

## Child-sensitive Social Protection Mechanisms in Non-governmental Child and Youth Care Centres in the Eastern Cape

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**ABSTRACT** The study investigates the child-sensitive social protection mechanisms in Non-Governmental Child and Youth Care Centres (NGCYCC). The objectives of the study were to examine the child sensitive social protection mechanisms in NGCYCC in Eastern Cape (EC) and to assess the efficiency of the well-being of children in the institutionalised centres. This paper used a qualitative research approach. Moreover, utilized various forms of academic articles, internet sources, dialogues, as well as critics and discusses child-sensitive social protection mechanisms in NGCYCC in EC. The findings indicate that parental mistreatment, substance misuse and domestic violence contribute more to influence the factors, which found children to be more vulnerable as well as the social welfare system. The study recommends a policy upgrade to add a criminality element for parents that are ignorant to protect their children. Many societies are at gang war and organised violence for survival.

### INTRODUCTION

South Africa remains a primary source of trafficking (Walker and Htincke 2016; Dewhurst 2018; van der Watt 2018), more especially the economically poorest provinces such as Eastern Cape, Free State as well as Northern Cape. Human trafficking occurs internally between families through child-brides (Uzhenyu 2017) (ukuthwala); domestic servitude as well as organ smuggling within South African borders and externally across South African borders. Johannesburg is regarded as the suitable gate from and to Southern African Region, Asia countries and other countries like Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, Ghana, Zambia, and Nigeria to smuggle children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds. Child trafficking is a global nightmare, which is not easily controlled and up rooted by affected and implicated countries. Rafferty (2013) states that there have been great increases rate in kids trafficked mainly for job and sexual exploitation.

However, this demonic act leave children more vulnerable with all different kinds of diseases and psychologically affected not only the victims but the families as well and the entire

community (Danieli et al. 2018). The children are forced to deal with trafficking and the pain that affected them from psychologically, physical, emotional and socially excluded. The children concerned lack parental supervision or parental care and some have all the family support they need but choose to live on the street for various reasons. The end result the children concerned becomes exploited for their labour (Howard 2017; Mokomane and Makoae 2017). The early intervention is required to the victims of trafficking as they are vulnerable without it, children who are forcedly separated with their families are at increased risk of significant threats to their well-being and negatively affect long-term development.

This paper will elaborate more on the existing current evidence on interventions strategies that take place when a child has been identified as being a child in need of care and protection outside or inside of family care environment. Along term institutionalization program should also be considered as the prevention work that contributes to strengthening of national child protection systems and which is essential in all emergency and early recovery contexts. This evidence review contributes to the stability of a

child in a care centres and sustainable interventions programmes.

### **Problem Statement**

The family members and society at large are important role players to provide protection and development for children from the negative impact of violence exposure in the community (Hardaway et al. 2016; Ozer et al. 2017). Most of children are abused and neglected occurs in the child's home and perpetrators of sexual and physical abuse are close relatives of a child. However, the family can also be a source of abuse and violence to them, where parents organized forced marriages for children as a result they go all the way to search for better life themselves and seek comfort on the street (Chimdesa and Cheire 2018; Jaffe 2018). Children living on the street are difficult to junt since they are highly mobile, and they do not have a stable place in which they stay. Children who grow up in poverty are also more at risk of child labour, commercial sexual exploitation. Therefore, protecting children's wellbeing on the street requires sufficient resources and internal and external capacity. According to the Street Action

Report (2010), the efforts of social welfare services to protect children are not sufficient because in many occasions within the safety centres of children, are continuously abused by their peers or house parents as well as the institution because often fail them, institutions set out to protect and care for children do not have a financial muscle to sustain the project. The department of Social Development is not doing enough to monitor and evaluate the quality of services to children. Thus, the article sought to assess the social protection mechanism of the effectiveness of child-sensitive social protection in NGO- CYCC's in the Eastern Cape.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- (1) To examine the minor sensitive social protection mechanisms in the Eastern Cape.
- (2) To assess the efficiency of the well-being of children in institutionalised centres.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The paper was informed by an examination of literature from various journals, published articles, unpublished dissertations and internet sources (Oyelana 2016). The researchers also used their experiential knowledge in social work profession, as well as public administration and environmental issues, with government publications, on deliberations and dialogues concerning questions of the child sensitive social protection mechanisms in NGO-CYCC in the Eastern Cape.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Social science addresses social injustice issues such as abuse by identifying the problem and the risk factors that may influenced the problem. According to Almond et al. (2018) and Moya (2018), risk dynamics are those associated with an increased probability of unfortunate outcomes, whereas risk factors are those associated with a reduced likelihood of good consequences (Heffernan and Ward 2017; Walters 2018). Hereafter social issues are interrelated and may have been related to the problem, identifying them makes it possible to recognize high-risk or factors, which might be conveniently be targeted in an intervention (O'Connell 2009). Such a methodology to kid maltreatment and neglect focuses on some related variables such as micro, macro and mezzo. The quality of children protection in the society is highly important to child development. Hence the community becomes responsible for social norms and the collective fight against violence. Children development becomes an art of the community because communities promotes children's emotional and social development that makes them more compassionate with their communities.

Therefore, many young people become the inspiration of their communities because they share their wishes and needs and they feel in of a shared vision and respect for their community. Thus, it is not surprising that many children and young people performed an active role in social change while facing extra familial structural abuse

during the period of their adulthood formation in the South Africa.

### **Family Systems Theory**

The term system was developed from Emile Durkheim's early study of social systems and later appeared from the work of Talcott Parsons. However, within social work profession, systems rational has been more intensely influenced by the work of the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy's and the later versions by the social psychologist Uri Bronfenbrenner, who examined human biological systems within an ecological environment (Barnes et al. 2017). Systems philosophies are a strategic way of discovering the world in which problems interconnect with one another. Then in a family, a system goes beyond the parent(s) and children but the community is part. There are possessions, culture and attitudes within the system that are consequential from the society where considered inclusive. Together, they emerge from the same environment and from the connections among parts made possible only by socialization.

In this study, CYCC is regarded as a system since about 28 children stay in a home with foster mothers with different social background. So, a CYCC must be seen as a system that is in constant interaction with other systems such as social workers, the school system, and the physical environment within which children live. This theory applies to this study because an abused child requires variety of services to rebuild a child.

### **The Pertinent of both Ecological Approach and Family System Theory**

According to the reviewed study conducted by Pozarny (2016) noted that, a useful strategy for preventing child-sensitive social protection is to organize child-focused social protection systems that include a financially sustainable support coordination. A high priority is to integrate preventive economic and child protection interventions (Chaffin 2011). It is observable that, families accept the responsibility to foster a child with the expectation of receiving money. Yet in most cases, children become targets of abuse by legal guardian, stranger, close

relative member and well as their peer group members. The legal guardians normally use financial assistance for children for their own personal use. In addition, in places of safety centres, boys sodomize each other, this shows that these centres can serve as problematic factor that can lead to non-preventable child-family separation (Williamson and Greenberg 2010). Although efforts to prevent children from living outside of family care are widely regarded as important (UNICEF 2008), much remains to be learned about the effectiveness and outcomes of such efforts in the context of extreme poverty. The contributory factor to the broken families is poverty that create a situation leave children more vulnerable and become victims of abuse. Indeed, poverty is a primary cause of child-family separation (Williamson and Greenberg 2010).

Hence, the importance of community participation and child-centered approaches cut across almost all of the evidence and guidance documents. For instance, raising the awareness of selling alcohol to underage children, misuse of drug substance and above all child trafficking. To empower the whole society on dangers and contributory factors to child trafficking and eliminating hazardous child labour with trafficking and forced prostitution, there must be the effective participation of s GO's, FBO's and community leaders (Winrock International Empowerment and Civic Engagement Unit) (WIECEU) 2008). Thus, the focus of this review was on early response strategies and interventions with the prevention work, which is the beginning of any successful child protection system (UNICEF 2008), much needs to be done to develop mechanisms that tackles the efforts of extreme poverty among children and effectiveness of outcomes of such efforts. Broken families and poverty are contributory factors that lead to the children's vulnerability and abuse. Indeed, poverty is a primary cause of instability within the families and children hustle for themselves for survival (Williamson and Greenberg 2010).

Hence, this South African saying "it takes a village to raise a child", the importance of community participation and child-centered approaches cut across almost all of the evidence and guidance documents. For instance, raising the awareness of selling alcohol to underage children, misuse of drug substance and above

all child trafficking. The whole society must be involved and there must be an effective participation of all relevant stakeholders in the community. Thus, the focus of this review was on early response strategies and interventions with the prevention work, which is the beginning of any successful child protection system (UNICEF 2008).

The analyses of strategies for preventing children to become vulnerable in social ills are grouped as follows: street kids, institutionalized children affected by trafficking. For the children to respond to the strategy and be effective, children need to be assessed by their strengths and weakness. This will assist to avoid using a blanket approach for protection. Family environment supposed to be the source of child development and a conducive environment for protection. According to Konzo (2017) and McAuliffe (2019) in their reviewed study noted that children had to nurtured and provided psychological support by external forces or informative interventions to make them feel valuable and accepted. Children need to be comfortable, and loved in ensuring adequate protection and support to those who are victimized. To provide adequate support and efficient prosecution of criminals that are involved, while respecting the fundamental human rights of all persons. People must be encouraged to promote human rights efforts to alleviate human trafficking in our societies by using effective rights-based responses and build the capacity of government and non-state actors, and foster partnership for joint action against human trafficking.

The Department of Social Development (DSD) (2020) noted that professionals can work together to improve the social and psychologically setting for the poor of the poorest by identifying and assisting victims of abuse in a social reintegration setting and help these women and girls access social services. Healthcare professionals can work together to improve the transmission of diseases and in a clinical approach so that victims of human trafficking are able to access primary care services.

According to Deshpande and Nour (2013) discovered that, victims of sex exploitation require adverse physical and psychological health conditions with social disadvantages. Thus, sex trafficking is a critical wealth issue with broader

social implications that requires both medical and social attention. Furthermore when children try to find a way to survive with their past traumatic experiences, as well as survivors of trafficking often experience social unfriendliness in the communities.

Department of justice as well as police services should work together to improve legal aspects and the implementation of law enforcement. As human trafficking has been globally observed as crime against humanity therefore, the victims of trafficking should be treated with care and love because of their vulnerability. The experience of children abuse and child trafficking experience has proven to be traumatic with long-lasting effects on emotional well-being, therefore is an urgent need for the strengthening of psychological programs and treatments to support this highly vulnerable population (Hemmings et al. 2016). The government needs to show extreme commitment to ensure that victims of modern slavery receive the support they need.

### **Instigated Programmes for Children on the Street**

The South African law always emphasis in the best interest of the child, whereas the Department of Social Development (DSD) as custodian of children is failing to meet legal requirements as stipulated in South African Constitution (Children's Act 38 of 2005). The state is supposedly is failing children because the government is showing minimal support towards them. The high number of NGO/ NPO's that rendered social welfare services has a widespread outcry over government inability to completely ensure that all kids are provided with adequate social services despite that it is their basic rights. According to Budlender and Proudlock (2011), NGOs are ensuring that they provides essential services to kids as stipulated in the Children's Act; whereas the payment made by the government for purchasing all facilities provided are insufficient to cover the full amenities. It is that reason the foster home and CYCC are held legally accountable for the overall welfare and security of kids in their care. Thus, failure to meet children's needs leads to an abuse.

However, Youth Care Centre's often depend on other institutions in carrying out essential ser-

vices for kids like wellbeing, psychological services and tutoring for special needs. While the DSD is responsible for meeting the needs of kids (DSD 2020). Some foster parents and CYCC's lack the money to meet basic living expenses of the children and fail to maintain consistent services. Many children are in foster placement in South Africa in which most of them are in frantic need of protection. DSD (2020) further explained that social workers have a responsibility to advocates for children and families for better services.

Social workers are legally responsible for screening foster parents to be custodians as well as custody for CYCC (DSD 2020). The process has to be organised in a strategic way with a support of a sufficient information about strengths and weaknesses of a particular child. Moreover, if the reunification process or other forms of contacting the family is not materialising, then the social worker must consider the best interests of the child. Social worker can also serve as an advocate to safeguard each child's conditions and needs.

According to Peterman et al. (2020) in her reviewed studies concluded that a huge number of children are often forced out of their homes due to the social ills such as poverty, abuse, as well as family dysfunctionality. Whereas there is no sufficient evidence of accurate number of children on the street. South Africans unknowingly trafficking children, by providing jobs to children as farm workers and in a process are financially and physically exploited. Some are employed in private home and end up becoming a sex slave to the man of the house if the wife sometimes is not knowledgeable or perhaps is well informed of the situation. Human trafficking involves some form of force that is not limited to prostitution and has become a significant human rights violation and a progressively in both South Africa and globally. Thus, Chant (2017) and Maduekwe (2018) stated that, forms of abuse includes the humiliation and deprived human and women rights which dislocate families and communities.

### **Residential Home for Children Becomes Unsafe Environment**

According to RoCHAT et al. (2016) and Ackermann (2018) respectively displayed some numbers of kids in foster placement in South Africa.

Most of this children experienced pain of abuse (Bengwasan and Bancual 2020). The residential home for children must be safest environment for children from disadvantage environments. CYCC is a place of safe care because by law is mandated to provide safe environment for children for all forms ill treatments of abuse from their homes and community. Time spent by children in CYCC should assist them to face their past experiences. It is detrimental for children to discontinue with abuse programmes that are meant to empower and rebuild their self-esteem (Villodas et al. 2016; Ziv et al. 2018). Many young people experienced bullying, physical and sexual harassment and felt ambivalent about care workers capacity to effectively protect them. The staff members often struggle to develop methods of protection for children in a CYCC to deal with these types of issues. Children have a lot to contribute in a CYCC protection methods about what could be done to improve their experience in residential care, including children contribution when employing staff members, involving children in decision-making about placements, and children bullying each other.

Furthermore, centre manager's capacity in a residential care need to be able to respond to children safety concerns, how can they better understand appropriate abuse, and how do they set up a good relationships with children for advice and for protection. Safety in residential home for children is not only includes the care received by children, but also the safe delivery of care, place of care and the psycho-social relations between the children, social worker, non-social work manage and care workers. Whereas psycho-social support is provided by social work and maintenance of care establishment are often at the discretion all CYCC staff members. Due to inadequate government (CYCC's) there are threats of closing down closing the NGO CYCC's because of lack of insufficient funding. Whereas high number of abused children are placed in Non-Governmental Organisation CYCC's and children in foster care homes. Placement in CYCC's has psychological and security advantages for a child in terms of having secured three meals per day and secured accommodation.

The good response of philanthropic sometimes may also cause unintentional damage with an intention of child protection interventions.

For instance, children often placed in child and youth care centres or foster home as a protection mechanism. In South Africa, a high number of children are beneficiaries of child support grant, some placed in an institutionalised centre and some in foster homes. According to (Black et al. 2017) note that developmental risks, such as poor nutrition, abuse, neglect, lack of stimulation and extreme stress which are often present in institutional care, can have a profoundly negative impact on a child's development and learning potential. It is observed that infants and young children experienced significant harm from institutional care in particularly when it is poorly organize (van Uzendoom et al. 2020). The more children are empowered about their rights they feel developed and able function self-sufficiently. A family contribution is vital, as well as a constant visit of a child that is placed in a children place of safety safe. This will assist during the reunification process and help the child to reconnect with his or her family.

#### **Contributory Factors that Influence Unprotected Children under Social Welfare Sector**

The Department of Social Development and leadership showed incompetence to handle its activities and deliver quality social welfare services. A high number of NGO social workers and staff are migrating to greener pastures which some of the reasons according to Giese (2010) are "low salaries and inconsistencies in salaries between NGOs social workers and government social workers". Department of Social Development claims they pay seventy-five percent (75%) subsidy to the NPO (NGO) sector. The researcher noted that the DSD tend to allocate a huge percentage of budgets towards social welfare services administrative work, instead of addressing the needs of children.

A moment DSD recognises the work done by NGO's (NPO's) the moment later they discredit NGO CYCC's as incompetent. Whereas DSD has a responsibility to empower NGO CYCC to be in an equal standard as a government sector. Further claims that the NPO (NGO) sector is central to the delivery of social welfare services in South Africa but fails to give sufficient economic support to NPO/NGO's DSD (2011). Child

Welfare CYCC in King Williams Town recently disqualified to place children and threatened to close down and limited children transferred to the nearby CYCC in Grahamstown.

The Children's Bill of Rights defined neglect as 'the failure by those responsible for the child to meet his/her basic physical, emotional, intellectual and social needs'. Section 150(1) (2) of (Children's Act 38 of 2005). This Bill has however not involved much on the varieties of neglect. Whereas the children act protect the children affected by exploitation as legislation mandated professional social workers to lead the processes to protect children. Therefore, CYCC's policy to place highlighting on child-sensitive social protection and ensure that intervention strategy is in place. Therefore abandonment "leaving a child or young person in any situation without arranging necessary care for them" (Children's Bureau 2019: 24). To achieve the child-sensitive social protection, it is require having a stable experienced workforce which is effective. The exodus of workers and closing of NGO's that renders social welfare services results to growing number of vulnerable children.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Study revealed that the social workers in NGO CYCC used the little support they can for children in the institution due to overload and limited resources. Children do not receive consistent care or protection, no security on the gate and in most cases one parent at night looking after children. Constant socialisation with organisational parents is considered as an intervention that assists in child development. Social work interventions, psychosocial support provides emotional and educational support which is minimal due to administrative work.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are the specific recommendations regarding the empowerment of children in the NGO-CYCC and all beneficiaries in (CYCC) because children need more attention to cognitive development and skill programmes. Professional social workers should base their judgements as part of a comprehensive continuous re-examination of the children. DSD has a legal

obligation to protect children in South Africa, therefore must take full responsibility to protect them and make sure that their business stakeholder's GO-CYCC tightened up security services in the canter. The abuse of children in South Africa is becoming uncontrollable; therefore government needs to establish a National day of Human Trafficking as an awareness to promote insight about human suffering that transpired in South Africa.

This study further recommends that the ecological livelihood approaches be utilised as a support base system care away to the children place of safety. This will guide the establishment of strategies safety and securities. A strategy will be a contributory factor of insensitive social protection as well poverty. The policy needs to be reviewed on criminalizing the ignorance of parent's responsibility to protect their children and to improve initiatives that focus openly on strengthening CYCC's. The DSD need to re-consider CYCC as a last resort to place children that are in need of protection because some children need an early mediation of CYCC psycho-social intervention.

Department of Social Development failed to act in an emergency manner to rescue the child from the social ills and use CYCC's as a dumping site and expect them to do enchantments of therapy. A sensitive-social children information management system (IMS) to be introduced to quickly classify kids in need of protection and establish a special unit in South African Police Services that will facilitate appropriate and effective responses.

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