

ALTERNATIVES TO INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN

A sequence of case studies



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THE NEED

- Poverty, family breakdown, drugs, and HIV/AIDS are the main contributing factors to the increased number of orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) in SA.
- Traditional community care structures such as kinship care are strained and not coping with the high level of demand.
- The continuum of care of children spans a range of sectors:

Non-Statutory/ kinship care - Placement of a child with extended family.

Statutory substitute care - Legal placement of a child with a foster parent.

Formal Welfare Sector - Recognised welfare NGOs operating "last resort" residential care.

Informal NGOs and unregistered homes - Often unregistered with the Department of Social Development (DSD), less structured, no support from state subsidies, difficult to track.

THE REASON

- BESEG promotes and supports a family orientated care environment for orphaned and vulnerable children.
- A series of case studies has been documented by BESEG with the intention of giving care providers and caregivers a practical guide to appropriate care models.
- Three models are presented, each describing a specific alternative to institutional care.

THE SOLUTION

As a last resort, when family or kinship care is not an option, to develop care models that:

- Ideally retain children in the environment and support networks with which they are familiar and "at home"
- Retain a family-orientation where a child can bond and develop emotionally, psychologically, and socially.

THE MODELS

Case study 1: Transitional Housing

Case study 2: Community Family Homes

Case study 3: Home extensions for carers

CASE STUDY 1- eKhaya Lethemba - Place of Safety: A transitional, short-stay residential care model

- The emphasis of this model is on providing a secure 'home type' transitional care facility, whilst developing an immediate strategy for onward informal kinship care, foster care, or adoption placement.
- eKhaya Lethemba accommodates children in need of care, ranging from newborns to pre-school children and strives to meet the holistic needs of children.
- Managed by PMB Child and Family Welfare Society (CWS).

WHY THE NEED FOR A PLACE OF SAFETY?

- Placing children with potential foster parents at short notice, particularly in the late afternoons, is difficult.
- Child-care institutions will not host children in an emergency. Red tape requires a time consuming process of interviews before placement.
- State institutions are reluctant to take in children that may be difficult to place, particularly older children or children with behaviour problems or disabilities.

THE PILOT PROJECT: REDEVELOPMENT OF CLUSTER FOSTER- CARE HOUSING

The eKhaya Lethemba project was identified by the Department of Housing as a suitable pilot cluster foster-care project.

'Special needs' housing subsidy funds were granted to cover costs for the full rehabilitation and conversion of the existing buildings, and associated professional technical services.

CWS appointed BESEG in April 2004, as the implementing agent.

The project provided a total yield of 19 beds with ancillary laundry, office, ablutions, crèche and play area.

Construction was completed in November 2006.

Capital Funding - Total of "special needs" housing subsidy R570,795 (R 30 042 per bed [19 beds]).

Physical characteristics - 3 main buildings, two used for residential care (with one central kitchen) and one as a crèche for older children (4-6yrs). Converted outbuildings include a laundry, office, play area, and additional ablutions.

Tenure - 10yr renewable lease from Msunduzi Municipality, with rent covered by a Grant-in-Aid.

Occupancy - Birth to pre-school. Remain +/- 6 weeks or until placement. 68% of children are re-united into the care of their families, fostered, or adopted.

Operational management - PCW management and board of trustees. Trained child-care workers care for the children (1 carer/6 children).

Operational funding - Funded by Stichting Kinderpostzegels (Holland). Carers are paid a "place of safety" fee by the DSD for the children that are placed in their care.

REPLICABILITY

- The project met all the DoH qualifying requirements, including security of tenure, in terms of a registerable long-term lease.
- The project had secure donor funding to enable it to be sustainable in the long term.
- The project was developed and is managed by an accredited organisation, which is able to source sufficient revenue funding to sustain the facility, irrespective of the level of occupancy.
- The facility integrates with one of CWS's core functions of foster care placement, ensuring children a permanent placement in family care where they are not able to be returned to their biological family.
- Place of safety fees are irregular and are paid bi-weekly in arrears. Income for carers fluctuates depending on the number of children assigned legally to their care. Consideration should be given beforehand that staff expect to receive a fixed monthly salary, and caregivers may not be able to rely solely on their child support/ foster care grant.

CHALLENGES

- Time consuming process of securing housing subsidy for capital costs.
- Delays were experienced from the DoH in terms of processing claims, building inspector verification, and communication between regional office and head office.
- The project experienced delays in confirming the new lease agreement.
- The buildings were old and dilapidated, thus it was difficult to anticipate the scope of works, which resulted in accommodating additional, unforeseen works.
- Tender prices were erratic due to construction markets at the time.
- Funding was only provided for renovations, which included fixtures, but not moveable furniture and equipment.
- The renovation period was prolonged, due to the need to keep the facility open during renovations.

CASE STUDY 2- COMMUNITY FAMILY HOMES.

- The emphasis of this model is on providing foster care for up to 6 children in an existing or purpose-built residential dwelling, either in a township or suburban setting.
- The home can be stand-alone or clustered.
- A recognised welfare organisation provides support, monitoring, and supplementary income to the carer.

Three projects were case studied, in order to provide variants on a common theme :

- Cato Manor community family homes - supported by Durban Children's Society.
- Nedbank/Unilever roll-out - supported by Project Preparation Trust.
- The Isibindi Creating Circles of Care Model: A case study of a child-headed family in Umbumbulu - supported by the National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW).

COMMUNITY FAMILY HOMES (CFHs)

Guiding principles of the CFH models

- Psychological, social, and emotional needs of children are best met within their family and surrounding community and culture, and children should therefore be cared for within their community of origin.
- Children are placed in an all-family environment to experience and enjoy a 'normal' family life, which provides love, warmth, security and a sound education.
- To encourage, assist, and empower communities to take care of children in a way that best suits their circumstances, culture, and resources.
- An external child welfare organisation provides guidance and assists with the management of the CFH.

CASE STUDY 2a- Cato Manor Community Homes - A community foster care model

Concept

- Cato Manor community family homes (CFHs) is a special needs housing facility initiated and supported by Durban Children's Society (DCS).
- The project involved the development of two township houses, each catering for a houseparent and six children.
- Each family lives in a single 'dwelling', integrated into their local community rather than within a closed institutional system.
- The house parent, ideally recruited from within the local community, lives with the children, cares for them, and is responsible for all aspects of childcare, nurturing, and rearing.
- The two Cato Manor CFHs were completed in 2004 and 2005 respectively.

- **Physical characteristics** - The two houses are on separate plots. The design is that of a typical township house.
- **Procurement** - The KZN Department of Housing (DoH) policy prior to 2004 stipulated the managing organisation to be a registered Section 21 company. DCS thus formed a subsidiary Izingane Initiatives Association, incorporated under Section 21 of Companies Act (1973). BESEG was the initiator and manager of the development.
- **Capital funding** - The land was acquired and the houses constructed using transitional/ special needs housing subsidy. Conditional approval by the Department of Housing in 2002. Total subsidy amount of R480, 672 (subsidy quantum R30 042 for 16 beneficiaries).
- **Occupancy**- designed to accommodate a houseparent and six children until the age of 18.
- **Management** - Durban Children's Society, mainly the responsibility of the DCS appointed social worker.
- **Operational funding** - funds for maintenance and service cost to the house are usually covered out of DCS's annual budget. Costs relating to children are covered by a Foster Care Grant received for each child. Housemother receives a an allowance from DCS of R1000 per month.

CASE STUDY 2b - Corporate Social Investment Initiatives

These variants of the CFH model relied on a combination of corporate social investment funding and government housing subsidy:

- Nedbank and the Nedcor Foundation accepted a proposal from Project Preparation Trust (PPT) in 2004 to establish community foster homes (CFH) by using Nedbank properties in possession (PIPs).
- A condition of sale was that PPT apply for special needs housing subsidy from the (DoH) for the purchase of the property.
- The value of the house was to be used by Nedbank to capitalise an endowment fund, the interest from which would cover operational costs.
- The Thokomala Orphan Care Programme was a joint initiative by Unilever and Durban Children's Society.
- Unilever provided funds to purchase and maintain (through an endowment fund) several houses to be utilised as CFHs, and Unilever employees were to be involved as volunteers, as part of Unilever's "Social Involvement Programme".

REPLICABILITY

- An accredited organisation has responsibility for monitoring the care of children and the sustainability of the household.
- Up to 6 children are cared for by one carer. This is not always possible in conventional foster placements.
- Siblings can be placed together.
- Children are placed in as near an area from which they come.
- The house should look similar to those in the immediate surroundings.
- Community family homes qualify for "special needs" subsidy from the DoH.
- A written Letter of Support for a CFH, from the Provincial Department of Social Development, is required to underpin the application for Provincial Housing Subsidy.
- The safety and acceptance of the home in the community is a fundamental factor to be considered.
- A routine building maintenance plan is important.
- A comprehensive contract outlining the organisation's expectations of the carers, and vice versa, must be drawn up. Housemothers are not employees of the Society and are not entitled to standard employee benefits.

CASE STUDY 2c

Isibindi Umbumbulu - Creating Circles of Care Model

- Developed and managed by The National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW).

The objective of this model is to:

- Create safe and caring communities for children and youth at risk.
- Preserve the family structure by focusing on children and youth made vulnerable through illness or death of one or both parents, resulting in child-headed households where siblings remain intact as a family.
- Focus on the care of children in the context of the family, extended family, neighbourhood and community with a service provider and/or the state acting as a protective mechanism.
- Work in the life space of children and youth with the focus on equipping them with skills to cope competently in their living environment.
- Empower and encourage communities through training and support, to facilitate a strong community base and community involvement in caring for children and young people.

REPLICATION OF THE ISIBINDI MODEL

The following is a brief replication guide:

- A needs assessment is conducted, identifying and incorporating all the relevant community stakeholders.
- A partnership needs to be developed between NACCW and the implementing organisation or agent.
- The model and its components are workshopped by NACCW and contextualised by NACCW and the implementing agent.
- Potential child and youth care workers are identified by the implementing agent.
- Workers are trained by NACCW in child and youth care.

CHALLENGES

The following are some of the challenges that have emerged in the CFH model:

- Obtaining subsidy approval can take at least two years. Properties on the open market are often lost.
- The subsidy amount may be insufficient to cover all capital costs, depending on the cost and condition of the property, and may need to be supplemented by donations
- Discrimination and physical abuse by other children in the community is disturbing.
- Problems relating to mixed genders within one house do occur.
- Problems with delayed foster care grants and, when applicable, place of safety grants are common.
- Children over the age of 18 are removed from the system with no resources for their future.
- It is critical to establish a sustainable funding source for maintenance and operating costs.

CASE STUDY 3- Home extensions ("Add-a-Room") programme

- The concept emerged from the high incidence of informal care occurring in townships, that results in overcrowding. This is particularly true of "RDP" housing, where as many as 3 generations can be crowded into a single room dwelling.
- The aim is to secure special needs housing for the carers of non-biologically related children, in order to build an additional bedroom(s) and where necessary a second bathroom.

The Save the Children KZN pilot project

- BESG started working with the Department of Housing on developing a programme of home extensions as one of three pilot projects, designed to test the replicability of the model in different situations.
- The original project, planned with Kokstad Child Welfare Society, had to be abandoned due to a proliferation of illegal home extensions in Bongweni township.
- Save the Children KZN operate a network of creches across the eThekweni (greater Durban) municipal area. Several creche workers had informally fostered children over an extended period of time. They were selected as partners for the pilot project.
- The project aims to benefit 8 carers and 26 non-biologically related children in "de facto" foster care.

The Save the Children KZN pilot project (cont'd)

- BESG had to go through a two-stage process of securing "approval in principle" (conditional approval) from the Department of Housing to use special needs housing subsidy to implement the model, and then approval to implement the actual pilot through the Coastal Regional Office of the DoH.
- Special needs housing subsidy of R40,787 (escalated rate to November 2008) per extension is provided. The DoH agreed to "pool" the subsidies, so that the cost of each extension can be varied according to the condition of the existing property, and structural and civil constraints.
- Part of the subsidy, after professional fees and construction costs, is capitalised in order to fund an 8-year monitoring commitment by Save the Children KZN.

Challenges and replicability

- The project is the most preferred model by the Dept. Social Development, because in principle it follows all the precepts of true foster care.
- There were challenges in implementing the pilot project, because there was no policy to cover the utilisation of housing subsidy to extend previously subsidised low-income housing. Replicability should be easier, as the regulations governing similar projects were developed in the course of the pilot project.
- The model is expensive in terms of capital costs, compared to subsidies for normal township housing, because site and founding conditions are not readily available, and money has to be committed to alter and in some instances rectify the existing house.
- Development is lengthy and complex, as one has to deal with all the underlying issues affecting development or upgrading of an entire township - tenure issues, general plans and revisions to property boundaries, services, etc.
- A letter of support for each child placement from the Department of Social Development, and a monitoring partner with a specialisation in child care, are required as a condition of funds approval by the Department of Housing.

Thank you!