SW9

**Interviewer:** Okay good afternoon. Hope you are doing well.

**Interviewee:** Good afternoon. I’m fine, thank you.

**Interviewer:** So basically, like I said, this is a research survey with a project title co -producing a child maintenance assessment checklist for the Department of Social Welfare. The research team are Dr. Ebenezer Cudjoe in the UK, Professor Frimpong-Manso, University of Ghana, and then Dr. Alhassan Abdullah, also a lecturer. So basically, the research questions are six that we want to find out concerning case management standard operating procedure, whether there is a need for a checklist or not and approximately maximum 50 minutes, we should be done.

You are free to stop at any time, and everything that we discuss here is strictly confidential and we are going to anonymize you so we’ll noy know who said this or who said that. So you are free to stop at any moment if you are not comfortable and so before I start, I want to ask you some few questions.

Can you tell us your name, your educational background, your age, if you don't mind, how long have you been working as a social worker and then you mentioned the name of your district assembly and how long have you been working on child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** Okay. SW9. I'm 27 years and I have a degree from the University of Ghana, Family and Consumer Science. I majored in Family and Child Studies and I've been with Tema West for three years. I’ve worked as a social worker for three years as well.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then also working on child maintenance cases for how long?

**Interviewee:** For three years.

**Interviewer:** The same three years. Okay, thank you very much.

So with the first question, I would want to find out if you could describe your experience in using the case management standard operating procedure, your experience in using it in general.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so with the case management standard operating material. Yes. It actually gives us the opportunity to plan very well with the steps we want to put in place to find missing children's parents, their families, and all that. So I think it's very detailed and I mean, it makes us plan well, basically. That's it.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so in your planning, can you go into details as to how using the case management standard operating procedure has helped you to plan if you can throw more light on it?

**Interviewee:** It gives us the opportunity to document every step as we move on.

**Interviewer:** So every step concerning the type of case you are managing.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Thank you very much. So there will be a further question to that but is there any other thing that you would want to say or describe aside the planning that the case management SOP has helped you?

**Interviewee:** Well, I mean, it's been okay, Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, thank you. So the next question is, what do you think about the need to create a checklist dedicated to assessing child maintenance cases solely?

Earlier on, you were talking about missing child cases and things like that, but this one, what do you think about the need to create a checklist dedicated to assessing only child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** So with the checklist, I think the case management SOP is very bulky and we’d want a brief and precise form as compared to this case management SOP.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So in summary, do you think there's a need for you to have a checklist dedicated to the child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** Yes. I think there should be a need for that.

**Interviewer:** Okay and what are some of your reasons aside you saying the existing one looks bulky?

**Interviewee:** My main reason would be that if it's short and very precise, It will make the work easier.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so to you, it’ll make the work easier, and you want something that is also brief and concise, strictly on child maintenance cases. Okay, so there is a follow -up question for you to brainstorm, and I want you to explain all details to me.

What are the key issues you consider when assessing a child maintenance case? So your normal child maintenance case you handle in your offices. What are the key issues you consider in assessing a child maintenance case, If you can tell me?

**Interviewee:** So the key issues we consider when assessing a child maintenance case is maintenance of the child, education of the child, medicals, access, or custody and accommodation. So with the maintenance of the child, we look at both parents, their income, how much they can both support in raising the child, and how much goes into child support, I mean that's supporting the child both ways. Then when we come to

**Interviewer:** So with the maintenance, when you are looking at the income of the parents, what are some of the things that you consider?

**Interviewee:** The job.

**Interviewer:** The job that they do, so you ask them the kind of jobs?

**Interviewee:** The kind of jobs. There’re certain times we ask for their pay slip to find out. Some of them have taken out loans and they have to pay for the loan, so sometimes we give them an amount to support the child with.

**Interviewer:** Like how much?

**Interviewee:** So about 300 cedis.

**Interviewer:** 300 cedis pay a child?

**Interviewee:** Yes, monthly but then this is even subject to review after six months. Some go beyond six months. Some too the mother or the father can tell you that I will give 500 cedis or I will give a 1000 cedis at the end of the month, depending on their income.

**Interviewer:** So aside, you are using their salary. So checking their pay slip. What if the person is not in a formal employment, how do you also determine the income?

**Interviewee:** So they tell us. When we ask them, they tell us that, so this is how much I'm making a weekend. This is how much I can give to the child. Sometimes the 300, we don't say, bring the 300 at the end of the month. Maybe if you can do 150 every two weeks or however you do it, 75 every week or something, yeah.

**Interviewer:** So you try to make it as flexible as it is. So are there instances whereby aside the monetary supports, they include other things.

**Interviewee:** Yeah. There are some who come and tell you that they want to give food stuff or maybe if you're asking for 300, they’ll tell you that, “I can give 200, but buy a bag of rice, a bottle of oil at the end of the month, yeah.”

**Interviewer:** Okay. So you have those options as well?

**Interviewee:** Those options, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so it means you do an assessment to ascertain what their strength can and what they can.

**Interviewee:** Yes, definitely.

**Interviewer:** Thank you for explaining the maintenance bits and the income bits, yes. So you can move on to the others and explain.

**Interviewee:** Okay. So with the education, most of the time when the parents can't afford, we suggest the public schools to them, to put their children into public schools, to make it, most of the public schools don't pay fees and we find, you need to find a school that is closer to where the child is living, so the transportation doesn't come. That's if the father can't afford it but sometimes the person the child is living with can afford to say, okay, I work in this area. In the morning, I can go with the child and put the child in school, in the afternoon, I’ll pick up the child and we come back home and yeah I’ve already said everything.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So it means that is education constant, that's for every child? **Interviewee:** In Ghana, education is a basic necessity for kids, so that's why we bring in the public schools if they can't afford their private schools around, yeah.

So I can move to the next medicals.

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee:** So for medicals, we also first ask the parents if the child is on NHIS.

**Interviewer:** Okay, NHIS means National Health Insurance Scheme.

**Interviewee:** National Health Insurance Scheme and we ask that when the lady or whoever the child is with goes to the hospital, they take receipts and if there's a need for medical bills to be paid, the woman calls her partner to try and sort that out with him or bring the receipts to our office, then we call the partner and we give him the receipts to refund the money. So can I move to the next?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**Interviewee:** So with access, we also consider the age of a child. If the child

**Interviewer:** So when you talk about access, what do you mean?

**Interviewee:** One party having to have a child for a particular time. So the party who doesn't have custody of the child has reasonable access to the child from time to time. So with that one, we consider the age of the child. Usually when the child is below 10 years, we don't allow the child to sleep over. Sometimes we do it like, even if they can sleep over every fortnight and the men can actually have access weekends, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, they can pick up the child and return the child. Maybe if you pick the child Saturday morning, you can have the child till like 5pm and bring the child back. You can't do that on Sunday as well but in the case where the child is grown maybe from 10 years and can do a lot of things for themselves, if they sleep over, it means that maybe every other two weeks, the child is spending time with the father or with the mother, any of them.

**Interviewer:** So why don't you allow sleepovers if the children are younger?

**Interviewee:** It's not that we don't allow sleepovers, we just don't encourage that much. Sometimes when they come, the men threaten to take the children away from the women or take the children and run away. So you can just have reasonable access until a certain age.

**Interviewer:** So it's when you see those signs that the man says that I have a tendency of taking the child away.

**Interviewee:** Stealing the child.

**Interviewer:** Stealing his own child?

**Interviewee:** Yes and the last one is accommodation. So with the accommodation, most of the time it really doesn't come up. Sometimes you realize that they both have places they live. So with the accommodation, I was saying most of the time both parties have places they are living and it doesn't always come up and then there are times where we plead with the men to assist the women find a place in case they are ejecting them from where they are or something.

**Interviewer:** That is with the accommodation?

**Interviewee:** Yes, It doesn't come up very often, but once in a while when we get those things, we ask that for the sake of the child, the man should please assist the woman.

**Interviewer:** Okay, in terms of accommodation?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And sometimes do they do it.

**Interviewee:** Most of the time, yes they do. It is not 50 -50, sometimes the woman already has 70% of her rent and needs a 30% support.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so what of instances whereby the woman is not economically viable, like she is not working. Are you sometimes also able to speak to the man to assist?

**Interviewee:** Yes sometimes you even realise that, maybe the woman is living in a two bedroom house and right now her rent is due, she can't afford it. We advised that you get a one bedroom or chamber and hall self -contain so that your cost can come down and if the man can help you, he does.

**Interviewer:** Yes. So but my question was for women that are not working. Do you also tell the men to sometimes put in capitals for the sake of the children?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes the men daily help. Yes

**Interviewer:** Okay. So it means that, Is this the point you are going to add, so is this something that you are assess, you are consider when checking whether the woman is employed or the man is employed so that if one part is not employed, how would the other person even support the other?

**Interviewee:** So we actually encourage them to find things to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So I want us to move on to the fourth question. So the fourth question is, how different would you want a child maintenance assessment checklist to be from the case management standard operating procedure?

**Interviewee:** Okay. So, the first thing would be the respondents and applicants details. The applicants and respondents’ details is not included in this SOP. Also their

**Interviewer:** So if it’s talking about applicants and respondents. I want you to explain.

**Interviewee:** So the applicant is usually the person who makes the complaint to social welfare and the respondents could be the partner or whoever she came to report. It doesn't include their source of income as well and also in case the children

**Interviewer:** So in their source of income, how different would you want?

Do you only want source of income or in this case, as you were explaining the other one, you want to know how they get their source of income and then from which way they want to be supporting?

**Interviewee:** Yes, everything. How much they make from whatever they are doing. Monthly, weekly, whatever and also in the case where the child has a disability, it doesn’t, children with disabilities are very expensive. So, I mean there should be a way to actually support the partner who has the child. This goes beyond just the maintenance because their education too is sometimes very expensive, yes. So, yeah, I think basically that's all.

**Interviewer:** So are they the only things that you want to be different?

**Interviewee:** Yes, for now, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so I think in summary, you did mention about having an application, applicant details. So in the applicant details and in the respondent details, can you come clearly as to what you want to ask?

**Interviewee:** Okay, so with the applicant and respondent details, we ask for their names, their ages, their contacts, their residence, their occupation, and the number of children they have between them.

**Interviewer:** Okay, and that of the respondents too, the same details?

**Interviewee:** The same thing, yes, same details.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so any other information or thinking through the child maintenance and SOP that you feel could include?

**Interviewee:** So another thing might be the type of case. You know, it's not always maintenance. Some is custody, some is paternity, all those things.

**Interviewer:** So explain it one after the other. So explain what you just said.

**Interviewee:** So with the maintenance, maybe the woman has given birth with someone and the man is not taking, he's not remitting them, he's not taking care of the children as he should. With custody, it could be that they were together, there was a split, and the man is taken the children, and doesn't want the woman to see, or the woman is taken the children, doesn't want the man to see the children. I mean, custody and access, they go hand in hand. Then with paternity, most of the time, the women come that the man is denying the pregnancy. Sometimes, some come pregnant, some to come when they have delivered and sometimes, even when you're doing the case work, the man will tell you that he's not responsible for the pregnancy. So cases like that, we just refer them to the court, for them to do a DNA and all that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you want a component of whether this child maintenance case involves that of a custody and assets, paternity.

**Interviewee:** Yes, maintenance and sometimes, child welfare in general.

**Interviewer:** So explain the child welfare in general.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so I'll give an example. So let's just say that a man has children with a certain woman, and a woman dies, and the family has the children, and the man decides, so if the family has their children, then he's just leaving everything for the family meanwhile, he should be supporting the children at every instant and all that.

**Interviewer:** So in that case, it is family welfare.

**Interviewee:** Family welfare, child welfare, I mean the welfare of the child is paramount.

**Interviewer:** So in this case, if I get you clearly, then you’d then call the man to book that he should take care of his child.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** So in that case, you will not call it maintenance, but you want to call it family welfare or child welfare because the child is already in the hands of the other family?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so do you have anything to add up?

How different would you want the child maintenance, I just want to probe further, how different would you want it to be?

**Interviewee:** Not as many leaflets as the SOPs, the case management SOPs.

**Interviewer:** So you don't want it too bulky?

**Interviewee:** Too bulky, yes.

**Interviewer:** And what else again?

**Interviewee:** And everything I've mentioned should be included.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so I would want to move on to the fifth question. What are the challenges you encounter in using the case management SOPs, so this one?

What are your challenges you encounter?

**Interviewee:** Okay. So with the challenges, I would say that the case management SOP is not really tailored to the child maintenance cases and it's very bulky so sometimes it's very difficult to fill in till the end.

**Interviewer:** So let me probe further, if you say it's not tailored to the child maintenance, what do you mean?

**Interviewee:** As I said, it doesn't have some of the information we require from the respondents or the applicants and also the bulkiness of it is one thing because I feel like some of the pages who are just writings and if you have four or five cases you have to fill this SOP, you'll be tired. Sometimes you'll just start and leave it halfway, you don't go through till the end.

**Interviewer:** Okay so you feel it’s too bulky and too much information?

**Interviewee:** Very bulky and too much.

**Interviewer:** So are these, all the information relevant to your child maintenance?

**Interviewee:** Most of the information required here are not really relevant to the child maintenance cases.

**Interviewer:** Can you give an example?

**Interviewee:** Like the referral forms, they are not needed because they are not actually taking the children out of their home. So that one form 11 form 12.

**Interviewer:** Where from 11 is what?

**Interviewee:** From 11 is the referral form as well.

**Interviewer:** Referral response form.

**Interviewee:** Okay from 10 is the referral from 11, referral response.

**Interviewer:** So for the referral forms, you use it when you are referring a case. So probably it's because if I try to understand you, it’s because most of the times they complainants themselves walk to your office. So they don't refer their child maintenance cases to you, they come directly. Okay

**Interviewee:** Yes that’s why but sometimes some also come with referral forms from the DOVSSU or the Police station.

**Interviewer:** Other places?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay so in that cases then the referral forms would be necessary.

**Interviewee:** From that side. Yeah and some too from other municipalities. Yeah

**Interviewer:** So, any other challenge in using?

**Interviewee:** No other challenge.

**Interviewer:** Then I would ask the final question, just the final question, I want it to be much more detailed, I want to probe it well.

What are the information you want included? So this one is like we've given you a drawing board, just putting all the information. What are the information you want included in a checklist to assess child maintenance cases?

So as you mentioned the information please be detailed as much as possible with the mindset that I don't even know what you are talking about. Thank you.

**Interviewee:** Okay so the first one is the details of applicants and respondents, that is, we need their names for both of them. The name, age, and contacts, residence, number of children between them. We also need their marital status, the number of dependents, their sex and

**Interviewer:** So, the number of dependents please explain.

**Interviewee:** So, it could be the number of other children he has. If he has, then other people he's taking care of, maybe a sick mother, his siblings, his nephews, nieces, all that.

**Interviewer:** Okay so why are you saying his, is it only the man you’ll take, ask those things, what of the woman?

**Interviewee:** So we would want it to be on both sides. We want to know if the lady as well, the number of dependents she has and also, we’d want to know if the children have any disability or not. Their source of income, whatever they do, they should

**Interviewer:** On the disability point, if they seem to have a disability, and it's weighing one party down or both parties down, is there any way that the Assembly can support?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, so most of them, we introduce them to the 3% common fund here by government. So we give them a form to fill and write an application letter, they bring us the response. We put it into the system as and when we get help from the government, we also give the help to them. What else?

**Interviewer:** Any other information you would want included? Please give me everything.

**Interviewee:** So, we’ll also need a column to put the interim ruling, that's the maintenance education.

**Interviewer:** Interim ruling, what does it mean?

**Interviewee:** So, the decisions we have taken or with the help of the parties, what they have agreed on to do, that's what we just term as interim ruling. So, that includes the maintenance, education, medicals, access or custody and the accommodation, if the need for the accommodation comes up.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so if I get you correctly, are you trying to say that we should also get a portion on the form that will give us decisions that we have arrived, maybe some form of intervention we are going to do, that has been arrived by both parties?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Both parties, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so do you give them copies of those documents?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes, when we are done, we read them out again to them, to let them know that, this is what we have all agreed on to do.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so do you think it would be good to give them a copy so that it's binding to them, so that they would always understand that we said, I'll pay the school fees, I'll do X, I'll do Y.

**Interviewee:** Yes, yes, I think it would be best to give them.

**Interviewer:** Give them copies?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, so we could do that and just give them a photocopy that, okay, so this is what you have agreed on and this is what we are going by, yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** But then, sometimes in all these instances, they are subject to change, so I mean, sometimes when it changes, they both come back and tell us that, oh, so maybe, I said I was going to give 300 at the end of the month, but then, this month, I want to give 500, or from now I want to start giving 500 because I've gotten a well -paying job, or this, a lot of things, this has change, yeah.

Some come like that, some are very generous like that, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so any other information you would want to be included?

Any other?

**Interviewee:** Yes, with the marital status, sometimes it's just, we're just living together, cohabiting, sometimes too they are married, sometimes they are separated, sometimes they are divorced, yes and I think the last one is just the safety of the children, to make sure that, every decision we make is for the safety of the children. We don't, we actually consider the children first in all, in our case management process, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So are you don or you’d would want to add something else?

**Interviewee:** For now, I'm done. I think I’ve mentioned everything.

**Interviewer:** For now, you’re done, exhausted everything.

Okay, thank you so much, for this feedback. We really appreciate for your time, it's just about 31 minutes. I think you really didn't want to talk much, you summarized and so we appreciate your time, thank you so much.

**Interviewee:** You’re welcome.