**SW5**

**Interviewer:** Good afternoon.

**Interviewee:** Good afternoon.

**Interviewer:** I am Abena form the department of Social Welfare helping in research for us to be able to coproduce a child maintenance assessment checklist for the department of social welfare in Ghana. The interview will last maximum, 50 minutes and you are free to stop at any point in time.

**Demographic Information**

**Name:** SW5

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 32 years

**Educational background:** A degree holder.

**Duration of working on child maintenance cases:** 11 years

**Interviewer:** How long have you worked as a social worker in the Tamale Metropolitan Assembly?

**Interviewee:** In Tamale I’ve worked for 2 years.

**Interviewer:** Have you worked in any other district?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I was in Talensi district for 9 years.

**Interviewer:** I’d want you to please describe your experience in using the case management standard operating procedure.

**Interviewee:** Thank you very much**.** Using the case management SOPs has been good because with the way we used to do it previously, writing a lot of notes, it has served as a guide in making things brief and concise when handling cases. It has also made us to be able to probe more also bear in mind the type of case you handle and how to go about it. So using it and based on my experience, it has been helpful so far.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so if you want to make comparison from the old way, how were you doing it before the SOP came?

**Interviewee:** We used to write more comprehensive notes on cases that are being reported from the respondent and from the complainant and then you have to write more on the summary and the decision that is being taken. But with the current SOP that we are using, the writing id brief, It goes straight to the point. It guides you on the particular issue you are tackling and how to help the issue around it. There are some cases that you don’t know where to place it whether custody or maintenance. But with this, it gives you the options and you’re able to just fall on one.

**Interviewer:**  So, if I may also probe again and in the past, what was it a standardise orit was an adhoc/ your own?

**Interviewee:** it was not standardised, it was just anyhow as in your own discretion, how the format will be will be and so it varied from district to district. You could go to another district and how they do it is different from how you do it but with this, it’s standard and it’s everywhere (like the same). So, you can even call colleagues for guidance, and it’s good.

**Interviewer**: Okay, that is your experience so far in using the case management standard operating procedure. Thank you very much Lizzy. The second question is, what do you think about the need to create a checklist dedicated to assessing child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** There’s a need because when you are able to identify the need for maintenance, some parents who are not working in the formal sectors, their maintenance will vary from other parents based on their monthly Income. And so there should be something that will suggest that where a parent is not working in the formal sector. This should be guide you as to how you can suggest the maintenance. Sometimes you can say daily, monthly bi-weekly or something and where there is the need or the extent to which you will have to get to before you can refer such maintenance cases to the court for the court to be able to assist you. In that regard, I think there is the need for checklist.

**Interviewer:** Okay so if I understand you clearly, you are saying there’s a need to create a checklist bearing in mind whether the respondents or the parents are in the formal sector or not.

**Interviewee:** Yes, and how the remittance should come and should flow. And in the form, you might be a farmer and claim that you don’t have money. You can be providing food stuff, it shouldn’t just be about the cash, it can be in the form of; let’s say a farmer can be like okay I can provide a bag or two every three months but I can’t provide cash for other things but that is a form of remittance. So, this should be included in the checklist so that it becomes an option to take.

**Interviewer:** okay, is it based on the based on the environment?

**Interviewer:** it should be based on the environment, the salary structure or the persons income level, and their source of income.

**Interviewer:** If I may ask in here in the northern region, do you have some people paying maintenance by giving in food items?

**Interviewee:** Some even opt that that is what they can give. They just suggest to us and so it has given us an information that there are some people who actually prefer that. Hence we also suggest it to some parents when we are handling some cases so that they know that it’s not just subjected to only cash but then that aspect exist. This is because when they suggest, we also ask the complainant and they buy into the idea (like they’re always okay with it).

**Interviewer:** So, Lizzy is the current standardised case management SOP not adjustable to that way?

**Interviewee:** No, it is not, unless you put it into writing. But if there are options where you can tick, there should be an option like that in the checklist. So that probably in my terrain, if respondents didn’t opt to give me that option, I might not even think of it and I don’t know how my colleagues in other districts to our considering. But if you put it there, it becomes standardised like what we are currently using that we can also go in for the food stuff instead of the cash all the time.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much but is there any other thing that you think that we can create in this checklist dedicated to child maintenance aside we giving options that maybe people can give out their food items or not necessarily monetary. Is there any other thing that can be considered or in creating this checklist that you think it’s not there, or even if it’s there, what you think should be in the checklist when creating solely for child maintenance?

**Interviewee:** Okay maybe an exact amount like a cup of an amount, though we know the terrain varies, we should be able to know, not less than this and not more than that. So even not more is not a problem but not less than an amount should be there.

**Interviwer:**  If it’s not less than an amount is there something we should peg it to something we should pay it. For example, maybe the minimum wage, what should the minimum be pegged?

**Interviewee:** Yes, it should be pegged to the minimum wage to some extent. I can make up my mind on that but there should just be a cap on less than something.

**Interviewer:** Okay? So, is there any other thing you would want us to creates in this checklist dedicated to assessing child maintenance cases, aside, the noting the income, having a cup- a minimum base on the minimum wage and then having options to take whether they will be given food items in addition to cash or things like that. Is there any other thing you want us to take note of?

**Interviewee:** Yes, there is. There should be a space where you can take the respondent statements, the complaining statement, as well as the summary from which you have deduced from the responses.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so I want us to take it one after the other. When you say the complainant details, what do mean?

**Interviewee:** The complainants’ details that is the person who comes to report. The details as in what has prompted a complainant to come to tell us that this is what is happening or why there is an issue that the person has come to the office? or the respondents to tell us why he/she has not been able to play his role in taking care of their child.

**Interviewer:** Okay so that becomes the respondents’ details?

**Interviewee:** Yes, then the summary of what we have deduced and our conclusion as well as the decision we have taken or all of us have agreed to. Hence there should be space created for all.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so how would you deduce as social welfare officers that this is the summary? **Interviewer:** From the statement of the complainant and the responses, for instance, if you complainant comes to say that I have a child with this man, the child is five years, we were married but separated and then for the past six months or one year my child’s father has not remitted, we probe. As in when you say remittance, has he given food or clothing and some will be like he has not even checked on us, he has not even given us food, clothing and doesn’t even know whether the children attend school and those things. We just call the parent, that’s the father who is the respondent to come, then we also listen to you probably you have reasons why you have done that. Some come and they are like the last time since they left my house, I sent her an amount and she told me that they don’t need anything from me, and since then I have decided not. Others would be like, I haven’t done that because I lost my job whiles some just don’t have a reason.

So from that we are able to understand that it’s either some are just trying to be irresponsible and others it is because of a reaction. So, we link it to the children’s act and let them understand that where the two parties are involved and you have children whether in marriage or not, you are responsible to take care of them. We make you understand that even the law is against their decision you have made or you are making and so it’s against the child’s right hence there’s the need for you to take good care of these children.

By so doing, from hence,

* You would have to learn to check on them
* You would have to remit them. Then we give you the options either every day, that’s daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly based on your capacity or capability. Some mention an amount, then we ask the complainant because it is the woman who is going to take care of children and not us. We are only relating to make sure that things go the right way. If she’s comfortable, because they have stayed and know the man’s capacity and capability. Some say GHc100.00 a week and the women agree even with four children others, with three children, they agree because they know the kind of work the man is doing, might not be able to afford more than that. Others also disagree because they know that the man can provide more than that. Okay what we just talked about that is for the food aspect under the maintenance as well.
* Then we come to health, we let them know that apart from the feeding aspect, you are to help them in health as well.

**Interviewer**: Okay, so if I get your understanding, in going into details per the assessments or getting the checklist, we should do an assessment and some of these assessments as well is what you are saying. We should get or example, a column that probably you would input all the complainant details which you have explained, all the respondent details, then your summary are the things that you assess, the things that you would now tackle, one after the other. I think that is even a follow-up question to this. So let me um use this opportunity to ask so that you can come up with the issues you are mentioning for example, health and education. So the third question is, what are some of the key issues you consider when assessing a child maintenance case?

So now in assessing it’s you started by mentioning the basic needs…

**Interviewee:** We talk about the food, the health and education. As for the health, we can’t measure but we normally recommend that, as and when there’s the need arises. But first of all, you have to get the health insurance card insured or renewed for the children involved. Hence when there’s the need you’d have to come and when you are called, you should respond.

We first talk about communication because if there’s no effective communication between the two parties, it’s part of the key issues we consider.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so the key issue, another one is communication. So when you pick them I want you to explain.

**Interviewee:** Okay. With the feeding, I made mention of need for the parents to provide for them and they decide as and when to do that. Then communication we make them understand that there’s a need for them to communicate so that where one party has to call and inform you about the person or an emergency, you’d be in the known and wouldn’t give an excuse that because you didn’t know you couldn’t assist and these are children we’re talking about.

**Interviewer:** So the communication bit it means that, there should be a free and flow. As in that they can speak on the phone or is it meeting physically?

**Interviewee:** Yes, on phone because often these parties are no more in a relationship, but since the children are involved, they have to communicate. So communication by calling concerning the well-being of the children and when there is marriage, but they live at different places, there’s the need for a visit.

**Interviewer:** Okay, can the visit also be another point you are highlighting?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I was just about to say that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so then mention the visit and explain.

**Interviewee:** Yes, the visit here, we encourage that, even though parties are not even married, the children need to bond well with the other part they are not staying with. So that party, which is often the father should regularise himself with the children, visiting them to bond well, and for the children to have a feeling of a father because also their right.

Then we talk about the education, we let the parents understand that it is the child’s right to be educated and we make them understand that when we say education, we mean basic education. Some parents want to go the other way, that is the expensive private schools, which we make them understand that they should go to schools that they are capable of affording to pay for the betterment of the children.

**Interviewer:** Okay? Yes, so is there any other thing to consider when assessing a child because we’ve spoken about the feeding in terms of their food, in terms of health, in terms of free communication between them, in terms of education and then visit. The sixth one you’re adding is clothing and with that how often?

**Interviewee:** The clothing, we normally advise that sometimes in festive season, there’s the need for children to also have a feel of the season, so you should make available provisions for that whiles you are taking care of them. But as and when you see something nice you want your child to wear, you should be able to get it for the child or provide the mother some way of helping her to buy it.

**Interviewer:** Okay this one you said provide the mother so does that mean it is the respondent or the fathers that are supposed to be buying the clothes.

**Interviewee:** No, all these they are collaborative effort for parties but it’s because the children are often with the mothers that is why I’m saying the father.

**Interviewer:** So, what of the accommodation?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes it is dicey especially when both parties are not married/separated. The reason being that some men are of the stand that they wouldn’t pay for rent for a woman to bring other men because they are no more together. But we made them understand that there are children involved and they must have shelter and they can stay alone but with their mothers. Some co-orporate and say that they will come in 50 to support let’s say an amount and the woman will also bring an amount and support her to rent a place. Others refuse whiles some are like, okay well we’ll do it and they really do but then after some time the woman should take up that responsibility because they cannot do it forever.

**Interviewer:** In this case are you also including the shelter or the accommodation bit as something for us to assess?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I’d include it because it’s necessary. We have cases where some parties refuse to provide an accommodation for the children and the woman in the question, cannot also provide. So it leaves the children even though you’re paying for school fees, but accommodation wise is not a good place for them stay hence a problem.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much Lizzy for explaining all your points. The fourth question is; I want to find out how different would you want a child maintenance assessment checklist to be from the case management standard operating procedure with currently have and the forms that we have now?

**Interviewee:** It should be specific that assessment on child or assessment on either the respondent’s or complainant’s income should be stated so that even after taking the statements of both parties, a portion should be created for you to state that this is what the person is doing for a living specifically, and probably the amount the person earns based on the person’s work.

**Interviewer:** Okay if I get you correctly, you are trying to say that on the checklist, there should be a room to create a portion that even after you have taken their details, it should include a portion that could ask questions concerning an assessment concerning the child? What else

**Interviewee:** Yes, there should also be a portion concerning assessment on the complainants and respondents’ incomes. With the old SOP, there’s a place they just write “Follow-up action”, It should be action taken or decision made or conclusion because if you just say action taken, what action are you talking of but it should be specific that- decision taken by both parties with the officer included. There should be a portion so that it will be known that, it is those two parties that have agreed and not the officer who has put it on them to make a decision.

**Interviewer:** You are saying there should be a portion that would specify the decision that has been agreed by both parties.

**Interviewee:** Yes, and there should be a signed column by them which is not in the current SOP.

**Interviewer:** How different would you want that checklist from the one that we have?

You’ve mentioned that you want it to be specific by just getting a portion to take their decisions and then a portion to have an assessment on their income. Is it only income or would you want more things to be assessed?

**Interviewee:** For now, only the assessment of their income because it has to do with maintenance.

**Interviewer**: Okay so what of their background and when you mentioned income, is it like they’re livelihood?

**Interviewee:** Their income is based on the kind of work they do and what they earn. Their background is also needed because it’s possible the person might not be working but get money from a relative who is probably outside the country and has been supporting and all this while. Hence that should also be included.

**Interviewer**: Lizzy please any other?

**Interviewee:** We here in Tamale, we have something we call an agreement and it’s something that we write on whatever both parties have agreed on that they will do going forward as well as the maintenance of the child or children are involved. We write it down and read it out to them, they accept and then they sign to it. So, if that could be included, it will be very good and helpful.

**Interviewer:** So, with this agreement, do they send a copy home?

**Interviewee:** We give them each a copy and keep a copy in their file.

**Interviewer:** So, is it something that they are to agree so that they don’t come and change their mouth and say they didn’t say it hence a summary of what they have said you write it?

**Interviewee:** Yes exactly, I just list them, read and explain to them. With those who can’t read, we speak in the dilect they understand even if it means we have to get someone who understands their dialect to interpret it for them and then include witnesses.

**Interviewer:** In this case, which people become the witnesses?

**Interviewee:** Who the complainant side wish to be a witness. We explain to them that we actually don’t just finish the case in a day. At the end of the case, we tell you that you are to sign to an agreement so get somebody you wish to be your witness to come so that you will sign to that agreement. They go and choose their own people and when they visit the office, we ask them if “they’re aware of the case they’re signing to?” They agree that they know the person has informed them. Some are always people they come with during the beginning of the case and are privy to the case before they come to sign the agreement.

**Interviewer:** Is there any other thing?

**Interviewee:** For now, no.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much. I want to go ahead and ask my fifth question. What are the challenges you encounter using the case management SOP?

**Interviewee:** One of the challenges is that on the form we have where they write child and family details and they write child’s name. Apparently, it’s asking you to just write one child’s details and where a client has more than one child provision is not being made or does that mean that other children that the person has is not important?

There should be a space that is given to indicate that the case is about all these children and if it has to do with one child, there should be a place where you can also indicate that it’s just a child. So that going forward, you’ll know that these are the children involved in this particular case.

**Interviewer:** So, are you trying to say that this addition can be added in creating it, that we specify the number of children with their details thus, knowing the total number of children involved?

**Interviewee:** Yes

**Interviewer:** If I may ask as a challenge, does that mean in using the standardised your cases are under numbered?

**Interviewee:** Yes, they are not the exact numbers as, for instance, if we are entering a case into SWIMS (Social Welfare Information Management System) that we use in recording, our cases that are being managed in districts and MMDE.

**Interviewer:** What’s this SWIMS about, is it a digital version?

**Interviewee:** Yes, it is a digital version of the SOP. When you’re entering cases, it doesn’t give you an opportunity to indicate the number of children the person has and their full details to show that these are the children are in that are involved in this particular case. It is a challenge hence with the checklist that should be there. It sometimes makes you confuse, as to who the case is referring to. With the way the system is, when you look at the SOP and compare with the SWIMS we get confused because you know the case on the ground, but when you are entering, the information is different so we don’t even know where to put some of the information.

**Interviewer:** Okay if I get what you are trying to say, in the social welfare information management system (the digital version of this case management SOP), because you enter the details of sometimes the children, and other cases it gets you confused, so that has been a challenge. In as much as your cases are being underscored, in the terms of you saying, I’ve been able to maintain 10 children because the couple had 10 children. At the end of the day, you just write one child and then in even imputing the details of the child, are you trying to say, you get confused at some point because at one point you write the mother’s details and some point you write a child?

**Interviewee:** Yes, you don’t know whether it’s the mother that is now referred to the child or the child that is referred to the mother.

**Interviewer:** So, you’re saying it needs to be clear and that is also a challenge for you in using this SOP. Okay does it mean the challenge would have to go into the requirements in creating a good checklist. It means we should be specific as to the mother is details and things like that.

**Interviewee:** Yes

**Interviewer**: Is there any other challenge from you?

**Interviewee:** No

**Interviewer:** If there’s no other challenge, I want to find out the last question, which is, what are the information you would want included in the checklist to assess the child maintenance case?

**Interviewee:** A portion should be created for respondent statement, complainant statement, summary and then some sort of an agreement form should be made where what both parties have agreed on are listed there. There should be a provision for witnesses to sign as well as the issues that should be accessed for instance, the food issue, feeding the health, the education, the communication, and visiting should be included into the child maintenance checklist.

**Interviewer:** So, any other?

**Interviewee:** Yes, with the children their names, statements and assessment, there should be a portion made for them for us to be able to write their assessments on it.

**Interviewer:** Okay so when you talk about children’s assessments, what do you mean?

**Interviewee:** I mean assessing the children’s needs.

**Interviewer:** Okay so assessing the children’s needs should also be included and then what of the children’s details, their education?

**Interviewee:** Yes, where a client has more than one child provision should be made for the names of other children to be included, so that will not be under numbering our cases.

**Interviewer:** Do you have any other thing to add?

**Interviewee:** For now, no.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much for your time.

**Interviewee:** You’re welcome.