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**Interviewer and Interviewee exchanging pleasantries**

**Interviewer:** Please, you are welcome to this interview. So, this research is focused on creating a checklist together with the social welfare officers in relation to child maintenance. So, we co create the checklist so that we know that social welfare officers are involved, because you have been using the checklist for some time now.

**Demographic information**

**Gender:** Female

**Age:** 50

**Educational background:** Masters in International Development Studies.

**How long have you worked as a social worker:** 11 years as a social welfare officer

**What about La Nkwartanang:** This is my 5th year of work.

**How long have you been working on child maintenance:** This is my 11th year.

**Interviewer:** So what kind of cases do you usually get in relation to child maintenance?

**Interviewee:** Usually, it’s the maintenance cases, child abuse, child neglect?

**Interviewer:** What is your experience like in using the case management SOP? How has it been like generally for you?

**Interviewee:** I think it's okay. It helps you to put you on your toes because you have all the, you have the steps to move on with the cases, so it makes it easier. Just that it's time consuming when the people are many on you.

**Interviewer:** So can you share any specific instances where it was effective using the SOP?

**Interviewer:** Yes, it's useful, but very bulky because filling this SOP on each child takes a lot of time and then some of the columns too are very scanty. So they need to elaborate it and then my problem is that the social inquiry in this SOP, court does not recognize it. They want the old time SER that we do for the court but we think this one will be simpler. So I'll suggest there should be a training for both the social welfare officers, including the judicial service, so that we can all work with the documents.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you are saying that, you mentioned some of the challenges you have, which includes some of the spaces being, some of the columns being scanty, as you said and also the fact that the court does not always recognize the social inquiry report in here. Okay and you have also given a good suggestion but on a whole, do you think you are comfortable working with this and if so, why are you comfortable as compared to the old one?

**Interviewee:** Are you talking about SER or you talking about the whole document?

**Interviewer:** So wait, I think before we go there, first of all, before this SoP came, how were you handling child maintenance?

**Interviewer:** It was the normal child maintenance. We have our books, we record them in and then when they come, we use the sheets to record the cases. Those days there were no SWIMS, so we don't enter. We only keep them in the office until you are doing your report or something, then you use it and you keep them on the files for references sometimes. But I think when this came, it is so useful because you enter everything you file, not even that after filing, you also use the SWIMS. So even if this is not there, you get it on your SWIM, you get them on your machine. So anytime you fall on them, you got the information you want, so we've moved to digitalization, I think it's the best.

**Interviewer:** And then looking at this, it's not only child maintenance. So how comfortable are you when like on a whole, are you comfortable working with the fact that the SOP is not only about child maintenance.

**Interviewee:** Yes, it's not about child maintenance but I think it's okay, just like anything that we do, we fall on it, especially when clients come and they are not supposed to be in our jurisdiction. We use the referrals to refer to wherever they are supposed to be. So I think it’s laudable.

**Interviewer:** What do you think about the need to create a checklist that will help to assess child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** I think the checklist will make it simpler. I think it will make the work simpler for us. As for the checklist, you just check and tick and then work goes on.

**Interviewer:** What will be the advantages, in your opinion, if there is a specialized checklist for the assessment process, what would be the advantages?

**Interviewee:** I think the checklist will make the work easier and simpler because with the checklist, whatever I want or need, I'll just check on it or tick on it. So next time, when I want to fall on, I'll go back to that same case. It will be easier for me for identification.

**Interviewer:** But then if we introduce a checklist, do you think there are certain specific drawbacks or disadvantages that it will bring.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, it will be time consuming because already the SOP is time consuming so, to add another document, it will be time consuming. The beginning of everything is difficult, but with time, I think we'll be abreast with it and manage it.

**Interviewer:** All right, so now I want to know what are the key issues that you consider when you are assessing a child maintenance case? All of them, all the important things. What are the key issues that you consider?

Somebody has come with a child maintenance, how do you then identify that it is a child maintenance case, when you do, what do you look out for, what are the key issues you look out for?

**Interviewee:** Initially, you listen to, are you talking of the child coming or the parents coming?

**Interviewer:** Any scenario so we can talk about the child coming and we can talk about the parents coming.

**Interviewee:** Okay, let's start with the child. Sometimes you'll be in your office, you’ll see a young boy or a young girl entering your office. Madame, I have a concern. maybe I'm living with my parents. They are not capable of taking care of me well. They leave the house very early, they come late, so I'm left alone. I have to fall on friends and stuff, my former place, they were coming. I have some people have been counseling. Once a while they will come to the office. You talk to them, you advise them, we invite the parents, we talk to them. All that we are struggling for is money, you’ll get the money, at the end of the day your child will be a dropout or teenage pregnancy. So what will you do? You are fighting for money, now you get the money, you have a problem at hand and how will you solve that problem?

So we have to balance the equations, that is what we normally tell the parents and then the second scenario, the parents can come. Madam, I'm living with my child, she goes to school early in the morning, she doesn't come home, sometimes she doesn't sleep home. So I'll ask, madam, what time do you leave the house? Maybe 03:00 a.m. What time do you come? 09:00 p.m. So what do you think the child will do within that period after school? You are not there. You are not there for him or her, so the child will fall on frame and that is where the peer pressure starts.

So normally we talk to them. If you adjust, get the child, you know you are busy. Get the child a teacher after school, a teacher will take care of the child and then later get somebody who will monitor the child for you until you get home. One thing I always tell parents is that their children should be their friends. When your child is your friend, anything, the child will expose it to you.

**Interviewer:** Let's go back to the first scenario where the child comes to talk about the fact that their parents are not really taking care of them. First of all, if any case is presented, how do you identify that? Okay, this is a non maintenance issue or this is a maintenance case.

**Interviewee:** Okay. Normally the case that a child will present will give you whether it's non maintenance or maintenance. There are certain children, their parents give them everything, they don't like anything, but they fall on friends, they would like to explore at their age. So, it's the duty of the parents to befriend the children as I said earlier. When your child is your best friend, there's nothing that the child will do without telling you.

**Interviewer:** All right, still dwelling on that. So the person has come, this is a child maintenance case maybe the parent is not catering for the child as much as they should. What questions do you ask? Like what important details do you also

**Interviewee:** The child?

**Interviewer:** From the kid and then from the parent.

**Interviewee:** Sometimes we fall on the teachers too. We fall on the teachers too

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but like so what questions do you ask them?

**Interviewee:** I'll ask you so when you are going to school, normally I'll ask, what time do you wake up in the morning?

Since you're the child.

**Interviewer:** So we’ll talk about the child.

**Interviewee:** Let's take about 15 years child or 14 years child. So what time do you wake up in the morning and what are your chores in the morning before going to school? Then I ask again, how much do your parents give you to go to school every day? Some will tell you 20 cedis, some ten cedis. You know my former place, the JHS, they don't give them school feeding, so you have to buy food. Then I ask, so what is your problem? The child can tell you that, let me put it in the local language, “ my mother always shouts at me, even when I’ve not misbehaved, she is always insulting me”. You know, some parents, the relationship with the children are not okay, they think shouting, yelling will solve the problem but at that stage, the children don't like it that way. So, after narrating the story with the child, then we invite the mother. If both parents are there, we can invite both. If it's a single mother, we invite the mother, then we talk to the mother. At the age of that girl, this is not the way to handle her. So we have so many children, during break time, they come to our office. Madame, my money is stolen, you have to give her something to eat. Madame, I came around to greet you. So now they are our friends in the office, if anything, so now how is the house now? Oh, maybe the house is okay now, changes have come. Then I advise them, be a good girl or a boy to your parents, so that you can achieve whatever you want to achieve.

**Interviewer:** What about when the parents come to report?

**Interviewee:** When the parents come to report, I have a case like that. The parents came to the office to report that the girl doesn't go to school. They give money, they give everything but still she'll dress up from the house and she won't come to school. When they close, she will come back because they are known in the house so they can't monitor. The parent leaves as early as 03:30 a.m. from the house. You leave the girl alone; she will dress up and prepare the young ones and take them to school. The young ones will be in school but the elderly one will not be in school, roaming around with friends and stuff. She feels she's alone; nobody doesn't like her. She feels nobody does not like her at all, the mother hates her. So, during our interaction with the girl, she started coming to school. Once in a while I'll go there and check. I talked to the teacher. I even have the teacher's number. Once in a while I go there to check and gradually, she has picked up again. So I advise the mother that even though we are looking for money, but try and come home early a bit because you can't leave your three children at home in the care of a 16 year girl. You go, you come around 9, by the time you come they’re asleep; whether they did their homework or they studied or where and where they went, you are not aware. So normally we advise the parents, when it's closer to me, I monitor.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so those are very great examples of your experience. Now, a scenario where a parent, the parent who has custody of the child comes to report that the non custodial parent is not helping to take care of the child financially. It could be the mother, it could be the father, so we have a situation where that happens. So the person is here, what are the important questions that you are going to ask her or him?

I mean, sometimes the men come and report that their mother is not helping to take care and sometimes the women also come and report. So what are the key issues, what are the importance?

So we are just looking at the questions you ask the details you need in order for you to assess the case.

**Interviewee:** Normally, the person who will come, I'll first ask, are you together? You know, some people are together but they don't take care of the children. We have cases like that, they are together. When the man gets up, he leaves, It's only the woman who will do everything. When you ask, there are problems here and there and then we have another one, they are separated, but the children will be with the man, either the man or the woman. So normally the women, it’s the women that suffers mostly. For the cases that we handle, about 90% are the women. The children will be with the women but the men won't bring money to take care of the children. So normally when you report a case like that, we will ask you what work does the man do?

**Interviewer:** So first of all, are you cohabiting? Are you living together?

**Interviewee:** Yes, then what work do you do and what when does your man also do.

**Interviewer:**  And why is that question important?

**Interviewee:** Because of the taking care of the children. So when we know the work you, the woman does and what the man also do, the man will not take care fully, the woman will definitely support. So if you don't work, how will the children live? So when we ask, upon interrogation, then we invite the other party. Then we sit and talk, so during our hearing we'll come to a conclusion. Maybe the man will willingly say, “oh, I didn't know. Initially I didn't want to give money to this woman, I hate her, I don't want her to use my money, that's why I was not taking care”. But then upon advice and everything they willingly give, maybe I will give them so, so and so, in a month I'll pay their fees. Then we tell the man that, when you pay the fees, you pay the feeding fee, you give them money, that is not all. They need to wash their clothes, they need soap, they need water, water for bathing, water for washing, water for drinking. The woman will do that, when they need to visit the barbarian shop, the woman will do, maybe foot their sandals and their school bag, their socks and stuff, the woman will also assist. Normally you have to let them know that the woman is also doing something to support and it's not about the woman, it's about the children. As we always say, the best interest of the child is paramount.

**Interviewer:** So, we've only talked about two aspects. We have talked about the maintenance and non-maintenance. You ask their parents that they are together, which is an important factor. Then you talk about the work they do and then you even went ahead to say that you explained to the parents that it is not only about providing money for school and for food, but there are other aspects. I think that's important.

What other key issues do you look out for when the parents come to you are there any other issues you look out for?

**Interviewee:** Yes, sometimes accommodation. You know sometimes most men sack the women from the house and, you know, women go with their children and they don't have a place to live. So sometimes we talk about accommodation too. When there's health issues, we talk about the medical aspect of it too. Sometimes the children will leave the house for a long time, they might not be in school. We talk about enrollment even if you don't have money for a private school, you can take them to public school. Now we are advocating for the public school because most of them say the fee is higher and I don't have that much. So it's advisable you take them to public school and then you monitor.

**Interviewer:** So, on your list of questions that you ask them and I mean, of course I realized that it's different from case to case but on a whole in general when it comes to child maintenance, which one do you think is most important, followed by what?

So is it that their parents relationship is the most important or is it that they work the parents which is the most important or where they live? So I just want to have your idea of what you think is most important. Then what? Then what? Then what? We are creating the checklist.

**Interviewee:** The welfare of the child is the most important thing before I come to where they will sleep, whether they are in school or not because when you don't have a place to lay your head, you can't go to school. You don't have the sound mind to study, so where they will leave. As for the parents, when they are not together, you have to provide for your children an accommodation to live in, you see and then what they will eat. The basic needs, all the basic needs, health, the education, accommodation and stuff. I think they/re all important

**Interviewer:** Then after that, what else?

**Interviewee:** Basically, that is all. That is all and money to eat with because they need to survive, they can't study without food.

**Interviewer:** All right. How different would you want a child maintenance checklist to be from the case management SOP? Let's say there are two different documents what difference, what is here that you don't want and you want it to be on the checklist or otherwise?

**Interviewee:** If I have my way, the maintenance, there should be a standardized amount. Standardized amount paid by parents to their children, maybe from a range. For example, maybe the child will eat 20 cedis a day, that is 600 a month. Some can even pay more because I have a case at my former place, one child, he pays thousand a month. You see, so there should be a limit, so the limits and above. I suspect there should be something like that because it varies from district to district.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, but then from what you're saying, generally there's a certain standard of living in the country. So, if the child will spend morning, afternoon, evening, this amount per day. Okay, so I understand that submission. So then with that one, would there be other considerations that you make? Because some parents live in places where they don't specifically have money, but they can bring food stuff,

**Interviewee:** Yes, especially our villages. They can get everything with exception of fish. So maybe the other parents can bring food stuff and something small for fish and they will be okay. But it must vary because I can't compare Adenta here to maybe Ada East or Ada West, the standard of living may be different.

**Interviewer:** but you think that the SOP should have that. I mean the checklist should have an amount, basic amount per child, no matter the number of students pay child is this amount. Does age matter?

**Interviewee:** A child is below 18.

**Interviewer:** Yes. So I'm talking about the specific age of the child. Maybe a child from zero to maybe 6, this is the amount. What do you think?

**Interviewee:** No,I think it should be general so that you, the case worker will look at it, look into it. Maybe we can compare a baby of like three or four months to a child of six years because as for the baby, there will be diapers, there will be wipes, there will be tin foods and we know it's now expensive. So it depends on the case worker.

**Interviewer:** What other information aside you said only the amount. What else should be on the checklist?

**Interviewee:** What we normally do, the medicals, the education. The education, let's go by this SHS even though it's free, look at the list they give them. Last we had a case here the list alone is close to 5000.

**Interviewer:** The prospectus?

**Interviewee:** The prospectus and the child's own list, maybe your pajamas, your staff close to 5000 and it's not easy.

**Interviewer:** No 5000 is not easy for anybody.

**Interviewee:** So I've started advocating to parents. When your child gets to JHS 1, start getting a small belonging for SHS. You know you’ll sleep on mattress, a pillow, you need a pillowcase, you need this, you need that for your child. So when you are ready with that and then the school come, all you are left to do is something small. So it's been my plan latter part of last year and this year. So I've started that advocate, preparing the minds of parents about that you know your child will go, why don't you prepare, so prepare, and I gave them a scenario. I wanted my boy to go to PRESEC and went to their this thing and downloaded it. I bought everything and he got it. I didn't suffer. I quickly took him. You see. So prepare, there are certain things you can buy. You can buy your bucket, your sponge and other stuff, your mattress. So the school list will be something small, this whole cutlass and stuff so that we move on, you'll be free too. You know as for boys, white shirts they will wear. Why don't you buy them down, everywhere white shirts and khaki. It's only Labone, hey wear white shirts and black. So you make your inquiries about the school, you prepare even if there are certain changes it will be something small.

**Interviewer:** I think I like your approach to the whole maintaining a child because the parents should know that this is my child no matter what so they should be able to push themselves to provide for the child.

**Interviewee:** And I always tell them where you've gotten to, your child should be higher. Maybe you are now in the market, you went to SS, your child shouldn't end at SS. Your child should go higher than you and they are your property. Whether you bought a land, you didn't buy a land your child is your property. Invest in that one and you will reap. You see, so I've added this to my campaign.

**Interviewer:** Yes, that’s so good. So before we end, I just want you to go over the challenges in the SOP that you mentioned or the ones that your colleagues have mentioned, that they have challenges.

**Interviewee:** The bulky is the number in the SER as I said earlier. Most of the distrits too, they are not using it. Where is came they’re not using it.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Interviewee:** They use but this my former place, we filled this, when the parent, the clients come, you know, when the clients come, we fill a form for them. I think this one, the case registration form. Yeah. They don't use it. I don't know why. The other time we did a reunification, as for that one, they use it and then child wish to the family, they use that one. The case registration, they don't use.

**Interviewer:** Then that’s another challenge. This is a new challenge you’ve mentioned, that most people do not use.

**Interviewee:** Most of the district do not use it.

**Interviewer:** Maybe if we understand why it's not being used, it will help us.

**Interviewee:** I’ve askedbymy boss is always busy. I asked the young lady who just came out, she can’t give me any tangible reason. So I've made my mind to add the boss himself. I don't know why they don't use it. My place we were using all, when you come to make case, we refer this for you. Keep a copy in the office before we give you the invitation but here, they give only the invitation to the client, the one who came to record the case. All this they don’t do it.

**Interviewer:** They don't use the initial screening?

**Interviewee:** I didn't see them using it. So, I'm yet to find out. I’ll ask, you know, I reported about two weeks ago.

**Interviewer:** What about the comprehensive assessments form?

**Interviewee:** They don’t use any. We did reunification and all they use is the reunification from the child wish and then welcome to the family also. That's they use so I’m yet to find out.

**Interviewer:** Yes please. Finally, do you have any suggestions about using the SOP, the checklist that we are co-creating and everything, any suggestion that you have or final words?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, I think the checklist need to be done because it will help ease the work in a way and then the SOP too should be enforced in all districts to use it because it was created to be used, not to be kept, so that the work must go on. I think that is okay.

**Interviewer:** Thank you so much for making time. Have a nice day.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. You too, my dear.