreneurship projects helped to mitigate the feminization of poverty in one province in South Africa. Social entrepreneurship is a term that was coined by Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, a global association of the world's foremost thinkers on social enterprises (Viser, 2011: 234).

Before the invention of the term "social entrepreneurship", the terms 'voluntary' and 'for non-profit' were widely used amongst Social Science scholars. Prominent scholars such as Viser (2011), London and Stuttaford (2018) provide evidence that social entrepreneurial activities integrate the public, private, profit-making, and non-profit sectors and that the emphasis of this hybrid model has become the backbone of the economic development of women in the informal economy. This conceptualization of social entrepreneurship as activities that focuses on achieving sustainable socio-economic and political transformative livelihood, resonates well with mitigating the feminization of poverty in post-apartheid South Africa.

Littlewood and Holt (2015); Taylor and Triegaardt (2018) and Lombard (2019) posit that entrepreneurship activities have opened new job opportunities for women and has emerged as a key developmental strategy in low-income communities; influencing public policies, societal attitudes, and socio-political processes (Raniga, 2016). Entrepreneurial activities facilitate social and economic transformation in low-income communities with a focus on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights (Basal *et al.*, 2019:1). In South Africa, women in urban areas have discovered opportunities where they can network and engage in cooperatives to generate income and sustain livelihoods (Raniga, 2016).

One of the central ideological positions put forward by the authors in teaching the social policy module was to offer final year social work students the opportunity to submit a reflexive paper on their involvement in women-led entrepreneurship projects in their home communities. The major elements of the SLA; namely social capital, human capital, physical and financial capital formed the basis of students' analysis and promoted an emancipatory learning environment beyond the classroom (Raniga & Seepamore, 2014). This position is supported by the findings of qualitative formative evaluation which documented the experiences of 120 social work students who were registered for the social policy and planning module offered by one higher education institution in South Africa. The following discussion provides an overview of the sustainable livelihood approach which formed the theoretical foundation for this study.

### **The sustainable livelihood approach**

As an epistemological position that merges social development and the sustainable livelihood approach (SLA); principles such as human rights, active peoples' participation, transcending micro and macro divide, facilitating strong supportive relationships between communities and students at universities, have the power to either influence and/or undermine the achievement of entrepreneurship goals. Serrat (2017:2) defines SLA as a way of thinking about the objectives, scope, and priorities for development activities. It is based on evolving thinking about the way the poor and vulnerable lives their lives and the role and importance of policies and institutions. Skelton, Evans and LaChanaye (2020) add that SLA helps in formulating development activities that include people-centred, responsive, and participatory, multilevel programmes, partnerships with the public and private sectors and that are dynamic and sustainable.

Serrat (2017) further states that the sustainable livelihood approach does not replace other intervention frameworks such as participatory development, sector-wide approaches or integrated rural development. Instead, it makes the connection between people and the overall enabling environment that influences the outcomes of livelihood strategies, meaningful. It brings attention to bear on the inherent potential of people in terms of their skills, social networks, and access to physical and financial assets and ability to influence core institutions.

The SLA recognises that poor women often know and understand their challenges best and are better able to formulate solutions and strategies to solve their own challenges (Krantz, 2001:4). Entrepreneurship activities thrive on access to social capital, human capital, financial capital, and physical capital and which inherently improves business performance and the impact on sustaining households. The relationships, coalitions and networks formed in social entrepreneurial ventures are beyond economic purposes and benefit, enforcing and driving sustainable livelihoods in poor households and upliftment of these communities (Ney, 2014; Raniga, 2016).

The Review of the White Paper on Social Welfare (2016) emphasises the SLA as a key strategy for changing the economic status of women in communities. Hence a central premise put forth by the authors in this paper is that women must be involved in the formulation and implementation of public policies and projects that can improve their economic circumstances. As such, building sustainable livelihoods is incumbent on social networks, human capabilities, and cooperation for mutual benefit. Historically the dominant narrative has been the tendency to blame women for their adverse circumstances, rather than the structural and economic factors that contribute to this situation.

To date, few published studies have documented the perspectives of students on the implementation of women-led social entrepreneurship projects that exist in communities to mitigate the feminisation of poverty. This study is an endeavour to fill this empirical gap. Bourdieu (1983) and Lombard (2015) maintain that strengthening collaborative stakeholder partnerships that seek to promote social investment strategies in developmental social work is necessary for the training of future graduates. In this sense, social policy advocacy training can become transferable and transformative with an emphasis on “economic, social, environmental and institutional sustainability” (Lombard, 2019), which has a close synergy with the four pillars of the Global Agenda for social work and social development (IFSW, 2012).

## METHODOLOGY

The study involved a short survey with 120 social work students who were involved in policy analysis and evaluation of women-led entrepreneurship projects in the province of Gauteng, South Africa between September and November 2019. This was followed by a review of policy analysis reports submitted by 40 students who consented. These 40 were drawn from the group of 120 students initially surveyed. The participants of the study were registered final-year social work students at one selected university in Gauteng province and who had a practice connection to women-led entrepreneurship projects in their home communities. All the participants gave their verbal and written permission to participate in the study. After all the data was put together, quantitative data was analysed using a spreadsheet and thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data. The first step in our data analysis process involved the familiarization of data through scrutinizing and analysing the individual items of the data and refining the themes several times. This involved reading the text and taking initial notes and generally familiarising and immersing oneself in the data familiar. Following the familiarization step, we engaged in the coding process which involved highlighting sections of the text -usually the most recurring phrases and statements and coming up with the short-hand labels or codes to describe the content. Lastly, we engaged in generating themes from the most recurring and interesting phrases and statements highlighted as codes in the preceding step. This was done by looking over the codes we created, identifying patterns, and formulating themes that were broader than the codes and labels initially created. The prolonged engagement of students during classroom teaching as well as the detailed policy analysis reports served to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of the data. Furthermore, the trustworthiness and credibility of the data were enhanced by the reflective engagements both in the classroom and with the women who led entrepreneurial projects in various communities in Gauteng. This corroboration and triangulation of the data contributed to the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings. The authors however do acknowledge that the main limitation of this study is the exclusion of women as direct participants in the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the target University Research Ethics Committee to conduct this study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

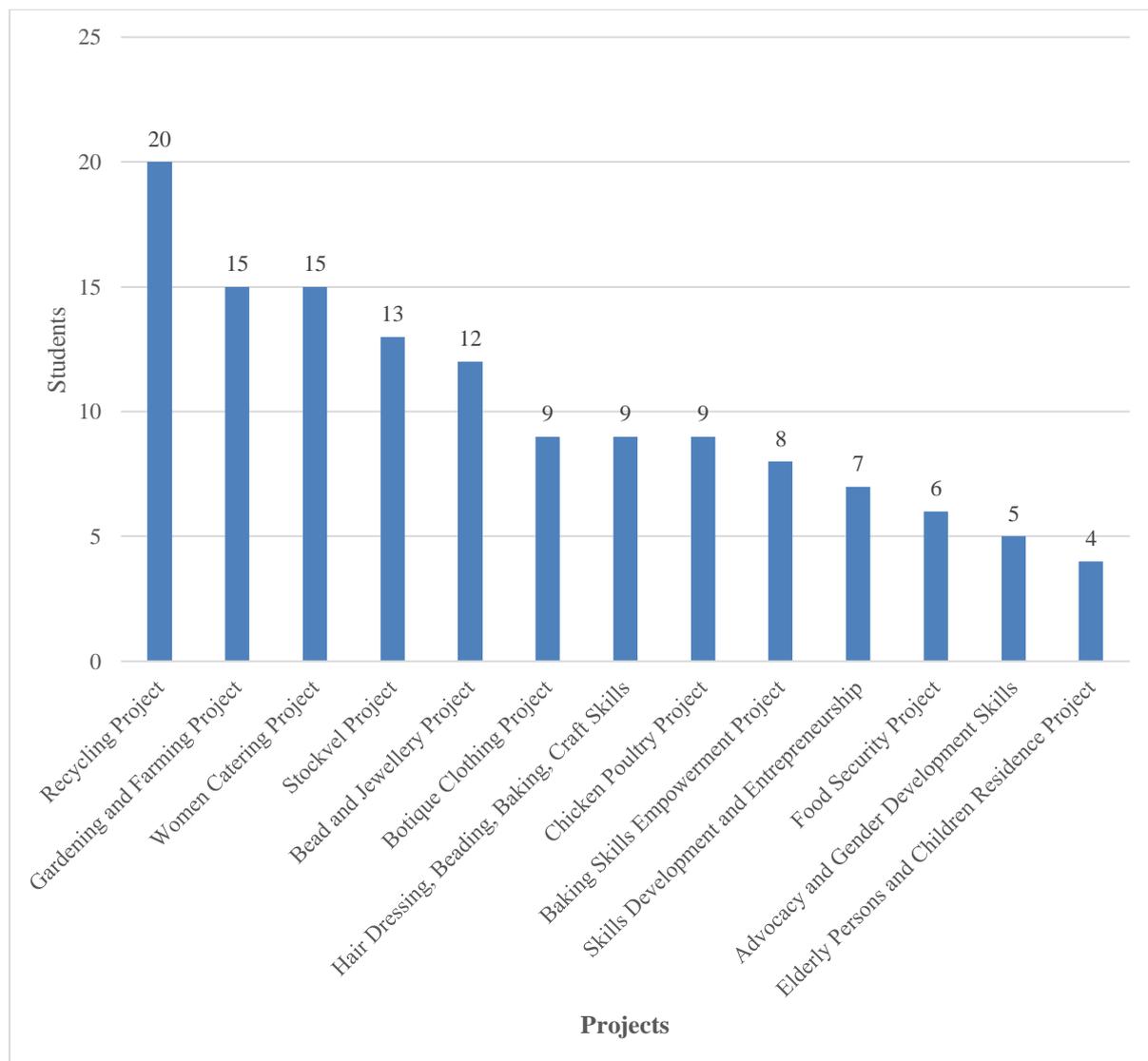
The findings of this study are presented in two segments: the students’ analysis of the projects is presented using a bar graph and subsequently, four themes extracted from the data are discussed which include: establishment of multi-stakeholder networks, tapping on infrastructure to produce goods, paying it forward and enhancing skills

development. Below is a bar graph illustrating the types of women-led entrepreneurial projects visited by the 120 social work students in the Gauteng province of South Africa.

**Women-led entrepreneurial projects visited by the students**

Figure 1 shows the statistical distribution and types of entrepreneurial projects that were visited by final-year social work students from one of the selected Universities in Gauteng province of South Africa. The distribution of the women-led entrepreneurial projects shows that recycling and gardening projects were dominantly undertaken by most of the women in different parts of South Africa. Whilst the projects were spread mainly around communities in Gauteng, the recycling projects dominated by 17% ahead of the gardening and farming projects. These three types of entrepreneurial projects were the most outstanding compared to other projects illustrated in the above graph. This was followed by the women’s catering projects which are at 13% and closely followed by the community stokvel and bead and jewellery projects which were visited by the 9% of the students, respectively. In their endeavour to maximize the policy directives of the NDP, the women in South Africa established a boutique for the sale of clothing, hairdressing, beading, baking and craft skills and poultry farming projects which were visited by 8% of the students. This was followed by the baking skills empowerment project and subsequently followed by the skills development and entrepreneurship projects which were at 6%. Finally, the food security project, advocacy and Gender Development Skills, elderly persons and children residence project staggered between 5% and 3% respectively.

Figure 1: Projects distribution



The distribution of the entrepreneurial projects as depicted in the bar graph does not mean dominance in profitability but shows the extent that poor, unemployed women were aware of the NDP policy and had taken the initiative to implement entrepreneurship projects as an endeavour to help them to break the cycle of poverty. Whilst profitability cannot be ignored from the success stories of these women entrepreneurship activities, the projects also contributed to building a strong social capital amongst women in their communities. It is in the premises of the foregoing that the findings were presented from the 40 students purposive selected from the 120 students' reflections of social entrepreneurship projects. Thus, the SLA analysis of these projects through the implementation of the NDP will be explained within the following key themes: establishment of multi-stakeholder networks, tapping on infrastructure to produce goods, paying it forward and enhancing skills development.

### **Establishment of multi-stakeholder networks**

Overall, the field visits undertaken by the students illustrate that the entrepreneurial projects had contributed to strengthening social capital through building multi-stakeholder networks in the communities. Women in their respective businesses nurtured partnerships with stakeholders such as NGOs, the Department of Social Development and faith-based organisations as associations and social support networks to enhance access to resources, material support, funds, and skills training.

The women had also tapped on support from other businesswomen outside of their own communities to market their products and to share valuable networks and business skills. Some of the practice examples documented by the students are as follows:

*I witnessed a local businessperson within the community who was impressed with what these women were doing at their homestead and the person donated one of his buildings in the area to help these women to do their beading making project (Student A).*

*This was not enough; another student mentioned that in the project she participated in, they reported that different political parties donated some business capital and moral support which have taken them a long way in enhancing the social capital base (Student B).*

Regarding building social capital networks, student C reported that:

*The organization that she was attached to was doing knitting and sewing and they started this without skilled personnel to help them. However, during their project, one of the local non-governmental organization spotted and outsourced the skilled trainers who teach them knitting and sewing for free. In addition to free training, the non-governmental organization brought sewing and knitting machines (Student C).*

The stakeholders voluntarily offered to market their products for some women's projects within their communities. Because of the marketing opportunity, student D remarked.

*He was attached to the women's project which was focussing on gardening. He explained that this group of women started their project on a very small piece of land. While they were in the process of doing their project, they were located by one of the community leaders who gave them a vast piece of land and offered to market their vegetables (Student D).*

It is commendable that the projects are in tandem with the NDP's vision 2030 in that the policy seeks to make sure that every citizen of South Africa can access equal and quality services and resources for a sustainable livelihood (NDP, 2013; Serat, 2017). The NDP stipulates that this will be achieved through a rights-based approach in which every person must be able to participate in the planning and implementation process of the policy. The NDP seeks to achieve these important social development goals through increasing employment and economic productivity (NDP, 2013). The numerous entrepreneurial projects initiated by women following the NDP reveals that there was an awareness of the policy and that it had translated into transformative action in communities.

The government alongside the NDP formulated the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy to encourage Black African women to start businesses and thereby reducing poverty, unemployment, and gender inequality in society. The collaboration between government and private sector stakeholders in empowering women resonates with the findings put forth by Lombard (2019) and Raniga (2018). These researchers argue that there is a critical need for multi-stakeholder partnership and engagement in communities to help women discover their inherent strengths and untapped talents. The students' reports bear testimony that whilst the roll-out of the NDP into the entrepreneurial project is commendable, government officials did not fully integrate human capital and financial capital into these projects. As a result, the women entrepreneurs expressed that the lack of human and financial capital posed the biggest challenges to them to sustain their businesses. In addition, the students' reports revealed that most of the women had received help from private individuals and business sponsors with minimal support

from the government. Thus, the students' report showed that even though women entrepreneurs were aware of the NDP policy, but the gap remains with the translation of the policy into implementation.

This finding corroborates with Hurlburt (2018) and Cheteni et.al (2019) who posit that regardless of the effort put forth by the government to redress the inequalities and poverty among women, the challenge is still rampant. In this view, some of the social work students shared that the women hoped that the National Minister of Social Development would put in place systems to get access to micro-credit and low-interest loans from banks in the private sector.

### **Tapping on infrastructure to produce goods**

Tapping on physical capital and relevant infrastructure for the production of their goods was one of the important issues raised by the students in their reflective reports. For this study, physical capital infers access to transport, shelter, electricity, water, and communication networks that the women had obtained from the profits and sales of their entrepreneurial projects. The findings revealed that women were able to increase their physical capital and assets as their businesses progress. The women were able to increase their physical assets such as vehicles, machines, and houses to strengthen their businesses and sustain livelihoods. What is worth noting is that most of the businesses were launched by individual women, but the projects evolved to being perceived as a community entity? Some of the women shared with the students that their access to transport, shelter, water, and internet services were provided by private business individuals. Serat (2017) and Skelton et.al (2020) assert that SLA helps women to group for a common objective and to enhance the production of goods and services for sustainable living. One project example related by a student who was involved in a vegetable gardening project stated that:

*Even though the project started small, but it attracted stakeholders from all walks of life who came to support my ideas, money and marketing. These women managed to buy their assets which included irrigation materials and building houses for their workers (Student E).*

Women who were involved in the catering project collectively pooled their profits to buy gas stoves and electric stoves which they shared for cooking and baking. This investment in physical capital helped expand their businesses and improve their household livelihoods. It is important to take note of some of the challenges raised by some of the women entrepreneurs which were documented in students' reports. Those women involved in gardening and poultry farming wished that government would give them a piece of land or access to microcredit to enhance their business sustainability. Students F remarked:

*We appreciate the opportunity that the government has done through its affirmative action policies such as NDP, WEGE and CGE. These policies have made the public aware of the needs of women. However, the government should do more in paving a way for the women in projects to acquire their land and infrastructure to operate their business.*

The empirical evidence of this study corroborates Basa et.al (2019) and Viser (2011) findings that entrepreneurship activities are sustainable based on access to material assets and resources. In this study, the findings reveal that the involvement of the Department of Social Development and Department of Trade and Industry to provide funding to support women entrepreneurs was ad hoc and inconsistent.

### **Paying it forward**

Students reported that social entrepreneurship projects were perceived by the women as not just a means to sustain livelihoods and increase income security; but that their businesses provided the opportunity for employment for other unemployed women in the communities. All the women spoke about paying it forward and the positive effect that their respective businesses had on the informal economy. Those women involved in the Recycling project spoke about the prospects of attracting more job opportunities for women thus reducing the feminisation of poverty. This finding corroborates with the policy directives enshrined in the National Planning Commission Vision 2030 policy (2011) which notes that vulnerable groups in society should be given opportunities that will help them to create employment and make a living. The women-led entrepreneurial projects grew from micro to macro businesses and the women indicated that they had created jobs not just for themselves but other unemployed women in the community.

One of the students who was involved in a hair salon project indicated that “*these women started too small, and some people were even not supporting them down but eventually they managed to buy their place where they are staying*”. They even bought their hair equipment and other important materials. Whilst the contributions made by the projects towards financial capital are commendable, the NDP did not contribute any start-up capital towards these women-led businesses. One of the students indicated that whilst the women projects are vital for their economic empowerment, the banks and other financial institutions were not ready to release money and buying properties for these small projects fearing that their money will not be reimbursed. Raniga (2018); Gray (2006) and Cheteni et.al (2019) support these findings that entrepreneurship is mainly sustained by the financial support

that comes from tapping on one's social capital networks than from the government. There was a consensus among the participants that the social engagements of the women with the multi-stakeholders through their projects have attracted different types of skills and services.

Some of the women spoke about the challenges of not having proper documents such as proof of residence in their names which was required for application of loans from banks and hence, their applications are always turned down. As such, evidence from the findings of the projects shows that there is little confirmation of funding from the government to enhance their project productivity. This dovetail with Raniga and Zeluck (2014) and McFerson (2010) who argue that the governments are good at formulating the policies which they do not practically support. Instead, the government did provide the women with cash transfers through social grants for direct household consumption and not financial capital for their businesses. Whilst the government is doing good through the social grants, affirmative actions and the BEE facilities, there is a lot that the students echoed that the government should do in human capital skills development. This is elaborated in the discussion below.

### **Enhancing skills development**

In the various entrepreneurial projects provided in Gauteng, human capital development was a central theme that the women mentioned to students during the field visits. Skills development in the context of the entrepreneurial projects visited by the students can be defined as a deliberate but systematic engagement intended to improve one's cognitive or technical competence to effectively undertake a given task or meet certain deliverables (Cheteni et.al, 2019; Hurlbut, 2018). In the various project's woman attested to having acquired and enhanced their marketing and business skills. They were able to apply these skills and enhance the productive deliverables of their respective businesses. Two sub-themes are discussed below.

#### ***Skills for cooperative engagement and development***

Bead and jewellery making, small scale poultry, and fruit gardening projects were some of the projects where skills training enhanced the women's human capital skills. The skills training was conducted by various stakeholders in the public and private sector who trained the women in a voluntary capacity. In some instances, the women had some basic skills, but the training enhanced their skills. In this instance skills training and upskilling congruently contributed to the project's success. Regarding acquiring the foregoing skills, Student G said:

*I witnessed an old woman who has never been at school making to interwove beads and jewellery of high quality. When I asked them where they got such skills, they indicated that they were taught by a certain non-governmental organization and individual well-wishers in their communities.*

The focus on human capital development initiatives fostered women's community engagement and cooperation in their respective communities. A discussion of the application of their skills for sustainability forms the basis of the discussion below.

#### ***Application of the skill for sustainability***

Obtaining the project skills translated to the women's ability to holistically sustain their projects, sustain their households, and attend to the project challenges. Their ability to apply the set of skills not only culminated in their business success but improved a sense of innovation as evidence in the woman ability to commercialize their product in their local market and compete in South Africa's open market. Concerning sustainability acquisition skills, Student H remarked in her report:

*During my involvement with these poultry and gardening projects, we have seen different people from different organizations operating within our community coming to teach us management skills and how to market our products. I remember we convened three workshops on different subjects on project management and budgeting.*

In this view, Viser (2011) and Lombard (2019) reiterated that cooperative and community-based business is sustained by the capacity of the organization's social networks and collaborations. Based on the empirical findings of this study, it can be concluded that sustainability of the women-led entrepreneurial activities is incumbent on a deep interconnection of building social capital networks, tapping on physical capital, sustaining financial capital and human capital skills development. A challenge mentioned by all the women with respect to the long-term sustainability of their businesses was the blatant lack of financial support and training provided by government officials and service providers.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY FOR SOCIAL POLICY AND DEVELOPMENT

Social policy education and training cannot remain static, it has to be responsive to the influence of history on contemporary life; address current life issues as social work students engage poor women in problem-solving, and societal change initiatives; and work towards greater socio-economic equality. The BSW qualification is therefore designed to be broad and flexible enough to be responsive to different contexts, and be of sufficient complexity to ensure that graduates possess the capacity to think on their feet; Within the social development approach, social work students are expected to implement income-generating projects as part of macro intervention strategies. In the premises of the above analyses, the study recommended that the political parties of land's ideologies must compliment the goals of the NDP policy. The fight and struggle for power amongst the political parties confuse the implementation of the NDP at the grassroots level. The other important aspect that the NDP should consider to achieve its goals is that its goals must be specific and timely as the period of 20 years is a very long time. It is also important that in its endeavour (NDP) to empower women it must put in place the monitoring and evaluation systems that help the implementers of the goals and objectives to measure their performance. The NDP objectives are too broad and hence they should be broken down that the ordinary people in the street can be able to run with them and achieve something at the end of the day. The objectives must bring about the specific measures that will be followed to tackle each aspect of poverty including feminization of poverty. The other important suggestion to improve the NDP is that it should not only include the long-term goals as it is more difficult to evaluate the progress of the goals for each period against its objective. The government as the visionary of the NDP must make the loans accessible for the women in businesses. Whilst such facilities are there through the financial institutions, but it was confirmed in theory and other projects that the paperwork required to get the loans are not accessible to some poor women.

## CONCLUSION

This article discussed the findings of an exploratory qualitative research project based on 120 policy analysis reports produced by final-year social work students that examined the National Development Plan Vision 2030 of 2011 with reference to the integration of SLA and women-led entrepreneurship projects in South Africa. These students represent the next generation of professionals and by embracing a sustainable livelihood approach in the implementation of social entrepreneurship projects, they were allowed to acknowledge how policy interventions contribute to advocacy for change. The article has highlighted the benefits of student-university-community member partnerships that is manifest in the opportunities afforded to students to value women-led entrepreneurial activities, to value advocacy interventions, policy analytical skills and novel solutions to fighting poverty in communities. The authors conclude that integrating a sustainable livelihood approach in social policy teaching shapes the policy engagement and advocacy skills of future social work professionals.

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