EXPLORING THE PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES OF CAPACITY BUILDING IN REFUGEE ORGANISATIONS: THE CASE OF MANCHESTER REFUGEE SUPPORT NETWORK (MRSN).

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Manchester Metropolitan University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 2016

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ABSTRACT

The following thesis has engaged an empirically informed liberationist's analysis to investigate the role of discriminatory tendencies in the destruction and demonizing of asylum seekers in the UK. The argument is that the hostility directed towards asylum seekers appears to be rooted in a racist connotation that has been perpetuated by successive governments through the legislation of immigration laws that criminalize this group will be explored. Refugees and asylum seekers, by virtue of their position in British Society, face discrimination because of the embedded hegemony of the masked sociological racism, which has replaced biological racism. Successive governments' control of asylum seekers through immigration has brought to this group a life of destitution and the inability to integrate and develop active citizenship. This study was done with the partnership and participation of Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN), which is a refugee led organisation that advocates for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers thus giving a voice to the voiceless.

A triangulation approach which involved participatory action research, encompassing formative activities and comparative and liberating perspectives in the quest for social justice was used. This approach inspired the participants to develop participatory and collaborative principles, which in turn presented a channel for them to have a voice. As a result of this the participants were able to challenge and educate those who had oppressed them. The formative approaches in the feedback of my data analysis given to the participants in strategic meetings not just gave them the freedom of deliberation and having the final decision on the course of action to follow but also taking the lead in the implementation. The key actions included improving the services provided by MRSN, fundraising, and developing new campaigns, hence building its capacity. The capacity building entailed the exploration of suggested new projects and training of community leaders to embrace collaborative principles, which aimed at improving governance in community organisations and MRSN. New fundraising strategies were explored in order to seek flexible funds that would allow for projects that had in the past proved

difficult to get despite being of paramount demand for example immigration advice. Campaigns included the fight for Basic Rights, Right to Work and against destitution, and the campaigns became more inclusive, and focussed on the agenda set by the participants and directed at the right people and were educational.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim of the study

The purpose of this study was the capacity building of Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) so that it enhances its ability of empowering refugees and asylum seekers as individuals and as groups in general with more emphasis on under-represented groups within refugee communities. This included women, young people and victims of destitution. This empowerment involved giving refugees and asylum seekers a voice that would inspire them to actively participate in the design of the capacity building of MRSN. It was envisaged that the above-mentioned groups' participation would generally enhance their citizenship development endeavours. In this study, a refugee is defined as a person who:

> Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside of his former habitant residence, …is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Brammer, 2010:580 & Clayton, 2012: 445).

According to the Geneva Refugee Convention (1951) an asylum seeker is someone who:

> … seeks protection in another country owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside of his country

of his nationality and unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country … (Brammer, 2010:580).

The term asylum seeker came into prominence in the 1990s as an innovation by Western governments, which were recipients of this group of people and thus argued that some individuals within the group were economic migrants who could not qualify to be termed refugees (Stalker, 2002). This development then makes an asylum seeker to be someone who has lodged an application for protection based on the Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR). The significance of the definitions of a refugee and an asylum seeker and this Article for my thesis is to focus attention on the experiences, voices and agency of this group of people.

This study is therefore aimed at enabling the voices of vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees to be heard effectively as part of a wider agenda for social change, social solidarity and social justice. With this aim in mind, therefore required an empowering and participatory study from an insider researcher's perspective that would seek to emancipate this group of socially excluded people.

1.2 My position in the study

Like most researchers, my study has been influenced by my own life experiences. As Oakley (1985) asserted: "My stance on world affairs is filtered through the sieve of my own life" (1985: 85). And like most people, my life has been a continuous battlefield between the forces that swear to promote my humanity and those resolute in demolishing it; those who endeavor to build a shielding hedge around it, and those who aspire to pull it down; those who persist in forging it and those who are devoted to breaking it up; those who aim to open my eyes, to make me see a tomorrow and its unpredictability, and those who long to soothe me into closing my eyes and into believing all is well. This has led to my life being dominated by a particular concern for the prejudices faced by marginalized groups because of my own experience of

having been "pulled down" and the way I was socialized.

Even at a very young age while growing up in Zimbabwe, instilled in me by my parents was a spirit of resilience and care for the less privileged as my parents cared for the poor and the physically disabled when others shunned them. At the time of her death in 2011, my mother was still caring for two people who were not our relatives despite her advanced age. As I was growing up I was so inspired by my parents care for others such that it was only fair that I took it upon myself to follow in their footsteps firstly by supporting them in their work and then by doing the job myself in order to maintain this great legacy of humanity. Unlike my parents I provided support with some innovation i.e. instead of just providing for the shunned and poor I also enabled them to seek ways to provide for themselves by helping identify resources for self-sustainability. As the Chinese proverb clearly put it "You give a poor man a fish and you feed him for a day. You teach him to fish and you give him an occupation that will feed him for a life time".

Growing up in the then known Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe after the independence of 1980) while under the colonial era of the British, freedom of speech or association was but a dream that most black Zimbabweans dared not even dream. After gaining independence in Zimbabwe our greatest expectation was to gain freedom and be emancipated from all forms of discrimination and oppression. However, coming from one of the minority tribes of Zimbabwe (Ndebele) where Shona is the majority unfortunately though the discriminatory tendencies around jobs, education, social mobility, freedom of expression and association still occur to such a point that those who stand up against it or speak out run the risk of harm coming to not just them but their families as well. This has in several instances led to death of such people with no justice being done about it.

When things got so bad that my life was in danger as a result of refusing to be discriminated against I escaped and came to the UK where being a first world

country I expected that discrimination was just a definition in the dictionary. On my arrival into the UK in year 2000, I sort asylum but to my dissatisfaction and disappointment I was once again presented with a different type discriminatory tendencies. Firstly, on my arrival I was detained for seeking asylum and felt like I was being treated like a criminal as compared to a victim with all the "procedures" the immigration and detention staff carried out on me. Secondly, three months later when my wife and daughter fled Zimbabwe to join me. Who would have thought that they would have to go through a similar if not worse treatment than me without even taking into account the then age of my daughter (13 years). As if it would have ended there, this was just the beginning of what was going to be a long and unfair procedure of uncertainty filled with sleepless nights. My family and I would then go through an unfair immigration process that would take us another three years before we could be recognised as refugees in the UK.

In my endeavour to further my academic career I enrolled in a social work degree at the University of Salford but to my surprise I was refused excluded from the course after 3 months of studying. Despite being accepted in the course and doing it for 3 months I was informed that the reason for losing my place in the course was because I was a refugee and the University had nothing in place to accommodate refugees on this particular course. Eventually I was enrolled after going through a lot of struggles. As a result I have engaged in activities that have helped alleviate the social exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers. This started with my involvement with the Zimbabwean community in the UK, which led to being elected Chair of Trustees at Manchester Refugee Support Network (MRSN) in 2002. MRSN is an organisation that seeks to improve the well-being of all refugees and asylum seekers in Manchester. Due to the work with MRSN and my own experiences upon completing my first graduate degree in Social Work Studies, I embarked on researching Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) for my Masters of Research. This study highlighted even further the amount of discrimination that occurs in our society, hence this present doctoral study.

The implications of my position in this study enforced some reality that there is

a conflict between humanity, economic and exploitative tendencies. Therefore, the argument could be made that the question of freedom of speech is key in completing research for an organisation that claims to empower people on the margins of society.

1.3 The study

This participatory action research study was one of the eight CASE (Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering) studentships from the 'Taking Part?' ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded Capacity Building Cluster. The aim was researching active citizenship and community empowerment within third sector organisations[1]. The Taking Part concept developed from the idea of Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC). This was the Labour Government's initiative that aimed at encouraging communities to take leading roles in active participation in civic and civil matters (Mayo and Annette, 2010).

In the context of the above aims, this study critically discusses hierarchical notions, and ideologies that are based on 'bribery citizenship' that offered rewards with restrictions. The study explores the concept of citizenship and practices for a democratic citizenship, which are based on ownership and responsibilities for community resources thus underpinned by community cohesion. The concept of democratic citizenship explored within the study embraces the feminist and anti-racist approaches towards a form of 'citizenship' that is gender sensitive and takes cognizance of ethnic minorities making it broadly anti-discriminatory. The intention was that the experience gained by participants in the study, would enable them to view voluntary and public institutions as agents set up to improve their quality of life not the opposite (Mayo and Annette, 2010). This CASE studentship project strove to promote empowerment among refugees and asylum seekers and ensure they

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1 I am the principal investigator, the reference number is ES/100470X/1 and the study started on 8th February 2010 and was supposed to end 7th February 2013

were effectively heard to promote social change, solidarity and social justice. The core question was how this would be achieved and the type of organisation that would be suitable.

1.4 The study context of Manchester Refugee Support Network

The financial crisis affecting banks in the USA between 2007 and 2009 caused by the collapse in the subprime mortgage market spread to Europe and the whole world, led to the longest recession ever (Michael et. al, 2010). The Federal Reserve, European Central Bank and Bank of England had to bailout some banks, and this culminated in the nationalisation of the Northern Rock Bank in UK and the collapse Lehman Brothers in the USA. When the Coalition government of the Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties came to power in 2010 it promised to shrink the deficit that had increased because of bank sector bailouts and failing tax revenues (Reeves et. al 2013). It introduced the highest and unprecedentedly radical economic cuts of £81bn over four years. This could only be achieved by welfare support cuts of £7bn, the loss of 490 000 public sector jobs by 2015, and spending cuts to all government departments including the department for communities and local government, and this led to cuts in the Third Sector (Pimlott and Giles, 2010).

This doctoral study came about because MRSN had developed into a charitable organisation that necessitated a smaller management committee composed of only seven trustees. The other members' meaningful contribution to the running of the MRSN had been reduced to just electing the trustees at annual general meetings (AGMs). A concern was highlighted that this development had led to the participation of the Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) being overlooked hence MRSN losing valuable contributions. Due to the threat of cuts in the third sector the trustees at MRSN realised that the task of capacity building required the participation and collaboration of all stakeholders in the quest of promoting active citizenship.

Thus in the endeavour to develop its capabilities further MRSN began the process of attempting to bring back that togetherness, collaboration and contribution of the RCOs, which existed prior to MRSN becoming a charity. The charity wanted to come up with plans for the future that would involve all the stakeholders in meeting their own needs. These needs had been identified but MRSN lacked the capacity and expertise to meet them because of their magnitude. What was needed was an approach that was more streamlined to achieve the aims of the charity. Therefore MRSN collaborated with Manchester Metropolitan University to carry out this PhD study with the aim of enhancing its work as a voluntary organisation of excellence and aid the capacity-building cluster (CBC) gain insight into the process of engagement and empowerment of marginalised groups.

Although voluntary organisations have been perceived to be closer to their communities than public service organisations (Mawson, 2008); some members of MRSN were concerned that their organisation had become detached and rigid in its organisational, decision-making and communicational strategies. As an important strategy in ensuring the openness and flexibility of MRSN, this research study was meant to give a voice to participants, particularly those who were socially excluded, by encouraging them to find their voice in the capacity building of MRSN. The socially excluded have knowledge about their problems as well as the solutions, but they might lack the organisational expertise to translate the knowledge into action (Freire 1973). When they translate the knowledge into action they become agentic and take control of their lives (Evans, 2002).

Agentism is the means by which people develop the ability to strive for higher aspirations, persevere against obstacles, learn from problems and therefore develop innovation (Todd *et al*, 2004). When people are at the stage of agentism they would have developed a voice of self-representation and understanding reflections of their shared history, language, race, and gender. Thus they would be able to challenge the existing hegemony by which one class of society fabricates consensus so as to dominate the other (Gramsci 1971).

For the voices of participants to be nurtured an environment is needed, which gives space and ease of communication at a horizontal level as a strategy for creating a sense of belonging. This was achieved at MRSN through the participatory action research undertaken for this thesis, which was formative in nature and incorporated comparative narratives, which perpetuated knowledge and sharing. The following section provides some historical background to MRSN's role in empowering refugees and asylum seekers.

1.5 MRSN background

MRSN began as a Network made up of established refugee communities such as Chilean, Bosnian, Sudanese and Kurdish Communities in 1996. When MRSN first started two members from each community sat on the management committee. The management meetings consisted of the honorary committee members who were; the chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, advisors, representatives of RCOs and staff members. This ensured that there was a collective decision making process. Over this time MRSN has achieved a growth in membership from 4 to 21 refugee community groups. As a result it has worked and continue to work with over 50 refugee and migrant organisations across Greater Manchester.

At MRSN's inception the Manchester City Council Link Worker helped the organisation with its developmental aspect, which included the writing of the first constitution. At the time MRSN had no paid worker and relied on the services of volunteers. This trend continued until the local authority funded a Community Development Coordinator's post. The funding led to the secondment of a link worker as an advisor, and this contributed to the detachment of the communities in the running of the organisation. According to one participant the Coordinator and the Chair ran the organisation while the rest of the committee members were passive participants.

MRSN was formed with the aims of supporting and empowering Greater Manchester's refugee communities to establish strong organisations and to increase public awareness around issues of asylum and media representation. There were further aims to give refugees and asylum seekers a voice and opportunity to express themselves whilst representing the needs and aspirations of their own communities. MRSN's core aims were to build strong and independent refugee community organisations (RCOs) that would help bring about lasting changes to the lives of refugees and asylum-seekers in Greater Manchester. This is accomplished by providing direct support to individuals in refugee and migrant communities through advice and advocacy projects. Therefore refugees and asylum seekers levels of stress, unemployment, poverty and isolation have been reduced. The aims of MRSN guide the work and ensure all work is informed by the commitment to deliver services and meet the needs and aspirations of refugees and asylum-seekers.

In a nation like the UK in which the legislature works with the executive branch to produce what is argued to be racist immigration laws (this will be further explored in chapter two), there is a need for organisations like MRSN to lead the fight against the machinery of discriminatory discourse. The exploration of MRSN's historical development is to emphasise its uniqueness in its fight against the discrimination experienced by refugees and asylum seekers. MRSN is a grass root member based organisation, started, managed and led by refugees and asylum seekers. The organisation cherishes the belief that refugees and asylum seekers have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. It further respects diverse cultures, valuing and celebrating how they enrich UK society. The ultimate hope is to inspire others to promote the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers.

In 2005 MRSN acquired charity status, which enhanced its fundraising sources. This new status was not well understood by the trustees of the organisation and they sought direction by engaging a consultancy company

Mellor & Lawrie, which was contracted in 2005 to explore how the organisation could function in a more effective way.

1.5.1 The Mellor and Lawrie work

The Mellor and Lawrie consultancy scrutinised the aims of the MRSN. In their work they studied the organisations structure and consulted all the stakeholders to gather their views of how to improve the running of the organisation.

MRSN structure before the consultancy work was identified as follows:
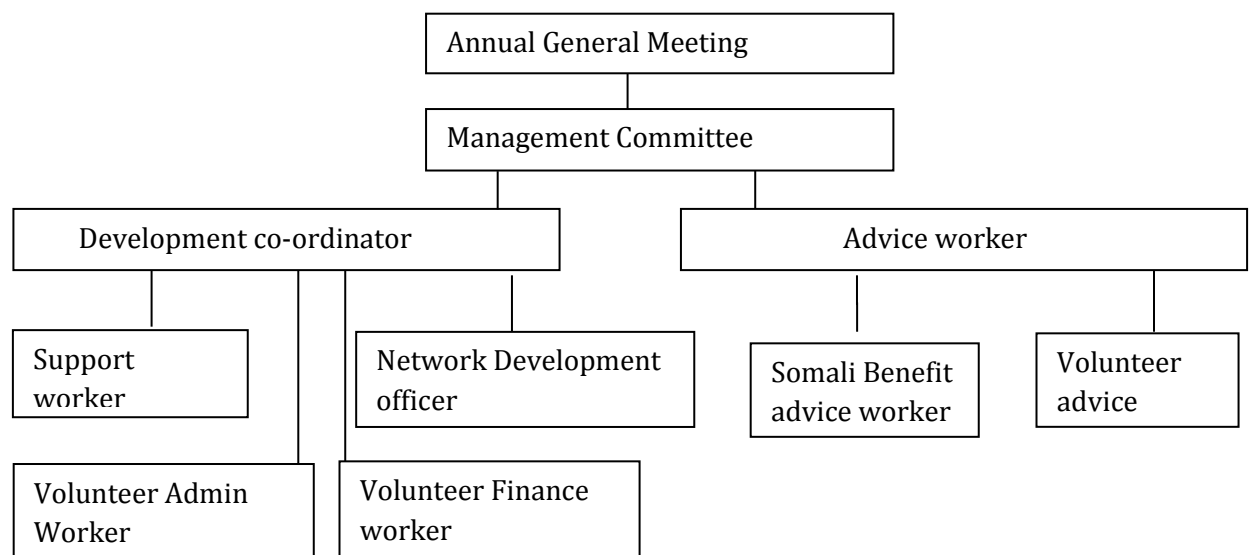
Fig 1 Source: Mellor & Lawrie, 2005

Fig 1 shows the MRSN organisational structure in 2005, and as a result of their consultancy Mellor and Lawrie (2005) argued that the MRSN internal structure needed strengthening because "the reporting lines between the staff and the

management committee were unclear" (2005:5). Many essential organisational functions such as financial management, fund-raising, staff supervision and support, office management and organisational development were not the responsibility of any one employee. Those tasks were fulfilled because of the commitment and availability of volunteers or because individual staff took them in conjunction with their formal job roles.

They further argued that MRSN needed to ensure that it had the core organisational infrastructure to enable it to effectively manage its affairs and to provide support and management to its projects and services. Mellor and Lawrie (2005) argued that they had concerns that the organisational structure was both weak and vulnerable. If key individual staff or volunteers left, or if new activities were added there was a feeling that the organisation could 'hit breaking point'.

This led to stakeholders, in collaboration with the consultancy, suggesting that MRSN needed a full time dedicated manager. However, the consultancy argued that the current size of MRSN at the time could not support a full time manager and that funders were unlikely to back it. This was because funders were more inclined to fund direct services and projects rather than management costs. In order for the organisation to develop and have a manager in place, they therefore came up with the following suggestions:

- Full cost recovery. The organisation needed to ensure that all funding bids included the full direct cost of the project whilst making a contribution to the organisational and management overheads involved in supporting and managing the service. MRSN needed to invest more in building up a strong and sustainable organisational core.

- A review needs to be undertaken to explore how core organisational tasks are and could be allocated and to develop some short and longer-term options.

- Committee's role. The committee's role is evolving. It is moving from being a representative forum (i.e. where the committee was made up of representatives from all refugee communities) to a collective body

responsible for steering and directing the organisation. We recommend that the committee should operate more like a management board and should look at its roles and responsibilities as an employer and subject to registration, their legal duties as trustees of a charity. The committee needs to have a disciplined approach to its work and also identify what skills and experience might be needed as MRSN develops (Mellor & Lawrie, 2005:8).

The consultancy further proposed the structure as described in fig 2, however it lacked the RCO's involvement. This could be because Mellor and Lawrie did not understand about the role of RCOs, who are the owners of the organisation and in theory are the supreme body through the AGM, which chooses the management committee.

MRSN Proposed structure:

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                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  Management      │
                    │  Committee       │
                    └────────┬─────────┘
                             │
                             ▼
                    ┌──────────────────┐
                    │  Development     │
                    │  Manager         │
                    └────────┬─────────┘
        ┌───────────┬────────┴────────┬────────────┐
        ▼           ▼                 ▼            ▼
┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐ ┌─────────────┐
│ Advice      │ │ Development │ │ RMF Officer │ │ Advice      │
│ Development │ │ Officer     │ │             │ │ Volunteer   │
│ Officer     │ │             │ │             │ │             │
└─────────────┘ └─────────────┘ └─────────────┘ └─────────────┘
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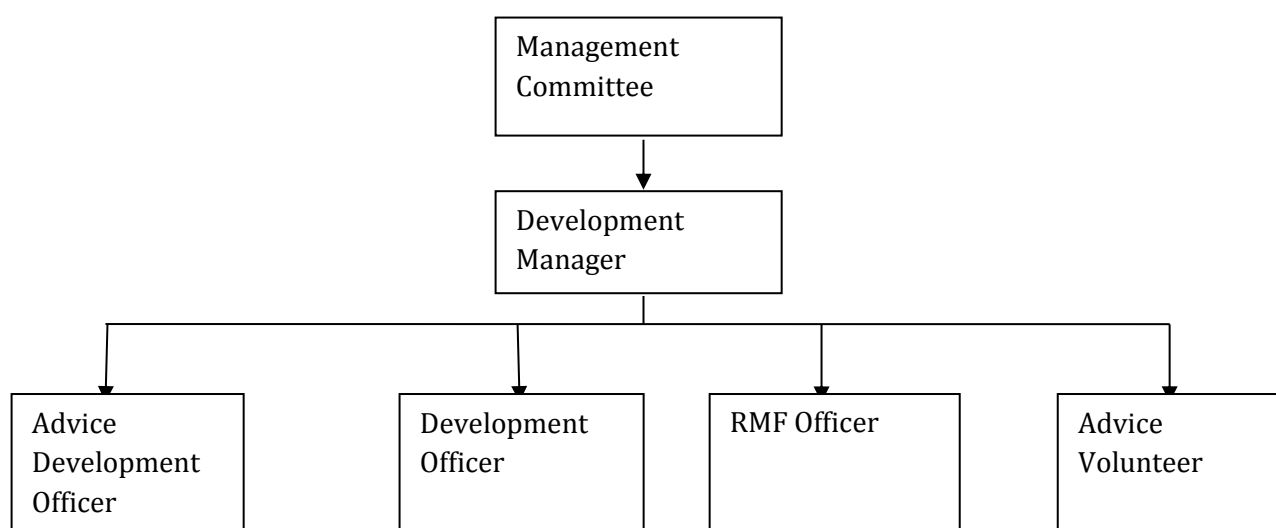
Fig 2 Source: Mellor & Lawrie (2005)

The structure in Figure 2 was proposed with the following key features:

A Development Manager post would have three key roles:

- Leading MRSN RCO development work (approx. 65%)
- Line management of Advice Development, RMF worker and Resources Officer (approx. 20%)
- Strategic management and external representation of MRSN (approx. 15%)

A New post of Resources Officer would work 17.5 hours a week post over three days and the role would be to:

- Manage MRSN's resources, finances and organisation
- Support fund-raising, volunteers and committee
- Office management

Therefore, after the consultancy's recommendations, MRSN embarked on a series of robust fundraising activities. This brought with it enough funding contributions for the manager's post, introduced new projects and expanded some existing ones. The recommendations are shown in Fig 3, which illustrates the structure that continued until the beginning of this study in 2010.

Structure in 2010
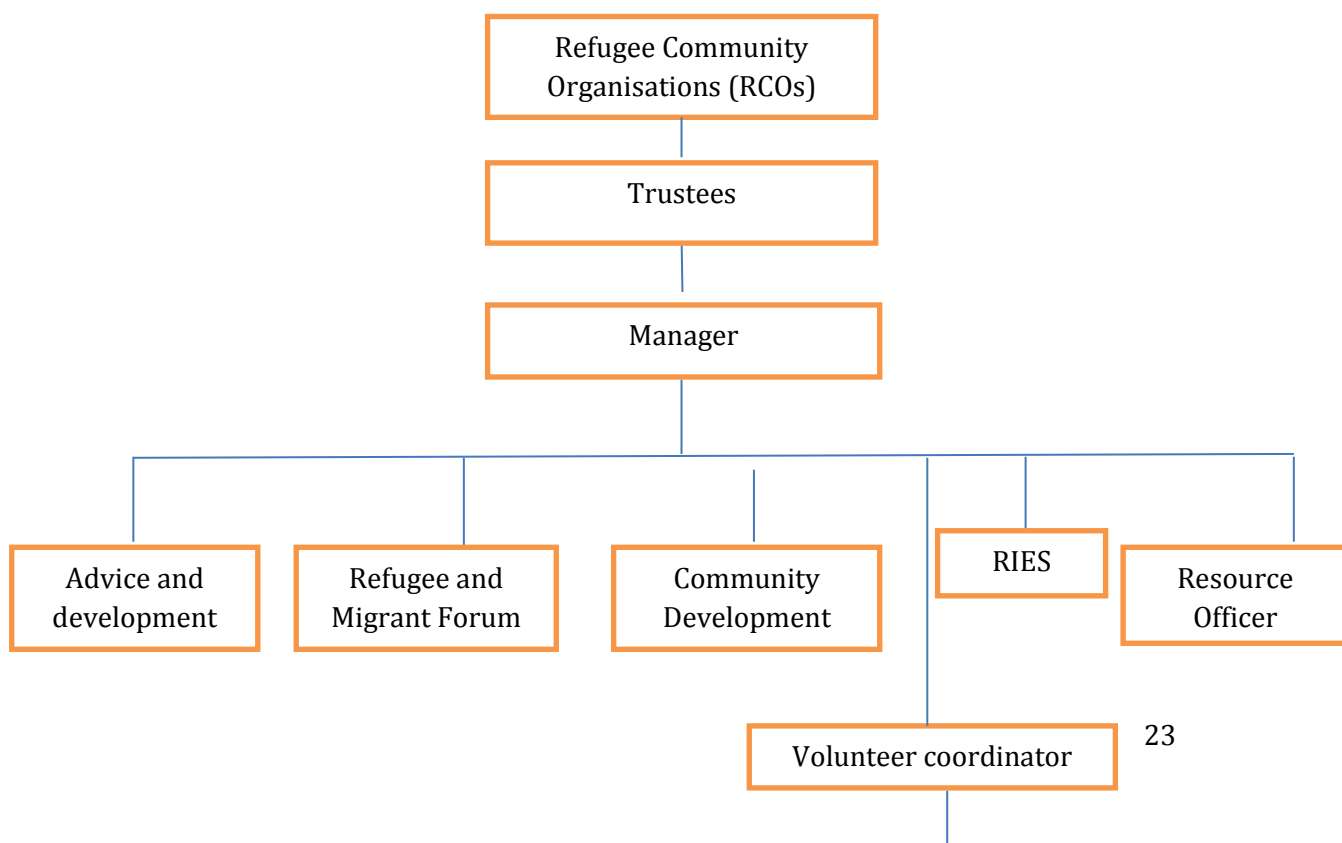
Fig 3: 2010 MRSN Structure

The structure in fig 3 indicates that MRSN moved from its organic state to a more formal and bureaucratic organisation. What is significant is that even where the structure depicts the RCOs as the ultimate responsible body it is the trustees that have legal obligations for the organisation. It became a charity in June 2005 with the rationale that this status would enhance the image of the organisation and make it viable, as it would have a small but effective board of trustees.

The formation of a smaller committee seemed to have been a catalyst in generating interest in people becoming members of the management committee. With this set up the organisation had become more accountable and obliged to produce evidence of its vision for the future. In the process of improving its image, however MRSN lost its original agenda of being a network of refugees and had moved to a service delivery model with diminished involvement of RCOs. As a result of this MRSN lost its connectivity with the refugees and asylum seekers who 'owned it' which made it very difficult for their voices to be heard. MRSN was hindered by the consultancy because instead of reverting to its organic origins it became bureaucratic which contradicted its ethos. However, this did not mean that MRSN lost the important position of empowering refugees and asylum seekers; on the contrary that role was most needed when my study began and progressed. MRSN leadership was aware of the position it was in but did not have a vision as to where it was heading. By engaging with RCOs it showed that they had started to revert to their original organisational structure and hence this study came at the right time.

Although the smaller committee helped in the smooth running of the organisation, however evidence from listening to participants talking and from personal experience revealed that some members (trustees in the charity) found it hard to disengage from their respective communities. They were always looking at what they could get for their own communities at the expense of unrepresented communities. For example, MRSN at a certain point during this study phased out some old computers and replaced them with new ones. The trustees decided to share these among the RCOs on a lottery basis. What actually emerged from all this was that they had manipulated the process and shared the computers among themselves at the expense of unrepresented communities. This resulted in them being asked to return the computers back to MRSN after the intervention of the study's findings and at the time of writing, the computers have since been lying idle. This plus a full range of issues explored in this section led to the questions in the next section that shaped my study.

1.6 The research questions

1. To what extent is the issue faced by immigrants and asylum seekers a form of racism?

2. To what extent can refugees/asylum seekers who have been rendered powerless and who feel dehumanised be empowered to have a voice in the capacity building of MRSN?

3. To what extent can participatory action research and other liberationists' perspectives promote empowerment in the context of the UK laws regarding immigration and asylum?

4. What is involved in promoting active citizenship, community empowerment and voice giving? What does the concept of democracy entail?

5. To what extent can third sector organisations promote equality and justice?

6. What is the impact of an insider researcher in an empowering and voice giving study?

7. What is the impact of the study in the capacity building of Manchester

Refugee Support Network?

1.7 Overview of Chapters

The following section gives a synopsis of the overall argument of the thesis by briefly laying out the arguments explored in each chapter.

Chapter 2 addresses research question 1: the extent to which issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers could be regarded as a form of racism. This chapter shows how voice is suppressed through 'new racism', which hides behind the discourse of nationalism. This new racism is perpetuated by the legislations and policies that demonise and criminalise asylum seekers. This chapter unmasks the dehumanisation of refugees and asylum seekers and considers whether such people can be emancipated from this dehumanisation.

Chapter 3 addresses research question 3. Liberationist perspectives and the dynamics of power are explored as strategies for emancipating dehumanised participants and challenging the embedded hegemony, which is disempowering. This question will be addressed by further exploring what this thesis calls 'critical theory' that is, a combination of some liberationists' theories that are helpful in emancipating the minds of the participants in this study. The uses of a critical theory enables people to develop a critical approach on issues they are exposed to, therefore developing critical consciousness. In this connection, it further explores Freirian principles, which are a combination of the philosophy of hope and pedagogy of liberation. These principles are based on the notion that researchers and participants take an equal position of learning from each other and that people who are oppressed have the ability to define their problems and solutions. This is because what they lack are the resources and insights into forms of organisational management. This chapter further explores organisational theories, which include classical and new organisational theories. During the study this was done as a way of enhancing MRSN and other refugee organisations' understanding of the various theories of managing organisations. The understanding of theories would help develop inclusive cultures in organisations and therefore promote voice. In order to embed inclusiveness and voice in organisational practice the chapter thus

explores the methodologies that are appropriate for the emancipatory perspectives; participatory action research was explored because it is about people defining how they intend to live and work towards achieving what they strive for. Ethnography was also explored because it is a methodology that aims at capturing data in its natural culture, from the perspective of the participants thus valuing their voice and uses participant observation as an insider researcher.

Chapter 4 addresses research question 6 by the exploration of data collection methods, which are participant observation, interviews, focus groups, insider research and comparative studies. Participant observation is about participating covertly/overtly in people's daily lives, by collecting data through engaging in interactions, observing and interviewing participants in their environment over an extended period of time. It involves the collection of data through in-depth understanding of people's personal experiences, behaviours, emotions, feelings and discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organizing these into theoretical explanatory schemes.

The focus group method involves group discussions that focus on distinct phenomena that are aimed at exploring participant opinions, wishes and concerns. The groups are designed for the purposes of discussing set topics. In this method, participants encourage one another and exchange their views. This chapter also includes the criteria of sampling of the participants, the ethical issues, barriers and the limitations of the study. This study encompasses a wide range of participants that includes RCOs, staff, volunteers, trustees, individual refugees, former workers, and participants from other organisations in Greater Manchester as well as other parts of the UK. It further explores the ethical dilemmas in trying to meet standards set by various governing bodies to justify the study as a body of knowledge. This chapter also explores the limitations of the study in its progress from various sources and the barriers that limit the scope of the study. Finally, it analyses the challenges and predicaments faced by the insider researcher in the advancement of voice.

Chapter 5 addresses research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 in order to enhance knowledge transference and sharing. Comparative studies were initially carried out with organisations that provide services to refugees and asylum seekers, in terms of how they are governed, raise funds, work in collaboration, the services they provide and their sustainability. The chapter thus explores the findings from six organisations to get insights that would be formative for the development of MRSN. Three of the organisations were from Greater Manchester while two were from Yorkshire and the last from the North East.

The chapter also explores the extent to which participatory action research and liberationists' perspectives promote empowerment. It also explores promoting active citizenship, community empowerment and voice giving and the understanding of the concept of democracy. Furthermore it explores the importance of third sector organisations in promoting equality and justice. The chapter argues that people who have been dehumanised can be empowered to have a voice. It explores the organisations to compare and contrast what was useful to MRSN in terms of governance, representation, partnership and collaboration, the voice of the voiceless, active citizenship, networking and youth policy.

It further explores the principles of collaboration and participation to bring together refugee organisations in their particular towns. Furthermore it looks at the networks and their usefulness in helping its members share expertise and resources and therefore provide better services.

Chapter 6 addresses all the research questions. Principally, it explores how empowerment can be used, as a tool in giving a voice - a theme that is implicit or explicit in all the research questions. This is done through how MRSN a third sector organisation, can promote equality and justice for the dehumanised, by empowering them to gain a voice. It also demonstrates the impact of my study on the Manchester Refugee Support Network. The chapter starts with the formative study that was undertaken at MRSN from its inception to the time of writing the thesis. It also looks into the causes of barriers to active citizenship

and identifies from the participants' point of view that destitution is one of the major barriers. It goes further to explore the ways of improving participation through campaigns. Furthermore it explores the leadership training as a tool of empowering MRSN and refugee organisations for their sustainability.

Chapter 7 summarises the argument of this thesis, which shows how MRSN has moved from being a bureaucratic organisation to one influenced by the principles of radical democracy. It brings in the immediate and wider implications of the social dilemmas on the refugees and asylum seekers. Furthermore, it brings suggestions to improve the treatment of this group and further studies, which could help, enhance their voice.

CHAPTER 2 IMPACT OF POLICY AND LEGISLATION ON EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS: A CRITICAL REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will look at how immigration policies and legislations have been used as tools in hindering social justice and curtailing freedom of speech, therefore thwarting the voices of refugees and asylum seekers. I would argue that it is justifiable that a study of this nature, which aims to emancipate and give voice to the refugees and asylum seekers, should endeavour to explore the damage perpetrated against them. The chapter starts by exploring the discourses of immigration legislations, policies and their role in causing a massive damage to this group, which has left MRSN with a difficult task of undoing the damage. These immigration laws guide the processes that are used to determine whether asylum seekers become refugees or are condemned to destitution or deportation. It also explores the anomalies in the process, considers unaccompanied asylum seeking children and the discrepancies and gaps that need attention from MRSN for this vulnerable group of young people. It further highlights the refugee and asylum statistics and the laws and social policies that govern their treatment. The chapter also explores the immigration laws of Sweden in comparison with UK's laws. Consequently, the chapter reflects on the need for MRSN to deal with the effects and consequences of the policies and legislations that suppress the voice, hence curtailing the engagement of the participants in active citizenship in order to develop the capacity of MRSN.

I will, in particular, argue that immigration legislations are a form of new racism (Balibar, 1991), used as a powerful tool in controlling and suppressing the voice of migrants, especially asylum seekers, as it overrides human rights (Vickers, 2012). This therefore, I would argue, depicts asylum seekers as a threat to the existence and survival of 'Britishness'. This threat is depicted by the criminalisation of this group through various institutions, which include the state, media and politics, therefore filtering to the population and raising tensions within communities.

Even if asylum seekers arrive with skills that are in demand and could be used

constructively (Bloch, 2007), because of their status, those skills have been deemed invalid. This, I would argue, is to demean and degrade this group so as to 'deter' others. The legislations are put into place, I argue, so that Britain is not viewed as 'soft on immigration'. It could be argued, that by these actions, the UK government is neglecting its duty of caring for the displaced as enshrined in the United Nations Charter (1951) of which it is a signatory. In the last section I will compare and contrast the UK with Sweden where in Sweden immigration/asylum is less criminalised than it is in the UK.

Asylum seekers migrate with the purpose of seeking a safe sanctuary, rehabilitation, and therefore an accepting system. They are driven by factors, which include exploitation through lack of social justice and democratic practices, poverty, war, persecution and environmental destruction. Evidence suggests that the countries from which they flee predominantly are generally oppressive. From an outsider's perspective, the UK is a safe and accommodative place. This is reflected by the sacrifices and distances asylum seekers travel in search of safety in UK. The British economic, political and social system has achieved a degree of stability and 'social peace' within its borders, on the basis of the exploitation of 'oppressed countries' (Vickers, 2012). An argument could be put across that the UK, because of its position on the world stage, i.e. as one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and a member of G8, is therefore one of the major contributors of aid to poor and conflict zones. The history of these powerful countries was in the past linked to slavery, colonisation and racism and that this legacy too often is revealed as contemporary forms of discrimination and has evolved into the 'new racism' based on immigration (Balibar, 1991). The next section therefore explores policy and legislations that hinder radical democratic practices to refugees and asylum seekers.

2.2 Policy and legislations

Refugees and asylum seekers in the UK have been viewed with suspicion, and they have become a focal point for political parties in their quest to gain votes from the host community. UK political parties create an atmosphere of

toughness on this group of people in collaboration with the media, which perpetuates this agenda of demonizing them as 'the other' (Burchett & Matheson, 2011). Therefore, the welfare support provided to asylum seekers has been dogged with controversies in that it has always been at variance with that provided for British citizens.

Asylum Seekers have been treated as 'the other', from the mainstream society, and this is evident in the legislations that govern their support, which limits choices of residence and curtails their integration. One such legislation is the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) which introduced the dispersal of asylum seekers to all local authorities and the formation of the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) that took over the provision of services from the local authority. Dispersal is the distribution of asylum claimants to all the UK cities as a way of sharing the burden of their service provision, especially accommodation, because financially they are supported by NASS, including payment for accommodation (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999).

Figures for the numbers of claimants are not easy to obtain, however it is estimated that in 2010 about 22,640 and in 2011 about 25,420 people claimed asylum in the UK (The Guardian, 2012). Out of this number, Manchester, like other cities received its fair share although it is not clear how many. By 2005 Manchester was hosting a population of 2000 refugees and 6000 asylum seekers (Refugee Action, 2005).

The above figures indicate that there were more asylum seekers than refugees, which could be attributed to two factors. Firstly, of the claimants only 33% obtain refugee status and the rest are refused. Secondly, some asylum seekers wait for long periods before their cases are determined as deserving for them to settle in the UK. In addition, when decisions are made, only a third is successful and the rest have to go through an appeals procedure, which takes a long time to process (Refugee Action, 2005).

Vickers (2012) argues that in the first quarter of 2010, as many as 76% asylum seekers were refused at the first hearing and after appeals 68% were further refused. This is in contrast with 93% of other forms of settlement; an example is employment related applicants who were granted leave to remain in the

same period (Home Office, 2010).

The long delays and appeals process creates problems for those involved (Amnesty International, 2006; Brown, 2008 and Smart, 2009); because when they are eventually granted leave to remain they may have developed multiple needs. These needs could include being unemployable; because the skilled would have been deskilled because of the length of time they would have spent out of employment. Some would lack basic communication skills because of minimal integration. There is also the majority (Vickers, 2012), who are rejected and immediately become destitute, because all the support would be taken away. In 2005, there were 283,500 refused asylum seekers and most of them were living in destitution (Crawley *et al*, 2011).

The financial support policies for asylum seekers have always been controversial, complex and depressing, because they are often treated with suspicion. Some of the policies are derived from the Asylum and Immigration Act (1999) that came from the White Paper, Fairer, Faster and Firmer (1998). This piece of legislation took away cash benefits from asylum seekers and introduced vouchers that were valued at 70% of Income Support. The voucher system reinforced the stigma attached to asylum seekers in that not only could they buy shop in certain shops but also they would not be given any change if they bought items at a lesser value than the vouchers. David Blunkett however abolished this when he became Home Secretary in 2001 as he argued that it was both inhumane and stigmatising. Only 5 years later in 2006 it was re-introduced for failed asylum seekers (Travis, 2006).

Further stigma introduced by the dispersal scheme meant that asylum seekers would be accommodated in the private housing sector of which some of the properties were in inhabitable conditions. To exacerbate the situation, the provision of accommodation does not give this group any choices. The whole exercise follows the connotations of the 1834 Poor Law Act (Cohen, 2002), which was structured in a manner that degraded the affected sections of society to second, if not third class citizens. In this scheme asylum seekers

have to be dispersed before being afforded accommodation; otherwise they have no accommodation at all. It is a scheme that is based on coercion and lack of protection from landlords who have the liberty to evict and humiliate asylum seekers without seeking a court order. The scheme is also akin to the Orwellian concept of 'Big Brother' in that Regulation 20 of the Asylum Support Regulations (2000), which is an extract from Immigration and Asylum Act (1999), compels asylum seekers and their dependents not to be away from their accommodation:

> For more than seven consecutive days and nights, or no more than a total of 14 days and nights in any six-month period without Home Office (i.e. NASS) permission. Breach of this condition can lead to summary eviction by a local authority or other housing provider (Cohen, 2002:534).

Furthermore, the Home Office provides weekly reports to the police of the details of asylum seekers dispersed, including date of birth, nationality, gender and dependants if there are any.

The chances of having a positive decision on asylum applications are very minimal:

> Each year around two-thirds of asylum applications made to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) at the Home Office are ultimately refused (including any appeal to the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal) (Amnesty, 2006: 5).

The moment their claims have failed through all appeals, the NASS support is stopped and there is no provision to seek employment with the only option provided by the government being deportation for those involved. Most of the time people would be unwilling to leave for a variety of reasons which has often

led to forced deportation or people living in destitution (Crawley *et al*, 2011). I would argue that the policies that exist contribute to destitution, which has a devastating effect on the lives of this group (this is discussed in detail in section 2.8). Destitution is one product of the asylum process that is an agent of the new racism because it is fraught with controversies and contradictions. The next section therefore explores the asylum process in detail.

2.3 The asylum process

As mentioned in chapter one, for one to qualify as a refugee, that person must have, "a well-founded fear" of persecution and the most common forms are because of religious or political beliefs or affiliation. However, this threshold of "well-founded fear" is the most contested, because it is not universal. Each country sets its own standards and in the UK, it has always depended on the ruling political party's policies, because the secretary of state provides guidance to immigration officers regarding who is to be considered as a refugee (Home Office, 2013). This is done in the name of sovereignty, and human rights are ignored as Jacobson (1996) argues that:

> The principle of national popular sovereignty in a state is to maintain a coherent sense of belonging, including its ability to control the composition of its population. From this perspective, a loss of control over immigration would threaten the basis of its legitimacy (1996: 4).

Therefore frontiers are created in the name of nationalism hence promoting divisions. Nationalism does not mean racism and racism has nothing to do with nationalism, they only relate when nationalistic discourses are formulated to discriminate those who do not belong to a particular grouping (Balibar, 1991). Under the banner of national sovereignty, frontiers are created and protected. This in turn makes a distinction between nationals and immigrants. Immigrants become a threat to national sovereignty by introducing cultural differences that undermine the supposed essential characteristics of the identity (e.g. Britishness) of the people. In particular, when immigrants compete for jobs and

claim welfare benefits, the indigenous population depicts this as 'unfair' and so it is argued that it is legitimate and not 'racist' to differentiate between 'nationals' and 'immigrants' legally in terms of jobs and benefits. This differential treatment Balibar (1991) refers to as 'differentialist racism':

> It is not by chance that the theories of differentialist racism (which from now on will tend to present itself as the true anti-racism and therefore the true humanism) here connect easily with 'crowd psychology', which is enjoying something of a revival, as a general explanation of irrational movements, aggression and collective violence, and, particularly, of xenophobia (Balibar 1991:21).

Therefore, because of these contradictions and contestations, the process of becoming legitimised as a 'refugee' in the UK follows a very painful experience. It is a process, which could take up to ten years while in some cases it could be just three months or less (Crawley *et al*, 2011). The cause of the long delays in granting refugee status has been the issue of 'well-founded fear', which has always been questioned by suspicious immigration officers, and judges who preside during the appeals. This trend has been seen to cause irreparable damage to some applicants who have been condemned to destitution (Crawley *et al*, 2011).

Some have gone to the extent of committing suicide, because of the feeling of unworthiness, rejection, powerlessness, humiliation and shame (Heilig et al, 1968). Others have developed illnesses that have been difficult to treat, like mental health issues (Kelly and Stevenson, 2006 and Taylor, 2009). One case of significance was the Iranian man who set himself on fire at the Refugee Action Offices in Manchester in 2003. The 29-year-old Iranian suffered between 60 to 70 per cent burns after dousing himself in petrol and setting himself alight (Ramsey, 2003:1). His friend, giving evidence before the coroner attributed his suicide to his destitution:

… the eviction of Israfil Shiri from their New Prospect Housing address in Salford. The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) ordered this eviction following the Home Office's rejection of Israfil's appeal. He was denied a home, benefits and the right to work. Israfil became destitute. Even access to his prescribed medication was blocked. Unable to eat, bleeding and vomiting, Israfil was a sick man (Pounder, 2004:1).

This process of becoming a legitimised refugee does not spare the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), because they follow the same process and timeframe and the process could be worse for them if there is an age dispute. In case of age disputes, UASC would be treated as adults and they would be supported by NASS until their age status has been determined, (Nandy, 2005), whilst others end up in detention. The detention centres have been described by inspection reports as damaging to children's development as they put children's welfare and safety at risk, (HMIP, 2005). Normally in the UK, children who are deprived of their liberty are those that are convicted, subject to a secure order made by a family court or detained under Mental Health Act (1983). Briskman and Cemlyn (2003) criticize the criminalization detention practice as administrative power with no legal basis and without time limits. Nick Clegg the Liberal Democratic leader (who later became deputy Prime Minister in 2010), at the time, concurred by arguing that:

There is now concrete evidence that the very young children who find themselves locked up even though they've done nothing wrong are suffering weight loss, post-traumatic stress disorders and long lasting mental stress (bbcnews, 2009).

This could be construed as a breach of Article 5 of the ECHR (Right to liberty and security), and Article 3 and 37. The discrimination of UASC is further evident in that Immigration Services, NASS and detention centre workers who work with UASC are excluded from the statutory provisions of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) that were introduced by The Children Act (2004). Therefore this subjects these vulnerable children to agencies that

are not obliged to promote their welfare, a reflection of the discriminatory tendencies (Nandy, 2005 and Refugee Council, 2006).

Asylum seeking children were discriminated against because the UK government had until November 2008 been in a general reservation of article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), with regard to children who were subject to immigration. With the withdrawal of the reservation of article 22, the government is obliged to treat asylum-seeking children like citizens of UK (Kelly and Bokhari, 2012). This discrimination is not new, because there is a history of laws that reinforce discriminatory tendencies by restricting welfare for those who are deemed alien in the UK; the next section therefore explores such discriminatory laws.

2.4 Access to welfare versus discriminatory laws

Asylum seekers' eligibility to exclusive access to welfare based on immigration and nationality dates as far back as the 1905 *Alien Act* (Cohen, 2002 and Dummett and Nicol, 1990). Children of 'aliens' were denied access to scholarships if they could not prove they were born in Britain and their parents had not been naturalized for at least ten years. This is still the prevailing situation because children of asylum seekers cannot be funded to access higher education. They can only access higher education if they can pay international fees, which is impossible because their parents or guardians are not allowed to work (Stevenson and Willot, 2007).

The *Alien Act* was passed because of the degenerating health and housing conditions, which was blamed on the Russian and Polish Jews who had fled from the Tsarist Russians (Cohen, 2002). The act also enabled the expulsion of 'undesirable immigrants'. It was these poor Jewish people who were deemed undesirable elements and the Act made it easy to deport them. This Act was followed by the 1916 and 1919 *Aliens Restriction Acts*, which were the products of controlling the 'enemy' during the first world war, and compelled foreigners to register with police and facilitated deportation. The 1919 Act

reinforced the emergency powers of 1914 at the same time introducing more stringent restrictions like employment of alien seamen on British merchant ships (Cohen, 2002).

More discriminatory laws were to follow in the years to come, for example, The National Health Service's Amendment Act (1949), which imposed charges for non-UK residents and thus restricted access to health care. The Commonwealth Immigration Act (1962) was another example of racially controlling legislation aimed at limiting the movement of non-white immigrants into the UK. Before the Act was passed, citizens of all Commonwealth Countries had every right to settle in the UK without any impediment. However when it was perceived that there was an influx of immigrants, the Conservative government of that time tightened the regulations by only permitting those with government-issued employment vouchers to settle (Cohen, 2002). The law was amended through The Commonwealth Immigration Act (1968), which was rushed through parliament to curb Asian immigrants from East Africa who were fleeing from laws, which prevented them from making a living in Kenya. After passing of this law, only those who could demonstrate a close connection with the UK were allowed to settle.

This was followed by successive legislation that was directly or indirectly racist (Cohen, 2002). The Asylum and Immigration Act (1996) was passed in order to make it easy to remove people from accessing the welfare system. And this has created a perception among the host community of viewing asylum seekers as a homogeneous group. The Labour government of 1997 to 2010 has been accused of being politically motivated in creating cultural diversity by allowing great numbers of immigrants into the UK:

> The huge increases in migrants over the last decade were partly due to a politically motivated attempt by ministers to radically change the country and "rub the Right's nose in diversity" (Whitehead, 2009:1).

It is further argued that:

The relaxation of controls by the Labour government was a methodical strategy towards "open up the UK to mass migration", but that ministers were nervous and reluctant to discuss such a move publicly for fear it would alienate its "core working class vote" (Whitehead, 2009:1).

On the contrary, it produced some of the most punitive pieces of legislations against asylum seekers this country has ever witnessed. The major aim of these laws, it would seem, was to minimise asylum claimants, deal with cases hastily and increase the numbers of deportations of failed applicants without delays. The other major component was the discourse of excluding those who were deemed undeserving (Zetter and Pearl, 2000). An example of this is *The Asylum and Immigration Act* (1999), which created NASS, which is a structure for supporting asylum seekers awaiting refugee application outcomes. This structure dictates that financial and housing support for asylum seekers is provided by NASS instead of local authorities like other members of the community.

Furthermore, the Labour Government reduced the weekly allowance for asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their application for asylum from £42 to £35 per week, a cut of nearly 20 per cent. Asylum-seeking families with children are only entitled to limited additional payments and not the full range of benefits paid to other families, such as Child Benefit, Educational Maintenance Allowance or the Family Premium (Reacroft, 2008). In 2002, the Government withdrew the entitlement to apply for permission to work, which had applied to asylum seekers who had been waiting for more than six months for an initial decision on their asylum application. Therefore, most of the asylum seekers in the UK have no form of employment (Crawley, 2011 and Doyle, 2009).

Asylum seekers are supported through NASS until their applications are processed with the only 2 outcomes being either a decision to give or refuse refugee status. In the former they join mainstream society and are supported through the mainstream welfare state. However, if they are refused and have

exhausted all the appeal processes support is withdrawn. The only exempted applicants are families with young children (Section 95 of The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999), although Section 9, of The Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act (2004) gives the Government the power to stop all support and accommodation. To further their cause, in December of 2004 the Government piloted a scheme to stop providing for families who resisted deportation (The Children's Society, 2008).

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002) is well known for the provocative Section 55, which restricts NASS support for in-country applicants, as it only provides for those who can prove that they applied 'as soon as reasonably practicable' after arriving in the UK. This led to over 9000 people reverting to charities for help for their livelihood (Refugee Council, 2004; Stewart, 2005). The then Government's policies in relation to the withdrawal of support for refused asylum seekers were strongly criticised. There was widespread belief that the Government deliberately used destitution or the threat of destitution as a policy tool in an attempt to drive refused asylum seekers out of the country (Chakrabati, 2005 and Amnesty International, 2006) and thus deter people from coming to the UK. The impact of the above measures is further enhanced by the demonization of refugees and asylum seekers; hence the next section explores the discourse of demonization and its impact.

2.5 The discourse of demonization

The persistent reference and comments directed towards refugees and asylum seekers, as the main causes of social problems, by right wing newspapers, has led to their demonization. The Sun newspaper, quoted in The Guardian, (Monday, 7 June 2010) refers to asylum-seekers "as no more than dole-scroungers." The Guardian further quoted The Daily Mail commenting that: "Nearly 2,000 patients will have to find a new GP because their local clinic is being turned over to asylum seekers."

Roy Greenslade (2005) in his book: Seeking Scapegoats The Coverage of

Asylum in the UK Press, argues that after a scrutiny of UK newspapers, The Sun, The Daily Mail and The Daily Express appeared to be in competition in spreading false and negative myths about asylum seekers. Greenslade gives the following examples:

> SURRENDER TO ASYLUM: outrage as Blair gives our veto to Brussels bureaucrats; ASYLUM FIDDLE EXPOSED: Refugee claims fall as work permits soar; ASYLUM WAR CRIMINALS ON OUR STREETS: Tidal wave of crime soars; perhaps the most venal of all was "PLOT TO KILL BLAIR: Asylum seekers with hi-tech equipment and maps caught half a mile from PM's home (2005: 21).

The demonization of asylum seekers and refugees has led some members of the British public to perceive the refugee community as a homogeneous group (Greenslade, 2005) whose motive is to choke social services, obtain jobs, and get free money. It is not surprising that The Mail Online in its article; Refugees a drain on UK, found that:

> Most young people believe asylum seekers are bogus and a drain on the country, according to a new report (Daily Mail, 2012).

The British public, fail to perceive refugees and asylum seekers as people who have escaped persecution and officers at the Home Office use little knowledge about their countries to reject their asylum claims (Nyoni, 2010). Sometimes universities have no systems in place to take them on courses that have to deal with the public (e.g. social work), because they ask for Criminal Records from their countries of origin, fully aware that these people have escaped persecution. It is hard to believe that persecutors could or would provide such documents for their victims.

Politicians use them as scapegoats for the shortage of resources; they argue that this group swamps schools and hospitals. Some right wing newspapers publish negative articles about immigrants and stereotype them as a threat or labelled lazy as they come just to obtain social benefits (Greenslade, 2005). Statements from politicians like William Hague and media, like the five listed

below create uncertainties among the asylum seekers and refugees:

> Britain must always be a safe haven for genuine refugees. But people are appalled that the system is now so overloaded it's preventing genuine cases being dealt with quickly and that, for bogus asylum seekers, this government has turned Britain into the biggest soft touch in the world (the guardian, 2000).

> "Up to 80,000 bogus asylum seekers granted 'amnesty'' (Slack, 2006)

> Labour has made this country a soft touch for the organised asylum racketeers who are flooding the country with bogus asylum seekers (Conservative Manifesto, 2001).

> "British workers for British jobs", by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, (*Jones et al, 2007*).

> "It is unfair that foreigners come to this country illegitimately and steal our benefits, steal our services like the NHS … Year on year, we are going to make it even more difficult for them to do that. We are now throwing out more asylum seekers failed asylum seekers than ever before." John Reid former Home Office Secretary (bbcnews, 2007).

Such statements do not help the situation; instead, they cause panic and anxiety, which could lead to depression to some refugees and asylum seekers.

An infamous example of demonising immigrants by the present government is depicted in the 'go home' billboards as follows:

Fig 4 'Shocking': one of the "go home or face arrest" billboards on vans touring London boroughs: Source: *The Guardian* **25 July 2013.**

Below are extracts from different political parties taken from The Guardian and The London Standard and surprisingly critics also include the coalition partners including the Liberal Democrats, Conservative MPs and right wing party United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP):

"What the billboards should say is please don't vote UKIP, we're doing something," Mr Farage said. "That's what it's all about, of course it is. I think the actual tone of the billboards is nasty, unpleasant, Big Brother. I don't think using messages like this will make any difference. What will make a difference is enforcing our borders properly." (Simons, 2013).

However, immigration Minister Mark Harper denied Mr Farage's claims arguing that:

The pilot is about targeting those who have no right to be in the country. We are giving them the opportunity and assistance to leave the country voluntarily (Murphy, 2013:1).

Conversely, Labour's Jon Trickett argued that the Billboards' campaign was a product of Tory strategist Lynton Crosby who was hired by David Cameron to run the Conservative Party 2015 election campaign (Sparrow, 2012). Crosby is credited with helping John Howard win four elections in Australia between 1996 and 2004 through the use of highly controversial tactics. He used fictitious stories that asylum seekers blackmailed their way into Australia by throwing children overboard. The slogan: 'We decide who comes into the country' was born. In autumn 2004, following his success in Australia, Crosby came to the UK to work for the Conservative Party under the leadership of Michael Howard.

During the 2005 election campaign Crosby was credited with transforming "a rusty party machine into the Rolls Royce it was in Margaret Thatcher's heyday'. Even though Michael Howard was not successful in winning he introduced two distinct issues; limits of immigrants and caps in asylum seekers and the two election slogans were: 'It's not racist to put limits on immigration'. 'Are you thinking what we're thinking?' His other notorious slogan was: 'how would you feel if a bloke on early release attacked your daughter' (Harkins, 2012)? During the 2005 election period Crosby influenced 'pro-Conservative papers to intensify their coverage of asylum seekers'. Crosby also successfully helped Boris Johnson in the 2008 and 2012 win London Mayoral elections and it is argued Johnson discarded his 'very liberal' stance on immigration. While campaigning for Boris John, Crosby complained about what he termed 'f****** Muslims', and his view was that it was a waste of time to seek Muslim and other ethnic groups' votes (Harkins, 2012 & Sparrow, 2012).

Some Conservative MPs also joined in the criticism of the billboards with Douglas Carswell saying:

> The breath-taking stupidity of the people in charge of our immigration system knows no bounds. If they still made Monty Python, then the minister for silly walks would be proposing this. It actually is an

indication of a weakness that we're having to implore people to leave the country (Syal, 2013:1).

The Lib Dem Party President, Tim Farron, said the campaign represented "the politics of division" and called for the billboards to be "shredded". Sarah Teather, the former Lib Dem Minister and MP for Brent Central, said constituents told her the billboards were reminiscent of some of the most offensive graffiti and signs seen at the height of anti-immigrant racism in the 70s.

> It reminds them of the things they used to see on walls in the 70s such as 'Paki go home'. The tone of the words on this van is similar to those signs in guesthouses that once told potential tenants: 'no Irish, no blacks, no dogs' Syal, 2013:1).

Teather said one of the vans drove past her office and had caused offence to those who saw it:

> It is very difficult to tell whether this is deliberately insensitive or incompetently insensitive. I don't see anyone other than the home secretary and the immigration minister who wish to be associated with it (Syal, 2013:1).

The debate has moved from that of being about the humanitarian crisis of asylum seekers from war torn Syria and Iraqi to a discourse that rebranded them as economic migrants who are like locusts invading crop fields. David Cameron the British Prime Minister dehumanised them as insects that 'swarm across the Mediterranean seeking a 'better life'. To UKIP MEP Gerard Batten, they are 'flooding into the country unimpeded' (Dawar, 2015). To Philip Hammonds the foreign secretary the asylum seekers are outlaws intent on destruction while seeking high standards of life in Europe. He argues that these

are dangerous individuals who will create chaos when they get into Europe. (Perraudin, 2015). James Brokenshire the migration minister argues that:

> The majority of people trying to cross the Mediterranean are economic migrants seeking out a better life and are not fleeing persecution in their own countries (Dawar, 2015).

Katie Hopkins' valuation, writing in The Sun, is that:

> '… these migrants are like cockroaches'. The drowning of Syrian asylum seekers in the Mediterranean Sea does not affect her conscience; **'**No, I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water play violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care' (Hopkins, 2015).

She further states that:

> … the next minute you'll show me pictures of aggressive young men at Calais, spreading like norovirus on a cruise ship. Watching them try to clamber on to British lorries and steal their way into the UK, do I feel pity? Only for the British drivers, who get hit with a fine every time one of this plague of feral humans ends up in their truck (Hopkins, 2015).

She suggests that the only way of stopping these asylum seekers is the use of gunships like the Australians who: 'threaten them with violence until they bugger off, throwing cans of Castlemaine in an Aussie version of sharia stoning' (Hopkins, 2015).

The impact of such extreme views can be seen in the extent to which UK

legislation resembles the policy of the far right British National Party (BNP's) attitude towards this group of people;

- BNP manifesto is to: Deport all the two million plus who are here illegally; Under Section 3 of The Immigration Act (1971), 'a person who is not a British citizen' may be deported.

- BNP manifesto: Deport all those who commit crimes and whose original nationality was not British; UK Borders Act (2007) argues for the automatic deportation of foreign criminals. The Rules also do not take into account the citizenship of the child of a potential deportee, and the rights that UK citizenship confers.

- BNP manifesto: Review all recent grants of residence or citizenship to ensure they are still appropriate; Home Office UK Border Agency (2008) Version 3.0 Operational Policy and Process Policy; Section 2.2 Refugee status can be cancelled if a situation arises where circumstances come to light that indicate a person should never have been recognized as a refugee in the first place. Refugee status can cease because of changes in the individual's situation brought about by themselves, and/or due to changes in the country where persecution is feared; the individual ceases to be a refugee. Refugee status can be revoked if an individual's conduct is deemed so serious that it warrants the revocation of their status.

- BNP manifesto: Offer generous grants to those of foreign descent resident here who wish to leave permanently; The Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP) is the UK's generic voluntary return programme for those in the asylum system and those with temporary status in the UK who wish to return voluntarily and permanently to their country of origin or to a third country to which they are admissible. Such individuals get assistance to settle in the countries of return in the form of; assistance with starting a business, education, a job placement or vocational training, childcare and short-term accommodation.

- BNP manifesto: Stop all new immigration except for exceptional cases; The Legislation Immigration and Asylum Act (1999) Schedule 3. This schedule concerns not accepting asylum seekers from or who have passed through countries known to respect human rights and protect refugees.

- BNP manifesto: Reject all asylum seekers who passed safe countries on their way to Britain; The Legislation Asylum and Immigration Act (2004), Section 33 Schedule 3 is concerned with the removal of people claiming asylum having passed through countries known to protect refugees and to respect human rights.

(BNP Manifesto, 2010:5; Home Office, 2010; Home Office, 2000 and Home Office UK Border Agency, 2008).

The above BNP manifesto and immigration legislations and policies make a case for an argument that UK immigration policies reflect the BNP approach of treating immigrants with suspicion, and are implemented clandestinely to fend off the far right's popularity through marginalizing immigrants. Thompson (2003) argues that this kind of notion causes some members of society to be excluded from the mainstream and banished to the periphery. This presents the notion of the 'other' who is an alien and undesirable in the community; and these predominantly affect women and children especially Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). The next section explores challenges to women and children.

2.6 Challenges to asylum seeking women and children

Women, it has been suggested, are faced with patriarchal views of the world, which defines everything by men and men as the representative of the human race. This line of thinking has moved from personal to cultural and even to structural levels because institutions have been seen to be promoting this

perception (Merchant, 1980). This has historically led to the naturalisation of the social subordination of women. Fraser (2007) states that most societies the world over have traditional hierarchies where women are withheld from full participation. As a result asylum seeking for women is more challenging than for men in their developmental quest to active citizenship (Goodkind and Deacon, 2004) particularly as most arrive as dependents of their spouses. Therefore they are confined indoors often weighed down by childcare issues and cultural dogmas, which require women to be the main child care providers and compels them to maintain their cultural identities. Most of all there is the fear of attack. Professor Kelly and Sen (2007) in their research *Violence against Women in the UK,* found that:

> Physical attacks on asylum seekers occur in the UK, contributing to a prohibitive climate of fear. Amongst refugee women, 83% reported living under a self-imposed curfew, locking themselves indoors by 7pm. One in three reports having been verbally or physically abused and half having experienced neglect, disrespect and racism from the maternity services (2007: 23).

Women who arrive on their own seeking asylum in the UK find it difficult to settle and integrate, as they have to fend for themselves in an environment that is typically defined by men. Some get detained while they wait for determination of their claims, including the pregnant and those who would have suffered violence and rape in their countries of origin. This detention is against the law in UK (Morrison, 2014).

Research carried out by Women for Refugee Women (WRW) found that almost 2000 women who sought asylum were detained in 2012. The research focused on 46 women, who were either in detention or had recently been detained. It found that 85 per cent of them had been raped or tortured before reaching Britain, but were guarded by male staff. This is contrary to government policy, which is against victims of torture detention except in 'exceptional' circumstances.

More than 90 per cent of women said they felt depression. One in five had tried to kill themselves in detention, while a third had been placed on suicide watch. Even at 3 months pregnant one woman was still placed in the detention facility. Seven in ten complained that men watched them in the shower, in the toilet and came into their rooms without knocking. One in two women had been verbally abused, while three women said they were physically assaulted. One woman in Yarl's Wood complained that guards sexually assaulted her. Baroness Helena Kennedy QC stated that the findings should be a "source of profound shame" to Britain and women faced a "culture of disbelief" when they shared tales of sexual abuse:

> This is part and parcel of a much wider form of misogyny - where we think women make up accounts of being raped … On top of experiences of persecution, they experience being disbelieved and marginalised in the very place they seek help and assistance (Morrison, 2014).

Their (female) chances of asylum applications being denied are twice as high as for their male counterparts (Gering, 2012). They struggle to explain their situations because they:

> … may feel too ashamed and traumatized to speak about what has happened to them since their experiences include details of sexual violence. And when they do discuss the details, some authorities may not find their stories credible (Gering, 2012: 2).

Kelly and Sen (2007) argue that:

> In 2006, 7105 women applied for asylum as principal applicants (30% of the total) and 2550 applied as dependents, a drop of almost 6,000 from 2001. The great majority of asylum seekers, including women, are not recognised as Convention refugees in the UK; indeed, the proportion of women granted asylum has fallen in this period – from 13% in 2001 to 10% in 2005 (2007: 23).

The lack of favorable asylum decisions creates big gaps in women's empowerment endeavors, compared to men, and therefore my study aimed to help address these issues. The women are trapped in their household and within their childcare roles in the confines of their homes with little information sharing. Their partners, I would suggest, are ashamed, scared, and paralyzed by the prevailing system, which is suspicious, and perpetually threatening to deport them and their families. As the men try to protect their images (United Nation High Commission for Refugees (2013), which have been destroyed by the system, they are only left to protect their status and in the process they are more defensive and oppressive, therefore becoming more autocratic and abusive.

The women find it difficult to report the abuse or separate with their spouses because their asylum applications are dependent on the abusive spouses. The immigration issues alongside the violence women experienced in their home countries and the one they experience in their households has led to some women developing depression (Burnet and Peel, 2001). Inquisitive children who after mixing with their peers in schools and colleges, question their parents on completing further education further exacerbate this and face denial to access higher institutes of learning as mentioned previously. These children do not understand that discriminatory policies do not allow them because of their refugee status.

The immigration laws do not spare unaccompanied asylum seeking children because they go through a similar process as the adult asylum seekers in the quest to be refugees. If ever, their experience is even more complicated, because they have no parental guidance, which means they have to work on fitting into the everyday life of the hostile environment. Even the children's services that are supposed to be protective treat them with suspicion because the professionals have to provide services within the parameters dictated by the immigration laws. Therefore these children leave care homes into destitution or deportation and those given refugee status leave without life skills (Wade *et al*, 2005; Free, 2005; Stein and Wade and Dixon, 2006).

I would argue that because of the hostile environment created by Theresa May the Home Secretary (Kirkup and Winnett 2012), the immigration discourses, legislations and policies discussed above could be labelled as the new racism. The next section therefore explores the concept of immigration as the new racism.

2.7 The new racism

Balibar (1991) argues that the 'new racism' hegemony that has developed is very deceitful in that it denies racism yet it has introduced it discretely through immigration regulations. The new racism has taken the place of the biological one as the representative of detestation and apprehension. The hatred and fear is derived from the free movement of the former colonies' inhabitants to their former masters' lands. It is racism without races because it erases the biological, but is based on the social diversity of people (Balibar 1991). Schaefer (2008) argues that in the traditional view racism is perceived:

> … as views, practices and actions reflecting the belief that humanity is divided into distinct biological groups called races and that members of a certain race share certain attributes which make that group as a whole less desirable, more desirable, inferior or superior (2008: 113).

Balibar (1991) contrasts this notion and argues that races do not constitute distinct biological elements; but suggests that there are no human races. He further argues that there is no evidence to suggest that people behave in a certain way because of their blood or genes. People's behaviours Balibar states are influenced by their belongingness to historical cultures. This therefore I would highlight means racism is a social construct that manifests itself in various ways like intolerance, violence, exploitation, contempt and humiliation. To maintain belongingness and preserve the identity of the group, it has to purify itself from associating, mating with other groups or incursion (Balibar, 1991). In addition Vickers (2012) suggests that it is not only the discourse of culture that distinguishes humans, but also the ideology of class

struggles that ends with one dominating others to become the ruling class. This class therefore imposes its ideology through various apparatus of the state.

It may be thought astonishing yet Balibar (1991) implies that even Levi-Strauss who once argued that all cultures were complex provided support for the new racism by asserting that a mixing of cultures and eradicating cultural separation would destroy intellectualism and threaten biological existence. Levi-Strauss brings the idea that cultural diversity is a threat to the biological survival of some members of society:

> And this 'demonstration' is immediately related to the 'spontaneous' tendency of human groups to preserve their traditions, and thus their identity. What we see here is that biological or genetic naturalism is not the only means of naturalizing human behaviour and social affinities (Balibar, 1991: 23).

The new racism is further reinforced through 'economic' debates as evidenced by the attack on the East Europeans and in particular more recently the Bulgarians who have faced a barrage of attacks from the UK government and other critics and have been labelled as 'benefit tourists'. This has led to the changes in benefit system so as to prevent the so-called 'benefit tourists'. New immigrants will not be eligible for 'out of work' benefits for the first three months. If after three months European Union (EU) nationals wish to apply for state benefits they will only be able to claim for a maximum of six months. There will be a new minimum earnings threshold to prevent access to benefits such as income support. Newly arrived EU jobseekers will not be able to claim housing benefit, and beggars or those sleeping rough will be removed and barred from re-entry for 12 months (itvnews, 2013).

Williams (2013) quoting Anderson (2013)'s book, *Us and Them? The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control* argues that the main worry is not the highly skilled and highly paid immigrants who are needed because of skill shortages, but the global poor. These are put in a dogfight between the British poor and the poor migrants:

> They're positioned as competitors for the privileges of membership. …
> Very often you're tolerated if you try to push other people out – if you're
> the hard-working immigrant, and you're better than those benefit
> scroungers. Or you're a hard-working citizen, and you've had your job
> stolen by these immigrant (2013:1).

Evidence suggests that new-racism has not spared the British citizens it
purports to protect. While they are watching, concentrating and admiring the
demonization of migrants, they have surrendered their fundamental human
rights to family life Williams (2013). Immigration laws, the new racism is about
social status not biological affiliation. Williams (2013) argues that while the
British people have been admiring the new racism their freedoms have been
eroded:

> … the most dramatic example … is the new requirement that you have
> to earn £18,600 to bring a spouse into the country. The same rhetoric
> that divides "migrants" from "citizens" also divides "citizens" and
> "taxpayers", in a sort of child-parent dichotomy (the citizen has rights,
> the taxpayer pays for them) (2013:1).

The fascinating thing is that people practising new racism deny it and they
argue that the racist immigration debates at higher political levels on restricting
immigrants are meant to prevent ethnic tensions in communities. The act of
refusing entry to migrants becomes constitutional, therefore is justified,
because racism, like other forms of discriminations are unlawful and most
perpetrators acknowledge these collective limitations (*van Dijk, 1992*). The
denial of racism because it is unlawful is like positive self-presentation since
both have an *individual* and a *social* dimension. People do not like to be
perceived as racist and are defensive: 'We are not racists', 'We are not a racist
society'. An example of denial and justifying it is Michael Howard the then
leader of the Conservative party at Telford:

'Well let's be clear. It's not racist to talk about immigration. It's not racist to criticise the system. It's not racist to want to limit the numbers' (bbcnews, 2005).

Howard further stated that:

I think it is offensive to brand as racist hard working people who worry about the chaos in our immigration system. If we don't speak up now and have a proper debate about immigration we'll only help the bigots who preach racial hatred and the people smugglers who profit from other people's misery. Mr Blair may want to pussyfoot around this issue, but I don't (bbcnews, 2005).

The strongest form of denial is reversal, which is a notion that those who talk about racism are the ones who are racist:

'We are not guilty of negative action, they are' and 'We are not the racists, they are the real racists.' This kind of reversal is the stock-in-trade of the radical Right' (*van Dijk, 1992:94).*

The diversity of refugees and asylum seekers because of their different countries of origin and diverse cultures and religion, and compounded by discrimination on arrival in UK makes this group very complex, therefore difficult to build their capacity to have a voice. The next section will therefore discuss on the refugee community dynamics.

2.8 Refugee community dynamics

Refugees have found it very difficult to belong to the British population because of the barrage of negativity, accusations and counter accusations from combination legislations, politicians and media campaigns. This sense of a lack of belongingness has also been compounded by the uncertainty of their

immigration status. Therefore this pursuit for belongingness led them to start refugee community organisations (RCOs). It was driven by the desire to form their own organisations, which would empower them by providing various kinds of advice in their own languages in a friendly manner from people they could identify with:

> As well as helping … to build a sense of self and individuality, such informal relationships also enable us to navigate our way around the demands and contingencies of everyday living (Allan, 1996:2).

Refugee communities like all social groups are diverse, what unites them is that they come from war torn countries or countries where freedom of expression or association is a taboo and restricted.

A community could be defined as a group of people bounded by geographical links (Bartle, 2007) like a village, settlement or district. A community could also include people linked by lifestyle, religion, hobby, interest, etc. Communities may often pursue a common cause on a voluntary basis. A community, it can be argued, is a social construct because the whole community is less visible; therefore, we can neither experience nor touch it although it can be imagined (Anderson 1983). Of course communities also come in various forms with no explicit or implicit model and most of them have existed before the present members and will outlive them. Bartle (2007) goes further to state that a community is a social construct which consists of a set of interactions and human behaviours based on shared expectations, values, beliefs and meanings between individuals.

A community could also be territorial in that a norm could be shared in that neighborhood and therefore that community has something they identify themselves with (Willmott, 1986 and Lee and Newby, 1983). Communion can link a community in that people can be part of each other because of a sense of attachment through for example, spiritual beliefs; that is people congregate to worship therefore constructing a religious community. This community exists because people develop a set of beliefs, which bring them together, not only

to meet each other, but also to be with their God. A community is therefore a purpose such as solidarity, commitment, mutuality, trust, liberty and equality (Frazer, 1999) although it is difficult to distinguish the categories.

The dimensions of a community can also overlap e.g. people who work together can also live together in a setting, like the army barracks or a mining village. However people could be living in the locality, but have no shared values or interests (Willmott, 1989). Communities could best be approached as 'communities of meaning' as the survival and sustainability of the community relies on how the members perceive the importance of its norms and values (Crow and Allan, 1994). As Cohen (1985) opines: "People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning and a referent of their identity" (1985: 118). People living together in a neighborhood does not necessarily make them a community, they can share a few conversations now and then, or come to each other's help in times of need. However, the relationship will be minimal (Newby, 1983). To some people they are part of the network community of intimate social networks of family, friends, and people they associate with at work, church, neighborhood, civic life, and [an] assortment of other "weak ties" (Putnam, 2000: 274). Such people could be living locally or beyond the borders of the immediate environment and country (Bott, 1957).

Communities can be imagined as going well beyond face to face relations and thus including millions of people no one person can physically meet yet imagine as 'like me/us' (Anderson, 1983) particularly in terms of nationalistic propaganda. That is to say:

> Nationalism is not the awakening of self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist (Gellner, 1964:169).

In this way it implies communities exist, which can be advantageously 'subsumed under' nations. They are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. Citizens of any nation are well aware that they are connected to people they have never seen, but these ties could at least once be imagined as indefinitely stretchable

nets of kinship. However, in more complex contemporary contexts, a nation can include multiple ethnicities, where they will identify each other by ethnicity and within those ethnic groups there may even be different clans.

Some people may identify themselves by their diverse professional standing, or cultural or ethnic sense of belonging. Therefore, there is no such thing, as for example a Zimbabwe Community in totality, even though an organisation can call itself that, and can provide services for all Zimbabweans who may approach it for help. Not every native of that country who happens to be in the same city is a stakeholder of the 'community'. That is the reason there are numerous refugee community organisations (RCOs) from the same country. There are some who do not belong to refugee communities by choice, some because they do not like the way the organisations are run.

Furthermore, some would not want to belong to the group because of the composition of the management team, which could be from an ethnic group that has 'bad blood' with the individual. For people from Zimbabwe it has proven difficult for a person of Ndebele tribe to work in harmony with a Shona tribe and vice versa, because of the history of extermination of one tribe by the other between 1983 and 1987 (CCJP, 1997), whereby the Shona dominated government through its agents systematically caused suffering and death to those from the western parts of the country who were largely Ndebele by tribe.

To further complicate things, some people who formed these organisations become authoritarians who want their opinions to be predominant in any decision making process, and anyone who dares to challenge is dealt with negatively and can be expelled. The lack of community, because of difficulties in integration as discussed earlier and dynamics within the RCOs lead to some people living in destitution.

The above issues discussed, the policy and legislation, the asylum process, the access to welfare, the demonization of asylum seekers and consequently their failure to develop a sense of belongingness, I will argue cause destitution among asylum seekers. The next section therefore explores destitution and its effect on asylum seekers because of the new racism, which is key in the creation of destitution.

2.9 Destitution

A destitute may be defined as someone who lacks basic living needs, which could be in the form of accommodation, food and clothes amongst other basics (Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999). It can also be defined as the inability to access statutory support, therefore relying on the charity that is offered by various organisations and individuals, and in the UK context this would be from the welfare state, subject to eligibility as per immigration law. Destitutions stems from:

> … the systematic material poverty and disadvantage, social exclusion and institutionalised structural inequalities and social divisions within society as a whole (Walker and Walker, 1997:8).

The negative end of the asylum process and having their cases turned down caused destitution to the participants in this study. The so-called 'end of process' clients, account for approximately 60-70% of the total showing-up as destitute, hence social exclusion. Social exclusion emanates from:

> … the dynamic process of being shut out of …the social economic, political, and cultural systems, which determine the social integration of the person in society (Walker and Walker, 1997:8).

While oppression is:

> Inhuman or degradation treatment of individuals or groups; hardship, injustice brought about by the dominance of one group over another; the negative and demeaning exercise of power. Oppression often involves disregarding the rights of an individual or group and is thus denial of citizenship (Thompson, 2001:34).

Destitution among asylum seekers and refugees has been an issue that has been ignored and suppressed in the UK for ideological reasons and thus

showing the British population that the government is tough on immigration. I would argue that the UK government, which purports to be an advocate of Human Rights, would not envisage being associated with creating anti-human rights conditions for a section of people within its borders. It is only recently that it has become an emerging phenomenon, and it has been the human rights activists that have been at the forefront, exposing the implications of the Home Office policy.

As described above once destitution has been created there are no policies to deal with the impacts of the policies that have withdrawn benefits from failed asylum seekers. The media however, which is one of the most powerful tools for disseminating information, is silent about the plight of destitution, of which if it reports it will usually be most negatively (Coventry Refugee Centre, 2012).

Section 55 of The National Immigration and Asylum Act (2002), which the government identifies as the legislation which accords it with broader policy deterrence and tackling abuse of the asylum system, has been interpreted by groups that advocate for asylum seekers as a catalyst in increasing the destitute population (Refugee Action and Refugee Council, 2006).

Section 9 of The Asylum and Immigration Act (2004) offers incentives for voluntary returnees and has been criticized for contributing to destitution as well. These policies have been rendered ineffective because in Manchester and Leeds alone, of the 116 people affected by section 9, only 3 had signed up for voluntary return and 12 took steps to obtain travel documents. Almost a third went underground and 80% were diagnosed with mental health problems, which contributed to their destitution (Refugee Action and Refugee Council, 2006).

It can be argued that these people have a choice of returning to their countries of origin; however such an argument I would highlight is flawed because most of the people come from countries where bombs are the order of the day like Somalia, Syria, Iraqi and Afghanistan (Meshelter, 2015). While others come from countries where there is no rule of law, people could be arrested on

treason charges for having a different opinion about how the country should be governed (Doyle, 2009). Therefore people would rather be destitute and have the limited freedom of association and other rights that go with it, than go back to what they escaped from. The choice of returning therefore cannot be taken as an excuse for depriving the very vulnerable people of their basic needs and rights, which often compound their vulnerability by being destitute (Crawley *et al*, 2011).

There is no government data available regarding the number of people living in destitution and hence it was not easy to obtain reliable information regarding the affected people. The only available material came from organisations that supported this group (Refugee Action and Refugee Council, 2006). This brought about data that was varied, (e.g. in Birmingham, different organisations provided different figures of destitution); NASS' estimation was 30, the Regional Consortium for Refugees and Asylum Seekers estimated 10,000 and the Refugee Network estimated between 5,000 and 10,000. In contrast the report by Refugee Action and Refugee Council after monitoring, estimated at least 1000 destitute in Birmingham. Crawley *et al*, (2011) argue that there were 283,500 refused asylum seekers living in the UK although it is not clear how many of those were living in destitution. It could be argued that NASS, as a wing of the UKBA, would be reluctant to give the correct figures for fear of enlightening society about the suffering it has created. I would suggest that it is the body that should provide accurate figures as all asylum seekers go through it for support and it is responsible for stopping that support. The organisations working with asylum-seekers, it could be implicated, could have deliberately inflated figures to make the situation look bleak as an attempt to exposing what they may regard as The Home Office's hypocrisy.

In Manchester, like in Birmingham, it proved very difficult to locate figures of people living in destitution because organisations duplicate each other in service provision to this group. Therefore there was a likelihood of counting one person two to three times. However according to the BOAZ Trust, (an organisation that provides accommodation for this group of people), there were over 1000 people living in destitution. In 2014 the British Red Cross (BRC)

supported 5,000 destitute asylum seekers across the UK. At the same time the Asylum Support Appeals Project represented 674 destitute asylum seekers at the Asylum Support Tribunal and won support for 65% of its cases (Mullin, 2015).

James Brokenshire immigration minister argued that the asylum system encouraged the view that UK was 'a land of milk and honey' therefore government wanted to change rules for asylum seekers with children into line with the rules for single adults. That meant that those who did not fit the tight criteria for section 4 support, would become destitute. A Home Office consultation paper estimated that as many as 2,900 families, totalling about 10,000 parents and their children could be affected (Mullin, 2015). However Andy Hewett, BRC's refugee support development manager argues that:

> The removal of support is unlikely to incentivise families to return but is likely to result in a significant rise in the number of families facing homelessness and destitution in the UK (Mullin, 2015).

The above discussions show that there are a number of influences leading to the formulation of immigration policies that impact negatively and can be called in effect, dehumanising to asylum seekers. It is therefore appropriate to explore one of the countries that have an immigration policy formulated from the same Convention that the UK bases its policies on to assess how it compares. It is imperative that in the next section, this study benefits by exploring the new racism through a comparison with the immigration laws in Sweden, a European Union (EU) member country, of which the UK is a member and signed the Dublin Convention.

2.10 Swedish immigration Asylum regulations- A positive exemplar

The Dublin Convention prevents asylum seekers from submitting applications in multiple Member States in the European Union. The Convention also reduces the number of circumnavigating from one member state to another. The country that the asylum seeker first applies for asylum is responsible for either accepting or rejecting asylum, and the asylum seeker may not restart the process in another jurisdiction (Gilbert, 1999).

In Sweden, The Migration Board deals with asylum applications and scrutinises them based on the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Dublin Convention. In dealing with the applications, consideration is taken regarding the gender and sexual orientation of the individual. Once a person is deemed as qualifying for protection as a refugee, a residence permit is granted in accordance with the UN Convention.

Sweden goes further by offering residence permits to people in need of "subsidiary protection" in accordance with joint EU regulations as well as other persons in need of protection in accordance with the Swedish Aliens Act (2005). Immigrants who qualify for subsidiary protection are those at risk of death sentences, who could be subjected to torture, inhumane treatment or are at risk of injury in an armed conflict in their countries of origin.

The protection under the Swedish Aliens Act (2005) has no international equivalent. This protection is offered to people, who because of an armed conflict have problems or have severe antagonism from their countries of origin, because they could be subjected to serious violation or cannot be returned because of environmental disaster. Sweden further offers residence permits to people with serious health problems and adaptation in Sweden.

The refusal and deportation of a person from Sweden under the Aliens Act (2005) is underpinned by the protection of that individual. The Aliens Act (2005) Chapter 5 Section 1, states that to be refused or deported one should be: a threat to Swedish security (paragraph 1) or involved in criminal activity

(paragraph 2). Such a person could be returned if he/she entered Sweden from the Schengen Area countries, which includes Denmark, Finland, Iceland or Norway, which offer protection. A person can also be returned to other countries in accordance with an agreement between Sweden and those countries, unless it is obvious that the alien will not be granted a residence permit there' (paragraph 3).

Paragraph 4 states a person can also be deported to a third country if there is protection there, and has special ties to that country (paragraph 5), and a person can also be returned to a Member States of the European Communities (the Dublin Convention) (paragraph 6), if it was that person's first safe country and lodged an application.

Failed asylum seekers have access to emergency medical care, a daily allowance and Swedish Migration Board housing until they leave Sweden. People exempt from the requirement to obtain a work permit continue to work until they leave Sweden, as long as they cooperate with the Migration Board return preparations. Failed asylum seekers can apply for a work permit once the decision of leaving the country has been enforced. However those who do not cooperate could have their allowances reduced, get supervised or can be detained until they leave or handed over to police who can use force. And those who delay leaving can be issued with re-entry bans, which means they would not be allowed to return to the Schengen Area for one year. The ban could be extended to five years if one has a hiding history, shown intention of less interest in leaving, used false identity and has been convicted of an offense punishable by imprisonment (migrationsverket, 2014).

In order to combat hatred and abuse of immigrants the Swedish parliament has passed a new law, which criminalises anyone critical of immigrants:

You're free in Sweden to be critical of immigration … at least within the confines of your mind. But dare those views, even on the Internet, and you can be more easily prosecuted under a new law taking full effect after Christmas (Duke, 2014).

Immigration is considered as the most important attribute of showing tolerance to foreigners in Sweden. Any signs of intolerance could be considered as racist, unpatriotic and could lead people to lose everything in life that could include jobs and family. Mikael Jalving author of the book *Absolut Sweden* argued that if there is proof one is anti-immigration then: "you're out of the game." Another journalist Ingrid Carlqvist asserts that:

If they point at you and say you are a racist, and then you will have no job, no career, you might also lose your family. You will have no future (Duke, 2014).

The analysis suggests that Swedish immigration policies are empowering, tolerant and less criminalising, than those of UK. Unlike in the UK where asylum seekers have no right to work, Sweden allows them even after they have been refused settlement. They can work until they leave. Asylum seekers in Sweden continue to receive their allowances and medical care after they have been refused, unlike in UK where support is stopped after 21 days. Such people in the UK start to live in destitution. Sweden does not allow the intolerance and the dehumanising discourses that occur in UK due to the passing of the law that criminalises anyone critical of immigrants. The respect of the human rights of asylum seekers in Sweden is a lesson for my study. Thus it could be applied as well in the UK as a challenge to the new racism.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter has answered question 1, i.e. the extent at which issues faced by immigrants and asylum seekers as a form of racism, to an extent that it has unearthed the worst consequences of this discrimination, which lead to destitution. Therefore research and organisations like MRSN have a big role to empower and give a voice to such people, as will be discussed later in this thesis (see chapter 5 and 6).

Refugees and asylum seekers having suffered physical persecution from their countries of origin are then, as evidence in this chapter shows, exposed to mental persecution from the institutions that are supposed to be protective in their host country, the UK. The chief motivation I would argue is because they are viewed as different from the rest of society in their way of life and because of the new-racism that I have argued is the new racism hegemony. They are used as scapegoats for every ill that occurs in the community; see for example the shortage of houses and school places in Middlesbrough (Jeeves 2014). The analysis of the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK has exposed that there exist discriminatory tendencies and that immigration laws and policies override human rights, therefore condemning this group to the margins of society with restricted rights. These discriminatory laws, because of their embeddedness in the hegemony of the neo-racism do not spare even children as they are exposed to all forms of abuse leading one perhaps to wonder whether the policy is 'Every British Child Matters' rather than 'Every Child Matters'.

It is also evident from the chapter that politicians have exacerbated this demonization of refugees and asylum seekers and government ministers who have become timid in the context of the rise of right wing parties like UKIP and BNP which focus on immigration. This is in contrast to the Swedish politicians who have passed protective laws for this group. The overall policies that have been developed over the years in the UK have been designed to curtail the

voice of asylum seekers and refugees and have had a negative impact in their citizenship development.

The policies have been crafted to promote the 'otherness' of asylum seekers as in the case of the two-tier system in the welfare provision for asylum seekers and those who are citizens of the UK. It can be suggested that the asylum process has been very flawed in terms of the length of time it takes to determine the applications for protection as well as the decisions that are made have been designed to cater for only a few applicants. These have caused irreparable damage for example life changing illnesses like mental health or even death.

It is further complicated by the dynamics within the refugee communities, which stem from their ethnic diversity that at times has proved impossible for them to work in collaboration and therefore making it even more problematic for organisations to work with them. This trend has given organisations like the MRSN and some of its partners like Refugee Action the role of fighting towards empowering this group of people. Their tasks have been exacerbated by the dispersal system, which brought with it more responsibilities to these organisations because of the increased numbers of refugees and asylum seekers and the new complex needs involved. This has required a radical approach that would totally emancipate the participants.

MRSN therefore, has been engaged with this group over the years emancipating them both as individuals and as communities. However, it has had some shortcomings because it has not always been fully inclusive. This study was commissioned as a capacity building adventure of MRSN so that it could best give voice to the voiceless in a more inclusive way that is emancipatory. Having been dehumanised, therefore there is a need for

liberationist perspectives and methodologies that will be explored in the next chapter as approaches to bring about empowerment to gain voice.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPLORING METHODOLOGIES AND THEORIES FOR SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

3.1 Introduction

This thesis is broadly motivated by the need to address the injustices that exist in our society and strives to untangle the myths and beliefs that are embedded in the existing hegemony, which suggest that certain members of society have no stake in the decision-making process about their lives. This study does this more specifically in the case of asylum seekers/refugees by giving voice to participants who could be perceived as outcasts, oppressed and excluded (evidenced in chapter 2). The study aimed to aid the service user group at MRSN to be agentic through the research process and its outcomes. The choice of appropriate theoretical perspectives and methodologies was influenced by my own experiences (Oakley, 1985), which have been dominated by particular concerns around prejudices faced by marginalized groups who are not allowed freedom of speech. Hence empowerment is the key criterion employed in choosing the theoretical perspectives, the methodologies and the methods of this study (Campbell, 2005). My concern for marginalized groups influenced the methodologies; participatory action research, ethnography, the theoretical perspectives of empowerment, interpretive theory, the development of the critical theory as well as Freirian perspectives and organisational theories. The methodologies and theoretical perspectives influenced the methods, which were; in-depth interviews, focus groups, insider research, comparatives, with ethical issues and analysis, (explored in chapter 4). It is imperative before exploring theoretical perspectives and methodologies to scrutinize the concept of enabling voice in the silenced, because without voice there is no empowerment.

3.2 Approaches to researching voice

Enabling those who have been silenced to have a voice is key to achieving freedom of expression for people like the asylum seekers in this study. They are not considered as stakeholders and thus they have been coerced into silence by the asylum system as described in the previous chapter. Coercive silence is always a one-sided contract concerning an authoritative negotiator and a weaker subject. Brueggemann (2001) argues that:

> … it is an unequal transaction between the powerful and the powerless, and such silence generates and legitimates violence on the part of both. The silencer thinks he is free to do whatever he wants; the silenced that is reduced to docility by the silencer, eventually will break out in violence either against self or against the silencer (2001: 1).

Brueggemann (2001) further argues that voice is a substitute of violence. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) argue that giving voice is: "empowering people to be heard who might otherwise remain silent" (1998: 204) or whom others have silenced. Britzman (1989) argues that: "A commitment to voice attests to the right of speaking and being represented" (1989: 145). I would argue that voice is the right and the ability to make self-heard, to have experiences and perspectives available to others. Further it is the right to participate in the construction of the self and the decision of how to represent that self to others. Therefore, it was my role as an insider researcher to help develop voice to empower participants, who had been silenced. Mazzei and Jackson (2009) assert that:

> Qualitative researchers have been trained to privilege this voice, to 'free' the authentic voice from whatever restrains it from coming into being, from relating the truth about the self (2009: 1).

Voice in the context of this study was the need to enable the silenced to have freedom of speech and have their voices heard to have political value in relationship to public decision making processes about things that affected them. The purpose was that once they gained voice they would partake actively in the capacity building of MRSN. I would further argue, that giving voice has to do with issues of representation in the wider socio-political sense. It allows people to understand reflections of their shared history, language, race, and gender. However the voice, the community, the language and the culture that is silenced has no impact upon decision-making. Therefore, I would argue that most people prefer to tell their own story rather than depend upon others to tell it for them.

Enabling the participants at MRSN to participate in the study was meant to liberate them from the coercive silence, to develop self-consciousness and have the ability of challenging the hegemony, which is dominance by one state or social group over others by military dominance (Chernow and Vallasi, 1994). In contrast Gramsci (1971) argues that the domination by use of force is not sustainable hence domination should be underpinned by ideologies. In his *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci (1971) argues that hegemony is the fabrication of consensus. He further states that in a capitalist society hegemony is composed of two intersecting spheres, a political society which rules through force and a civil society, which rules through consent with the latter more pronounced. Hegemony is replicated in cultural life through the media, universities and religious institutions to 'manufacture consent' (Lippmann, 1922) and legitimacy (Heywood 1994: 100). It is the:

> … pervasive power of ideology, values and beliefs in reproducing class relations and concealing contradictions (Heywood, 1994: 100).

According to Heywood (1994), Karl Marx recognized that economic exploitation was not the only driver behind capitalism but that the system was reinforced by a dominance of ruling class ideas and values. This led to Engels's famous concern that 'false consciousness' would keep the working

class from recognizing and rejecting their oppression. False consciousness' relation to invisible power is itself a 'theory of power' in the Marxist tradition. It is particularly evident in the thinking of Lenin, who 'argued that the power of 'bourgeois ideology' was such that left to its own devices would perpetuate. The proletariat would only be able to achieve:

'Trade union consciousness', the desire to improve their material conditions but within the capitalist system (Heywood, 1994: 85).

My study was involved in 'counter-hegemonic struggle,' which offered 'alternatives to dominant ideas of what is normal and legitimate' and this therefore implies that 'knowledge' is a social construct that serves to legitimate social structures (Heywood, 1994: 101). The study was influenced by Gramsci's perceptions in the establishment of power in state institutions' ideologies through consent instead of forceful means and then legitimizing that as hegemony of consensus. These ideas were useful in the study as it was about consciousness-raising, based on Paulo Freire's theories of liberation in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Additionally the study was aimed at raising awareness about the impact of the popular media, communication and cultural action in the demonizing of refugees and asylum seekers, thus liberating the mind. To liberate the mind, people are given a voice to have freedom of speech in things that affect their lives. Freire (1973) argues that liberatory education is about developing self-consciousness, and aims at emancipating not only individuals, but also the whole community, hence capacity building of MRSN.

Liberating education is contrary to what Freire called the 'banking education' that involves indoctrinating people about how they should live and make decisions concerning their lives. Freire (1973) argues that people have a connectedness with each other and the world they live in, therefore they need meaningful dialogue that is only possible when every voice is harnessed and considered. This connectedness is plural, hence divergent in the face of challenges. Thus the study was informed by this concept of inclusiveness and

aimed to develop the contribution of those divergent voices for the sake of individuals, the community and MRSN. Success can mostly be achieved when people live and work together peacefully in a well-ordered manner despite their affiliation to differing ideologies (Clancy, 2012). My study however was not meant to be a consultancy project that would identify what would be required to make changes at MRSN. Instead it was approached more in a formative way on the premise of liberating participants so that any suggestions or ideas developed by the participatory research process would contribute to the development of the organisation. Thus the participants had the liberty to engage or discard the suggested changes hence the liberating education, which is democratic and provides participants with the space of active learning. This is unlike banking education, which views participants as empty vessels into which the educator pours knowledge (Freire, 1972). The next section explores theoretical perspectives that enhance voice to be employed in this thesis.

3.3 Theoretical perspectives

UK immigration policies as argued from sections 2.2 to 2.9 of chapter 2 curtail the voice of refugees and asylum seekers leading them to destitution. This group therefore lacks freedom of speech and is in need of empowerment to develop voice. To enable empowerment and the development of voice the research engaged in liberationists' discourses, which are explored in this section. Each sub-section states its contribution to the theoretical understanding and the implications for undertaking this study, starting with empowerment.

3.3.1 Empowerment

Empowerment involves engaging in a variety of well-organised activities with oppressed people (in this case refugees and asylum seekers) in order to minimise powerlessness that has been cultivated by hegemony to dominate

the oppressed (Solomon, 1976). Empowerment, therefore, could be argued to be any process whereby those lacking comparatively in power become or are helped to become more powerful (Pierson and Thomas, 2002). The core element of empowerment lies with the process of helping individuals gain control over their lives and the socio-political and existential challenges they face (Thompson, 2003). Empowerment can also be defined as a way of encouraging or equipping individuals with tools to be self-reliant and removing barriers that prevent them from fulfilling their potential. However, Payne (2005) opines that this gives a false sense of equality between workers and service users because it ignores the power dynamics and the influence of workers. Consequently, it is very important that when working with refugees and asylum seekers professionals should allow them to be part of the decision making process. However, what happens to this group of service users is that they are mostly discriminated against either by individuals from a personal or community perspective (Thompson, 2003). From a cultural or policy level an example is politicians and commentators (see section 2.5). Evidence suggests that the forced removal policy of so called 'failed' asylum seekers and the treatment they receive from individual security personnel, who are contracted by the government, could be defined as appalling (Amnesty, 2011). An extreme example was the use of dangerous and improper control and restraint techniques, which resulted in the death of Jimmy Mubenga in 2010 (Amnesty, 2011).

Power dynamics are central to empowerment and the broader arguments explored in this study as participants are victims of the abuse of power from both their countries of origin and UK their host country (Crawley *et al*, 2011). Any lack of fully scrutinising power for the benefit of the participants would be an injustice to this study. This would be like using a simplistic approach that defines power as only an agent of destruction, yet if used appropriately it can be an agent of radical democratisation, social justice and change.

Power is: 'the ability to influence or control people, events, processes or resources' (Thompson, 2003: 44). This can either be positive due to being empowering or negative if 'disempowering'. Power manifests itself in various forms and is always present wherever human beings interact; power has to be understood in the process of empowering a group of people. Empowerment is

challenging the power that people use to control the distribution of resources. It can be exercised covertly or overtly through the decision-making or actions that people in power display. It can further manifest itself as ideas or laws that are meant to disenfranchise a specific section of society (Hugman, 1991). There is always a difference of priorities between people exercising power and those that it is being exercised upon, particularly where such power is experienced as oppressive (Weber, 1968 and Abercrombie *et al*, 1994). Power can be based on structures that are used to exploit other classes, especially the working class, for economic gains of those who own businesses (Vickers, 2012). Power can also be prevalent in the context of gender and race issues when women and people of colour are treated differently (Segal, 1999 and Williams, 1989).

For Foucault (1982) power, involves:

> … a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action (Foucault, 1982:789).

Foucault (1982:788) further argues that power is not a relationship between partners, but exists explicitly in action through integration 'into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures'. Therefore it is not 'a function of consent'. He goes onto highlight that:

> In itself it is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few (which does not prevent the possibility that consent may be a condition for the existence or the maintenance of power); the relationship of power can be the result of a prior or permanent consent, but it is not by nature the manifestation of a consensus. (Foucault, 1982:788).

Power is everywhere, it is dynamic and is evident in various systems (Foucault, 1988 and Gergen, 1999). Furthermore, Foucault (1926) argues that power can be productive as it is used in the functioning of the state and this has a bearing on members of society. Since power, according to Foucault (1926), resides everywhere and is dynamic, there is a need to challenge it at every level i.e. at personal, cultural and structural levels to create radical democratic processes. If it is not challenged, people holding it will not give it up that easily:

> People do not tend to give up power willingly so consensus may not be achieved (Temple and Moran, 2006: 7).

Within this concept of power, there is a significant dissimilarity between 'power over' and 'power with'. 'Power over' is the use of power in dominating whatever activity is taking place either by cohesion or by enforcing the embedded ideology of the dominant figure, with less consideration of other stakeholders. According to Mills (2000), this 'power over' could be used in decision making or not making a decision at all. Mills (2000) argues that as mentioned above, the domineering figures sabotage other people's ideas by not considering them and then go further to frustrate them by not including other people's ideas in the agenda. However 'power with' is integrative because it caters for all stakeholders' ideas by allowing every voice to be heard regardless of where it emanates from (Butcher *et al*, 2007). I would argue that it is a collaborative phenomenon because it brings society together. And communication is horizontal unlike the 'power over' which has vertical communication that is instructional in form and may be exploitative in character. 'Power with' has positive implications because it has the capacity to achieve goals 'not at the expense of others', and it creates bonds in society, as the whole community exclusively owns any undertaking. 'Power with' creates power within, as people get motivated to mobilise themselves and participate in the tasks that are at hand; hence they are empowered as they have freedom of speech (Butcher *et al*, 2007:26-27). Therefore, since this study was about promoting active citizenship, I would argue that it was paramount to practice 'power with' which gives the participants the space to have a voice to express selves. 'Power over' is discriminatory and degrading, which I would argue was not suitable for a study like this one, which was emancipatory.

In the process of empowering people, it was fundamental that anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive perspectives were used, which included group work, advocacy, and partnership. A group is a regular meeting of members for a range of activities that often help develop problem-solving skills (Pierson and Thomas, 2002 and Davies, 2002). Group work can comprise two or more individuals in face-to-face interaction, each aware of the membership in the group and aware of their interdependence as they strive to achieve common goals (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). At MRSN, groups met for training purposes, to run campaigns and sometimes to discuss issues that affected their organisation. In this study about emancipating people who have suffered various forms of abuse, it was important to explore group work, because it has proved to be effective in helping people to encourage each other, learn from each other, develop a sense of belongingness and greater motivation to engage and succeed (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999).

Advocacy is also linked to empowerment and refers to representing an individual or group's interest when they cannot do it themselves (Adam *et al*, 1998). In this case the refugees and asylum seekers in the study had ideas about what they wanted, but did not have the ability to represent themselves. Freire (1973) argues that the socially excluded have knowledge about their problems and the solutions. What they might lack is the organisational expertise to translate the knowledge into action. This is the role of the organisations like MRSN and this study aimed to enhance MRSN's provision of this expertise. In situations where there is representation, it should involve acting only in the service user's interests (Payne, 2005). However, it could be argued that sometimes workers contribute to dilemmas themselves by failing to explain their involvement and giving service users essential information about their rights, and the extent of the powers they possess (Horner, 2004). Hence there is implicitly a need for partnership.

Partnership implies equality between partners; Carnell and Buchanan (2005) argue that partnership could be viewed as the communal obligation of every partner to share rights and responsibilities equally through good and bad times. It is:

A working relationship that is characterised by a shared sense of purpose, mutual respect and willingness to negotiate. This implies sharing information, responsibility, skill, decision-making and accountability (Pugh & De'Ath, 1989:33).

In partnership relationships power can be shared equally, hence the use of the principles of 'power with' in contrast to 'power over', and communication is horizontal. Hence, given that emancipating participants was the rationale this study was entrenched in and they were given the opportunity to participate in the shaping of MRSN (see chapter 6). By gaining power through forms of participation that frees them, they were able to experience a degree of empowerment to shape their lives. Participants in the study were motivated to develop the desire to identify their problems so as to interpret them and decide how to gain a voice and gain active citizenship; hence interpretive approaches were needed as documented in the following sub section.

3.3.2 Interpretive Approaches

For the disempowered to be empowered thus have freedom of speech and gain voice as a basis for empowerment, there is need for approaches which place stress on the social world being examined and interpreted (Bryman, 2001). The participants needed the freedom to interpret the social world the way they viewed it, in order to be empowered to interact with each other, to construct forms of social organisation appropriate in addressing their everyday realities. Giddens (1974) argues that:

Social life of which the endeavours are part … is produced by its component actors precisely in terms of their active constitution and reconstruction of frames of meaning whereby they organise their experiences (1974:79)

I would argue that being able to see that there are alternative interpretations and forms of organisation empowers people because they are no longer

constrained by a given interpretation, particularly the interpretation and forms of organisation of the powerful/elites (Weber, 1964 and Benton and Craib, 2001). Weber (1964) argued that scientific knowledge of society comes from selective experiences of societal life, and that if social sciences have their unique objects of study and meaningful social action therefore they need their unique methodology of study. This he argues is "interpretive understanding - hence the use of interpretivism to describe this approach" (Benton and Craib 2001:79). Weber used the German word *'verstehe'* which means understanding what goes on in the subject's thinking and their way of life. Thus Weber argues for the value of freedom:

> … any sort of science is bounded on every side by values and that values penetrate to the heart of the scientific enterprise (Benton and Craib, 2001:81).

Schutz (1963) argued that connotations and clarifications given by participants about their activities are the characteristic story of societal occurrences, therefore such sharing leads to empowerment. The world is reachable by everyone through communication by the use of language (Schutz, 1963 and Blaikie, 1993). Schutz argued that social life was both practical and theoretical. Social theories need to be constructed from examples of grasped fragments of conversations which are held in anonymous circumstances, personal connotations, motivations, diversities and strategies that are practiced in their typicality (Schutz, 1963 & Blaikie, 1993).

Interpreting therefore is vigorously analysing instead of simply living experience without reflections. Data is composed of active actors and concepts; therefore interpretations from these have to relate to everyday experiences and an introduction to the concept of change in behaviour. For Schutz *'verstehe'* unlike Weber is not a social science method, but a way of finding out where common sense thoughts are recognised and valued (Blaikie, 1993).

Winch (1958), through the influence of the philosophy of Wittgenstein considered that each individual person has a complex capacity to interpret the world around while animals do not have that complex capacity. His approach endeavoured to make a distinction between natural and social sciences at the same time advocating for an identity to be established between the social sciences and philosophy. Winch argued that it is a mistake to base social science on natural sciences, as society was both conceptual and logically different from nature. Winch (1958) stated that human responses are very complex in comparison to other living creatures; therefore perceptions that relate to more intricate behaviour should not apply to the less intricate.

Contrary to the natural sciences that are concerned with causal sequences, Winch argued that social sciences should strive to discover rules humans follow in their behaviour. This can be termed as acceptable conduct in a given setting. Winch argued that all meaningful behaviour is rule governed, unlike Weber who distinguished between action and social action. Winch's perspective is that, language and social activity are inseparable. In order to provide an interpretation of the connotation of a conversation, it involves defining the societal association into which it enters:

> … social relations really exist only in and through the ideas, which are current in society; or alternatively, that social relations fall in the same logical category as do relations between ideas (Winch, 1958:133).

Adopting such intepretivist approaches underpin an empowering and critical approach to engaging in research. Thus participants are able to explore a range of interpretations of social events and circumstances based on their own interpretations of experience and set these alongside those of the powerful. This opens up the possibility of challenge to dominant viewpoints. These challenges can be strengthened through adopting 'critical theory' as discussed next.

3.3.3 Critical Theory

Critical theory, as I employ the term takes into account power dynamics and includes all liberationist theories. I found this the most meaningful approach to liberate the minds of the participants in order to strive for freedom of speech. Critical theory started at a Frankfurt School in Germany and is based on the belief that: "reason is the highest potentiality of human beings and that through its use, it is possible to criticize and challenge the nature of existing societies" (Benton, 1993:52). Habermas (1972) a leading critical theorist, asserted that natural and social sciences were different in their methodology in that natural sciences use 'sense experience', (which is observation) while social sciences use 'communicative experience' which is an understanding of meaning based on communication with human beings. This is important because without communication people's diverse voices can never be heard and are therefore constrained. Connerton (1976) argues that:

> This is because societies are differently constituted as objects of possible knowledge. They form a network of intentional actions, and statements about intentional actions and are not reducible to statements about observable events. The investigator must gain access to his data through understanding of meanings (1976: 35).

Furthermore, Habermas (1972) asserts that participants already socially construct reality. Thus when carrying out research the researcher will be communicating with participants about their experience as a basis for exploring other possibilities of exploring ways of empowerment. That process of understanding this reality is 'dialogic' and the researcher is a reflective partner unlike natural science's 'monologic' approach in which the researcher is a disengaged observer. Habermas does not agree with the positivist's 'objective illusion', which is a belief that separates facts from the researcher. Rather than objectivity being 'universal' and independent of subjectivity, Habermas introduced the concepts of 'knowledge-constitutive interests' as the yardstick of what is termed as knowledge and methods of unearthing that knowledge and its justification (Bernstein, 1976).

Habermas (1972) argues that critical theory is emancipatory, and he adopts the consensus theory of truth, as opposed to a positivist theory of truth. His argument was that the truth could only be established through critical discussion and not through data obtained from observation. Therefore truth can be acquired through critical discussion of the data obtained from in-depth interviews, focus groups and other interactive methods of data collection.

For the purposes of this study it was important to engage with an enquiry that was guided by the critical spirit because it motivated the researcher to explore and question conventionally held values and assumptions by challenging mainstream social structures. In addition I would argue this approach also encouraged participants, who are refugees and asylum seekers to change their mind-set and perceive things differently which helped them to engage in collaborative action enquiry (Crotty, 1998). Due to its critical approach the study enhanced the reflectiveness of both researcher and participants and enabled both to question the discriminatory tendencies and to challenge them. Its participatory scope enhanced a critical dialogue between the parties involved, with a view of challenging the status quo for social change. To enhance the critical thinking in the participants it was vital to engage in Freirian principles, which will be discussed next.

3.3.4 Freirian principles

Since Habermas considers critical theory to be emancipatory then a turn to Freire is useful since he provides a practical as well as a theoretical account of emancipation. It can be argued that Freirian principles are the combination of the philosophy of hope and the pedagogy of liberation. In this study the oppressed, (i.e. refugees and asylum seekers) needed to be conscientised to reflect on their existing state of affairs and act on changing them through action. This action should 'constitute an authentic praxis' (Freire, 1972:41). Freire was concerned with the processes of critical detection, of ways of emancipating oppressed people's minds and for them to realise that they had the fundamental ability to transform their lives. The dehumanisation that they

had experienced was the cause of their eroded hope and was not permanent, and so could be changed:

> … 'dehumanisation, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that endangers violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanises the oppressed' (Freire, 1972:21).

Therefore since dehumanisation is a creation it can be changed, however in that change the oppressed should not replace the oppressors as Freire (1972) states that:

> … in order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restore the humanity of both (1972:21).

This study aimed to be emancipatory to all the participants and host communities by raising awareness as a way of restoring humanity to all parties so that they live harmoniously together with trust and respect. This was done through dialogue, because the study was not mechanistic dogmatism, (which sometimes purports to be diological) but was liberationist in its approach and fully dialogical. It was based on raising awareness about the hegemony that was oppressing the participants through the engagement of the participants in focus groups and forum planning meetings, which included campaigns. Mechanistic dogmatism produces what Freire (1998) refers to as 'verbiage' and he further argues that authoritarianism does not engage in dialogue but, 'tells them what they should do' (1998: 104). This study engaged Freire's principles which are based on 'conscientising' the participants to take a lead in challenging existing inequalities. Freire (1998) argues that the lack of conscientisation of the people leads to ignorance of how society functions, not:

… because they are naturally incapable of … but on account of precarious conditions in which they live and survive, where they are forbidden to know (1998: 105).

Freire argues for equal partnership and cooperation between participants and researchers, this study was based on these principles (Freire, 1972). As indicated earlier by Freire who argues that dehumanisation does not take away knowledge and solutions to personal problems from individuals. However the lack of expertise to act accomplishes this. Involving participants made the study meaningful with the potential to transform their wellbeing. The Freirian perspective because of its participatory angle argues for people to be given the freedom to express themselves concerning matters that affect their lives and once that is established they can make informed decisions because they are emancipated. However if the environment is oppressive and disengaging, people are suppressed and the study does nothing to change their quality of life, but leaves them even more dejected than they were previously (Freire, 1974).

Freire has been criticised for his omission of social differences: gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* quoted by Mayo he argues that he was not concerned about specificities based on colour, race, gender but oppression as:

> … social, existential, and individual tendencies. … I was more occupied then with the oppressed as a social class. … this does not mean I was ignoring the many forms of racial oppression that I have denounced always and struggled against even as a child (Mayo, 1999:113).

Freire further argues that he has always fought against all form of discrimination:

> I have worked against forms of racial oppression, which is keeping with my desire, and need to maintain coherence in my political posture. I could not write in defence of the oppressed while being a racist just as I could not be a machista either (Mayo, 1999:113-114).

In his book *Learning to Question*, quoted in Hooks (1994), Freire argues that women need to accept support of men including him to their cause, like workers who need to accept the contributions of intellectuals:

> Then, if the women must have the main responsibility in their struggle they have to know that their struggle also belongs to us that is to those men who don't accept the machista position in the world. The same is true of racism. …I have a duty and a right to fight with black people against racism (1994: 57).

Therefore it seems that for the total emancipation of the participants and to bring about education in a participatory action research project, Freire's precepts make a positive contribution to understanding how to engage people in their everyday lives. The use of this perspective in this study because of its liberating precepts, which can motivate the downtrodden, enabled those living in hopelessness to have hope. The acquired hope led participants to act by standing up for their rights, seek new rights hence the ability to engage in active citizenship. In order to deepen understanding as to how to bring about emancipation it then became imperative to explore organisational theories in the next section, because if functioning in an empowering manner they can facilitate the emancipation of the oppressed.

3.3.5 Organisational Theories

Organisational theories could be understood as metaphors for how individuals comprehend the improvement of their lives in collaboration with others. For McNiff, (2000) an organisational theory:

> … constitutes the descriptions and explanations that people offer for how they understand and improve their lives in the service of others in the organisational context (McNiff, 2000: 243).

In order to gain an insight into appropriate ways of encouraging an egalitarian environment at MRSN and the refugee organisations I felt it would be useful to contrast the ethos of classical and new organisational theories in analysing organisations working with refugees and asylum seekers including MRSN*.*

3.3.5.1 Classical Organisational Theories

I argue that Classical Organisational theories are contrary to the development of forms of emancipation; instead they create rulers and subjects. Classical Organisational theories are a combination of scientific management, bureaucratic and administrative theories. Scientific management is based on Fredrick W. Taylor's (1856-1917) theory that is often referred to as 'Taylorism'. It is defined by four principles which are; exploring the best way a worker can perform a given task by breaking it down into simple sequences of steps, getting the right person for the right job, close monitoring of workers using the carrot and stick in order to motivate and keep a 'tight grip' on the workforce. Taylor's philosophy was based on production at the expense of the workers, however it led to less production because of workers' low morale due to the lack of belonging to the organisation (Coulshed *et al*, 2006).

Building on Taylorism the bureaucratic theory of organisational management was propounded by Max Weber (1864-1920). This refers to the creation of a distinct chain of command, which is a hierarchical structure to avoid ambiguity and maintain stability and uniformity. It emphasised on the division of labour and specialization, hence job descriptions and job specifications. The theory recognised that the culture prevailing in an organisation comes about through the interactions of members (Coulshed *et. al*, 2006). The main thrust is to make people submissive by following instructions and completing tasks to perfection. This could be achieved by the use of three forms of authority; charisma whose thrust is personal and may have visionary authority, the hereditary traditional authority and rational-legal authority, which place value on 'personal and organisational authority'. Weber defines this theory as a hierarchy of offices and posts hence an emphasis on 'job description', rather than individuals, (Coulshed *et al*, 2006:29).

The administrative theory (Neo Classical Organisation Theory) developed as a way of addressing the problems created by Classical management. For example it challenged the tough authoritarian structures, which it identified as inflexible and mechanistic (Mooney and Reiley, 1931). It further challenged the discourse that people were motivated to work by material gains. The theory turned its attention to focussing on people's needs in a non-punitive and caring way. Using this approach in the Hawthorne Electric Plant in Illinois, Mayo (1933) concluded that it produced workers who were prepared to work hard for the organisation as they had a sense of ownership and belonging. This is what is referred to as a 'wart' theory of productivity (Uris, 1986), because a wart could be treated by nearly anything. This implied that planning with wisdom normally yields positive results. "The implication is plain: intelligent action often delivers results" (Uris, 1986:225). However, it has been argued that academics and professionals manipulated workers and data to produce positive results:

> The result is usually a lot of wheel spinning and cynicism… probable it is about researchers (and managers) manipulating and 'playing tricks' on employees (Pascale, 1990:103).

Broadly classical and neo-classical organisational theories identify the organisation as an entity with well-planned procedures that are strictly obeyed in order to maintain the ethos. In an organisation like MRSN and other refugee organisations, whose reliance of workers is mostly on volunteers, to subscribe to the perspectives of the classical and neo-classical organisational theories would be contrary to its vision and values. MRSN's ethos is to empower people by creating a participatory environment, which allows for the voice of every member to be heard. Therefore, with such theories it was paramount to explore an alternative organisational approach that could enhance egalitarianism in organisations, therefore improve working conditions leading to better service provision.

3.3.5.2 Towards a democratic form of organisation

An alternative form of organisation to that of hierarchy and inequality is based

on the principles of equality and freedom (as in Balibar's expression égaliberté) (see sub section 3.51) leading to 'horizontal' or radically democratic forms of organisation (Laclau, 2005). Unlike the traditional theories, which were about places in hierarchies, I sought approaches to organisational development that are about people's lives that are about social change and are generative and transformational in order to:

> … enable people to change their minds and practices as they attempt to live out values more fully (McNiff and Whitehead, 2000: 244).

Such an approach draws on those humanist and democratic paradigms that endeavour for an egalitarian perspective in order to encourage participation in decision making. These approaches are in effect educational because they argue that the organisation should be a place of learning, so that people participate in the decision making process. For example, Antonacopoulou *et al* (2006) argue that:

> … this perspective is not institutionalised in formal educational settings or organised by external agents in terms of efficiency, but realised in complex organisations and the logics that prevail there. Learning this way is part of human existence and development in the social setting of work and organisational life and living (2006: 3).

Learning in a work place therefore creates an organisational culture, which is about how things are done in a specific organisation, which for example includes behaviours, and how decisions are made (Braksick, 2000 and Daniels and Daniels, 2005). Broadly it is about human conduct, which impacts on performance, recruitment, rewards and recognition using conflict as a creative force. In such an organisation if it is to be based on mutual learning then every voice is to be respected and considered in a process of collaborative working.

This study was about helping MRSN to become a collaborative organisation. However the participants had life experiences where they had been marginalised and were also in a hostile foreign land with most of the state apparatus against them. This is evident in the threats made by the Home Secretary at the time Teresa May: 'We're going to give illegal migrants a really

hostile reception' (Kirkup and Winnet, 2012). Additionally the participants were also of a different 'race' to the host community. I would argue I needed to adopt theoretical perspectives that were emancipatory and empowering in nature hence, I explored interpretivist, critical and Freirian approaches in section 3.4, because they complement each other. To complement the emancipatory and empowering perspectives it was imperative to explore emancipatory methodologies in the following section.

3.4 Methodologies

3.4.1 Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR is an emancipatory form of research that gives participants the voice to be active participants in the decision-making process about their future in order to achieve practical solutions to issues that affect them (Bradbury and Reason, 2001; Miller, 2003). It is grounded in action research and gives the participants the ability to change their prevailing paradigm of hopelessness for a new one of hope (Kagan and Burton, 2000). Participatory research is:

> A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people individually and more generally the flourishing of individuals and their communities (Bradbury and Reason, 2001:1)

I argue that in this study PAR was both emancipatory and a direction-giver to the investigation. PAR enhanced the experience of the participants and was concerned with developing practical knowing through participatory, demographic processes in recreating a meaningful human purpose:

> A wider purpose of action research is to contribute through this practical knowledge to the increased well-being economic, political,

psychological, spiritual of human persons and communities, and to a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the wider ecology of the planet of which we are an intrinsic part (Bradbury and Reason, 2001:2).

The primary goal for the use of PAR in this study was to impart knowledge that was useful to people in their everyday lives so that they would create an environment that was socially just. Fraser (2007) argues that for justice to prevail, it requires an environment that allows for dialogical endeavours on an equal basis on all levels of social interaction, be it political, family or work related. To have a meaningful and purposeful dialogue, there needs to be no institutionalised obstacles that prevent anyone from becoming a full participant in society. Fraser (2007) further argues that it should not be a cosmetic equality based on tolerance of the minority or disadvantaged (like the participants in this study who are the minority), but rather it should be a dialogue of mutual recognition among equals and anything contrary would create enmity between people. Similarly Mouffe (1993) argues that:

> ... the root cause of inequality in society, is the notion of domains of collective identifications that promote the delimitation of others, subsequently political antagonism is born. Such political antagonism has no restrictions to certain institutions or individuals, it is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition (1993: 3).

In situations like the one in this study there was a need for democratic approaches, which included all not perpetuate the oppression of one section in our society. If decision making processes enhance oppression by privileging one section of society over another, then:

> … democracy will be in peril, not only when there is insufficient consensus and allegiance to the values it embodies, but also when its agonistic dynamic is hindered by an apparent excess of consensus,

which usually masks a disquieting apathy. It is also endangered by the growing marginalisation of entire groups whose status as an underclass practically puts them outside the political community (Mouffe, 1993: 6).

Mouffe (1993) additionally asserts that what is needed is radical democracy, which recognises diversity, 'the particular, the multiple, the heterogeneous, everything that had been excluded by the concept of Man [sic] in the abstract'. Universalism is not rejected but particularised, what was required for the study was a radical 'articulation between the universal and the particular' (1993: 13). PAR was chosen for this study because it is possible to organise it to meet the principles of radical democracy within a PAR project. For example by demanding human rights as a universal principle in the context of their particular circumstances of seeking the right to stay in the UK.

In my study the participants adopted democratic values, which facilitated a multiplication of democratic practices, institutionalizing them into ever more diverse social relations. A multiplicity of subject positions were enabled and formed through democratic practices. This motivated the participants in the study to not only defend the democratic processes, but to also be emboldened. Hence the study became a project of radical plural democracy, which entailed the existence of multiplicity, plurality and conflict between viewpoints, and sees in them the raison d'être of politics (Mouffe, 1993) as a process of seeking to create political and social rights through dialogue. Balibar (1994) argues that such rights should be political rights, which resonate in the 'unlimited right of all men (sic) to citizenship'. He advocates what he calls:

Equaliberty, which is a proposition that affirms a universal right to political activity and recognition for every individual, in all the domains in which the problem of collectively organizing possession, power, and knowledge is posed (1994: 212).

Balibar (1994) uses the term equaliberty to emphasise that freedom or liberty cannot exist without equality; the elimination of one is the elimination of the other. An example is that a billionaire has the ability to fund political parties, thus influence policy and legislation in a way that a poor person cannot. This in turn reduces the freedom of the poor person to influence politicians. Therefore this inequality reduces the freedom of many who do not have the power of wealth to influence decision-making. Freedom and rights have to be universal regardless of the status and wealth of people, hence 'the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, is a politics of the universalization of rights (and not merely a morality, an ethics, or even a religion of their universality).' This universality gives everyone the right to liberate him/herself by taking action rather than waiting in vain to be liberated. Equaliberty and the rights of men/women and citizen can only be achieved when the people who are oppressed overcome their oppression by taking a lead in the fight for their emancipation, not through other people's means.

My role was viewed as a means of facilitating the democratic approach to social organisation by using empowering perspectives as discussed above in section 3.4. Hence I saw my role as facilitating an inquiry, which should be viewed as a way of searching for alternatives to the norm:

> One should stop worrying about whether what one believes is well grounded and start worrying about whether one has been imaginative enough to think up interesting alternatives to one's present beliefs (Rorty, 1999:34).

In this view action research is concerned with whether the participants are 'imaginative enough' to achieve in terms of integrating inquiry and practice in peoples' lives in order to transform their circumstances for a better life (Reason and Bradbury, 2001). These emancipatory principles required everyone to be involved in identifying, planning, monitoring and evaluating the changes that were taking place. In the setup of the study there was no exclusion of

contributions because that would have been negligence and self-defeating; all voices were taken on board.

In attempting to do this however, difficulties can be experienced where for example some people who are supposed to be recipients may hold deep rooted assumptions and ideas and sometimes be critical of the engagement (Armstrong, 2004), or are afraid of embracing emancipation (Freire, 1996), and therefore resist divergent perspectives. Freire (1994) argues that people who have been oppressed for a long time fear freedom, hence they resist. Such people have a lot of anger in them and as result they may end up developing the perspectives of the oppressors and sometimes wish to take the place of their oppressors, in the process lose focus of emancipating themselves and others:

> A society beginning to move from one epoch to another requires the development of an especially flexible, critical spirit. Lacking such a spirit men {and women} cannot perceive the marked contradictions which occur in society as emerging values in search of affirmation and fulfilment clash with earlier values seeking self-preservation (Freire, 1973:7).

In order to address the issues of marginalisation, oppression and hopelessness, I employed formative research as a way of bringing about empowerment and giving a voice. Higgins *et al*, (1996) argue that the formative study plays a central part in any involvement in a study and:

> … should continue throughout the life of a project to 'fine tune' the intervention overtime. … can be applied at all levels of behavioural intervention activities, whether clinic based (one-on-one and group interventions), street based, community level, or mass level (such as national media prevention campaign) (1996: 29).

Formative research as an element of PAR, employed in this thesis, involved scrutinizing the known problem of MRSN and approaches it with methods that were empowering and giving voice to the participants (Andreasen, 1995). It

could be defined as a developmental action study that is deliberately meant to improve theoretical design to enhance knowledge to conscientise individuals to develop critical approaches to practice (Reigeluth, 1989 and Romszowski, 1988). It entails questioning: "What is working, what needs to be improved, and how can it be improved?" (Worthen and Sanders, 1987:36).

To aid in the process of mapping the key issues to be addressed during the formative stages, I employed an ethnographic approach to enable me to explore the voiced experiences of participants.

3.4.2 Ethnography

Ethnography, studies participants in their natural environments and is concerned with how people live and how people define and recreate their cultural worlds (Goldbart and Hustler, 2005). In this study I employed some ethnographic approaches in order to gain access to people's diverse ideas, values and practices. This was achieved by the use of methods that capture people's social meanings and ordinary activities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005). I participated directly in the setting of activities to collect data in a systematic way with less interference. Therefore, my approach involved close association with the participants, as I participated with them at MRSN. That is, I acquired knowledge from participant observation or 'first-hand' observation. I was actively involved in the participants' daily lives for three years. I watched what happened and listened to what was said and asked questions, collecting whatever data was available to throw light on the issues that were the focus of my study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005 and Brewer, 2000).

My study could be called humanistic ethnography, which Brewer (2000) refers to as:

> … 'getting close to the inside', (intimate with the participants) 'telling it like it is', giving 'thick description' and 'deeply rich' data" (capturing the voices of the participants) (2000: 37).

This is being part of the participants observing, listening, starting conversations and discussing intimately with them in their environment and in the process capturing their voices to relate their stories as they told them. (Kitzinger, 1999) argues that ethnography is appropriate for exploring in depth cultural issues that can only be accessible to someone who is part of the setting or is accepted as a member of the community. My accessibility allowed me to provoke discussions about particular issues, listen to responses and then record them. Sometimes this involved observing, listening to people discussing and taking an active role which entailed being a participant observer, without disempowering the participants in the process. Such activities made me understand not only what the participants were relating to but also the context in which it was said, hence thick description. This could not have been possible if I was not an insider researcher. The next section therefore explores the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher.

3.4.3 Insider Research

An insider research is an approach carried out by a member of the group or community or organisation that is under study. You're an insider if you are recognised and accepted as a participating member. As an insider you have significant understanding of the settings of the organisation that is being studied (Hellawell, 2006). I was an insider researcher because of my attachment to MRSN after having been a trustee for nine years prior to the study. I had the ability to scrutinise and challenge the prevailing paradigm from a knowledgeable standpoint (Costley *et al*, 2010). This was possible because I had held a high position in the organisation and had overseen its transformation.

As an insider, I was part of the refugee community through living and working in it, which led to inside understanding (Hellawell, 2006). I was free from dealing with culture shock; therefore I enjoyed an enriched relationship with the participants and had the ability of evaluating the validity of the responses to inquiries, and was perceived as trustworthy by the participants (Hockey,

1993). I employed qualitative methods, which involved reciprocal engagements with participants on an equal basis, and I created a harmonious environment by showing interest in discussions and that made the study more meaningful and rich in data collection (Harrison, et al, 2001 and Eide and Kahn, 2008). Reed and Procter (1995:195) concur by identifying 'idealised' criteria for insider research, which includes meaning a social process undertaken with colleagues that is educative for all participants. It is developmental and has the ability to identify and explore socio-political and historical factors that hinder progress. It gives the participants a critical perspective as they participate in decision-making, and enhances the capacity of participants to interpret everyday action. In this sense, I helped change situations, challenged the status quo from an informed perspective, and had easy access to people and information. I also had the advantage of being able to deal with the complexity of the work situation because of an in depth knowledge of most complex issues:

> Some work issues are beset with paradox and ambiguity, but an insider is often able to unravel and comprehend such intricacies and complications (Costely, 2010:3).

Kvale (1996) argues that insider research is an approach that allows understanding to develop through a coherent dialogue and communal critique among researchers in the process of identifying and interpreting a phenomenon. The collaborative and partnership approach to the study allowed for a wider exploration of ideas, which meant that I had access to most available data. The insider approach stimulated such corroboration between myself as the researcher, and the participants. This improved interdependence and shared association (Stamatoplos and Robert, 2004). The association was educational as all voices were valued as a way of improving MRSN and changing people's mind-set so that they could fight for social justice to achieve social change. This educative process involved suggestions, proposals, discussions, arguments, disagreements and compromises, from the researcher as well as the participants. However, this privilege of the insider researcher could potentially compromise the data collected.

Gunasekaia (2007) argues that the inside knowledge of the researcher is likely to influence the outcome and Hellawell (2006) concurs that researchers have been seen to reflect their own beliefs and values; furthermore participants may not be consulted on research methodology. Being an insider in this study could have been disadvantageous at times because some information might have been withheld if it had been deemed sensitive by any of the participants. It may be such information could have been divulged to an outsider who is anonymous to the organisation because that individual brings a differing interpretation and viewpoint (Smith, 1999). However I could not confer with an outsider researcher, because it was not possible in these circumstances. Murray and Lawrence (2000) argue that the collection of data by an insider is a sensitive affair because the findings could be discredited as being biased and therefore lacking validity and reliability. In this study sharing my findings with participants alleviated this, and sharing insights with everyone involved enabling feedback from both the researcher and the participants. This further included careful handling of sensitive data, which included high levels of anonymity. I argue, nevertheless, that the knowledge base needed to understand the information processes of certain professions, however, is such that an insider status can be more of help than a hindrance.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that dehumanised people can be empowered and given a voice if democratic and emancipatory perspectives are used and that the methods to be used for my study contribute to this purpose. This formative strategy involved participants having a voice in the development of themselves both as individuals and collectively; therefore it was appropriate to approach the study with liberationist theoretical perspectives. Empowerment perspectives provide the opportunity for participants to take charge of their situations and own the whole empowerment process. In such an environment, it is argued, participants develop greater confidence and feel less inferior and more like humans who should engage with the environment and value humanity. The chapter also discussed the need for emancipatory perspectives

of empowerment involving critical and Freirian principles in the quest of the study to engage people who are on the margins and to help them develop a spirit of active citizenship. With such a mind-set they are at liberty to identify their needs and devise the solutions to those needs. In subsection 3.4.5, it was argued that classical or hierarchical forms of organisational are inappropriate to meet emancipatory aims. Hence, there was a need to develop democratic forms of organisations that strive for an egalitarian environment that is collaborative and incorporates every voice. Such perspectives brought transformation to the participants, therefore the ability to be valued members of the society because they were able to engage and raise awareness about their plight. The egalitarian organisational processes helped create an environment that was conducive to participation, and also informed this transformation.

An egalitarian environment helped asylum seekers who were perceived as a marginal group to be able to demand a voice, even though there were many obstacles to their endeavours. The design of the study was for the participants to develop an understanding of how to engage and be prepared to engage with people in power who had no desire to empower the powerless. The oppressors may resist and any attempt to give power would be tokenistic due to the use of falsity and propaganda (Freire, 1972). They the oppressors use the same banking concept, which portrays knowledge as a gift bestowed by the knowledgeable. They treat the powerless as people who need a change of consciousness and fail to recognise the situation, which oppresses them. Due to this mentality they treat the oppressed as marginal people who have diverted from the norm and are in need of integration (Freire, 1996). Thus for the powerless to become empowered, they have to demand power from the powerful, and this was the guiding principle within the study (Freire, 1973).

Discussion of such issues showed that an appropriate methodological framework of this study would need to take into account the importance of the emancipation of the participants. Participatory action research was chosen in order to help participants identify their intentions and therefore strive for social justice. It allowed the participants to express their purpose in order to achieve practical solutions to issues that affected them. It also helped in developing the collaborative spirit and through participatory activities they became motivated

and strove to change the prevailing paradigms for new ones. Ethnography was employed as a way of getting close to participants; gain trust and develop understandings that enabled me to adopt a formative strategy. My insider researcher position gave confidence to the participants to engage in the study. The next chapter explores the methods that were central in the collection of data and its analysis.

CHAPTER 4 METHODS, ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the theoretical perspectives that aim to empower and give voice to the participants needed to be appropriate. The following chapter will therefore focus in more detail on the empowering and voice giving methods that were used for data collection; participant observation as an insider, interviews, focus groups and comparative studies. The chapter further discusses the participants and explores ethical issues, the analysis of data, the limitations of the study, barriers and then reflects on the insider researcher.

4.2 Participant observation

As an insider who then became a researcher and engaged in participant observation I will discuss some of the challenges this raised. The change of status impacted both positively and negatively on the relationships between my former colleagues and myself because they could give data freely or be selective. The use of participant observation enabled participants to give data without the pressure of adjusting to an interview or group environment. Even though overt ethnographers inform the participants fully, it is difficult to keep reminding, and therefore speak freely without preparation like in interviews.

In my case, it would have been disruptive to keep informing the participants each time there was an engagement. Punch argues that such behaviour; "will kill many a research project stone dead" (Punch, 1986:36). The key attribute of participant observation was that it enabled the understanding of social phenomena in natural settings, with emphasis on the meanings, experiences and views of the participants (Newman *et al*, 2005). Participants speaking without pressure, with fewer restraints reinforced my study, which focused on empowering refugees and asylum seekers in the capacity building of MRSN

as well as helping them to use the knowledge and skills to participate in the communities they lived in. As I could not just rely on participant observation I conducted interviews (explored in the following section) in order to complement participant observation.

4.3 Interviews

The interviews were either digitally recorded or recorded by making notes depending on what participants were most comfortable with. The data was then analysed to develop the findings, which are given in the section headings in chapter 5 and 6. This type of data collection allowed for in-depth understanding of people's personal experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as organisational functioning. The interview method was about discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organising these into concepts (Strauss and Corbin, 1996). This was made possible by using semi-structured questions in the in-depth interviews, which enabled participants to reveal their feelings, thought processes and emotions (Strauss and Corbin, 1996 and Stern, 1980).

The semi-structured questioning (examples: (1) what could be done to improve services at MRSN to meet the needs of all organisations? (2) What is your understanding of empowerment?), which involved understanding how interventions worked and how it could be improved, gave the respondents the opportunity to express themselves and clarify and elaborate on their responses. It is unlike the structured interview technique, which is most associated with questionnaires as the instruments of data collection (May, 1997). When questionnaires are used in interviews it has been argued that the interviewees treat the researcher as a stranger thereby compromising valuable information (Benny and Hughes, 1984). In particular, structured interviews involve the researcher directing the conversation, which can sometimes result in bias and an imposition of ideas, which the informants would not have thought

about beforehand (Brewer, 2000). Hence I made a move towards a conversational form where there is more give and take.

The semi-structured format promoted dialogue between the participants and the researcher, which was effective for pursuing and obtaining more information from more expansive responses (Fielding, 1988). The semi-structured interview also allowed the interviewees to answer questions on their terms, as compared to directed discussion (May, 1997).

The semi-structured questioning also allowed interviewees the freedom to explore the topics and use in open-ended questions. This approach might be criticised for its openness in that participants can go off topic, but these can be fused into positives as they allow the interviewees to discuss the subject according to their understanding therefore producing more valuable information (May, 1997). This technique also reduces bias on the part of the interviewer because issues, which may have been discarded or ignored, can be brought to the attention of the researcher. It is up to the researcher to sift through the information to make meaningful findings through close analysis to capture data that is relevant to the study findings; this is explained further in section 4.10. It was vital that the research was focused and at the same time flexible in nature, giving interviewees the freedom to openly explore the topic (Pahl, 1995).

Oakley (1997) however argues that interviewing lacks thorough interaction and is a one-way process which gives the researcher the liberty to 'elicit and receive' while giving out nothing in return. There is a minimal personal relationship and freedoms of debating on a topic as interviews tend to be more fixed. These deficiencies have been highlighted by qualitative emancipatory researchers because of their sensitivity to power dynamics in research. They argue that the one to one interview empowers the researcher and does the

opposite to the participants (Oakley, 1997). Interviews done in isolation are considered as:

> Cut off from interactions and relationships with other people and the research has to: turn away from the theory of the causal nature of the inner dynamic and look to the social context within which individuals live (Weinstein, 1993:200).

The shortcomings of the interview method therefore meant that there was a need to apply other qualitative methods like focus groups, which is explored extensively in the next section. Focus group is both formative and participatory because it balances researcher/participant interactions.

4.4 Focus groups

The focus groups were invited through phone calls, letters, emails and word of mouth and venues that were chosen were those appropriate to each group. The venues included church halls, MRSN hall and library halls. A focus group is a qualitative research method in which participants have the opportunity to express their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes in groups, unlike interviews where the participants are isolated. It is:

> … an important tool for scrutinising information, thoughts, narratives, the behaviours and semantic arguments in contextual settings (Kitzinger, 1999:5).

Feminists who encourage the use of focus groups as the ideal research method argue that it enables the participants to feel empowered by their peers who are in similar positions and that this leads to them sharing their

experiences, and potentially empowering the participants (Oakley, 1981; Morgan, 1993 and Hoppe *et al*, 1995). Fine and Gordon (1989) further argue that relationships with others are a paramount part of the social context:

> If you really want to know either of us do not put us in a laboratory, or hand us a questionnaire, or even interview us separately alone in our homes. Watch me with ... other women friends, my son, his father, my niece or my mother and you will see what feels authentic to me (1989: 159).

The focus group method involved group discussions that focused on distinct phenomena that aimed at exploring participant opinions, wishes and concerns; in this case the services provided by MRSN to refugees and asylum seekers, the treatment at report centres and the discriminatory treatment. The participants encouraged one another and exchanged their views. The method was useful in that the group had the liberty to formulate concepts and deliberate on the concepts according to the group members' understanding, which is in line with empowerment studies. It also allowed me to analyse differences of opinion in a group setting rather than from interviews at an individual level. It enabled me to analyse the formation of concepts and how they were suppressed and manipulated through peer group dynamics (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999).

Some focus groups allow participants to debate with some freedom; this allowed views, which could not be expressed individually to be freely discussed because of the warmth or supportive nature of the group. The naturalistic tendency of the method gave participants the freedom to discuss a variety of topics and the debates sometimes stimulated more understanding of the subject matter. The egalitarian nature of the method can encourage even the

reluctant participant to contribute to the debate and that makes the findings rich in data (Morgan, 1988).

Focus groups are distinct from other groups because of their explicit use of group interaction as research data. Respondents can feel more valued in terms of what they talk about concerning their experiences and their attempts to understand the world thus enabling a diversity of opinion to be revealed (Merton *et. al,* 1956; Morgan, 1988).

Focus groups in my study enabled participants to narrate their life experiences, and make sense of their lives:

> They speak of what has been, of their experiences, of words, of meaningful silences, of the said, of the heard (Freire, 1998:15).

My role as facilitator meant I avoided controlling the group by ensuring that I did not dominate conversations in order to minimise influencing the data (Bloor, 2001). This is also dependent on the nature of the study's objectives and the researcher's personal style, which this study needed because it was focused on the empowerment of the participants (Seale, 1999). Furthermore, as the facilitator I minimised my intervention as a means of maximising interaction by provoking debate or scrutinising some views (Kitzinger, 1999).

It could be argued that complete objectivity on the part of facilitators is not an easy task to achieve (Barbour and Kitzinger, 1999; Newman *et al*, 2005). Even

though it is not easy to achieve objectivity data from focus groups is more objective compared to questionnaires:

> Focus groups give researchers the opportunity to examine apparently perverse results generated by questionnaires and to unpack people's underlying presumptions (Boulton, 1994:166).

Focus group interactions develop hypotheses through exploration unlike questionnaires, which generate explanations through correlations. Focus groups involve multiple interactions while interviews are a two way process. Co-participants act as co-researchers, which is complementary (sharing common experiences) and argumentative (questioning, challenging and disagreeing with each other) (Kitzinger, 1999).

In addition, these focus groups were characterised by teasing, joking and acting out which sometimes occurs among the peers. It reached parts that other methods could not and in the process revealed dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by the more conventional one to one interviews or questionnaires (Boulton, 1994). However, this freedom of joking and teasing that goes on in focus group discussions would not suite everyone as some felt offended. The focus group method also:

> … tap into people's underlying assumptions and theoretical frameworks and draws out how and why they think as they do. The data generated by this method confronts the researcher with the multi-levelled and dynamic nature of people's understandings, highlighting their fluidity, deviations and contradictions (Boulton, 1994:168).

As they gave emotional narratives, which are idiosyncratic, mystifying and daunting, they argued talking had alleviated their anxieties (Craib, 2003). The

narratives of the participants were repetitions and revisions of experiences (Roberts, 2003), therefore artistic endeavours, which they argued was about emptying themselves of their heavy loads. Some of the narratives enhanced their well being; however, some seemed to perpetuate passivity and disconnect participants from their genuineness (Craib, 2003). In addition Horrocks, *et al,* (2003) argue that the self, could be viewed as a 'library of stories' and what matters is:

> … that we try to characterise people's lives...there is an acceptance of the need to look at how people actually live and make sense of their lives (2003: xv).

In the study the focus group method therefore proved to be inappropriate for sensitive issues because for some people as they were too open in terms of what could be revealed and my role as a facilitator was to help minimise sensitivities. Furthermore, extrovert peers would dominate the introvert participants and some participants were not comfortable with some revelations that they felt were taboos in their cultures, and therefore developed introvertism (Kitzinger, 1994). In addition, Mitchell (2008) in her research on young people's experiences found that some participants could not contribute to the discussion on sensitive issues in the focus group setting but in interviews they were able to speak more openly about those same issues. By combining the two methods, Mitchell (2008) collected more in-depth and rich data.

It should be understood that according to Freire, saying one's experience is 'reliving' the experience:

> I need to speak of the spoken, of the said and the not said, of the heard, of the listened to. To speak of the said is not only to re-say the said, but also to relive the living experience that has generated the saying that now, at the time of the resaying, is said once more. Thus, to re-say, to

speak of the said implies hearing once again what has been said by someone else about or because of the saying that we ourselves have done (Freire, 1998:15).

The opportunity given in expressing oneself in the presence of peers can enhance one's demeanour; however, it can also be a difficult experience when one relives traumatic events that have occurred in the past. For my part as the researcher I was aware of such eventualities and I clearly gave my participants referrals, e.g. counselling if things discussed affected them.

4.5 Comparative studies

Comparative studies were employed because there was the desire to share and learn from others' expertise. In this case from the six organisations discussed in chapter five, I will call Dibutibu, Sipepa, Bulawayo, Victoria Falls Network, Luveve Forum and Mzilikazi Forum. Comparative studies can be defined as a social science method that endeavours to make comparisons of a wide spectrum of entities that could include countries or cultures, or in this study, organisations that provide services to refugees and asylum seekers (Clasen, 2004).

The research aim was to compare organisations and identify how they were formed, governed, worked in collaboration, the kinds of services they provided and most of all their sustainability and then sharing this with the participants as a capacity building of MRSN. The major problem however, is that it is very difficult to reach conclusive findings because of the compared cases' variant settings and definitions of terms. It has been argued that there is no single methodology for this kind of study (Heidenheimer, *et al*, 1983) and hence a

multidisciplinary approach was used employing a range of methodologies and methods as my study did (Jones, 1985).

4.6 The participants

My study was not aimed at generalisability or representability in a statistical form, as this would not be appropriate considering the aim of the study, which was to empower by giving a voice to refugees and asylum seekers in Greater Manchester to build the capacity of MRSN. It was an appropriate sample (it was representative in terms roles, community group and gender) that would shed light on an organisation and its participants to enable some issues to be raised and hopefully acted upon (Denscombe, 1998 and Punch, 1998).

The study involved participants from RCOs, staff, volunteers, trustees, individual refugees and participants from six organisations, three in Greater Manchester two in West Yorkshire, and one the North East. These other organisations were chosen for comparative purposes and because of their work with refugees and asylum seekers. A total of fifty-eight people were interviewed and sixty-two participated in the focus groups, while participant observation involved some of the participants involved in interviews/focus groups and fifty more individuals.

The nationality and ages of the participants have been kept confidential, as this would have unmasked their anonymity. If nationality were to be exposed it would have compromised anonymity because MRSN is an organisation where people know each other as refugee organisations are formed according to nationality. There was no deliberate choice of the gender to participate; it was the participants who made themselves available, except with the trustees where I tried to obtain opinions according to gender. The interviews were digitally recorded and note taken to avoid loss of data with participants given

the choice of which methods to be involved with. The focus groups involved RCOs, volunteers and campaign groups.

Interview Participants

Category	Numbers	Gender
RCOs	10	3 women 7 men
Trustees	7	2 women 5 men
Staff	10	6 women 4 men
Volunteers	10	7 women 3 men
People living in destitution	10	8 women 2 men
Six organisations' representatives	6	3 women 3 men
Others	5	1 woman 4 men
Total		**30 women and 28 men**

Table 1

In Table 1, 'others' refers to some former staff members and people who were involved with MRSN from its inception. It is evident that there are more men leaders of the RCOs and trustees as compared to women, however there are more women volunteers and people living in destitution than men. The imbalance between men and women was because almost all RCOs affiliated to MRSN were led by men, and those that were led by women were mostly women only organisations because they were operating parallel with men's groups from their communities because of cultural or religious reasons. However, the volunteering and destitution categories are predominantly

women because from my study I found that men were uneasy about to talk about their destitution and were also reluctant to volunteer.

Focus group participants

Category	Groups	Number in group	Gender
RCOs	2	6	4 women 8 men
Volunteers	2	10	15 women 5 men
Refugee Migrant Forum	3	10	20 women 10 men
Total			**39 women** **23 men**

Table 2

The volunteers and the forum have more women than men because when the number of women increased and were enabled to participate while the men started to withdraw. It is not clear what caused this, however one man stated that he could not 'stand women'. I asked some men who used to attend and they mainly gave the reason as that of lack of time. However it is difficult to conclude that it could be lack of time or not 'standing women'. The validity and

reliability of the study hinged on the good ethical practices of the researcher hence the next section.

4.7 Ethical issues

In view of the sensitivity of the issues and the vulnerability of the participants' ethics was more than just dealing with ethics committee formalities. The participants were a diverse group with refugees, asylum seekers who were still awaiting decisions on their asylum claims, refused asylum seekers and those living in destitution, therefore vulnerable. Such groups except refugees, I would argue might have assumed that the study would have a positive or negative impact on their claim. The ethical issues could also arise because of my previous involvement with MRSN that could have made the participants feel obliged to participate. I made it clear that they were not obliged to participate and the study would not have any effect on the immigration issues but that it was about empowering them in decision making about things that affected their lives.

More formally, in conducting this study, I sought the approval of the university sub-committee of the Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC), and Manchester Refugee Support Network Ethical Governance. I also adhered to the British Sociological Association (BSA) guidelines of ethical review and governance. Ethics are the cornerstone of any research study because the credibility and validity of the methods used in data collection are influenced by the ethical principles and procedures governing their use (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995 and Warwick, 1982). In respect of the Data Protection (1998) and the Human Rights Acts (1998), information collected was kept in a locked

cabinet only used for the purposes of the research, only exposed if necessary to my supervision team and will be destroyed 3 years after the publication.

In order to articulate ethics in practice, my earlier ethical training and social work skills had helped me to successfully conduct my previous research study (Masters in Research) which involved unaccompanied minors whom I believe were more vulnerable than this group because of their age. I drew upon this earlier experience to make sure that the relationship between the participants and me, the manager, the staff, the trustees, volunteers and the RCOs did not compromise confidentiality and therefore affect the validity and reliability of the study. I endeavoured to protect and not expose the participants by using letters of the alphabet, rather than real names. All participants had to fully consent freely without any duress, whether in the focus groups or interviews. I explained to participants that they had the right to withdraw at any stage of the study without any explanation. However, it could be questioned whether this could be considered as informed consent, because the participants lacked experience of the academic process (Thomas and Byford, 2003). Fully informed consent is difficult to obtain from this group because they lack the research skills and:

> … language, culture, religion, social norms, and experience of oppression may make it difficult to obtain truly informed consent (Thomas and Byford, 2003:1400).

However in my study I did the best I could to obtain fully informed consent as discussed above. During the study, intrusiveness was minimised by trying not to broach sensitive topics and the participants, especially the refugees and asylum seekers were not asked questions that related to their experiences in

their home countries, ways of arriving into the UK, reasons for seeking asylum, or their families.

My flexibility, which was brought about by my social work experience and my research with unaccompanied asylum seeking children, enabled me to identify and eliminate issues that would have been difficult or unethical for the participants. Some participants (8) in the sample were reluctant to be digitally recorded because they felt it would be recorded when they made mistakes in the interview and some felt that they would be identifiable by their voices. They felt comfortable with the data being written down and their choice of method to be used for data collection was not questioned.

Participants had the choice of venue; some chose libraries, eating houses, their own offices and MRSN staff preferred the work place in the advice rooms and the manager's office which were all private. Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) argue that the venues of the meetings for the groups should not be work places or institutions of learning as they can be counterproductive, it should be a: "neutral setting, where participants will not feel influenced by the surroundings" (1999: 11). This was partly achieved except for the MRSN staff whose interviews were conducted within the work premises.

Putting all the formalities in place to avoid ethical dilemmas could not prevent them occurring. An example is a formative collaborative problem solving engagement meeting between staff and trustees, which instead of serving its purpose ended up creating resentment between staff and researcher on one hand and trustees on the other. This was because trustees wanted the source of all the negative assertions about the governance of MRSN. This development tested my ethical skills training and my experience as a researcher helped me to be very clear about protecting the informants and this infuriated trustees even more. The general feeling among the trustees was that staffs were misrepresenting the facts and that the research was biased towards them. I would conclude that this was the lowest point of my study. The whole engagement ended up with threats traded against me, and more

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resentment between staff and trustees. However, this did not hinder my resolve to make the study a success, so I used my position as an insider researcher in engaging with stakeholders informally and formally to diffuse the impasse. This is discussed in detail in the next sub-section.

4.8 Overcoming the barriers

I overcame the barriers that could have hindered the study through patience, focus, commitment, and I lovingly embraced every voice regardless of its tone and negativity as I navigated my way through the study. My supervisory team and my research colleagues played a big role in encouraging me when I was faced with barriers related to the qualitative research. The values instilled in me by my parents, my social work skills and research training helped me overcome the barriers the situation demanded with confidence and assertiveness skills, as I felt vulnerability with some of the participants.

My work with refugees and asylum seekers helped to deal with the language barrier and I was able to communicate with the participants who English was not their first language. The grammar in the English spoken by refugees can sometimes be poor for a person who has not worked with them and would have required the services of interpreters. However, my experience of working with this group enabled me to understand the language, which sometimes does not follow the correct pattern in sentence construction or tenses. This understanding required the skill of patience and calmness on my part. Using

the skills of research, such as vignettes enabled me to engage with participants of every persuasion.

Vignettes serve several purposes when used in research and in this study they were used to build rapport with the participants whilst collecting data (Finch, 1987). They have been recognised as useful tools before conducting interviews; it could be reading a story, a conversation of interest, presentation of pictures or any complex concept that could be of interest (Finch, 1987). My involvement with the participants in various activities had made me familiar with some of their interests, therefore my first approach in generating data. These interests ranged from current affairs in football or politics. I used this technique in my first research, which involved young people; however it was also useful in this study setting as a confidence building exercise.

The core technique of overcoming some barriers, I would argue was utilising my position as an insider researcher. This allowed me to gather data and carry out feedbacks both informally and formally. Being an insider enabled me to engage with participants anytime and anywhere and some even called me in the evenings to discuss matters concerning MRSN. This was a positive phenomenon because these discussions at times resolved some uncertainties before formal feedbacks and they made participants feel valued in the study. However, some saw me as threat to their perspectives and I understood this since I had been a trustee at MRSN before. I expected to be viewed with suspicion as someone interested in interfering. This was exacerbated by the fact that there were sections of RCOs, trustees and staff who had approached me and suggested that I be made Chair of Trustees. Therefore, initially the feedback was not received with much enthusiasm.

This necessitated a change of tact, instead of giving recommendations based on a single perspective, which is not liberatory; I explored different perspectives on issues. For example, in governance I explored the various organisational theories like the scientific, the bureaucratic and the humanistic perspectives. The exposure of different perspectives encouraged interest and

choices to the participants and it made them make informed decisions, hence liberatory. This could be that either MRSN as an organisation had appreciated the value of the research or that those who were not comfortable no longer felt threatened or that the change of direction made it easier for people to comprehend better.

I would also argue that the change in the receptiveness could stem from the perception that the feedback brought with it self-awareness concerning issues at MRSN and created feelings of reflection on individuals' actions. Therefore, such individuals reflected on their past decision making processes and scrutinised them (Antonacopoulou *et al*, 2006). It could be that the change of approach to liberationist (Freire, 1972) brought the realisation that feedback is learning, which is unpredictable and uncontrollable (Godwin, 1994), and is social in nature (Elkjaer, 1999). Consequently, this development brought benefits to MRSN. However in any study there will always be limitations and this one was no exception, hence the next section.

4.9 Limitations that affected data collection

Access to individual refugee community leaders was not a problem and they were forthcoming in making me aware of their predicaments in accessing support from MRSN. However, trying to engage the refugee community organisation as a whole or a full committee turned out to be a very difficult issue. This could be attributed to lack of time as the group members had different schedules. Moreover, sometimes I was referred to different people, who would claim they did not represent the group. This made me wonder if some organisations were 'one person' organisations, or if some existed just in 'name'. Therefore, the study with RCOs is based on representatives.

I found it very complex to interview MRSN staff; because I had been the Chair of Trustees before. It was difficult to tell if they would be objective or not in their

participation. My fears were that staff could try to portray me as having been a good Chair who had led a more functional committee than the current one. This fear was compounded by the fact that the existing committee was composed of new people except for the chair who had been a secretary and vice chair of the previous committees.

I was also aware that the majority of the staff had worked with different committees before and there was bound to be comparisons in their approach that could be objective or subjective. However, it could be argued that a researcher who identifies the problem is best suited to conduct the investigation rather than an unknown character that might struggle with gaining the trust of the participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005).

Furthermore Standpoint Feminists give an example of women having the privilege and higher status in the access of information about people's needs because they play a central role in socialising people (Harstock, 1987 and Harding, 1986). As I had played a socialising role in facilitating some of the participants in integrating with the host communities, therefore it seems to me that I may have had a similar privilege. However, my impartiality could be questioned and if I was not careful I could have 'gone native', as evidence suggests this is easy for qualitative researchers. I avoided going native by not influencing participants behaviours and by being objective in the application of emancipatory perspectives and encouraging making informed choices. This could have invalidated the whole study if the data was construed as biased and unreliable (Bryman, 2001).

I was also aware that the staff had worked for a considerable time in 2009 without a manager. This raised two fundamentally conflicting factors. Firstly, they had managed to function 'independently' and 'effectively' with little interference from trustees. Secondly, this autonomy had created a culture of independence, which had made people resistant to any changes that could emanate from any angle, therefore making it difficult to adjust to any new challenges that came with change. In the case of the new trustees they were

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coming into uncharted grounds and were prone to making a number of unintended errors of judgement, which was caused by inexperience. I observed some of the staff members picked on those deficiencies as a lack of leadership skills.

MRSN was going through a transitional phase as previously described. In summary: there were new trustees, a new manager, and a PhD student (i.e. myself) who happened to be a former trustee who had left the position while the staff and the RCOs still wanted him to continue. When my study began the trustees who had requested it had since left, therefore the new ones needed to understand the programme because they were partners to it by default. It took a lot of persuasion and time to understand the study because they did not understand the formative nature of the study that involved educational processes like feedbacks, discussions, strategic planning, acting on those strategies and monitoring them. In this respect, it was unlike those forms of research in which researchers collect data and disappear, just leaving a report.

The formative aspect was more involving and needed every participant to contribute. Such encounters created friction because the status quo was questioned. I have wondered if the trustees who had asked for it would have fully understood it, as I discovered even the staff members that were there when the methodology was formulated did not seem to understand it. They could be perceived, therefore, as passive rather than active participants.

When the new manager came into place, he wanted to assert his authority, which seemed anti-democratic yet he was learning about the organisation. To further complicate matters he did not have the background of managing a complicated organisation like MRSN, where the trustees had the last say or had the power to override any decision made in the name of the organisation. The anti-democratic practices created power struggles, much to the detriment

of the organisation's efficiency and people lost focus of what was expected of them.

The failure to embrace change and support the new way of management had led to a change of staff dynamics. The organisation had the manager and the trustees on one side and staff on the other at first. As this disharmony developed three anti-democratic conflicting alliances were formed, some staff and trustees on one side, manager alone and some staff in another corner. The disharmony led to the manager failing to effectively execute his duties well, as he was alienated. This led to him becoming ill, which led to him approaching the labour tribunal to claim constructive dismissal. This resulted in a lengthy and messy court proceeding which culminated in an out of court settlement, a massive solicitor's bill and full payment to the manager for the remaining months of his contract. The loss of a manager had a negative effect on the image of MRSN and its functions. An example is, the network concept failed to progress because he was the only individual at MRSN who valued the concept.

The people who remained with MRSN did everything to suppress the idea. Some of the trustees did not want to continue with the challenge of the networking programme. This is because the programme was about partnership and collaborative working, which would have meant visiting and sharing knowledge with other organisations. This would have exposed the fact that they had non-functioning organisations, i.e. not providing services and this would have been quite a negative image for their organisations. The network also meant staff from the three organisations would share the burden of supporting service users. I would argue from my engagement through observation that some members of staff involved did not like the new ways of working in collaboration with other organisations because their practice could have come under scrutiny. All the progress that had been achieved was under threat. Being an insider researcher was creating some animosity between some individuals and me. Such was the resentment that when people had a

disagreement, they were prepared to foil the good ideas because people they disagreed with were taking the lead like the manager as discussed above.

Under these circumstances, for effective changes to take place, patience and perseverance were needed, as there would be pushing and pulling, negotiation, arguments, contradictions, compromises and flexibilities for ideas to be successful. During the transitional periods, some were left behind because of a lack of understanding or being resistant to change, some could just follow blindly, while others could pull far ahead of the rest and this could cause a lot of uncertainties, anxieties and uneasiness. Freire (1973) argues that if people have less understanding of the world around them so as to act, they just follow the changes blindly:

> They see that the times are changing, but they are submerged in that change and so cannot discern its dramatic significance. … people cannot perceive the marked contradictions, which occur in society as emerging values in search of affirmation and fulfilment clash with earlier values seeking self-preservation. (1973: 7).

People get so immersed in such dilemma that they fail to realise the transitional period of the changes and the diverse ways the changes take place. This dilemma manifested itself for example in the PAR, in the introduction of formative processes and procedures in listening feedback, monitoring actions and in the development of voice in the context of organisational decision making.

During the transitional period, the formative nature of the research resulted in ethical difficulties as mentioned in section 4.7 when participants wanted to use the findings to challenge other participants, particularly my presentation of the interim findings to trustees generated a debate and controversial responses which led to one group making accusations against another, based on my

findings. The presentations came at a time when the trustees were still not confident of each other. Therefore controversies were expected and after finalising my report, I informed the trustees that I was ready to present my preliminary findings, and I explained the amount of time needed. At the time of the presentation I discovered that a staff member was presenting a report as well. We negotiated that the staff member postpones presentation so that I could have sufficient time. However I was given a maximum of 15 minutes. I declined to take this, and therefore a further date was set specifically for the presentation.

On the set date again there was confusion in that some believed after my presentation there would be some policy discussion. However the policy discussion was postponed because there was lack of time after my presentation. The presentation went well except for a few interruptions. Some of the findings did not please some of the trustees because they disagreed with the findings based on interviewing the staff and instead the trustees offered what appeared to be accusations. For example it was stated that staff members were scared of the trustees. The trustees also argued that they had demanded some work from staff and received nothing, which was construed to mean that staff members were not performing to the expectations of the trustees. It was suggested by some of the trustees that the study was biased.

It was also suggested that I was supposed to have briefed the trustees about staff findings and should have shaped my questions for trustees around those staff findings. In such a development, the trustees argued that they would have reacted to the 'accusations levelled against them'. My response was that if I had followed their suggestion that would be tantamount to influencing the outcome, which would be unethical. I also showed them the similarities of the questions, which were crafted at the same time as staff questions and that it was up to them to have aired their views concerning their problems with staff. I also reminded them that I had brought most of the concerns to their attention earlier and that they had said they would address them. For example I had told them about the low staff morale and other concerns, which I thought were critical and needed addressing urgently. I was asked if I could add trustees'

counter accusations of the staff to produce a balanced study. I acknowledged all the concerns and informed the participants that I would verify them. Interestingly, the trustees were more concerned about what was said by staff, but overlooked what had been said by their colleagues (trustees) who had argued that instead of building the capacity of MRSN, they were willing to 'destroy' it if given a chance. If I had mentioned it once in my feedback I would have assumed they would have missed out. However during my presentation I was interrupted and asked to elaborate (on my interim findings about trustees who were prepared to destroy MRSN), which I did, but there were no comments. However, most of the trustees seemed to embrace the document and said they needed the document to scrutinize it. The next section explores the data analysis of the study.

4.10 Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis were undertaken in parallel. I started with the formative study by conducting consultation gatherings, which helped formulate the interview questions. The validity, objectivity and reliability of my data, is based on my employing triangulation, by the use of three methods, participant observation, interviews and focus groups. After analysing data from the formative studies, I would feedback to the participants for further analysis, action planning and implementation. This feedback process contributed to validity and the development of key categories, themes and shared understandings. Schostak (2010) argues that:

> … the validity, objectivity, and, indeed, reliability of an observation, and object, a category, a meaning, a state of affairs, or an event is increasingly established through correlating or cross-checking a

multiplicity of viewpoints directed towards it over time and across contexts (2010:443).

There was continuous feedback from all participants and the researcher and scrutinising of data as well as refocusing as the study developed. That is, in the process of cross checking what was said in interviews with what was said in focus groups and with what was observed, I made note of what was similar in each case and what was different. This enabled me to get a sense of the key themes in common, their generalisation across individuals groups and contexts and what was significantly different between them. This kind of study required sensitivity in gathering and processing data otherwise it could have been compromised and violated ethics, and make participants feel insecure and raise emotions. In such a scenario the whole research would be rendered unreliable, therefore not valid, because the reliability and validity of research relies heavily on the strategies used to process the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

Data analysis strategies included reading of transcripts over and over again and listening to the digital recordings (Jackson, 2001), scrutinising the themes so as to avoid diverting from the original data, therefore minimising distortion. The process is reminiscent of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which is:

> A rigorous spirit of self-awareness and self-criticism, as well as openness to new ideas and continual revision and development as new evidence, or voices, emerge (Seale, 1999:104).

In terms of analysis I could have adopted such strategies as open, axial and selective coding or a more open-ended approach where key categories and themes arise from a repetitive comparison of data can. Open coding analysis is concerned with the identification, classification and definition of facts located

in a transcript in exploration of the reaction to recurrent inquiry. Axial coding is the process of identifying causative relationships, and fitting them into a simple structure of general connections.

Selective coding is the selection of one category to be the core and relate others to it. Open-ended coding is the analysing of comparatively unstructured responses and statements by participants from research interviews, focus groups and other conversations. I chose the latter because of the open-ended nature of the responses. From interviews, focus groups and participant observation the theme of governance in chapter 6 developed from such comments as in the following three extract examples out of the many:

Communication is essential. Accepting other people's opinion as well as valuing other people's opinion is key to good governance (volunteer).

We do not know who is managing us anymore, the manager is overlooked and we get directives from trustees (staff).

We are confused, as we do not know what next from trustees. We live in fear (staff).

Therefore the above extracts were coded, and organised to make sense of textual data then categorised as governance, lack of communication, managers being 'overlooked' by trustees, staff feeling confused and fearful. This then gave a sense of how governance was experienced.

Through triangulation, patterns emerged which had deeper social meanings that were derived from deeper scrutinising of data as compared to storytelling, which when taken literally can be misleading as discussed later (Huberman

and Miles, 1998). The following are examples of extracts that could mislead if taken literally:

We are supposed to work together like a family, but we are enemies (trustee).

They put you down when you raise a point and that creates anger and hatred (trustee).

After triangulation and read in conjunction with others, the above extracts mean lack of the creation of unified spaces of governance where disagreements and hostilities can be raised, debated and creatively resolved (Mouffe, 2005). Literal readings of stories can be misleading because some stories are ironic, i.e., saying one thing but meaning another. Some are deceptive in terms of deliberately covering what really happened or was meant. An example is the following sentence, which if taken literally would mean there is a lot enmity:

We are supposed to work together like a family, but we are enemies (trustee).

Yet when analysed and the context at which it was said and in conjunction with other data from participants like quotations above, it meant governance that does not allow for differences to be resolved constructively. Therefore there is always the need for triangulation, or cross checking with other forms of evidence. The following extracts from participants from subsection 6.3.1

indicate the emergence of various categories of empowerment to the RCOs and individuals by the activities in the Community Development project:

I am happy with Community Development, to my organisation it has done well. We have funding for the next three years and have the right premises to provide our community with the services they need (RCO rep).

The Community Development has helped us very much and my organisation is very stable. We have managed to get all the help we need (RCO rep).

The community development have afforded me access to workshops, and I have worked with other organisations, had training including leadership and immigration law (community member).

When I joined I did not have a background of working in the community, but I have learnt those skills from MRSN. I have benefited in training how to run an organisation and it is not only me but also my whole community (RCO rep).

I have gained social capital, knowing a lot of people, good and high level contacts, managerial experience and personal development (community member).

These different categories are; funding for RCOs, stability in RCOs, helping RCOs as well as the community gaining of social capital by individuals. These were analysed to find their contribution to the empowerment of the RCOs in the giving voice to the participants individually and collectively. Triangulation

was used in the identification of agreements from different perspectives, which reduced the possibility of bias that could have occurred from using just one viewpoint. This and the use of participants' language helped in acquiring of objectivity, validity and reliability in the research. Hence the verification of data through formative feedbacks, interviews, focus groups, discussions, empowerment, interpretive, critical and Freirian perspectives (Brewer, 2000). The use of multiple methods is useful in checking for consistencies (O'Donoghue and Punch, 2003).

It also provides a comprehensive and stable depiction of a specific situation (Altrichter *et al*, 2008). The concept of multiple methods helped to understand social phenomena with emphasis on the meanings, experiences, and views of the participants (Newman *et al*., 2005). An example was when observing participants not showing enthusiasm I could not tell from observation alone whether, for example, they were not feeling well or it was low morale. I could then find out through a conversation with participants instead of speculating the problems. The comparison of theoretical and empirical literature led to recommendations for further investigations (see section 7.5). Since it was a study of people's lives it affected how I felt after having conversations with participants, hence the next section develops analysis in relation to the emotional dimensions of the research process.

4.11 Emotional dimensions of the research process

How would you feel if people tell you that they have no place to sleep, they have nothing to eat, and then show you pictures of burnt bodies where they come from, yet their lived experiences are taken as fallacy or as fiction? Such stories add emotive feelings of powerlessness, which contribute another dimension of data analysis, and the development of themes of empowerment (see sub section 3.3.1). The experiences of talking to some participants made me realise and reflect on my personal experience and appreciate my immigration situation and personal achievements as well the feeling of being free. I had completed two university degrees and was studying for a third one,

however I felt this was only individual freedom as I could identify immigrants who were relatively so disadvantaged and struggling to make ends meet. Shor and Freire (1987) argue that:

> Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom (1987: 109).

I did not enjoy individualistic freedom; I therefore adopted humanistic ethnographic studies, which Brewer (2000) refers to as 'getting close to the inside' (a social feeling), 'telling it like it is', 'giving 'thick description' and 'deeply rich' data'. I felt it was important to be part of the informants' world to get a full understanding of their conduct in their settings, and move away from 'hypothesis testing, deductive analysis, description and measurement by means of assigning numbers' (Brewer, 2000:37). Data collection is often a complex experience; however with this group it was the most emotional experience I had ever had in all my data collection endeavours. I would manage to hold myself during the sessions, however afterwards I would feel emotionally drained and helpless. Sometimes I would have sleepless nights after reflecting on the participants' stories. Such experiences led to the development of the themes of empowerment and voice. The fundamental aspect of our humanness is the capacity to feel and to show emotion, when faced with situations that affect peoples' lives (Gilbert, 2001). Denzin (1994) asserts that:

> Emotionality lies at the intersection of the person and society, for all persons are joined to their societies through the self-feelings and emotions they feel and experience on a daily basis. This is the reason

the study of emotionality must occupy a central place in all the human disciplines, for to be human is to be emotional (1994: x).

Emotion, it can be assumed, is part of any research that involves intimate contact between the researchers and the participants. Dickson-Swift *et al*. (2009) argue that:

> If emotionality lies at the intersection of the person and society then it follows that emotions are a central part of social research (2009:61)

As researchers of sensitive issues we should be, 'both intellectually and emotionally' involved, we should also be careful that our studies are not only embedded in intellectual exercise, but should also be: 'a process of exploration and discovery that is felt deeply' (Gilbert, 2001:9). Furthermore, Lee (1993) asserts that:

> … sensitive research encompasses topic, the consequences, the situation and any number of issues that may arise: research which potentially poses a substantial threat to those who are or have been involved in it (1993: 4).

If one is true to the research, sensitive studies should have a similar impact in terms of harm and emotions to the researcher as much it as has on the participants (see section 6.6). Anything contrary to that would be abuse of the participants for the researchers' benefits. The next argument is what was I meant to do with the data - was I supposed to collect the data, disappear and use it as I wanted? That felt akin to washing my hands like Pontius Pilate in Matthew 27:24 in The Bible, who washed his hands and let Jesus be crucified even though he had committed no offence. Freire (1973) argues that washing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to

side with the powerful and not being neutral. Emancipatory theories like empowerment, participatory action research and Wenger's theories of Communities of Practice, dictate that a researcher does not just collect data for the sake of it, but that the data and its analysis in terms of themes and issues to be addressed is used as a tool for social change and social justice.

In facilitating collective empowerment as an approach to social change that addresses emotional issues helps those lacking motivation, but drain the researcher. I used collective empowerment as an enabler for the participants to develop the liberty of becoming partners with professionals and the researcher (Thomas and Pierson, 1995), and this led to collaborative working of all stakeholders. It was used as a vehicle by which the participants as individuals and as groups gained the emancipation to become determining agents of their situations and therefore take the steps to free themselves from oppressive settings and make the best out of their lives (Adams, 2003).

It could be argued that at times because of the emotionality of the process of empowerment people choose either to be: "person-solo" learning alone; or "person plus" which is learning with others (see section 6.6). Salomon (1993) argues that:

> People appear to think in conjunction or partnership with others and with the help of culturally provided tools and implements. Cognitions, it would seem are not content-free tools that are brought to bear on this or that problem; rather, they emerge in a situation tackled by teams of people and the tools available to them (1993: xiii).

Solomon further argues that if engagements, occasions and configurations were put in place there would be genuine learning, which would lead to cognitive partnership that will benefit the individual and the community. Participants came together in an organised manner and worked in partnership

in campaigns and in shaping MRSN's future. 'Thus it is not just 'person- solo' who learns, but the 'person-plus' the whole system of interrelated factors' (see section 6.7 and 6.9) (Salomon, 1993: xiii). The next section explores reflections of my insider role in this emotive study.

4.12 Reflection on my insider researcher role

In reflecting on my insider researcher role I would argue that carrying out the study at MRSN was both an exciting and daunting experience (see section 3.4.3). This was because I was also involved in its development from a network to a charity and subsequently had an in-depth knowledge of the organisation and its members and that also they trusted me and referred to me as a 'brother' they could relate to, 'I was one of them'. Like them, I had gone through the asylum process which included detention in order to acquire refugee status; I felt as a black, male refugee this would enable me to share and understand their experiences better than an 'outsider'.

Olson (1977) similarly argues that the researcher who shares a particular characteristic, for example gender, ethnicity or culture, with the researched is an insider, and everyone else, not sharing that particular characteristic, is an outsider (1977:171). However Mercer (2007) argues that other studies show that the boundaries between insider/outsider are far more complex, permeable and an unstable example in my study is the Christian-Muslim ways of dealing with women (2007:4).

I think it is plausible to say that my status within the group facilitated the participants to be trustworthy, honest and open in their responses to my study. The specific positive example of trust was, that despite being a devout Seventh Day Adventist Christian man; I was able to conduct interviews with individual Muslim women on a one to one basis without anyone else in the room. I would also argue that my insider position enabled me to motivate all the participants,

which included staff, trustees, RCOs and volunteers to actively participate more in the activities of MRSN and crucially, its development. I also felt this enhanced the collaborative partnership which empowered the participants to become active researchers in their own right. This also enabled data to be shared without fear and with openness and it brought joy and motivation to my study. However this sharing of data, because of my intimate attachment, also brought with it disappointments and sometimes anger as I learnt about the suffering and neglect the asylum seeker living in destitution had to endure. Such experiences affected the progress of the study, because the whole experience drained me.

There were also times when conflict and tension with former colleagues contributed to slowing and depressing the progress of the study as a whole. During such times I felt so demoralised that I felt like abandoning the whole study, however support from colleagues, supervisors, friends and family helped me to keep going. The conflict stemmed from the issues of power dynamics, when individuals mistook the concept of collaborative working to mean relinquishing 'Power'. This made the study more complicated and hard, because I had to constantly re-evaluate the research design and my role within it. The re-evaluating helped in cultivating a culture change in the organisation to allow for collaborative working and the need to engage the under-represented in a manner through which they would feel valued so that they would feel comfortable to engage and contribute. As the study progressed the majority of the stakeholders began to embrace the collaborative spirit, which was enhanced through my feedback. The engagement with women began to be more encouraging and accommodative and the women themselves developed an emancipatory spirit by being assertive. As a result the organisation's activities are now more representative of all stakeholders.

During the course of the study, even though my being an insider impacted positively, I also realised that it impacted negatively on the research findings and perhaps the participants' own experience (see section 4.9). One of the main ethical principles, underpinning undertaking research is the guarantee of confidentiality; in this instance this was potentially problematic. It could be

argued that some participants might have been reluctant (Smith, 1999), to share or divulge some sensitive information to me, which they felt it might have been potentially damaging to either themselves or the organisation if made public. In contrast, I would argue such information could have been divulged to an outsider who is anonymous to the organisation and is therefore able to adopt a more independent and neutral position and interpretation (Smith, 1999). In addition, Murray and Lawrence (2000) argue that the findings of an insider researcher could be discredited as being biased and therefore lacking validity and reliability. In this study, I felt this concern was addressed as participants were involved (see chapter 6 emphasis section 6.9) with each stage of the process and all findings were shared and discussed.

4.13 Conclusion

From the above discussion I am able to conclude the appropriateness of the research methods for the kinds of studies undertaken in the fieldwork. My broad research aim was empowering refugees and asylum seekers, and I would conclude that the chosen data collection methods and analysis were empowering. My insider researcher position was the key to empowering, because it gave the participants trust that gave them motivation to participate and have a voice. The combination of my insider researcher position, the research methods (sections 4.2 to 4.5), and the ethical assurances in the protection of data enabled them to express their voices in very sensitive and emotional topics. Comparative studies methods empowered them by broadening their understanding of the approaches of other organisations. The involvement in the analysis of data in the formative sessions, which also mapped future plans, was very empowering. The following chapter explores

the findings of the studies as a result of using six case study organisations as a comparative to MRSN.

CHAPTER 5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION FROM THE SIX ORGANISATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of studying the six organisations was to gain insights that would be formative for the radical democratic capacity building of MRSN as described in sections 3.3, 3.3.1 and 5.2. This chapter addresses four research questions, which are fully stated in section 1.6. In brief these are: i) the effectiveness of participatory action research in promoting empowerment, ii) the role of the third sector in empowering, voice giving, and what promoting active citizenship involves, ii) what community empowerment and voice giving entails and iv) finally it addresses whether people who have been dehumanized can be

empowered to have a voice. This study was a knowledge acquiring adventure, which was undertaken to compare and contrast how the six organisations empowered and gave voice to refugees and asylum seekers. This part of the doctoral study is based on data collected through interviews from representatives of the 6 organisations. Three of the organisations were in Greater Manchester, which I will call Dibutibu, Sipepa and Bulawayo. The other three organisations were: two in Yorkshire, I will call Victoria Falls Network and Luveve Forum; and one in the North East, which I will call Mzilikazi Forum. In the analysis (see approach taken in section 4.10) of this comparative data the following themes developed; governance, representation, development of refugee community organisations, the voice of the voiceless, youth work and concern with financial stability.

The goal was to find out the extent to which the organisations operated democratically and whether they viewed themselves as belonging to a community of practice or simply to a loose set of networked coalitions or alliances that jointly or separately fight for social justice, seek joint funding and deliver services in enhancing democracy. A network in the context of the study could be likened to the formation of loose coalitions or alliances by organisations that work together in fighting for social justice, seeking joint funding, delivering services in collaboration and at times sharing the same office space. These alliances maintain their independence but share a unified political space where differences are debated in a way resembling radical democratic practices (Mouffe, 1993). Mouffe and Laclau (2001) describe radical democracy as involving:

> The rejection of privileged points of rupture and confluence of struggles into a unified political space, and the acceptance on the contrary of the plurality and indeterminacy of the social ... radical libertarian and infinitely more ambitious in its objectives than that of the classic left (2001: 152).

Mouffe and Laclau (2001) reject a unified political space because consensus is never fully achievable in society. Thus, unified political spaces may be agreed upon but they can only be temporary and restricted to particular circumstances, because new conditions arise that would destabilise them.

These later chapters attempt to explore the development of provisional unified political spaces as a means of underpinning mutually agreed actions on the understanding that with changing circumstances and new points of view these will be challenged and rethought. There was need for the recognition of plurality of values, cultures, and visions, ends that create the symbolic space within which the differences can be articulated and decisions made that respect the differences. In such a unified political space members collectively deal with problems that single members cannot handle alone, share ideas and resources, help members to develop, provide better services (Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). This could be similar to communities of practice where groups meet for a common cause, which could be a loose coalition of people who share expertise, and meet regularly without an agenda. Sometimes they communicate through emails or other social networks (Wenger et al, 2002). However for the communities to thrive individually and collectively there is need for sound governance, which is a combination of debate, consensus building, alliance building and creating the provisional unified political spaces for creative inclusion of difference. 6 organisations were explored in order to get insights into whether they have forms of governance that are appropriate to the development and management of the emergence of provisional unified political spaces for the undertaking of mutually agreed actions. Those insights would then inform the formative study at MRSN; hence the next section explores governance.

5.2 Governance

I would argue that forms of governance are the core component in any organisational study and this empowering and voice giving study was no exception. The study strove to evaluate the extent organisations provided democratic forms to their service users.

Of the three organisations in Greater Manchester, in terms of governance, Bulawayo had a purely elected body of trustees by affiliate member organisations, Dibutibu had a combination of elected and co-opted, while at Sipepa recruiting new trustees was the prerogative of the existing trustees:

All our trustees are elected at an annual general election. Those interested in being elected complete application forms to demonstrate the experience they bring to the organisation (B rep from Bulawayo).

We have a combination of elected and co-opted. Applicants interested in being elected or co-opted have to demonstrate the expertise they will contribute by sending in applications forms. At Dibutibu we have 24 elected positions and 10 corporate positions with voting rights, of which one is reserved for the local authority. The elected trustees can only serve a maximum of three terms in the office, after that they are not be eligible for re-election. We also have consultant observers who are from the local community who are co-opted with no voting rights (D rep from Dibutibu).

Something worth noting at Dibutibu was the reserved position for the local authority, which was the main funder among the 10 corporate positions. It could be speculated that this could have been a deliberate ploy to secure continuous funding or it could have been that the local authority was monitoring its investment, or a combination of both.

Conversely at Sipepa, the existing trustees identified skills shortages and recruited the right candidates with the skills needed in the organisation:

The trustees are not elected ... they decide when they feel they need a new trustee with the new skill set. A good example would be if we put more emphasis on last year or so on our communication department to help raise public image at the same time. We recognised the trustees did not have anyone on the trustee board that had experience; therefore they brought in somebody with understanding of media (S rep Sipepa).

This kind of recruitment of trustees could be perceived as undemocratic, however in an organisation where they had no constituency to refer to when recruiting trustees this could be the only arrangement. This would have been problematic if Sipepa had claimed to be a representative organisation, but did

not. It remains very exclusively a service delivery organisation and has proven to be an effective and resilient one.

It would be undemocratic to follow the Sipepa route for the two other organisations in Greater Manchester, which are based on membership. What is of significance to note is that all these organisations recruited people who brought new skills, and would therefore contribute to the missing skills or introducing new skills. The recruitment of skilled trustees was contrary to MRSN practice, which recruited its trustees based on their popularity regardless of skills of the candidates. At MRSN where the role of the trustees had been inadequately defined in relation to the management roles required for the operation of the organisation; election by popularity led to the election of trustees who lacked the basic knowledge of the function of community organisations. Some were individuals who came from non-functioning RCOs. This had brought with it problems in the operation of the organisation because these individuals had to trained to understand the basics of their roles. It often took half their term of office to learn and understand the function of the organisation and their role. Maybe the Mzilikazi Forum approach discussed in next paragraph could provide a potential solution.

The Mzilikazi Forum, based in the North East, was governed by a management committee, which was chosen at an annual general meeting (AGM). This AGM brought together all the member organisations, whose approach was that for one to qualify for election into a management position that person had to demonstrate that there was a specific role of specialty they could play in one of the projects:

> *… each member has a specialised area they are tasked to develop; they are the champions in that role. This could be in the capacity building project, communication project and campaign project so we have capacity building officer, campaign project officer and communication officer. There is an extended project, the refugee week, which has its own chair and food officer* (M rep Mzilikazi).

This would mean an individual recruited would not only manage a project, but would also help develop it further; and this was healthy for the development and sustainability of the organisation:

> *At The Mzilikazi Forum we feel that our election process is fair and transparent, therefore democratic* (M).

It could be argued that the democratic notion was grounded in the understanding that those individuals who were considered to have appropriate expertise by the electorate were nominated to stand for election to given posts. Before the nominations and the election, the electorate reviewed the reports and accounts of the members of the outgoing committee. However, the candidates who had not been previously committee members had no such similar chance to make their case. Therefore the outgoing committee members had the edge for their re-election. Pottier and Orone (1995) in their article 'Consensus or Cover-up?' describe how a chief in a village deliberately did not invite the deserving, but invited his friends and acquaintances. However it was difficult to determine if that was the case at Mzilikazi Forum because I had no contact with the members of the forum to get their views about the democratic aspect of the process.

Democracy can be categorised into two broad forms: involving some degree of competitive representation and the other that involves the radical democratic process of including all in the processes of organisational debate and decision making. It has been argued that competitive representation is weak as the electorate vests all the authority in the winning candidates who will end up dominating and controlling the electorate in policy formation (Cohen and Fung, 2004). However the radical democratic approach discards those anomalies because it elevates the citizens from passive to active participation (Cohen and Fung, 2004), therefore influencing the policy formations from inception to implementation. Unlike competitive representation where all the work is done by the 'professionals… and as a consequence the democratic skills, capacities and habits of citizenry are apt to atrophy' (Butcher *et al*, 2007:64); radical democracy enhances empowerment. Citizens are governed by the rules and regulations that they will have played an active part in formulating:

… radical democracy fosters political autonomy, enabling citizens to live under rules they have played a part in crafting themselves (Butcher *et al*, 2007:64).

It could be argued that Mzilikazi practiced the democratic principles based on unified spaces. Members held monthly meetings where it has been argued they played a big role in influencing policies.

We have monthly meetings to review what is achieved and not achieved in a particular month and strategise for the future and differences are worked out or disregarded (M).

This could be construed as radical democratic decision making, based on the collective (Butcher *et al,* 2007) and that the Mzilikazi Forum employs the perspective of 'power with'. According to Boulding (1989) this is an inclusive power that joins all the stakeholders and cultivates a sense of belongingness and ownership of whatever is planned and taking place in any given situation. I would argue this is unlike 'power over' which is based on constraints and domination of others thus is oppressive and leads to conflict among members.

Further to being a democratic the strategies at Mzilikazi could also be perceived as critical community practice. This is grounded on the premise of giving space to participants to determine their future and in the process become empowered. At this forum it was argued that the participants had the liberty of brainstorming on matters that defined the future prospects of their forum in order to come up with strategies for implementation:

Critical community practice is…. about empowerment; it entails working with members of communities (locality, interests, culture, and life-course) in a way that assists them to mobilize, and effectively exercise, a greater degree of power when challenging the construction and maintenance of the social differences that shape their experience of disadvantage, exclusion and oppression (Butcher *et al*, 2007:21).

At MRSN such an arrangement would have proved unsustainable due to the cost implications of reimbursing travel expenses and provision of refreshments

for attendees of all meetings. However at the Mzilikazi Forum there was no provision for the expenses except for those living in destitution:

We only give travel expenses to those living in destitution, most of our affiliated organisations are self-sustaining and they sponsor their representatives for these meetings, which are sharing and learning from each other. These monthly meetings are a catalyst to working with other organisations because this ability to engage with other member RCOs gave the Forum the initiative to work with outside organisations, hence networking (M).

At Luveve Forum in West Yorkshire it was argued that to have a bright future, there was a requirement to build sustainable RCOs led by people who had the knowledge and the capacity to manage their own organisations professionally. If the individuals were to be the trustees of the forum, it was argued they had to develop and prove their effectiveness in their own organisations. They could then transfer those skills to the forum, unlike at MRSN as discussed before:

In order to be a strong collective voice the membership itself needs to be strong. This is done by helping the membership in the organisation with their capacity, their development, their knowledge and their skills in order to be successfully supporting them into shape. The membership is encouraged to work together to gather evidence on shared issues and concerns they have as a charity and take collective action on it through questioning, advocacy or campaigning. Only when the members have proved that they have the capacity to manage an organisation effectively can they contest to be trustees. Seven elected trustees from 65 membership organisations manage Luveve Forum. Constitutionally only one member from each RCO could be elected into the board of trustees (L rep from Luveve).

It could be argued that seven people could not be fully representative of the 65 organisations. It could also be questioned if there was true representation. This brings into question the whole notion that third sector organisations are more inclusive than the public sector. Mawson (2008) argues that the third sector organisations reproduce the same rigidity as the public sector and

sometimes could be worse. This is illustrated in the case of Luveve by decision-making that involves a small group of people interested only in targets at the expense of the range of issues and interests of the wider membership, which may not be necessarily represented.

> *Trustees meet regularly once every six weeks. The senior staff and the project manager who present their written reports to the trustees also attend the meetings, and they are mainly concerned with targets in each of the programmes* (L).

The two officers also worked in collaboration with trustees in these meetings to address concerns or issues, which could range from funding to policy formulation. The officers also needed trustees for advice and guidance on decisions that needed to be taken:

> *These senior staff members are there to answer questions from the committee or advise when things are discussed. At the end of the year, the forum held self-evaluation meetings based on the targets that were set by the previous Annual General Meeting (AGM). It is the supreme body that determines the function of the organisation; it ensures good governance on the part of trustees (L).*

This meant that there were checks on the trustees by the electorate during the AGM. However it could be argued that in some instances the trustees and staff privilege their interests because they were the ones who organised the meetings and their impartiality in handling this process can be questioned as they could influence the outcome.

The forum could be viewed as inclusive and therefore democratic to the extent that it allowed senior staff members to attend trustees meetings, but remains hierarchical because of the structural divisions between the rest of the members and meeting attendees. I argue that this could not be seen as real democracy or at least in my view this is not a form of radical democracy, but could be viewed more as a competitive democracy. Thus elected leaders take decisions and reinforce them through vertical forms of management.

At Luveve, trustees were elected in an AGM like the other organisations as discussed previously. Candidates could be nominated to trusteeship only if they belonged to a member organisation; therefore each member organisation had a right to nominate.

Member organisations can nominate people from their own organisation or any people who belonged to any other organisation, and two people from each RCO have the right to vote. When people sign in on the AGM day, they are given two ballot papers per RCO. The nominees would then be given two to three minutes to 'sell' themselves to the membership; they say why they want to serve in the membership, what they think they can bring to the forum, which could include skills, commitment and experience. After this, the electorate fill in their ballot papers privately and put them in the box. The ballot papers are then counted, the results announced and newly elected members of the trustees will then take their position (L).

The unique thing about Luveve, unlike MRSN and the other studied organisations, is that there was no specific elected honorary post of chair, treasurer, or secretary.

The election of post holders is left to the newly elected committee to choose among themselves in a secret ballot. This is stipulated in the organisation's constitution and has never been amended since the original founder members produced it (L).

The argument was that if these positions were elected at the AGM, people would have too much power hence dictatorship. In this system all the trustees had the same mandate and responsibility. The argument was that the committee needed to be viewed as a body and not as a collection of individuals. Therefore, the chair was not the highest representative and had the same authority and responsibility as others. This could also have been helpful in creating an attitude of equal responsibility among members as they felt they were treated equally. I would argue it also created a horizontal communication that was vital for the success of the organisation as there would be mutual respect. Freire (1973) argues that in a horizontal dialogue there is

empathy between the people involved and this leads to: 'lovingness, humbleness, hopefulness, trustworthiness and development of a critical mind' (p, 44). However in a vertical dialogue, empathy is broken and this manifests 'lovelessness, arrogance, hopelessness, mistrustfulness and an uncritical mind set' (p 45).

All stakeholders who were involved in the organisation including volunteers, staff and service users governed Victoria Falls Network:

The trusteeship of 10 people is elected by the membership and then advisers are co-opted if there are gaps in the trusteeship. The membership is open to all members of the community who have an interest in the work of the network (V rep from Victoria Falls Network).

This is unlike the other organisations in the study, which required one to be from the refugee organisations to qualify for membership.

A forum member sat in the trustees meetings as one of the advisors (V).

The forum was one of the network projects that had its own committee that was elected each year from the membership that was comprised of refugee community organisations. In the network half of the trustees were volunteers and the rest were staff representatives and all attended meetings because they were part of the trusteeship. Thus within the trusteeship there were a variety of voices that included volunteers and service users as well as staff members.

It could be argued that Victoria Falls' ethos was based on the realisation that staff do not only work for the organisation but also comprise the organisation. Additionally it needs to be recognised that people through democratic practices can create formal structures that serve their purposes. Therefore, people have the ability to create better working conditions for themselves. Follett (1925) argued that the management of organisations needed to avoid scientific management and adopt practices sensitive to human factors. Follett further argued that management should be based on the ethical principle of respect for human worth and dignity, not the emotional, sterile pursuit of efficiency at any cost. Workers and management sometimes have aims that are at variance

and this leads to conflicts. Follett (1925) believed in the collaboration and participation of all stakeholders. He was of the view that any decision should have the consent of everyone before any implementation. I would argue that groups that are at conflict should be afforded a platform to air their views and produce ideas that will not be associated with an individual. This does not lead to any one side winning or messy compromises.

Victoria Falls had a semi-independent project called the Forum, which had a separate committee and qualification to the committee was different from the mother organisation:

> *… to qualify for office in the management committee one has to be a member of a refugee community organisation and has to be involved in that refugee community organisation. Only forum members have the privilege to nominate other individuals or themselves* (V)

It was argued this was intended to have people in the management who had been actively involved with refugees not people who were passive.

The Victoria Falls network worked along the principles of partnership and collaboration therefore any new projects that came into implementation were a product of volunteers, trustees, staff members and service users. One such project was the Forum discussed above, which had been seen as the main source of ideas from individuals and these ideas were taken to the executive committee, which was tasked with scrutinising the idea and making it a reality:

> *Football sessions is an example, which started when service users developed an interest in it and the idea was brought to the committee meeting and an executive committee around the project was put together. The other was 'Refugee Week' where everyone was involved* (V).

From the discussions above, it could be argued that some organisations had created some forms of governances appropriate to temporary unified political spaces with openness to emerging challenges. Radical democracy employs a methodology of equality that flattens relationships between people so that no

one voice is higher than another (Newman, 2003). Such governance aims to produce forms of governance through which differences/disagreements are managed under conditions of equality between people, hence progressive governance. Newman (2003) defines this as involving a significant shift from governance through hierarchy and competition to governance through networks and partnerships with an emphasis on inclusion. Progressive governance involves the production of techniques and strategies of citizen responsibility operationalized through the development of networks, alliances, and partnerships, with a strong focus upon active citizenship. This process spreads responsibility for social control to all members, (Garland, 2001).

Trustees that have the skills and the capacity to govern according to critical democratic principles are a product of an open democratic election process, which is fully representative. However it is not practical that all members can participate in all decisions all the time, thus there needs to be some form of representation of members interests and concerns when decisions are being made. Hence the next section explores the six organisations' concepts of representation.

5.3 Representation

There is an assumption that third sector organisations are more inclusive than public sector organisations (Mawson, 2008). In such egalitarian communities it was envisaged that all groups of people had to be represented, but not necessarily physically present to participate in all decision-making processes. This could be interpreted as a radical democratic and inclusive process as decisions may affect peoples' lives and as such there should be a representation of issues that address their needs and interests. The following quotes reveal that the 6 refugee organisations I engaged had divergent views of what representation entailed:

> *At the Luveve Forum representation means to be a member of a refugee organisation* (L).

Similarly:

> *At Mzilikazi Forum representation means being a member of an RCO (M).*

In contrast

> *At Bulawayo representation means the inclusion of all stakeholders in decision-making (B).*

While at Victoria Falls Network:

> *… representation means all stakeholders being represented in decision-making and in the board of trustees depending on the skills one possessed (V).*

However, Dibutibu goes further

> *We create space for members, funders, corporate organisations and other interest groups to be in the trusteeship. This also includes the funding organisations, which meant full inclusiveness, no one is left out of the decision making process (D).*

In contrast at Sipepa:

> *The trustees make all decisions; there is no involvement of members. Members' roles are to access the service (S rep from Sipepa).*

From the above interpretations of representation, it shows there was a range of differing representation ranging from fully democratic e.g. Bulawayo to the non-democratic e.g. Sipepa. It could then be questioned whether some of the organisations that do not involve members serve the interests of their members. Phillips (1998) argues that in the decision-making of organisations or government not all sections of society would be represented. It is argued that those who are elected may be more divergent than the electorate. Some divergent ideas could be viewed as positive and of great benefit to the electorate.

Phillips (1998) argues that full representation cannot be predetermined, but is achievable in the continuation of meeting the needs of the constituency. Phillips further argues that representatives can sometimes be at variance with the electorate, not only in 'social or sexual characteristics, but in understanding where the 'true' interests of their constituents lie' (1998:226). In such a case the representatives might be of the opinion that they know better what their electorate needs. An example is the rich professing to know what is in the 'best interests' of the poor regardless of what the poor think.

What defines full representation could be the accountability that binds the representatives and their constituencies together in ways, which empower and give voice through partnership and collaboration. This partnership and collaboration implies sharing information, responsibility, skill, decision-making and accountability (Pugh and De'Ath, 1989). This approach presumably is about meeting the needs of the range of people who the organisations represent. Thus the representatives should be able to steer the strategies of the organisations appropriately to meet those needs. Only those forms of organisations where there is full representation can be considered to meet the needs of the members. Such forms of collaboration can be extended to working across organisational boundaries towards some positive end (Huxham and Vangen, 2005). It is an arrangement concerning autonomous organisations being represented in working jointly to realise an objective (Audit Commission, 1998). Pratt *et al* (1998) argue that it is sharing defined by the fact that partners share a common ground and are aware of each other's activities.

In summary, the above 6 organisations have differing strategies to involve people in decision-making. For Dibutibu, decision-making processes are more fully enhanced through representation than the others. Indeed, Sipepa had no mechanism to create such space for inclusive decision-making. Unified spaces for decision-making are created and nurtured better when organisations empower and give voice to the voiceless to work together in groups in their communities. The next section explores how community development in refugee organisations can contribute to empowerment and voice.

5.4 Community Development in refugee organisations.

From the above findings the organisations explored were committed to the cause of community development and giving voice to individuals or groups. This was achieved by imparting skills that were useful to make a change in their communities. Thus aided in broadening their scope and critical understanding of power structures and decision-making procedures. This is defined as Active Learning Active Citizenship (ALAC), which strives to equip participants to become involved in their quest for egalitarianism (Packham, 2008). Community development can be viewed as an agent of social change as it transforms those who are powerless because of the lack of resources by providing the tools for critically scrutinising how they can change their situations collectively (Thompson, 2004).

It is built upon the premise of the organisational development (OD) model, which argues for a formative approach. A need for initial diagnosis is needed, and is achieved by involving all stakeholders in data collection and feedback to get their approval for implementation, followed by action planning. It scrutinises each aspect in the context of the whole organisation and seeks to enhance its effectiveness (French and Bell, 1973). Additionally it is informed by the past, acknowledges the present and plans alternatives for the future (Freire, 1974 and Biesta and Tedder, 2007). This leads to stakeholders being agentic, therefore taking control of their lives (Evans, 2002). However, Freire (1970) argues that there can be no emancipation of individuals unless the whole community is emancipated. Involvement reinvigorates the participants to analyse and plan for their future endeavours, despite any difficulties that might be faced (Gramsci, 1971). This emancipatory tendency allows the participants to define their intentions to achieve practical solutions to issues that affect them (Bradbury and Reason, 2001 and Miller, 2003). As mentioned at the beginning of this section that the organisations had a commitment to community development; therefore it is worth exploring Mzilikazi Forum and Luveve Forum further, as an exemplar of the OD model. Mzilikazi Forum follows the OD model of active learning by allowing members to be creative and conscious about their environment in identifying their needs:

If a couple of people are willing to think of or are trying to take action to change the situation for people they know in their particular community or because of the fact they are sharing the situation as refugees at that point we can help them to develop a new community organisation. Paid staffs are there to work with these individuals. This is done through our two offices that are based in two towns J and P (M).

I consider that one characteristic of being human is continually having a pragmatic inquisitiveness about the general circumstances that determine one's livelihood and how change may be made to improve those circumstances. It is then part of the role of democratic forms of organisation to allow spaces for that to happen. By doing so, the communities' progress because they produce citizens who are well informed about their circumstances and how to effect changes. Therefore, 'democratic values, pragmatic knowledge creation and self-transforming democratic societies' are heightened (Bradbury and Reason, 2001:105). Following the OD theme of active learning, Freire (1973) argues that collaboration of all participants in identifying their problems allows the process to be owned by all the stakeholders. Involving all the stakeholders clarifies their needs and any action taken transforms their thought processes. Freire (1973) further argues that the role of the educator is to facilitate development by engaging with the participants to identify what needs to be learnt through offering the resources that motivate the recipients to learn by themselves. This kind of education cannot function in a vertical setting where the educator is at the top and the learner at the bottom but functions better in an open environment that is welcoming. Mzilikazi Forum for example did this by operating:

… an 'open door' policy and members can drop in for support whenever they feel like, we are user friendly. To create a strong and viable organisation, we operate on a flexible programme based on actions planned with RCOs, which can be 6 months and the action plans are set at the beginning of the work period with them. It allows the members to monitor progress against what they originally aimed to do. The training development programme, which is the management tool, is set according to the stage of each organisation and is focused on where

each organisation wants to be. The trainers and the RCO decide how to get to where they need to be (M).

There was also an opportunity to reflect on how far they had gone and what lessons they had learnt on the way as illustrated at Luveve where:

At regular intervals, the project manager has meetings with members to receive their feedback and to also reflect on the journey they had been on which allowed for evaluation to ascertain whether the support given was effective. There is also an evaluation of the membership itself and that determined how future programmes are planned. Each community organisation has a case file or coursework, and in order to see the kind of progression added to the action plan, most of the planning involved participatory appraisal with groups therefore incorporating their ideas into action plans (L).

One of the action plans is that:

The project officer is working with RCOs in the development of their website and so far 20 RCOs have just completed an ICT project which has lasted 3 years. This exercise has enhanced their images in that funders can easily identify the work they do. The webpage on the refugee forum website is to help RCOs have direct interface with both potential members and with the other agencies that would want to make contact with refugees in their locality (L).

The website programme had enhanced the forum and RCOs image and their networking activities. In the development of OD theme of active learning, Luveve Forum's community development project:

… engages with individuals and groups in the RCOs. This we do in conjunction with organisations that have some expertise in some of the learning needs of the RCOs, like governance or fundraising (L).

This kind of engagement raised people's consciousness and enabled participants to identify their needs unlike the docile individuals whose needs

were dictated by the hegemony and their roles were to just fit in (Batsleer, 2008):

> *Our group meetings and deliberations help us to identify the needs, and we devise strategies of addressing them, then identify areas for action, investigate and explore reality, in a collaborative rather than competitive way (L).*

In this process it could be argued that themes surfaced from authenticities of the contributors in conversation. Packham (2008) identifies a process that enables the development of the individual ('learning as becoming'), draws on the development of communities within which to engage ('learning as belonging'), and acquires knowledge through interacting with others, therefore developing voice (2008: 15). Voice in this context could be understood to refer to what Freire (1973) argues as the knowledge of individual problems and the solutions to those problems, hence the need for an enabling environment to express themselves without any constraints.

Participants who develop that voice are referred to as agentic because they have taken control of their lives (Evans, 2002). It could be argued however that they cannot become fully emancipated unless the whole community is emancipated (Freire, 1970) so that the 'voiceless' find their voice.

5.5 The voice of the voiceless

Giving a voice sometimes borrows from the notions of advocacy, when the recipient is not able to speak for self. In such a situation if a person has to speak on behalf of someone else they should reflect the wishes and opinions of the recipient. However, self-advocacy should be prioritised and used wherever possible. Thus the ideal model used within the study was self-advocacy, and participants were given the opportunity to share their experiences. Blatt (1981) in his article, 'How to destroy lives by telling stories', argues that individuals are defined by what they say about themselves and the accounts given by others about them. What tends to happen in most cases is

that professionals suppress the voices of the people they work with. In such a scenario only the perceptions of the professionals end up being the representative story and determining the course of action.

Like MRSN, the six organisations researched aided in raising the voices of the refugees in their own individual ways. These organisations could be defined as the torchbearers as they worked to empower refugee and asylum seeking communities and individuals to have a voice in a society that marginalised them. These people were empowered through being advocated for and in learning skills to self-advocate and to advocate for each other. One of the participants argued:

> We stand as a voice of refugees and encourage them to take the lead at times. We speak on behalf of the refugee community on issues affecting the refugees. There are a lot issues that are affecting refugees. For example, we stood against child detention and we participated a lot we spoke on behalf of refugees and the detention of children got finished. Right now we are campaigning also for different issues concerning women, ESOL classes. … We are campaigning with asylum seekers for reporting centres because there are some who have to travel long distances. We are fighting about housing problems issues, health problems (M).

What distinguishes these organisations from the rest is putting those in need at the forefront. The motivation to fight for their rights was neither done for people nor was it forced upon people. The role of those who had realized that they were free was to spread critical consciousness to those who were still afraid of freedom or had not realised the fruits of freedom. Douglass (1857) in his famous speech, 'If There Is No Struggle, There Is No Progress' stated that slaves were supposed to take on the fight themselves meaning people in any predicament should be in the lead in their fight for if they do not do that they are not worth fighting for:

> If we ever get free from the oppressions and wrongs heaped upon us, we must pay for their removal. We must do this by labor, by suffering,

by sacrifice, and if need be, by our lives and the lives of others (Douglass, 1857:1).

Such was the motivation of slaves and such was the motivation of the participants in the study. People who were motivated to fight for their rights found in themselves the ability to survive. For example, Victoria Falls Network contributed to the development of such a voice in the following projects: Befriending, English at Home and the Short Stop emergency accommodation project. Thus:

We set up The Befriending project to identify isolated asylum seekers and refugees and match them with trained volunteers who engaged with them through regular visits in order to forge a supportive relationship for a period of 6 to 12 months. A lot of assessment takes place before forging the relationship to match the right volunteer with the right service user. The main emphasis is to make the service user as comfortable as possible for the partnership to work and this motivated them (V*).*

This project supported the struggles by making it easier for refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into the local community; access services and overcome the emotional stress caused by past trauma and the asylum process. The relationship extended to supporting them to go through the court process, which had been identified as the most traumatic to any individual. The second project contributed as follows:

The idea of the English at Home (EaH) project is to help refugees and asylum seekers who, have issues of caring, disability or gender and are unable to attend classes that are provided by other organisations in offices. EaH aims to develop students' language skills so that they can cope with everyday life, by having a voice, therefore become empowered. The purpose of the project is the commitment to promote cross-cultural friendship and enables participation in the wider community. We hope that some students will go on to further and higher education (V).

Therefore, it was a foundation to formal educational development of the participants. In the third example:

> *The Short Stop scheme aims at supporting asylum seekers experiencing homelessness. Short Stop volunteers provide hot meals and a bed for the night to people who have nowhere else to turn to. This is an emergency accommodation for destitute asylum seekers who go to volunteers' homes and get a roof for the night, breakfast, and washing facilities. This is usually during the weekends and after that they go back to the agency that referred them and they are back to destitution again or until other volunteers take them* (V).

In these ways the programmes by Victoria Falls Network from the evidence received seem very beneficial and empowering. However I would argue that it is very difficult to conclude without verification from the beneficiaries, which I was not able to. I would also argue that The Short Stop scheme was a short-term remedy; it was neither sustainable nor empowering as the scheme was a somewhat emergency scheme. The affected asylum seekers reverted to the same predicaments after the short reprieve and it is very difficult to ascertain how much this cycle affected these individuals. The key lesson is that there is need for a long-term solution to the destitution of asylum seekers, not the temporary fixes, which could be more traumatic. Giving voice does not involve adults only, but the young people as well hence the next section youth work.

5.6 Youth Work

For the diverse ideas and beliefs to be accommodated in the unified spaces there is a need for the youth to be catered for; they would in turn need to cater for the future youths when they become adults. Therefore it can be argued that in order for organisations to have a future, it is imperative to involve future generations and move away from the notion that young people have minimal if any contributions to the development of organisations. Such notions could be driven by insecurity from the adult population especially the refugee

community who, from my study, viewed their young people as becoming 'Westernised', lacking respect. Young people were viewed as deviating from their norms and values, which they argued had led to the young ones demanding too many rights:

Community leaders say young people we have lack their cultural values (V).

They say young people question everything you tell them because of these rights (D).

They say they have lost their children, and children have no respect anymore (L).

The organisations talked about the involvement of young people in their activities. However there was lack of clarity in how they were involved and only the Mzilikazi Forum had clear evidence of a youth policy and involvement.

It was inspirational to find out that Mzilikazi Forum had an explicit vision concerning Every Child Matters. The concept of Every Child Matters was a government policy that was designed to try and address the imbalances of young people who were either disadvantaged or involved in anti-social behaviour or committing crime. The Every Child Matters policy has clear precepts, which include: being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing for young people (Every Child Matters, 2003). Young refugees and asylum seekers fall into this category and are even in worse situations due to lacking networks, parents and or guardians (Nyoni, 2010).

At the Mzilikazi Forum we have a youth voice which is from a youth sub-group composed of young people who are asylum seekers and had parents or unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This is a sub-group and not a community organisation. We help the young people learn skills of managing their own group through shadowing the main committee. They also learn about governance to make sure that their voice was heard and therefore it makes the committee and the forum

more relevant to young people. These young people are in the process of creating their own community organisation with the aim of standing for trusteeship positions in the next AGM (M).

From the statement above it could be argued that was an attempt to create unified spaces at the Mzilikazi forum. This was limited due to being at an early stage and the young people shadowing. Due to lack of access I would argue that it would be very difficult to ascertain whether these young people had a voice or if their involvement was tokenistic. However there is solace in that these were positive signs of recognising the importance of young people's voices. Although this was not yet fully promoted there was hope that it had a chance of developing. The chance to be able to develop skills and be fully inclusive in terms of representation in general needs to be underpinned by financial stability. If finance is precarious then organisations will find it difficult to be sustainable, empower and give voice. The next section therefore explores financial stability of the organisations.

5.7 Concerns about financial stability

The preoccupation with fundraising by most third sector organisations caused a negative impact on their service provision as at times most of the efforts were directed towards fund raising at the expense of service delivery. Interestingly, three of organisations studied in Greater Manchester competed for funding from the Big Lottery. That meant one would be considered at the expense of others. There seemed to be a significant reliance on Big Lottery for funding and this was confirmed by two of the three organisations that identified the Big Lottery Fund as their main source of financial support to fund their operations:

> *Currently the big funding is lottery that is where the large money of funding comes from. The core funding is from city council for strategic work in the city linking with local authority policies and procedures to harmonise communities for political vision including gender equality and delivering major services in Manchester* (B)

Our funding comes from Big Lottery, Oxfam and private funders (V).

Meanwhile Sipepa got most of its funding from the central government through UKBA. There were possible implications of this influencing the operations of the agency as it would seek to please the funder:

85% I am not sure about the exact figure comes from central government through UKBA. We have a lot of small funding streams like lottery funding, local authority, local authority (LA), there is a little bit of money from all over the place here. We have small groups who give us money such as individual gifts to our head office. There are donations from individuals who like our work, these are not massive but proportionately, probably makes about 3 or 4% something like that (S).

There was fear that most organisations would collapse:

Organisations in Greater Manchester fear that most of them would collapse because of public spending cuts (B).

These cuts have affected service provision, broken down some organisations and created staff unemployment. The predictions are that medium sized organisations are the ones that would be most affected because they rely more on paid staff, compared to smaller organisations which rely on volunteers (D).

They suggested that:

… large organisations could get contracts from local and national governments to provide some services or they could scale down until things improved. They also could extend their services because they could be commissioned to provide new services (S).

This was fueled by the perception that Manchester City Council had closed down its advice services. The assumption was that these services would be outsourced to organisations, which had the capacity to provide them. It was

felt this could be the role of large organisations and even the medium could be sub-constructed to be part of the service provision. There was uncertainty on whether MRSN as a medium organisation would survive or collapse. As one member shared a thought:

> *Some will go bankrupt. It will take the government a year to realize the amount of damage it will have caused to the third sector organisations. Those organisations, which survive, will come out stronger* (D)

Another member added that they had assessed and believed that organisations would feel the full force of the cuts:

> *We have been working with Greater Manchester on voluntary sector level; we believe that in about 12 months' time at least ¼ of organisation will disappear. The cuts will have effects for the medium size organisations I believe the large organisations will survive and actually get contracts for services. The small organisations do not employ people; therefore will be able to survive the cuts and funding because they rely on volunteers. They could continue to do that at the local level. Medium size of voluntary organisation does employ 3-5 people because if funding is cut they will not be able to employ all of those people. Some of those people will be made redundant; most of the organisations will have to close down. So really, this is a very difficult time for some organisations, most of them will feel the cuts but tragically they will be some of the organisations that will have to close down* (S)

The organisations from outside Greater Manchester seemed to have less concerns about their funding endeavours, either because they had enough funds for the foreseeable future or because they had a variety of resources at their disposal. In order to maintain its independence the Mzilikazi Forum did not source funding from central or local government. It relied on charities and this allowed it to initiate its projects according to the needs of the service users as it sourced funds, which did not restrict its intentions:

> *It does not seek to get any funding from government sources so that it remains a truly independent voice, and most of its funding comes from*

*charitable trusts and foundation organisations and things like Lottery
and not something to do with Home Office or Government sectors* (M).

M further added:

> *Our biggest funder is The Big Lottery Fund and we are fully funded for
> the following three years. The next biggest funder is regional and it was
> the banking sector that had been funding the forum the previous seven
> years. The third and final funding stream came from the charitable
> organisations* (M).

One member claimed that the organisation had survived because they had
stuck to their original aim to support refugees and asylum seekers. They felt
confident about surviving as long as they kept to their original aim.

> *We are specific in our funding strategies we are not interested in every
> funding that was available on the market, unlike other organisations that
> end up diverting from their ethos because of money* (M).

The only project that was facing uncertainty was the campaigning and
advocacy. The organisation had funding for two years, which gave them
enough time to seek alternative funding sources if The Big Lottery would not
continue to fund the project.

The Victoria Falls Network argued it was stable in its funding because the
source of funding was reliable and appreciated the services it provided.

> *70% of our funding comes from charitable organisations, 15% from
> individual donations and another 15% from government grant schemes,
> including The Big Lottery and other micro funds. The religious fraternity
> also plays a part in donating to the cause* (V).

Furthermore it was argued that volunteers contributed financially:

> *Over the years the network had over 800 volunteers who had become
> the main individual donors. Some of them were still active in the*

network, while others were former volunteers who understood how the network functioned. The donations were allocated a budget of £16,000 annually and they had always surpassed it. Sometimes if there was an emergency need for more funding, they have been able to treble the allocated budget (V).

Of note the volunteers felt they were part of the network. They had a stake in what went on and would not want to see their organisation collapse.

In contrast to all the organisations in this study, MRSN included, Luveve Forum functioned without any direct sustained funding of any sort:

We have no funding, we have no paid staff and we are not worried about the funding situation. Local authority provides the place we use and we get grants from The Big Lottery and local authority for *refreshments and bus fares for our volunteers* (L).

Even though the forum was surviving without funding, it was:

… exploring various ways of sustainability such as becoming a social enterprise and we are being advised by other organisations on how to move forward in maintaining what we are doing and at the same time how we can grow and develop (L).

The discussion above shows that third sector organisations were threatened with collapsing because of the funding uncertainties. For organisations to survive there was need for partnership and collaboration, which is the next section.

5.8 Partnerships and Collaboration

From the discussion in the last section evidence suggests that like MRSN, some of the organisations relied on public funding and lottery monies. Therefore to some extent competed for the same funds, so it made sense that they were contemplating joint bids. The funders would view this as more cost

effective than organisations in the same town bidding individually to provide similar services. It was also about the survival of the organisations in the uncertain future, which seemed to be dominated by funding cuts in the public sector and this also had an effect on private and voluntary sectors. However this approach could force agencies to divert from their mandates and potentially endanger the agencies' ability to meet the needs of the people the organisations served. Thus it is important that the agencies prioritize their established aims and objectives and ensure they are not sacrificed for the sake of the agency's survival. These networking endeavors demanded that organisations defined what they were doing and how they did it. If there was duplication of services it needed to be addressed. For the working together to succeed, it required the creation of mutual or unified spaces for collaborative planning and decision-making. The idea of networking was not to overlook the needs of the people, but to improve the services. The organisations had seminars and conferences and planned how to work together for partnership, managing and developing funding streams. There was also an assumption that funding streams would require partnerships of sometimes up to four or five partners getting together as one organisation. Surviving in hard times was going to be a big challenge because utilities and other bills would increase while income was decreasing. Participants in Greater Manchester argued that:

Income will be less than the expenditure and this will make it difficult for organisations to survive (D)

It will be hard to pay the bills and salaries (S).

The third sector organisations' situation was difficult and it demanded radical changes in how organisations operated. This was reflected in some cases whereby local authorities in Greater Manchester were contemplating pulling their resources together to cut the costs. In some cases they proposed joint services, sharing of staff and purchasing together.

Council chiefs in Greater Manchester were aiming to save £90m under radical plans to pool services and staff (Linton, 2011). The Association of Greater Manchester Authorities had outlined how it wanted to transform the way the region's ten town halls worked together under a new motto-'customer service excellence through collaboration'. One report stated that the ten councils would work more closely on health and social care (Linton, 2011). The councils' intention was to collaborate under a new joint working program and was expected to save between £61.7m and £89.7m in 2012/13 according to a draft blueprint going before council leaders. Service charges would be reviewed, hiked and brought in line with others where possible and corporate services such as legal and IT would be shared among town halls. The councils were already looking at driving down overheads in the library service as part of a government program to reduce costs by merging functions and staff and buy books together (Linton, 2011).

Some of the organisations worked in partnership in sharing information and collaborating in providing services:

At Mzilikazi Forum we endeavor to work with other organisations in the region for the benefit of our members and they are involved in the discussion and final decision (M).

It was argued that this collaboration manifested itself by providing better services for the service users and making other services more easily accessible. These organisations signposted service users to each other depending on each organisation's specialism thus complemented each other. This networking, collaboration, sharing of information and working together produced a strong relationship between organisations.

The Luveve Forum had established a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) sector, which dealt with ethnic minority issues and presented them to other sectors. There was no superiority within the relationship rather there was an equal

partnership to the extent that some of the organisations allowed each other to be observer members in their committee meetings:

We work with the Local Council and we work closely together and we really share information and sit in each other's meetings/committees as well. There are many committees in …. And some of the committees about 4 of them, we sit in those committees and also other members sit in other committees, we share. We also have some of their members sitting in our different committees as well (L).

All the six organisations networked with other organisations in the UK or in their respective regions. Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) argue that such forms of networked partnerships deal with problems that single members could not handle individually by sharing ideas and resources. This helps members develop and provide better services. Networking had been the backbone of campaigns among the refugee communities and other organisations countrywide. An example was the Right to Work campaign, which was initiated by countrywide groups to form a national campaign to establish asylum seekers right to work. This had brought organisations across the UK together and this showed how people could network to sort out problems collectively. The group membership of the network acted collectively in the interest of refugees and asylum seekers in their regions by using their collective evidence to campaign and this contributed to the process of policy formation and practices at local and national levels. Several participants attested to this, for example:

I have attended other RCOs' AGMs with some of our members and we have gained a lot of useful knowledge and experience, which we have shared with our members (L).

The sharing of knowledge and working together has made us stronger (V).

These collaborative experiences have helped our organisations to look out for each other in bad times because running a community organisation is not easy. This collaborative working has also brought high expectations from communities (B).

Sometimes there were impossible expectations that were difficult to meet because allies were going through the same problems, however they continued to be supportive. The concepts of networking and communities of practice were regularly promoted in this forum. RCO representatives were encouraged to visit and learn from other organisations within the same city and in other cities and this widened the scope of these participants. In cases where people felt powerless:

> … acting as a group can enable people to be more aware of the issues involved and can take part in an analysis of what is possible at an individual, cultural and global (Packham, 2008:72).

Instead of imposing on RCOs to work together, the organisations encouraged by providing training workshops for them to deliberate on the benefits of collaborative working and gain further knowledge. This can be described as empowerment. This knowledge is informed by the past, acknowledges the present and plans alternatives for the future (Freire, 1974 and Biesta and Tedder, 2007). From the evidence I would argue that the more they created an environment of cross working within the groups, the more people came together and everyone participated and this led to less competiveness and more collaborative working, hence successful creation of mutually beneficial spaces for planning and decision making.

5.9 Conclusion and the implications of my study for MRSN

This chapter addressed the main theme of the thesis: the empowerment of refugees through the creation of unified spaces. However, these interests can be constrained by wider policy and funding issues as third sector organisation try to survive in hard times as described in section 5.7. The chapter reflects the role and the importance of third sector organisations in promoting freedom of speech, equality and justice including the impact of my study to MRSN. This chapter has significantly identified what MRSN could learn from the experiences and practice of six organisations on how to empower and give voice. The main elements are governance, representation, sustainability, fundraising and partnership and collaboration, they are discussed and explored further in the next chapter.

The chapter has highlighted concerns about MRSNs forms of democratic organisation, therefore it could benefit from drawing lessons from; Bulawayo's, inclusiveness in representation of all stakeholders and Mzilikazi's inclusiveness of young people. MRSN was not sufficient in inclusiveness and could benefit from collaborative governance that is representative to accommodate differences of opinion and encourage collaborative working. This type of governance as demonstrated in some of the organisations brought some elements of radical democratic practices that recognised that all stakeholders had a voice. The monthly engagements of stakeholders at Mzilikazi Forum and six weekly ones at Luveve Forum encouraged the development of egalitarian, open and collaboratively working. It could be argued that nearly every stakeholder had a sense of belonging; consequently this made people take ownership of their organisations.

It was fascinating to find that Bulawayo was truly representative as all stakeholders were represented in its structure of trustees including volunteers and donors. On the other hand it could be argued that such a setup could have created a conflict of interest. Having noted this it is worth pointing out that in voluntary organisations, which strive to give a voice this could be helpful because decision-making would be inclusive. Inclusiveness is helpful in organisations that endeavour to empower members, because needs are easily identified when members have representation. This chapter further highlighted a key component that led to the success of voluntary organisations, which is recruiting people into the trusteeship who were skilled and had demonstrated

the ability to lead. If implemented at MRSN this strategy could eliminate candidates, who lack understanding of voluntary organisations, therefore enhance its capacity. It is a concern that the new constitution at MRSN does not stipulate the calibre of candidates who should qualify for trusteeship. This ambiguity brought people who did not understand voluntary organisations, lacked skills and in the process made mistakes, which had caused damage to staff and the organisation. Time and resources wasted in trying to address the mistakes could be used more productively in developing the organisation.

One of the major contributions of the study in this chapter that can help MRSN in its development and sustainability is having viable and stable RCOs. MRSN can learn from organisations like the Mzilikazi Forum, which operated an 'open door' policy that allowed members to drop in for support. The Forum strove to create strong and viable organisations by operating a flexible programme, which was based on actions planned with RCOs. It encouraged RCOs to scrutinise their own development compared to their intended aims. Training was not universal but tailored according to the stages of each RCO's developmental level. I would argue that the continual scrutinising of the progress helped in the sustainability and improved governance of the organisations, which would filter to the mother organisation through leaders who got elected. If MRSN had to adopt such a development it could be helpful because most of its affiliated RCOs would develop, therefore experienced leaders would emerge from these RCOs and help in developing MRSN.

The various unorthodox methods of fundraising like individual donations, which were found in the organisations were welcomed by MRSN and taken on board as discussed in the next chapter. These funds allowed the organisations to provide services, which were initiated by the service users for those projects, which could not be funded from traditional funders who had stringent restrictions about what could and could not be done. Examples of hard to fund projects included the ones mentioned above; Befriending, English at Home and Short Stop. These various ways of fund raising could be helpful to organisations like MRSN, which relied on the central and local government in these unpredictable times of austerity.

Investing in the youth was an important undertaking in particular for one

refugee organisation because it demonstrated that the organisation recognised that young people (most notably those without parents) needed support. This was due to the inadequate support from the social services, which were tasked with preparing them for adulthood. This was also imperative for the continuity of the organisations as the youth could take over when the current adults retired and due to their involvement had knowledge of the organisation ethos. MRSN embraced this concept by co-opting some young people into the trusteeship although they had a limited voice, as they could not vote. Despite the limited contribution this was a critical and positive move as discussed in the next chapter.

One major contribution that came out of this chapter was the concept of partnership and collaboration between organisations that shared the same purpose of empowering the under-privileged. By working collaboratively, they were able to support each other in sourcing the required resources. I would argue that this could be the greatest contribution to MRSN if it could be implemented as discussed in the next chapter.

I would argue that one of the responsibilities of the organisations that work with refugees and asylum seekers is being the voice for this group of people because they are voiceless. It should not end there but should also help encourage these marginalised people to develop a voice for themselves. In extending issues of voice and empowerment to the most vulnerable, the next chapter explores destitution as a barrier to active participation and ways of overcoming this barrier through campaigns. MRSN is doing well in this area through campaigns, advice and community development. MRSN could do more by emulating Victoria Falls Network, which gave the voice in various forms through the following projects: Befriending, English at Home and Short Stop emergency accommodation project. Such activities are very helpful for the development of confidence in people who have lost it. In order to meet the challenges of addressing the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and those members of society who are most vulnerable, the education of leaders for the facilitation of emancipatory work that is fully liberating will always be vital. Such leaders would improve the organisations; therefore making life changes to the vulnerable members of society.

The above findings were presented to MRSN stakeholders in trustees meetings, combined trustee and staff meetings and all stakeholders meetings. In the presentation of the findings the participants were very eager to learn about how other organisations functioned. They were more receptive and interested as compared to findings from within MRSN which were first met with muted and aggressive responses (section 4.8). Notably, especially in the trustees' feedback, they were keen on changes to do with fundraising as compared to governance. This could be that they felt challenged in terms of governance, and it could be because some did not have sustainable organisations (see section 4.9) or the skills suggested and some could have been harbouring authoritarian tendencies and this is further discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ABOUT EMPOWERMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 sought insights from MRSN on the establishment of an environment that promoted governance for the creation of new mutually beneficial unified spaces for the discussion of new circumstances and points of view as the basis for collective planning and decision-making. It will explore how MRSN could benefit from the 6 organisations in the previous chapter. The chapter therefore begins with exploring 5 empowerment projects for insights of how to embed governance for the creation of such new unified spaces. The projects are; (i) Community Development, (ii) Refugee and Migrant Forum, (iii) Advice development, (iv) Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) and

(v) Health Advocacy and volunteer coordination. Following this, from sections 6.3 to 6.9 the chapter then explores; governance, representation, networking, destitution, campaigns and financial stability. Finally after establishing the insights it sought to formatively explore how to empower using the experiences and practices of the six organisations in the previous chapter to embed this form of governance at MRSN.

6.2 Projects delivered by MRSN

6.2.1 Community Development

The community development project was set up to empower and give a voice to refugees and asylum seekers to start their own organisations to reduce levels of stress, unemployment, poverty and isolation. This was to give refugees the chance to express themselves and represent the needs and aspirations of their communities. And most importantly to increase public awareness about issues faced by asylum seekers and seek positive media representation.

From the study findings, there were mixed feelings about services provided by the project. Some argued that there was unequal service provision to refugee community organisations (RCOs) across Greater Manchester and that meant some had no access or limited support from the project:

> *Not all communities receive the same support from the community development. Mine is not and we are struggling* (RCO member).

> *From the community development, we have not received much support* (RCO member).

One participant had no idea of the services at MRSN and could not identify the correct location of the organisation. Instead of identifying Beswick as the location Openshaw was named:

Since they moved I don't know the services they provide. I think community development is supposed to support refugee community organisations and in Openshaw where they are based and they provide trainings to refugees communities (RCO rep).

In addition another participant had lost track of what was happening because of lack of support:

Since they moved I am not sure of the services, we do not get any community development support anymore (RCO rep).

Furthermore, there were members who had no idea about MRSN's ethos, and more surprisingly they could not even tell what services the organisation provided:

I know they are supposed to support the community you know starting their project that's all I know about the community development to be honest. We have not got any support as an organisation (RCO rep)*.*

According to some RCO representatives, MRSN was not doing enough in integrating them into the wider community:

The community development should lead in helping us start refugee community organisations and this will help us to integrate. We have not

been supported to start our own community organisation (community member).

Some participants argued that they felt that the project was neglecting them by not helping them:

We feel neglected by the community development project; we have not been supported for a long time (community rep).

Others differed in view and argued that the project helped organisations when they were starting, for example by training in governance that entailed producing a constitution, electing a management committee and training:

We were supported with starting our organisation and had some training, but our progress is not monitored to nurture us and we are now struggling and no one is helping (RCO rep).

One stated that only details were taken and there was no explanation given on how to start an organisation:

For me when I came somebody sent me to MRSN and said if you want to get your project, it's better to see someone from MRSN but what I got was someone getting my personal information and nothing was done after that (RCO rep).

In contrast to the above, some organisations were satisfied with how the Community development provided the services, which they argued helped them have funding for the next three years:

I am happy with Community Development, to my organisation it has done well. We have funding for the next three years and have the right premises to provide our community with the services they need (RCO rep).

The Community Development has helped us very much and my organisation is very stable. We have managed to get all the help we need (RCO rep).

However others felt the project only remembered them when there were events that needed numbers. They were of the view that they were needed for visibility to show the project was working with a great number of groups. They argued that the project did absolutely nothing for them and it was the other way round because they did more for MRSN:

To be honest with you what happens, they want us to do things more than we have done than they do service for us. They want us to go for consultation, take part in the meetings to discuss things; they want more than they are able to give to us (RCO rep).

One participant however argued that they had developed useful contacts in the community development field:

The community development has afforded me access to workshops, and I have worked with other organisations, had training including leadership and immigration law (community member).

Another participant added that he had benefited a lot:

When I joined, I did not have a background of working in the community, but I have learnt those skills from MRSN. I have benefited in training how to run an organisation and it is not only me but also my whole community (RCO rep).

Furthermore one participant added:

I have gained social capital, knowing a lot of people, good and high level contacts, managerial experience and personal development (community member).

Despite this, one trustee was very pessimistic about MRSN and this was even more worrying when other RCOs that were led by some of the trustees were implicated in the destruction of MRSN:

RCOs are not receiving what they are supposed to receive from the Community Development. … It may lose funding because RCOs will feedback to funders that they are not getting value for money and this could have a negative impact. You know E and F organisations we brought them down. MRSN is facing the same situation, if the funders go to S's, P's, J's and R's organisation (trustee).

The above extracts reveal mixed experiences among some RCOs about the community development, which was expected to fully empower, yet in the eyes of some was not achieving this. It would appear that MRSN was not achieving one of its set objectives and some of the critical views from the respondents highlight this. This could be viewed as embodying the discriminatory practices (Mawson, 2008). MRSN lacked the means and skills needed to address organisational and practices that generate unified spaces for critical decision-making and effective action to avoid unsolved contradictions. The sections below contribute towards addressing the above, which is lacking in the

community development project, so as to empower. Therefore as furtherance of empowerment the next section explores Refugee and Migrant Forum.

6.2.2 Refugee and Migrant Forum

In January 2006 MRSN launched the Refugee Charter for Manchester, which is a unique statement of rights and entitlements written by refugees and asylum seekers. Over 100 individuals and organisations including Manchester City Council endorsed it. The launch of the Refugee Charter led to the creation of the Refugee and Migrant Forum project whose main priority was to promote the principles within the Charter, which empower refugees and asylum seekers. The Refugee and Migrant Forum is a project that gives stakeholders unified spaces for critical decision-making by creating an environment that allows working together in planning and solving issues through engaging with the sources of the problems affecting refugees and asylum seekers.

Some of the participants were full of praise for the way the forum had helped them to self-advocate and advocate for others:

> *The forum has changed my life and I feel motivated and able to speak for others and myself* (none refugee community member).

Another added that there was freedom of expression in the forum gatherings:

> *I feel I am listened to at the forum meetings* (none refugee community member).

In addition there was mutual respect for everyone:

> *The people at the forum have respect* (none refugee community member).

However, there were criticisms. For example, some participants had the feeling the forum was patriarchal

> *Men dominate the forum and us women find it hard to contribute* (none refugee community member).

Some participants also argued that there was a lack of transparency regarding forum activities. This they argued was because the forum was working more with individuals than with refugee community organisations.

> *The forum works more with individuals than communities* (RCO rep).

> *I don't know what takes place in the forum because my community is not involved* (RCO member).

> *As a leader of my community organisation I don't know the forum activities because it does not work with my community and others (RCO rep).*

From the contribution of the participants it can deduced that though the forum was doing a good job in giving voice to individuals, it had some shortcomings as it did not work with communities. The way of finding strategies for improvement is discussed in the later part of this chapter. The next section is a continuation of the concept of emancipation through advice and development.

6.2.3 Advice and Development

Continuing with the theme of empowerment the advice and development project was set up to give refugees and asylum seekers welfare advice. It came at the same time as the community development. However, it had transformed from being an individual advice provider to include community advice development of refugee community organisations. This section therefore explores the contributions of the project in giving advice and building advice for RCOs as a form of emancipation. Some participants argued that:

Advice is not run properly. It used to be good but not anymore (community member).

Advice is poorly run because there is less support for community organisations (RCO rep).

RCOs wanted the continuation of the 'drop in' office, which was threatened with closure. They argued that closing 129 Princess Road would create more work for them in their advice offices:

If the office at 129 Princess Road closes, we will struggle with the overflow in our office (RCO rep).

Our organisation would not cope if the 129 Princess Road closes (RCO rep).

We want the drop in service at 129 to continue (RCO rep).

Other participants argued that the advice did not help with the development of RCOs' advice but only concentrated on individual advice at the expense of RCOs.

> *My organisation has failed to establish advice service because we do not get support from MRSN as an organisation* (RCO leader).

Some participants argued that the Advice service concentrated its services in the Manchester City area, and neglected some organisations in the wider Greater Manchester.

> *Our organisation is out of the borders of Manchester City area and we do not get support to develop advice services properly* (RCO rep).

Whereas other participants argued that they were very impressed with the work of the advice services as they received good advice, which had helped them, and others to develop sound advice services within their communities:

> *I will always be appreciative of the advice I got from the MRSN advice service. The advice I got changed my life forever* (non refugee community member).

> *At MRSN advice I was treated with respect and dignity and I got first class advice that met my needs* (refugee community member).

Other participants added:

My community advice services is one of the best in Greater, because of the training and support we have received from MRSN services (trustee).

My community members now do not seek advice anywhere; they come to us because of the expertise we learnt from MRSN (RCO rep).

The advice service like the community development and the refugee and migrant forum was providing services, although improvements were needed for the service to be considered good and effective. The development of RCOs advice services in their communities was needed, as was an expansion of the service to cover the whole of Greater Manchester and be accessible to most refugee organisations. More ideas are discussed later in the chapter. In furtherance of the empowerment, the next section explores MRSN's Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES).

6.2.4 Refugee Integration and Employment Services (RIES)

RIES was a brainchild of the Home Office during Labour Party rule (1997-2010) and was aimed at speeding up the integration and employment of those who had acquired refugee status. The Home Office funded Refugee Action, which in turn contracted MRSN to provide employment and integration support to refugees. With the funding received from Refugee Action MRSN commissioned some RCOs to provide the services. Both RCOs and MRSN recruited volunteers and trained them to work alongside the paid staff. This project was set out to enhance life opportunities and empower service users so that those who benefited could have a voice and also feel supported to settle and integrate into their host communities. The study explored how it contributed to the empowerment of refugees and asylum seekers and findings indicated that this was a project that most individuals and RCOs were satisfied with:

RIES has done a lot of good to me and some of my friends. We were able to get accommodation, GP and jobs quickly (community member).

I am happy with what RIES has done for me now I got a house as soon as I got my refugee status (community member).

I am into employment a few weeks of getting my status thanks to RIES (community member).

I am able to provide welfare advice because of volunteering for RIES (volunteer).

RIES has provided funding for my organisation and helps us with running costs (RCO rep)

From the above statements by participants it could be argued that the RIES initiative was having an empowering effect on RCOs and individuals. However it was not inclusive, because some participants did not understand the function of RIES, therefore the issue of inclusivity needed addressing for all stakeholders to appreciate and benefit from it.

MRSN has run other projects like RIES and I don't know how they are run (RCO rep).

One participant did not want to comment on the project because her RCO did not take part in the funding:

> *My organisation was not chosen to be part of RIES I have no comment about it* (RCO rep).

Unfortunately, the funding from Home Office was cut by 50% in June 2010 after the coalition government of the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives came into power. Refugee Action who had contracted MRSN therefore withheld the remaining 50% of the funding, thus ending MRSN's contract in September 2010. This led to the loss jobs to 2 full-time posts, 25 bi-lingual Volunteer Advocates who were trained to help people overcome significant barriers to settle in their communities and loss of income to six RCOs. Some participants were therefore worried about funding problems because of the closure of the project:

> *I think it closing down will make life difficult for my organisation* (RCO rep).

> *My organisation will suffer when RIES closes down* (RCO rep).

Participants had gained valuable skills of giving advice to help settle refugees, but the closure of the project impacted negatively on them:

> *Now it is closing I will lose my advice skills unless I get a job* (RIES volunteer).

Staff members were worried about losing their jobs and the financial impact on MRSN and RCOs:

> *I am losing my job and I am not sure if I will get another one* (staff).

> *MRSN and RCOs will suffer financially when RIES ceases to exist* (staff).

Whereas some participants who had been well served by the project were worried about the future of refugees:

> *I got a good service from RIES, I feel sorry for those who will get refugee status when it has ceased to exist* (refugee community member).

Others were worried about the future of refugees, and lacked solutions to the problems:

> *The closure of RIES is bad news for MRSN and refugees* (trustee).

> *RIES has been doing very well and refugees have been settling quicker. Its closure will be bad. If we could do something we would but we are powerless* (trustee).

From the above discussion the RIES project was a very significant project in the emancipation of refugees as it aided them to integrate quicker than before. As a result its closure negatively impacted on the lives of refugees. The last project explored in the emancipatory journey was the Volunteer Coordination and Health Advocacy project.

6.2.5 Volunteer Coordination and Health Advocacy

The Volunteer Coordination and Health Advocacy aimed to play a big role in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers by providing expert advice,

enhancing employment prospects and reducing isolation and social exclusion. It also advocated for asylum seekers who could not access health services because of their failed asylum applications. Participants argued that the project had a positive effect in their lives especially by helping them gain skills and access health services:

The volunteer coordination has helped members of our community to gain skills that have helped them get paid employment (former volunteer).

They helped me when I was having problems getting medical help, and I will always appreciate their help (refugee community member).

Some argued that they had used MRSN as a springboard to employment through volunteering. Due to the skills gained they had gone onto receive qualifications to acquire jobs thus it had also acted as a gateway to employment. For them, MRSN was a good training ground to develop skills and confidence in order to access employment:

The project opened the gates for employment. We have gained skills that enabled us to get jobs (former volunteer).

I am now in paid employment because of the project (former volunteer).

I think I can get a job because of skills I got from volunteering (volunteer).

Vickers (2012) argues that whilst awaiting a decision on their asylum claim, asylum seekers volunteer to enhance their chances of employment should

their claim succeed. This is contrary to host communities where retired members volunteer to pass time. This was evident in this study:

It helped my friend to gain practical skills (RCO rep).

It was further argued that there was a need for matching volunteers' skills with the needs of RCOs and providing professionally trained volunteers for communities:

As a community we can gain from these volunteers if they came to work for my community because they have skills that we need (community rep).

Volunteers can be of use to RCOs instead of only working at MRSN (RCO rep)

The volunteering staff argued that the training at MRSN had been useful to their professional, social and personal development. The training had helped them carry out their voluntary jobs effectively and had also improved their relationships with the people they came into contact with as it had improved their communication skills and their proficiency in the English language. The volunteering staff became confident enough to apply for paid jobs, however some could not progress into paid employment due their pending asylum claims. And some had found that roles in paid jobs were very competitive:

Getting a paid job is not easy the competition is very high even with all the training and practice I got from MRSN (volunteer).

The training that I have done at MRSN has helped me a lot, when I

started with MRSN I could not speak English, but now I can speak and this has led me to college and possible university, but more practical training is required (volunteer).

The group argued that even though the training was good it lacked the knowledge and depth of the diverse cultures they worked with. They were of the view that this needed to be addressed so that they could provide better services:

We need training on different cultures, people and language because I am involved with people in diverse areas; we need to have culture awareness (volunteer).

Even though there were some shortcomings in the professional development of volunteering staff, overall MRSN had a vibrant volunteer training program. This enhanced professional development for this group of volunteering staff to secure paid work. However some of the group argued that there was no clear policy on the payment of volunteer expenses, especially lunch. Some staff gave volunteers cash and then asked them to produce receipts, while others gave cash after a receipt was produced. The lack of consistency on this matter appeared to cause confusion to volunteering staff and it seemed the MRSN had no coherent policy on these issues:

MRSN policies regarding lunch payments should be standardised. In some cases you are asked to produce a receipt to be given cash for lunch and at times you are given cash to produce the receipt after buying food (volunteer).

Some volunteers were not even aware that their lunch expenses were paid for as one asserted:

I was not aware that MRSN gives money for lunch, I have worked for three months and I have never received any lunch payments (volunteer).

The above comments highlighted that the volunteer induction process was not executed consistently. The volunteering staff further argued that MRSN could save a lot of money if they could buy weekly bus passes for those staff members who worked at MRSN three or more times a week, rather than paying £4.30 for daily bus passes which proved costly:

When you submit a weekly bus pass you get paid one seventh, yet a day saver is £4.30, I suggest that for a weekly pass it should be one fifth paid. This can cut costs because if I am coming to MRSN three times I will prefer a weekly bus pass, but with the existing system it is better to buy a day saver (volunteer).

This arrangement could be perceived as a token of appreciation for the volunteers' contributions. It could be argued that if participants were paid one fifth of the weekly pass as they suggested, MRSN could save the difference, therefore this would be more cost effective. Such suggestions reflected the fact that the volunteers wanted to be able to contribute to MRSN policy development. However MRSN had no procedures that allowed for the creation of organisational spaces where such issues could be raised and debated as part of the decision making process. MRSN could use Bulawayo as an example in accommodating such organisational spaces that allow issues to be discussed and decision-making inclusive. In such an environment empowerment and voice can be developed; therefore the next section explores MRSN governance.

6.3 MRSN Governance

MRSN was at first a network composed of loosely associated members, directed by a large number of people, 2 from each member organisation, at one point 20 excluding 4 advisors and 3 workers. During my study it was a more closely defined organisation directed by 7 trustees. The latest development brought with it some mixed feelings among the stakeholders, because some felt they were not represented; therefore it was paramount to explore forms of governance that facilitated the creation of spaces of debate where differences could be raised and resolutions sought. Such a form of governance needed to be designed to include the voices of trustees, staff, volunteers and the wider community members. That is the cornerstone to the existence of any organisation like MRSN aiming to empower refugees and asylum seekers. Such governance is defined as 'power with', while the opposite is 'power over'. As discussed earlier (section 5.2), some participants argued that because of the trustees' open eligibility criteria it meant that people who were not skilled found themselves on the board. Such people therefore needed training on how to oversee MRSN. Therefore longer trusteeship tenure was proposed:

I think for continuity we should set a minimum of two years. If the trustees are voted out in one year then logistically it is costly (staff).

We need at least two years as a minimum for trustees to serve (RCO rep)

It is a waste of resources to train trustees every year (community member)

However one participant added that it could be more:

2-3 years maximum. One year is nothing. This year we are nearly there and there will be elections (trustee).

Concerning governance, staff members argued that there was lack of communication between them and the trustees and that the only communication they received were directives, which did not allow room for discussions. The staff and volunteers further argued that they had been used to collaborative working and according to them MRSN was built on collaboration. They argued decisions were dictated to them (power over), and there was no opportunity to contribute to any 'proposed' changes, which came to them as directives which at times were to be implemented 'with immediate effect':

Communication is essential. Accepting other people's opinion as well as valuing other people's opinion is key to good governance (volunteer).

Mobile phones that were useful for staffs' contacts with volunteers were taken off without any warnings and those that were left had texting messages blocked (staff).

Another worker added:

You try to use the phone and all of a sudden it is not working, it is frustrating (staff).

This power over cultivated a sense of worthlessness:

I feel like we are hired hands to do the bidding for the trustees (staff).

Volunteers meanwhile felt they were not part of the team because they were not invited to staff meetings. When paid staff attended meetings they felt out

of place because they were left isolated.

> *When paid staffs have meetings we are left out and it feels out of place* (volunteer).

This created a sense of not belonging on their part; therefore they developed an attitude of just acquiring skills and references from MRSN:

> *I feel I do not belong here and I work to get skills and to get a reference* (volunteer).

This meant highly skilled volunteers would leave for places where they felt a sense of acknowledgment and esteemed. Therefore at MRSN there was continual training of new volunteers, which resulted in the overuse of the scarce resources to train people.

Some were of the opinion that trustees should have management skills, and also be skilled in both literacy and numeracy. An example was when people needed explanation, and the treasurer could not explain figures, it resulted in misunderstanding and loss of faith:

> *The chair needs managerial qualities, financial experience for the treasurer, secretary needs administrative skills, others it would not matter even if they don't have skills, they will learn from these three* (community member).

Some sated that because the trustees were not secure in their positions, when they were challenged they became defensive, instead of looking at the issues raised:

Trustees must stop being defensive and listen so as to solve issues (community rep).

However, some thought that some individuals used the position of trusteeship to secure paid jobs at MRSN. The suggestion was that if a trustee was interested in a job it had to be transparent and an equal opportunity policy was supposed to be applied:

Application for jobs should be based on equal opportunity; there should be no conflict of interest, and advantage for trustees (refugee community member).

The trustees should be committed to the organisation. They should not be working in jobs that do not give them time for MRSN (refugee community member).

One of the participants described the ideal qualities required of the trustees as:

The first quality of leadership at MRSN is open mindedness and second is self-control because of various communities. In the last meeting I was very ashamed because of the shouting that took place without any control from leaders, that is bad (refugee community member).

Additionally some members were not impressed with the election of trustees at MRSN, which they believed were predetermined by the seating members:

It could be improved you know it could be more transparent that is the word I am going to use. We need an independent panel to count votes. To me I do not know how it should be done but to me it was not transparent enough for me (refugee community member).

When I went to the electoral meeting, for me it was as if they already knew what was going to happen. They knew exactly who is going to be a member of the board and who would not be. I wish MRSN to be open to the wider community no matter where individuals come from (RCO rep).

Staff felt that there was lack of professionalism among the trustees because of their conduct which included inappropriate behavior in public for example near fist fighting in front of staff, volunteers and service users:

The trustees nearly had a fistfight in front of staff and volunteers. How can they lead us (volunteer)?

This kind of conduct brought into question the whole process of the competence and integrity of individuals who were elected to the trusteeship. The extracts from participants show that the qualities of the trustees and their use of power within the organisation were barriers to the input from staff, volunteers and the community. The task for my developing discussion in this section was to indicate how these and other negative issues could be addressed by reforming procedures and practices at MRSN in order to create those inclusive spaces where decisions could be made for the benefit of all in the communities being served. Staff argued that trustees should be the guiding force for the organisation; therefore they needed to be seen to conduct themselves in a professional manner that displayed thoughtfulness and the ability to handle pressure. In addition trustees had to bring wisdom by giving counsel to staff and other stakeholders. They argued that if trustees, who were

supposed to be giving directions, lacked that direction it was worrying and confusing.

Staff also raised issues around line management; they argued that the trustees had taken over the day-to-day running of the organisation as they gave instructions directly to the staff. When they gave instructions through the manager there were directives over which the manager had no input:

> *We do not know who is managing us anymore, the manager is overlooked and we get directives from trustees* (staff).

> *When the manager gives them, he fails to explain because he had no input* (staff).

This caused confusion and contradictions in the role of the manager and the trustees. This kind of politics of the organisation affected the management of staff and the functioning of the organisation, therefore compromising the service provision. The staff felt less motivated about completing their job effectively and got to a point where even coming to work was becoming a struggle:

> *The last two years I have not taken any leave from work because I enjoyed doing my work and I did not mind my leave days being forfeited, however this year because of what is happening I can't wait to go on leave* (staff).

Some felt insecure about their jobs because they did not feel safe in their work place:

I am not even sure if my work is secure and I have just joined the union because I am not sure about my job (staff).

The staff argued that the organisation was heavily politicized, which was affecting its operations and as a result there was a lot of uncertainty and confusion:

We are confused, as we do not know what next from trustees. We live in fear (staff).

I would therefore argue that such a situation required action, as discussed below. Trustees meanwhile had a spirit of enthusiasm, honour and pride in being the trustees of the organisation:

I feel enthusiastic, honoured and proud of being the lead in governance of MRSN (trustee).

However this enthusiasm was misplaced if other stakeholders felt unwelcome or their voices suppressed. The lack of openness to the experiences of others was summed up with one trustee arguing:

They have no choice, because as a trustee I am not there to make numbers, but contribute. Even if it's not consistent with other trustees they will have to recognise me (trustee).

Moreover, one trustee argued that there was a lack of trust among the trustees because they did not understand each other, and this led to animosity within:

As trustees we do not trust each other, we are divided. Individuals want their ideas to be the ones that are listened to (trustee).

Some want to dominate others and suppress ideas (trustee).

This is the kind of conflict that radical democracy anticipates and seeks to deal with by seeking a common symbolic space within which to creatively come up with decisions that do not overrule the disagreements (Butcher et al, 2007). However, given the presence of animosity and the lack of trust then a symbolic space where creative solutions through debate can arise is unlikely to emerge. The confusion in the line management of staff, as discussed above, and the lack of the inclusion of RCOs and the wider community in decision-making further exacerbated the problem. Some concurred that trustees were supposed to operate like a family, which worked in collaboration, so as to be empowerment agents, but there was animosity:

We are supposed to work together like a family, but we are enemies (trustee).

They put you down when you raise a point and that creates anger and hatred (trustee).

The lack of understanding of the evident power dynamics led most trustees to believe that as trustees, they alone had to make the decisions and they only could consult RCOs if they needed:

My opinion is that trustees make decisions and pass to the manager who then passes to the staff. The trustees are the engine of the organisation and without them the organisation would not function (trustee).

The relationship between trustees, managers and staff was thus one of 'power over'. Consultation would begin to address this by creating the potential for 'power with' as it was implicit in the recognition by one trustee:

The Trustees represent the wider community as such they need to be taking decisions and if there is any controversy they should consult the wider community (trustee).

At MRSN it was important to turn the enemy-like stance that people had towards each other into what Mouffe (2005) calls agonism, which is distinct from antagonism. Agonism is the recognition of differences of view under conditions of debate and the desire to find solutions. Antagonism on the contrary creates the conditions of a 'fight' where some win and others lose. The relation of agonism requires a space where procedures and practices can be constructed that lead to creative resolutions. Hence the need to search for the conditions that allow a temporary unified space for collective debate, decision making, planning and action that can resolve issues to the mutual benefit of all. The quotes below about the need for empowerment imply some form of 'power with'. This equality of powers required for 'power with', which recognises agonism without slipping into antagonism and enmity where mutual resolutions are no longer possible.

I believe we empower by raising the voices of service users by updating policies and procedures (trustee).

We empower by giving the refugees the opportunity to decide about things that affect them (trustee).

To me I think everyone has power, therefore we empower by facilitating the exercise of this power that is at the disposal of the people. We help

them develop the ability to negotiate and demand power to affect their lives, therefore reinforcing active citizenship (staff).

We are doing our best to empower RCOs with the training and support in fundraising (staff).

Some participants argued that RCOs were the cornerstone of MRSN because their involvement can enhance a strategy for developing the skills necessary to turn antagonism into agonism in the manner advocated by Mouffe (2005). Therefore they should have played a major role in what happened at MRSN:

RCOs have to be involved because they bring in skills that are needed at MRSN, their skills help the organisation and this is transferred to other RCOs (trustee).

Network meetings had the potential to enable the expression of voices but were not well managed thus some voices were not heard. As a result one trustee argued that the previous network meeting had been a good idea, however it let down the RCOs because they were not given chances to voice their views:

The last consultation we let the RCOs down, involvement was limited. People are supposed to be given a voice. Trustees should be reporting to RCOs, they should consult on the agenda. Trustees should report on issues, and this will improve the organisation (trustee).

Another trustee felt that RCOs were passive and not taking an active role at MRSN. So they endeavoured to create spaces for RCOs to assess the functions of MRSN and then feed them into the organisation:

What I have realised is that RCOs don't take an active role, they are passive and not committed. If we can create a space where RCOs have a forum where they meet regularly and feed into the organisation, MRSN will be effective. This will be a two-way communication, a relationship (trustee).

From the extracts from the participants I would argue that most trustees lacked understanding on how to construct a form of governance that enhances unified spaces, which was a requisite if MRSN was to be empowering. I would argue that the role of trustees as governors requires one to understand how charities function and be prepared to contribute towards the development and success of the organisation not the opposite. Destruction of an organisation is usually caused by abuse of power that manifests itself in cohesion 'power over' which is oppressive and diminishes people's demeanours. Where power is the emancipator, 'power with', it gives people space to self express, ideas develop and every voice is epitomized and taken on board, therefore creating an environment that enhances governance of unified spaces. Consequently, set objectives are more easily achieved (Butcher *et al*, 2007). Governance as an empowerment and voice-giving agent is based on the premises of representation (see section 5.3) and also that is explored in the next section.

6.4 Representations and MRSN

Representation in the context of the third sector involves issues of power and empowerment, alongside the need for collaboration and consensus. Governance involves how to manage an organisation whether on the basis of representation or some other basis such as authoritarian line management. At MRSN governance was identified through this research as an issue since some participants argued that there was inadequate or even no representation for certain sections of the community. For example:

MRSN does not have a balanced representation, because there are

more men than women and no young people in the trusteeship (RCO rep).

MRSN has no representation of young people in their structure (staff).

If MRSN had young people representation there would be services for the young people provided by the organisation (RCO rep).

There was a general feeling among RCOs that children were not getting services in their respective communities because they were discriminated against:

Our children suffer discrimination even outside the playground they cannot play football or badminton with others because they are not welcome. They always tick boxes. Sometime they only take 1% of black people. This is disgraceful (refugee community member).

Therefore some suggested that MRSN needed a Children's Service to cater for the needs of children. Some argued that in summer children had lacked provision of activities due to the school holidays and parents had struggles with childcare. They suggested that MRSN could start projects for members because their communities were not providing services for their children. Where there were facilities, they felt children of refugees and asylum seekers were unwelcome:

I think we have to be responsible for our children's future by setting up projects such as sports activities and so on. I am sure MRSN can do that for the children (community member).

Places like Miles Platting are closer to town but there is nothing for children to do. If you are a parent and you want your child to participate into health activities then you have to travel to Gorton or other places, and you feel unwelcome (community member).

Most single mums do not drive and have no money to travel far, so, I think MRSN should do something for children closer to where they live otherwise it's disgraceful. What do they say about healthy living when there is nothing available in this area (community member)?

In the context of such issues, some argued that MRSN was a closed society, which should open up to include members of the community who are not refugees to make it easy to integrate:

I find MRSN as a closed organisation, it is not open. I wish they could be more open to the wider community (RCO member).

Some argued that because of the lack of representation they had no idea of the function of MRSN:

First we do not even know what is really going on, that is the difficult part because if you do not know what is going on its not easy to have any influence (RCO rep).

Others felt that their views were not represented:

I do not think my views are represented. Maybe I am not in the right place, I feel excluded instead of integrating (RCO rep).

However some felt their contributions were valued, hence they felt represented because their voices were heard by the service users who appreciated the services they received from them.

I feel I am the heart of MRSN; my contribution has changed people's lives for the better and appreciated (staff).

I feel my contribution is valued, everyone is aware that I do a valued piece of work (staff).

Whilst others were of the view that representation enhanced active citizenship:

It is easy to get involved in civic matters if your voice is considered then you feel represented (community member).

Participants had various views and definitions concerning active citizenship, however the underlying factor was that active citizenship involved taking part in activities that affected their lives in their communities.

Citizenship is being part of the community (community member).

To me it is taking part in decision-making (staff).

Active citizenship is the ability to be part of the activities that affect our lives (RCO rep).

People should not be forced to volunteer for active citizenship (volunteer).

The concept of governance by increasing the range of representation is very important because it enhances active citizenship. However the divergent interpretations held by the stakeholders at MRSN meant that there was a need

to do more to develop the concept. Representative governance had a big impact on the vision of MRSN because of its mandate of empowering by giving voice to refugees and asylum seekers individually or as organisations. The empowering and voice giving is further expanded through networking among themselves and with other organisations, which is explored in the next section.

6.5 Networking

Most participants seemed to embrace the importance of networking as an agent of giving voice to enhance active citizenship. They argued that by coming into contact with other people in other communities and organisations, they learnt from each other, and that knowledge was valuable for MRSN and RCOs:

> *I feel our connection with Refugee Action helped us with securing the RIES project, which helped to improve the lives of refugees and MRSN and RCOs financial support. Now that it is gone will impact negatively* (trustee).

In addition one participant argued:

> *… we cannot afford to live like an island. If you have a collective voice other people like policy makers will listen and take you seriously, but if you are alone no one listens. The present climate of cuts and the proposal of the Big Society require organisations to work together* (trustee).[2]

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[2] The Big Society was Prime Minister David Cameron's idea launched in the 2010 election campaign, which let people decide how they want things done. He argued it would facilitate communities to run post offices, libraries, transport services and shape housing projects. These schemes would be funded from dormant bank accounts' and he hailed this as a big advance for people power.

In addition, others argued that they needed more networking with other RCOs:

We need to network with other RCOs to learn from each other (RCO rep).

We can share resources with other RCOs if we network (RCO rep).

One added that networking with other RCOs would enhance chances of networking with more refugee organisations:

I believe if our RCOs' networking is effective we can extend to more refugee organisations (community member).

Networking brought some positives, therefore it was imperative for MRSN to embark on advancing more networks, and that was possible, because the stakeholders (RCOs, members, trustees, staff and volunteers) embraced the idea. Networking is helpful in people learning about each other and integrating therefore it enhances active citizenship. However the scale of the problem faced by organisations like MRSN led some asylum seekers into destitution because of the difficulties highlighted in this chapter and the preceding chapters of the thesis describing the hostile social, political and economical environment. Hence the next section explores the life of destitution and the capacity of MRSN to address this issue.

6.6 MRSN and Destitution

Destitution manifests itself when a person lacks all the basic needs to earn a living. It became an important theme in the exploration of the data. The

purpose of this section therefore is to provide a context to the experiences of destitution and minimising its ills like isolation through campaigns. Hence the vulnerability of women is the next sub section.

6.6.1 Vulnerability of women

My study identified that some women were abused and forced to indulge in 'immoral' acts against their will in order to survive. It was further found that some women remained in relationships even though they did not wish to and this was mainly due to being dependent on these men for survival. One participant stated:

I try to find another way to survive. Other women do it living with abusive partners as well (L).

Another participant added that it was hard living with a man she did not love:

For women it is hard you end up living with someone you don't love for you to survive, you can be abused (Y).

In addition one of the women had adapted to living with 'a lover' to survive:

I developed an attitude of living with someone even if I did not love for my survival (K).

Furthermore one argued that she had worked to survive, but the situation had changed:

I have been left destitute and I play hide and seek with Immigration. I used to work illegally, but now they want papers, I can't. I have resorted

to prostitution to get money for food and clothes, but I don't like it. I have no choice. I was never a prostitute before (R).

The suffering of women often starts at a young age (child abuse) and is perpetuated even when they become older in the form of working for low pay and various forms of domestic violence. Butcher *et al*, (2007) argue that:

Women experience oppression as a subordinate group within patriarchal societies in many ways, including low pay, worse working conditions, the 'glass ceiling'… They experience appreciably higher levels of child abuse and levels of domestic violence, and they carry appreciably heavier and more demanding 'caring' roles than men (2007:20).

De Beauvoir (1953) argues that women are in concrete situations that limit their ability to be free, as their manoeuvres are always in check by men who are scared of their freedom. The greatest challenge to these women was that the system that was supposed to protect them did not by not providing them basic needs therefore exposed them to abusive individuals who operated with impunity.

6.6.2 Lack of basic requirements

One aspect of destitution was a lack of basic needs like food. The only source of food available was from charity organisations like the Red Cross, churches and sympathetic individuals. These kinds of sources were often unreliable and did not offer any choices. Therefore they had to take whatever was available even if they did not like it:

Sometimes you are forced to eat food you are not used to. There is lack of choice of food because you have no option. The food has no proper nutrition (P).

To further compound their predicaments, organisations like the Red Cross had time limits in provision of handouts and on reaching the time limit, the individuals involved had to look elsewhere for survival:

I used to get food from Red Cross for a year, but now it has stopped. I don't get anything now (B).

One participant added:

I used to get food from the Red Cross. It stopped last week. I have to rely on my bus fare for food to survive. Sometimes I go to homeless places where I can get a shower and hot food. Some allow me to take sandwiches and I then live on the sandwiches (H).

In a bid to address the issue of being destitute, some organisations provided sleeping places, but did not provide sanitary services. This led to people waking up in the morning in search for showers. As a result this lack of provision often led to a chaotic start of the day as people searched for showers to clean themselves:

I go to some places for a shower and something to eat. Some provide for 7 days while others provide 5 days, but they don't give me bus fare to get there. I have to walk and it is far (Z).

When a person has to be unsettled in pursuit of food, a place to sleep, get personal care and at the same time avoiding deportation, I would argue that such a person lacks safety and would become distressed. This lack of basic needs leads to more vulnerability.

6.6.3 Lack of safety

Some of the participants were uncertain about their future in the UK because of immigration issues thus felt unsafe. This was compounded by the threat of being raided and deported to their countries of origin anytime by the immigration officers. Alinsky (1972) argues that: 'The threat is usually more terrifying than the thing itself' (1972:128). What made life more difficult for some participants was that people they referred to as friends had been seen to turn against them:

> *If I tell some people they will have nothing to do with me. You don't know who to trust. I had people who knew me, but once they got to know my situation they said I was illegal and had nothing to do with me (H).*

In addition one participant argued about his despair:

> *I feel scared, sometimes I feel my stomach upset, and I feel sick. It gets too much about destitution. When I am out in the street and I see police I feel scared and even when I am in the house I don't know if they will come and take me for deportation. How can I participate (W)?*

Some participants preferred to stay away from others due to lack of confidence, as they felt ashamed of themselves. They felt helpless about their situations and believed that all people viewed them with the same attitude:

> *Confidence is destroyed, you prefer to hide because you are in what you have been made to feel as a shameful situation, and you avoid other people (Y).*

When the confidence is destroyed it makes it very difficult to participate and relate to other people therefore such individuals find it difficult to maintain relationships hence lonely and isolated.

6.6.4 Sense of isolation and loneliness

These people were struggling to come to terms with their situations; they lived in misery and isolation and could not develop the courage to have relationships:

> *I don't have a girlfriend. I am scared of responsibilities. I have gone to other organisations and they ask me if I have a partner, it's the same they might ask me as well at MRSN I am ashamed* (J)

The fear of the exposure of being a destitute thus hindered some from engaging in relationships:

> *I am stopping myself because if the girl would know my situation she will dump me, it is better to stay without. I might be tempted if I go to MRSN and I might end up having problems* (P).

The experience of isolation and lack of relationships was further compounded by the treatment of people they thought were their 'friends' who treated them with contempt when they accommodated them, therefore the next sub section explores life in these circumstances.

6.6.5 Accommodation needs

Most of the people who offered accommodation to people living in destitution

did it out of love and care:

The family that offered me accommodation were very good to me (J)

I felt like a family member to the good lady who looked after me when I had nothing (G).

I will never forget the love I got from the family that cared for me when I was homeless (A).

In some cases however people offered help for different agendas. One participant argued that:

Some people who offer accommodation sometimes need something more and sometimes they do it for the financial benefit, it's not always free. We are thankful to be housed, but we are not happy (X).

Another added:

How can you be happy living in someone else's house when you have left behind a house and a family that is still your responsibility but you are unable to fend for them (H)?

The asylum seekers who had been categorised as 'deserving' viewed others with suspicion and tried to avoid being associated with them:

The people I called my friends treated me like a toy, an imbecile. They

would switch off the gas and electric when I tried to wash. I had to wait until they finish work. How can I participate at MRSN when I sometimes have no bath or breakfast to start the day (X)?

In such situations people found it very difficult to engage with others and asking them to participate in activities that would enhance citizenship would be pushing them to the limit. This hopelessness led to blaming themselves.

6.6.6 Self-blame

Some participants had lost all hope, because everywhere they looked there seemed to be problems, therefore they developed what Gramsci, in Strinati (1995), calls: 'Spontaneous consent' which is willingness to accept the prevailing discourse (1995: 165), or consensual control where they voluntarily assimilate the world view hegemony of the dominant group (Ransome, 2004):

I think it's my fault that I am in this situation (L).

One argued that her presentation of the case was the cause of all the suffering*:*

I should have presented my case in a better way, it is my fault (Z).

The other lamented that it was a wrong idea to seek asylum in the UK and was the one causing trouble:

I should not have come here, I am causing trouble (P).

Two participants even went further to argue that pets were treated better than

them:

> *People here treat their pets better than us. It is my fault that I am here* (N).

> *I have a feeling that I should have stayed in my country and died than be treated worse than a dog* (A).

Freire (1972) argues that if people are not free they turn to conformism and take positions in society that are not theirs, hence live in falsity. Such people are powerless and they see calamity approaching them and they lie down to be crushed without trying to avoid it, as if they were paralysed. Such people need consideration from those who are free and would like to share their fruits of freedom.

Some however were grounded in their belief that it was the government that was getting it wrong:

> *It's Home Office's fault. It's the system. They don't care about people's human rights. They want people to commit suicide* (G).

The situation was not helped by the media, which portrayed sections of society as different from others; therefore the next section explores biased media reporting.

6.6.7 Biased Media Reporting

Destitution of asylum seekers was not reported in media at the time of writing, like the oppression of blacks before the Brixton riots, and I would argue this similarity as a 'cover up'. Brian Paddick, commenting about the Brixton and

2010 London riots, said:

> In 1981 nobody would listen ... No media would cover the oppression that, particularly, young black men were suffering at the hands of the police at the time ... The uprising in Brixton was understandable if not legitimate. (Kelly, 2010:1).

Some media, it could be argued was biased and always portrayed the activities of immigrants negatively (see section 2.5) and generalised them to create an impression that they were bogus. This created animosity between the British citizens and the immigrant communities, and it also created anxieties for both communities:

> *We are always accused of stealing jobs, bringing violence, guns, drugs and diseases. How can I come out? I am scared because of what the media reports* (J).

> *When I read things in some newspapers I am scared of coming out into the street* (Z).

The media played a key role in instilling fear in the public, therefore exacerbating a threatening atmosphere towards asylum seekers and refugees:

> *When I was in a bus I heard people talk about an article about asylum seekers swarming schools and taking away houses and the language they used made me to get off the bus before I arrived at my destination* (H).

Even the police acknowledged that the atmosphere was threatening to this group of people:

Racist expressions towards asylum seekers appear to have become common occurrence and acceptable in a way which would never be tolerated towards any other minority (The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), 2001:1).

This kind of behaviour by the media left most people misinformed e.g. a MORI poll (2002) showed the public perceived that the UK hosted 23% of the world refugees, yet it hosts only 1.89%. As discussed in chapter 2 politicians in cohort with the media misinform the British population, instead of reversing the hostilities they exacerbate the atmosphere (Oxfam, 2006). The 2014 British Social Attitudes Survey asked the causes of the most divisions both in their local area and nationally. 41% of respondents cited tension between immigrants and people born in UK as the biggest problem in their local vicinity. 57% said tension between immigrants and people born in UK caused the most division nationally. A February 2014 poll conducted by YouGov for Channel 5 found that 65% of respondents were worried about the level of immigration to the UK (Migration Watch UK, 2014). When the environment is hostile people have limited chances of participation in the communities they live in, and this led to their exploitation.

6.6.8 Experiences of sanctuary and of exploitation

Religious institutions have always been perceived as places of sanctuary to the needy and this dates back to the beginning of organised religious establishments. Some participants argued that:

*When I was a destitute a church in Lower Broughton gave me food and clothes. I am not talking a story without foundation, its facts. I know up to now they still help people (*N).

And another recounted their experience of being helped:

> *I went to the Catholic Church and they gave me £10 a week, tissues, food and others items. They took me to hospital when I was expecting and when I gave birth they gave my baby a cot* (D).

However, some participants claimed that some churches had taken advantage of the people by false promises that they would pray for them to get refugee status:

> *African Churches are not helpful; they give falsely promises to solve all your problems through prayer (G).*

In some cases this led some young women to have forced relationships with some of the church members who held positions of authority. However when they became pregnant they were hurled out of the churches and labelled as fornicators and left to fend for themselves without any support:

> *Once you are pregnant they chase you out of the church, they call that fornication. They don't bother about the men responsible for the pregnancies. The father of my child was not even asked about my pregnancy, when I told them they did not want to listen I became an outcast (M).*

Beside exploitation of the women in churches by men, there was also financial exploitation:

> *They will tell you to offer a lot of money, saying God will bless you. I remember changing my only vouchers for cash that amounted to £100 for offering with the expectance that my problems will go away. Sometimes I would borrow for offering because they always kept an eye on how much you offered (N).*

In addition, one participant protested:

They were stealing from us. If you tell them that you have no money or job, they will tell you to give the last penny and you will get blessings. You give in desperation. These so called 'pastors' worry about themselves and nobody else. They are hypocrites. I am mad about them. They study people's problems and then come up with false promises. I believed they were men of God, yet they are thieves. You would think as a Christian they would do what Jesus did, caring for the people, but they did the opposite exploiting the needy. They still do it (R).

From this it could be argued that some churches play their part in helping people living in destitution, but some contribute towards suffering of those very vulnerable. Even the health system was not helping; therefore ill health was a concern, which is explored in the next section.

6.6.9 Increase in ill health and lack of health care

The people living in destitution faced further discrimination because the health system did not provide for secondary treatment; therefore they were asked to pay for it. This caused more distress:

I am ill, I can't come out and I don't get any support because I am a failed asylum seeker (K).

In addition one participant added:

My illness rheumatoid arthritis/scerrolsero-negative inflammatory arthritis was caused by stress, because I was always worried about

what would happen. 9 years I waited for my case to be resolved. I was always waiting for a knock at the door to be deported. I did not sleep. This had a lot of effect. I could sometimes get lost in places I know. I went through a period of depression. The stress contributed to my illness. People used to ridicule me because I was a destitute. I would prefer to stay at home 7 days without coming out and I think this affected my boy (M).

In frustration one bemoaned:

I have stress and anxiety all the time and this led to mental health problems (K).

These kinds of uncertainties have led others to contemplate drastic measures of committing suicide:

People who experience such a kind of life might end up having suicidal thoughts because they have nothing to live for. I have sometimes thought of taking my life, but when I think of my son who needs me, I have held on (M).

The Institution of Race Relations recorded 87 deaths between 2005 and 2010 of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants as a result, self-harm, denial of medical treatment, destitution, hazardous working conditions or racist attacks (Athwal, 2110). In March 2015 about 300 immigrants went on hunger strike over sub-standard housing conditions at Harmondsworth detention centre near London's Heathrow Airport. There were further reports of hunger strikes and protests breaking out in similar centres around the country (RT, 2015). A UK based NGOP Women for Refugee Women in 2012 argued that 1902 women-seeking asylum were detained which was about a third of women asylum applicants for that period. Of this number the 46 interviewed claimed

they had been raped or tortured in their countries of origin. More than half stated they had thought about suicide during detention, and more than one in five had attempted to kill themselves (European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), 2014).

This section has identified the scale of the issues experienced by those in destitution. This therefore required MRSN and similar organisations to develop effective strategies to address destitution. One of the strategies was creating an environment, which allowed unified spaces for critical decision making through the planning of campaigns. The campaigns in the next section brought togetherness and a sense of belongingness.

6.7 MRSN Campaigns

Given the significance of the problems described in the previous section, MRSN decided to address the issues by developing campaigns to empower and give voice to refugees and asylum seekers to enhance their citizenship. From the onset, to make the campaigns effective and meaningful, it was paramount to distinguish between matters of policy and civil servants' incompetence. The former was to be addressed to MPs and councillors and the latter to civil servants. This avoided the previous confusion, which had led to breakdown in communication with UKBA staff because of the policy questions thrown at them from the militant campaigners.

The stakeholders decided that the forum would be the focal point of contact for refugees and migrants to share skills, information and resources. It was argued this would build respect and cooperation between Manchester's refugee and migrant populations and develop solutions to the problems they faced. There were further suggestions that raising awareness amongst the general public through the improving campaigns and establishment of new ones with the participants leading. Campaigns needed people who were prepared for the struggle and would not give up, because of the challenges. As Douglass (1857) argued freedom was a result of a struggle: 'and power concedes nothing

without a demand' (Douglass, 1857:1).

I would therefore argue that in any campaign against any form of oppression, it is the prerogative of the oppressed to take full control of the struggle because they have the energy and enthusiasm for the cause. And it should not only be:

> … purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then can it be praxis (Freire, 1993: 47).

Such people needed hope to be participatory to harness all their energies towards set goals. Therefore critical hope is the key to any success and persistence towards striving to achieve goals as Freire (1998) asserts that:

> A struggle without hope is an illusion. This hope should be based on openness, to attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical equality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle one of its mainstays (1998: 8).

I would argue that it would have been a mistaken strategy to seek power by using Fanon's principle of violence as: 'a cleansing force' that emancipates from 'despair and inaction' (Fanon, 1963:94), nor as Alinsky (1972) argues, that there should be no common ground with the oppressor:

> Our cause had to be all shining justice, allied with the angels; theirs had to be all-evil, tied to the Devil; in no way has the enemy or the cause ever been grey (1972: 3).

This would have created more resentment on both sides. Bamyeh (2010)

argues that violence and use of language to glamorise violence is counter-productive. It is associated with a process of limitless destruction of both human beings and infrastructure and it can lead to total obliteration of the adversaries. Therefore time spent on organising violent tendencies could be spent more productively engaging in meaningful discussions that bring community cohesion (Bell, 2010). In the destitution context, the idea of violence and hateful language would not have been helpful, as that would have confirmed to society that the asylum seekers brought problems to the communities.

Attention was turned to the opportunities that provided spaces for resistance in everyday life without prescribed methods to be used (de Certeau, 1984). It was important to use various tools available like music, art, language, protest, negotiations and campaigns. This fluidity bolstered the development of *la perruque* that is 'making do', that drives people to resist the 'norm' even in the most conservative or oppressive societies (de Certeau, 1984). In addition, Critchley (2007) advocates for an ethical and democratic participation, which is defined as the 'infinitely demanding'. This is a meta-ethics based on concepts of approval and demand where such universal demands as freedom, justice, and human rights are 'infinite' thus cannot be exhausted in any particular finite circumstance. Balibar (1994) argues that in any meaningful participation there is need for the existence of both equality and freedom hence equaliberty where the one universal term cannot exist without the other. In the study it was about persistently demanding changes in the system that oppressed by denying people's demands for what they considered to be their universal rights. As Alinsky (1972) asserts:

> The major premise for tactics is the development of operations that will maintain a constant pressure upon the opposition (1972: 129).

Therefore it was felt that the best strategy was engagement and the people living in destitution would lead the fight for social justice, inclusion and belongingness. To achieve social justice, Frazer (1999) asserts that it entails

distributive justice, that includes concerns about economic justice and is defined as the absence of exploitation, economic marginalisation and deprivation; and cultural justice is the absence of cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect. For Cribb and Gewirtz, (2003) this involves associational justice, which:

> … is the absence of patterns of association amongst individuals and amongst groups, which prevent some people from participating fully in decisions, which affect the conditions within which they live and act (2003:19).

In addition Butcher *et al,* (2007) argue that the key principle for the oppressed is to: '… confront the disadvantage, exclusion and oppression that they experience …' (2007:21).

In short, as Douglass (1857), asserts that those affected have to fight for themselves. He argues that a person who does not want to fight to free self is not worth sacrificing for and the world rewards people according to their engagement in their struggle. Cribb and Gewirtz, (2003) argue that:

> It is absolutely essential that the oppressed participate in the revolutionary process with an increasingly critical awareness of their role as subjects of the transformation (2003: 19).

In summary, from the above brief discussion, it could be argued that for the campaign to be successful it needed the following key elements: (i) people who were prepared to fight for their freedom, (ii) people who had hope and, in practising the 'infinitely demanding', were not prepared to give up because of disappointments, (iii) people who had focus on what they were fighting for, (iv) people who were able to engage in non-violent means and (v) people who practiced equality and respect among themselves as a basis for social justice.

To advance the campaign and using the above principles, I worked with the steering group (a committee set for campaigns in refugee immigrant forum project) in conjunction with the sub groups from Let Them Work and Basic Rights, and we incorporated the Refugee Awareness and Destitution campaigns. These campaigns were a culmination of the deliberations of the Manchester Migrant and Refugee Charter, which was discussed earlier. The precepts from the charter were meant as a way of empowering asylum seekers to have a voice and to access representation in activities that affected their lives.

This involved acting together of participants and consultancy work in implementing what had been determined as an action plan. It also involved ladder participation, that is, communities identifying and prioritising their needs and engaging with organisations like the local authority and other agencies for support with resources like finances and expertise (Wilcox and Taylor, 1995). When refugees and asylum seekers are empowered and have voice, destitution can be tackled and stopped; therefore the first sub-section of the following explores the attempts made to prevent destitution. It should be emphasised that the principles adopted for all the following sub sections were similar: the affected taking lead, resilience, having focus, non-violence and equality and respect for each other.

6.7.1 Stop Destitution Campaign

'Stop destitution' was a new concept explored in the campaigns and it targeted MPs to sign up that they were against this form of human rights abuse and to table early morning motions in parliament. The strategy was to get as many MPs as possible on board with the view that this could lead to a change of policy. Other methods used included speaking at conferences and gatherings with policy makers present. In these forums, people who had experienced or were experiencing destitution, took the lead in informing the audiences of their suffering. These campaigns also involved sleeping in the open in winter as a

public awareness exercise. At the time of writing, this exercise succeeded in getting support from 14 Members of Parliament (see footnote page 215), Councillors, students and members of the public. What came from engagement with various people was that destitution could be stopped if asylum seekers were allowed to work. Therefore the next sub-section explores the campaign to let asylum seekers [3]work, so that they get empowered and gain voice.

6.7.2 Let Them Work Campaign

The Let Them Work campaign was based on the withdrawal of the right to work for asylum seekers as discussed in chapter 2, which I argue is against human rights. The argument was if people were allowed to work, it would free them from the benefit dependency syndrome. The dependency syndrome manifests itself when people have to rely on benefits for a long time (some as long as a decade). These people came from countries where there was no welfare support of any sort; they were used to working for everything. Thus, they had the ability and the willingness to work; this is evident as some ended up taking illegal jobs (Burnett and Chebe, 2010):

> *I worked illegal to get some money because I had nothing to eat. I stopped when the employers demanded a work permit (P).*

In many cases they were underpaid, leading to exploitation (Burnett and Chebe, 2010). Nevertheless, some still wanted to work but the working environment was restrictive than it used to be;

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[3] Kate Green, Lisa Nandy, Graham Stringer, Tony Lloyd, Gerald Kaufman, Andrew Gwynne, Jim Dobbin, Andy Burnham, Yvonne Fovargue, Paul Goggins, Michael Meacher, Simon Danczuk, Hazel Blears and John Leech.

> *I tried looking for work in three places and they all demanded work permits, now I am afraid to try, because the last one was threatening (J).*

Too often, with an absence of opportunities to work, they were left to roam the streets with nowhere to go to and nothing to do. Hence this campaign involved the participants and myself lobbying Greater Manchester Members of Parliament (MPs) to support the cause of allowing asylum seekers to work. The campaign took the form of us sending letters to the MPs to sign pledging their support for the right to work. It also involved face-to-face meetings where participants told their stories about the effect of not being allowed to work. I would argue that morally the right to work is a basic human right, which should be afforded to everyone.

6.7.3 Basic Rights Campaign

The Basic Right campaign, which was sometimes referred to as Asylum Rights, was a manifestation against the abuses perpetrated by the UKBA staff at reporting centres, where the treatment of asylum seekers was appalling:

> *These people talk to us as if we are not human beings and I don't feel safe to go to the reporting centre (W).*

> *I was treated worse than a criminal by the UKBA staff (B).*

> *We are made to wait outside in the rain with young children and inside it is not a good place for children (D).*

In this campaign I helped prepare and accompany participants for face-to-face meetings with the UKBA staff in an environment that allowed for the voices of

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the affected people to be heard. The aim of the campaign was to improve asylum seekers' experience at the reporting centre and for it to be child friendly. This was raising awareness with UKBA staff in Greater Manchester about the needs and experiences of refugee communities, which is the next sub section.

6.7.4 Refugee and asylum awareness Campaign

The aim of the Refugee Awareness Project was to offer local groups the opportunity to learn more about asylum in the UK by talking to trained speakers from the refugee communities who had first-hand experience of exile. We designed the campaign to involve the training of refugees, asylum seekers living in destitution and other interested people in the raising awareness of society about the plight of asylum seekers.

The graduates from the Refugee Awareness Project training targeted UKBA staff, colleges, universities, schools and communities. The comments by the participants at two sessions at a Housing Association and a school reveal the positive impact the campaign was making. For example, at the Housing Association:

> *Was a really eye opener and very emotional*

> *It has been very powerful and humbling to hear real people's testimony, thank you*

> *An informative and powerful session*

At the School:

> *Very inspirational and I've learnt a lot*

Changed my view on refugees, give them respect as they've had it tough compared to me

Changed opinion, realised how lucky I am to have freedom

WOW!!

If one person changes their views then that's success!! If more than one person changes their views then that is absolutely incredible! I was so impressed by the session today; you and your team had such good energy and made a very positive impact upon our students as they learnt many new things today. I keep on reading the evaluation comments and I still can't believe the impact it's had! Last year we ran a workshop on Refugee awareness and the effect was nowhere near the level reached today. My colleague is even considering booking you for one of her Cope classes. Thank you once again for such an excellent workshop (teacher).

The main thrust of the asylum awareness campaign was to enlighten the population about the negative impact of immigration laws and to highlight the plight of refugees and asylum seekers thus expose the on-going process of creating destitution.

In summary, the success of the campaigns improved because of ensuring that the affected took the lead, being resilient, having focus, and adopting the values of non-violence, equality and respect for each other. The campaigns helped even those who were lacking in confidence to gain it, because they were respected, their voices were considered and nurtured into taking the lead in engaging with diverse people. As a result, it can be argued that the targeted recipients came to understand and appreciate the concerns of the asylum seekers and the ills that they are exposed to. An example of this can be seen in the support given by MPs and councillors sleeping out in support of the eradication of destitution, signing letters in support of asylum seekers being

allowed to work and taking it to parliament. It can also be seen in the responses to the awareness campaign. Campaigns could be extended to include handing some petitions to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and Home Office select committee. All the activities discussed in this chapter hinge on the financial stability of MRSN, hence the next section.

6.8 Financial stability

In order for MRSN to build its capacity, effectively provide empowerment and give voice to refugees and asylum seekers through such projects as described in section 6.2 and in undertaking such campaigns as described in section 6.7, it needs to have a sound financial base. However because of the radical economic spending cuts introduced by the coalition government (see section1.4), in September 2010, MRSN lost RIES (see sub section 6.2.4) and this affected it negatively. Furthermore 6 RCOs who were sub contracted to provide the advocacy lost funding. MRSN had been receiving funding of £90,000 annually from the RIES project of which £50,000 went towards the salaries and £40,000 was spent on running costs and payment of the 6 RCOs for infrastructure support.

The Migrant Impact Fund, which was funded by central government through Manchester City Council to MRSN and partners, Citizen Advice Bureau and Cheetham Hill Advice Centre, was reduced by six months, from the two-year agreement. This funding contributed £160,326 annually which paid the salaries of four staff and it was the biggest funder for MRSN. Therefore this affected the way MRSN functioned as an organisation. It proved impossible to obtain that kind of funding, therefore the anticipated outcomes were affected. This predicament changed MRSN's focus, instead of implementing the current strategies and exploring new ideas, all the efforts turned towards fundraising. This often meant that staff spent most of their time fundraising at the expense of providing services. As a result this created a lot of anxiety in the organisation and affected the quality of services provided:

> *MRSN spends a lot of time sourcing funds instead of helping RCOs as result they also lack funds because of this lack of support and poor quality services we provide suffers* (staff).

It was further argued that MRSN depended on local and regional government funding and this had affected the organisation's finances:

> *MRSN relies on Council and regional funding and now because of central government spending, it is heavily affected* (trustee).

One participant suggested that MRSN should devise new strategies of raising funds:

> *MRSN should look at new ways of raising funds* (RCO rep).

The stakeholders acknowledged that MRSN and the RCOs were not in a financially stable position. Such a situation needed to be addressed; therefore the next section explores ways of improving MRSN so that it provides the required services.

6.9 Discussions and Conclusion

This concluding discussion aims to identify the key challenges and some potential strategies to improve the capacity of MRSN's ability to address the issues raised in this chapter. The key challenges and issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers were; confidence building, active citizenship, employment and destitution. In order to improve MRSN's capacity to provide services, support and to undertake campaigns the discussion will deliberate strategies to address organisational issues, identify and address the issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers and ensure its future sustainability. These issues

will be discussed in terms of: developing a form of governance appropriate to MRSN's aims and values; undertaking training; enhancing the morale of staff and volunteers; strategies to secure a sustainable future; and the development of mutually beneficial alliances.

6.9.1 Establishing an Appropriate form of Governance-training

The core aims and values of MRSN are to empower refugees and asylum seekers to enhance active citizenship by inclusive collaborative engagements. This called for appropriate governance, which was lacking leading to low staff and volunteer morale (see section 6.3). An appropriate form of governance for an organisation like MRSN involved training that was tailored towards its needs by adopting a formative approach to the discovery of those needs.

The formative nature of my study required engaging trustees with staff concerns, however engaging only was not enough. Therefore training programmes on governance and networking with other organisations for all stakeholders was identified as a need, in particular, leadership training. It is often argued that such training is always necessary because we live in a fast changing world that is a:

> … liquid modernity a world of change, a place where people travel light and are flexible in the face of the forces of change. It is as if stasis has ceased to be and change is the norm of existence. It is endemic', the changes are so swift that there is no time to evaluate the outcome before taking decisions, 'it is a risk society' (Antonacopoulou *et al*, 2006: xiii).

Our environment has no place for dogmatism and yet the world is full of it. Dogma hinders progress as it lacks flexibility, while dynamism is flexible to change when situations demand. Since dynamism involves collective decision-making and collaborative working of stakeholders and alliances (see section

6.7) I would argue that this requires radical democracy that enhances the development of voice.

The leadership training accredited by The Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) was one of the components of my study. It was based on promoting active citizenship through Freirian liberating perspectives discussed in chapter 3, sub section 3.3.4. This was to enhance radical democracy, which undoes the barriers of inequality among gender, race, class or social status (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). This programme contributed to appropriate governance of RCOs and MRSN because of their very important role in the integration of asylum seekers into active citizenship.

In more detail, it was designed along the Taking Part concept that developed from the idea of Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC). This focused on widening the involvement of communities' participation in civic matters as well as enhancing their skills to be able to take leadership roles (Mayo and Annette, 2010). The training covered three types of citizenships; the traditionalist based on rulers and subjects, contractual based on rewards for compliance and civic based on rights and responsibilities. It was entrenched on the civic notion of citizenship that is based on civic republicanism and progressive communitarianism where citizens play a role in how the state functions (Jochum *et al.,* 2005 and Hoskins *et al*., 2012). This means that citizens are therefore shapers of the public realm, and hold the key to decision-making process of governance (Mayo and Annette, 2010).

The types of citizenship involvement described above can be further explored in terms of Negri's (1991) analysis of Spinoza's concept of power, which hinges on two opposing concepts; Power (potestas) and power (potentia). With a capital 'P':

> Power denotes the centralised mediating transcendental force of command whereas power, the local immediate, actual force of

constitution. …The two are fundamentally different forms of authority and organisation that stand opposed in both conceptual and material terms in metaphysics as in politics and the organisation of society (1991: xii).

The concept of power as a constituting force, according to Negri's Spinoza analysis, is concerned with the multitude, the collaboration of people who share a common cause, and who are dynamic in creating new networks. The consensus encompasses societal standards, moralities and principles that denote the culture. This involves the understanding of power relations. Firstly, this concerns the power of constraint and control that is 'Power' (Negri, 1991) or 'power over' (Butcher *et al*, 2007). Secondly, there is the power of consensus 'power' (Negri, 1991) or 'power with' (Butcher *et al*, 2007). 'Power with' in the context of the study was to empower everyone involved. The concept of power as a constitutive force was of relevance in relation to the participants. They could only be a constitutive force in relation to MRSN if they were able to participate through empowering their voices in the decision-making and courses of action undertaken by MRSN. MRSN as an aggregation of their individual powers developed campaigns for example to influence regional and perhaps national developments to provide a counter influence to State Power.

Therefore as a way of exploring how power operated in various institutions and developing alliances, Manchester City Council seemed a reasonable place to start in understanding power. This was to enhance understanding how local decision-making processes are influenced in order to become familiar with the constructive use of power and its development. This involved harnessing the services of councillors to present how they worked and ways of engaging with them to influence policies. Furthermore, participants learnt about the roles and responsibilities of MPs, the making of legislations and the lobbying process. This also involved inviting people who worked in parliament to provide clarity on the functions of parliament and to explain ways of effective lobbying as communities or community representatives and this created opportunities for successful campaigns. This was critical education, which was meant to help

participants understand the forces of hegemony e.g. economic, social and political forms that dominate our lives and minds (Gramsci, 1971). The activities of inviting guests also helped in developing ways of challenging hegemonies from informed positions, by organising and taking part in campaigns.

The training delivery was challenging, as some trainees could not complete their programs due to their change of circumstances, examples; being deported, relocation and not having time because of starting employment. Furthermore some of those who completed failed to implement radical democracy in committees they got involved in. However there was some positivity at MRSN because of the training, and this enhanced the morale of the staff and volunteers.

6.9.2 Enhancing the morale of staff and volunteers

As a result of these training programmes and formative deliberations, the relationship between stakeholders improved because of collaborative decision-making approach to issues. An example is when the funding for Advice Services was coming to an end; the trustees and staff members collaborated in scaling down service provision. Staff members worked fewer hours while funding was sought for them to return to full time employment. Volunteers were invited to attend all staff meetings. The trustees also worked with staff and volunteers to produce a financial policy for MRSN that suited all stakeholders, hence improved morale for staff and volunteers.

The formative engagements also helped trustees to understand that their roles were to give MRSN direction. The expectation was for them to focus on appropriate governance for the aims and values of MRSN rather than being concerned with the micro management. Another example is the issue of the term of office of trustees, which was deliberated at the stakeholders' conference. The conference set up a committee composed of all stakeholders,

trustees, paid staff, volunteers and RCO representatives and tasked it with producing a new constitution which would make trustees serve a period of two years before calling for new elections. The committee completed its task and brought the draft for approval to the annual general meeting (AGM) of 2011. The major reason for leadership training was to help address the key challenges to refugees and asylum seekers. However there were some voices among the stakeholders who still felt their voices were not represented because in such a big organisation it was difficult to get a consensus. Overall as discussed before, this enhanced the morale of the staff and volunteers because they felt part of MRSN.

6.9.3 The key challenges and issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers

The key challenges and issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers as mentioned at the beginning of this section needed attention. Due to its inclusivity the Refugee and Migrant Forum project, enabled the isolated to build confidence, enhance active citizenship, facilitate chances of employment and reduce destitution to refugees and asylum seekers. The Forum worked towards promoting the principles within the Charter by creating channels of participation by which members could access decision-makers and influence policy. The forum did this by working vigorously in campaigns to build confidence, promote active citizenship, fight for employment and fight against destitution (see section 6.7). The involvement of asylum seekers and refugees in taking a lead enhanced their confidence to engage and seek employment, developed active citizenship and reduced isolation. However the forum was not involved much with RCOs, therefore it was enhanced to widen its capacity to include RCOs.

In addition the advice service played a role in addressing the key issues faced by refugees and asylum seekers by advising individuals about their rights and responsibilities. Capacity was built to expand around Greater Manchester and to do more outreach advice work. This involved identifying refugee

communities' needs around Greater Manchester and developing existing and new services in those areas with priority on RCO service delivery. The stakeholders proposed a strategy to incorporate and strengthen an RCO advice partnership service as part of the MRSN network to build capacity, sustainability and good practice. Not all refugees and asylum seekers in Greater Manchester benefitted because they were not all reachable owing to resources. And there were some who could not engage for example; women in particular due to child care constraints and having to seek permission from husbands or partners. This group needed a new engagement strategy for them to benefit like paying childcare, which MRSN was doing but some were still ignorant about it. Men who constrained their wives or partners needed educating, and this needed resources and strategy. Thus the main priorities were developing effective and sustainable advice and information centres for RCOs in Greater Manchester as well as to consolidate and maintain the current MRSN advice service. This adventure needed more financial resources, but there were tight constraints, hence there was a need to engage in strategies for a sustainable future.

6.9.4 Strategies for a sustainable future

Given the funding cuts discussed in section 6.8, MRSN required a range of strategies in order to ensure its future. In particular, the impending funding cuts demanded a need for a higher capacity of volunteer coordination to service and expand services around Greater Manchester. This section therefore gives examples of how MRSN tried to engage in activities that would meet the sustainability needs of the organisation as well as that of RCOs and individuals. A series of main priorities were identified which were: having more volunteers for MRSN and RCOs, creating reward schemes to encourage, training and creating a larger volunteer project. It was argued this venture would be a helpful attempt, because the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) project had folded up because of funding complications and other projects faced the same fate except for Community Development. RIES project had been the one that had played a big role in integrating asylum seekers when they got refugee status recognition.

For MRSN to have a future it also had to address challenges and issues in developing a sustainable future membership, finance, generate awareness and support from the public, other organisations and influential people. In order to develop a sustainable future MRSN had to develop resilience because over reliance on conventional funding from central, local government and charities was no longer sustainable as a result of funding cuts. Therefore there was a need for new funding strategies, adjusting to streamlined services with less financial and human resources, and planning to deliver services without funding. Packham et al, (2013) argue that:

> The themes of resilience and survival have become prominent … as the impact of the economic downturn, coupled with cuts in public spending, has made the consideration of the role and future of the voluntary community sector (VCW) matters of increasing concern (2013:219).

Into the second year of my study MRSN lost its manager as well as funding for almost all projects, with the exception of the Community Development Project (see section 6.8). This had a negative impact on the provision of services as well as its management capacity. Critically, this meant less advice and advocacy provision for individual refugees and asylum-seekers, less support for refugee community organisations, and less professional developmental opportunities for volunteers. The forum had a year left of its funding and a bid to get further funding failed. However, The Big Lottery alternatively offered a Supporting Change Fund to help MRSN find new ways of working.

The Supporting Change Fund helped to implement key strands of MRSN's Business Strategy and Action Plan. The fund enabled MRSN to purchase consultancy and voluntary external support to help stakeholder develop financial strategies that gave the organisation direction for the future. The first fundraising event held by MRSN was held at Ceilidh Dance in Whaley Range in March, attracting over 120 people and raising over £1,000. A venue and a band were secured for free using MRSN's growing network of supporters, as

well as obtaining a range of good quality raffle prizes donated by local businesses. A fantastic by-product was that it ended up being the best integration event ever run by MRSN, with everyone clamouring for the next one to be organised. However further work needed to be done in fundraising because the amount of £ 1000 raised at the event above event was not enough to cover costs, not even for volunteer expenses.

Furthermore an MRSN online fundraising was launched as well as the selling of the Refugee Awareness training course, which it was hoped would be the first traded product, giving another revenue stream to help sustain future Forum activities. Whilst it was a good idea to sell the Refugee Awareness training this move could end up alienating the communities where asylum seekers and refugees resided because of affordability to pay. Therefore there was an issue of it benefiting those who could pay but had less contact with refugees and asylum seekers. There was need to have exceptions in the payment for the service for some sections of the society.

MRSN also used the Supporting Change Fund to commission a web developer/designer to set up a new-look website as well as an online refugee community directory in the new format. The new site was launched at the end of September 2012. This enabled MRSN to fulfil its plan to adapt the new operating model, using this much more participative website to keep forum members and volunteers updated with information about integration events, training, campaigns, and meetings through one easy mechanism. It also enabled MRSN to provide links to the national campaigns and to other events or support available to Forum members locally. This led to commissioning the design and production of a range of promotional products like banners, roller stands, t-shirts for volunteers and fundraisers. These provided a more visible/professional presence for MRSN at fundraising events, training activities and festivals.

The most significant achievement in relation to sustaining the future for MRSN was the recognition of the importance of young people's engagement.

Because children/young people are part of MRSN's as well as the community's future excluding them would be neglecting the future of MRSN. Evidence from my study (see section 6.4) suggested that there was need for services for young people to be provided by MRSN. The fundraising team was therefore tasked with fundraising for the project. At the time of writing, MRSN had started working with young people after securing funds from the BBC Children in Need Fund.

In preparation for sustainability of the Forum project without funding, the forum established volunteers to run two Best Practice Pilot projects to address the multiple deprivations faced by refugee communities around employability and mental health, while the MRSN and the Forum's coordinating body developed a broad based media campaign. The Best Practice Pilots were identified as two evidence based projects on employability and mental wellbeing. The projects would be participant led and have clear action plans and outcomes designed by forum members, and work in collaboration with the community development project.

The sustainability of MRSN beyond the funding lifetimes of other projects (see section 6.2) was reinforced by the identification of the community development project as the cornerstone of empowerment, because it was the only project with future funding. This therefore meant all the volunteers would be coordinated and supported by the community development worker. It also meant that there was a need to improve its capacity by having 4 community development volunteers and one MRSN membership/network volunteer that would do outreach with the community development worker around Greater Manchester. The volunteers would be trained on different aspects of RCO development work. The use of volunteers would potentially double the capacity of 50 RCOs that were working with the project at the time.

In order to be sustainable and remain relevant in time of funding hardships, MRSN still had to maintain its role as a socialising agent for refugees and asylum seekers. Because of its history it was in a position to understand their

problems, therefore the stakeholders pursued the idea that better immigration advice services would be provided by MRSN rather than large institutions because they did not provide suitable customer care for this group of people. Immigration advice services were also sought to be provided without funding. And at the time of writing Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit (GMIAU) had been secured to provide immigration advice to refugees and asylum seekers three times a week at MRSN offices.

In addition to immigration services, rehabilitation in the form of counselling was suggested as one of the projects that could be provided by MRSN and was relevant. It was argued that the service would be the 'best' because it would be conducted with care and empathy compared to what other organisations offered. It was also argued that the counseling development could be rolled out to the RCOs to provide to their constituencies and this would lessen the burden to MRSN, which would end up training the RCOs and helping them get funding to provide the services. The training was also to be given to asylum seekers and staff to equip them with the appropriate counseling skills to empower them to deal with unforeseen eventualities. There was also recognition that without the development of the English language, which enables better communication, it would be difficult to empower the participants, therefore the advocacy of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes would be needed.

A close analysis of the barriers placed before asylum seekers would suggest that it is a group that has lost its 'soul', which would be difficult to regain (see section 6.6). This had a lot of impact in my study because it was difficult to motivate this group to shape their future, speak out, and understand that their voices were powerful and would be listened to. However the design of my study, because of the emancipatory principles, getting ideas from other refugee organisations, finally enabled some to come out of their 'hibernation'. Therefore giving voice needs to be sustained to envisage a fairer society. Since evidence suggests the need for sustainability in giving a voice to the oppressed, it therefore requires a strong and intelligent leadership at MRSN and in the refugee community organisations.

My research involvement in the development of refugee community brought a fusion of theory and practice, because community development is:

> … a praxis that locates the silenced stories of those who are marginalised and excluded at the heart of any theory of change for social justice (Ledwith, 2011: 9).

In particular it:

> … begins in the everyday reality of people's lives by extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary (Shor, 1992:122).

This fusion of theory and practice gave the participants the voice they needed to get motivated to challenge the existing hegemony embedded in everyday life, which had been accepted as a reality. In the process this shaped their lives, and developed active citizenship.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

My concluding argument from the discussions of the previous chapters is that MRSN's efforts to achieve its aims of empowering, giving voice and enhancing active citizenship for refugees and asylum seekers appears to be very difficult to achieve because of the hostile environment. This hostile environment is underpinned by discriminatory immigration policies, contributing to a new racism, which reduces the possibility of becoming and feeling like a citizen. This comprises what may be called the hegemony of the new racism, which is

explored in section 2.7. As discussed, this new racism dehumanises and demonises asylum seekers who will have suffered physical and mental persecution from their countries of origin, only to be exposed to further mental persecution from the institutions that are supposed to be protective. Instead of integrating this group, and expanding the few networks that existed among and between refugees on the one hand and the British citizens on the other, they were dismantled through the dispersal system. Where there was alleged integration it was arguably cosmetic. Vickers (2010) calls this: 'individualised forms of engagement with the state', because it is the integration of the individual not the whole refugee community. The funding of a few voluntary organisations like Sipepa discussed in chapter 5, which get nearly their entire funding from central government (see section 5.7), has perpetuated individualistic integration. Such organisations claim to include refugee interests, but closer scrutiny reveals that refugees have no voice in the shaping of services (see sections 5.2 and 5.3). They are only used as 'free labour' i.e. volunteers, to make these organisations appear refugee orientated.

The immigration laws have weakened the idea and practice of asylum seeking as discussed in chapter 2 sections 2.2 to 2.7. This is due to the fact that they override human rights and therefore condemn this group to the margins of society with restricted rights. The overall policies as described in chapter 2 sections 2.2 to 2.5 were developed over the years in the UK and have been designed to curtail the voice of asylum seekers and refugees by refusing them the right to work therefore this refusal had a negative impact in their citizenship development. This is further exacerbated by the creation of the 'otherness' of asylum seekers as discussed in chapter 2 section 2.5, because of the two tier system in the welfare provision for asylum seekers and citizens of the UK (see section 2.4). These welfare and asylum policies have created divisions among the refugees and asylum seekers themselves and animosity with the British society, and such divisions create isolation and individualistic tendencies. In order to address the issues and problems this thesis has described, I ague that agencies in generally and MRSN specifically needed liberationists' approaches and an insider researcher to be emancipated (as discussed in chapter 3 section 3.4). This thesis, in addressing its aims, has made a

significant contribution towards understanding these issues and how agencies such as MRSN may best respond to the issues being faced by asylum seekers.

7.1 The extent to which the aims and research questions have been addressed.

The overall aim of the research was to empower and give voice to refugees and asylum seekers to participate in the capacity building of MRSN in order for it to provide them with a better service. It was through the creation of an inclusive and participatory environment that my research contributed to the empowerment (see section 3.3 subsection 3.3.1) and voice giving (see section 3.2) to refugees and asylum seekers. Engaging in research to identify the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, and work undertaken with them in the fight for social justice did this empowerment. As a summary, the research succeeded in addressing its research questions as follows:

1. To what extents are the issues faced by immigrants and asylum seekers a form of racism? I have argued that immigration laws have been used as a form of new racism to discriminate against the asylum seekers. For example, this can be seen in the provision of welfare support that is different from the UK nationals and the barring of asylum seekers to seek paid employment. Most of the evidence for discrimination is addressed effectively in chapter 2 in sections 2.2 to 2.7.

2. To what extent can refugees/asylum seekers who have been rendered powerless and who feel dehumanised be empowered to have a voice? When the dehumanised are treated with respect, they get motivated to be empowered and develop a voice. They demonstrated the voice development by contributing to the capacity building of MRSN so that it could improve in terms of representative governance, sustainability and service provision (see sections 6.2 to 6.4).

3. To what extent can participatory action research and other liberationists' perspectives promote empowerment in the context of the new racism, UK

laws regarding immigration and asylum? Participatory and liberationists' perspectives (see section 3.3 and 3.4) are able to empower refugees and asylum seekers by emancipating them to challenge the government and civil servants, therefore enhancing active citizenship. For example, refugees and asylum seekers were facilitated to develop a voice in shaping their organisations and MRSN and also in taking a lead in campaigns to improve their lives (see section 6.7).

4. What is involved in promoting active citizenship, community empowerment and voice giving? What does the concept of democracy entail? Promoting active citizenship involved the creation of an environment that recognised and respected diversity therefore allowing free voices of all stakeholders' equally, regardless of their status (see section 6.7). In my thesis democracy entailed working together to create unified spaces even in diversity aiming at governance that creates the conditions for people to participate in decision making with the understanding that new ideas will develop to challenge the existing ones.

5. To what extent can third sector organisations promote equality and justice? Third sector organisations work within the limits of their resources and under the constraints of laws and policies. Hence their powers to promote equality and justice have always been limited. Within those limits however third sector organisations, play a major role in integrating refugees and asylum seekers by helping understand welfare and employments rights and the rights to participate in civic agendas, hence promoting equality and justice. They can use liberationist perspectives and participatory action research strategies to enable those who feel dehumanised to be empowered to work towards improving their lives by fighting for their rights (see chapter 6 section 6.7).

6. What is the impact of an insider researcher in an empowering and voice giving study? An insider researcher generally is someone who is well known to the participants, however the impact depends on the trustworthiness of the person in the role. In my case as an insider researcher I was trusted and that made it possible to break some of the barriers that were hindering the voices of some people, for example women, and this allowed the voice of every stakeholder to be heard and respected. My role, established working relationships, trustworthiness, and

also motivated the people living in destitution to take part in the lead for the fight for social justice through campaigns (see section 6.7).

7. What is the impact of the study in the capacity building of Manchester Refugee Support Network? The study had a generally positive impact on MRSN because it improved campaigns, involvement of stakeholders, networking and funding (see chapter 6). However, although the involvement of stakeholders had a positive impact in that more women got involved, it was negative in that men's contribution lessened. Therefore I had to embark on motivating men to participate with the help of the few that remained, albeit with little success.

7.2 Challenges and resolution

In any study there will often be some challenges that make it difficult to achieve the intended goals completely, because some are only resolved partly. In my study the challenges were: (1) destitution, (2) trustees' understanding the study, (3) democratization of MRSN, (4) professional conduct, (5) uncertainties of job securities, (6) inappropriate roles, (7) the constitution and (8) lack of funds. Each challenge will be briefly addressed to indicate how it was partly or fully resolved.

Challenge 1, destitution was a major hindrance, because participants who were affected were isolated, lacked basic needs and were dehumanised. Therefore they were very difficult to motivate to self-advocate, advocate for others and to be empowered to develop active citizenship. This was partly resolved by motivating them to participate equally in planning and execution of campaigns to alleviate their plights and have input in improving MRSN work with all stakeholders. This is fully discussed in section 6.6 sub sections 6.6.1 to 6.6.9.

Challenge 2, was the trustees' understanding of the empowerment aspects of the methodology adopted in the doctoral research as well as the use of the data and the literature reviewed to stimulate debate. When my study began the trustees who had requested for it had since left, therefore the new ones

needed to understand the programme because they were partners to it by default as described in chapter 4 sections 4.9. The initial lack of understanding was resolved through engagements in meetings and working formatively during the research period, which involved democratising MRSN. This democratising process in itself was a big challenge, as summarised next.

Challenge 3, was the democratization of MRSN as the basis for building a creative approach to handling disagreements when they occur by taking on board differing opinions for the good of the organisation. Radical democratic practice (Laclau 2005 and Mouffe, 2005) involves ensuring all voices are heard so that common points of focus between people can be identified and political strategies and alliances developed to address common problems. The lack of strategies that bring diverse groups together at MRSN, led to power struggles within. This challenge hindered full transformation because of bureaucratic tendencies from some stakeholders. The trustees believed that they were the full authority, therefore made all the decisions. The staff felt they needed to have some input in decision-making. The new manager wanted to assert his authority, which seemed anti-democratic to staff. All these differences created power struggles that, in my view, were detrimental to the running of the organisation, and as a result people lost focus of what was expected of them. This disharmony led to three anti-democratic conflicting positions, where some staff and trustees were on one side, some staff in another corner and the manager was alone. This further led to the loss of the manager as described in chapter 4 section 4.9. This challenge was resolved by the introduction of the liberationists' perspectives, which brought about horizontal communications (see section 6.9). The use of liberationists' perspectives, led to advocating forms of engagement based on the principle of freedom and equality among MRSN stakeholders where every voice was respected, even though there was some resistance from trustees who felt they had all the authority to make decisions without being questioned (section 6.3). The resistance was not been eradicated, but had been reduced.

Challenge 4, was related to professional conduct described earlier in the thesis (chapter 6 section 6.3). On one hand some refugees were highly skilled people, and this could be construed as positive, but on the other it was negative in that such people had embedded knowledge and found it difficult to

adapt to new ideas. Such individuals seemed to apply skills and attitudes that they had learnt and developed from their respective previous occupations and life experiences e.g. we had a former army commander who was militaristic in a similar way an army superior officer would deal with his subordinates. This was obviously not ideal for a third sector organisation, which depended on networking, partnerships and collaborations. My study's formative approaches resolved this challenge by helping participants to understand how to act with professionalism in whatever role they played in organisations.

Challenge 5, uncertainties of job securities at MRSN, led to an exodus of highly qualified staff attracted by better conditions of work and job security elsewhere. In short, staff members that had useful skills including fundraising for MRSN were lost. This was further exacerbated by over reliance on volunteers whose availability was not consistent due to their immigration status and other commitments. When some asylum seekers received their decisions to stay or leave the UK, in most cases they moved on, got jobs, entered into education, got deported or moved to other towns. This resulted in MRSN losing its human resources and therefore continually training new staff and volunteers, which further stretched its meagre financial resources. Such activities hampered the progress of MRSN in fulfilling its aims and brought a major strain to all stakeholders. An example is when the manager whose role involved the promotion of collaboration and partnership working through networking, left, the activities failed to progress as required because he was the only individual at MRSN who had expertise and arguably the motivation of the working together concept (see chapter 4 section 4.9). Therefore staff felt insecure and left for other organisations (see section 6.3). This challenge was partially resolved by exploring other fundraising activities, however these new fundraising adventures were not yet contributing enough funds to sustain MRSN at the time of writing.

Challenge 6, was that some members of staff occupied roles not suitable for their level of skills or training. For example staff members did all the fundraising. The trustees then spent that money in the management of the organisation. The only contribution in the fundraising by trustees was in signing application forms and the approval of such funds to be sourced. This challenge was resolved partly through training and involving trustees in the fundraising

activities.

Challenge 7, was the constitution, which allowed for a single term of one year in office for the trustees. This short-term appointment created the problem of trustees who initially did not have the skills and knowledge to perform their duties adequately. By the time they were grasping their roles, their terms of office would be coming to an end. Then new ones would be elected who would also be in need of training; therefore more training resources would be needed. The only way of resolving the issue was to draw up a new constitution. The process of changing the constitution involved all the stakeholders equally, including the under-represented groups. This inclusiveness meant that the constitution was a people driven document, which catered for most of the peoples' needs. The major change in the constitution was the change from one-year to two-year terms for trustees, which was ratified in the AGM of 2011. In my view, this was a step in the right direction in terms of governance (see section 6.9). This issue, together with all the previous challenges hindered the empowerment of the participants. Nevertheless, the biggest of them all was the lack of funds, which is the next challenge.

Challenge 8, was a persistent lack of funds, which was the biggest challenge because the pressure put on MRSN was unprecedented due to the uncertainties of funding streams. It was exacerbated by the loss of some of the funding from the central government because of cuts introduced by the coalition government when it came to power as discussed in chapter 6 sections 6.8 and 6.9. The lack of funding put further strain on the organisation as only the Community Development project was fully funded and the rest of the staff worked part time and their salaries and running costs depended on under spend and reserve funds. Therefore all the energy, apart from activities under Community Development of MRSN was concentrated towards fundraising, which meant that other activities that should have been taking place did not take place. The largest funding opportunities came from central or local governments and the Big Lottery; therefore this challenge remains unresolved because it is not easy for small charities to get such substantial funding. This will remain a challenge given the current climate and may well get worse until government funding policy changes or the economic climate changes.

7.2.1 Unity of purpose

Challenges are part of everyday life for organisations and often lead to disagreements. However it should be understood that in every organisation there is a place for disagreements but there is also a need for reconciliation in order to produce a unity of purpose as Freire (1992) asserts:

> Struggle does not rule out the possibility of pacts and understandings, of adjustments between parties in discord. Pacts and understandings are themselves part of the struggle (1992: 93).

These pacts like working together of all stakeholders to draft the constitution (see section 6.9) have kept MRSN functioning during periods of conflicts and disagreements. Therefore despite challenges, the study by contributing to the development of pacts and understandings made a great impact to MRSN, as summarised in the next section.

7.3 Impact of my study on MRSN

The impact of the study in contributing to MRSN's capacity to engage in the promotion of equality and justice came from a variety of angles: (1) challenging racism (2) insider researcher (3) campaigns and communication (4) refugee awareness toolkit (5) representation women and children (6) Infrastructure support (7) leadership training (8) resilience, (9) new programmes (10) active citizenship. The impact was a result of the formative studies, the participatory action research, the reviews of the literature in relation to policy and a range of issues that affected refugees and asylum seekers. The impact was made possible by the use of liberationists' perspectives and approaches to promoting empowerment. The liberationists' perspectives empowered participants to have a voice in things that mattered to them, therefore developing active citizenship. I argue that from my experience in my study that, liberationist perspectives were effective tools in empowering and giving voice to the voiceless, the asylum seekers and refugees including those living in

destitution. This I argue underpins radical democratic practice that can be reinforced by participatory action research and an insider researcher. These are major tools for emancipating the dehumanised to get a voice. That voice enabled participants to be innovative and take charge of their situations and own the whole process, and encouraged them to persevere even when faced with difficulties. The inclusive environment that was created allowed even the most vulnerable (those living in destitution) to develop a spirit of fighting for social justice as discussed in chapter 6 section 6.7. Therefore addressing the question as to whether third sector organisations have a role in promoting equality and justice. It can be argued that dehumanised people can be empowered by agencies such as MRSN to have a voice in demanding equality and justice. The discussion of the impact also addresses and develops further some of the responses to the challenges highlighted in the above section.

7.3.1 Challenging Racism

The significance of my study was in facilitating participants to have a voice and to take a lead in challenging the hegemony of ideological racism (see chapter 2 section 2.2 to 2.5), which was hindering their advancement to active citizenship. Some elements of social change, justice and solidarity were achieved at MRSN because representation and collaborative working improved (see sections 6.7 and 6.9). Participants developed mutual acceptance of diverse voices from each other and this included previously ignored groups like people living in destitution, women and young people. For MRSN to take up the challenges, it drew upon the motivation of an insider researcher.

7.3.2 Insider research role

My insider researcher approach broke down barriers, to encourage women to participate in campaigns. This was made possible by actions that ensured the equal inclusion of voices (see section 6.7) e.g., male and female to be heard, rather than cultural practices that fostered hierarchical relations. Those who participated were treated with respect and experienced horizontal dialogue not the vertical, top down approach. In this horizontal dialogue there was empathy among the people involved hence: 'lovingness, humbleness, hopefulness,

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trustworthiness and a critical mind is developed' (Freire, 1973:44). However in a vertical dialogue empathy is broken and this manifests in 'lovelessness, arrogance, hopelessness, mistrustfulness and an uncritical mind' set (Freire, 1973: 45). The former approach attracted a sizeable number of female respondents. This thirstiness and longing for freedom, once lit by the spark of the liberating education was overwhelming and as a result unstoppable no matter what barriers were put in front of them. However, this process created a reduction in the numbers of men because most of the meetings ended up being dominated by women, not only in contribution but also in numbers. The re-emergence of the domination (i.e., power-over) of a particular gender over the other threatened the principles and practices of radical democracy. The reduction in the number of men brought a new challenge to me and other participants. Therefore we worked hard to encourage men who had not left to come back and to recruit others. It was very difficult to elucidate what led to this development of men excluding themselves (see section 4.6). It could be that men who were not used to witnessing women participate in things felt threatened as they were only used to patriarchal environments. The patriarchal domain defines everything by men and man as the representative of the human race, where even the asylum process favours men (see section 2.6). Therefore to challenge racism involved also challenging patriarchal values and practices under a principle of equality of voice for all, leading to 'power-with' rather than 'power-over'. My insider researcher's approach broke barriers of inequality in terms of gender equality and race, and created the conditions for a unified approach to undertaking campaigns.

7.3.3 Campaigns and communication

The campaigns undertaken by MRSN introduced some radical democratic practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) as described in the previous section, such as creating communication that was horizontal, in order to enhance togetherness and respect (Freire, 1998). This was then filtered to the target group in order to make the forms of engagement dialogical not militant. My involvedness in supporting the groups on their outreach activities like; demonstrations, sleeping rough, lobbying MPs, councillors and engaging the UKBA officers at their offices gave them confidence. The supporting role helped in organising and advising on approaches that facilitated meaningful

engagement. This improved the relationships between the campaigners on one side and policy makers and the civil servants on the other. Instead of the militant approach that created resentment between the campaigners, policy makers and civil servants, dialogue based on the principle of equaliberty (Balibar, 1994) became the norm as discussed in section 3.5 sub section 3.5.1. In practice, there are always new circumstances, new contexts and new demands being made. Thus there is always a need for new political spaces to exercise the new demands for freedom and equality. This is a process of demanding a voice in the sphere of political, social and cultural decision-making. This is a process that Critchley (2007) called in his ethics of democratic participation, 'the infinitely demanding' because the concepts and practices of freedom and equality at the heart of the democratic voice are universal. As universal categories they cannot be fulfilled in practice (that is, finite contexts) once and for all, thus any demand for equality and freedom will rise again in other contexts. There is then a continual struggle to engage with contemporary concrete conditions that inhibit freedom and equality.

For MRSN, their struggle was made difficult because civil servants from the UKBA had developed an attitude of disengagement after what they termed previous 'harassment' by the campaigners. When new approaches involving respect and equality were adopted by MRSN, they then changed their stances and engaged after a lot of convincing. This engagement was led by asylum seekers, like the first engagement (see section 6.7) which had been militant, but the language and the tone used in this later engagement was based on equality and respect, and I would argue, it produced the best results. Individuals' needs were attended to confidentially and in respectful ways and most importantly it created a working partnership between the two organisations, which could be a lasting legacy. This engagement, not only brought partnership, it also improved service provision by UKBA North West; and this in turn improved the asylum seekers' attitudes and UKBA got instant feedback from this group.

The campaigns also improved, I would argue, because they addressed the separation (see section 6.7) between the policymakers, the MPs and councillors on one side and civil servants on the other. This separation meant that matters that were related to policies had not been brought up with the civil

servants whose jobs were to implement the policies even if they were against them. The previous confusion that was caused by bombarding civil servants (see section 6.7) with questions on policies they had no power over stopped. The civil servants felt relieved, as they were then able to concentrate on improving their practice, which they did to the satisfaction of the participants. This also encouraged refugees to develop new ways of raising refugee awareness to various organisations and individuals in Greater Manchester.

7.3.4 Refugee awareness toolkit

In partnership with the steering group, using my social work, teacher and research skills, we designed a refugee awareness toolkit (section 6.7 sub section 6.7.4) to engage with the host communities. This was because these communities had relied on the negative presentation, which portrayed refugees and asylum seekers as people who arrive in the UK to scrounge for welfare benefits, as, discussed in section 2.5. This awareness did not require confrontations involving demonstrations or petitions as it was agreed that the best way was educating the wider public, through workshops, lectures and personal testimonies about the plight of refugees and asylum seekers. The starting places of this liberating education series (sub section 6.7.4) were universities and colleges, schools, trade unions and community organisations. As well as raising awareness, the other aim of the project was to give members the opportunity to gain confidence, presentation skills and experience in public speaking campaigns. The study, not only improved the image of MRSN as a beacon in the fight against the oppression of refugees and asylum seekers, but it also changed it into an inclusive organisation that recognises the voice of under-represented groups.

7.3.5 Representation women and children

Representation at MRSN had not been inclusive of all stakeholders' men, women and children in all its activities. It was important for MRSN to strive for inclusiveness and also for future existence by nurturing its young people to take over when the older members retired, anything otherwise meant it could become extinct. MRSN, as a community based organisation, only considered adults, and did not seem to have a policy of engaging with young people, and

therefore operated contrary to the principles of Every Child Matters which ultimately was not beneficial to the community it served. Evidence from previous studies suggests that unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) have not been supported sufficiently to lead a fulfilling adult life (Nyoni, 2010), and my study-highlighted discrepancies in services offered to children of asylum seeking parents (see section 6.4). Therefore there was a need for MRSN's involvement in young people's projects.

The study led staff members to take the initiative to connect with organisations that worked with young people in Greater Manchester, that is, in creating networks in order to increase resources and inclusiveness. As evidenced in section 6.4 RCOs identified a lack of resources like after school activities and holiday clubs for refugee children. MRSN listened, and applied to the BBC's Children in Need Fund with the aim of identifying children in need in the communities. The funds were secured and MRSN started working with children in after school activities and other activities during school holidays.

I would argue however that without the involvement of women in any of the activities, those activities would be doomed to fail because of the equal role women play in the socialisation of society. The move towards an equality of role amongst the refugee and asylum seeker proved difficult to achieve because the physical, socially and mentally abuses women had suffered from the authorities, society and men in the UK and their countries of origin (see section 2.7 and sub section 6.6.1). Certainly, at MRSN before the study, men dominated women, however with the help of the study, which influenced equal treatment of everyone, women ended up part of the lead teams in campaigns. At the time of writing, MRSN had a woman as chair of trustees for the first time in its history, which is a remarkable achievement. However there was need for infrastructure support for all the above to be sustained.

7.3.6 Infrastructure support

MRSN benefited from my research by being pragmatic in identifying a variety of funds, an example is the Supporting change fund, which paid for part-time Fundraising Coordinator who worked with the planning group and fundraising

volunteers in community fundraising activities. The funds raised were meant for building infrastructure capacity. It was hoped that the Supporting Change funding would have a long-lasting impact on MRSN, because of its enablement to develop infrastructure support, to test fundraising ideas and competences, and to review organisational plans, policies and practices. The funding enabled MRSN to review forum activities and develop plans to continue with the work even with limited funds. This was initiated by holding an engagement event, which brought all stakeholders to make collaborative decisions, which involved everybody, therefore giving them a voice (see section 6.9). This was achieved in part because of the graduates from leadership training.

7.3.7 Leadership training

Leadership training was undertaken to improve leadership qualities that were lacking at MRSN and in refugee organisations (see section 6.9 sub section 6.9.1), was a programme I participated in developing as part of my study. The leadership training helped educate refugees and asylum seekers in developing the spirit of creating a governance of unified spaces, i.e. bringing people together to develop a shared set of values, interests and form mutual targets for action. The graduates from the training developed radical democratic practices, which they implemented in organisations and at MRSN. Hence embrace the changing environment in the third sector organisation therefore develop resilience.

7.3.8 Resilience

MRSN also benefitted from my research by identifying new ways of fundraising (see sub section 7.3.6), therefore gaining the ability to approach the hostile and changing environment, which brought with it financial constraints, with resilience. This resilience was developed through collaborative working and the flexibility to learn from others through formative and comparative studies, which brought ideas from other organisations. People's life development could sometimes be shaped through learning from their working experiences, which can be enhanced by the willingness to learn from others (Costley *et al,* 2010;

Antonacopoulou *et al,* 2005). It is argued that people's "…professional life, professional bodies, partner organisations and colleagues will have influence …" (Costley *et al,* 2010:2), over them. This led to embracing new programmes that helped sustain MRSN (see section 6.9).

7.3.9 New programmes

The new programmes influenced by the research included new funding methods (see 7.3.6) and the introduction of new programmes like immigration advice, ESSOL and children's after school club, which had started at the time of writing (see chapter 6 section 6.9). These new programmes augmented MRSN's position in the way it sourced funding to start new projects that were needed by the service users as compared with the orthodox funds, which came with laid down terms and conditions. These terms and conditions were sometimes at variance with the needs of the service users; however, because the fundraisers were staff in need of salaries, they would bring in the funds and follow those terms and conditions at the expense of the core needs of service users. Such tendencies hindered the development of participating of service users in decision making and that affected enhancement of active citizenship (see section 6.9).

7.3.10 Active citizenship

I would argue that the ability to practice active citizenship by those who were considered as outcasts and therefore marginalised, not only by the British society, but by the refugee and asylum seeking communities as well, was the biggest achievement of this study. Witnessing them arguing their cases in a precise and diligent manner before the UKBA officers that they dreaded, and getting respectful responses, which were intimate and personal to them, was the pinnacle of my study. That is when I realised the study was making a difference in people's lives, and was therefore necessary and relevant.

7.4 Significance of the research

My research was significant first to me, because I learnt a lot that improved my ability as a researcher. It was also significant to MRSN and all stakeholders, because MRSN was able to improve as an organisation and the participants were able to fight for social justice in a hostile environment.

On reflection, I found that undertaking an insider participatory research study was a daunting experience and one where I learnt to be patient and develop an understanding of the usefulness of diverse methods of engagement. The difficulty was exacerbated by the fact that it was a formative study, which involved participatory action research (PAR). The participants were also the stakeholders who had to deal with feedback from themselves and others and at times some of the data was critical of them (see section 6.3). This collaborative working brought progress in giving voice; however it also brought tensions, which led to a near breakdown of relations with my former colleagues thereby affecting the research. It was partly because I had probably not prepared to deal with the changes in the dynamics of the group and my relationship with MRSN staff and volunteers. I lacked experience when I began the study and was seen more like a consultant who was to deliver advice or solutions and therefore I was more inclined to the banking education approach (Freire, 1973), which involves gathering knowledge and making recommendations. The breakdown of relations made me realise that for the success of my study, I had to change, first to repair the damage and secondly to promote collaborative working. I therefore changed my approach. This involved moving away from the banking pedagogy to a liberating process of education. This meant sharing various perspectives and letting the participants digest and make informed decisions. This improved relations with most participants, hence improving the progress of the study. I would argue that there were challenges, despite my position as an insider researcher and a refugee, which helped achieve the main aims of the study, which was to help facilitate the development in the participants of a sense of belongingness and in the process to become agentic (Evans, 2002).

My research was significant in that it contributed research-based insights into the organisation and practices of MRSN, which is involved in empowering and

leading in the fight for social justice in a hostile environment. The hostility made the research even more significant because the participants involved had been dehumanised therefore it was difficult to motivate them take a lead in the fight for recognition. The research was further significant in that it helped MRSN towards creating a form of governance seeking to bring about unified political spaces (that is, spaces for the inclusion of all), improve campaigns, develop RCOs, and develop new ways of fundraising. In the process, such practices facilitated integration by helping refugees and asylum seekers to develop active citizenship. This could not have been possible without the use of participatory action research. However there is still need for further research.

7.5 Further research

This further research section addresses gaps in my study that remain. There are those that concern research design and those that deal with substantive issues faced by asylum seekers.

There is a need for further research and development of participatory action research and formative evaluation in the quest of radical democracy to be embedded in the practices of organisations like MRSN. This is because radical democracy is a continuous process and at MRSN it is still being developed so as to create a more egalitarian environment, which harnesses the motivations and powers of all and accommodates diverse ideas. The process of developing a radical democratic environment is continuing at MRSN with the quest of creating more alliances to counter oppression, which is always evolving.

The formative perspective could be widened by the use of other methodologies like evaluation, multisite case studies, and surveys, as my study did not develop this area fully because it concentrated on the PAR and ethnography. A female researcher could be justified to carry out this kind of research so as to collect more data from women, which this study could not unearth perhaps because a man carried it out. This could be extended to longitudinal studies of

those who have been deported to their countries of origin or to third countries to find out how they were coping, as this is a virgin area.

Further research is also needed on the applicability of the formative methodologies in scrutinising the rise of far right groups like the English Defence League on one hand and the Unite Against Fascism, from an insider research perspective since these have a key bearing on the lives and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees. Perhaps the liberating approach could help the opposing parties understand that they are divided by the state, therefore unite these groups who are both protesting against the state, albeit for different reasons. Whilst these groups are engrossed in fighting each other the hegemony is maintained because I would argue it is easier to rule people who are divided.

It would be useful that the study of MRSN is further nurtured so that it continues to empower asylum seekers because if it is not, they might revert back to isolation and the state of being dehumanized. The methodological perspectives that were explored and proved useful could be a starting point, however there also needs to be a review of them with the aim of introducing new ideas that could further enhance the development of MRSN. This is because the world we live in is ever changing, thus the oppression which is complex is ever changing, therefore it needs new ways of challenging it, otherwise one would be left to live in the past.

MRSN's visibility in the quest for short and long-term needs attracts alliances. There is need to research these in order to produce wide-ranging alliances, to reduce the need for and reliance on assistance from the government (Moya, 2005). Such a development calls, not only for multiplicity, but also for complementary organisations in the refugee communities, where some are concerned with acute needs like individual welfare advice and others with reflexivity needs like building sustainable RCOs. In this context some organisations would be giving immediate needs like welfare advice, while others help in the formation of sustainable refugee organisations. Both

instances require connectivity, in terms of the creation of alliances for expertise and resources, thus again reducing over reliance on the government for resources. This means developing research on how to encourage reliance through civil society rather than government as argued by Però and Solomos (2010):

> … especially in those sectors that retain autonomy from government and are not 'bridled' or domesticated as a result of participating in the processes of governance and service provision (2010: 14)

MRSN could form alliances with some government organisations and some areas of the state that retain some form of independence to gain a voice or impact on policy. This could also include the disfranchised sections of the society e.g. migrant workers and the working class, who were not covered by my research.

7.6 Final words

This thesis has explored capacity building of MRSN by 'giving voice to the voiceless' to participate in the process. I have argued that when people are caught up in the predicament of destitution, developing a voice from a perspective of oppression is not an individual spontaneous choice, but is based on programmes that are inclined towards liberation, collaborative and collectivist tendencies. Such programmes should spring from individual refugees themselves and organisations managed and formed by them, anything to the contrary would be cosmetic. In my view, the role of central and local governments should be to promote such organisations with resources and encourage them to be more accountable to service users. Having lived the experience of persecution by the system and being liberated, such people individually or collectively have shown the capacity to engage with the oppressed and together develop programmes that are emancipatory. Only then can true emancipation be realised. Thus, on the contrary, if the repentant

oppressors lead it, it might be designed to perpetuate the oppression (Freire, 1972). Like most people, refugees and asylum seekers' perceptions and behaviours are not determined in isolation but through interaction with their environment. If the environment is oppressive, isolation continues, however if it is emancipatory, it reinvigorates their historical activism as they regroup and affiliate with likeminded social forces.

There is no doubt that oppression in society will always exist, however there will always be resistance, therefore the oppressed need to continually develop their strategies and tactics of challenging the mechanisms of social control. What is paramount is the understanding of the processes that perpetuate the prevailing hegemonies and counter them through an informed and conscious approach that is based on collaborative and empowering strategies. Such a situation, which is continually renewed in line with the needs of refugees and asylum seekers, therefore gives them a real voice not false generosity.

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