

# **No Place Like Home**

**A study into the operations,  
management, and care offered by  
residential facilities for orphaned and  
vulnerable children in KwaZulu-Natal**

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# The environmental context

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- At present, it is estimated that one in three people in KwaZulu-Natal are infected with HIV. By the year 2008, one million five hundred thousand heads of households will be children in South Africa (KZN Housing 1999).
- By the year 2010, it is estimated that there will be 750 000 “AIDS orphans” (sic) in KwaZulu-Natal alone (KZN Housing 1999).
- By 2015, there will be 2.5 million orphans under the age of one in South Africa (ASSA, 2007).
- Government departments have responded to this impending social crisis through multiple policies. For this study, the policies of the Departments of Housing and Welfare are of central concern.

# The policy context

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- In terms of section 26(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996, “everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing”.
- In terms of section 28(1)(b) of the Constitution, every child has the right to family care or parental care, or to appropriate alternative care when removed from the family environment.
- In terms of section 28(1)(c) of the Constitution, every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services and social services.
- In terms of the Housing Act, 107 of 1997, national, provincial and local spheres of government must...promote the meeting of special housing needs, including, but not limited to, the needs of the disabled.

# Continued...

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- The KwaZulu Natal (KZN) Department of Housing in 1999 issued HIV/AIDS Housing Guidelines as a component of the Transitional Housing Subsidy, which stipulated the following:
- Cluster homes or children's villages for "AIDS orphans".
- Transitional housing for adults or children who lose a breadwinner.
- The provision of facilities for home based care where families are prepared to assist people with AIDS or "AIDS orphans".

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- The KZN Department of Housing guidelines have come under heavy criticism:
- Delineation of all orphans as “AIDS orphans” propagates stigma.
- This policy has created the opportunity for a new generation of “AIDS orphanages” in contravention of national welfare policy and the KZN’s Department of Housing policy not to fund projects that do not have the support of the Department of Welfare.

# Research Questions

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- Are unregistered homes serving a need?
- How do institutional care facilities manage the care of orphaned and vulnerable children?
- What are the impacts of institutional care on orphaned and vulnerable children?
- Are institutional care facilities operationally and financially sustainable?

# Methodology

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- Six child residential care institutions in KwaZulu-Natal were case studied.
- Of this sample, three were registered and three were unregistered.
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Directors or Managers of child care institutions, coupled with on- site visits and observation.
- Information was requested regarding NPO registration, audited financial statements, awards and welfare registration.

# Results: Unregistered institutions

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- The lack of funds for operational costs creates dependency on local and international donations for various supplies.
- Management of the institution may be informal in reality; owing to a lack of funding there sometimes are no child care workers, and consequently no personal growth or placement programmes.
- Children are not placed back into the community with extended family or foster parents.
- Unregistered institutions do not have the capacity to care for children with special needs.

# Registered Institutions

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- Receive welfare grants from the Department of Social Welfare and Population Development.
- Welfare grants are meant to cover the bulk of operational expenses of the registered institution.
- Fundraising is essential for sustainability for operational costs and additional programmes.

# Is Policy Misalignment giving rise to institutional housing?

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- Policy misalignment is not in itself giving rise to new forms of institutional housing.
- Homes have arisen out of a *perceived* need without the permission of the Department of Welfare.
- Registration depends on a needs assessment process; the Department of Welfare is often approached after the event

# Are institutional care facilities financially sustainable?

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- For registered homes, welfare grants contribute to expenses, but may not cover all expenses. Fundraising is essential to cover expenses and innovative programs.
- Unregistered homes are inherently unstable. They have to fundraise for all operational costs and are dependent on donors for sustainability.

# What are the impacts of institutional care on orphaned and vulnerable children?

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- This study did not investigate empirically the impacts of institutional care on children. Instead, this study aimed to investigate the operations, management and care offered by registered and unregistered facilities that potentially impact on children.
- This study concludes that behavioural problems and psychosocial dysfunction begin either through partial or complete breakdown of the family or in the family home, triggered by physical and sexual abuse, parental addictions and general poverty.

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- Unregistered homes can positively influence the psychosocial development of children, depending on the:
- Physical environment (physical structure, cleanliness, privacy, space for study and sleep).
- Capacity of child care workers to counsel and guide children.
- Monitoring of and interest in children.
- Presence or involvement of a social worker.
- Provision of balanced nutrition and food security.
- Presence of a motherly figure that children can bond with, irrespective of working hours of childcare workers/housemothers who usually work in shifts.

# Are unregistered institutions serving a need?

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- This research has shown that children are sometimes in unregistered homes because communities who refer them are not aware of the differences between registered and unregistered homes.
- Child care institutions in communities are more accessible to people.
- Community members are more aware of unregistered homes as they frequently operate within the community.
- From this perspective unregistered institutions are serving a need as a 'drop off centre'. Homes operating from communities essentially save children from abandonment and abuse that results from living on the street.

# Policy Recommendations

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- Unregistered homes should be encouraged apply for registration as shelters, or places of safety as short-term facilities for housing orphaned and vulnerable children.
- Shelters and places of safety have less rigorous compliance standards than children's homes.
- Registration means that children are at least in the welfare system.

# The Department of Social Welfare and Population Development:

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- Needs to recognise that unregistered facilities will increase as a result of the growing number of orphaned and vulnerable children.
- Given that it does not have a systematic process to undertake needs assessments and monitor and regulate a 'spontaneous industry,' it is indirectly placing children at risk.
- It needs to be more flexible in its approach to unregistered institutions in order to bring them into a regulatory framework and move unregistered homes towards compliance with Minimum Standards.

# The Department of Housing, to protect its investment:

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- Needs to be more systematic in engaging with the Department of Social Welfare and Population Development, and adopt a demand-driven vs. supply-driven approach to meeting the shelter and care needs of orphaned and vulnerable children.
- Needs to be more critical of organisational and financial sustainability factors.
- Needs to simplify procedures for accessing special needs housing subsidy in order that new institutions are regulated, and they are given access to adequate levels of investment to meet Minimum Standards in terms of physical shelter needs of orphaned and vulnerable children.

# Conclusion

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- The scale the crisis of OVCs in South Africa is growing. There are limited financial and human resources to address this crisis.
- The reality is that unregistered institutions exist and vary in the type of care given to children and in community outreach programmes.
- Strict statutory control of all institutions is required. A regulated process and regular visits from social workers to offer support are important mechanisms to ensure that the child's rights are protected.