**SW12**

**Interviewer:** So, good afternoon. Okay, so good afternoon once again, I'm Abna Dufie Akornu Attah. Yes, I'm here to collect data. This data is purely on academic purposes. The title of the project is coproducing a child maintenance assessment checklist for the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana. The project is being led by Dr. Ebenezer Cudjoe a lecturer in the Department of Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies at the University of Essex, UK and he's doing it with other teams like Professor Frimpong-Manso in the University of Ghana and Dr. Alhassan Abdallah who is a lecturer in Australia. So basically, the purpose of the study, okay, so the purpose, like I said, of the study, is for us to have a tool for social workers specifically for assessing child maintenance cases in Ghana. You are free to withdraw or stop at any point in time during the interview and also at the end of the interview you'll be compensated with a 50 cedis Melcolm voucher which will come later, but it will not take too much of your time. It will take approximately 50 minutes and everything you see is strictly confidential. So, signing this consent form means you have given us your permission to do this assessment. So, before we start, I'll just take some small demographic information. I know you're a beautiful friend and would want to know your gender, which you are. Female of course. Your educational background then your age if you don't mind and how long you have worked as a social worker and how long you've worked on child maintenance cases. So which one should we start with?

**Demographic information**

**Name:** SW12 in the Prampram District Assembly

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 42

**Educational background:** I have a masters.

**How long have you worked as a social worker:** For twelve years.

**How long have you been working on child maintenance:** For the same twelve years.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you very much. So the first question we would want to know is for you to describe your experience in using the case management standard operating procedure. This case management standard operating procedure, your experiences generally.

**Interviewee:** Okay, I think it's good, somehow straightforward. It helps you do whatever you are supposed to do in a few minutes because you have to take some portions and also write a few notes. The only concern is sometimes the spaces provided are not big enough, if you have to write more things. Apart from that, I think it's a good guide.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you very much for describing it. So if I get what you are saying, you are saying the documents to you is good, it’s straightforward. Your challenge is the spacing in some of them. Okay, so I’d want to move on to the second question. What do you think about the need to create a checklist dedicated to assessing child maintenance cases? So I'm listening to you, please.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so it's a good idea to have another checklist, but so I think we can maintain this one. But then if we can have something which is also complementary, because this one sometimes is not only about child maintenance, it can take issues about missing children, abandoned children, child neglect and all that. So if you can have something just for child maintenance, then it's okay.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so why do you think we should have something different? If you are saying.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so we deal with a lot of cases. So, if you have a form that will only deal with child maintenance, when a client come, just take that one and fill it.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** You don't have to just be filling this one and this one contains a lot more issues in detail. Private is only about child maintenance, you can skip some of the things, for instance, comprehensive assessment form and all those things sometimes based on the cases we have. If it is child maintenance, then it is urgent you deal with it as and when. You don’t have to be sitting and asking so many questions, what is this, what is that, when the issue is about maintenance and it's just straightforward.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so if I get you, you're trying to say with a child maintenance case, you don't really need a comprehensive assessment in the form. You want it to be straightforward. So the straightforward bit, maybe I'll let you probe further and that comes with the question that you are saying we should dedicate one. You are saying so that when you have a child maintenance case, you only pick the form and then you are good to go. So this form to you, the case management standard operating procedure form to you.

**Interviewee:** Is a little bulky.

**Interviewer:** It's a little bulky?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Any other reason why you think we should create.

**Interviewee:** If we only have for child maintenance, it is easily accessible. Sometimes, as social workers, you have two or three issues you are dealing with. Maybe clients are waiting and they don't understand what you are doing. In Prampram for instance, sometimes you come and clients are already waiting, and when they are waiting for you, they are expecting that you facilitate the processes easily for them. So, when it is only child maintenance, you pick it and you fill it or you can dedicate a staff that you only deal with child maintenance and this other person deal with missing children. So, we all know what we are dealing with.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. So, I think I'll move on to the third question. The third question is, what are the key issues you consider when assessing a child maintenance case, the key issues you consider?

**Interviewee:** Thank you. I like to consider the economic potential of parents, the number of children they have. Do they have children with other spouses somewhere else? Basically, that one, their earning ability, can they pay? Are they being truthful? Are they telling me the truth? Sometimes they have the money, but they will tell you they don't have because the relationship is thawed in the way. They want to punish the other party, so they will say, I don't have money.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** So, it's necessary to check, do a good check and know the true state of your client to determine the maintenance you give them to pay.

**Interviewer:** Okay, what else would you, what are some of the things you would do?

**Interviewee:** So you would look at the number of children they have.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** So if the person has only one child, it's different from if the person has some other ten children they are looking after and what work they do. If the person is a laborer, how much the person ends, the person is a banker, how much are they able to pay and all at.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so aside those key issues, do you have any additional aside, because if I check, you’ve want the economics, it means their income and things like that, you want to know whether they have other dependents or other children and then you also want to check.

**Interviewee:** Want to check the extended family. Sometimes they can tell you they don't work, but you want to find out if they have a relative who is willing to support them.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you even look at externally, any relative or friend who even wants to support. Well noted. So what else would you want to consider again?

**Interviewer:** I want to consider sometimes are they in an association? Because if it is intentional, they don't want to support because of the relation. Sometimes if you form the association, they can influence them to help.

**Interviewer:** So, an association, if you say a n association, is it like a club?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, like club, is he in the man fellowship, is he in the church/

How can you explore that, because if they don't tell you the truth themselves and you prove further, you can get the truth.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, if they are in an association, you go and probe further from that association or group?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, like for example, the men's fellowship. Okay, so in handling child maintenance, what are some of the key issues you would want to consider again, aside, knowing the truth, probing, assessing to know whether they are telling a lie or not, and speaking to external members and family members, what else would you want to consider?

**Interviewee:** Okay, so I’ll also consider the health status of the child. Is the child a person with disability, is the child able to talk, is the child mobile, is the child sound?

Yes, the health status, is the child having sickle cell, would the child need constant hospital visitations and all that?

**Interviewer:** Okay, so it means when you get to know the health status and whether they have the disability, does it in any way influence the maintenance?

**Interviewer:** Yes, because if the child has a disability, then, you know, they will need further support, because a child who is not mobile would always need a caregiver around and if someone is taking care of that child, then it means that the person must also be supported in a way, and the disability will even make the caregiver frustrated, stressed. So if the money is not coming as it's supposed to, then it is another ballgame altogether.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so any other thing you would want to consider? Aside the health and other things you’ve mentioned.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so I also look at where they stay. Are they living close by family, relatives? Sometimes, you know, in a Ghanaian society, it's not only the nuclear family, but the extended family. So, if you are living by relatives, sometimes if you don't have money, the children can go over and eat. If they are living alone, then it means that you have to do all the supporting and you must provide by all means. Those are the things we’re looking out for.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so the proximity of where they live to their family would also be a factor for you to consider with the hope that the family will be supporting. What if the family do not have?

**Interviewer:** You’ll pray the family will have.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and what other things would you want to consider?

**Interviewee:** I think basically that’s all or if another point or

**Interviewer:** Okay, then I would continue, if that's all the points there. Then the fourth question is, I would want to know how different would you want a child maintenance assessment checklist to be from the case management standard operating procedure. How different would you want?

**Interviewer:** The current one that we have, only asks for the bio data and it's more on the caregiver and not the extended family. Doesn't ask whether the man has other dependents, doesn't ask about the religion, but the religion is there, but it doesn't probe feather. You know, Muslim will relate to their child differently from even how a Christian would. For a muslim man, he is entitled to all things being equal for other women, but for a Christian, and he's supposed to have only one. And where the person is, a Christian is supposed to have one, but has gone on to have another side chick somewhere the woman will be jealous and even if there is no cause for even asking for more, the mere fact that she knows there is another woman somewhere, she will come in demanding more, because it will be like, if you don't have money, why did you go for another person.

**Interviewer:** So,in this case the religion, you want it broken down to find out whether they have side chicks and things or whether they have other concubines or other wives, number of wives.

**Interviewee:** Yes

**Interviewer:** Okay, well noted. Very refreshing to note. So any other, how would you want different, so aside that bit?

**Interviewee:** The religion and then also the occupation. Occupation, It doesn't go further to ask is it seasonal, you know in Prampram, they come and they tell you they are fishermen and now when they go fishing, they don't get anything and that is it. A person, sometimes we ourselves, we go to the seashore and you see that they didn't bring anything and so how do you go pressing them, you see that the person doesn't have. So you should probe, apart from the fishing, what else do you do so that you can task them. Sometimes they come and they lie to you. How are you able to probe and find out this person is lying or some because they have made up their mind at the moment, they will come and tell you I'm not working.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you want us to prove and even the work/ occupation, we should find out the type and whether it's seasonal or not seasonal and any other side hustle they have, side job. Okay, well noted. Any other?

**Interviewee:** I think so far, those are the things I've seen.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That you would want to be considered?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So since there's no other point for you to add, we would ask the next question. The fourth question. What are the challenges you encounter in using the case management SOP? This one, this case management SOP, what are the challenge you encounter?

**Interviewee:** Okay, so the current one is a little bulky.

**Interviewer:** Bulky in what way?

**Interviewee:** There are lots of other information you have to fill which are not really maintenance cases.

**Interviewer:** Other forms like what?

**Interviewee:** Other forms like you have social inquiry report, case plan and check plan and all that, which are not really. So you see the way it is, it makes it, if you are not in a proper place and you come to work in the morning and you see the form you have to fill, if you are not careful, you put it aside and then just talk to the people. It's not every day that you feel like I have to be writing, but if it was just one page, then you just take it and fill it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so that's why you're saying it's bulky. Any other challenge?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Some of the spaces allocated for writing information is limited. You are forced to take an extra sheet and write that attached. Sometimes if you don't have a sheet, it’s surprising, this is social welfare but sometimes you come and there is no A4 sheet.

**Interviewer:** So, your challenge is now logistics and whose fault for you not to have logistics?

**Interviewee:** It's true, sometimes you'll be surprised. The whole assembly, you go round and there's no paper but anyway, that is on the lighter side.

**Interviewer:** Yes, any other challenge?

**Interviewer:** The others we will manage.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so I would want to ask the final question. Final question is what are the information you want included in the checklist to assess child maintenance cases? I remember you said like if you have a page or something. So now on that page or whether it's going to be front and back or whichever details. Now tell us what information you want in this checklist?

**Interviewee:** So obviously the complainant details. So name, age, sex, occupation, religion. Religion because religion determines how people behave, yes, influences behavior. So, religion, sex, education, occupation and then whether they are living with family or they are living on their own and also I think I've mentioned education.

**Interviewer:** Education of who?

**Interviewee:** The complainant.

**Interviewer:** The complainant’s education. Okay

**Interviewee:** Yes, because education determines a lot of things. If the complainant is educated and is working, then you can even know how to share the maintenance. When they come, we encourage them that the responsibility is a shared one. It's not only the man mostly who's supposed to take care. So is the complainant herself working, yes and then are they living duo-locally or with a family? Those are important things and then the respondent too, their marital status, are they divorced, do they have concubines, how many spouses they have?

**Interviewer:** So, if you say respondents and complainant, maybe you can explain who is the complainant?

**Interviewee:** So the complainant is the person who came with an issue. The respondent is the one who is coming to answer or who was invited to answer questions.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So aside knowing whether the respondent now is married and this like divorce or single and things like that, what else should we take?

**Interviewee:** So the church they attend. I think when you ask religion, they can say Christian and you can probe better. What church do you attend? So that's also important.

**Interviewer:** Why is knowing the church they attend important?

**Interviewee:** Because sometimes when everything else fails, we can fall on their church leaders. Sometimes we invite them to come in, help us solve the issues. So, you know, nowadays you have one-man churches. If the person is coming from one-man church, how they will be able to be different from if the person is from a well recognized church like Pentecost, already they are even shy to mention that I'm from Pentecost. Then that one alone is, I've had a lot of encounters like that. You ask them and they say Pentecost and they say “initially we were not doing that but”. Then you probe further and ask “you weren’t doing that, then what happened”?

So it's very important. Then they will come out and tell you things you didn't even know. They will tell you this and this and this happened, then you’ll gather more information and then based on what they are telling you, sometimes you use the word of God to encourage them so that they become aware of the situation and even how necessary it is to take care of their child because they don't even want their church leaders to know that they have a case as social welfare at all.

**Interviewer:** And they are being irresponsible.

**Interviewee:** Yes, it's very important.

**Interviewer:** So, asking the denomination, what if the person is a Muslim?

**Interviewee:** Yes, if the person is a Muslim, all the better, because based on their teaching, they are also required to be very responsible. Even though they are entitled to four women. The qualification is treat all these four women equally. So, if they treat one bad and they are treating the other good, then as you ask them, they themselves will come up with a solution if they are well meaning Muslims.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so any other side that religion, I think you really extended or expanded on the religion bit. Any other. I remember the other one you were mentioning the occupation. If you can also repeat and expand.

**Interviewee:** So, the occupation is also very important. Most of our clients, from what we have observed over the years, most of them are menial workers. They are barber, tailor, fisherman and you know that those people, their occupation are seasonal. It is not something that is regular like a person who ends monthly salary who you can tag that, okay, at the end of the month you receive X amount of money. So pay this and it's fixed. If the person is a barber, they can come and tell you the whole week, haven't barbered, which sometimes you can know they are not telling you the truth. But then based on their earning capacity, you can determine what money they are supposed to pay for the maintenance.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so do you even think we should have a standardized amount to charge for maintenance?

**Interviewer:** Yes, I think we should have a minimum.

**Interviewer:** A minimum and what amount should it be?

**Interviewee:** A minimum, I’m looking at the economic situation now. If we take at least, it is difficult sometimes for them to even pay 10 cedis a day for a child.

**Interviewer:** So 10 cedis a day means how much for a month?

**Interviewee:** Around 300, it's even difficult. Realistically they come and some can tell you four children, they can afford 200 a month, you’d be surprised It is a difficult situation, so on a minimum, I think that 300 should be okay for one child, so 10 cedis a day, which should be enforced. You see, sometimes some of these men take us for granted. They come and tell you I don't work and they believe that once they've told you I don't work, then you should let them go. But if they don't work, they eat and the children must eat, so they must be held accountable.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so if you get difficult cases, and the man doesn't pay or support the woman, what do you do?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes we refer to court.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Most of the time you refer to court, you can only encourage them. Sometimes they will tell you they are not paying me because of the behavior of the woman.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so then do you think we should include behavior of woman and whether the person is willing to pay or not and whether you think you can make a referral to the court? Do you think all these details should then be on the form?

**Interviewee:** Behavior of a woman, anyway, but the behavior of the parties doesn't justify whether they’d pay or not. Yes, if we want to look at it that way, then it will mean that if you don't behave well, you get supported or you don't behave well, you don’t get supported.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so reason why the person is not paying be or was not taking care of the child should be included?

**Interviewee:** Yes, reason why the person is not paying, I think should be included.

**Interviewer:** As we were even discussing, you said, so should you think we should have a minimum amount on the checklist?

**Interviewer:** Yes, a minimum amount

**Interviewer:** And to you, you said we should see the minimum as 300 cedis with the intention that 10 cedis a day.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then aside that, what else do you think we should include on the checklist? The child details.

**Interviewee:** The child details, yes. So, a child with disability, it's important, you know they also have a percentage of the common fund. Sometimes the parents are not even aware that persons with disability are supposed to come to the assembly for support.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** So if you probe, then you know, you can even encourage them to come and do your needs assessment and see how they can be supported. Some have come and they've been relieved. I remember a certain lady came and surprisingly four children she had, all of them had epilepsy, four children and she wasn't even aware that there was something and through the case we were able to support her with something. So, if you ask, you might get something for them apart from even the father.

**Interviewer:** I see. So even proving, I'm even getting to hear of information that at least your common fund, disability common fund is even able to assist people, children with disability, so that it's also, for children, it's difficult caring for them.

**Interviewee:** very difficult and challenging and some parents are tempted to even go and dump them, or even one story I heard, their mother goes to buy sleeping tablets for them so that they can drink and sleep, so she can be free.

**Interviewer:** I believe they might also have their own side effect. So, taking note of the disability of the child and what kind of support the department is rendering, okay, in that case

**Interviewee:** Itcan be helped to reconcile, because if they are separated, what caused separation, is it something that can be managed? Because when they are living together, then taking care is easier than when they are separated.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you want us to consider reconciliation, if it can be? Okay, so what other?

**Interviewee:** Let us also consider if we can solicit help from other organizations apart from social welfare. There are lots of organizations like compassion, which assist in taking care of children. So if the man genuinely cannot afford, I’ve had cases where a man can say, if you worry me, I will kill myself. I don't have the money but if you insist, I tell you I don't have, and you are forcing me and I will die, when I die, then that ends it. So if it is a genuine reason, then why not, explore other organizations for them to assist

**Interviewer:** Wow, so it means you should probe, If the man cannot afford and he says he cannot afford why? And we should even take note of suicidal thoughts and looking for help from other key stakeholders

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** What of family members?

**Interviewee:** Family members, yes. Family members from the church, from organizations, wherever we can find support for them.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Any other thing you want us to include? I'm sure for you, you can give us more hints, what we should include in the checklist.

**Interviewee:** So, we spoke about the age of the child. So is the child a baby, would the child need diapers, the education, is the child in a private institution?

Sometimes the mothers would want the child to be in a private institution, the man cannot afford. Can we send the child to a government institution where they don't pay tuition? Yes. We should explore all those opportunities.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Any other thing we should include in there?

**Interviewer:** That’s all.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, if that's all, I want to thank you so much for your time. God richly bless you, Madame of Prampram. Okay. Thank you so much

**Interviewee:** Okay, you are welcome.