**SW8**

**Exchanging pleasantries**

**Interviewer:** My name is Yvonne, we are having a research that will enable us develop a checklist for child non -maintenance cases as social workers and so that's why I'm here. Since we've been working with SOPs as social workers, I deemed it right to come to you this morning, to enable us to have this interview, which will go a long way to help research and other things. So, that's why I'm here.

**Interviewee:** You are welcome.

**Interviewer:** Thank you. What's your name, please?

**Interviewee:** SW8.

**Interviewer:** how old are you, please?

**Interviewee:** Please I’m 45 years of age.

**Interviewer:** Wow. You don't look it. What's your educational background?

**Interviewee:** I have a diploma in community development and I have a diploma in social work. I have an MBA in management studies.

**Interviewer:** Wow, that's great. So, how long have you been working as a social worker?

**Interviewee:** I have been working as a social worker for about 12years now.

**Interviewer:** I see, all in this same district or You were somewhere and you were transferred?

**Interviewee:** I was, when I first graduated, I was posted to Ho Municipal Assembly, the Department of Social Welfare but then later on, I was transferred to this district, so I would say this is my second district.

**Interviewer:** It means that you have worked in Ho and so you have related well with the people.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** How long were you there?

**Interviewee:** I was there for six years.

**Interviewer:** Before you were transferred?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Wow, that's great. Have you been working on child non-maintenance cases?

**Interviewer:** Yes please, all the time, since I started working as a professional social worker. I've had cases also in child maintenance.

**Interviewer:** Child maintenance for the past 12years?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, then it means I would have a lot of information from you this morning. Okay, so now to our main reason why I am here., kindly describe your experience using the Case Management SOP.

**Interviewee:** First of all, I would say that the SOPs are standardised versions for recording of statements of clients both parties, and the child involved. So, per my experience as a social worker working on child maintenance cases. There have been a lot of cases on child maintenance, especially you take the whole case management SOPs as a whole, you’ll realize that child maintenance has higher rates than other cases.

**Interviewer:** So, if I'm getting it right, out of the cases that you have filed here, you mean child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** It has the highest percentages or the highest rates.

**Interviewer:** On the cases that you worked with?

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay and was it the same in your former station, like in the whole environment?

**Interviewee:** In the whole environment, I would say that most of the cases were pertaining to custody instead of child maintenance. So when I came to this district, I was quite surprised at how high the rates for child maintenance is.

So I went through the report and I realized that most at times it's issues coming from family welfare that lead to child non- maintenance cases because of the feud between the parents or the clients.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Will you relate it to the tradition, you know, so we are told for the Voltarians because they, you know, they inherit their fathers. So they are the patrilineans and they have the patrilineal system, will you relate it?

**Interviewee:** Well, yes.

**Interviewer:** That's why it was about custody and not

**Interviewee:** Yes, because most of the times, because they have a patrilineal system of lineage, the men don't see why the children should be with their mothers while they are still alive.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so they take the children and they take care of them themselves

**Interviewee:** Yes they do that.

**Interviewer:** and so, no one will report them for non-maintenance?

**Interviewee:** No. When they come for custody, they do their, they perform their responsibilities, even sometimes more than when the child is with their mother. So the cases for a mother coming for a child from the father, they are quite, small. It's not high like how the father would want the child to be with the mother,

**Interviewer:** the child to be with the mother as in your district now. Okay, so what it means is that that is making the child non maintenance cases, having a higher percentage over all the other cases here?

**Interviewee:** Yes and I would also relate it to the kind of environment that both of the clients find themselves because we are in a district where marriage is not really upheld.

**Interviewer:** So it's boyfriend, girlfriend and then they give birth?

**Interviewee:** Yes and then they have the child and everybody goes their separate ways. They have other children and then it becomes their whole, the responsibilities become much for the men. So they find it hard to even come back and take care of their child.

Most of the time, they don't take care of any of their children. They just give birth and they move on. So I think the economic stability of the parents, it's a factor for the high rates of child non-maintenance cases.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so if you say that what do you mean?

**Interviewee:** Because we are in a district where unemployment is quite high, so most at times the parents, the fathers to be precise they do not have the financial capability to take care of their children properly like how a father is supposed to take care of their children. So it makes it quite difficult for them and the women don't want to support either, so it becomes a whole lot of issues. So I’d relate it more to the environment and then the high rate of unemployment in this district.

**Interviewer:** wow that's insightful. Okay, so what do you think about the case management SOP?

**Interviewee:** Well, when we first came here, I was quite new to how the case management SOPs are, because my district, where way I was at first we had the

**Interviewer:** You weren't using it?

**Interviewee:** Yes. So, I find it quite bulky and repetitive.

**Interviewer:** Bulky, how?

**Interviewee:** It's complicated. It's very complicated. When you want to pay attention and go through the case management SOPs in the whole, it takes a lot of time too. It's very bulky. It's complicated. So, if you want to take your time,

**Interviewer:** Okay, so let me get you right. You're saying it's bulky. It's complicated. So the bulky, come clear for me.

**Interviewee:** Yes please. It's a lot, because when you take the child maintenance SOP in a whole, it's up to the officer to sort out which parts are for child maintenance, which parts are for family, which parts are for other cases, other forms of cases that we deal with.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so like rape, defilement, the protective concerns.

**Interviewee:** Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Okay, missing children

**Interviewee:** Yes. Exactly, so it makes the record keeping quite difficult for me as a social worker.

**Interviewer:** So it means that's when you pick SOPs, it has different components, like if a case is on child abuse, if a case is on rape, which is also another form of child abuse.

**Interviewee:** Missing children, family welfare, It's all in one. It's all in one in the case management SOP, so it's up to the social welfare officer to detect which parts of the form are for the case he or she is handling at that time, which is what makes it bulky. Do you understand?

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yes please.

**Interviewee:** So, if I'm working on child maintenance, I'd have to go through to look which one is for child maintenance

**Interviewer:** before you complete that area?

**Interviewee:** Exactly. Yes, that's what I mean by bulky.

**Interviewer:** Okay and what of the complicated?

**Interviewee:** Yes. The type of questions, how the questions are in the SOP for the take-in, sometimes it's, the questions are twisted in a way, they are not in layman's English.

**Interviewer:** Okay, that you can easily understand.

**Interviewee:** You’d have to think and relate it to if this is for child maintenance before you tick, because you can't just tick all of them and go. Yes, that's what I mean by complicated and it's a repetitive. Repetition in the SOPs, they are quite much.

**Interviewer:** Wow. So what are some of them?

**Interviewee:** Some forms, I feel some forms you just need one or two, but end up having three or four and you have to write the same thing all over again and it’s time consuming.

**Interviewer:** Wow, it's bulky, it's complicated, it's time consuming and it's repetitive. Okay, that's a lot. Okay, so as a social worker, do you think it would be needful to create a checklist that is dedicated to assessing child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** Yes, I think it will be very helpful to create a child maintenance checklist.

**Interviewer:** Just that?

**Interviewee:** Yes, a child, I would be happy if the checklist is on every form of cases that we do. Child maintenance, family welfare, missing children, so when the officer takes the SOP, there’s a path for child maintenance.

**Interviewer:** So that you complete that pattern, you are good to go

**Interviewee:** Exactly, you know that you’re done

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Yes, so there's no need to go through and ascertain or detect which one is for child maintenance. So I think there's a really, it's really needful that we have a checklist dedicated to assessing child maintenance. it's very it's a very helpful and beneficial to us.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so, I'm enjoying our conversation. So what are the key issues that you as a social worker consider when assessing a child non-maintenance case?

**Interviewee:** First of all, we look at the economic states of both clients. Even though per the law, the father has the sole responsibility of taking care of the child. We also try and see if the mothers can also help out. So the economic states, the psychological states, because sometimes the child can be with the mother but then the mother brought the case for child non-maintenance but realize that, it'd be better if the child is taking from woman given to the father. So, we look at the mental states too.

**Interviewer:** Okay, of the caregiver.

**Interviewee:** Of the caregiver and the child as well because sometimes the caregivers, they say a lot of things to the children about the other parent and then it changes their perspective or mindset of the father, even though that may not be the case.

We Look at the environment, where the caregiver and the child is living and the parents as well, either the respondents or the complainant.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so where do they live?

**Interviewee:** Yes, we look at the environment. Yes, that's basically it. We look at the environment and then their environment, their mental capacity and then their economic capability.

**Interviewer:** So, if I'm getting you right, if a child maintenance case is reported to you, you consider the employment of both respondents and their complainant, then you also look at the environment that they find themselves, then they are mental state. **Interviewee:** Yes, because the child is the main focus in all this. So any decision we take, we try and make sure that it's going to help the child in the long run.

**Interviewer:** So it’s the best interest of the child, that is what you look at?

**Interviewee:** Yes, the complainants and the respondents, they can sort their issues another day, but the main focus is the child, the best interest of the child is why we are here.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so basically when handling child maintenance cases, these are just the things that you look at.

**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so how different would you want a child maintenance assessment checklist to be from the SOP that you are saying is bulky and it's complicated and it's time -wasting, and all that?

**Interviewee:** Well, personally, I would want the checklists to be dedicated more on the child.

**Interviewer:** Okay, how?

**Interviewee:** Because when you take the case management SOP, most at times, it's asking about the respondents or the complainants but very less, even though there's space for information for the child, it’s very less comparing

**Interviewer:** Maybe it’s scanty?

**Interviewee:** Yes, comparing it to the

**Interviewer:** The information on the respondents and the complainants?

**Interviewee:** Yes, exactly. So there should be, the space for information for the child should be more than the respondent or the complainant. If possible, there can be a statement, if the child is of age. The child can also give a statement, not just the respondent or the complainant.

**Interviewer:** So, if I'm getting it, what you are telling me, you would prefer if sometimes the children in question are also invited?

**Interviewee:** If they are of age, because not every child.

**Interviewer:** To be part of the case conference?

**Interviewee:** Yes, because sometimes the child non-maintenance, you realize that the children are 16, 17, 18, they are of age, they can express themselves. So if the children are part of the case conference, I think it would also be a very good idea.

**Interviewer:** Okay and what they are saying or what they will be saying will be parts of the checklist?

**Interviewee:** Yes, or even the checklists should have more information on the child, even if the child is not present to give the statement, more information on the child.

**Interviewer:** So that you can find out those issues from the complaint?

**Interviewer:** Yes, exactly.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, aside that, what else?

So, if your child is not present and you have, you are recommending for a checklist for child non-maintenance, what are some of the things that you feel should, if the child is not there?

**Interviewee:** Certain details, more details of the child should be included in the checklist. So there should be a space where the details of the child should be taken. Even though there is a space where details of the child are in the SOP now, it’s scanty, because you will fill it and it goes back to the caregiver.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so let me break it. So, if we take a child, that the parent has reported that, the father or the mother is not taking good care of, what would you like to know about the child?

If you tell me, it should be detailed information, are we looking at the school of the child, the performance, so elaborate on it.

**Interviewee:** Exactly, how is the child performing in school, the educational background, performance, educational background, relationship with teachers, relationship with the people they live in the community, even the kind of relationship the child has with the people, because sometimes they live with others in the house. So, what's the relationship the child has with the others living in their house, apart from the caregiver, what's the child's relationship with the respondent? Because apparently the child thinks that the respondent is not taking care of.

So, what is the relationship between the two? Is it good, is it bad, does it have to be worked on? Yes, such details, it will help.

**Interviewer:** Okay.Will it be proper if the child’s physical, whether the child has a kind of disability, you know, those things, do you think it will be okay in the checklist?

**Interviewee:** Yes, it's also needed that it should be part. Does the child have any illness and how does the respondent or the caregiver attend to those illnesses for the child.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so what would these detail do to the case management even the non-maintenance?

**Interviewer:** So if, for instance, there's a child maintenance case and then realize that, the child has a chronic disease of asthma, we would know how to manage the case for the respondent.

**Interviewer:** How?

**Interviewee:** If maybe there has to be other payments, dedicated to the

**Interviewer:** Aside the

**Interviewee:** Aside maintenance, medication, it there’ll be other payments dedicated to the owners of the child because asthma is a disease that can come anytime. So there should be some form of payment that is dedicated to when that need arises. So just come and then.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so you mean that a child’s health status or condition can help you make decisions relating to the maintenance of that child?

**Interviewee:** Yes exactly, because asthma is a disease that come at any time, and things happen, you don't, maybe the caregiver may not reach the respondents at that given time. So when there's additional money or payments, the child will be rushed to the hospital and then the respondents will be informed later, that this is what has happened.

Please, I hope you understand me?

**Interviewer:** Yes, please. So what are some of the challenges you encounter using the case management SOP?

**Interviewee:** As I said earlier, it’s quite time wasting, it's complicated. Time wasting in the sense that you'd have to go through the whole

**Interviewer:** with the clients?

**Interviewee:** No, you mean, when filling it or?

**Interviewer:** Yes, when completing it, what I know is that you start completing it by asking questions from the complainant and the respondent. So the time wasting, is it time wasting for the officer, the social worker, or time wasting for the respondent and the complainant?

**Interviewee:** Well, sometimes it can be time wasting for both the clients and the officers because you'd have to ask questions to be able to fill it and if you are taking about 30 minutes to fill it, you are wasting 30 minutes of the client's time and there are clients outside too waiting to be attended to.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Interviewee:** Yes so when, every client has a scheduled time that they come. So when I’m attending to a client and I take about 15 minutes alone to fill a checklist, then it's going to eat into 15 minutes of the client's time. So it pushes the time we are supposed to even close because we can't leave them hanging, we have to attend to them before we leave. So when I say time wasting too, that is what i mean by that.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so considering the questions in the SOP, are there instances that clients come and, based on the questions, they will have to even call the house for information?

**Interviewee:** Yes. Some people come, they don't even know their date of birth, they've forgotten. So they'll have to call someone, some of them they’ll have to go back home. They'll have to go home and come back and bring it and when, you see, because of the issue of confidentiality, you don't want the case when we are attending to someone, another client would walk in, then we’ll have to leave the current clients waiting to fill other records.

Please do you understand?

**Interviewer:** Yes, please.

**Interviewee:** So, yes, ID cards are left home. They don't bring their ID cards along.

**Interviewer:** Most of the clients don't have their ID cards?

**Interviewee:** Yes, unless those who have it on their phones, some of them will have a picture of it. Some of them, and you see, not everybody uses a smart phone. Yes. So some of them will have to go back home and bring it. Some of them too have to call home because we need the number on their ID cards to be able to fill it.

**Interviewer:** And all those things, waste time

**Interviewee:** Well, yes, if they should have a knowledge that they are supposed to bring it

**Interviewer:** Bring the ID card?

**Interviewee:** Yes, maybe that one, that part would be and the punctuality, they don't come on time. When we issue the letters to them, we give someone 9 am, as at 10 am, the person is not here and so we’d have to look at other clients that are here. So, by the time the person is ready to come, we are working on other cases too. So the punctuality is also a challenge that we face.

**Interviewer:** Okay, so what are the information that you want included in a checklist? I think it's almost like the first question I asked you. So what are the information you want yes, as a social worker on child maintenance cases?

**Interviewee:** So, as I said earlier, they health details of the child to be able to help us in decision making and the current economic status of both complainants and respondents, not just the respondents, both of the clients.

**Interviewer:** Why not just the respondents?

**Interviewee:** Because, when you, sometimes, even though per the law, the child is the responsibility of both. So we want to see the economic status of both so we can be able to make the decision on how the child will be maintained.

**Interviewer:** Okay, by both parents?

**Interviewee:** By both parents, yes. Towards the education, health, and general maintenance, welfare everything and so we need to know the economic capabilities of both clients.

**Interviewer:** Okay, madam, I would like to thank you so much for your time.

**Interviewee:** You are welcome. Thank you very much.

**Interviewer:** I believe that the information that you've given us will help us to work on a child non-maintenance checklist to relieve social workers of the bulky SOP, which is complicated and also time wasting. Thanks so much for your time.

**Interviewee:** Thank you very much also.