



Ersta Sköndal Bräcke University College

The social work undergraduate program, 210 ECTS

## **“I want to become a role model for them”**

**A qualitative study in a Philippine context about social workers perceptions of poverty**

Student: Fatima Dagdelen and Moa Agnebrink

Bachelor Thesis, SOC 63, 2017

Supervisor: Johan Gärde

Examinor: Ulf Hammare

## **Abstract**

There is much said about how to support a client as a social worker. Much is based on the country's politics, structure, organization, norms, but also on the values, knowledge, and responsiveness of social workers. When a country is exposed to poverty, social work takes a certain kind of shape and direction based on several viewpoints. The world has its eyes on developing countries with many poverty reduction recommendations, but how do social workers, living and working in a country with high poverty, express their reality?

This study aims to, in a Philippine context, examine professional social workers perception of poverty and identify their approach to poverty alleviation and clients living in poverty. A qualitative study, with eight semi-structured interviews was hold plus one group interview including two respondents. All respondents were professional social workers that worked with poverty reduction in various ways. The thematic analysis was made with the framework of Human Development and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach theory. The result shows that the efforts to reduce poverty in the Philippines require long-term thinking where respondents' mostly have the task of changing communities and clients' values. The respondents' perceptions of poverty is that it is a condition that can be changed as long as the individual living in poverty makes active choices. The conclusions show that the major approach the respondents have, is to work with clients potentials and mindset by aware them to see what they actually can do for themselves. Almost all of the respondents use their own background as a motivator to support clients out of poverty and they approach their clients with patience, attention, belonging, and love, which can lead to minimizing obstacles that may be in the way of increasing the well-being of clients. On the other hand, the results show that it is the individual's responsibility to change his or her situation and a common perception among the respondents' is that education is the key to reduce poverty.

Keywords: Social work, Philippines, Human Development, Capability Approach theory, Poverty, Social workers, Perception, Poverty reduction

*“We are born into a world of values. Whether we are aware of it or not, we are incarnations of values. There is a little we can do about values except to become conscious of their presence and impact on our lives, to criticize or celebrate them, to unlearn those that weaken us, and to promote those that strengthen us”.*

David, R. S. (2016, p. 169)

**Table of contents**

- Abstract.....2**
- Acknowledgement .....6**
- Term definitions .....7**
- 1. Introduction..... 10**
  - 1.1 The world, The Philippines, and Poverty Reduction ..... 10**
  - 1.2 Social work and who bears the responsibility? ..... 10**
  - 1.3 Problem Statement..... 11**
  - 1.4 Purpose and Research questions..... 13**
- 2. Background..... 14**
  - 2.1 The Philippine context ..... 14**
  - 2.2 The biggest problem in the Philippines and social workers ..... 14**
  - 2.3 The concept of Human Development ..... 15**
  - 2.4 Demarcations ..... 16**
- 3. Current state of knowledge ..... 17**
  - 3.1 International perspective ..... 17**
    - 3.1.1 The role of social work in poverty reduction ..... 18
  - 3.2 Philippine national perspective..... 19**
    - 3.2.1 Social workers in the Philippines working with poverty reduction..... 19
- 4. Theory..... 21**
  - 4.1 Capability Approach theory..... 21**
    - 4.1.1 Functions ..... 23
    - 4.1.2 Capability ..... 23
    - 4.1.3 Agency ..... 24
    - 4.1.4 Freedom..... 24
  - 4.2 Theory criticism ..... 24**
- 5. Method..... 26**
  - 5.1 Methodology ..... 26**
  - 5.2 Selection ..... 27**
  - 5.3 Pre-understanding ..... 29**
  - 5.4 Literature searches ..... 29**

<b>5.5 Implementation of data collection .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>5.6 Method for interpretation and analysis .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>5.7 Our division.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.8 Method discussion .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.9 Ethical guidance.....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.9.1 The demands of information/ Information requirement .....	34
5.9.2 Consent requirement .....	34
5.9.3 Confidentiality.....	35
5.9.4 Useful requirement.....	35
<b>6. Result and Analysis .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>6.1 Theme one: Social workers perception of poverty.....</b>	<b>36</b>
6.1.1 Poverty is more than the lack of economic transactions.....	37
6.1.2 Poverty is not a permanent condition – Look at me.....	37
6.1.3 Poverty as a lack of education.....	39
6.1.4 Analysis of Theme one: Social workers perception of poverty .....	40
<b>6.2 Theme two: The necessities of the profession to work with poverty reduction .....</b>	<b>42</b>
6.2.1 Having a role of a coordinator.....	42
6.2.2 Support that cannot be measured .....	45
6.2.3 Balancing the private and professional role as a social worker .....	46
6.2.4. Analysis of Theme two: The necessities of the profession to work with poverty reduction .....	48
<b>6.3 Theme three: To be an agent of change.....</b>	<b>50</b>
6.3.1 Given an opportunity .....	51
6.3.2 Individual responsibility .....	53
6.3.3 Environmental responsibility .....	55
6.3.4 Analysis of Theme three: To be an agent of change.....	56
<b>7. Conclusions .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>7.1 Discussion.....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Appendix 1.....</b>	<b>65</b>

## **Acknowledgement**

We have been awarded with a Minor Field Study (MFS) scholarship. The scholarship program is administered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education and financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). MFS scholarship is awarded to Swedish students with desire to undertake an in-depth field study collecting data as a part of our university studies in Sweden. The focus of the scholarship is to raise the level of knowledge in our respective academic field of study by interacting in a foreign context. The program also aims to raise the interests for international cooperation and learn more about other countries increasing international understanding and global knowledge.

We were happy to grab the opportunity and to take the chance to travel to the Philippines to make the study and we would like to thank SIDA for the opportunity to make our field study. Also big thanks to our respondents for taking their time to share their stories in such a personal way for us. We would also like to thank our creative and inspiring supervisor Johan Gärde who supported us to go to the Philippines. And a huge thanks to teacher Marietta Lingvall at Saint Louis University that invited us to a lecture with Filipino social work students.

In view of the fact that we have not taken part in clients' own experiences, we also want to say that we return home with great respect and humility to all the dimensions and concepts we read and heard about expressing poverty.

## **Term definitions**

As we intend to use abbreviations in our study, this section explain the central concepts and definitions that we are going to use further in the text.

### **APPROACH**

To deal with something ([www.dictionary.cambridge.org](http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org)). We will use “approach” based on how social workers handle their challenges at work and how they do to achieve solutions.

### **CLIENT**

Refers to the “individual, group, family, or community that seeks or is provided with professional services” (Barker, 2013, p. 73 referred in NASW). In our thesis we have chosen to use the term “client” which refers to an individual as the term is internationally well used in the social work field and for the reason that our respondents are using it.

### **DSWD** *Department of Social Welfare and Development*

The Philippine Government did after the Second World War gradually assume the considerable responsibility for social welfare in the country. The department established in 1915 and was reorganized and got its name DSWD in 1987. Today there are 16 offices around the country, broken down by regions ([www.dswd.gov.ph](http://www.dswd.gov.ph)). DSWD has the mission of working for a society where vulnerable, poor and disadvantaged are empowered for an improved quality of life. Against this background, the ambition for DSWD is to be the world's standard for delivering coordinated social services and social protection for poverty reduction by 2030. DSWD provides assistance to various national authorities and organizations, including Non-governmental organizations (NGO). By implementing projects, programs and services focusing on reducing poverty, disadvantaged people, families and communities will have an improved quality of life ([www.dswd.gov.ph](http://www.dswd.gov.ph)).

### **HDI** *Human Development Index*

Since 1990, the United Nations (UN) conducts yearly measurements of the member states living conditions by the so-called Human Development Index (HDI). The value indicates a country's socio-economic, health and educational development in order to compare the countries development in a global perspective and can be seen as a complement to economic measurements of poverty ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)). The index varies between 0-1 where 0 represents low development and 1 well developed. The countries are categorized into four groups: “Low human development, Medium human development, High human development and Very high development” (ibid.).

### **HDR** *Human Development Reports*

Reports produced by the Human Development Report Office for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ensured of editorial independence by the United Nation's General Assembly, have been published every year since 1990, with a special interest in poverty and with concerns of the creations of opportunities to lead worthwhile lives ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)).

### **IFSW** *The International Federation of Social workers*

A global organisation which promotes social work and facilitates international cooperation, endeavours for human rights, social justice and social development ([www.ifsw.org](http://www.ifsw.org)). IFSW have special advisory status in the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF). IFSW are also working with the World Health Organisations (WHO), United nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. IFSW provides a global voice for the social work professionals and supports its 116 country members (*ibid.*).

### **NGO** *Non-Governmental Organization*

A significant actor in the social services in the Philippines is NGO's, which have expanded in quantity due to international goodwill and support after the Philippine dictator Marco's resignation in the late 80's (Nilan, 2013). The development of NGO's with the roots in anti-Marcos factions, shared an ideology of a privileged civil society with a less significant role of the state in society. Eventually it was discovered that it wasn't sustainable because of the shifting of international foundations from the Philippines to other countries. Despite the fact, even today, NGOs provide many of the social services in the Philippines (*ibid.*). The newfound recognition of the role and contributions of the NGO sector in Philippine development has led to the spectacular rise in the number of NGOs in the country. Some reports state that there are as many as 60,000 non-profit, NGOs registered in the Philippines today ([www.pcnc.com.ph](http://www.pcnc.com.ph)).

### **PCNC** *The Philippine Council for NGO Certification*

A private voluntary, non-stock, non-profit corporation serving as a service organization whose main function is to certify non-profit organizations that in the service to underprivileged Filipinos, meet established minimum criteria for financial management and accountability ([www.pcnc.com.ph](http://www.pcnc.com.ph)).

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

“A person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization”.

([www.businessdictionary.com](http://www.businessdictionary.com)). Stakeholders, in this study include communities, service users,

families and organizations that have interest in, or power to influence a service, organization or a project.

#### **UN** *United Nations*

The United Nations is an international organization with 193 members and was founded in 1945. UN work to protect human rights, maintain international peace and security, deliver humanitarian aid, promote sustainable development and uphold international law ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org)).

#### **UNDP** *United Nation Development Programme*

UNDP works in about 170 countries and territories to eradicate poverty while protecting the planet. In order for countries to sustain their progress, UNDP help countries develop skills, strong policies, partnerships and institutions ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)).

#### **WORLD BANK**

“Is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. We are not a bank in the ordinary sense but a unique partnership to reduce poverty and support development” ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). World bank assists developing countries around the world with financial and technical sources to reduce poverty and succour development, also emphasises that countries need to make decisions that benefits and ensure that there is help for the poorest to avoid from falling back into poverty (*ibid.*).

# 1. Introduction

This chapter starts with a background of the research topic from different levels, both globally and in the Philippines, and how it matters to social work. Then a presentation of the approach to the study followed by a problem formulation and concludes with the study's aim along with the three research questions that will be answered by the purpose of the study.

## 1.1 The world, The Philippines, and Poverty Reduction

In September 2015, UNDP decided the “2030-agenda” with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) where goal number one calls for an end of poverty in all its manifestations by 2030 (United Nations [UN], 2017). World leaders have demanded collective and intensified actions to deliver commitments, made as part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and since the Philippines are members of the UN, they have signed in agreement with these goals. Moreover, in the Philippines's development plan, poverty reduction is explicitly formulated as a goal and due to the fact that the Philippines has over the past decade experienced a rapid economic growth, the benefits of economic expansion have not resulted in significant poverty reduction (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2016). The latest measurements from World Bank show that there were 13.11 % of the Philippine society that lived under the international extreme poverty line which is \$1.90 a day and 37.6% that lived in less than \$3.10 a day ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). Another way to assess a country's poverty is through HDI, where the Philippines ends up on the value of 0.682, which indicates that the Philippines is a “Medium human developed” country (Human Development Report [HDR], 2016).

## 1.2 Social work and who bears the responsibility?

Amartya Sen argues in the foreword to; *From Poverty to Power: How active citizens and effective states can change the world* (Green, 2012) that the common view of poverty as a lack of income does not give a complete understanding of the phenomenon, and he has also contributed to the Human Development (HDR, 2016) as well as he has developed Capability Approach theory as a counter reaction and a complement to the previous traditional evaluations of monetary focus. Although, Sen agrees that dimensions such as social, cultural, and political aspects also need to be taken more into account to achieve development in individuals' well-being (Robeyns, 2003). However, Sen's theory is more about how we can understand, measure, and work to increase human well-being, which also is the basis that we intend to assume in our study.

Two main social work actors in the Philippines are DSWD and NGO. These organisations work with poverty reduction by providing help and support for people living in poverty ([www.dswd.gov.ph](http://www.dswd.gov.ph); [www.pcnc.com.ph](http://www.pcnc.com.ph)), and a global description of social work with its profession, which The IFSW

clarifies, has a central role in reducing poverty and work to increase people's well-being. IFSW claims that social work is a practice-based profession that promotes social change, development and social cohesion. Social work should work for empowerment and liberation of people. And by engaging people and structures, social work addresses life challenges and improves well-being (<http://ifsw.org>).

Since human development in many ways, as illustrated earlier, is affected by for example political, and economic factors, Nilan (2013) describes, how those factors are shaping and defining the role of social workers regarding poverty reduction. He also argues that social work often is described as if there was a single unified discipline but that it occurs in many different forms in different parts of the world (ibid.). Depending on the roots and traditions on which social work is based, it leads to many differences and also similarities in philosophies and orientations (ibid.). Nilan claims that social workers in the Philippine society practice their profession in a context where inequality and disadvantage are accepted as a natural part of life. He concludes that a dominant ideology of Philippine social policy has shaped social workers role in poverty programs and anti poverty programs are permeated by an ideology that do not necessarily match with the ideals of how social work should be done because of the country's ideology (ibid.).

There are also other studies on who is responsible for a poor state where two dimensions explicitly returns. There is an individualistic view of the cause of poverty, where poverty is the product of factors at the individual level, such as the behaviour of the poor themselves and personal traits. The other view is the social explanation, where structural factors cause poverty (Lepianka, Gelissen, & van Oorschot, 2010; van Oorschot & Halman, 2000).

With the on-going work on global targets for poverty reduction and that the Philippine context said to be characterized by developmental needs, we found it interesting to visit the country and conduct our study in their context. Because social work in many ways is about social workers' efforts to achieve and strengthen the well-being of clients, is the overall issue of the study, how social workers perceive poverty in their context. As reducing poverty is a considerable task, how do social workers handle their challenges in the work of poverty reduction and how do they approach solutions?

### **1.3 Problem Statement**

What we find in the literature on poverty, the majority focus on the definition or the evaluation of poverty policy, as well as on the measurement of poverty. There are broad discussions on how to measure poverty and how to achieve poverty reduction in developing countries. Barder (2009) argues that the aid effectiveness research industry has done a one-dimensional measurement and condensed the definition of poverty reduction when measuring poverty through increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita or by estimating the number of people that will be taken over an international poverty line. The traditional model that measures the impact of aid on economic growth

is the key concern in Barder's study as the focus on poverty reduction through the GDP ignores other important perspectives as that between addressing the causes and symptoms of poverty and between reducing present and future poverty in the world (ibid.). See, for example, from the Human Development perspective, the world is a place where all human beings should possess the freedom to achieve actual living that one has reason to value (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2016; Sen, 2001). Human Development is about universalism, where development enables people to fully expand their capabilities and put them to use. Universalism is described as “leaving no one behind” and that there will be people who need support from others such as states, communities, and individuals to realize their full potential (ADB, 2016).

As we have seen, poverty has a multifaceted and a complex character. Many efforts and strategies are being put in place to address problems and social workers' end up with the challenge and the difficult task of managing the consequences of poverty and making improvements in peoples' lives. Blomberg, Kroll, Kallio, and Erola (2013) discuss social workers' perceptions of the causes of poverty in the Nordic countries and that public service workers are more bureaucratic and considered important actors because they have extensive scope for assessments in their work. Social workers are considered important as they influence the legitimacy of welfare policies among the general public and especially the welfare state's users, in our study the welfare state's users are the clients. Blomberg et al. (2013) emphasize in the article that social workers' professional norms, attitudes, and beliefs play a major role in how they use their discretion in the implementation processes and through categorization of citizens, decide who is entitled to benefits and which are not (ibid.).

van Oorschot and Halman (2000) discuss how surprising it is that in studies on measurement, dynamics, causes, and consequences of poverty, much research has not been done on public perceptions of the poor. The authors argue that it is not an irrelevant question of what the public sees as the reasons for the existence of people who are in need in their society as the views and explanations play an important role in legitimizing social inequalities and delimiting the welfare state intervention boundaries in general (ibid.). They suggest that future research should focus on the relationship between perception of poverty and different types of strategies against poverty. The authors also believe that a country should ensure that people have an as diligent life as possible while the country is developing, especially when it comes to focusing on economic growth (ibid.).

With the above mentioned, we find it interesting to look more closely at social workers and their work to increase the well-being of clients living in poverty as they are the actors who work closest to welfare state users. By highlighting the social worker perspective, we hope to help demonstrate the approaches social workers have in poverty reduction in a developing country such as the Philippines. Social workers' perceptions can also be viewed as an interest from a general social policy perspective.

#### **1.4 Purpose and Research questions**

The purpose of this study is to, in a Philippine context, examine professional social workers perception of poverty and identify their approach to poverty alleviation and clients living in poverty.

1. How do professional social workers define poverty?
2. What do social workers say is necessary in their way of supporting clients out of poverty?
3. What do social workers describe as challenging in their work with supporting clients to get out of poverty?

## **2. Background**

In this chapter, a brief description of the Republic of the Philippines will be presented to illustrate the context of the background in our study. Furthermore, a brief description is also given on our experience in the country, which became the starting point for the progress of our purpose. We will conclude with a description of the concept of Human Development, as it is a background to, as well as a framework for our study. This chapter ends with demarcations.

### **2.1 The Philippine context**

In 2013, 767 million people around the world lived in less than \$1.90 a day, which is the international measurement for the poverty limit. Since 1999 until 2013 the global poverty rate decreased from 28% to 11%. The largest advances in the process of poverty reduction has taken place in south and southeast Asia where measurements show figures from 35% in 1999 to 3% in 2013. ADB (2009) present that the main cause of poverty in the Philippines is the low to moderate economic growth in the country over the past 40 years. Since the country has experienced low to moderate economic growth in recent years, poverty reduction has, according to the report, been slow. And since inequality has been high, it has also limited growth's positive impact on poverty reduction and chronic poverty has become a major limitation for achieving a higher level of the country's overall development as well as limited continued growth (ibid.).

The Philippines was the 12th most populated country in 2013 and now has a population of 113 510 008 (2017) where 10 444 527 people are living in the capital Manila ([www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com); [www.nationsonline.org](http://www.nationsonline.org)). The nation was a Spanish colony during the 16th century until the Spanish American War when the Philippines were ceded to the USA 1898 ([www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)). In 1935 the Philippines became a self-governing commonwealth and declared their independence day in 1946 and during our visit we experienced that it was very easy to communicate in English, regardless of whether it was with the younger or the older generation.

The Philippines is a nation, divided into three main islands: Luzon, Visaya, and Mindanao with totally 7107 islands, located in the Southeast Asia ([www.gov.ph](http://www.gov.ph)). The size of the Philippines is more than 300.000 square kilometers which is the size of Italy. The country has suffered from several natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, storms, flooding and volcanic eruptions and ranks fourth in the global climate risk index, which identifies countries affected by extreme weather (ADB, 2016). The poor are the ones most likely to be dependent on natural systems for their livelihoods and therefore suffer more losses than the rest of the population (Bauer, 2008 referred in ADB, 2016).

### **2.2 The biggest problem in the Philippines and social workers**

We already knew before our trip to the Philippines that the country was struggling with poverty and that we would experience shantytowns and dumps where people lived and worked. We were also prepared that there could be a big difference to what we in Sweden focus on in social work as well as how we look at poverty. Against this background, we sought the education system to get a sense of how the social work in a developing country such as the Philippines, starts at the academy. We were luckily given the opportunity to attend a lecture for social workers at the Saint Louis University in Baguio. The lecturer started the lecture by saying: "Today's topic is the biggest problem we have in our country – Poverty" (personal communication, 13 of March, 2017). We were privileged to be able to go directly into the context that our study was intended to be conducted in. The social work students had the task of reading literature until that day we joined the class and they talked about an expression that was common in the country, namely "if you are born poor, you will die poor". It was here that our curiosity about how social workers themselves look at the concept of poverty began, as well as how it would appear to be met in social work by social workers.

### **2.3 The concept of Human Development**

This presentation aims to better understand how and why UNDP use the concept of Human Development as a complement to SDG in work with well-being and equality on international and national levels.

Human Development was introduced in HDR in 1990 as a new approach for advancing human well-being. This approach is more than increasing the richness of the economy in which people live ([www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)). Human Development is about expanding the richness of human life by focusing on people, their choices and opportunities (ibid.). The director of the HDR Office, Selim Jahan (lectured on the HDR, 2016; [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)) describes the concept of Human Development and how to reach the ultimate goal of human development. He argues that people's choices in all aspects of human life need to be enlarged and believes that there are two sides of improving the choice. First, human capabilities must be improved and that can, for example, be enhanced by human resources development by nutrition and better access to help. Secondly, people's opportunity to use this capability must be improved. And in order to use those capabilities, opportunities must be created through, for example, employment opportunities, innovation and entrepreneurship (ibid.).

To maximize human development, Jahan (HDR, 2016; [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)) claims that there must be a balance between these two sides. In a mismatch between these, there is a risk for situations of human frustration that can mean a loss of human potential. In this specific concept of Human Development, treatments are highlighted because, one: income is a critical ingredient and a means of improving human development. But the income itself is not the end. Two: because it is not just about the development of human resources or people as human capital. Human Development is much more

holistic and more than basic needs because it speaks of human choices and not just about the minimum requirements for human welfare. Human Development is, according to Jahan, more than welfare as it treats people not only as recipients of development but also as active participants in the development process.

HDI is only a measure of human development and the idea is to focus on some basic elements of human development which open doors for other types of human choices. According to Jahan, none of the measures capture a concept totally and fully so therefore it would be wrong to assume that HDI can capture the totality of human development (ibid.). The two types of actions in HDI with its different indicators of human development such as mortality, employment or a long healthy life, knowledge and decent living standard, provide a more comprehensive picture of human development in any society and basic dimensions of human development but does not say anything about people's choices and opportunities (ibid.).

Universalism is unique to the concept of Human Development and gives its uniqueness because it refers to human freedoms and to realize the potential of every human life in all corners of the world, both now and in the future (HDR, 2016). The report claims that, to ensure human development for all, it is not sufficient to identify only the nature of and the causes for the deprivation of those left out. In the assessment perspective, human rights, security, autonomy, and voice are key to Human Development (ibid.). The report discusses that certain aspects of the analytical assessment perspective for Human Development must be highlighted to address issues that prevent universal human development. The two basic questions that will be relevant are: Who has been omitted in the human development process and how and why has it happened? The report complements and shares the principle of universalism with the 2030 agenda by focusing on the fundamental areas of eliminating extreme poverty, ending hunger and highlighting core issues for sustainability. The 2030 agenda and strategies in Human Development reinforce each other by examining indicators of sustainable living and human development and how these can complement each other.

## **2.4 Demarcations**

The study examines ten professional social workers divided between DSWD and NGO in the Philippines that work with poverty reduction in some way. The study is limited to being held within two regions – Cebu for DSWD, and Manila and Cebu for NGO. The economic conditions in the different regions differ from one another in the country, and different regions have different major poverty problems. However, the study does not intend to investigate differences between the regions nor differences between DSWD and NGO. The demarcation is made in view of the limited time period, in order to have a depth in the study but also because we were not allowed to interview social workers in the government organization in other regions if we agreed to work in region seven.

### **3. Current state of knowledge**

In this section we will present peer-reviewed international and Philippine national research that we found relevant for this study. Poverty is a well-researched area but Amartya Sen argues that the common view of poverty as a lack of income does not give a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Green, 2012). The chapter begins with international research related to perceptions on poverty to get a sense of the issue we conduct in this study. Given that social work constitutes a main role in work to reduce poverty, we will present international and national research related to that. The national perceptions are presented in the last section of this chapter.

#### **3.1 International perspective**

The sociologists' Giddens and Sutton (2013) states that, through history there have been many theories developed about why there is poverty. To give a general summary, Giddens and Sutton describes the theories in two main explanation categories; theories that poor people considered responsible for their own situation and theories that means that poverty is created and being reproduced of structured powers in the society. In addition, Giddens and Sutton points out that the two perspectives can represent two sides in a sociological debate, namely actor-structure, and that they are intertwined with each other. To investigate the meaning of each of these perspectives is the sociologist's task (ibid.). van Oorschot and Halman's (2000), gives a more nuanced image of why there is poverty. Through a comparative cross-national study with data from the 1990 European Values Study surveys, a study was made on which of four perceptions of poverty that are the most popular explanation; individual blame (laziness); individual fate (bad luck); social blame (injustice); and social fate (inevitable part of progress). It was further explored whether differential patterns in perceptions were related to different welfare systems, but an important conclusion was that the most popular explanation for poverty was found to be social blame in almost all twenty countries that were a part of the study. Consequently the majority of people that are living in industrialized welfare state countries think that poverty is an effort from social actions of social actors, rather than necessary result of individual or social fate. The idea that the poor have themselves to blame for their situation seems to be a more popular perception in Eastern Europe than in Western Europe (van Oorschot & Halman, 2000).

Watkins-Hayes and Kovalsky (2016) argue that current political discourses and policy histories make sense to the ideas of rhetoric. What the authors mean is that the support for a social safety net is shaped according to what the public and political leaders believe about the poor. Instead of protecting the economically vulnerable, support can be formed to encourage those exposed to lift them by one's own efforts on an unbridled free market (ibid.).

In an article by Harms Smith (2017), individualism, conservatism and "blaming the poor" are

discussed as an underlying ideology in South African social work texts. The author claims that the texts show how ideology puts social workers in positions that limit their hope of social change and limit their sense of mutability. The article also describes how the texts encourage the perception that "what is good" is a change of attitude and the texts define reality as the personal culpability of the poor. The article illustrates how ideology maintains and serves to establish relationships of dominance as well as highlighting a common tendency in social work that reproduces structural power relations, inequality, and creates confusion. In that case, the trend was about linking social justice, developmental and transformation discourses with neoliberal and conservative discourses of self-confidence, personal responsibility, and self-help. The essence of the article is that social workers convey the oppressive structural dynamics of a country through ideology, which can also be contrary to welfare goals, as in this case, in South Africa (ibid.).

### 3.1.1 The role of social work in poverty reduction

Professional social workers are described as a profession that provides services to families and individuals throughout the lifespan as well as addressing the full range of issues, such as environmental, spiritual, and bio-psychosocial issues that affect well-being (Wheeler, 2016). [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org)).

Gordon and Owen (2012) discuss the increased poverty among families in UK and other European countries. The article illustrates the importance of social workers having a good understanding of the cultural context in which their clients' they are working with are living in. It also describes social work as based on recognizing values, traditions, and norms that affect how individuals behave and think. Listening to people talk about their lives, beliefs, and experiences is the best way to develop an understanding and the authors argue that a social worker should recognize that their clients are experts in their own life because the statements of the disadvantaged also help us understand their problems and action strategies (ibid.). The authors illustrate links between poverty and human well-being, as well as how poverty creates other disadvantages in people's lives and raise that the legislation, which places a duty on social workers to protect and improve peoples' well-being, makes a difficult task to fulfill, and describes it as a *difficult balancing act*. Because as a social worker you have to engage with the client in a way that makes it possible to effectively investigate the situation, and at the same time provide appropriate support. The conclusion of this is that there is always a risk that services may contribute to forms of work that add problems to disadvantaged families, rather than helping to challenge them (ibid.). In order to base social work on the above mentioned points, the article emphasizes the importance of social workers being aware of one's own cultural values, having a positive attitude to diversity, developing cross-cultural skills and knowledge about the cultures of the different groups of people they are working with. The article concludes by emphasizing the

importance of developing the practitioner's self-awareness, and to recognize their own prejudices to approach its work with respect and an open mind for the clients because, in relation to cultural skills, more knowledge does not always lead to more understanding (ibid.).

### **3.2 Philippine national perspective**

In the in Republic act (4373:1b)- *an act to regulate the practice of social work and the operation of social work agencies in the Philippines*, describe a social worker as:

A practitioner who by accepted academic training and social work professional experience possesses the skill to achieve the objectives as defined and set by the social work profession, through the use of the basic methods and techniques of social work (casework, group work, and community organization) which are designed to enable individuals, groups and communities to meet their needs and to solve the problems of adjustment to a changing pattern of society and, through coordinated action, to improved economic and social conditions, and is connected with an organized social work agency which is supported partially or wholly from government or community solicited funds.

ADB (2016) announces that due to, for example, poor orientation and lack of clear accountability mechanisms and coordination difficulties, anti-poverty programs have been relatively weak due to poor targeting in the Philippines. The sustainability of good programs and the cancellation of bad programs have been prevented by inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems in the country. Due to the fact that administrations tend to introduce new programs or terminate those belonging to previous government, it has been difficult to formulate both plans and poverty strategies (ibid.). Chronic budget deficits have resulted in the government having less funding for basic social services and poverty reduction and anti-poverty programs have weakened (ibid.).

#### **3.2.1 Social workers in the Philippines working with poverty reduction**

Nilan (2013) discusses the role social work plays in poverty reduction in the Philippines and the survey concerns the workers role in anti-poverty programs both on the initiative of governmental and Non-governmental organizations. He argues that policies such as social assistance and social insurance have been the main focus of the majority of the literature on poverty reduction and poverty in general rather than for example, social services provided by social workers. Nilan examined, from the perspective of critical social perspective, three types of poverty reduction programs in the Philippines, undertaken by DSWD. Two of the programs (SEA-K and KALAHI-CIDSS) were more designed for the dominant political views on social welfare and social work. The programs follow generally accepted principles such as participation and empowerment and concentrate the professional to facilitate community processes, skills building and skills development. These two programs encourage one's self-esteem to work for themselves by actively participating in community life. The third

program (4P) is more focused on giving money to poor families and has received strong criticism of the argument that the program's focus promotes addiction (ibid.).

Besides a mainstream conception of social work and social problems, which in turn is characterized by an intensive labor intention in order to create change in individuals and their environment, Nilan (2013) refers to a worldview. The worldview is a result of four centuries of colonial influence, where inequality and hierarchical social order is accepted as inevitable aspects of life. The colonial influence marked Philippine social policy by an individualist and enduring orientation where functionalist and minimalist conceptions of welfare were engendered and the Philippine government has played a secondary role since independence, regarding ensuring access to education, social assistance, and health care. Families are the ones who bear the primary responsibility because the government-supported social welfare initiatives target the poorest 25% or “the poorest of the poor” (ibid.). As Nilan argues that social workers practice their profession in a context where there is an ideology, we mentioned earlier, has the role of social work with poverty reduction a greater focus on to look after those suffering most from the vagaries of life – the poorest of the poor – “without touching the structural sources of their disadvantage” (Nilan, 2013 p. 32). Nilan writes that several social workers are experiencing limitations in the above described role and therefore choose to apply for employment within a Non-governmental organization where the environment is more open to the social worker's practice. The summary that Nilan (2013) concludes with is that social work needs to be more strictly advocated in order to reduce structural inequality.

## 4. Theory

In this chapter, we will present professor in economics and philosophy, Amartya Sen, and his Capability Approach theory, as well as a brief history of how his theory has become to be considered a useful method of social work.

Sen was awarded the Nobel Prize for work in welfare economics in 1998 and the focus in his early economic work was on the theory of Social choice which analyses how individuals make their choices among preference options and how these preferences can be aggregated (Jacobson, 2016). Social choice analysis has influenced and been centrally concerned with expanding social choice models, thereby including factors not recognized in standard economic theories. Even based on that, Dheeshana (2011) argues that Sen's Capability Approach theory should be more used in social work as it is considered a modern public health-based strategy or a development method. The theory benefits both social workers' strategies in the work of poverty reduction and for social work in its entirety, as it is of particular importance mainly for developing countries as it deviates from other population methods and that human development perspective is consistent with international social values, assignments, and goals (ibid.). Dheeshana's description clarifies how poverty and well-being correlate with each other.

Sen has contributed to Human Development with his Capability Approach theory and Jacobson (2016) argues that Sen's theory has contributed to identifying poverty as being multidimensional, and by that, influenced the development of new poverty measures. Sen's contributions have motivated the creation of HDI as well as the publication of the HDR (ibid.). With this in mind, we believe that the theory is appropriate for our study because poverty reduction is, in many ways, about achieving a more positive well-being for the client. The framework of Human Development motivated us to use Capability Approach theory as a tool in the analysis of our result. We believe that the Capability Approach theory will help us analyze and discuss the identified approaches the respondents have in their work towards well-being and development for a client's life situation in poverty.

### 4.1 Capability Approach theory

Robeyns (2003) describes that Amartya Sen was critical to the economic surveys that dominated development work during the early 1980's and developed the Capability Approach theory as a counter reaction and a complement to the previous traditional evaluations of monetary focus on human well-being. Sen argued that social, cultural, and political dimensions need to be taken more into account to achieve development in individuals' well-being (ibid.). This made us interested in discovering what approach the respondents' have in their work with poverty alleviation and well-being in a third

country such as the Philippines. We also thought that Sen's dimensions above could help us to illuminate how those dimensions might affect the work to achieve clients' well-being. Robeyns (2003) discusses that the Capability Approach theory identifies social barriers that affect and limit well-being and evaluation exercises. The theory could, therefore, be useful for us to get a deeper understanding of how the respondents describe the challenges they face in their work with poverty reduction.

According to Robeyns (2005), Capability Approach theory is being used in many different fields such as social policy, political philosophy and welfare economics but most commonly in *development work*. Further, Robeyns argues that the theory does not give explanations to why there is poverty, well-being or inequality, but it is used as a framework and a tool for conceptualizing and evaluating these phenomena. In that sense, we wanted to examine how social workers think and talk about the concept of poverty in a common way.

Sen's theory of development has certain similarities with Modern theory, which focuses mainly on the development of market dysfunctions, but differs from Modern theory by focusing on the citizens' voices and cultural values (Jacobson, 2016). We thought that Sen's theory was appropriate to our study because social work involves meeting both the citizens and community cultures.

The Capability Approach theory evaluates the impact of politics on people's abilities (Robeyns, 2005). The evaluation is about people having the resources and means necessary to make living a healthy life. This may involve access to clean water, access to doctors, protection from infections and diseases, and basic knowledge of health problems. It is also about people having access to a high-quality education system, the opportunity for political participation and community activities that support them to cope with everyday struggles and promote genuine friendship (ibid.). According to Robeyns (2005), economic resources and economic production will be the main focus of some of these opportunities, while others may be institutions (our respondents) and political practices such as the protection of freedom of thought, social structures and norms, traditions and habits or political participation and social or cultural practices. We want to look at how our respondents consider that these resources are catered for the clients and as the focus of this approach is what people are able to do and to be, we also want to examine if the respondents' experience that the clients are capable of receiving the help they are offered.

Sen argues that in social assessments and political design, one should focus on what people can do and be to get a higher quality of life. He claimed that one should remove obstacles in people's lives so that they have greater freedom to live the kind of life they find valuable (Robeyns, 2003). Sen writes: "Capability reflects a person's freedom to choose between different ways of living" (Sen, 1999, p. 44). We want to know what kind of obstacles our respondents' face in their daily work with clients and how they work to get through them.

Sen (2005) explains that the Capability Approach theory helps us to see how other means except from financial capital affect people's substantial opportunities. Sen exemplifies the approach by describing how a disabled person can do fewer things compared to an able-bodied person even though they have the same income. Sen further argues that “The disabled person cannot, thus, be judged to be equally advantaged — with the same opportunities — as the person without any physical handicap but with the same set of means or instruments (such as income and wealth and other primary goods, and resources)” (Sen, 2005, p.154). In the perspective of capability Sen argues that even though people could have the same set of means (such as income, primary goods, and resources), people could have very different substantial opportunities (ibid.).

With the help of the theory in the analysis we aim to gain a deeper understanding of how social workers perceive their clients' ability to develop their well-being apart from financial support. What kind of support do the respondents describe as necessary to help clients develop their well-being? The following four sections will introduce Sen's Capability Approach theory with four of its major concepts: *Functions, Capability, Agency, and Freedom*.

#### 4.1.1 Functions

The key concepts of *functions* and *capabilities* are closely related (Jacobson, 2016). Functioning are related to living conditions and is about what people are *able to do and/or be* and has to do with different things people value in doing or being, called *valued functioning* which explains complex activities or personal states, for example having self-respect or being able to participate in the life of the community. Valued functioning varies from *elementary functioning*, which relates more to being nourished and free from disease (Robeyns, 2003; Sen, 2001).

#### 4.1.2 Capability

*Capabilities* are, as earlier mentioned, linked to the concept of functioning and is the *potential* to live the life as one wish to including the ability to choose between different kinds of paths in life. It refers to a person's available functionings he or she could choose from. Capabilities also help to create an understanding of a person's real opportunities that he or she might have (Sen, 2001).

With the perspective of capability, one can both see the parametric variability in the relation between *the means* and the *real opportunities*. Although two people would have the same set of personal means, differences in the capability to function may occur due to various reasons such as mental or physical variety among persons, differences in non-personal resources such as societal cohesion, public health and so forth. A person's capability to function could also vary due to environmental variables such as local crime, climatic conditions, threats from epidemic diseases or if there are different relative positions towards others (Sen, 2005).

To understand the two concepts of *functions* and *capabilities* and their differences, Sen describes an example where two persons don't eat enough to be completely nourished in well-being. The first person is a victim of hunger and the other person chooses not to eat because of the person's religion and choice to fast. Even though both lacks nourished well being (because of not eating enough) the freedom in whether or not they choose to be hungry varies. According to Sen, the difference between functionality and capability is choice (Robeyns, 2003).

#### 4.1.3 Agency

The concept of *agency* is based on the idea of capability and the key is to make *decisions* about what is to be valued in ways of life (Sen, 1999 referred in Jacobson, 2016). Jacobson (2016) argues that it is the citizens themselves that will make that decision and not the development agencies or the government. A person with agency may be declared as a person acting and causing change (ibid.). Agency is when the person's achievements are judged in relation to her own values and goals and not about how we, based upon external criteria, assess them as not good (Sen, 1999 referred in Jacobson, 2016).

#### 4.1.4 Freedom

The ideas of functions, capabilities, and agency can be seen as a combination underlying Sen's approach to development as *freedom*. Development is neither wealth nor social benefits such as health, education, environmental sustainability or longevity according to Jacobson (2016). It is the capability to choose among these functionings that are called development (ibid.).

Amartya Sen describes in his article "*Human Rights and Capabilities*" (2005) two different ways of how we can understand the concept of *losing freedom*. Sen explains that people could lose freedom by (1) being forced to do something they would not choose to do if they had any other possible alternative. This could be described as a contravention of people's own substantive opportunity. Sen also means that people (2) could lose freedom by being forced to do something, without having the freedom to choose, which he describes as a contravention of people's process of freedom.

## 4.2 Theory criticism

Robeyns (2003) describes how Capability Approach theory is being used in various disciplines and for different purposes. We experienced in our analysis that the theory is not close enough to social work practice as it has a more Meta perspective. On the other hand, a broader perspective in social work is usually needed, combined with an individual perspective. We were nevertheless interested in using a worldwide theory that could have a more significant place in social work as the theory addresses the

development of human well-being. Robeyns (2003) argues that it is not easy to make a simple summary of the theory because it is extensive and she argues that to really understand the theory, one would need to read every piece of writing from Sen, which he has written over two decades. We noted that it is a comprehensive theory and therefore we have selected parts that were suitable for our study.

## 5. Method

The following chapter describes the methodological considerations of the study. Firstly, we will present our research effort, and then how respondents were selected. The chapter continues with a description of our pre-understanding and the literature search we have made for the study.

Furthermore, we explain how data was collected and analysed, followed by a presentation of the ethical considerations for the study and a description of how we divided the work between us. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's validity, reliability and generalizability. Attached to this thesis is the interview guide we used to collect data.

### 5.1 Methodology

We have chosen to use qualitative interviews with phenomenological analysis as a method because this study focuses on social workers' *perception of the phenomenon of poverty*. Qualitative interview is a proper method when a study aims to discover and identify for example perceptions of a phenomenon (Patel & Davidsson, 2011). The phenomenological analysis aims to discover how the phenomenon is perceived by humans (ibid.). The study has a hermeneutic orientation, as we wanted to understand people's life situation by interpreting how human life and existence are expressed in the spoken and written language (ibid.). We would say that this study has an inductive approach thus that we followed and had an explorative approach. Patel and Davidsson (2011) explain that a study is explorative when there is a gap in our knowledge and when the study aims to be a foundation for further research. In the same way, we wanted to explore social workers perceptions of poverty in the Philippines because we understood through our literature research that a small amount of research had been done about this subject (van Oorschot & Halman, 2000).

We argue that our study is explorative since we conducted the study in a context that we weren't familiar with and went there with a limited knowledge about what we would experience. Patel and Davidsson (2011) explain that an inductive researcher studies a research object without first anchoring the study into a theory, instead, a theory is formed after the collected empirics. We did not begin with a theory before we conducted the study, but because we were aware of the concept of Human Development, this might have influenced the direction of our study. To use the Capability Approach theory, as a tool in the analysis was something that matured over time and we took the final decision after completing all the interviews.

Our questions of science were created from our research on poverty and the social work in the Philippines and as mentioned with a possible influence of Human Development. We conducted eight *semi-structured* individual interviews and one group semi-structured interview with two respondents. Because it was our first time conducting interviews in English, we decided to use *fixed questions* as a

guide to help us feel more confident as interviewers. According to Bryman (2011) solid questions, allows the interview to be considered as semi-structured. Our interviews have a *low standardization* in the sense that even though we had created predetermined questions the interviewer sometimes changed the order of the questions during the interviews, to get a better flow in the conversation by not interrupting the respondent. We found that the design of our interview with a low degree of standardization together with mostly *open interview* questions was suitable since it encouraged the respondents to describe their answers in their own way and since we aimed to do a qualitative analysis of the results (Patel & Davidson, 2011).

## 5.2 Selection

According to Trost (2005), qualitative studies often aim to get a wide and a detailed description of a phenomenon you are interested in. Trost therefore argues that in order to get a sufficient variation of the population you are interested in, a strategic selection facilitates to systematize the selection of respondents and to get a variety among the respondents. Our ambition was to strategically select in order to get a broader perspective of the perceptions of poverty and also due to the fact that the height of poverty differs around the country. Therefore we started via email by contacting the main organization, DSWD that works with poverty reduction in the Philippines. We contacted different regions in the country and got an answer directly from the one where we were located at that time. As we turned to the first authority (DSWD) to ask for respondents, we learned that DSWD had a policy that we were not allowed to interview respondents from several governmental offices. Given the limited period we had in the country and that we established a contact with the visited DSWD office, we instead used convenience sample as a method. Bryman (2011) explains that this type of sample consists respondents who at the current time are available to the researcher. Although it was important for us to interview educated social workers since we had questions related to the profession. We attempted to conduct ten interviews.

Through our University in Sweden, we established a contact in the Philippines, named Marietta Lingvall. She worked as a teacher in Social work at University Saint Louis in Baguio and we met her in Sweden, two months prior to our trip to the Philippines. She informed us that, to become a professional social worker in the Philippines one must first complete a bachelor in social work and after the graduation from the four year long social work program, one must purchase a certification. The certification must be renewed every third year through a course. We decided, that all of our respondents should be certified, especially if they have higher requirements and influence in their role as social workers. And to get a broader perspective on the answers to our questions of science we tried to get different ages of the respondents. We also wanted to have a spread in gender to get a wider perspective to our study but, given our limited time in the country and that we knew that the majority

of the staff were women, we interviewed social workers who were available and all our respondents turned out to be women.

At the established DSWD office we went through an application process to attain permission to conduct the interviews with the staff and after about five days we were able to meet our first respondents. We got four respondents from DSWD, at the age between 40-55, all of them had a bachelor and two of them also had a master in social work. They have all been working as social workers at DSWD for more than ten years. One respondent was working with women that were being abused. Two of them were working with social welfare and development for individuals in crises. And one was working with social welfare at a training centre and she was also supervising the overall operation of that centre.

We also wanted to get respondents that work in different NGO's since we understood that there are many social work actors in the Non-governmental sector in the Philippines (Nilan, 2013), which was also confirmed by our contact person in the Philippines. Even in this case, we wanted to do interviews with certificated professional social workers. We started our first week in the Philippines by visiting PCNC in Manila. The director at PCNC helped us with information about the certification process, how NGOs are organized in the country and which ones that would be adequate for our study. We found out that there are about 60,000 registered NGO's in the Philippines ([www.pcnc.com.ph](http://www.pcnc.com.ph)), some of the organizations are certificated and some are not. To find suitable NGO's for our study, we sent a letter with our request of making interviews by email to 15 certified organizations that we found on PCNCs website.

One of those who responded to us, organization A, has a special focus on supporting people in need that has been affected by natural disasters. Our respondent from organization A has been in the social work field as a professional social worker for 16 years. We received contact information from friends in Sweden who had been in the Philippines as volunteers in two different NGO's that work with poverty reduction. We requested interviews with both of them via email and got permission to meet them. Organisation B was located in Cebu and the respondent had been in the social work field for eight years. Organisation C was located in a poor area in Manila and we had the opportunity to interview four social workers from there. We conducted two one-and-one interviews and one group interview with the other two respondents together. The two respondents we interviewed in a group were initially supposed to be interviewed one-to-one but as they wanted to do it together, and according to the ethic guidelines (described in section 5.10.2), we did a group interview. Even all respondents from the mentioned NGOs' have a bachelor in social work; they are in the age between 30-56 and have been in the social work field for 8-16 years. Further in the thesis the respondents will be called R1-R9. The two respondents in the group interview will be called R7a and R7b.

### **5.3 Pre-understanding**

When we read about the global goals of reducing poverty in the world, our thoughts began on the extremely important work of social workers in a developing country and that it probably involves many challenges in a country like the Philippines. We both thought that it should almost be impossible for the country's social workers to aim for these goals, given that there are several factors, both in a country and in people's lives, which in a change process affect each other. We asked ourselves: How are they doing? How do they view this worldwide concept of poverty based on their context and how do they manage the work of getting people out of poverty when the country is struggling with so many other factors that affect the phenomenon? Our common pre-understanding was that we would have many different definitions of the phenomenon of poverty. One of us thought that the simplest explanation of poverty would be the economic definition, but it could also be about being poor on social networks or experiencing loneliness. The other one of us thought it would be difficult for social workers to define the phenomenon, both because it is complex but also because social workers live so close to poverty and because it has become a natural part of their everyday life. As the Philippines is described as being challenged by a great poverty, we thought that "inherited" poverty is widespread and difficult to get out of. We considered the inherited poverty, limiting opportunities to choose one's future and that corruption in the country does not make it easier for opportunities. One of us thought that social workers would primarily have the attitude that the explanation for poverty is corruption. The other of us thought that a Philippine social worker has an attitude as more of a "friend" than authority and with a less critical view of social work. Our thoughts thus circulated around the attitude of social workers to who is responsible for a poor condition.

### **5.4 Literature searches**

Considering that the concept of poverty is a well-explored area, we have spent a lot of time immersing ourselves in the subject at globally level. We have also looked more extensively at literature about the country of the Philippines and their history of poverty in order to gain a deeper understanding of the context. We have subsequently sought information about the country's social system to find respondents to our study. When we found the respondents, we sought information about the country's education system and the education for social workers (our respondents) to see if there was information that was important and relevant to our study.

We have been searching on different databases such as: Google Scholar, DIVA, Academic search complete, ESH Discovery and searched on terms: social work\*, social work\* profession, social work\* poverty perception, social work\* poverty opinion, social work\* poverty perspective, poverty reduction, poor people, social work Philippines, poverty strategies, social work values, social work\* experiences, social work\* ideology, social work attitudes.

## 5.5 Implementation of data collection

We created the interview guide with some starting “introducing questions” so that the respondents could introduce themselves. We also believed that the introducing questions were a way to create a safer and more personal environment for all involved persons in the room. We chose to start with open questions, as Patel and Davidson (2011) describe, to motivate and activate the respondents to verbalize, as they want. Our first, main question was created to get a wide perspective of the subject, as well as allowing the respondent to share what the person wanted to share, without being guided in any direction. The question was about the term poverty and through their explanations of the concept of poverty, we were able to keep the interviews open to what the respondents wanted to talk about, like a guidance function, to deepen in what emerged during the interview. The following questions were formed in three categories with the purpose to create nuanced answers to our research questions.

Gillham (2008) explains that it is particularly important, in more or less unstructured interviews, to have *exploratory questions* when you think that the respondent has more to say. It happened that we, during our interviews asked supplementary questions or asked the respondent to develop a specific answer to get a more nuanced answer. In other occasions, we repeated the respondent’s answer, as a confirming encouragement. A logical and decided order of questions increases the studies replay ability (Lantz, 2013; Patel & Davidsson, 2013), therefore, we created a logical order of interview questions and by sending it to three people that helped us narrow down the questions, tested the interview guide. However, if we felt that another order of the questions suited the interviewee better, we had the freedom to change it accordingly.

All interviews except one were conducted at the respondents’ own offices to make them feel comfortable. There was one interview that we conducted on a rooftop of a hotel instead because the respondent's office was located a far distance away, and she therefore suggested meeting us at the hotel.

We created an invitation to the respondents to be a part of the study and formulated a letter. The letter contained information about who we as students were, and where we came from. The letter also contained the purpose and questions of the study and information on ethical considerations. We started all interviews by reminding the respondents of the information from the given letter and asked if we were allowed to record the interview. All the interviews were recorded with one cell phone and a backup with an H2 recorder. During the interviews, we listened carefully to interesting words and answers that the respondents gave so that we could follow up with spontaneous questions. All interviews were held for about one hour and at the end of the interview, we had some extra questions if we had the time for it. After the first interview had taken place we discussed the content of it, which could be seen as the first step in our decoding. Our first interview had, apart from obtaining data, the purpose to test our questions. We asked the respondent after the interview for feedback and if there

was difficulty understand any of the questions. After the first interview, we rephrased and removed some questions deemed unnecessary.

## **5.6 Method for interpretation and analysis**

We decided to transcript all the interviews since it facilitates the analysis of what the respondents have said (Bryman, 2012). The transcriptions were made after all of the interviews had been held, through the program Express Scribe. According to Gillham (2008), there are dimensions of speech such as tempo and stresses lost in the transcript. In our transcribed material we have therefore clearly noted how the words were said in the hope of a more accurate reflection of the answers. Our starting point for the analysis is based on Patel and Davidson's (2012) phenomenological analysis in four stages. We chose to do a thematic analysis by using "framework" as a course of action that Bryman (2011) describes is a matrix-based method for organizing and systematizing data. We started by reading all the empirical material and took notes to get a first overall picture of what had been said; this could be seen as the first stage (Patel & Davidson, 2012). We made an overall summary of the interviews to get a sense of the central essence. That could be illustrated as what the respondents' were anxious about or what they emphasized or returned to during the conversation, which could be interesting to interpret in our analysis. During the second stage, we read through separate sections and discussed with each other what possible categories we saw in the material. We noted similarities and differences in respondents' statements as well as metaphors used by several respondents. At the beginning, we had seven categories with headings: Multifacilitated; Not a permanent condition; Lack of education; Tasks; Future development; The work with clients; The development trap, with totally 16 subheadings. Trost (2005) explains that it is a good idea to look for repeating words or word combinations. From the compilation of all data we searched for the words most used, second most and so forth. Trost also means that it is good to look at whole sentences. What we did in our study was to highlight the repeated expressions that gained our attention to possibly be used for later interpretation. In the third stage, we categorized the respondents' perceptions in an excel document with the purpose of seeing details and getting an overall view of the answers (Bryman, 2011; Watt Boolsen, 2007). We noted at this stage, that some answers to the interview questions fitted better into other categories of the interview guide, which means that the order of the questions in the interview guide does not correspond to the placement of the final themes of the study. In the fourth stage, we searched to find patterns in the material using our pre-understanding and by examining whether there was an underlying structure in our categories. We also looked at how respondents themselves made linguistic connections between categories with words such as "because of" and "therefore". By discussing with each other, whether we thought the categories were related and could be merged, finally three themes were formed with three subheadings each.

## 5.7 Our division

The two of us alternated in the role of being the interviewer. That means that one of us did four, and the other one, five interviews. The person who was not interviewing was responsible of taking notes and asking follow-up questions. At the transcription, the one that interviewed transcribed the interview that she had done because we discovered that the interviewer had a bigger focus on the interviewing itself than the substance of the conversation. It was easier for the person not conducting the interview to join the conversation and capture other dimensions in the conversation. This division of transcripts was thus made to get a deeper understanding of all of the material. We have together established a working structure and divided various chapter responsibilities in the document. We have throughout the study, individually worked in different parts of the document but always critically reviewed each other's texts, as well as discussed and shared views on the subject area in order to successfully keep a “red thread” on the major subject – poverty that our study concerns. And in order to maintain a high level of focus, if two interviews were conducted in connection with each other, the two of us alternated roles as previously discussed.

## 5.8 Method discussion

In order to discuss the quality and methodological considerations of the study, the following section will be based on the terms validity, reliability, and generalizability.

In social science research, high *validity* involves investigating what is alleged to be investigated (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2014). For example is *Response Validation* a way to ensure the validity of a qualitative study (Bryman, 2013). One of the several ways to apply respondent validation is to allow respondents to get a share of the interview material to secure and confirm that the description provided by the respondent is correct. We offered all respondents to take part of the material after the transcription, but none of the respondents returned to us, which may reduce the validity of our study. On the other hand, we believe that a certain rate of response validation was conducted as we were confirmed if we had perceived the respondents' answers correctly during the interviews. Even if English is well spread in the Philippines and all our respondents mastered the language, we noticed that there were still some difficulties in understanding each other. If we had used interpreters in the respondents' native language (Tagalog), it could have facilitated for respondents to express themselves more freely. On the other hand, the interpretation might not have been completely consistent with what the respondents expressed. We chose not use an interpreter, mainly because it was more time efficient. We also believed that a use of an interpreter would distance us from the respondent and also affect the trust between the respondent and us negatively (Bryman, 2011).

The term *Reliability* is about how reliable a study is (Bryman, 2011). In qualitative researches, the

term can, for example, be applied both in terms of *external* and *internal reliability*. External reliability refers to the extent to which a study is replicable, and internal reliability is an agreement between individuals in a research team, that they agree on how to interpret what they hear and see (ibid.). According to Bryman (2011), compliance with the criterion of external reliability in qualitative research is generally difficult. We understand that our study has low external reliability because it is difficult to recreate a social context, such as, among other things, practical conditions and the interaction that is created between interviewers and respondents (ibid.). The outcome of the interviews may also have been affected by loud noise from air conditions and old fans, screaming children, warmth, and colleagues who entered the room and interrupted our respondents. On the other hand, it is easier to repeat the study as we have used an interview guide. The internal reliability of the study is considered to be relatively high considering that we in all phases of the study process have discussed our impressions and interpretations with each other (described in section 5.7).

Gillham (2008) claims that it is most advantageous to transcribe directly after the completed interview. Because of the fact we could not fully decide when the interviews were to be held, several interviews were conducted during an intensive period. This affected why we did not transcribe the interviews immediately in connection with the interview. If we had transcribed the interviews directly following the interview, it could have helped us identify which interview questions were difficult or unclear for respondents to answer.

Gillham (2008) says that many aspects of conversations that are nonverbal, making the result lose a level of meaning when one audio record interviews. He also believes that transcribing eliminates *paralignant phenomena* such as emphasis, tone, and pace, which also add value to words used by the respondents. In our transcripts, we noted everytime the respondent paused for laughter, giggles, thoughts and reflection, and "uhms" and we used letters if it was weight in words. On the few occasions we did not understand what the respondents answered, the one who did not conduct the interview would listen to what was said in the transcribed material. We also used the tool to regulate the speed of speech in Express Scribe, which in most cases helped us to understand the obscure.

The participants of this study are not representative of the whole Philippines and region seven but as mentioned, we have attempted to get a good variety, which we have achieved regarding, the respondents' age and work experience. The outcome would probably have been different if we had respondents from other organizations due to the fact that values and attitudes could be shaped according to the organizational work you are working in. Although our selection type with convenience sample reduces the possibility of *generalizing* the results, we think, in agreement with Bryman (2011) that our research results are not insignificant as it can serve as a stepping-stone for further research.

We considered using focus groups with social workers as a research method for our study, which

would also have been an appropriate qualitative method for investigating our subject. Given the time frame and the practical difficulties of bringing these groups together, we did not choose this option. The absence of focus groups might have made it easier what is being said because we did not have to distinguish more voices. Individual interviews may also be to the respondent's advantage to express oneself more freely. In retrospect, we find that a supplementary observation study had contributed with further nuances to the purpose of this study.

## **5.9 Ethical guidance**

In our research, we followed the recommendations from the Swedish Science Council and their ethical guidelines: *Good research practice* (Hermerén, 2011) and *Research ethical principles* (2002) to protect individuals and to do a well-founded research in the various ethical dimensions. In the good research practice (3:2011) there are four important concepts that we must take into account, both in the preparation, in the implementation and in the treatment of our study.

The concepts deal with *secrecy professional secrecy*, *anonymity* and *confidentiality*, and are guidelines that we in order to collect material and in the processing of data, have followed throughout the entire study.

### **5.9.1 The demands of information/ Information requirement**

To comply with the Swedish scientific ethical guidance regarding the information requirement, we e-mailed offices where we thought we could find potential respondents to our study. We attached a letter containing our institutional connection, a short presentation about ourselves, and our contact information, in order to establish contact with us. We described the purpose of our study, informed that we had been awarded a Minor Field Study scholarship, administered by the Swedish Council for Higher Education that is financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). We also informed that the scholarship was focused to raise the level of knowledge in our respective academic field of study by interacting in foreign contexts and also that it aims to raise the interest for international cooperation, to learn more about other countries, increasing international understanding and global knowledge (Universitet and Högskolerådet, 2017). The recipient of the e-mail was informed that we wanted to conduct approximately one-hour interviews with professional social workers, that the participation was voluntary, and the material was intent to be used in our Bachelor-essay.

### **5.9.2 Consent requirement**

In accordance with *Research ethical principles* (2002) shall consent always be obtained in investigations with an active involvement of participants. Just before the interviews, we wanted to ensure that the respondents were informed about our purpose of the interview. Therefore, we started all interviews by giving the respondents the letter we had sent to the office. We asked the respondents if it was okay for us to record the interview to facilitate the transcription and if they had any questions regarding the layout of the interview before we started.

Those who participate in an investigation shall be given the right to independently decide if, for how long and under which conditions they will participate (Research ethical principles, 2002). All our respondents received the information and they chose where to hold the interview at their workplace. One of our respondents wanted to come over to us and therefore the interview was held at the hotel that we stayed at. Furthermore, in accordance with the guidelines, our respondents also received the information that they could end the interview at any time if they wanted to.

### 5.9.3 Confidentiality

Highest possible confidentiality shall be given to details of all persons included in a survey and personal data shall be kept in such a way that unauthorized persons could not access them (Research ethical principles, 2002). We told our respondents that all data was treated confidentially. To secure confidentiality for our respondents we used code keys while we did the transcription and during the writing of the essay. The recorded and transcribed interviews will be deleted after the publication of the study.

### 5.9.4 Useful requirement

Our respondents were informed that the interview material would be transcribed and then as an empirical material be the basis for our study. We also informed the respondents that, if they wanted to take part of the transcribed material, we offered to email it over. During the interviews, the respondents received our contact information, if they wanted to add something or if they had questions about our study. However, none of our respondents returned to us.

## 6. Result and Analysis

This chapter presents the material from the interviews conducted within the framework of our study, which we, later on, will analyse with the help of Human Development and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach theory. After reviewing all our material, we see that there are many similarities but also many nuances in respondents' answers. We also discovered that respondents sometimes have almost similar answers, recurring words or use the exact same expression in their answers. We also noted through an overall analysis that there was no difference between the answers, whether the respondent was from a governmental or Non-governmental organization.

We intend to present the results of our study and analysis of the results by clearly explaining what our respondents' answers and what our interpretations are. The themes are related to our research questions and with the analysis we aim to answer the purpose with this research. The themes will first present a summary of the respondents' answers along with our interpretations and will provide the basis for our analysis, which will be presented directly after every theme. We have chosen to present the results in three themes, with three sub headings, each to lift the nuances of the answers. The first theme aims to answer our first research question *How do professional social workers define poverty?* Theme two aims to answer our question of science *What do social workers say is necessary for their way of supporting clients out of poverty?* The final theme three, aims to answer our third question of science *What do social workers describe as challenging in their work with supporting clients to get out of poverty?*

In chapter seven we will present the conclusions of the study with a following discussion and suggestions for future science.

### 6.1 Theme one: Social workers perception of poverty

This theme gives a deeper understanding of the context through our respondents' perception where this research has taking place. Through the interviews, we see that social workers describe poverty in a variety of ways. One definition of poverty is described to be when a person does not have the opportunity to eat three times a day. Four respondents say that financial limitations are a common understanding and public perception of poverty but the respondents also point out that there are other aspects of poverty in the Philippine context. Eight respondents talk about poverty as a condition that could be changed with the reference of how their own lives have been changed from being poor. Our results show that *education* is one of the most frequent word and topic. The respondents are both talking about the lack of education as a cause and an effect of poverty. We have divided Theme one into three sections; *Poverty is more than the lack of economic transactions; Poverty is not a*

*permanent condition – Look at me, and Poverty as a lack of education.* Each one describes social workers' perception of the phenomenon poverty in varying ways.

#### 6.1.1 Poverty is more than the lack of economic transactions

R6 explains that her clients often look at poverty as a lack of money, the inability to acquire what they want. But according to her, poverty is formational devalues. Values are something that R5 also is talking about, cited: "Poverty that I mean is, although you are materially rich, but as I think you can also be poor in terms of values". She continues by describing that people sometimes are satisfied even though they are living in poverty and that people accept their situation as poor. She gives an example of how her clients say that they will not do anything because they are poor, have no innovations or no initiatives, they just accept that their life situation is what it is. R2 believes that poverty can be experienced on physical-, spiritual- and emotional levels. She continues to say: "It's important to see the whole picture, where the economical part is just one dimension of a status in poverty".

One of our respondents thinks that there is poverty in the Philippines because of the country's history with periods of colonization. She also thinks that religion affect people's thoughts that everything is God's intervention. She describes how people express themselves in a way that "it's God's will that they are poor" and therefore they don't work or strive hard because "God is telling them that their life is just like that" (R3). Another respondent calls poverty multi facilitated, cited:

When we say a person in poverty, usually it's not only about financial, they may also have less education, they may also be unemployed or if they are employed, they are getting less salary. And of course, in this family, the children will also be. Probably the children would not have been to school. Sometimes the clients that come to our office and presenting a problem like "I need medical assistance" and if you try to trace it, they actually have other need and problems (R4).

From our point of view, all the quotes above are pointing at the complexity of the term poverty, that is that the term is a collective name that stands for several different things depending on who you ask. R8 for example, calls the word poverty "the most abused term". According to her, there are many ways in which we can experience poverty, "not in money but in the way that we look at it". Further she says: "And because here in the Philippines, we are a very poor country. But if we say that we are poor, yes we are poor but what shall we do if we are poor? How shall we help ourselves?" (R8).

#### 6.1.2 Poverty is not a permanent condition – Look at me

Our empirical result shows that all respondents argue that poverty is a state of change. As we see it, the respondents do not believe that poverty defines a person's identity, instead, the respondents use the term of poverty as a condition that a person is living in. Something we have noted during the interviews and became a fact when all the interviews were completed, is that all of our respondents, relatively quickly share their own experiences with us. The respondents tell us about how their own

lives have changed from being poor even though we never asked them about their own life experiences or backgrounds. We interpret this as respondents identify themselves with their clients and that they work as it actually is possible to change one's situation from being independent to dependent. For us, it seems like their experiences probably contribute to the belief that one can manage to escape poverty.

R5: Poverty comes from the inner self because, me, I came from a poor family, but I decided to study hard, because I knew that my parents could not afford to send me to school in college so I tried my best to study hard so that I would be able to finish high school education. That could be my stepping-stone.

R5 continues to say, "Poverty belongs to you. If you don't strive hard, nothing happens". During the interviews, we were raising questions about Sustainable Development Goal number one, – To end poverty in all its forms by 2030. R8 expresses a wish that the goal will be achieved, cited: "I really want to help them, because I also came from that situation before. So I really want them to get this, get these people from poverty, so I want to help them to reach that goal." R3 talks about her own background of being poor and explains that it is an advantage to have a similar background to what the clients experience, cited:

It's very difficult if you come from a rich family, you don't have the experience in your work. So it's very difficult to address this kind of situation unless you are very open to learn and to expose yourself in that particular situation ... I'm happy that I have become a social worker, because (pause, she is crying) because you are helping people like you were before (pause) and you will be part of their lives, to improve their lives (R3).

Some of the respondents' describe their own experiences and efforts to combat poverty. That they had to struggle in order to achieve something they did not have. R6 says, "If you really want to become something, you will find ways to get there", cited:

I myself belong to a very poor family but I really wanted to go to school. We even do farming and vending vegetables. But I really wanted to change myself. And my parents, they are not professionals. And all of us children in the family, we are successful in the government service right now. So maybe that's why I say it's value formation ... (R6).

R1: Yeah I was born poor, we were poor. Though my mum was a teacher, she did not earn well. She did not have the money to send us to college, so what she did, or what we did as children we did part jobs. Me I had to, I know a little music so I taught choir and piano because I play it a little and I also sold candy in school. I had to work. I walked to my aunt to clean their house so I got something so I could pay my school. So I had to work hard.

During our stay in the Philippines we encountered an expression both from locals that we met and also during the university lecture we joined: "If you are born poor, you will die poor". We became curious about what our respondents' thought about this expression and integrated this question in our interviews. In our opinion, some of the respondents reacted quite cogent to the statement. Either with a high "no" and a following argument that they do not believe in that statement but believe that it is

possible to change it. Some respondents answered that they do not use that statement in their work. Some laughed when explaining that themselves have managed to get out of poverty, and that it does not have to be that you die poor just because you were born so. Quotations regarding the expression: “No, that’s not true”, R3 tells us that she thinks this saying comes from the mindset that “it’s God's will”. She continues to say:

Ending poverty, I think that principles or that phrase or that sentence will not introduce anything. It will not educate the people. This saying or this principal will no longer be applied, or if they get education and skills they get employment. They will not die poor. They will die rich (laughing). They were born poor, and they will die rich (laughing) (R3).

R2 is also laughing when she says that there are so many people here that believe that. On our question of why she thinks that they think so and where it comes from, she answers, cited; “It’s in their values ... they have that reason to excuse themselves from not doing something they can do, to help them be out of poverty”. R9: “No, I’m not believing that (small laugh). If you are born poor, you are the one to work hard to uplift your, to uplift yourself”. R8: Yes I heard that before... But if you are born poor, you have a chance to not die poor because if you work and you help yourself you cannot die poor. You are the only one who helps you. I always believe that, that you are the one that helps yourself to improve, to have a better life”. R4 gives a lot of weight to our question and says that she did not belong to a rich family and had to study more so she could attain to higher education, cited:

Noooo, I don’t believe in that. Because of course, you can break the poverty (laughing) ... It’s not actually poverty that causes everything, it’s more of a characteristic behaviour of a person. If that person wants to break the poverty that he or she has with the family, then the person could attain (R4).

### 6.1.3 Poverty as a lack of education

Our empirical result shows that a lack of education is described both as the major cause and also a consequence of poverty. R7a and R7b in the group interview, both work with the aim of supporting children. The respondents talk about a lack of education as a definition of poverty and describe poverty as a client who lacks education. R7a says, “Because in most of our cases here, the parents are not well educated so most of them do scavenging, which turns into their children”. R7b fills in and describes that those parents that come from provinces who are not educated fall into scavenging and she continues by saying, “It’s sad to think that they will become a street family and the family will go into this kind of situation here in the Philippines” (R7b). Both respondents agree that these clients who turn into scavenging struggle to provide all the needs for their families because they do not earn enough. R4 exemplifies how the lack of education can be both a cause and an effect of poverty, cited:

Because if we try to trace, there are many people that are jobless but if we ask them, why are you jobless? Some of them wouldn't actually apply to work because they have low education. And they do not have skills, and probably there are fewer opportunities for them. Because, if there are

opportunities, usually it's for the professionals, for those who have attained higher education in college (R4).

Furthermore, R4 says that if she traces that client's history, the client has probably been in a poor condition for a long time. She means that the family really comes from the poorest part of the economical ladder. We interpret that she is talking about intergenerational poverty, which is when poverty goes from one generation to another. We can also see in her answer that it is difficult to say where poverty actually begins. R1 is also talking about the lack of education but that the difficulties lie in the system and environment. She describes the Philippines as a country where natural disasters such as the Yolanda typhoon in 2013 affect the environment and for example fishermen that live by the shorelines. When those families lose their fishing boats and livelihood in disasters, they strive many years after the disaster to rebuild their lives again. She also says that this could be a cause of poverty in the country, cited:

... the environment, the place where they (clients) live, there is no encouragement for them to go to school. Because here in the Philippines, to get employed or to get a good job, you have to go to school and have a degree or something like that (R1).

Furthermore, R1 says that children are the ones that get affected by growing up in a family that is struggling with poverty. The children lack education because they are not able to attend school, cannot afford the school uniform, lunch or literature. Some families have a long distance to school and no transportation, which makes it difficult or even, prevents the children from going to school. The children will instead stay at home. R1 also describes that in her perspective clients do not want to do something for their lives, cited: "They are just not interested in getting a good education ... There are a lot of them who would just sleep in their house do nothing even if you give them a new motorboat."

In my job, in my present work, I think education is number one, not only number one (small laugh). Education is the main source of reducing poverty because if the children are educated, in the future, I think our country is getting good or getting better. Like in sponsorship program we are aiming to help the children to finish their school so it's the main source .... A reason to educate the young generation is to reduce the poverty. In my opinion (R9).

R9 explains that she encounters children that drop out of school because their parents are unemployed. In that case, our respondent does home visitations and talk to the parents to find a solution for the child to go back to school. She says that some parents are neglecting or refusing the help but it helps with some counselling for them twice a week: "We do some counselling so that the parents get open minded to that situation and then after a month we have solutions for this problem so their child can go to school" (R9).

#### 6.1.4 Analysis of Theme one: Social workers perception of poverty

Many respondents see the lack of financial assets both as a cause and effect to a poor state but they emphasize, like Sen (Green, 2012) that poverty is not just about the economic perspective. According to Sen's Capability Approach theory, there are, besides the lack of income, many more dimensions of how to understand the phenomenon poverty (ibid.). The majority of the respondents describe poverty as being poor in terms of values but it seems like the respondents have a strong solution-oriented belief in view of their attitude to the fact that their clients can be and do so much more than what their existing condition speaks for. As the respondents say that the clients are poor in their mindset and we understand that the social workers focus on to change it, we interpret it as the respondents think that people in poverty have low expectations or limited thoughts on what life can offer or contain. The respondents emphasize what Capability Approach theory illustrates, namely that values affect the ability to develop one's well-being (Jacobson, 2016). We mean that it could have been problematic if the respondents did not have that strong belief in the possibilities, which in turn had affected the clients negatively.

To work with clients potentials and mindset by aware them to see what they can do for themselves seems to be the major approach the social workers have. Human Development is described as providing people with opportunities and to give choices, not insisting that the clients make use of them (HDR, 2016). We notice that our respondents want to tell us about their own experiences of poverty and that they use it as a motivation to highlight the actual opportunities clients have for a change. A common sense we both get from all the interviews conducted is that there is a link between the respondents' own background of a life in poverty and their hope of reducing poverty, and this is expressed regardless of the respondents' age or length of work experience. We think this is a major contributing factor to their positive future confidence, but also that their approach can limit the freedom of clients to choose their own path to ease their daily lives. According to Capability Approach theory and the concept *agency*, people themselves have to find a path that is considered a valuable life for them and the key in the concept is about who makes the decisions in one's life (Jacobson, 2016). What we also find in respondents' answers is that they put a lot of responsibility on the clients themselves, for example does R4 point out that living in poverty is more about a person's behaviour. The respondents' descriptions confirm Giddens and Sutton (2013) one explanation model for poverty, which describes how the individual himself is responsible for his or her situation. Likewise, van Oorshot and Halman (2000) describe with one of their approaches, "individual blame" that addresses the individual himself as the explanation for the emergence of poverty.

The question we ask ourselves is, do clients have the same view as social workers on what is a well-being life? Capability Approach theory does not give explanations to why there is poverty, well-being or inequality, but it can be used as a framework and a tool for conceptualizing and evaluating these phenomena (Robeyns, 2005). Poverty is very clearly conceptualized in our respondents' answers

as they all say that education is a prerequisite for poverty reduction and to prevent poverty to go on for generations. We see a pattern that shows that respondents work with values of the clients, for example as R9 says that she gives counselling to parents “even if they are neglecting the help”. Her purpose with the help is to get the parents open-minded and to convince that education is good for them and their children. On the one hand, respondents oppose the idea that clients themselves should choose if they want to be helped, on the other hand, it seems to give a positive result as R9 states that it leads to open the parents’ minds for development.

That our result confirm and demonstrate deficiencies in the two concepts in Capability Approach theory; *elementary functionings* (no food, education or house) and *valued functionings* (for example low expectations of life), we understand that our respondents' perception of the concept of poverty is consistent with what the Capability Approach theory points to is a non-well-being state. On the other hand, we also see that the respondents define poverty as a concept of a changing process. We think that the respondents emphasize that a client in poverty is not something that identifies them as a person.

## **6.2 Theme two: The necessities of the profession to work with poverty reduction**

The following theme concerns the respondents’ descriptions of what is necessary for their way to achieve poverty reduction and clients’ well-being. Many of the respondents’ emphasize that their work really is a long process of development work, as respondent 5 says “The results of our job would not be overnight but it is a process where you can see the evidence through after many years”. After reading the empirical result many times, we identify how the respondents are talking about this longterm work with poverty reduction in different ways such as *having a role of a coordinator* and to *give support that can not be measured*. The respondents are also pointing at the importance of *balancing the role of being private and professional* in their poverty reduction work. The above three italic explanations are also the theme titles in this chapter.

### **6.2.1 Having a role of a coordinator**

Even though the respondents are working in different organizations and with different tasks, they all describe, as we see it, that they are having the role of a coordinator. We use the definition of a coordinator as “*A person whose job is to organize events or activities and negotiate with other in order to ensure they work together effectively*” ([www.en.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.en.oxforddictionaries.com)). We identified the role as a coordinator when the respondents describe their main tasks in the organization, how they are arranging activities or how they need to cooperate and negotiate with other organizations, politicians, government or clients in the communities with different wills. The respondents show that there are both advantages and disadvantages of the cooperation, yet the cooperation is described as something

necessary to work effectively against poverty reduction. The following quotations exemplify how the respondents are talking about their role as a coordinator. R1 describes her work on disaster response and that her task often has a collaborating function. She cooperates with organizations that give houses to people. When the houses are assigned, she works to provide her clients with access to livelihood programs, as cited:

Yes, I do the entire social work thing. So I organize the people. I organize the implementation of the program, the livelihood program and monitoring what's going on if it had helped them. If they are earning with what we have given them. If they learn something. It's really beneficial for them. That's what we want to see, that if it had helped them it would augment their income (R1).

Furthermore, she describes the difficulties of being an organizer, as we call it Coordinator when others do not agree with each other but also how she has to make demands in order to get those involved to interact with each other. We understand in her answer that she believes the problem is also affected by politics, as cited:

One example is we have an area in X where until now I could not give what livelihood they want. It's because of politics they have different, you know this is a different group; they belong to different group politicians. So they quire during the meetings, one group wants to raise pigs and another wants to raise chicken or cows. But we say; "You only allowed to pick one" because it's easier to monitor. You have one system and it's easy for me to monitor and they will also learn something. Because they are used to raise pigs, and I say; "Why not chicken? We could teach you the technique about raising chicken". We could invite people who are very good at that and that is their forte, teach how to raise a good chicken but they could not agree together. So we say; "If you could not agree to something then we could not give you livelihood" (R1).

R4 emphasizes the importance of being flexible and to be able to organize yourself as a social worker. We understand that she, as a social worker, need to have a lot of knowledge in many different social work related areas, as she is involved in several different fields, cited:

You should just be flexible, uhmm when you deal with children then you also have to organize yourself to deal with the child, so, that's the nature of a social worker here in the Philippines. When you also have to go to court and you have court cases, then you also have to deal with the lawyer .... Actually in the Philippines, it's more of coordinating when you go into social work, you have to, and you should be good in coordinating with other agencies. That could also help you out because you do not have to deal with that everything by yourself. You have to be resourceful and you should know where to find these agencies and this centre like that (R4).

We also see how R8 is acting as a coordinator in her work. She needs to cooperate and negotiate with different types of clients, other professions and arrange events like seminars to ensure that they are working together effectively. She describes her role in the organization, cited: "I handle women in communities in this area. So first I have one area in X, they call it X .... So I got almost 365 women here in the community". We were surprised by the number of clients she was working with and asked if we got it right if she had that many clients in one and the same period. R8 answers, "Yes at the same time, so they are all women. We have a few men but most of all are women, they are also a mother

like me. As a community development worker, I am working them through, to empower them awareness”. Further on R8 describes:

So, last month we had contact with women seminar about violence against women and children. I sometimes ask the Philippine national police to speak to them as a guest speaker, sometimes in livelihood. So I ask in different places to conduct or they facilitate their activities .... (R8).

R4 describes that being a social worker can be difficult because you deal with all kind of cases in the Philippines. And as we understand it, politics are again taken into account, but the respondent tries to think that politics should not affect the relationship, cited: “You should have knowledge about everything”. Then she points out that getting help from the government or local government could be an advantage, cited: “However the office is also giving us orientation, they orient us. They also orient us with other agencies, like the police or with the court.” The respondent also describes how the cooperation with governmental offices would take place, cited:

Sometimes the major (talking about a governmental office), they are influenced by politics. But you as a social worker, you should be able to coordinate with them and make them your friends, your partners (R4).

R8 describes how she thinks collaboration is beneficial even within client groups. She describes that it is easier to work with groups because it involves different minds and knowledge. And that working together with one united plan makes the clients more motivated to get out of poverty. She also exemplifies how her role involves cooperation with both governmental organizations and NGOs’. She points out that it is an advantage and easier to work together with the governmental organizations because her organization is a part of the government. She describes that other organizations also make assessments and send help to her organization but it also appears to be difficult at times due to the different agendas of the different organizations, “Because, Non-governmental organizations have also their own goal and their own plan. It's hard. Because you have also a different, have their own plan based on our project” (R8).

In comparison with the quote above, R9 raises a disadvantage in the needs of cooperation with the government. R9 describe that there is a lot of corruption in the local government that increases the poverty in the Philippines and then she asks us, cited: "Are you aware of the corruption? And she laughs. She continues by saying: “We have here the eye (refers to the symbol against corruption), “no corruption generation”. One of the second first is to educate people, second is to implement the no corruption generations to help to reduce the poverty in the future” (R9). On our further question about how it is to live and work with poverty, to give help while knowing the issue about corruption, R9 answers and tell us how she organizes activities: “We conduct seminars for our sponsor children, separated from their parents. We talk about the no corruption generation, discuss it at the early age.

You need to discipline yourself ...” She continues by explaining how they discuss corruption with children: “That even if there is a simple coin on the table, they should not take it without permission, otherwise, it is corruption”, she asserts. She also talks about preventing the corruption because according to her, the children misunderstand it, cited: “Corruption means big money or big things getting from others. In the same breath she says: “No, it’s a simple coin on the table ...” (R9).

The quotations above state that the role of a coordinating social worker involves cooperation with several agencies and individuals, which requires flexibility in the work with poverty reduction. By flexibility, we mean that they have to handle a lot of different situations, tasks, and also be able to cooperate with both clients and other professions. We notice during the interviews that several of the respondents confirm each other with a wish that their work not would be so general. As we interpret, the respondents want a more specialized profession. To get another angle on the perspective of a coordinating role, we asked our respondents what they would like to change or remove in their professional work in order to achieve more successful poverty reduction. R2, says for example, that she wants a more focused work so she can make it more replicative, cited:

I hope that it will just, I can work more focused because toward generally I can deal with a lot of things, individually, groups, communities. Sometimes it’s very overwhelming and energy draining because doing something and there are many other things, that’s hard (laughing) (R2).

### 6.2.2 Support that cannot be measured

In our view, the result shows that respondents support the clients’ in a way that may not necessarily be measurable, but needed in the work with poverty reduction. We interpret it through the following.

The advice R8 wants to give to newly examined social workers that are going to work with poverty reduction is to have patience and heart: “Because if you don’t have heart in the work with the community, you can’t help them because people have different attitude, different behaviour and if you don’t have patience you can’t work long with them”.

The word *patience* is one of the most frequent words through the interviews and as we interpret it, could be seen as something necessary in our respondents’ role. Several of the respondents emphasize that they want to be a “listening ear” for the clients. As R3 says; “I give clients, aside from giving financial help, medical assistance, or counselling, a listening ear for their problems .... Somebody who listen to their problems personal or emotional or financial or anything”. R4 also talks about the importance of listening when she describes what she gives to her clients except for practical help, cited: “... a listening ear and of course you have your heart to also feel what your clients are actually feeling for now”. The same respondent mentions that she gives patience and warmth to her clients.

From the above quotations, we interpret that our respondents are pointing at, what we would call “soft skills” as something necessary in their work with poverty alleviation. The respondents from the

group interview also, as we see it, point at soft skills, as something needed to support clients out of poverty. The advice they want to give to a new examined social worker that is going to work with poverty reduction is “To work with the heart”. They exemplify this as they describe what they give to their clients, who in their cases mostly are children that grew up in poor families:

Yeah, also because most of them lack attention, lack of love from their family. We provide them the sense love and attention, the sense of belonging in that’s why the children village is created as a home environment so that children if they don’t see this before in their family, this is the kind of family they should have.

R7a and R7b further describes their long-term aid to create an environment of love, attention, and belonging:

We provide it here so when they go back to their family, they could apply it into their family that love is important, support system is important for us and that we are not living for ourselves only but for our families.

Another respondent that also describes “Giving love” as needed in the poverty reduction work is R2. First, she emphasizes the importance of supporting clients “Alongside with all those other needs”, where love is a central part of the support. She tells us that in X city there are many homeless people and that many people are struggling with how to eat three times a day. She says: “We deal with poverty as a whole. Not just the economic thing”. She describes that the centre of the programs is to share hope and love of the Christ to the people that they are working with: “It’s not about the religion that we share to the people, but it’s about the relationship between God and man and the hope and the love that Christ is bringing to them (R2)”.

Some respondents talk about the support that, according to us, cannot be measured, with examples like *inspiration* and *encouragement*:

So we have to encourage them. We have to give them support or words of encouragement in order that they will not remain that principals in them. They have to aspire something to increase their skills or their knowledge with the right attitude in order to survive, not just remain what, where they are now (R3).

### 6.2.3 Balancing the private and professional role as a social worker

Several of the respondents are pointing out that being a social worker with the responsibility to support clients out of poverty is a complex task and role that takes time and energy. They talk about it as private life has a bearing on their professional role and that you as a social worker should be able to manage your own time well (R4). Many of the respondents talk about their work almost like a vocation. For us, it is not always clear when they are talking about themselves in their private role or when they are talking about their professional role. However, we note that the respondents’ seem aware of that it is a necessity to balance between your private and professional role. R5 says:

“Working with them (clients) is not (pause). The poor people, you give yourself to them, but don’t forget that you have also your own personal life. You have your family. You should balance the situation”.

What we think is conspicuously is, that even though it seems to be difficult for the respondents to manage to balance between the private and professional role, they give only a few answers on what they would like to improve in their professional role. We will come back to that in the analysis. We asked the respondents what they would like to improve about themselves in order to achieve a more successful poverty reduction in their profession? Some of the respondents cannot come up with anything that they would like to improve in their profession. Two of the respondents describe that they want to improve their role as a leader.

More skills on managing because I’m already in this supervising and managing position, monitorial position. I want to change, I want to improve my skills on this matter because I do believe that a good leader is someone that is also equipped with the knowledge and skills .... So for me, I do believe that I still need some training and I want also to explore from others ... (R5)

Furthermore, R5 explains that we as humans are not permanent. She wants to transfer her leadership to others so that the organization would not be affected even if she would not “exist”. R9 also wants to improve her leadership, she says: “I want to become a good or better leader. I want to become a role model to them, to achieve their (clients’) dreams, their future, especially on the children”.

On the question of advising newly graduated social workers, we interpret the four answers below as descriptions of the importance for social workers to be able to balance their roles in social work. R2 says:

Do not give up easily (laughing). Focus on the good things or don’t dwell so much on the negatives that are around the communities that they are working with but focus on the resources that these communities have. The resources of the people, not really economical resources, I’m not referring to that but having that attitude of looking at the best in every situation. Not really being dragged down by the negatives but looking at the positive things because it will matter a lot to those you working in poverty reduction because yeah. And then, if you are the one give up easily, you can’t really see change. But if you persist in to be that leader of a positive outlook among the people, then yeah. People are going to become also very positive. Hoping that their situation will really change” (R2).

R6: “That they are convinced of their work. That they are convinced to be able to provide help or assistance.” R3: “Commitment is also a strong word for the social work profession. If you are not committed you just up for the salary .... you can’t stay long in this profession”. R5: “It’s really important to commit yourself to your clients but at the same time remember to not stop dreaming for yourself”. One of the respondents (R4) says that the Philippines need more social workers. She says that social workers get less paid than other professions in the country and: “You would not become a social worker if you would not have the heart and the passion to serve people”. She laughs and says:

“You don’t become a social worker for the salary”. She concludes with saying that “In the Philippines it’s more about a call”.

#### 6.2.4. Analysis of Theme two: The necessities of the profession to work with poverty reduction

It appears that the respondents find it necessary to act with the help of other actors to support clients to get out of poverty of poverty. The respondents have several roles in addition to coordinate their work. Besides all the practical day-to-day tasks the respondents seem to also have many other aspects of their work to relate to, and there seems to be a correlation between the different organizations, professions and the clients in the way the respondents are able to help them. By that, we mean a more or less thoughtful approach to politics, other partners' cooperation, to be able to coordinate themselves to adapt to varying situations. We argue that respondents have reflected a lot about their role and between the lines we interpret that some respondents have a business mindset. That is, as long as they stay *friends with the partner*, it will be possible to achieve their purpose. Respondents insinuate how difficult it may be to have so many different parts of the work to be responsible for. Some of the respondents explicitly say that they want a more focused work. The respondents also seem to have come to terms with which approaches that work best to get beneficial collaborations.

We can see that the respondents find it necessary to be that person whose job is to ensure that every stakeholder work together effectively in order to increase the clients wellbeing. Sen argues that both social, cultural and political dimensions need to be taken into account in order to increase an individual’s wellbeing (Robeyns, 2003). We find that the respondents exemplify how this dimension indeed does affect the work with clients’ well-being as they are mentioning difficulties in handling clients with different political opinions, organisations with different agendas, a corrupt government, and the challenge to deal with clients from different cultures. As we see it, the role the respondents have of being coordinators could be seen as a way of conceptualizing what poverty is about. The social workers interactions with stakeholders and clients forms a further idea of what poverty is about and what social workers consider necessary in the work of poverty reduction.

Nilan (2013) argues that social worker’s practice their profession in a context where there is an ideology; that people who are living in inequality and disadvantages are natural elements in the Philippine society. The role of social work in the work with poverty reduction is therefore often to look after those suffering most from the vagaries of life – the poorest of the poor – “without touching the structural sources of their disadvantage” (Nilan, 2013, p. 32) Nilan writes that several social workers are experiencing limitations in the above described role in the governmental organisations and therefore choose to apply for employment within a Non-governmental organization where the environment is more open to the social worker's practice.

Furthermore, our results show that the respondents provide other types of support (except from

financial capital) that seems to be necessary to increase well-being of their clients'. This could be an example of Capability Approach theory's description of "other means" that affect people's potential for development. Sen (2001) argues that his theory helps us to see how other means in addition to economics affect people's actual opportunities. R3 is talking about giving encouragement to clients, which she argues affect clients' potential to develop and help them get out of poverty. R3 says: "We have to encourage them. We have to give them support or words of encouragement in order that they will not remain that principals in them. They have to aspire something to increase their skills or their knowledge with the right attitude in order to survive, not just remain what, where they are now".

The support that our respondents are pointing at does not capture a full concept of well-being but it says something more. As Jahan (HDR, 2016) describes, Human Development Index with its indications such as mortality or employment rates in a country, cannot provide a complete picture of how wealthy citizens are, because there are many other values that affect human well-being but are difficult to measure (HDR, 2016). We interpret our respondents' support such as: having a listening ear, having a heart and patience for their clients which the respondents think is a significant factor to increase their clients wellbeing, may be the values missing in the dimension of Human Development and is an important approach for social workers in long-term development work.

As the result show, several of the respondents are talking about the importance of being a good listener, which we link to Sen's concept of Agency (Sen 1999, referred in Jacobsen, 2016). We interpret that the respondents emphasize the importance of having respect for what the clients themselves values in life. R4, for example, says that she tries to "Be a listening ear and of course you have your heart to also feel what your clients are actually feeling for now". Our analysis is that it is necessary for the respondents to have patience and to be a good listener in order to make decisions in consensus with the clients' own will.

The respondents in the group interview describe that they find it necessary to support their clients with attention, a sense of belonging and love. R2 emphasizes love and also hope but in the sense from a relationship with God. We make the analysis that respondents express what the Capability Approach theory describes as obstacles (Robeyns, 2003). We think that the respondents mean that lack of attention, love and belonging limit the freedom of clients to live a life they find valuable. To us it seems that the respondents think it is necessary to first meet the clients with these types of support so that they can then set direction in what kind of life they want to live.

From our interviews, we also understand that respondents find it necessary to learn to balance between the private and professional role in order to cope with poverty reduction. Coordinating the different people and roles they have at work appears to be difficult, and if the respondents had had a deeper knowledge about the other professions they encounter at work it could make the cooperation easier. If this is the case though, one could ask how many roles a social worker is expected to have and manage

at the same time?

In our study, coordinating seems to involve a need for extensive knowledge, and as Gordon and Owen (2012) write, social workers have an obligation to protect and improve people's well-being, which they mean is a difficult task of balancing. Our study found that respondents have a general and extensive work with different issues, which we would think means that they need to be continually learning and growing in their knowledge of the challenges they face. What we found though was that although the social workers had a great cultural awareness and insight into the different situations their clients live in, we found it interesting that most of them could not answer what they would like to change to improve their work situation, to be able to do a better job and more efficiently work towards achieving poverty reduction. The authors say that, as a social worker, it is important to develop one's self-awareness in order to approach its work with respect for the clients. On the other hand, the authors say that more knowledge does not always lead to better understanding (ibid.). As we also heard from our respondents that the result of their job would not give any overnight results because it is a process where the evidence can only be seen over time, we do the analysis as it takes both time and commitment for social workers to understand the values for both the client and the context in which they live. We also understand that social workers' development work must benefit from the values of the client because it is of great importance for the work of reducing poverty.

### **6.3 Theme three: To be an agent of change**

Given that social workers work with the goal to achieve change in some form, and we believe that approaches can be highly individualized, we want to look more closely at the social worker's view on the challenges they face “as agents” in their work with poverty reduction. Given that our results mostly showed that the challenges lie in the cooperation with clients and that social work is influenced by the environment or by culture aspects, we have chosen to divide this theme into three parts: *Given an opportunity; Individual responsibility; Environmental responsibility*. Each section describes social workers view of varying difficulties in their poverty reduction work with changing one's conditions, and the result aims to gain a broader understanding of the work towards increased well-being.

R3 illustrates in one and the same opinion, many of the aspects that this theme contains. The quote includes both opportunities given and the individual's responsibility to receive support. It is about the expectations of recipients but also about human dignity and potential to succeed, cited:

Poverty is not a permanent situation for me. Poverty is a condition that can be changed as for long as the person in that situation is willing to help himself with the aid, with the assistance of the government institutions or offices, which could provide an instrument to provide assistance to them. Not only to feed them but to develop their capacity as a person, because you know, I believe in inherent worth and dignity of a person (p.5).

### 6.3.1 Given an opportunity

A dominant challenge for six of the respondents in their work to support clients out of poverty is being described as, "They (the clients) don't grab the opportunity" or that it is in some way hard to help clients because they do not want help or do not know how to receive the help. Opportunity is also defined as a privilege to almost all of our respondents and "client's choice" is very frequent in their responses.

R3: Oh yeah there is times that we experience that the particular person, especially those people living in the street, dwellers or street persons that don't like to be helped. But they are cooperating if we give them assistance like food and then they will come back again. I'm not sure that we are going to address that challenge because it's in their mindset and in their system ...

In the quote above we interpret her perception of what the work can look like, that the challenge lies more within how clients themselves think about changing their situation, but we can also interpret the answer that the help continues to be given. Perhaps the social worker may be content with the short-term help to first build a relationship with the clients but we also understand from her response that it is a complex situation if her intention is to get clients out of poverty and that it's a two-way process.

R2 describes the two-way process as a challenge and as a choice in another way, cited:

There is a challenge in poverty in two ways, both for those who can help to reach out to the poor people, and that there is a challenge for the poor people to level up from poverty .... "It's a challenge also for the poor people themselves because they have a choice if they want to remain poor or want to be, you know, eradicated from that state of living. So, yeah, it's actually a two-way thing (R2).

Another respondent believes that, to enable achieving a good result for the client's well-being, the challenge lies within the handling of the client and that you as a social worker have to have a "special skill in dealing with people, cited:

... People have different attitudes, especially the poor people, they always want to take whatever you give to them .... If you don't have patience and don't know how to deal with them, you would just say something that would hurt them. Then you will not reach your goal to help them. Because these people easily get hurt because they are already poor (R1).

The respondent cited above continues by describing that she always reminds herself to be patient and use kind words, which according to her, makes the clients more susceptible. She also states that, "Not always look at them as you know people who are poor". To us, it sounds like there is an underlying preconceived view of the poor but that they, according to her, should not be judged based on the preconceived opinion about the poor. It seems like the respondent believes it should be remembered that there is potential among clients to succeed in achieving a change as she sums up by saying, "People can do something for themselves" and she describes the two-way process by highlighting the clients' potentials: cited:

You know people also have talents to do something and accomplish something for themselves. We could teach them to help themselves. Because ours is just to help them but they are the ones who really help themselves. So that's one part of, you know, being a social worker ... (R1).

Being less privileged as poor is addressed by a respondent describing that the same opportunities are not available to all people. We ask our respondents what they think privilege is, and according to R7b privilege is the same as opportunities but that "It only works with the rich people". She laughs after saying that it is her experience here in the Philippines and continues by telling why she knows it. She gives an example of when rich people are more opportune when it comes to contact with the government or any private company and continues: "... But when you are less opportune, it's only the DSWD that give you all the opportunities and privileges ... (R7b). We ask her to elaborate her answer with an example, she says:

Yeah, actually for getting a passport. Yeah... they say that you need to be there physically but when you are rich you can avail all the opportunities if you are not there because you will give them money. But also with the documents for the poor people. It's hard for them to negotiate with the government .... There are a lot of requirements before you get the documents. But when you are rich you can just give your money and then it will be given to you in a couple of days (R7b).

The same respondent further says that opportunities should be given also fairly to the poor but is not given because of this system.

Seven respondents talk about a trap, cycle or an intergenerational poverty that goes on and on from one generation to another and that these phenomena also challenge social workers from being able to provide opportunities. Some respondents exemplify the difficulty of providing assistance on the basis of these phenomena by describing the fact that even if the clients receive help they will go back to the street. R2 describes how she every day sees a lot of homeless people on the street where some of them are living in plywood houses. Her description of the challenge in giving opportunity and how to help the people is cited:

No matter how the government is trying to help homeless people, they go back to the life on the street .... No matter how you help them, if they choose not to be helped then they will remain to be like that for the rest of their lives. But for the communities that we help, we have helped them to realize that they can do something. We don't spoon feed them but we facilitate them to realise that they can actually do something to reduce their state of poverty (R2).

R2 tells us that foreigners also amplifies the choice that people choose to live on the street by giving them money when they are begging for it and for that, poverty is maintained. The respondent continues, cited: "... even though it's by good willing, it doesn't help people in the long term condition to have a life away from the street, instead they get fast money which motivates them to stay in a life of begging".

R3 explains the challenge in giving opportunity by highlighting the importance of not only help by giving. She says, like many other respondents by using metaphors, that they should make sure that

clients can receive help or help them receive help, cited: “Challenge here is, we have to teach people how to survive or how to end their poverty. So we can’t give them the fish to eat, but we can teach them how to get the fish.”

R6 tells us that there are no guarantees that the assistance provided by social workers will help the client, but that there will still be opportunities. R6 who works at a residential facility for abused women describes that, when women are there with them, they get what they want and what they think is good for them: “Original living is not really full of roses. Yeah, there are also tears”. The respondent says, she is happy for all the successful cases but that there are women who fail. She ends by saying: “But we will do our best to provide you whatever we have and even extend another mile if needed. Just for you to be able to cut the rope of poverty”.

### 6.3.2 Individual responsibility

In order for clients to change their situation, our respondents express a lack of client involvement and imply that the individual (client) also has a responsibility. R3 describes that it is hard, but she would like the clients to have a bigger involvement in designing strategies for themselves to get out of poverty. She says that social workers cannot end poverty unless the ideas come from the people who are in poverty or those who are affected or stigmatized by poverty.

Maybe it’s more of people’s participation. They should participate to end the cycle of poverty because we can’t solve of our own just introducing something, they should be more part of the program to end their situation” (R3).

The essence of the following statement is that one must involve the people in the process. R2 says that even if it is by good intentions, she cannot give a toilet to someone who is not used to use a toilet. She is laughing even if she says that it hurts to see foreign people come over and help Filipinos, cited:

Sometimes they are like that: - “We go to the Filipino; “Hey you need a toilet”. Or for the community that has no toilet; ”You need a toilet, I give you a commode”. And then, you don’t even educate people how to use a toilet. They are not used to do that, to use that. If you go there and you just give them things you see that they need, but you don’t educate them, you don’t involve them in the process (R2).

We hear, in the respondents’ answers, a wish and a belief that the clients themselves can see that there is actually help to get but it can be difficult in the process of getting the clients to take responsibility. Our result shows a common opinion among the respondents, that they need to start their support by helping the clients how to receive the help. R8 says that she always dream that the clients she is working with will change their situation, that they should not be dependent on other people but have the confidence that they can do it themselves, cited:

I want to change this community to a better life maybe. As a social worker, I have a lot of programs with services, we have a lot of agencies working here but it's hard to change people here in the community (R8).

R5 describes the approach to achieve the goal of reducing poverty by awareness and by empowering the clients to "Go out" and see their opportunities. She believes that the clients should be shown how to avail Non-governmental and government services for livelihood and then maintain what they have, cited:

Sometimes their attitude, at first they are just very. If there is something that offered to them, they will always grab the opportunity but they are not ready to receive because they lack the skills. But if you first provide with inputs, if you develop their skills first, then how to do business and afterward they have that knowledge, you give them the capital for them to start their business or whatever livelihood they want to engage in, so sustainability can happen ... (R5).

R2 describes what is necessary to succeed in getting clients to do something about their situation and to end the cycle of poverty. Her explanation for getting clients to change their situation is, to support the clients in such a way that the clients will recognize that they have something in them, not outside assistance but inside the community. She says that the clients have something inside themselves that they can use for them to get out from the cycle of poverty and she describes it, cited:

Well as a social worker, the thing that we can do to help end the cycle is really to empower them. You know, (thinking) first is to really make them realize like "Hey, you can do better, you can have a better future", like to make them realize that they can do something. It's not really helpful when you always feed them, when you just give them, give them, give them. It will not help them. But if you empower them to do something that can make them better, to make their situations better. Then that is the thing. And how we can do the empowerment? The most practical thing that we can describe that is- teach them how to fish" (R2).

R8 who works with women training and for example gives them education in women's' and children's' rights, expresses the desire for clients to change their situation, not only for themselves but also for their children by saying that she wants to "Twist their minds into right". We hear in her statement that there is a humour. She giggles when she describes that the main challenge in her work is to "Change their (clients) minds with their situation". Further, she tells us that she believes that her strategy is to help clients become aware that they are living in poverty and that they need to change their perception to succeed in getting out of poverty. She says that she always tells her clients that they can change themselves to uplift from the situation they are in.

R2 says that people remain poor if they do not choose to work and do something about it.

Furthermore, she says:

Although some people are born into a poverty stricken family, that person has a choice if he or she will remain to be that for the rest of their life. Because as I see it, they are able people, they can work actually but they want easy money, like for begging (R2).

### 6.3.3 Environmental responsibility

What appears in our interviews is that the environment and cultures affect poverty alleviation and also social workers' approaches or at least gives an understanding of the complexity and why it can be difficult to get out of poverty. What is very often recurring in our interviews is education, which is expressed in both the individual's responsibility but also at an organizational or state level and very often these aspects go hand in hand. For example, R3 describes the goal of ending poverty as an "Ideal goal". She says it will take a long time but that there is a lot of help available through government programs that will help achieve the goal. In her opinion, poverty has a historical background of colonization, but she also argues that people's thoughts and beliefs affect the poverty reduction work, cited:

We call this the Spanish colonization; the American colonization and then we add the religion to believe that everything is God's intervention, God's faith that we are poor. We don't work, we don't strive hard because it's God telling us .... We don't have that awareness before, and then maybe lack of resources, equal distributions for the existing gap between the poor and the rich and the opportunities and the lack of opportunities to learn to study, to work to get employed, or to get paid, and lack of skills. You don't have the skills to compare globally (R3).

The following quotes illustrate how factors such as culture are challenges in respondents' work. R1 says it is important to learn from the clients, to learn what their needs are, cited: "Because here in the Philippines there are different cultures. One community has a different culture from the other community so, I have to learn from them so I could do what I can for them".

R2 says, that social workers cannot really support everyone in the communities because they are so many people there. She describes successful cases in her work with people in the slum areas that are surrounded by an environment infested with drugs, prostitution, and gangs. She says that they try to teach the people in those areas about values and help them with their basic needs like education. And those who finish their education are the ones that now are helping their families. We can hear that clients' attitudes are an important part of the work, cited:

So, from a very difficult situation, they have now levelled up. It's not much that we give or help but, (thinking) it's really the attitude, their outlook, their perspectives and how they view things around them that become different. Because they no longer embrace the culture of the community that they are in to. Like the culture of doing bad things to survive, something like that. So they become different because they can already provide for their own family (R2).

R2 laughs when she describes what the family culture looks like in the Philippines. She says, that just because one is stable does not mean you should only help your immediate family, cited:

Sometimes, I need to extend help to relatives who are still poor .... We help each other. Like for many of the Filipinos go abroad to work. When you have some money to support your family, your other relatives will also expect that you will help them too (laugh) (R2).

I think they (clients) would be placed where they can be given daily activities or changing their mindset .... The local government, social workers in the Barangay, in the city or in the provinces, they have to address those street beggars or people who are enjoying the life in the streets, the sidewalks, there is a lot of work to be done there. It's really a difficult situation. That's the challenges you can call development traps. It should be personally changed in the person who addresses that particular issue, but it will take time because they have to be educated (R3).

There also seems to be environmental and cultural aspects in the answer when R8 says that she wishes that clients would stop depending on "Only God knows", "If only the government help us". She sums up by saying that: "They can do it for themselves like, - "I need to change".

Family traditions or family norms are something that several of the respondents encounter when they describe the difficulty of making clients change. R9 describes how the cycle of poverty is maintained, as there is a tradition in the Philippines when the children of the family get married, they do not always move from the house and become independent. The family grows as all the children marry and stay at the house. She says, that it is called "The extended family" and when the children still are depending on their parents the poverty becomes a cycle due to that condition:

... Some families undergo counselling and small talk but some families are refusing because this is our tradition. No one can promote this. So, ok we respect it. But sometimes some families are- "ok, it's too hard to have extended family or big family", especially when the grandmother is the one who is working to sustain the needs of the family (R9).

R2 says that she tells her clients: " If you don't want to stay poor you have to do something." She continues to describe that in the area where her clients live, "They don't have a lot of things to see and still they are just content with what they see". But she says that she always tells them "There is more outside your house". She tells them not to be content with what they have and that there is more outside their community and that they just have to go around: "Go outside and you can see big houses. Why do they have big houses? It's because they work hard, they don't earn it because of sleeping the whole day" (R2).

#### 6.3.4 Analysis of Theme three: To be an agent of change

Based on the theme, *To be an agent of change*, all the respondents explain their challenges as something difficult or as something limiting in their work. There are respondents pointing at the possibility for clients of getting help or support from the government, but sometimes it seems to be challenging to successfully reach clients in order to work together with long-term goals. The respondents are illustrating a lack of participation in terms of "They (clients') don't grab the opportunity" but according to us, the help from the social workers' continues to be given no matter how it is received. We analyse it as *freedom*, which Human Development advocates. Sen (1999) argues that development must be seen as a process of expanding and focusing on human freedoms, a freedom that people themselves enjoy. Our respondents clients' seems to get the freedom to choose

whenever and when it suits them because the help continues to be provided regardless of whether it is received or not. We analyse it as it may be more important that the aid still persists until the clients want to receive it, in order for social work to achieve its purpose, in this case, to get clients out of poverty.

Most of our respondents' are talking about the opportunity to change as an individual, that you have the choice to change your situation. The concept *functions* in Capability Approach theory is about what people are able to do and/or able to be, based on different things people value doing or being (Robeyns, 2003). We can find that majority of our respondents talk about values of their clients in a similar way and it is mostly about how client values are a limitation for change. It sometimes seems that respondents have greater ambitions to change a community or a person living in poverty than clients themselves, except the clients who suffered from natural disasters where their daily lives were destroyed. van Oorschot and Halman (2000) illustrate four popular perceptions of poverty, where we see that our respondents' dominant views can be considered as one of the perceptions – "individual blame (laziness)", which permeates our entire result and has been presented primarily in theme three. What appears from the result is, that the largest challenges seem to be the amount of the poor in the country and that the clients' mindset or as expressed, "Their system" limits them to get out of poverty. An analysis of the dominant view that it is the individual, who carries the responsibility, can be related to what Nilan (2013) says, that inequality in the Philippines has become a natural part of society. It can also mean that the clients, described by the respondents, hold an attitude for the same reason, that poverty has become so normalized that it affects their motivation to change.

An approach that appears in our analysis is that respondents are keen to take cultures and different ways of thinking into consideration. As R1 say that she has to learn from the clients so she can help them to the best of her ability, we interpret that as she is committed to the client's situation in order to meet this with "right" help. As Gordon and Owen (2012) argues that it is a prerequisite to engage in the client for being able to provide appropriate support.

Overall, we see that respondents still see potentials for client functions; at least there is a hope that the clients themselves will discover their potentials or reassess their thoughts, which seem to be what our respondents are working with to make happen. Like R2 say that "They are able people, they can work actually but they want easy money like for begging". We get the feeling that sometimes it may feel hopeless for our respondents to help when help is given but not receiving. It is also apparent to respondents that clients do not believe that they can actually be helped or that they do not feel they need help. Dheeshana (2011) argues that social workers should help transform individuals and communities to act as agents themselves, we can see that it seems to be the main task of our respondents, at least the biggest challenge they choose to tell us about. Dheeshana (2011) also argues that social workers should work to increase individual's capacity by improving clients' capabilities

through empowerment so that they (clients) get the opportunity to choose. We can see that from our result that majority of our respondents talk about taking responsibility as an individual and to receive the help. However, many of our respondents say that in order for their clients to take responsibility, they need to work for the clients in terms of awareness, which we think, in fact, can improve clients' ability to choose, in the long run.

The concept Capabilities in Sen's theory (2001) is about various valuable functioning's in an individual and claims the importance of evaluating the individual's actual ability to achieve those as a part of living, we can see that our respondents work with awareness for the clients so they (clients) can see themselves, their situation and potentials to be able to take responsibility for their own situation. And as *capabilities* is the potential to live the life as one wish to and refers to a person's *functioning* he or she could choose, and as long as the functioning's limit or complicate the work of our respondents, we analyse it as respondents focus more on the capabilities and potentials of the clients so that clients can see that they can choose between different ways of living.

If the respondents succeed in finding, confirming and supporting the values of the clients that may cause them to change their situation, poverty reduction can proceed in an easier way. We can also see from our respondents' answers that social work is not just about helping someone, it is a work more about giving and taking opportunities. The respondents mention nothing about being limited in providing support and assistance. In addition to one respondent saying, those clients should have the same opportunities as "the rich". Otherwise, most interviews are about providing the help that the clients are susceptible to, and the difficulty seems to lie in the client's opposition.

From the Human Development perspective, people's choices in all aspects should be enlarged and as Jahar (HDR, 2016) argues, there are two sides of improving the choice, both by improving human capabilities and people's opportunity to use this capability. Almost all of our respondents describe social work as a two-way-process that deals with receiving as well as rewarding to achieve a long-term goal and there are different approaches to give opportunity and for achieving goals. In order to be able to work on a long-term basis, we can see that respondents argue the importance of giving opportunity by "meeting the clients where they are". Through this, we think that social workers find potentials that help in the work to strengthen clients' capacity that can lead to change.

## 7. Conclusions

Social workers perception of poverty is a condition that can be changed as long as the individual, living in poverty, makes active choices. One conclusion is that social workers' answers mainly points out that it is the individual who is responsible for his or her situation in poverty, like what, van Oorschot and Halman (2000) describe as *individual blame*.

Social workers use their own background to motivate clients to see what potential they have, and from there, improve client's life for the better, a life that can be more than the client's current situation. To increase well-being of clients, patience is an important approach for social workers, and by providing support to clients in forms of, for example, attention, belonging and love, will help to eliminate obstacles, which lead to, and may be beneficiary to improving well-being. A professional social worker often means, being the link between clients and other stakeholders that constantly balance between different work fields. Balancing means being flexible and having a friendly approach to make it possible to achieve one's purpose, even though our respondents experience a lack of involvement from their clients, balancing seems to be important. Social work is not just about providing help but also more about an exchange, where opportunities are given and opportunities are received between social workers and clients. The study shows that the efforts to reduce poverty in the Philippines require long-term thinking where the social worker mostly has the task of changing the values of the individual and in communities. "To change" is about widening the client's perspective and illustrate what they can actually achieve, become or do with their lives. However, it may also be important to think of what Giddens and Sutton (2013) argues, that one should see the decisions an individual makes, in its context because individuals' choices and decisions always take place in a social environment that they themselves cannot fully control (ibid.). Although, to work with the clients' potential and mindset by making them see what they actually can do for themselves seems to be a major approach the social workers have and the aim is, in almost all cases, to encourage education. A lack of education is seen both as a cause and an effect of poverty, therefore the social workers work to raise clients' awareness about the importance of education. As social workers see it, education leads to broader perspectives and greater opportunities, and therefore they express that education is the key to reducing poverty. Although social workers have a lot of advice to give about which approaches are important for social workers, they have fewer answers to what they would like to improve in order to better manage poverty in their profession.

### 7.1 Discussion

Something that emerges from our study is that social workers seem to lack the client's involvement and receiving the help to get out of poverty. Having knowledge and their own experiences about what

the client is undergoing, are positive factors for social workers as they can relate to, and have an understanding of the clients' socioeconomic position. It is also clear that social workers in their work relate to themselves, and in certain ways want to be role models for their clients. Is that why social workers feel so much passion and love for their work and have a great hope that creating positive change is possible? Although we did not intend to investigate the respondents' own backgrounds or beliefs, everyone told us about their experiences of a life in poverty, and several also say that they believe in God impacts their work. Social workers' own backgrounds are, in this way, a subject worth looking further into. Would the approach towards the clients' inadequate involvement, give different results if social workers in the Philippines did not have their own experiences with poverty? As the study found that several respondents believe in God and talk about their work as a "vocation", another suggestion for future research is to make a comparative study between social workers in religious and Non-religious organizations. Studies of religious character, can examine whether religious social workers have different approaches to clients or if they have different views on clients' participation in the work on poverty reduction.

Something that we reflected on after the study's implementation, and presented in the results, was that one of our respondents told us how her work with foreign volunteers could be problematic at times. We find it interesting and suggest further research to learn how social workers in a developing country perceive their work with foreign volunteers. We ask ourselves the question: How do foreign volunteers integrate into the new context to carry out a "culture-oriented" work? We think there is something in the argument that Van Oorschot and Halman (2000) describes that the view of poverty differs in Eastern and Western Europe, and that is, what is being dealt with in the cooperation between the social worker and the foreign volunteer.

This moreover leads us to think of international exchanges, how valuable it is to broaden its horizons and learn more about methods and practices in other countries.

We were well aware that we entered a wide area that crossed boundaries and global goals, which made it all the more interesting to hear the social workers' voices – how those who actually face vulnerable people experience their work. Our ideas lead us to a further dimension – that all social work is linked to global processes of change as Healy (2008) describes it. With this in mind, we want to say that our study is primarily relevant to international social work and is also relevant to national social work in view of the importance of the global process. Healy (2008) believes that globalization has both created new opportunities for social work, as well as significant areas of international responsibility, and in order to achieve this, it requires not only an awareness of professional action but a professional action that requires new knowledge and new attitudes.

## References

- Author Unknown (2009). *Poverty in the Philippines: Causes, Constraints and Opportunities*. (Asian Development Bank, No. RPT090621). Mandaluyong City. From <http://www.adb.org>
- Backman, J. (2008). *Rapporter och uppsatser*. (2., uppdaterade [och utök.]. uppl.) Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Barder, O. (2009). What is Poverty Reduction? *Center for global development*, No. (170), doi: 10.2139/ssrn.1394506
- Barker, R. L. (2013). *The social work dictionary*. (6th ed.). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- Blomberg, H., Kroll, C., Kallio, J., & Erola, J. (2013). Social workers' perceptions of the causes of poverty in the Nordic countries. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 23(1) 68-82. doi:10.1177/0958928712456575
- Bryman, A. (2011). *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*. (2. [rev.] uppl.). Malmö: Liber.
- Dheeshana S. Jayasundara. (2011). Applicability of Amartya Sen's human development perspectives to the fields of reproductive health and social work. *International Social Work*, 56(2), 134-147. doi: 10.1177/0020872811414598
- Gillham, B. (2008). *Forskningsintervjun: tekniker och genomförande*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Giddens, A. & Sutton, P.W. (2013). *Sociology*. (7th ed.) Cambridge: Polity.
- Gordon, J., & Owen, G. (2013). Developing cultural competence for social work with families living in poverty. *European Journal of Social work volume*, 16(2), 220-234. doi:10.1080/13691457.2011.649347
- Green, D. (2012). *From poverty to power: how active citizens and effective states can change the world*. (Fully rev. and updated 2. ed.) Bourton on Dunsmore: Practical Action Publishing.
- Harms Smith, L. (2017). Blaming-the-poor: Strengths and development discourses which obfuscate neo-liberal and individualist ideologies. *International Social Work*, 60(2), 336–350. doi:10.1177/0020872815594218

- Healy, L.M. (2008). *International social work: professional action in an interdependent world*. (2. ed.) Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hermerén, G. (2011). *Good Research Practice* (Vetenskapsrådets rapportserie, No 2011:3) Bromma: CM-Gruppen AB. From <https://publikationer.vr.se/en/product/good-research-practice/>
- United Nations Development Programme (2016). *Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone*. (ISSN: 0969-4501) New York, NY: United Nations Publications. From <http://www.undp.org>
- Kvale, S. & Brinkmann, S. (2014). *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*. (3rd ed). (S.-E. Torhell, Trans.). Lund: Studentlitteratur AB. (Original work published 2009).
- Jacobson, T, L. (2016) Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach and Communication for Development and Social Change. *Journal of Communication*. 66(5), 789-810. doi: 10.1111/jcom.12252
- Jahan, S. (2016). Human Development Report: Human Development for Everyone (United Nations Development Programme, No E.16.III.B.1). Washington DC: Communications Development Incorporated. From <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2016-report/download>
- Lantz, A. (2013). *Intervjumetodik*. (3., [omarb.] uppl.) Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.
- Lepianka, D., Gelissen, J., & van Oorschot, W. (2010). Popular Explanations of Poverty in Europe - Effects of Contextual and Individual Characteristics across 28 European Countries. *Acta Sociologica*, 53(1), 53-72. doi: 10.1177/0001699309357842
- Martines, A., Jr. (2016). *Analytics tools for measuring poverty dynamics: an application using panel data in the Philippines*. (ADB Economics Working Paper Series, No. 477). Asian Development Bank. From <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/181581/ewp-477.pdf>
- Nilan, G, Yu. (2013). The role of social work in Philippine poverty-reduction programs: ideology, policy, and the profession. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, 23, 24-34. doi:10.1080/02185385.2012.759320
- Patel, R., & Davidson, B. (2013). *Forskningsmetodikens grunder: att planera, genomföra och rapportera en undersökning*. Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.

Republic act no. 4373:1b. *An act to regulate the practice of social work and the operation of social work agencies in the Philippines*. Downloaded May, 2017, From <http://www.chanrobles.com/republicacts/republicactno4373.html#.Wc3jvq2HKRt>

Robeyns, I. (2003). *The Capability Approach: An Interdisciplinary Introduction*. (Doctoral, University of Amsterdam, Department of Political Science And Amsterdam School of Social Sciences Research). From: <https://scholar.google.se/scholar?hl=sv&q=The+Capability+Approach%3A+An+Interdisciplinary+Introduction.+&btnG=>

Robeyns, I. (2005). The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 93-117. doi:10.1080/146498805200034266

Samson, L. L. (Ed.). (2016). *Understanding Philippine society, culture, and politics*. Mandaluyong City: Anvil Publishing, Inc.

Sen, A. (2001[1999]). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (2005). Human rights and Capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(2), 155-162. doi:10.1080/14649880500120491

Trost, J. (2005). *Kvalitativa intervjuer*. (3. uppl.) Lund: Studentlitteratur AB.

United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *What is Human Development* [Audio/Video]. Downloaded from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> Human Development Reports.

United Nations. (2017). *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General* (E 2017/66). From: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1>

Universitet and Högskoleverket (2017) *Ramar och Kriterier: Minor Field Studies* [brochure] From <https://www.utbyten.se>

van Oorschot, W., & Halman, L. (2000). Blame or fate, individual or social?: An international comparison of popular explanations of poverty. *European Societies*, 2(1), 1-28. doi:10.1080/146166900360701

Watkins-Hayes, C., & Kovalsky, E. (2016). *The discourse of deservingness: Morality and the dilemmas of poverty relief in debate and practice*. In Brady D. & Burton. M (Eds.). *The oxford handbook of the social science of poverty*. (pp. 192-220). Oxford: University Press.

Watt Boolsen, M. (2007). *Kvalitativa analyser: forskningsprocess, människa, samhälle*. Malmö: Gleerup.

Wheeler, D. P. (2016). Standards for Social Work Practice: in Health Care Settings. (National Association of Social Workers) From <https://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWHealthCareStandards.pdf>

Yeong, K., & Wang, T. (2013). Poverty and Social Work: experiences from some Asian and Oceania Countries Work. *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Work and Development*, 23(1), 1–2. doi:10.1080/02185385.2013.764750

# Appendix 1

## Interview guide

### Background

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Education:
4. Years as a professional social worker:
5. How come you wanted to become a social worker?
6. Shortly description of you working field:
7. What is your role in the organisations work with poverty reduction?

### Category one

What do you think of when you hear the term poverty?

Are you familiar with the Sustainable Development Goals? United nation have 17 different global goals to achieve by 2030. One of them is to "end poverty in all its forms anywhere". And because the Philippines are a member of UN, they also have signed up for this. How is it to work towards these (SDG) goals as a social worker in the Philippines?

Why do you think there is poverty in the Philippines?

What does privileges mean to you?

When do *you* think that one has escaped from poverty?

### Category two

Except from the practical help, what would you say that you give to the clients?

How does social workers work to prevent development traps? (Ex. Metaphor)

Is there any room for manoeuvre for social workers to come with alternative ways?

What would you most like to improve about yourself, in order to achieve a more successful poverty reduction in your profession?

### Category three

What specific challenge would you say that you have in your work with poverty reduction?

If you one day would have the chance to change something in the social work field with poverty, what would it be?

If you would give one advice to a new examined social worker that is going to work with poverty reduction, what would it be?

Would you like to add something?

Extra questions

What would you say is the difference between being in situational or generational poverty?

What would you say about this saying: If you are born poor, you will die poor?