

**PERCEPTION OF SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ORPHAN
CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT IN AN URBAN
SETTING OF WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA)**

Brigitte Nshimiyimana

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of Child Studies
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
Linköping University
(Sweden)**

**In partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of
Arts in Child Studies**

LINKÖPING 2008

DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to you:

All mighty God, who made everything possible for my studies,

My Husband, **Jean Damascene UZABAKIRIHO** and my Son, **Jean Emmerly NGABO-SHINGIRO** for all sacrifices you made, your inspiration, encouragements, understanding and support during my studies to allow my dream to come true.

All victims of injustice, especially Mothers wherever they are and particularly my Mother **Bernadette MUKESHIMANA**. Keep up the fight; I know you are a strong woman.

You are all part of my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is a combined effort of many people who contributed in many ways. I was greatly aided in conceptualising, researching, and writing this report by thoughtful and experienced professionals who shared their knowledge and insights with me.

First of all, my appreciation goes to the Linkoping University, in particular to the team of lecturers from the Child Studies Department who gave me knowledge and understanding on children related issues.

Special thanks go to my examiner Prof. Bengt Sandin and my supervisor Friederike Gerlach, who gave me valuable support, advice and guidance. I am grateful indeed.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Pascal B. Ndengejeho. He has been a constant source of insight during my studies.

I am very pleased to acknowledge Dr. Lucy Steinitz for her constructive criticisms on my research.

Special thanks are extended to the Directorate of Education in the Khomas Region and the Principals, guidance Teachers from Concordia College, Augustenium Secondary School, Eldorado Project Secondary School, Goreangab Secondary School and A Shipena Secondary School and their Foster Parents who granted permission and offered support during my data collection.

I am also pleased to acknowledge Foster Parents and Social Workers and Foster Children who participated in the interviews and group discussions.

Lastly but not least I would like to thank, Child Welfare Directorate who recommended me to the Khomas regional directorate of Education to obtain permission to conduct group focus discussions at the above mentioned schools.

ACRONYMS

AED:	Academy for Educational Development
ALU:	AIDS Law Unit
AIDS:	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAA:	Catholic AIDS Action
CAFO:	Church Alliance for Orphans
CHS:	Community Household Survey
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DHS:	Demographic and Health Survey
EFA:	Education For All
FHI:	Family Health International
GRN:	Government
HIV:	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus
LAC:	Legal Assistance Centre
MGECW:	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
MOE:	Ministry of Education
MWACW:	Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NDP:	National Development Plan
NPA:	National Plan of Action
NPC:	National Planning Commission
RAAAP:	Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning
SIAPAC:	Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis
SPVC:	Special Programs for Vulnerable Children
PSS:	Psychosocial Support
PTF:	Permanent Task Force
OVC:	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
UN:	United Nations
UN CRC:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNAIDS:	United Nations AIDS Program
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of this study is to investigate the perception of support provided to orphan children in foster care placement in terms of education, care and support as well as protection by orphan children themselves, foster parents and social workers.

Due to HIV/AIDS many children are being orphaned and are left behind without any visible means of support.

HIV/AIDS remains undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of the world today, as there is no part of the world that has not felt the devastating impact of the pandemic. This is already evidenced by the increase in number of orphans, child headed households and other vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS and the inability of the extended family system to provide such children with basic requirements such as shelter, food, medical care, education, love and support.

The first chapter is focusing on the Magnitude of OVC in general and Namibia in particular. According to the National Plan of Action for OVC in Namibia, the total number of orphans and vulnerable children was estimated at 128 000 in 2007 (MGECW, 2007). According to 2001 Population and Housing Census the whole Khomas region had 6674 OVC, while Khomas urban had 5708 OVC, which means that in the Khomas region more OVC in an Urban areas while rural areas had less number which was 389 OVC (NPC, 2005).

Chapter two presents a literature review and focuses on the phenomena of foster care placement. It includes the definition of terms such as an orphan child, a vulnerable child and foster care placement. It gives background details of foster care placement in general and foster care placement in the Namibia context. Also the support (care and support, education and protection) being offered to children in foster care placement are discussed.

Chapter three focuses on the research methods and data collection of this study. The following elements are described in this chapter: Setting and samples, procedure, methods and methodological consideration, the role of the researcher, the limitations of the study and the ethnographic situation.

Chapter four is devoted to the foster care placement legal framework in Namibia where the current foster care placement processes to access government grant to support foster families are discussed as well as foster care placement policy implications in Namibia. The conclusion of the findings on foster care placement processes is included.

Chapter five consists of the analysis of the study. It provides the background information of the samples, questions, responses and interpretations of the main views of the respondents on the support provided to children in foster care placement in terms of care and support, education, protection as well as foster care placement process are provided in this chapter.

Chapter six is focuses on discussions and conclusion. It includes major views of the respondents and the understanding of different voices of orphan children in foster care placement, foster parents and social workers who are professionals in this matter.

TABLE OF CONTENT

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	9
CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW.....	12
2.1 INTRODUCTION.....	12
2.2 DEFINITION OF THE TERMS	13
2.2.1 <i>Orphan child</i>	13
2.2.2 <i>Vulnerable Child</i>	14
2.2.3 <i>Foster care placement</i>	16
2.3 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	17
2.4 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT IN THE NAMIBIAN CONTEXT.....	18
2.5 DIFFERENT TYPES OF SUPPORT OF ORPHAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT.....	20
2.5.1 <i>Education</i>	21
2.5.2 <i>Care and support</i>	23
2.5.3 <i>Protection</i>	25
2.6 CONCLUSION.....	26
CHAPTER 3- RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION.....	28
3.1 SETTING AND SAMPLES.....	28
3.2 PROCEDURE	31
3.3 METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS	32
3.4 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER.....	33
3.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	34
3.6 ETHNOGRAPHIC SITUATION.....	34
CHAPTER 4- FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN NAMIBIA	36
4.1 CURRENT FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT PROCESSES TO ACCESS GOVERNMENT GRANT TO SUPPORT FOSTER FAMILIES (NAMIBIA).	36
4.2 FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT POLICY IMPLICATIONS IN NAMIBIA	41
CHAPTER 5 - ANALYSIS	44
5.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS	44
5.3 HOW ORPHAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT EXPERIENCE THEIR SUPPORT.....	46
5.4. FOSTER PARENTS PERCEPTIONS SUPPORT PROVIDED TO ORPHAN CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT AND FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT PROCESS.....	50
5.5 SOCIAL WORKERS PERCEPTIONS ON SUPPORT PROVIDED TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT AND FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT PROCESS	55
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSIONS.....	61
6.1 INTRODUCTION.....	61
6.2 CHILDREN’S PERSPECTIVES	61
6.3. FOSTER PARENTS PERCEPTIONS	64
6.4 SOCIAL WORKERS PERCEPTIONS	67
7. CONCLUSION	69
BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

APPENDIX.....77
 FIGURES OF SOME BACKGROUNDS RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY77
 GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND INTERVIEWS GUIDE79

Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

Due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) has drastically increased. To cater for their basic needs, many solutions have been considered and one of them and the most popular in Africa is foster care placement.

When one or both parents pass away, children may join the core of other vulnerable children like street children, run-away, thrown-away, or school dropouts. The following are some facts:

- According to the National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2004)¹, Namibia ranks as one of the five countries most affected by HIV/AIDS. The National Plan of Action for OVC in Namibia estimated the number of orphans to be 117 000 in 2007 while vulnerable children were estimated to be 11 000 in the same year. The total number of OVC in Namibia was estimated to be 128 000 in 2007(MGECW, 2007)²
- According to 2001 Population and Housing Census the whole Khomas region had 6674 OVC, while Khomas urban had 5708 OVC, meaning that in Khomas region more OVC are in urban areas than in rural areas (389) (NPC, 2005)³.
- The extended families usually assume responsibility for orphans, but the rapidly increasing number of orphans is now overwhelming this care system. Poverty is already widespread in the worst affected communities and the added burden of taking care of orphans causes great economic hardships. Therefore, orphans often lack adequate food, shelter, clothing and schooling (Makane, 2002)⁴.
- According to (Beegle et al., 2007)⁵ Orphan hood can be associated with an increasing value of the child's time in home production as a substitute for adult labour, which results in less schooling. They may be discrimination against

¹Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (2004). *National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. Windhoek: MWACW & UNICEF. The National Policy for OVC was launched in February 2005 during the Third National Conference for OVC that took place in Windhoek, Namibia

² Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2007). *National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Namibia* (Vol. 1). Windhoek: MGECW

³ Republic of Namibia, National Planning Commission (2005). *2001 Population and Housing Census: Khomas region Report, Basic Analysis with Highlights*. Windhoek: NPC.

⁴ Makane et al., 2002 Psychological well being of orphans in Dar El Salaam, Tanzania. *Acta Paediatr*, Vol. 91, pp 459 – 465.

⁵ Beegle, k. et al. 2007. the long –run Impact of orphan hood. Policy Research Working paper Series 4353. The World Bank.

orphans and favouritism towards biological children for double orphans or among single orphans who do not reside with their surviving parents.

Considering the facts mentioned above, it was worthy to investigate perceptions of the support provided to children in foster care placement, specifically in an urban setting of Windhoek.

This study aims at investigating perceptions of orphans, foster parents and social workers whether children in foster care placement, in an urban setting such as Windhoek, are being supported in terms of their care and support, education and protection.

Furthermore, the literature review shall gather information on foster care placement worldwide and Africa in general and Namibia in particular and analyse policies that are in place in Namibia for OVC in general and foster care placement process in particular.

Therefore, my hope is that this study shall contribute to the improvement of the support provided to orphan children in foster care placement in an urban sitting of Windhoek in terms of Care and support, education and protection. A basic assumption that supports this ambition is that ***“The absence of proper support to orphan children in foster care placement will lead to low outcomes in education, care and support, and protection”***. The study focuses on perception of how orphan children in foster care placement are cared for and supported, educated and protected and the views will come from different respondents: Children in foster care placements, foster parents and social workers.

A number of studies have been done on OVC. In 2001 Social Impact Assessment and Policy Analysis (SIAPAC) conducted a situation analysis on OVC. In 2007 the Government published preliminary results for the 2006 Demographic Health Survey (DHS), which includes key OVC indicators. In 2007 Community Household Survey (CHS) took place in six regions collecting information on OVC. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) undertook a Situation Baseline Analysis for OVC in six regions of the country, in 2005. The Annual Education Census for 2007 collected data on a number of OVC in schools. Few studies have been done on children’s perspectives such as Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning on Orphans and Vulnerable Children by Dee Dee Yates on RAAAP 2004, More than the loss of a parent: Namibians first study of orphans done by Steinitz Lucy in 1998, Strengthening the Capacity of Child –Headed Households to Meet Their Own Needs: An Exploratory Study on Social Networks of Children Heads of Household in Northern Namibia by M. Ruiz-Casares in 2004, Impact

on HIV on Education Study took place in 2001 by Ministry of Education. However, there is no study that has been done on children in foster care placement in Namibia. According to Finkelstein et al. “[O]ne of the reasons that the foster care research is confusing and insufficient is because it glosses over the children’s perceptions” (2002:2)⁶.

The perspective of children is framed by both how the society has organized the caring of children in foster care as well as the perceptions of the professionals that work with children. The three categories of respondents (foster children, foster parents and social workers) might have different perceptions, if that the case, I shall bring them to light and the different voices must be understood in relation to each other. Furthermore, the voices of orphans children, foster parents and Social Workers define the situation of the children in foster care placement under the current foster care placement process or foster care placement legal framework to access government grant to support foster care families.

The study will answer the following questions:

- What do the Government, Non- Governmental organisations and foster parents do to support the orphans in foster care placement from the point of view of orphan foster children, foster parents and Social Workers?
- How do parents and social workers view the foster care placement process?
- What should be done to improve the foster care placement process?

Children are considered as primarily participants, their foster parents and the social workers are considered as secondary participants. A conclusion will be drawn from the results of this study.

⁶ Finkelstein, M. et al. 2002. What keeps Children in Foster Care From Succeeding in school? Views of Early adolescents and the Adults in Their Lives. New York: Vera Institute of Justice

Chapter 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study examines the perception of support provided to orphan children in foster care placement. Their number is drastically increasing due to the AIDS pandemic. The UNICEF's Executive Director Carol Bellamy in Siaens et al. (2003)⁷ adds, "Two-thirds of countries hard-hit by the disease do not have strategies to ensure the children affected grow up with even the bare minimum of protection and care".

It has earned, in the African continent, the dubious distinction of being the leading killer (Deininger et al. 2003; Birdthistle, 2003; UNICEF, 2004; UNAIDS, 2004 in Adato, 2005⁸; Hepburn, 2001:3)⁹. For two decades, AIDS has had a drastic impact in Sub Saharan Africa and an estimated 12.3 million children have lost one or both parents due to AIDS. Besides the increased risk of death, children whose parents have died due to HIV/AIDS also face stigmatisation and rejection, and often suffer from emotional distress, malnutrition, lack of health care, poor or no access to education, and most importantly, lack of care and love (Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, 2006)¹⁰. Extended families and communities in highly affected areas are often hard-pressed to care for the orphans. But according to Adato (2005)¹¹ on a more optimistic note, this number is hopefully expected to stabilise by the year 2030.

Namibia is one of the most seriously affected countries by HIV and AIDS. On average, 23% of Namibians aged 15 to 49 are HIV- positive (MGECW, National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2004)¹². Not only HIV/AIDS pandemic has a devastating impact on society, there are different threats on orphans and other vulnerable children. According to (UNICEF, 2006)¹³, in Namibia, children are facing problems such as food insecurity, which

⁷ Siaens, C. et al., 2003. Are Orphans Especially Vulnerable? Evidence from Rwanda. Rwanda: World Bank.

⁸ Adato, M. et al., 2005. Children in the Shadow of Aids: Studies of Vulnerable Children and Orphans in Three Provinces in South Africa. Washington: International Food policy research.

⁹ Hepburn, A.E. 2001. Primary Education in Eastern and Southern Africa: Increasing Access for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Aids affected Areas. Duke University: Terry Sanford institute of Public Policy

¹⁰ Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. 2006. Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Programming Guidance for United States Government In-Country Staff and Implementing Partners. US Government

¹¹ Ibid (See Children in the Shadow of Aids: Studies of Vulnerable Children and Orphans in three Provinces in South Africa

¹² Ibid (See National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2004)

¹³ UNICEF. 2006. Namibia's most vulnerable children: Excluded and invisible?. *A Supplement to the State of the World's Children Report*. pp 1-8.

could increase dramatically with the weakening productive capacity of families and communities and chronic environmental problems; and the weakening capacity of social and economic services.

This situation threatens the care giving capacity of the communities (Siaens et al. 2003¹⁴; Meeting on African Children Without Family Care, 2002)¹⁵ as the number of OVC in Namibia has been estimated at 128 000 by 2007 (MGECW, National Plan of Action for OVC, 2007)¹⁶.

2.2 Definition of the terms

2.2.1 Orphan child

The term “orphan” is derived from Greek and Latin meaning, “a child bereaved by the death of one or both parents”(Shelly& Powell 2003:25)¹⁷. According to Hepburn (2001:3)¹⁸, “Orphan” is a socially constructed concept that varies among cultures and countries. Community definitions of the orphan child differ from the definitions used by the government and external agencies (Skinner, D. et al., 2006)¹⁹. In the Malawian culture, for instance, the concept of orphanhood is much larger than their national definition. It is a social and economic process that goes beyond the biological situation entailed in the demise of a parent or both parents (Chirwa, 2002)²⁰. Some refer orphans to children who have lost one parent and others reserve the definition to those who have lost both. In Namibia, according to National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (2004)²¹ orphan children are defined as children under the age of 18 whose mother, father or both parents or primary caregiver has died.

¹⁴ Ibid (Are orphans Especially Vulnerable? Evidence from Rwanda

¹⁵Report: Meeting on African Children Without Family Care, 2002 in Windhoek, Namibia

¹⁶ Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. National Plan of Action for OVC in Namibia. MGECW: Windhoek

¹⁷ Shelly, A. K. & Powell, G. 2003. Children Orphaned by AIDS: A Global Perspective. *Seminars in Paediatric Infectious Diseases*. Vol. 14 No. 1 : pp 25 –31

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Skinner et al., 2006. Towards a Definition of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. *AIDS Behav*, Vol. 10, pp 619-626.

²⁰Chirwa, W. Chijere. 2002. Social exclusion: challenges to orphan care in Malawi. *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, PP 93-113.

²¹ Ibid

The main variables are age of the orphan and parental loss. Some define children up to 15 or up to 18 years. In the case of parental loss, some does not consider the loss of one parent; they only consider the loss of both parents (Smart, 2003)²². All definitions have in common the passing away of one or both parents while the notion of what constitutes the child as an ‘orphan’ varies widely in its local application (Giese et al. in Meintjes et al., 2003)²³. Parentless children are a particular vulnerable population (Foster et al., 1997b²⁴, UNICEF, 1999)²⁵. Defining double orphan is complicated by the fact that some children have parents whose where-about status is unknown, or one parent is deceased and the other parent’s vital status is unknown to the family, which is taking care of the child (Guarcello et al., 2004)²⁶. The question of vital status of the parents can cause also a child to be most vulnerable than the child who lost both parents, because parents with unknown vital status, even if they are alive, do not take part in the care, support and protection of their children. Here lies the dilemma of who is an orphan and who is not. In this study, the definition as stipulated in the Namibian National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children of 2004²⁷ will be applied.

2.2.2 Vulnerable Child

Vulnerability definition differs from country to county or from one framework to another. According to UNAIDS definition, a vulnerable child is a child who is under the age of 18 and:

- i) *has lost one or both parents or*
- ii) *has a chronically ill parent (regardless of whether the parent lives in the same household as the child), or*
- iii) *lives in a household where the past 12 months at least one adult died and was sick for 3 of the 12 months before he/she died, or*

²² Smart, R. 2003. Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Framework for Moving Ahead. *Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. pp 1-28.

²³ Meintjes, H. et al. 2003. Children ‘in need of care’ or in need of cash? : Questioning social security provisions for orphans in the context of the South African AIDS pandemic. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.

²⁴ Foster, G. & Makufa, C. 1997. Perceptions of children and community members concerning the circumstances of orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *AIDS Care*, Vol. 9, issue 4, pp 391-405.

²⁵ UNICEF. 1999. Children orphaned by AIDS: front-line responses from Eastern and Southern Africa. New York: UNICEF.

²⁶ Guarcello, et al., 2004. The influence of Orphanhood on Children’s Schooling and Labour: Evidence from Sub Saharan Africa. ILO, UNICEF & W.B.G.

²⁷ Ibid

- iv) *lives in a household where at least one adult was seriously ill for at least 3 months in the past 12 months, or*
- v) *lives outside of the family care (i.e. lives in an institution or on the street)*
(UNICEF & UNAIDS, 2004)²⁸

In Botswana, for instance, according to the country's National policy definition, vulnerable children are street children, child labourers, children who are sexually exploited, children who are neglected, children with handicaps and children in remote areas from indigenous minorities. In South Africa, according to the working definition for Rapid Appraisal, a vulnerable child is a child orphaned, abandoned, or displaced; a child under the age of 15 who has lost his/her mother (or primary caregiver) or who will lose his/her mother within a relatively short period (Smart, 2003)²⁹.

In Namibia, a vulnerable child is a child under 18 years old who needs care and protection (National policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, 2004)³⁰. This definition of vulnerability could describe all children in Namibia since all children need care and protection but every program or project is targeting its intervention at a unique set of children.

For instance for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation, the definition was developed based on the circumstances that are not expected to change over time in most cases and described as follow:

- i) *a child living with a chronically caregiver ill caregiver, defined who is too ill to carry out daily chores during 3 of the last 12 months*
- ii) *a child living with a caregiver with a disability who is not able to complete household chores*
- iii) *a child of school- going age who is unable to attend a regular school due to disability*
- iv) *a child living in the household headed by an elderly caregiver (60 years or older, with no adult caregiver in the household between 18 and 59 years of age)*
- v) *a child living in a poor household, defined as a house that spend over 60% of total household income on food*
- vi) *a child living in a child –headed household (meaning a household headed by a child under the age of 18)*

²⁹ Ibid (See Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Framework for Moving Ahead)

³⁰ Ibid

vii) *a child who has experienced a death of an adult caregiver (18-59 years) in the household during the last 12 months.*(Namibia National Plan of Action for OVC, 2004)³¹

The concept of vulnerability is not only restricted to individuals, such as children, but is often used to refer to households as well (Smart, 2003)³². Therefore there is no universal definition on vulnerability.

2.2.3 Foster care placement

Family foster care is the leading form of substitute care for children (Rhodes et al., 2003)³³. Thus “fostering is an authorised placement with a ‘foster’ family, supervised by the Social Services and usually involving financial compensation to cover the additional expenses incurred” (Cantwell, 1998:3)³⁴. It serves children who have experienced abuse or neglect with their birth parents and families, and their foster parent (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001)³⁵. For the West Africans, child fostering means the movement or the change of children from their natural parents to the substitute home where they are raised and taken care for by other parents who are not their biological parents (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985³⁶; Olusanya & Hodes, 1999)³⁷. Normally, foster care is a temporary service that helps to respond to the problems in the lives of the children and their family. The reconstruction services are done on the side of the children and their biological family, so that the children can go back to their biological parents as soon as possible. However, some children remain in their foster family for a longer

³¹Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2007. National Plan of Action for orphans and Vulnerable Children in Namibia (Vol.2). 46 governments, civil society and United Nations partners at an OVC Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop that took place on 14-16 May 2007 developed Windhoek MGECW Vulnerability definition.

³² Ibid

³³ Rhodes, K.W. et al. 2003. Foster Parents’ Role Performance Responsibilities: Perceptions of Foster Mothers, Fathers, and Workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol.25, No.12, pp935-964.

³⁴ Cantwell, N. 1998. Inter country Adoption. *Innocent digest*, issue No.4, pp 1-24.

³⁵ Barbell, K. & Freundlich, M., 2001. Foster Care Today. Washington: Casey Family Programs. *Bulletin. News*, Vol.8, No. 1, pp 1-20.

³⁶ Isiugo-Abanihe, U. C. 1985. Child Fosterage in West Africa. *Population and Development Review*, Vol.11, No.1, pp 53-72.

³⁷ Olusanya, B. & Hodes D. 1999. West African children in private foster care in City and Hachney. *Child: care, Health and Development*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp 337-342.

period and others attain their maturity while they are still cared for by their foster parents (Barbell & Freundlich, 2001)³⁸ especially orphans.

2.3 Foster care placement historical background

Foster placements were historically most likely due to illness, poverty, or parental death (Schor, 1982, 1988 in Racusin, 2005: 201)³⁹. The origin of modern foster care started in New York City in 1849, where a large number of vagrant children were living in the street. It was a major concern to the police. Between 1854 and 1929, an estimated 100,000 children were shipped on orphan trains to the Midwest where families took and raised them in return for the value of their labour. Surely those children were viewed as resource to meet the needs of the foster parents (Morton et al., 1994)⁴⁰. In America, “one trend impact foster care is the steady growths in number of substantiate reports of child abuse and neglect the number of children in foster care has steadily increased since 1960s, with the exception of a few years in the early 1980s. “(Barbell & Freundlich, 2001:1)⁴¹. In the past few decades, American families have been experiencing dramatic change, as a result, a large number of American children are cared for from the different forms of traditional families (Sun, 2003)⁴².

Foster care placement of children is common practice all over the world, but the circumstances or conditions of fostering might differ from one society to another. In Western societies, the motive of fostering might be associated with child neglect from the side of the biological parents while in an African society, the motive of fostering might be associated mostly with the death of the parents of the child as well as economic reasons. There is also “intercountry foster care placement that has currently grown in the past few years, involving some tens of thousands of children every year”. (Cantwell, 1998:9)⁴³. The placement of the child within a family living in another country is a temporary placement and it is a way of reconstructing the child from the problems that he/she has been going through with the biological parents.

³⁸ Barbell, K. & Freundlich, M., 2001. Foster Care Today. Washington: Casey Family Programs. *Bulletin. News*, Vol.8, No. 1, pp 1-20.

³⁹ Racusin, R. et al. 2005. Community Psychiatric Practice: Psychosocial Treatment of Children in Foster Care: A Review. *Community Mental Health Journal*, Vol.41, No. 2, pp 199-219.

⁴⁰ Morton, D.T. et al. 1994. History of Child Protection and Foster Care: Early History of Child Protection and Foster Care. Atlanta: Child Care Institute.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Sun, Y. 2003. The Well-Being of Adolescents in Households With No Biological Parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol.65, pp 894-909

⁴³ Ibid

In most African cultures, the extended families play an important role in sharing parenting role, which has an advantage of ensuring that if the child's parents are unable to take care of responsibility as parents or if they were deceased, the extended family as a whole was supposed to take responsibility of the child concerned (Thomas & Mabusela, 1991)⁴⁴.

In West Africa, fostering has been a valued traditional practice among many ethnic groups. "Most fostering in West Africa takes place within the kinship framework, because children are generally thought of as belonging not only to biological parents but also to the lineage or the kinship (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:53)⁴⁵". The child also may be fostered as a result of the nuclear family dissolution such as divorce, separation or the death of a spouse, and this is called fostering crisis. There were also other types of fostering that served to strengthen the relationship in terms of social, economic and political alliance (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985)⁴⁶. "In Africa, children are an important part of the domestic labour and are needed to perform various household tasks and small services" (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1985:59)⁴⁷. The educational fostering also is being practiced in African societies, where the child has to be sent away for education purpose. But sending away children for schooling is a common practice around the world, which is not an exception in African societies. However, in the past, the use of the fostering services reflected on social and political relationship. Family foster care remains an important part of child welfare services.

2.4 Foster care placement in the Namibian Context

Children orphaned by AIDS are found in every country across Sub-Saharan Africa (Adato et al., 2005)⁴⁸. In Africa, the extended family and the community play an important role in providing the basic care for the orphans (Siaens et al., 2005⁴⁹; Ntozi et al. 1999⁵⁰; Adato et al., 2005)⁵¹. The children belong to the extended family whether it follows the matrimonial or patriarchal system. Furthermore, through East and Southern Africa, a strong and long-standing tradition of extended family networks and informal fostering exist (Shelly & Powell, 2003)⁵². Thus, the capacity of the traditional extended family structure to care for orphans and

⁴⁴ Thomas, A. & Mabusela, S. 1991. Foster care in Soweto, South Africa: Under Assault from a Politically Hostile Environment. *Child Welfare*, Vol. 70, Issue 2,

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ntonzi P.M.J. 1999. Orphan care: the role of the extended family in northern of our OVC?. Windhoek:

MWACW

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

other family members is already straining under the growing burden of caring for increasing numbers of orphans (National Policy on OVC, 2004)⁵³. In Namibia, a child in the foster care placement is a child that has been identified by the Social Worker as ‘a child in need of care’. According to Children’s Act of 1960 “a child in need of care means a child who:

- Has been abandoned or is with a visible means of support
- Has no parent/s or guardian
- Has parent/s or guardian who do/does not or unfit to exercise proper control over the child.
- Is in the custody of a person who has been convicted of committing a crime upon that child.
- Cannot be controlled by his parents or guardian.
- Is in the custody of an habitual truant person
- Is in the company of immoral or vicious person.
- Begs
- Is being under 12 years and engages in any form of street trading
- Is in a state of physical or mental neglect (Act no. 33 of 1960).⁵⁴

A foster parent means any person who undertakes the temporary care of any child who has been placed in his/her custody in terms of the Children’s Act of 1960 (Steinitz, 1998)⁵⁵. For a foster care placement to be approved there is a need to be a children court’s enquiry. Most foster care placements are based on the ground of the child not having the parents due to death and few cases due to economic and education reasons.

Normally “the family is the most important source of love, attention, emotion support, material sustenance, and moral guidance in a child’s life” (Olson, et al, 2005: 4)⁵⁶. It is important to make sure that each and every child has a family that is able to provide care and support that every child needs. The question is to know if care and support is being provided to orphan children in foster care placement, especially in Namibia.

Due to HIV/AIDS, parents are dying leaving their children behind. “These children suffer overwhelming and largely unmitigated losses, living as they do in societies already weakened

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Republic of South Africa. 1960. Children Act no.33 of 1960 as amended, together with the Regulations. Pretoria

Namibia is still using the Children’s of 1960 inherited from the apartheid era.

⁵⁵ Steinitz, L. 1998. Resources for Vulnerable Children. Windhoek: UNICEF.

⁵⁶ Olson, K. et al. 2005. From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Resource for Faith –Based Groups and Donors Seeking to Help Families Affected by HIV/AIDS. Santa Cruz: Firelight Foundation.

by under-development, poverty and the AIDS epidemic itself” (UNICEF, 1996:2)⁵⁷. Namibia is not exception; it is ranked among the severely affected and hit countries in Africa. The extended family network, which includes the aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents, form the safety net for such most vulnerable children. Those who provide the safety net for the orphan children already impoverished, are the grandparents who might have been depending financially and physically on the support of the very son or daughter who has died. In addition, this safety net is becoming unreliable because caregivers are also dying (Olson, 2005⁵⁸; UNICEF, 1996⁵⁹). Due to a big number of orphans and the weakening of the extended family system, the child headed households are increasing in Namibia; the non-extended family is found to be rare in fostering the non-blood related orphans. There is a new phenomenon of child headed households, where the elder siblings take responsibility to take care of their younger siblings because there is no one in the extended family who is willing to take care of them or because as siblings they do not want to be separated.

2.5 Different types of support of orphan children in foster care placement

The problem of orphan children, especially those in foster care placement, needs to be addressed in order to meet their basic needs. According to the study done in Uganda, the problems that orphans were facing among others were shelter, school fees and equipment, food, bedding, clothes, medical care as well as provision of care to younger siblings (Shuey et al., 1996 in Ntozi, 1999⁶⁰). In Namibia, just to name only few the following programmes are in place:

The National OVC programme of the Government of Namibia: It is a program overseen by the Permanent OVC Task Force chaired by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) composed by line Ministries, NGOs and several donor agencies (http://www.FHI.org/en/HIVAIDS/country/Namibia/res_namibiaovc.htm),⁶¹ and (Verduijn, 2004)⁶²:

⁵⁷ UNICEF.1996. Children Orphaned by AIDS: front-line responses from eastern and southern Africa. UNICEF& UNAIDS

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ntonzi P.M.J. 1999. Orphan care: the role of the extended family in northern of our OVC?: Windhoek: MWACW.

⁶¹ http://www.FHI.org/en/HIVAIDS/country/Namibia/res_namibiaovc.htm

⁶² Verduijn, R.JC. Assessment of OVC with a Food Component in Namibia. Pretoria, November 2004.

Schooled for Success: It promotes Full School Participation by OVC and it is a Catholic AIDS Action (CAA) program aiming at attendance and success of OVC in schools. It campaigns on the right of OVC, for their psychosocial support in the community and the provision of school supplies and uniforms to those who qualify through a joint venture with the private sector.

Psychosocial Support (PSS) training for OVC is being conducted by Philippi Namibia. This program aims at training peer counsellors and identifying potential youth leaders who, in the future and after further training, would provide care and support to OVC. It provides also PSS to children through holiday's camps and kids clubs.

AIDS Law Unit of the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC). This project focuses on the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and OVC. The AIDS Law Unit not only has greatly contributed to the drafting of the national OVC Policy but has also drafted the National HIV Policy for the Education Sector, which addresses the rights of vulnerable children and education.

Christian Alliance For Orphans (CAFO) "has the aim of encouraging and empowering local churches and other faith-based organizations to provide emotional, spiritual and/or material assistance to needy orphans and other vulnerable children in their communities" (Verduijn, 2004: 42)⁶³

Special Programme for Vulnerable, (SPVC) serves the families and the community due to the increase of OVC due to a big number of OVC and the weakening of the extended family associated with poverty. This program helps the caregivers in income generating projects that will contribute to the basic needs of OVC. Through SPVC, the communities are sensitized on Children's Rights and the services available for OVC in the communities.

UNICEF is operating in 5 regions in their support to the programs assisting OVC in the regions which are highly affected by HIV/AIDS, namely Omusati, Ohangwena, Omaheke, Kavango and Caprivi. Different activities are taking place in the above-mentioned regions such as sewing, gardening, bakery, bricks making projects, PSS, soup kitchen for OVC.

2.5.1 Education

According to the MGECSW (2007)⁶⁴, with regard to education, support is to ensure that all school age OVC attend school and are not deterred from full participation through lack of

⁶³ Ibid (See Verduijn, R.J.C. Assessment of OVC with a Food Component in Namibia)

⁶⁴ Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. A Human Resources and Capacity Gap Analysis. Improving Child Welfare Services. Windhoek: UNICEF & USAID.

financial means, materials or psychological need, stigma and discrimination, or any other constraints. The support also looks at out-of-school OVC to ensure that they have educational opportunities to help them to help themselves after their education.

Primary education is one of the basic rights of every child according to UN Convention on the Rights of the child. All girl and boys must have access to and good quality education as a cornerstone of an inclusive basic education (UNICEF, 2002)⁶⁵. According to (Guarcello et al., 2004:9)⁶⁶, “The HIV/AIDS epidemic is seriously undermining the achievement of the goals of Education for All (EFA) adopted by the international community in the April 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, as well as the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (Guarcello et al, 2004)⁶⁷. Education is a tool to re-establish the self-esteem and socialisation of orphan children (Shelly & Powell, 2003)⁶⁸. They continue to say that poor access to schooling is another problem caused by financial strain on extended families. In many households, orphans cannot cover school fees and uniforms. As a result, children drop out in order to reduce family expenses and assist with house chores, caring for younger siblings or work that can bring additional income in the household (Makane et al., 2002⁶⁹; Guarcello et al., 2004)⁷⁰. According to data from 19 Demography and Health Survey studies that were conducted in 10 countries between 1992 and 2000, it was found that orphans are less likely compared to non-orphans to be enrolled in school (Case et al., 2004⁷¹) for reasons stated above. In addition it was found that foster-cared youth do less well in school generally than their peers and therefore have lower rates of high school graduation”(Wolanin, 2005)⁷².

⁶⁵ UNICEF, 2002. A world fit for children: Millennium Development Goals Special Session on Children documents. The Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: UNICEF.

⁶⁶ Guarcello, et al., 2004. The influence of Orphanhood on Children’s Schooling and Labour: Evidence from Sub Saharan Africa. ILO, UNICEF & W.B.G.

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Shelly, A. K. & Powell, G. 2003. Children Orphaned by AIDS: A Global Perspective. *Seminars in Paediatric Infectious Diseases*. Vol. 14 No. 1 : pp 25 –31

⁶⁹ Makane et al., 2002 Psychological well being of orphans in Dar El Salaam, Tanzania. *Acta Paediatr*, Vol. 91, pp 459 – 465.

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Case, A. et al., 2004. Orphans in Africa: Parental Death, Poverty, and School Enrolment. *Demography*, Vol. 41, No. 3, PP 483-508.

⁷² Wolain, T.R. 2005. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers. Washington: Institute of Higher Education Policy.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia, (1990)⁷³ in its Article 20 (1)(2) “All persons shall have the right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory and the State shall provide reasonable facilities to render effective this right for every resident within Namibia, by establishing and maintaining State schools at which primary education will be provided free of charge”. In the same manner the article 28 (1) (a) (b) in emphasises that “1.state Parties recognize the right of education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular: (a) make primary education compulsory and available free to all; (b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need”(UN CRC, 1998)⁷⁴.

In Namibia, primary education in public schools is free for children between the ages of six and 16 years. This means that government provides the facilities, essential equipment, qualified teachers, and essential teaching and learning materials free of charge to children under the age of 16 years (grades 1 to 7). However, the government has established school development funds as parents’ contributions. Nevertheless, the exemption from paying school fees towards this fund is granted to the economically vulnerable children including orphans (National Policy on HIV/AIDS for Education Sector, 2003)⁷⁵. According to (Case et al. 2004)⁷⁶ the reduced school enrolment of orphans is associated with the lower household income.

2.5.2 Care and support

Care and support is referred as the basic needs including adult care and supervision, access to social services and psychosocial support that OVC have to be granted (MGECW, 2007)⁷⁷. “Care is a social phenomenon that involves many aspects of everyday social life” (<http://w.w.w.codesria.org>). Taking care of a child has common features like

⁷³ Wolain, T.R. 2005. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers. Washington: Institute of Higher Education Policy.

⁷⁴ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 1989.

⁷⁵ Ministry of Education. 2003. National Policy on HIV/AIDS for the Education Sector. Windhoek: MOE

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. A Human Resources and Capacity Gap Analysis. Improving Child Welfare Services. Windhoek: UNICEF & USAID.

affection, comfort, assistance, shared solving problems, provision of food and so forth (Weisner, 1997 in <http://w.w.codesria.org>)⁷⁸. Given the pivotal role of foster families, it is important to understand aspects of the foster family that exacerbate behavioural and emotional problems in foster children, as well as aspects of the foster family that might prevent or ameliorate future problems (Orme & Buehler, 2001: 3)⁷⁹. There is evidence that the children in foster care placement display psychiatric difficulties (Racusin, et al., 2005)⁸⁰. Given the magnitude of orphanhood problem coupled with poverty that are affecting many communities, the majority of Africa's orphans are being taken care of by their extended families and it is a remarkable phenomenon (Shelly & Powell, 2003)⁸¹. The most touching part is that relatives tend to provide the same good care to these children that they give to their own (Sounding Board, 2002⁸²; Shelly & Powell, 2003)⁸³. In addition, relatives provide support in different ways (Foster et al., 1995b in Foster & Makufa, 1997)⁸⁴, such as keeping the orphan child in their house, providing school fees, food or clothes to orphan children. On the other hand, though the extended family networks are the primary resource for orphans, some relatives exploit, abuse and neglect orphans or fail to fulfil their responsibilities (Foster & Makufa, 1997⁸⁵; International Social Service & UNICEF, 2004)⁸⁶. Furthermore, multiple international agencies have embarked on different programs in order to support orphans and vulnerable children and it has become one of the priorities (Sound-Boarding, 2002)⁸⁷. The orphan children are often placed in foster care (International Social Service & UNICEF, 2004)⁸⁸ because they need care and protection from adults. However, the findings from the study called Sorrow Makes Children of Us All: A Literature Review on the Psychosocial

⁷⁸ <http://w.w.codesria.org>

⁷⁹ Orme, G.J. & Buehler, C. 2001. Foster Family Characteristics and Behavioural and Emotional Problems of Foster Children: A Narrative Review. Feature Article, Vol.50, No.1, pp 3-15.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Shelly, A. K. & Powell, G. 2003. Children Orphaned by AIDS: A Global Perspective. *Seminars in Paediatric Infectious Diseases*. Vol. 14 No. 1 : pp 25 –31

⁸² Sounding Board. 2002. Supporting Community Efforts to Assist Orphans in Africa. *The New England journal of Medicine*. Vol. 346, No. 24, pp 1907 – 1910.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Foster, G. & Makufa, C. 1997. Perceptions of children and community members concerning the circumstances of orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *AIDS Care*, Vol. 9, issue 4, pp 391-405.

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ International Social Service & UNICEF. 2004. Improving Protection for Children without Parental Care: care for children Affected by HIV/AIDS: The urgent Need for International Standard. Geneva: UNICEF & ISS.

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children shows that “orphaned children face discrimination with their own families as well as in their communities, churches and schools, both before and after the death of their parents. Such discrimination is often based on the fears that the children of those infected with HIV may be infected too” (Stein, 2003:13)⁸⁹. In the same study, the orphan children were not happy especially those living with the extended family. They are expected to work harder, and tend to have less access to food, school fees and emotional support (Stein, 2003)⁹⁰. In addition “since parents are more closely related to their natural children than to their foster children, conflicts may arise over the treatment of foster and natural children” (Silk, 1987: 42)⁹¹.

2.5.3 Protection

Protection involves providing frameworks for protecting the wellbeing of all OVC, ensuring their rights and the rights of their caregivers are protected and fulfilled (MGECW, 2007)⁹². Children should be protected from harm and exploitation such as violence, abuse, and discrimination (UNICEF, 2002⁹³; UN CRC, 1989⁹⁴).

AIDS orphans are reported to suffer increased sexual abuse (UNAIDS, 2002 in Stein, 2003)⁹⁵ and will have no role models in the future. As a result, they will resort to criminal activities in order to survive (Grimwood, 2001; cited in Bray, 2003: 683 in Stein, 2003)⁹⁶. Orphans are often deprived of money or property that is rightfully theirs (UNAIDS & UNICEF, 2004)⁹⁷. The Convention of the Rights of the Child states that the family has the primary responsibility to protect and care for the child, and governments have an important role to play in terms of protection, preservation and support relationship between the child and the family. In addition, the state has the responsibility to provide special protection for a child who has been found to be in need of care (UNAIDS & UNICEF, 2004)⁹⁸. The best interests of the child should always be considered in terms of protection. Here the term “best interest” of the child should take into account the environment and the culture of the child.

⁸⁹ Stein, J., 2003. Sorrow Makes Children of us All: A literature Review on the Psycho-Social Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children. CSSR Working Paper No. 47, pp 1-32.

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Silk, J.B. 1987. Adoption and Fosterage in Human Societies: Adaptations or Enigmas?. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.2, No.1, pp 39-49.

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ibid

In Namibia, the National Policy for OVC⁹⁹ is a guide to protect Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children. It is based on the existing national and international legal frameworks, including the Namibian Constitution and the UN Convention on Children's Rights. Currently the Children's Act of 1960 is governing the Child Welfare Services interventions in terms of Children that are in need of care and/or protection. Cabinet enacted the Children's Status Act, and the Regulations of this new Act are underway. Furthermore, under the direction of the Namibian cabinet, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare reshaped the previously existing steering committee into the OVC Permanent Task Force (PTF). The latter is a multi-sectoral and multi-institutional body that includes government and non governmental Organisations. The OVC Permanent Task Force has five working groups: Education, Care and Support, Health and Nutrition, Child Protection and Human Rights as well as Management and Networking. This last group has been given the mandate to monitor and evaluate the national plan component and to receive progress reports from the implementers of the National Plan of Action and the compilation of the national OVC reports and submitting them to the relevant Government agencies, NGOs and Donors. (http://www.FHI.org/en/HIVAIDS/country/Namibia/res_namibiaovc.htm)¹⁰⁰, National Plan of Action for OVC, 2007¹⁰¹. Finally, the Child Care and Protection Bill have undergone different stages of consultations and it is currently with the Parliament awaiting approval. There are different legal frameworks that are meant to protect the children in Namibia; however, the problem lies in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these strategies by all stakeholders on OVC issues.

2.6 Conclusion

Foster care placement with its different form is a substitute care for children who are in need of care and protection. The modern foster care placement took roots in 1849 in New York City, when the police realised that street children were a major concern. Between 1854 and 1929 trains to the mid-east regularly shipped them where some families were ready to cater for them, as they were valued as labourer (Morton et al., 1994)¹⁰².

⁹⁹Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (2004). *National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. Windhoek: MWACW & UNICEF. The National Policy for OVC was launched in February 2005 during the Third National Conference for OVC that took place in Windhoek, Namibia

¹⁰⁰(http://www.FHI.org/en/HIVAIDS/country/Namibia/res_namibiaovc.htm)

¹⁰¹Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. *National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Namibia* (Vol. 2). Windhoek: MGECW & UNICEF.

¹⁰² Morton, D.T. et al. 1994. *History of Child Protection and Foster Care: Early History of Child Protection and Foster Care*. Atlanta: Child Care Institute.

Orphans and Vulnerable children is a global problem but the definition of OVC differs from culture to culture and from society and to society. Each society has many motives of fostering children. In Africa, the extended families take care of these orphans left behind by their deceased relatives. The increasing number of orphans due to HIV/AIDS is threatening the traditional care-giving capacity of the communities.

Thus, in Namibia, the child who is placed in foster care should be found in need of care by the social worker. The Children's Act of 1960¹⁰³ is the guidance document in the process.

When a child is found in need of care, different types of support such as education, care and support, protection should be accorded as it is done to a child with parents. Failure to get the necessary support can result in problems.

Though the Namibian government, the UN agencies and non-governmental organisations are trying to uplift the plight of orphan children, there is room for improvement in order to make sure our most vulnerable children are getting their basic needs including orphan children in foster care placements.

¹⁰³ Ibid

Chapter 3- RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION

3.1 Setting and Samples

The study was conducted in Windhoek, the capital city of Namibia located in the Khomas region, the central part of the country. Its inhabitants vary from upper economic class to lower class characterised by a very big gap between rich and poor. The samples were selected from public schools that host children of the middle class and the lower class income groups. According to the National Plan of Action for OVC, Vol. 2, 2007¹⁰⁴, the number of orphans was estimated to be 128 000 in Namibia. About 13% of the household in Khomas region have a child less than 15 years of age without one parent and 2% of households with a child under 15 years without both parents. This implies that in 1 out of every 50 households there is a child without both parents. Particularly in Windhoek one out of every 100 children under the age of 15 years has lost both parents (NPC, 2005)¹⁰⁵

The orphan children were primary respondents.

This sample was drawn from a target group, which are orphan children in foster care placement in Windhoek in the age group of 13-18 years. The children who are being placed in foster care have lost one or both parents or one parent or the vital status of other surviving parent is unknown.

Fifty (50) children formed the sample and they were selected with the guidance of teachers from five (5) different schools around Windhoek randomly selected. Ten children formed a group from each school. The investigator formulated a questionnaire (see annexure) that was a guide to the discussions. The same questionnaire was used for all five groups.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid (See Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, 2007)

¹⁰⁵ Ibid (See National Planning Commission, Highlights for Kohomas region, 2005)

Particulars of foster children respondents Covered in the study per group

Table 1: Gender per group

GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Augustinium Secondary School	3	7	10
Goreangab Junior Secondary School	4	6	10
Concordia College	5	5	10
A. Shipena Secondary School	6	4	10
Eldorado Project Secondary School	5	5	10
	23	27	50

Table 2: Age per group

GROUP	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL
	13-15 yrs	16-18 yrs	13-15 yrs	16-18 yrs	
Augustenium Secondary School	1	2	2	5	10
Gorengab Junior Secondary Shool	2	2	2	4	10
Concordia College	1	4	2	3	10
A. Shipena Secondary School	2	4	1	3	10
Eldorado Project Secondary School	3	2	1	4	10
TOTAL	9	14	8	19	50

Table 3: School grades per group

	GADE 8	GRADE 9	GRADE 10	GRADE 11	GRADE 12
Augustineum Secondary School		1	5	3	1
Goreangab Junior Secondary School	2	4	4		
Concordia College	3	1	2	2	2
A. Shipena Secondary School	2	3	1	4	
Eldorado Project Secondary school	4	5	1		
TOTAL	11	10	13	9	3

The focus discussion method was preferred, because the researcher's objective was to better understand how children in foster care placement view the support provided to them by different stakeholders. This method requires a well-experienced moderator, in order to get accurate results of the discussion. Sometimes few individuals in the group dominated the conversation, but it was worth it, because the group provided naturalistic data and allow the researcher to listen and observe non-verbal behaviour such as the tone of voice, reactions and emotions during discussions. Besides, the group dynamics inspired new ideas about the topic which gave more much in-depth discussion about the topic. The method was less time consuming because; it covered ten (10) children at once. (<http://focusgroups.pbwiki.com>, <http://www.groupsplus.com>)¹⁰⁶

Foster parents and social workers were secondary respondents in the study; and the interviews were conducted individually. Fifteen Foster parents and 10 social workers were interviewed and different questionnaires were used for the two groups (see annexure). The foster parents were randomly selected from the social workers' files available at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare while the social workers respondents, dealing with foster care placement on a daily basis, are employed with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare.

The non-schedule structured interviews were used because; it was not easy to get the foster parents and social workers at once due to their commitments. Nevertheless it was an advantage because, there is a flexibility to formulate more questions as the need arise in order

¹⁰⁶ (<http://focusgroups.pbwiki.com>, <http://www.groupsplus.com>)

to get as much as information on the topic. It is a time consuming method, it requires more time in collecting and analysing data.

3.2 Procedure

According to (de Vos et al., 2004)¹⁰⁷, interviewing method is the most used tool of data collection in qualitative research. Both parties, the researcher and the participant, are thus necessarily and unavoidably active and involved in meaning-making work (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994: 3 in de Vos et al., 2004:294). The bottom line of the interview is to give the participant the opportunity to tell the story.

To have access to schools and children, a letter requesting permission was written to the Regional Director of Education and to the foster parents. Appointments with Foster Parents and social workers for the purpose of conducting interviews were made through telephonic contacts.

Focus group discussion was used on orphan children participants. This method was meant to better understand how people feel or think about an issue, product or service (de Vos et al., 2004: 305). Participants were selected because they had certain characteristics in common that related to the topic of discussion. In the study, the children participants were selected on the basis that they are orphans who are in foster care placements. The investigator created a free and friendly environment that allowed the participants to express freely their opinions. During the group focus, notes were taken and tape recording was also used.

Non-scheduled structured interviews were used on foster parents as well as on social workers. According to (Bless& Smith, 1995), it is structured in a sense that a list of issues that has to be investigated is made prior to the interview. There is a list of issues that contains precise questions and together with the alternative questions depending on the answer of the main question. It was a non-scheduled interview in the sense that the investigator was free to formulate other questions as the need arises for a given situation (de Vos et al., 2004). The tape recording interview was done in order to concentrate on the interview proceedings and where to go next rather than to concentrate in notes taking. This was followed by a transcription of the recording for analysis purpose by using excel program.

In both groups the recording permission was accorded by the respondents before the initiation of the process of the interview. Before starting the group focus discussion, it

¹⁰⁷ De Vos et al. 2004. Research at grass roots: For the Social Sciences and human services professions (second edition). Pretoria: Van Scaik Publishers

was important to develop a friendly relationship among the participants. Pairs were formed and individuals from the same pair had to introduce to each other. From each pair a child introduced his/her fellow to the rest of the group. The exercise made them feel free during the discussion. Participants were encouraged to raise new topics that they felt were relevant. For foster parents and social workers interviews were wide-ranging. After recording, transcripts of the texts were made. This allowed, the researcher to combine the responses from different individuals and analyse them by subject categories, such as support provided/ to be provided to children in foster care placement, description of the support, the support system, coping mechanisms, willingness to foster, performance of foster children in school, the protection issues, the view on foster care placement process and suggestions of foster care placement process improvement.

3.3 Methods and Methodological considerations

This study was based primarily on **qualitative method**; the orphan children were considered as 'active subjects'. Participation, expression and reaction on the topic of discussion were preferred on these children. Each session lasted between one and two hours for children in foster care placement. At the beginning of each session, the participants were explained that the objective of the discussions was to have first hand information from them, what are their thoughts and feelings and experience on this issue. This allowed the researcher to determine if support provided to children in foster care placement is adequate for their educational, care and support as well as for their protection. The researcher explained to the participants that she was not there to evaluate, to test or to judge them; therefore there was no wrong or right answer to the questions. All the participants were prepared before hand by their guidance Teachers. The participation was voluntary. The respondents were informed that the information given would be kept confidential and how important it is. Secondly **quantitative method** was also used to collect demographic data such as age and gender.

The qualitative method also was used to get information from the foster parents and social workers.

Fifteen foster parents and ten Social Workers were interviewed. Interview sessions were conducted between one to two hours. The researcher was interested in their thoughts, feelings and experiences in order to determine if support provided to the children is adequate for their educational, care and support as well as for their protection. All answers were considered; therefore there were no right or wrong answers. Their participation in the interviews was voluntary as they were contacted before hand and no

one who was forced to answer a question that he/she is not feeling comfortable with. **Quantitative method** was also used to acquire demographic data such as gender, age, and marital status.

There are important methods that one should take into consideration when conducting a research especially on children. As this study was about children, they were involved as active subjects rather than as objects of study (Grover, 2004)¹⁰⁸.

The children were facilitated to tell their own story in their ways. It emphasized “When the children are permitted in those rare cases to become participants telling their own story in their own way, the research experience is often personally moving and meaningful and the data provided are rich and complex” (Grover, 2004:84)¹⁰⁹.

3.4 The role of the researcher

It was my duty to determine the most suitable methods to use for children respondents, their foster parents and social workers in order to get meaningful data from the participants.

Being a listener, observer and a facilitator were my roles during the group focus discussion for orphan children in foster care as well as during the interviews with foster parents and social workers.

It was my duty to understand the complaints, problems and concerns of the respondents, especially orphan children who are in a vulnerable situation.

During the group focus discussion with orphans children in foster care, the researcher’s role was to understand better their roles and to let them tell what they think or what they experience on the topic as they are the ones who are experiencing foster care placement situation. As it is stated that “there is emotional response evoked by such data with fosters an understanding of what means to be a child in that situation” (Grover, 2004: 86)¹¹⁰.

However, the researcher had the responsibility to keep the group focused on the topic, setting limits, and knowing when to back off to avoid emotional involvement or inappropriate use of language during discussions.

¹⁰⁸ Grover, S. 2004. Why won’t they listen to us? On giving power and voice to children in social research. London: SAGE Publications.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid (See Grover, S. 2004)

¹¹⁰ Ibid (See Grover S., 2004)

3.5 Limitations of the study

The sample of the study was small compared to the target population, because the time allocated for the thesis was too short, to work with larger samples. The financial constraints as well contributed to the size of the samples

Although confidentiality was granted from the side of the researcher, it was not known, if the respondents were convinced, it was very difficult to grant them confidentiality while they were in groups. This might have hampered the freedom of expression during the group discussion of some children respondents.

3.6 Ethnographic situation

As inherited from the apartheid era, Namibians stayed in locations according to their ethnic origin, two of the schools are located in the formerly “coloured area”, other two in the “formerly black” area while one is located in the formerly “white area”. Even though people have tendency to mix, these areas have remained predominantly as described above. Schools, being public institutions, seem to evolve faster than locations of origin of learners. There is no school confined to one tribe. Besides, all these schools are located in Windhoek where people from different corners of the country converge in search of green pastures. As the researcher could not speak any indigenous Namibian languages, all discussions were made in English. Therefore, It was very difficult to know the ethnic origin of each learner.

This study has different samples and a questionnaire that would help to reveal the views of respondents on the support provided to orphan children in foster care placement in an urban setting.

The views might differ or not. For all five-focus discussion groups I have used the same approach in order to initiate the conversation among the group members. The guidance teachers from each school were contacted before hand through the schools principals. The purpose of meeting the children was explained. All the five schools contacted were very much willing to participate in the hope that study would make a difference in their life situation.

It was very interesting to hear how the children expressed their views towards their support. The researcher was asking a question and the children had a chance to express their views. Obviously in a group discussion there are some individuals who dominate the floor than others. My group discussion sessions were not an exception. Nevertheless each child was given a chance to talk if he/she was willing to say something on the topics that emerged during our discussions.

Chapter 4- FOSTER CARE PLACEMENT LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN NAMIBIA

4.1 Current foster care placement processes to access government grant to support foster families (Namibia).

In order to qualify for a Foster Child Grant, children's care givers must be legally designated as foster parents by the court, and the child has to be found in need of care by the Children's Court. A Social Worker has to monitor and report to the Commissioner of Child Welfare on the behaviour, progress and welfare of the child as it is stated in Children's Act (Act No.33 of 1960)¹¹¹. Not only there is a shortage of Social Workers as well as the Magistrates in the country. But the process is lengthy, complex and extremely labour-intensive for Social Workers and Child Welfare Commissioners.

The following diagrams show the procedure of legal foster care placement of the children; child support and foster grant access by caregivers/foster parents and the ongoing monitoring of foster placements by Social Workers as it is required in Children's Act of 1960¹¹².

¹¹¹ Ibid (See Children's Act of 1960)

¹¹² Ibid (See Children's Act OF 1960)

Figure1: Foster Care Placement prior going to court (modified) Source: Children in need of care or in need of cash? (Meintjes, H. et al. 2003)

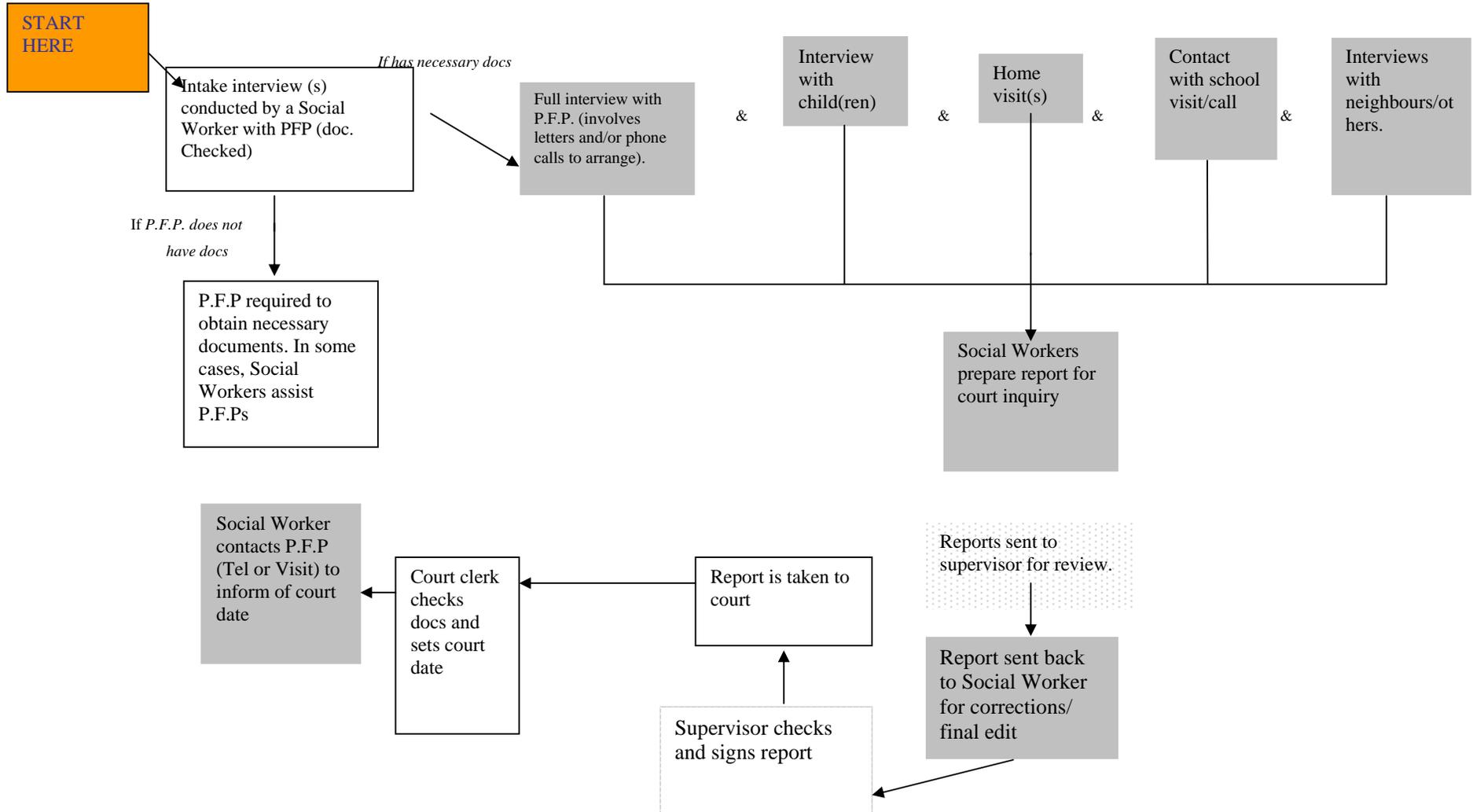


Figure 2: Foster care placement court and post-court processes (modified) Source: Children in need of care or in need of cash? (Meintjes, H et al.2003)

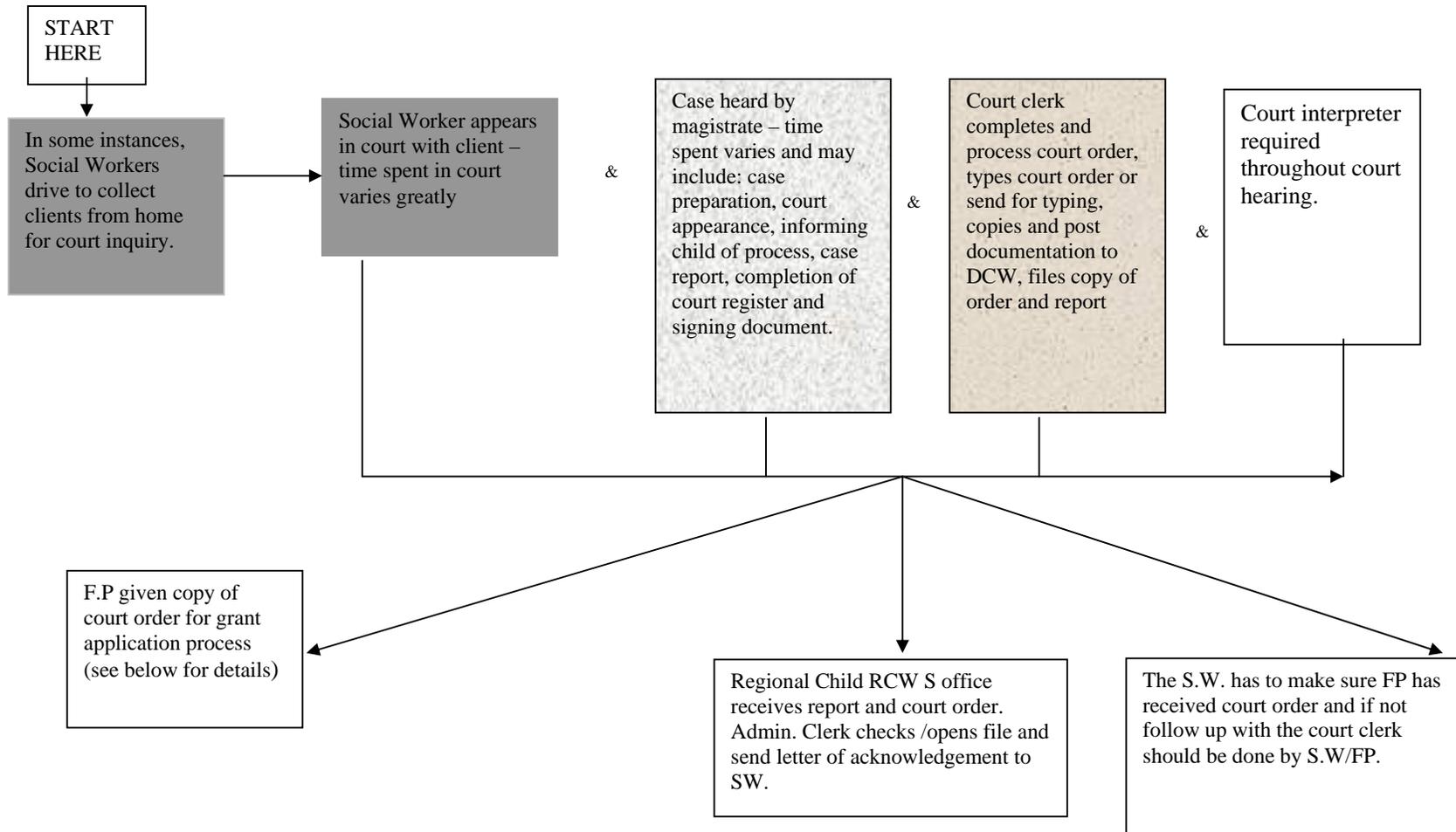
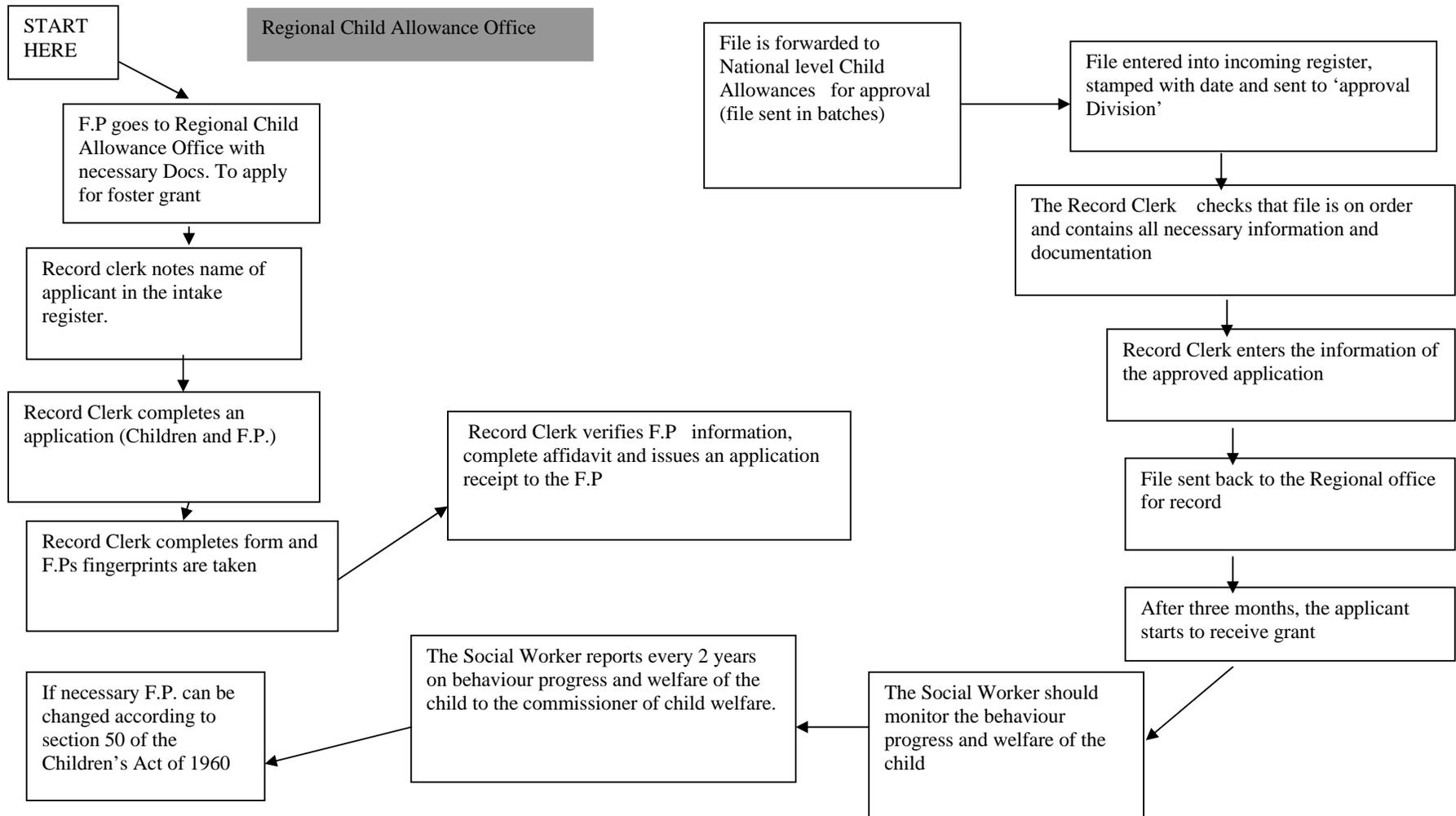


Figure 3: Foster grant application process and monitoring child placement (modified) (Source: Children in need of care or in need of cash?)



P.F.P: Prospective Foster Parent
F.P: Foster Parent
SW: Social Worker
DCWS : Directorate of Child Welfare Services
Docs. : Documents
RCWS: Regional Child Welfare Services

The diagrams represent a best-case scenario of the processes. It does not indicate the various ways in which this process can be disrupted including shortage of resources such as transport for investigations, computers for reports writing just to name a few.

The process differs to some extent between service providers. The required documents for the application should be available and completed. Before intake, social workers conduct initial interviews with applicants for foster care, and open files for the appropriate cases. The investigations have to be done by the social workers at schools, neighbours and the families concerned, and she/he must write the reports; that have to be verified by the supervisor of the social workers. After verifications, the same social worker has to make corrections for the reports to be submitted to court. The Social Workers are responsible for taking the applications to the court for the Children's Court Enquiries.

Briefly, the social workers are responsible for the intakes, intervention investigations and court processes, as well as monitoring foster placements.

One has to note that, the foster care placement process is not done overnight, the process might take a minimum of three months upward and it will depend on the case road and the availability of the Social Workers.

4.2 Foster care placement policy implications in Namibia

The large numbers of orphaned children present a tremendous challenge to governments, communities and families of heavily affected countries and to the agencies and organisations that assist in the matter related to orphans. (Hunter & Parry, 2001)¹¹³. Considering the number of OVC in Namibia, there is a need of joint effort and active involvement of all stakeholders in order to tackle OVC problem. Issues related to orphans and other vulnerable children are crosscutting and, in order to be successfully addressed, they require coordination and collaboration between all ministries, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, faith-based organisations and elements of the private sector involved in the national response to orphans and other vulnerable children (MWACW, 2004)¹¹⁴. Thus currently there are 139777 orphans in Namibia registered by the MGECW but only 47% of them are currently benefit from government grants (Isaacs, 2007)¹¹⁵. For more clarification,

¹¹³ Hunter, S. & Parry, S., 2001. HIV/AIDS prevention and care in source – constrained settings: A handbook for the design and management of programs: Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children: Approaches to Care and Protection Programs (Chapter 26). Washington: FIH.

¹¹⁴ Ibid (See MWACW, 2004. National Policy on OVC)

¹¹⁵ Isaacs, D. 2007. OVC aid not reaching all Vulnerable. The Namibian. April 30 2007. pp3.

the total number of children registered in foster care placement in Namibia is 11212 while the Khomas region, where Windhoek is located has the total number of children in foster care placement of 1312 (MGECW, 2007)¹¹⁶.

The National Policy for OVC is based on the existing national and international legal frameworks. It includes the Namibian Constitution, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, National Development Plan (NDP) and National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, National Plan of Action (NPA) for orphans and vulnerable children and Permanent Task Force on at national level and OVC Forums at regional and constituency levels. It also contains guiding principles like the best interest of the child, strong political leadership and commitment, multi-sectoral approach and partnerships, and the promotion and protection of human rights (MWACW, 2005)¹¹⁷.

The OVC policy guidelines and principles include the family setting as the most sustainable care provider for OVC and the support should be given to those families that are providing support to the OVC. The policy also puts emphasis on the communities and the foster families. Adoption is the second best to care for orphans. The institutional system to care for the children is not welcomed because “it dislocates children from their natural environments and sometimes can have a negative impact on the child” (MWACW, 2005: 3)¹¹⁸.

Namibia is very well known for its positive policy and legislation, whether in place or on its way, for OVC namely: Children’s Act (1960), OVC Policy (2004), a Policy for Educationally Marginalised Children (2002), a Child Care and Protection Action and Children’s Status Act. An HIV and AIDS Policy for the Education Sector (2003), HIV/AIDS Charter of Rights. However, legislation with regard to inheritance to protect the property rights of orphans is still needed. Although there is a foundation of policies and legislations, multiple barriers hinder the efficiency of service delivery on OVC.

Much has been achieved with regard to Orphans and Vulnerable Children. But, the truth is:

- How do all the stakeholders working in the field of Orphans and Vulnerable Children reach the child at household level?

¹¹⁶ Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. National Figures on Orphans and Vulnerable Children receiving Social grants 2003-2007. Windhoek: MGECW

¹¹⁷ Ibid (See, MWACW third OVC National Conference, 2005)

- How can we address the needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in a holistic manner to ensure access to basic services?
- The most challenge at community level and household level is poverty associated with HIV/AIDS pandemic. How this problem should be addressed?

The Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children's emphasis is on the family setting as the most sustainable care provider for OVC, and the support should be accorded to those families that are caring for and supporting the OVC such as foster family and adoption family. Is the system making it easier?

Chapter 5 - ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

The hypothesis of this study is that the absence of proper support to orphan children in foster care placement will have a negative impact on their care and support, education and protection. The different groups of orphan children I dealt with are not homogenous but share a lot in common. I will use their own expression to describe what they experience on a daily basis. I will therefore determine to which extend the government, the non-governmental organizations and foster parents support them.

Furthermore, I will turn to the group of adults comprising of foster parents and social workers. Their own words will be used to describe how they perceive the support given to orphan children by the government and NGOs and foster parents' themselves. Moreover, the adults will give their point of view with regard to the foster care placement process, and how the process should be improved for a better service delivery. The main issues emerging will be presented through extracts.

5.2 Background information of the respondents

From statistical data of this study, the majority of children in foster care placement are girls: seventy per cent (70%) compared to boys thirty per cent (30%).

Table 4: Living arrangements of foster children

PLACEMENT	n	%
With extended family:		
With grandparents	21	42
With aunties	15	30
With uncles	8	16
With siblings	2	5
Subtotal	46	93
With non relatives:	4	7
TOTAL	50	100

By far 93% of those in care placement are staying with their extended families while only seven percent (7%) are staying with non-relative foster parents. This phenomenon correlates with previous studies that stipulate that in Africa, the extended family (as it is

mainly in this case) and community play important roles in providing the basic care for the orphans (Siaens et al., 2005¹¹⁹; Ntozi et al., 1999¹²⁰; Adato et al., 2005¹²¹).

The foster parent respondents 67% are female and 33% are male.

Table 5: Marital status of foster parents

Status	n	%
Married	6	40
Single parent	6	40
Widows/ers	3	20
TOTAL	15	100

Table 6: Age category of foster parents and the number of children fostered

Age category	#. of foster parents	#. of children fostered
35 to 45	3	max 3
46 to 55	6	max 3
56 and above	6	<5
TOTAL	15	

While 40% of foster parents are married, the percentage of single foster parents is also 40% while the remaining 20% are widow (See table 2). Foster parents were divided into three categories: 35 to 45 years, 46 to 55 years, 56 years and above.

Table three gives the number of children fostered by three different age categories. The group aged between 56 years and above is the one fostering more children (at least five) while other younger age categories have a maximum of three children. This is in line with a study on Dimensions of the Emerging Orphan Crisis in sub-Saharan Africa conducted in

¹¹⁹ Siaens, C. et al., 2003. Are Orphans Especially Vulnerable? Evidence from Rwanda. Rwanda: World Bank.

¹²⁰ Ntonzi et al., 1999

¹²¹ Adato, M. et al., 2005. Children in the Shadow of Aids: Studies of Vulnerable Children and Orphans in Three Provinces in South Africa. Washington: International Food policy research.

early and late 1990 by Bicego et al. (2003)¹²², where it was found that orphans are much more likely than other children to be in the household headed by grandparents.

All social workers respondents (100%) are female and work in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. Their working experience ranges between one year and 4 years. Ninety percent 90% of them are dealing with Foster care placement cases on a daily basis while 10% deal with foster care placement cases on weekly basis.

5.3 How Orphan children in foster care placement experience their support

5.3.1 Care and support

Desired support

During the group discussion children indicated different types of support and needs that they feel are basic necessities. The children's expressions to their desired support can be taken as indicators that corresponded to what the children do not get easily in their foster families. They have different needs that they wish to get including material support, financial and emotional support. Issues such as school fees, school uniforms, food, and time to play and love weigh heavily on their minds:

“I would like to have uniform and school fees. Because if you do not have uniform other children tease you and the teachers always ask you when you are going to pay your school fees” (A girl from grade 9, 15 years).

“I would like to have enough food to eat, time to play and clothes” (A boy from grade 8, 13 years old).

I would like to be loved by my foster parents” (A girl from grade 11, 17 years old)

¹²² Bicego, G. et al., 2003. Dimensions of the emerging orphan crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. *Social Science & Medicine*. Vol. 56, pp 1234-1247

Support received

Asked to describe the support they are receiving, children gave various reports according to how they are treated by their foster parents. Issues like being abused verbally, being overworked and being reminded about their orphan hood status were raised:

“From my side, to stay with my foster parents is a nightmare. I am being abused verbally and I am given too much work to do at home compared to other children. I am like a slave. I am always being reminded that I am an orphan and all this whole issue makes me [to] feel that I am not loved or cared for by my foster family”. (A Girl, grade 9, 15 years old).

On the other hand, other children felt they were cared for, loved in such way that they did not see any difference between their biological parents and foster parents. The orphan children were completely integrated in their foster family:

“I am staying with my aunt and I am happy because she gives me love and she cares about me and she considers me as her own child and I also consider her as my mother”(A girl, grade 8, 14 years)

“I do not have problems with my foster parents, I am happy to have someone who is taking care of me” (A boy, grade 8, 13)

The degree of bonding with foster family can be also one of the reasons to feel at home, loved and cared for. This is about a sense of security and the expression of certainty about their situation.

Support systems and their efficiency

Besides foster care parents, other support systems are available in the City of Windhoek such as the Government, NGOs and other extended family members and the community.

Their responses pointed out the government for not supporting them in education related matters, as they have difficulties to further their studies. The government was voiced for not caring. The politicians were pointed out as not caring for orphan children:

“The government is not doing enough. We need facilities to further our Studies, because without education you are nothing in this country”. (A boy

from grade 12, 18 years old).

Another child concurred by voicing similar concerns:

“The government is not doing anything. Always politicians in their speeches say that we are the future of this country. But they are not doing anything to show that they care about us” (A Girl from grade 10, 17 years old).

However, the efficiency of the support varies from one child to another. Children expressed their mixed feeling of anger, disappointment towards the support provided to them by the government. Hence there is also an indication that the Government supports the Foster parents and the children are happy about the support provided to them. The support provided by NGO also was appreciated:

“Catholic AIDS action is helping me with school uniforms and to pay school fees and I appreciate the support they are offering to me, because my foster parents are unemployed and they can’t afford to provide everything I need.”(A boy, Grade 11, 18 years old).

“My grandmother is getting social grant from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for me and for my other two siblings and she uses the money to buy food for us and we are happy” (A boy, Grade 9, 15 years old)

The most popular support system to the children is obviously Government:

“The government is giving money but more children you have the lesser you get and even the amount given per child is not enough for that specific child.” (A girl from grade 10, 17 years old).

5.3.2 Education

More than half of the children of the sample in the focus discussion groups expressed that they are not getting necessary support for their education whether from the foster families or from the government. The government is blamed for not exempting examination fees to orphans, while their foster parents do not have sufficient means of support. The little they have is allocated to their biological children:

“Always the government is talking about free education to orphans and other vulnerable children, but the government does not support with the examination fees. Where does the Government think we can get money from since we are orphans and most of the time our foster parents have many other children including their own that they have to educate and feed”(A Girl from grade 10, 17 years old).

While the government is being blamed for not supporting orphans in matters related to financial assistance, foster parents are not either actively involved in their foster children education such as getting involved in all matters that are related to their education like helping them with homework and advise them. On the contrary, orphans are involved in house chore, which interfere with the time allocated to their homework. This greatly contributes to the low performance or dropout:

“If you have to do house chores while you were supposed to study, how would you perform in school? That’s why some kids end up repeating grades or dropping out school”

“I think we should not blame only the Government, our foster parents also somehow do not help out with school work, they give us too much work to do after school and we do not get time to study, or sometimes we miss classes because we have to help out at home and you end up dropping school and then we miss our bright future because without education there is no future”. (A boy from grade 11, 18 years old).

5.3.3 Protection

Children’s perception on their protection:

The child expressed unhappiness of the situation that he found himself in. For his protection, he does not see any substitution of his biological parents. The child is in a very traumatic, depressive with a certain degree of uncertainty, because he does not have any other choice:

“ There is no one who can protect me; I do not get protection from where ever. My only protectors were my parents and they are no longer in this world. My foster parents are just abusing me and I do not have anywhere else to go” (A boy, grade 11, 18 years).

The children interviewed were concerned about their protection in their foster homes, demonstrating emotions and expressions of fear and unspeakable experiences. The abuse is not taking place in a physical form, rather she is verbally and deeply emotionally abused to the extent that one of the girl got almost married but fortunately turned to social workers for a new shelter. Even children, who do not experience abuse, are aware of its existence.

“Even though your foster parents are not abusing you physically, you are being abused verbally or emotionally, you even become a slave of your foster family. They overwork you while their biological children are doing nothing” (A Girl in grade 8, 14 years old).

“ From my side I am not protected by my foster parents, because they wanted me to leave the school so that I can get married at my age (16 years) to someone I do not even know and when I refused I was chased away from my foster house and the Social Workers helped me to find a school and a shelter”. (A girl in grade 9, 16 years old).

Children painted a sad picture of very difficult circumstances they endure in their foster families and it causes them to feel that their existence is denied or ignored.

“Yes, most of the time the abuse is being experienced verbally or emotionally and when you are in the abusive situation that’s when you feel the sense of being an orphan and you feel like you are nothing in this world”(A Girl, from grade 9, 16 years old).

Children reported that their foster family does not protect them, rather are abused. Other children are happy where they are staying. This child does not have any problem and she is safe as she is staying with her grandparents:

“ From my side I feel safe because I am staying with my grandparents” (A girl, Grade 11, 17 years)

5. 4. Foster Parents perceptions support provided to orphan children in foster care placement and foster care placement process

Foster parents interviewed are in the database of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare and they are looking after the children legally and they are getting foster grants on monthly basis.

5.4.1 Care and Support

Foster parents interact with orphan children in foster care and have comprehensive understanding of their daily living circumstances. The foster parents sample was small, it makes it hard to generalise. However, information of great importance was collected.

Five out of 15 foster parents are convinced that orphan children under their care are in dire need of basic necessities such as food, school uniforms and school fees. For them material support means a lot, it is a problem since they cannot afford to satisfy them:

“The children need school uniforms and school fees” (A single female parent, 40 years old, 2 children in her care)

“The food is among other important support, because if they are hungry they will not be able to listen to the teachers and they might end up in the street looking for someone who can feed them” (A married male parent, 46 years old with 3 children in his care).

But love and support are important too, according to four parents:

“Orphan children in foster care placement need someone who can give them love, who can give them support because the death of their parents affects them”. (A single female parents, 34 years old with 2 children in her care).

The remaining six parents believe that they are too old, looking after orphan children weigh a lot on their shoulders.

Care and support systems and their efficiency:

Coping mechanisms

Foster parents are the primary agents in caring for their foster children, 10 parents consider it as a burden while two were more explicit and emphasized that it is not only a

burden but it is worsened by poverty and the increasing number of orphans in the extended families. Three confirmed to be coping very well with their foster children because they believe they are part of the family:

“It is a burden from my side to take care of these children, because I have my own children too. I am unemployed which means I cannot satisfy the needs of my own children. But these are my sister’s children and I have to take care of them, because other family members also are taking care of other orphans from our family. We have to share the responsibility.”(A married, male, Foster parent, taking care of 3 orphans).

“I can’t say that it is easy to take care of foster children, because those children are additional mouths that you have to feed; you have to love them, you have to provide all their basic needs. So it is not easy to cope especially when you have your own children that you have to provide for”. (A single, female foster parent, with 3 children in her care)

It is not a burden because the children are part of the family and we have to take care of our children (A married, male foster parent, with 2 children in his care).

5.4. 2 Education

Foster parent’s perception

The same as their foster children, 10 foster parents from our sample blamed the government for not helping them in matters related to education of their foster children, such as the payment of examination fees for grades 10 and 12. None of them get any help from any NGOs. Three parents get help from NGOs such Catholic AIDS Action and the Church Alliance for Orphans. Two parents did not want to mention anything:

“I do not get help from the government for the education of my foster children. Besides the school fees, it is a common practice for grade 10 and 12 learners have to pay examination fees in order to sit for examination. Where orphans or poor parents will get such amount of money ranging from N\$ 400.00 per child upward? What if you have more than one child who has to write exams?” (A Foster parents, married female with 3 foster children).

While three parents told the researcher that children under their care are not showing at school, eight parents said the children do not perform well because they do not attend school

on a daily basis due to lack of food, three believe that the low performance is due to the new school environment they have just joined but remain optimistic that the situation will change for the better as time goes on. One Foster Parents blames the lack of transport as the main reason of not performing well:

“ My foster children are not performing well because they don’t have enough food to eat and sometimes they do not go to school because they are hungry” (A Foster parent, Widower with foster children, 59 years old).

“They are not performing well because they are new at school and they have to adapt the new environment. They have to get used to the Teachers and their fellow learners. I am hoping for them to work better next term”(A foster parent, Male with 2 foster children in his care).

5. 4. 3 Protection

Foster parent’s expression on protection of their foster children

In our study, when queried about protection of children under their care, 10 parents told us that they are not able to protect them because of several reasons such as bad behaviour, not trusting foster parents, not having time for the foster children because of other commitments. Only five parents reported that they protect children under their care:

“This child that I am looking after does not listen to me. He does what ever he wants to do. If you talk to him nicely he will tell you that you are not his mother. He goes on the street whenever he wants and you would not know what could happen to him. So it is very difficult to protect him from my point of view” (A Foster parent, single mother with 1 foster child).

With the concern that not all Foster Parents protect their foster children under their care, it was acknowledged that some of them, not only are not capable of protecting their Foster Children but abuse them. It was pointed out that they are not the right people to protect children already affected by the death of their biological parents associated with the separation of their siblings. Not all foster children are not protected accordingly said one parent during our interview:

“I think my children that I have are being protected by myself. But there are so many children around in this area who are being abused by their caregivers. They do not give them enough food; they are the ones who have to do all work at home. There are many people here who are caring for orphans but I do not think they should be the right people who should take care of those children who are already affected by the death of their parents and some times

all siblings do not stay in the same house as they have to be divided among family members” (A Foster parents, Married, looking after 7 foster children and feeding others who are staying in the same area).

5. 4. 4 Foster care placement and policy implication

All foster parents we spoke with stressed that the foster care placement is a lengthy and a complex process while it was supposed to come to the rescue of needy families that are willing to take care of orphans. This process can easily take at least two years:

“ I was about to give up, because it took almost two years for my case to be finalised and it was very difficult for us to cope with their school fees, books and their uniform”(A foster parent, Married with 2 children in her care).

“Foster care placement is a long story. I have applied in 2004 and my foster children started to get money in March 2006. I took me almost two years” (A foster parent, male and married with two children in his care).

They continued saying that all these delays are mainly due to the administrative procedures that foster parents only come to know during the application process such as documents to be provided. The government is blamed for not giving preference to senior citizens who do not have other sources of income:

“This process requires many documents that you have to produce in order to start it. Sometimes they ask documents that you do not have. The other thing I have seen you have to wait for years and years to have and myself I am old and unemployed. What does government think, if they see an old meme[mother] like me with five children and always you are told to wait until you are called to attend the court proceedings? (A foster parent, [a grandmother] widower with 5 children in her care).

5. 4. 5 Proposed ways to simplify the process

Foster care placement is a process that involves different legal and administrative steps confirmed all parents during our study. In their response 4 out of 15 suggested that social workers should be given the authority to finalise the process and register the child for foster grant rather than going through all these lengthy and complicated processes and 2 out of 15 requested that a social worker and a prominent member in the community should testify on behalf of the foster parents when the application is being done:

“I am not sure what I should say. But I think the social workers and a prominent member in the community should testify on behalf of foster parents without taking the report to the court. Because you have to wait for a long time for the Social Worker to finalise the report and again the Social Worker has to wait for a long time to be given the date to present the report to the court” (A foster parent, female and single with one foster child in her care).

Nine out of 15 parents expressed that there is a tendency to view foster care placement as a problem that hampers the necessary support to children in foster care placement. It was suggested that more professionals dealing with foster care placements such as social workers and magistrates should be employed taking into consideration the increasing number of orphans:

“More social workers and magistrate should be employed in order to finalise the cases of foster care. Otherwise there is an increasing number of orphans every day and the professionals to attend to them are very few” (A foster parent, female and single with one foster child in her care).

5. 5 Social workers perceptions on support provided to children in foster care placement and foster care placement process

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare employed all social workers interviewed. The ministry is responsible for the well being of all children in Namibia. They are dealing with foster care placement cases among others on a daily basis. The social workers are considered to be knowledgeable about children placed in foster care. However the follow up procedures after the placement of the child is almost inexistent because of shortage of manpower in the country.

5.5.1 Care and Support

Social workers shared the same perceptions as children concerning their needs. For 3/5 of the sample, children in foster care placement need different kind of support, ranging from materials support such as school uniform, school fees and love. The remaining social workers mentioned that taking into account the child’s situation, psychological support is very important:

“A child does not need only food or clothes. A child needs love protection support and so on.... A child needs to be cared for from different angles” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 3years of experience).

“Psychosocial support is very important because those children they have lost their parents. They wish to have their parents back but it is impossible” (A Social Worker, MGECW with one and a half of experience).

The support system and its efficiency:

The social workers are highly involved in foster care placement process; they have noticed that the grand parents constitute the majority of foster parents while surviving on their old age pension to which the government adds a foster grant. In some case NGOs contribute with material, financial as well as psychological support:

“ Most of orphan children are staying with their grand parents, and most of the time the said care givers are surviving on their monthly pension and that might be the only income in a particular household” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2years of experience).

“It is true that most foster parents are grandparents but government and NGOs are trying to help out where they can. For instance the government is giving foster grants to foster parents and NGOs are also providing material support, financial and psychosocial support” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 4 years of experience).

Half of the social workers underlined that due to lack of any other source income in the household, foster grants are not enough to cater for the basic needs of the children. Unemployment coupled with meagre income is the main problem among foster parents. These factors constitute the stumbling blocks with regard to the efficiency of the foster parents:

“Foster parents are willing to take care of orphan because they are in need of care and support and it is difficult for those foster parents to cope with the responsibility

as most of them are unemployed without any other reliable source of income”(A Social Worker, MGECW with 1 ½ experience).

“I would rate foster grant as satisfactory, although it is not enough to cater all the basic needs of the child, but is better than nothing as most of foster parents are unemployed or they are getting meagre income to survive on. So this make the foster grant provided by the government to become insignificant because all people in the household has to count on the same foster grant that meant to help foster parent in addition of what he/she is providing to the foster child ” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 3 years of experience).

The support system around OVC exists, according to 2 social workers amongst 10. The communities are being empowered to become self sufficient:

“The support system around OVC is there, namely extended family it self, Government, NGOs but there is a big number of OVC and the support has to be divided among them, that’s why the community capacity building is on the agenda, so that the communities can sustain themselves” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 4 years of experience).

5.5.2 Education

Perception on support provided to children in foster care placement:

Concerning education, social workers’ views on the support provided to children in foster care placement diverge.

Children in foster care placement are unable to perform well at school because they are staying with their grandparents who are illiterate therefore incapable of helping them with schoolwork, said two social workers. Some foster parents can help. Only one social work from my sample reported that some foster parents do not pay much attention to the children’s academic activities, as they would do for their biological children, as long as children are attending school. According to two social workers some parents are more concerned about the grant than the school performance. The standard of school attended by orphans has been mentioned as one of the reasons of their poor performance mentioned one social worker. Lastly four social workers from my sample believe that orphans get the necessary support:

“Most of the school reports of children in foster care placement indicate that the children are not performing well. This is could be the fact that the majority of the children are staying with their grandparents who are illiterate and can not assist them in their school work” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2 years of experience).

“Though some caregivers receive grants on a monthly basis for their foster children, they are not much concerned with their performance, as long as they are in school, so that they can be able to get the grants” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 4 years of experience).

“Orphan children do not get good schools because their foster parents do not have money to pay or because they do not see as a necessity to spend more money on the children who are not their own.” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2 years of experience).

“Orphan children in foster care placements are receiving basic and necessary education as other children and a lot has been done, for instance exemption of school fees policy by the government in order to make sure that all orphans children get free education and foster parents are taking responsibility to enrol them” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 3 years of experience).

5.5. 3 Protection

Only two social workers told us that since the children are staying with their extended family members who are viewed as a safety net, orphan children should be protected:

“Normally a child is in a close net extended family set up and is being protected” (A Social Worker, MGECW with one year experience).

The social workers, teachers and NGOs understand the meaning of child protection but four social workers are convinced that foster families abuse orphan children under their care:

“Children in foster care placement are protected by social workers, some NGOs and their teachers. But not so much by their families, because they are being exploited by their foster parents. They have to do all house chores at home otherwise they will be considered as children with bad manners and without respect” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 3 years of experience).

In addition, social grant is seen as a source of income by some unscrupulous foster parents, said two social workers, who take children in their families without an intention of protection and care, the same number told us that orphan in foster care are not protected at all:

“I am shocked when I see foster parents coming to apply for grants before the burial of the deceased parent. Does this foster parent care about the child or about the money? [Sic] (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2 years of experience).

5.5. 4 Foster care placement process and policy implication

On this issue, all social workers share the same view as other respondents. The process is time consuming and complicated while it was meant to rescue those in dare need.

“The policies around foster care placements are complex. Foster care placement is very long and complicated due to the time taken to send and receive reports for verification and setting of court dates” (A Social Worker, NGE CW with 3 years of experiences).

“It is very long and costly process to qualify as a legal foster parent. This process is victimizing orphan children who are left behind with their deceased parents without any visible means of support” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2 years of experience).

A reference was made to other services that are rendered to OVC, such as the maintenance grant. When a child loses one of the parents, the surviving one gets a grant without a long and complex process. All social workers suggested that the same should be applicable to foster care children:

“The process is definitely lengthy, people have to wait long [Months and years] to acquire the grant due to the lack of man power. The worse parties that the children who need to be placed in foster care are the most vulnerable because of they left without any surviving or visible parent while maintenance process is very simple and one of the parents is still alive.” (Social Worker, MGECW with 1year of experience).

5.5.5 Proposed ways to simplify the process

All social workers interviewed agreed that the process of foster care placement is long and complex. Possible ways to simplify foster care placement process were proposed: Two social workers proposed the appointment of more social workers and magistrates only dealing with foster care placements:

“The possible solution is to have enough Social Workers. The Magistrates attending only foster care placement should be appointed and should attend to the cases on a daily basis” (A Social Worker, MGECW with 2 years of experience).

Two social workers from our sample believe that the amendment of the Children Act of 1960 is long overdue:

The children’s Act of 1960 that make provisions on foster care placement should be amended taking into consideration the lack of professionals [Social Workers and Magistrates] as well as the increasing number of orphans. on a daily basis associated with poverty (A Social Worker, MGECW with 4 years of experience)

Three out of 10 suggested that a Social Worker should issue certificates in order for the foster parents to apply for the orphan grant while following procedures of foster care placement process:

“I propose that the same procedures that followed with maintenance grants should be applicable to foster grants while the process of proceedings in children’s court is underway, because most of foster parents face financial constraints associated with additional number of children in their care”. (Social Worker, MGECWwith3 years of experience)

Chapter 6: DISCUSSIONS

6.1 Introduction

Foster children, foster parents and social workers provided the researcher with the way they regard, understand the support provided to children in foster care placement in terms of care and support, education and protection in an urban setting: Windhoek. They gave their perception concerning the support that the Government, Non-Governmental Organisations, Foster parents offer to orphan children in foster care placement. The views on foster care placement process and possible ways to improve it were suggested. During the discussion groups and interviews, interviewees did not necessarily have the same views.

6.2 Children's perspectives

6.2 .1 Care and support

The researcher came to the conclusion that the orphan children in foster care placement have problems related to their support provided by the foster parents, government and NGOs.

The most needed supports are material, financial such as schools uniforms, food, school fees, as well as the time to play and emotional and love supports. Although the above mentioned variables were identified as part of their care and support. During our group discussion other problems arose, these orphans are verbally abused, overworked compared to the biological children and reminded of their orphan hood. According to their views, emotional support is missing more than any other supports that they have described. One of the children described his living in his foster family as a nightmare. This in line with Stein (2003)¹²³, they are expected to work harder, and tend to have less access to food, school fees and emotional support. Furthermore, other studies have revealed that sometimes children in foster care placement are less well fed and work more than the biological children in the family, under the pretext of giving them a good upbringing and domestic tasks are considered as kind of payment for services rendered by the foster family (Pilon, 2003)¹²⁴. In addition "since parents are more closely related to their natural children than to their foster children, conflicts may arise over the treatment

¹²³ Stein, J., 2003. Sorrow Makes Children of us All: A literature Review on the Psycho-Social Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children. CSSR Working Paper No. 47, pp 1-32.

¹²⁴ Pilon, M.2003. Foster care and schooling in West Africa: The state of knowledge. France: IRD

of foster and natural children”(Silk, 1987: 42)¹²⁵. However few children from the sample were happy with the support provided to them by their foster parents, especially their grandparents.

Concerning the efficiency of support systems, children’s views differ. They seem not to have a common understanding of the support system. Some think, the support should only be the responsibility of parents and the government while others are aware of some other sources of support such as NGOs (CAA). Surprisingly, some children know that the more orphan children you take care of, the less money you get from the Government. According to the United Nations Namibia Common Country Assessment 2004¹²⁶, MWACW [currently MGECW] does not have enough money to provide all needy orphans with grants, nevertheless Namibia is one of the few countries in Africa that maintain social safety nets for vulnerable groups such as senior citizens, orphans, people living with disabilities and war veterans. According to United Nations Namibia Common Assessment, (2004: 12)¹²⁷ “Cabinet approved the creation of an Orphan Fund with an initial injection of N\$10 million. However, the fund remains low compared to the needs and received no allocation for 2004/05. It is estimated that N\$34 million would be needed annually to assist the 14,150 registered” but according to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (2007)¹²⁸, the number of OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children) receiving a Social Grant in November 2007 was 80891. The total number of OVC is unknown; therefore many of those eligible do not receive their entitlements due to a number of reasons including lack of awareness, geographical and social exclusion and limited capacity of the delivery system (United Nations Namibia Common Country Assessment, 2004)¹²⁹

6.2. 2 Education

According to the majority of the children, they do not get enough support for their education from their foster parents and the government. As a result, they perform poorly and sometimes they end up dropping out. Orphan children ascribe their low performance to the house chore they have to do after school and the little time allocated to their schoolwork. This is in line with Ilahi (2001)¹³⁰ and Pilon (2003)¹³¹ where they stipulate that in developing

¹²⁵ Ibid (See Silk, 1987. Adoption and Fosterage in Human Societies: Adaptations or Enigmas?)

¹²⁶ Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2004. United Nations Namibia Common Country Assessment.

Windhoek: NPC

¹²⁷ Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. 2004. UN Common Country Assessment)

¹²⁸ Ibid (See MGECW. 2007. National Figures on OVC receiving social grants)

¹²⁹ Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. 2004. UN Common Country Assessment)

¹³⁰ Ilahi, N. 2001. “Children’s Work and Schooling: Does Gender Matter? Evidence from the Peru LSMS Panel Data.” Policy Research Working Paper 2745. World Bank, Washington, D.C.

countries children allocate their time to three broad activities, which are schooling, labour and work at home. In this case housework is not considered as child labour activities. It is considered that work and school are part of and parcel of the child's upbringing in any given human society mostly in rural areas.

Furthermore, children in foster care are practically thought as domestic servants in their foster families, and this can only have a negative impact on their school performance (Vandermeersch, 2000 in Pilon, 2003)¹³². In addition, it was found that in many households, orphans cannot cover school fees and uniforms. Consequently, they drop out in order to reduce family expenses and assist with house chores, caring younger siblings or work that can bring additional income in the household (Makane et al., 2002¹³³; Guarcello et al., 2004¹³⁴).

Concerning the school fees and the fact that Government does not exempt examination fees for grade 10 and 12 learners. This is contrary to The Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (2006)¹³⁵, which states that no full time learner under the age of 18 in a public school shall be excluded from examinations on account of inability to pay examination fees. Both the Government and Foster parents are blamed for not supporting orphan children in education related matters.

6.2.3 Protection

Sixty percent of children believe they are not enjoying the right to protection from their foster families. It is important to mention that no cases of physical abuse have been reported. Stein (2003)¹³⁶ explained, "a child sense of security is deeply undermined by the loss or imminent loss of a caregiver. This is augmented by the failure of those around to explain the situation, leaving a child to reach his own conclusion about what happening". However, The UN CRC, 1989¹³⁷ states that the family has the responsibility to protect and care for the child, and the government has an important role to play in terms of protection, preservation and support relationship between the child and family. In addition, the state has

¹³¹ Ibid (See Pilon, M.2003. Foster care and schooling in West Africa: The state of knowledge)

¹³² Ibid (See Pilon, M. 2003)

¹³³ Ibid (See Makane et al., 2002 Psychological well being of orphans in Dar El Salaam, Tanzania)

¹³⁴ Ibid (See Guarcello, et al., 2004. The influence of Orphan hood on Children's Schooling and Labour: Evidence from Sub Saharan Africa)

¹³⁵ Ministry of Education, 2006. Education Sector Policy For Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children. Windhoek: MOE. This Policy is not yet officially launched but is being considered as an official document for the MOE)

¹³⁶ Ibid (See Stein, J., 2003. Sorrow Makes Children of us All: A literature Review on the Psycho-Social Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children)

¹³⁷ Ibid (See, UN CRC, 1989)

responsibility to provide special protection for a child who has been found to be in need of care (UNAIDS & UNICEF, 2004)¹³⁸.

According to the foster children the abuse that mostly takes place in their lives are identified as verbal, deeply emotional. Foster & Mafuta (1997)¹³⁹ and the International Social Services & UNICEF, 2004)¹⁴⁰ confirmed that though extended family networks are the primary resource for orphans, some relatives' exploit, abuse and neglect orphans or fail to fulfil their responsibilities.

Through their expression they demonstrated how they are living in very difficult circumstances that cause them to feel that their existence is ignored, or denied.

Children never mentioned the government or any NGOs for their protection, at which the exception of one who sought help from a social worker when she was on the brink of forcibly getting married.

6.3. Foster parents perceptions

6.3.1 Care and support

The majority of foster parents find it hard to take care of orphan children. These in the line with (Kinghorn, et al. 2001)¹⁴¹ where he said that some extended families see orphans as a burden and they are treated as such. All the more, most of our interviewees (9 out of 15) are either single parents or widow (er) (Table 5) and 12 out of 15 are aged between 46 years old and above (Table 6). Furthermore the group aged 56 and above is catering at least for 5 orphan children while the retirement age in Namibia is 55 years.

Foster parents identified the needs of their foster children as more on material support such as food, school uniforms and school fees; love was also identified as one of the needs for the foster children. It is important to note that taking care of a child has common features like affection, comfort, physical, assistance, shared solving problems, provision of food and other resources, moral... (Christiansen¹⁴², 2003; Weisner, 1997 in <http://w.w.w.codesria.org>)¹⁴³.

¹³⁸ UNAIDS & UNICEF, 2004. A Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS. Geneva: UNICEF & UNAIDS.

¹³⁹ Ibid (See, Foster, G. & Makufa, C. 1997. Perceptions of children and community members concerning the Circumstances of orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *AIDS Care*, Vol. 9, issue 4, pp 391-405.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid (See International Social Service & UNICEF. 2004. Improving Protection for Children without Parental Care: care for children Affected by HIV/AIDS: The urgent Need for International Standard)

¹⁴¹ Kinghorn, A. et al, 2002. The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Education in Namibia. Windhoek: MBESC & MHETEC

¹⁴² Christiansen, C. 2003. Reflections on the Changing Patterns of Care for Orphans. Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute.

¹⁴³ Ibid (See <http://w.w.w.codesria.org>)

All these depend on the emotional relationship with the host family, and the personality of each person in the family (Pilon, 2003)¹⁴⁴.

In describing their coping mechanisms towards their foster children, the majority of Foster parents find difficult. They said that it is a burden and they are struggling to care for them properly due to poverty, unemployment, and meagre income; the provision of their basic needs as well the increasing number of orphans in the extended families. This is emphasized by Ntonzi & Gapere, 1995¹⁴⁵; Kinghorn, et al., (2002)¹⁴⁶ ideas where they argue that the dramatic increase number of orphans due to AIDS is threatening to break the function of this safety net of the extended family. This burden of care and support is falling on the very young, very old relatives and other family members impoverished after expenses occurred during the long sickness of the AIDS patient.

Since the extended families cannot care for their orphans, would the kinship prevail, jeopardizing the future of the child? What makes a person a relative? “Is the meaning of being related? Kinship is one among several ways of being related to other people in that form of fundamental social relationship” (Carsten, 2000 & Schweitzer, 2000 in Christiansen (2003: 3)¹⁴⁷.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare through Social Workers with the help of Community leaders should make all endeavours to support OVC.

6.3 .2 Education

Foster parents do not get support from the Government for their children in the matters related to education. The crucial issue is the examination fees for grade 10 and 12. With the exception of three foster parents, 10 foster parents out of 15 said that they do not get support either from government or NGOs.

It was found that foster children are not performing well due to lack of food, transport money, difficulties to adapt new school environment and lack of interests in school. The orphans’ poor performance in school can be associated with economic stresses on the households, psychological impacts that result in change of the family structure and the new responsibility to care for the sick, the elderly or siblings, as well as the loss of parental

¹⁴⁴ Ibid (See Pilon, M.2003. Foster care and schooling in West Africa: The state of knowledge)

¹⁴⁵ Ibid (See Ntonzi P.M.J. 1999. Orphan care: the role of the extended family in northern.....)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid (See Kinghorn, A. et al, 2002. The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Education in Namibia)

¹⁴⁷ Ibid (See Christiansen, C. 2003. Reflections on the Changing Patterns of Care for Orphans)

guidance (Kinghorn, et al. 2002)¹⁴⁸. Wolain, (2005)¹⁴⁹ continues saying that changing schools is particularly disruptive to the education of foster children as it reinforces a cycle of emotional trauma of abandonment and repeated separations from adults and friends. According to the United Nations Namibia Common Country Assessment (2004)¹⁵⁰ there is ineffective implementation of policy provisions that cater for educationally marginalized children and for OVC in general.

6.3.3 Protection

Five parents out of 15 admitted that they are able to protect their foster children. The majority find it difficult to offer protection to those children due bad behaviour of the foster children, lack of trust from the foster child to foster parents and not having time because of other commitments.

6.3.4 Foster care placement process

All foster parents agreed that foster care placement process is complex and lengthy because of the administrative procedures and lack of professionals to deal with it. The process can easily take up to two years. This could be associated with the large numbers of orphaned children and constitute a tremendous challenge to governments, communities and families of heavily affected countries and to the agencies and organisations that assist in the matter related to orphans (Hunter & Parry, 2001)¹⁵¹. In this specific case the UN Namibia common country assessment (2004: 12)¹⁵² abound in the same way saying “many of those eligible do not receive their entitlements due to a number of reasons including lack of awareness, geographical and social exclusion and limited capacity of the delivery system”.

6.3.5 Possible ways to simplify foster care placement process

All foster parents suggested that the process should be simplified and shortened in the following ways: Social workers should issue the certificate for the foster parents’ application without passing through the court; a social worker together with a prominent member in the community should testify on behalf of the foster parents when the application is made; more social workers and magistrates are needed.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid (See Kinghorn, A. et al, 2002. The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Education in Namibia)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid (See Wolain, T.R. 2005. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers)

¹⁵⁰ Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. United Nations Country Common Assessment)

¹⁵¹ Ibid (See Hunter, S. & Parry, S., 2001. HIV/AIDS prevention and care in source – constrained settings: A handbook for the design and management of programs: Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children: Approaches to Care and Protection Programs (Chapter 26))

¹⁵² Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. United Nations Country Common Assessment)

6. 4 Social Workers perceptions

6. 4. 1 Care and support

Social workers have identified the needs of foster children for their care as food, school uniforms, school fees as well as love, protection and support. Normally “the family is the most important source of love, attention, emotion support, material sustenance, and moral guidance in a child’s life” (Olson, et al, 2005:4)¹⁵³.

It was found that the grandparents constitute the majority of foster parents; they are surviving on their old age pension and the foster grants. It was said that in some instances NGOs contribute with material, financial as well as psychological support.

The government provides financial support to foster families but due to lack of any other source of income in the foster families, the grants are insufficient. This view correlated with ideas of (Olson, 2005¹⁵⁴; UNICEF, 1996¹⁵⁵) where they state that those who provide the safety net for the orphan children already are impoverished and are the grandparents who might have been depending financially and physically on the support of the very son or daughter who has died. Social workers suggested that due to poverty coupled with the increasing number of OVC, income-generating projects in the community could be a solution to a better efficient support system. However, there is a lack of the transportation and staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to implement, monitor and evaluate community-support programmes (UN Common Country Assessment, 2004)¹⁵⁶.

6. 4. 2 Education

Regarding the support provided to foster children in terms of education, social workers’ views differ: the low performance in school is due to lack of assistance, the illiteracy of the grandparents and the low standard of the schools attended by children in foster care. It can be argued that parental care, according to Ntonzi (1999,1997) in Christiansen (2003: 3)¹⁵⁷, “is about discipline and developing child’s skills”. Here a new trend is being developed because it is known that “ the relationship between caregiver (s) and care

¹⁵³ Ibid (See Olson, K. et al. 2005. From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Resource for Faith –Based Groups and Donors Seeking to Help Families Affected by HIV/AIDS)

¹⁵⁴ Ibid (See Olson, K. et al. 2005)

¹⁵⁵ UNICEF. 1999. Children orphaned by AIDS: front-line responses from Eastern and Southern Africa.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. United Nations Country Common Assessment)

¹⁵⁷ Ibid (See Christiansen, C. 2003. Reflections on the Changing Patterns of Care for Orphans)

recipients (s) is important in respect to the actual care provided as well as its long term endurance and implications on the lives of children, such as their competence and sociability” (Christiansen, 2003)¹⁵⁸. Grandparents’ care for their children’s is about care, mutual help, enjoyable company and emotional commitment (Whyte and Whyte, 2002 in Christiansen, 2003)¹⁵⁹. There are missing pieces in the puzzles: discipline and skills development. As a matter of fact, this can affect the schooling outcome of the child. This is in consistence with Bicego et al. (2003) findings where they emphasize that orphans have lower educational attainment than do children whose parents are both living. As a result, they cannot further their secondary and tertiary education and foster youth do less well in school generally than their peers and therefore have lower rates of high school graduation (Wolanin, 2005)¹⁶⁰.

6. 4. 3 Protection

Although the sample is too small to come up with a conclusion, the majority of social workers (8 out of 10) are convinced that their foster parents do not protect the children under their care. The little protection they get is from NGOs and social workers. Namibia was the first country in Africa to ratify the Convention on Children’s Rights. The Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990)¹⁶¹, in its Article 15, states the importance of legislation enacted to protect the best interest of children. It emphasizes the protection of children from economic exploitation or any form of labor that is likely to be harmful to their health, physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. Hence, the Article 25 of the Convention on the Right of the Child (1989)¹⁶² states that: “States Parties recognize the right of a child who has been placed by the competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection or treatment of his or her physical or mental health, to a periodic review of the treatment provided to the child and all other circumstances relevant to his or her placement”. Furthermore, Section 52, in the Child Care Protection Bill draft,¹⁶³ there is a provision for a periodical review for a child placed outside his parental home. The children’s court should review the condition of the child within three months after the first placement. The second review should take place at least within three months, then after every two years. The purpose of the review is to evaluate whether the placement is in the best interests of the child. The court may request that the child attend the review enquiry and be given an opportunity to speak. Despite this positive legal framework and foundation, numerous social and economic

¹⁵⁸ Ibid (See Christiansen, C. 2003)

¹⁵⁹ Ibid (See Christiansen, C. 2003)

¹⁶⁰ Ibid (See Wolain, T.R. 2005. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers)

¹⁶¹ Ibid (See the Constitution of the Republic of Namibia (1990))

¹⁶² Ibid (See CRC, 1989)

¹⁶³ Republic of Namibia. 2006 Child Care Protection Bill. Windhoek: MoJ

factors hamper the effectiveness of these policies and the implementation of the programme of action for OVC (UN Namibia Common Country Assessment)¹⁶⁴.

6. 4. 4 Foster care placement process

All social workers shared the same view that the process is time consuming and complicated, all this at the advantage of the orphan children. This process can be made easy and simple. The reference was made to other social grants such as the Maintenance Grant that is offered to the surviving parent as long as she/he is employed or earning less than N\$ 1000.

6. 4. 5 Proposed ways to simplify the process

To make the process easy it was suggested that: the appointment of social workers and Magistrates to deal with foster care placement cases only; the amendments of the long overdue Children's Act (1960), the issuing of certificates while the procedures of foster care placement are in process.

7. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate whether children in foster care placement in Windhoek, are getting necessary support in terms of their care and support, education and protection. The assumption being that the absence of proper support to them will lead to low outcomes in education, care and support and protection.

The findings indicate that orphan children in foster care placement believe that they face problems related to their care and support (material or psychological). Compared to biological children, orphan children needs' are not met, they are overworked, verbally abused but no case of physical abuse has been reported. For orphan children, the most popular support system is the Government and the foster parents. A small group of orphans is satisfied with the support they are receiving while the majority remain convinced that they are not getting any support either from the Government or their foster parents.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid (See GRN of Namibia. United Nations Country Common Assessment)

Foster parents cannot afford to meet the orphan children's basic needs due to financial constraints and the increasing number of orphans in the extended safety net family. It is clear from this study that the older the foster parent, the more children he/she cares for and the lesser money he/she gets from the government foster grants. Most of foster parents are willing to cater for orphan children but they are failing because of lack of means. No NGOs were mentioned in this specific case of care and support. Social workers share the same views as foster parents concerning care and support of children in foster care placement.

Orphan children in foster care perform poorly in school because of lack of adequate support. The discussion with orphan children has revealed that they blame their poor performance on foster parents and the government. Parents ascribe this failure not only to poverty but also to the new school environment and the ill will of orphans to attend school. Social workers acknowledge the poor performance of orphan children but diverge on the roots of the problem.

Although protection toward orphan children is not parents' privilege only, children do not know that it is as well the Government and NGOs' duty to protect them. Concerning their protection, they only focus on their foster parents they blame for not protecting them. Concerning the protection of orphan in foster care placement, social workers are rather divided and evasive on the protection issue. They believe the government and NGOs are better than foster parents.

In brief, the majority of orphan children in foster care placement are not getting necessary support with regard to their care and support, education and protection. The government, NGOs and Foster parents are stepping in but their support is insignificant compared to the increasing number of orphans. The foster care placement process is also making the matter worse because of its complexity.

With regard foster care process, it was found to be lengthy and complex due to complicated administrative procedures, the lack of manpower and the obsolete Children Act of 1960.

In conclusion, the support provided to children in foster care placement requires a broader view for community capacity development involving all stakeholders than the current

welfare grant approach. For my future consideration it would be worth of it to investigate the situation of orphan children in foster care placement and challenges they are facing in their foster families and possible solutions for their wellbeing.

Bibliography

1. Adato, M. et al., 2005. Children in the Shadow of Aids: Studies of Vulnerable Children and Orphans in Three Provinces in South Africa. Washington: International Food policy research.
2. Barbell. K. & Freundlich, M., 2001. Foster Care Today. Washington: Casey Family Programs. Bulletin News, Vol.8, No. 1, pp 1-20.
3. Bicego , G. et al., 2003. Dimensions of the emerging orphan crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Social Science & Medicine. Vol. 56 , pp 1234-1247
4. Cantwell, N. 1998. Inter country Adoption. Innocent digest, issue No.4, pp 1-24.
5. Case, A. et al, 2004. Orphans in Africa: Parental Death. Poverty, and Shool Enrolment. Demography, Vol. 41, No.3, PP 483-508.
6. Christian, S. 2007. Educating Children in Foster Care. Washington: National Conference of State Legislatures.
7. Christiansen, C. 2003. Reflections on the Changing Patterns of Care for Orphans. Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute.
8. Chirwa, W. Chijere. 2002. Social exclusion: challenges to orphan care in Malawi. Nordic Journal of African studies, Vol. 11, N0. 1, PP 93-113.
9. De Vos et al. 2004. Research at grass roots: For the Social Sciences and human services professions (second edition). Pretoria: Van Sckaik Publishers.
10. Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2005. Conference on Orphans and Vulnerable Children: “*Are we meeting the needs of OVC?*”. MGECSW: Windhoek.
11. Feldman, C., 1997. Staying with Grandmother: The old custom of caring for relatives’ kids poses new challenges in the ’90. July-August 1997 Children’s Advocate newsmagazine.
12. Flanklin, B., 2001. Children’s rights and Media wrongs: Changing representations of children and the developing rights agenda. London: Routledge.
13. Finkelstein, et al. 2002. What keeps children in foster care from succeeding in school? Views of Early Adolescents and Adults in their lives. New York: Vera Institute of Justice.
14. Foster, G. & Makufa, C. 1997. Perceptions of children and community members concerning the circumstances of orphans in rural Zimbabwe. *AIDS Care*, Vol. 9, issue 4, pp 391-405.
15. Government of the Republic of Namibia. 2004. United Nations Namibia Common Country Assessment. Windhoek: NPC

16. Guarcello, et al., 2004. The influence of Orphan hood on Children's Schooling and Labour: Evidence from Sub Saharan Africa. ILO, UNICEF & W.B.G.
17. Grover, S. 2004. Why won't they listen to us? On giving power and voice to children in social research. London: SAGE Publications.
18. Hepburn, A.E. 2001. Primary Education in Eastern and Southern Africa: Increasing Access for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Aids affected Areas. Duke University: Terry Sanford institute of Public Policy
19. <http://www.cwcas.ca/en/foster-care.htm>
20. http://w.w.w.codesria.org/links/conferences/hiv_aids/Christiansen.
21. http://www.FHI.org/en/HIVAIDS/country/Namibia/res_namibiaovc.htm
22. <http://www.Focusgroups.pbwiki.com>
23. <http://www.groupsplus.com>
24. Hunter, S. & Parry, S., 2001. HIV/AIDS prevention and care in source – constrained settings: A handbook for the design and management of programs: Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children: Approaches to Care and Protection Programs (Chapter 26). Washington: FIH.
25. Ilahi, N. 2001. “ Children's Work and Schooling: Does Gender Matter? Evidence from the Peru LSMS Panel Data.” Policy Research Working Paper 2745. World Bank, Washington, D.C.
26. International social service & UNICEF. 2004. Improving Protection for Children without Parental Care: care for children Affected by HIV/AIDS: The urgent Need for International Standard. Geneva: UNICEF & ISS.
27. Isaacs, D. 2007. OVC aid not reaching all Vulnerable. The Namibian. April 30 2007. pp3.
28. Isiugo-Abaihe, U. C. 1985. Child Fosterage in West Africa. *Population and Development Review*, Vol.11, No.1, pp 53-72.
29. Kinghorn, A. et al, 2002. The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Education in Namibia. Windhoek: MBESC & MHETEC
30. Makane et al., 2002 Psychological well being of orphans in Dar El Salaam, Tanzania. *Acta Paediatr*, Vol. 91, pp 459 – 465.
31. Meintjes, H. et al. 2003. Children 'in need of care' or in need of cash? : Questioning social security provisions for orphans in the context of the South African AIDS pandemic. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
32. Ministry of Education. 2003. National Policy on HIV/AIDS for the Education Sector. Windhoek: MOE
33. Ministry of Education, 2007. Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children. Windhoek: MOE.

34. Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare (2004). *National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. Windhoek: MWACW & UNICEF.
35. Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. National Figures on Orphans and Vulnerable Children receiving Social grants 2003-2007. Windhoek: MGECW.
36. Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. A Human Resources and Capacity Gap Analysis. Improving Child Welfare Services. Windhoek: UNICEF & USAID.
37. Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare. 2007. National figure on children receiving Social grants from 2003-2007. Windhoek: MGECW
38. Morton, D.T. et al. 1994. History of Child Protection and Foster Care: Early History of Child Protection and Foster Care. Atlanta: Child Care Institute.
39. Ntonzi P.M.J. et al. 1999. Orphan care: the role of the extended family in northern Uganda. Canberra: Australian National University.
40. Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator. 2006. Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Programming Guidance for United States Government In-Country Staff and Implementing Partners. US Government
41. Olson, K. et al. 2005. From Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Resource for Faith – Based Groups and Donors Seeking to Help Families Affected by HIV/AIDS. Santa Cruz: Firelight Foundation.
42. Olusanya, B. & Hodes D. 1999. West African children in private foster care in City and Hachney. *Child: care, Health and Development*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp 337-342.
43. Orme. G.J. & Buehler, C. 2001. Foster Family Characteristics and Behavioural and Emotional Problems of Foster Children: A Narrative Review. Feature Article, Vol.50, No.1, pp 3-15.
44. Pilon, M.2003. Foster care and schooling in West Africa: The state of knowledge. France: IRD
45. Racusin, R. et al. 2005. Community Psychiatric Practice: Psychosocial Treatment of Children in Foster Care: A Review. *Community Mental Health Journal*, Vol.41, No. 2, pp 199-219.
46. Verduljn, R.JC. Assessment of OVC with a Food Component in Namibia. Pretoria, November 2004.
47. Republic of Namibia, National Planning Commission (2003). 2001 *Population and Housing Census: National Report, Basic Analysis with Highlights*. Windhoek, NPC.
48. Republic of Namibia, National Planning Commission (2005). 2001 *Population and Housing Census: Khomas Region, Basic Analysis with Highlights*. Windhoek, NPC.
49. Republic of South Africa. 1960. Children Act no.33 of 1960 as amended, together with the Regulations. Pretoria

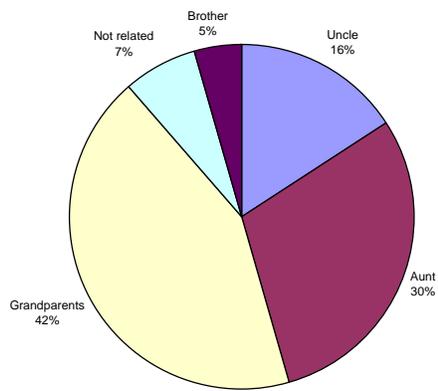
50. Republic of Namibia. 2006. Child Care Protection Bill. Windhoek: MOJ
51. Rhodes, K.W. et al. 2003. Foster Parents' Role Performance Responsibilities: Perceptions of Foster Mothers, Fathers, and Workers. *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol.25, No.12, pp935-964.
52. SAFAIDS. 2000. Southern Africa AIDS information Dissemination Service
53. Shelly, A. K. & Powell, G. 2003. Children Orphaned by AIDS: A Global Perspective. *Seminars in Paediatric Infectious Diseases*. Vol. 14 No. 1 : pp 25 –31
54. Siaens, C. et al., 2003. Are Orphans Especially Vulnerable? Evidence from Rwanda. Rwanda: World Bank.
55. Silk, J.B. 1987. Adoption and Fosterage in Human Societies: Adaptations or Enigmas?. *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol.2, No.1, pp 39-49.
56. Skinner et al., 2006. Towards a Definition of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children. *AIDS Behav*, Vol. 10, pp 619-626.
57. Smart, R. 2003. Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children: A Framework for Moving Ahead. *Policies for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. pp 1-28.
58. Sounding Board. 2002. Supporting Community Efforts To Assist Orphans in Africa. *The New England journal of Medicine*. Vol. 346, No. 24, pp 1907 – 1910.
59. Stein, J., 2003. Sorrow Makes Children of us All: A literature Review on the Psycho-Social Impact of HIV/AIDS on Children. CSSR Working Paper No. 47, pp 1-32.
60. Steinitz, L. 1998. Resources for Vulnerable Children. Windhoek: UNICEF.
61. Sun, Y. 2003. The Well-Being of Adolescents in Households With No Biological Parents. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol.65, pp 894-909.
62. Pilon, M.2003. Foster care and schooling in West Africa: The state of knowledge. France: IRD
63. The Republic of Namibia. 1990. Constitution. Windhoek: Namprint.
64. Thomas, A. & Mabusela, S. 1991. Foster care in Soweto, South Africa: Under Assault from a Politically Hostile Environment. *Child Welfare*, Vol. 70, Issue 2, pp 121 –130.
65. Uganda. *The continuing African HIV/AIDS epidemic*. pp 225-236.
66. UNAIDS & UNICEF, 2004. A Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS. Geneva: UNICEF & UNAIDS.
67. UNICEF, 2002. A world fit for children: Millennium Development Goals Special Session on Children documents. The Convention on the Rights of the Child. New York: UNICEF.
68. UNICEF. 1999. Children orphaned by AIDS: front-line responses from Eastern and Southern Africa. New York: UNICEF.

69. UNICEF. 2006. Namibia's most vulnerable children: Excluded and invisible?. *A Supplement to the State of the World's Children Report*. pp 1-8.
70. UNICEF.1996. Children Orphaned by AIDS: front-line responses from eastern and southern Africa. UNICEF& UNAIDS.
71. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, 1989.
72. Verduljn, R.JC. Assessment of OVC with a Food Component in Namibia. Pretoria, November 2004.
73. Waugh, R. 2005. Foster Care Policy: State Legislation Impacting Education of Children and Youth in Foster Care Policy. Olympia: Office of State Superintended of Public institution.
74. Wolain, T.R. 2005. Higher Education Opportunities for Foster Youth: A Primer for Policy Makers. Washington: Institute of Higher Education Policy.
75. Yates, D. 2004. Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. Windhoek: UNICEF

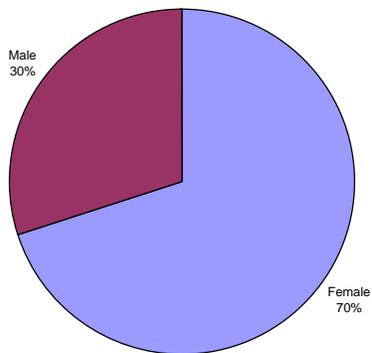
APPENDIX

FIGURES OF SOME BACKGROUNDS RESPONDENTS OF THE STUDY

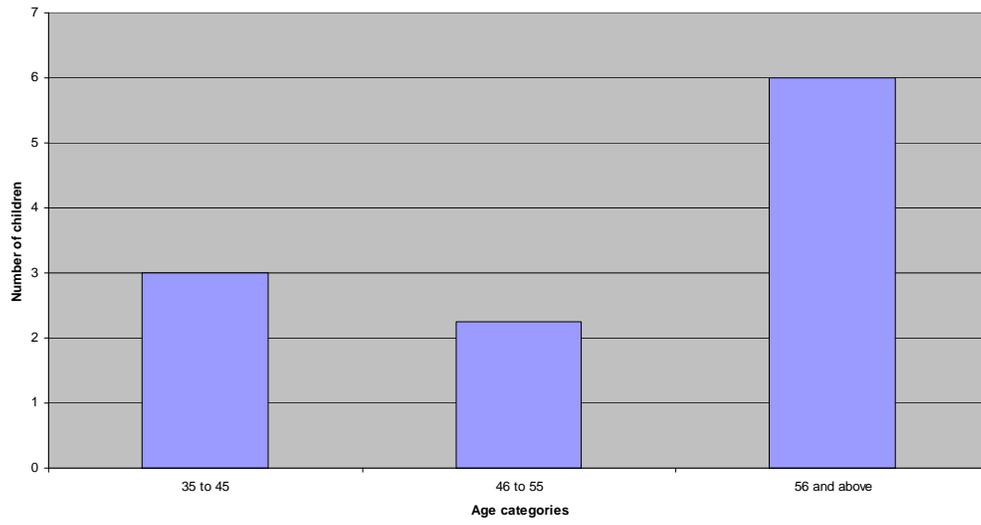
Relationship between foster and foster children



Gender of orphan children respondents



Age categories of foster parents and the number of children in their care



GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND INTERVIEWS GUIDE

1. Orphan children in foster care placements

1.1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex (M = Male or F = Female)

Age

School grade

Relationship with foster parents

1.2. MAIN QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What would you like to get as a support?

How would you describe support around you?

What are your most important needs?

What do you think on your support system?

Is the support enough to cater all your basic needs?

Do you get support towards your education?

Do you think you are protected?

2. Foster parents (Semi-Structured interviews)

2. 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex

Marital status of the foster parent/s

Age

Number of foster children

2.2. MAIN QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

...What is the support your foster children need the most?

How do you cope with foster children under your care?

Do you get help in the matter related to education of your foster children?

How is their performance at school?

What do you think to the matter related to the protection of your foster children?

You have gone through foster care placement process, how did you perceive it?

What is your view on foster care placement process?

What do you think should be done in order to make the process easy and faster?

3. Social Workers (Semi-structured interviews)

3.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sex

Organisation

Years of experience

3.2 MAIN QUESTION FOR INTERVIEWS

What are the most important needs for children in foster care placement?

How do you perceive support system around children?

How would you rate foster grants toward foster families?

How would describe support system of children in foster care placement?

Your perception on support provided to children in foster care placement in terms of education?

What is your perception towards protection of children in foster care placement?

How do you perceive foster care placement process in terms of accessibility?

What should be done to make the process easy and faster?

Ms. C. Tjikua
Regional Director
Ministry of Education
Khomas Region
Private Bag 13236
Windhoek

04 April 2007

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT DISCUSSIONS WITH ORPHAN CHILDREN
IN FOSTER CARE PLACEMENTS IN 5 DIFFERENT SCHOOLS: WINDHOEK,
KHOMAS REGION**

This letter serves to obtain permission from the Ministry of Education, Khomas regional office to conduct interviews with Orphan Children who are in foster care placements in five different school of Khomas region.

I am a Social Worker working in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, currently doing my Masters' degree in Child Studies through the Linkoping University-Sweden. One of the requirements is a thesis with the title: "Support provided to orphan children in foster care placements in urban setting: the case of Windhoek".
The aim of this study is to find out how does the lack of proper support to orphan children in foster homes leads to educational, care and support, and protection problems.

I am intending to have discussions with a group of learners aged between 13 and 18 years, who are orphans and who are care for guardians. The learners will be selected from 5 schools in Windhoek, before the end of this term; preferably between 16th and 20th April 2007, at the following schools: A Shipena Secondary School, Augustineum Secondary School, Eldorado Project Secondary School, Goreangab Secondary School and Concordia College.

It is against this background that I would like your good office to accord me the permission in order to have discussions with specific learners at the above mentioned schools.

Thank you for your understanding.

Brigitte Nshimyimana