

The nature of collaboration between social workers and Isibindi child and youth care workers in rendering services to orphans and vulnerable children.



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Can Social workers
and child and youth
care workers coexist
for a better child
protection system?



Literature review

- ▶ DSD National strategic plan(2012)- adoption of the Isibindi programme nationally to work with OVC in their life space
- ▶ Hon Bathabile Dhlamini's foreword encouraging partnerships amongst stakeholders to ensure effective service delivery to vulnerable groups
- ▶ Social workers and CYCWs occupy roles that might seem very similar; however their activities to address the same goal of child protection may differ, (Allsopp, Thumbadoo, Mendenhall, Bachman, Bess, Kidman & Walsh, 2013:5). **Social workers- statutory intervention, CYCWs- therapeutic role in child's life space.**
- ▶ Thurman, Yu and Taylor (2009:8)- description of Isibindi approach and the roles of CYCWs
- ▶ Scott (2009:3)- importance of supervision in CYCW and its different methods
- ▶ Michael (2013:94)- the knowledge and skills needed by CYCW supervisors to enhance the provision of professional and effective services to OVC.
- ▶ Thumbadoo (2013:53)-explains how the needs of OVC are effectively addressed by CYCWs supervising child-headed households
- ▶ **NB: Commonality- effective service rendering to OVC**



Rationale for the study

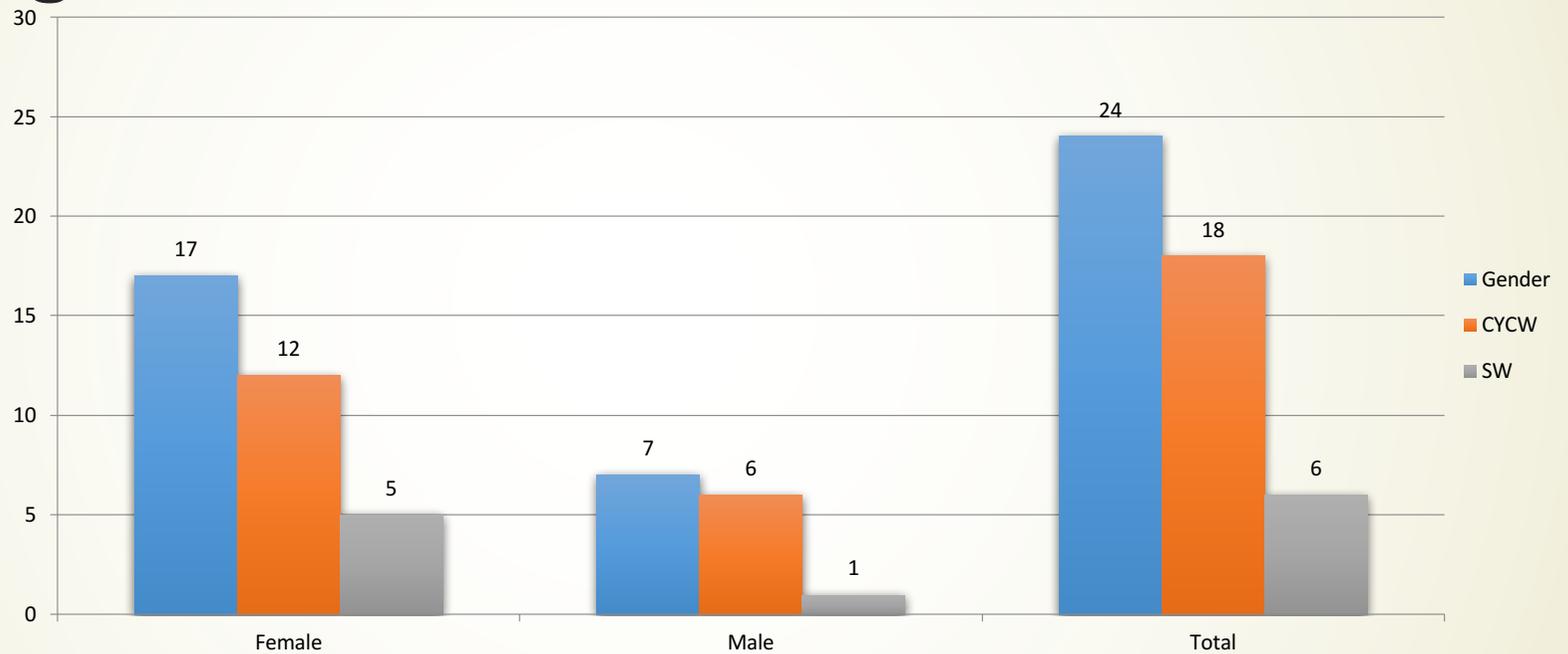
- ▶ **Researcher's personal experience**
- ▶ **Negative:** different approaches to a problem (different message to client), no boundaries or specific roles for the social worker or CYCW were present in the relationship with the client.
- ▶ **Positive:** high case load reduced by collaboration with CYCWs (prevention and early intervention services MDT intervention eg social grant cases-SW write letter to SASSA, CYCW escort client, budgeting skills)
- ▶ Case referrals- assisting with homework, addressing urgent material needs, and monitoring adherence to Antiretroviral Treatment (ART), CYCWs reporting cases needing statutory intervention
- ▶ Prevention of system loopholes- reporting potential social grant fraud- grannies reporting biological parents as untraceable, CYCWs live in communities reviewing truth
- ▶ **Colleagues' similar experiences**
- ▶ Allsopp et al. (2013:30) the process of recognising CYCW as a profession has taken years. Barriers to this included professional rivalries between social workers and CYCWs, and unclear and overly restrictive regulations.



Qualitative Methodology

- ▶ **Research design-** multiple case study (Dewetsdorp, Thaba Nchu & Gariep dam)
- ▶ **Population-** Social workers and CYCWs
- ▶ **Purposive sampling:** 6 social workers, 18 CYCWs
- ▶ **Semi-structured one on one interviews-** 45mins-2hours
- ▶ **Data analysis-** Creswell's spiral, (2013:182-188)
- ▶ **Data verification-** Guba's model, (Shenton, 2004:63)
- ▶ **Ethical considerations:** university ethical clearance, permission letters NACCW & DSD, signed consent letters, confidentiality, anonymity(pseudonyms) & information management.

Demographic profile: Participants - gender, social workers and CYCWs



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- ▶ Qualified social workers and CYCWs,
 - ▶ Ages ranged between 21 and 41
 - ▶ Practical experience ranging between 2 and 19 years of practical field work.

Participants' accounts of their daily activities to address the needs of OVC

CYCWs' accounts of their daily activities

- Assist with personal care and household chores
- After school care
- Sessions with children
- Accompany children & parents to resources
- Administrative
- Supervise and support team
- Deal with community complaints

Social workers' accounts of their daily activities

- Statutory work
- Counselling and support
- Crisis intervention
- Awareness programmes
- Registration of CBOs
- Social grant administration
- Prevention and early intervention

Participants' accounts of how they work together

CYCWs' accounts of how they work with social workers

- Report/refer cases to social workers
- Social workers assist with grants, administration and documentation
- Social workers provide background information
- Social workers assist with counselling
- Social workers assist with food parcels
- Work together on community programmes
- Social worker as an advocate

Social workers' accounts of how they work with CYCWs

- CYCWs refer and report cases to social workers
- CYCWs support OVC
- CYCWs provide information
- CYCWs link social workers to the community

Participants' accounts of the successes experienced in working together

CYCWs' accounts of successes experienced in working with social workers

- No successes
- Social workers facilitate documents related to social grants and school enrolment
- Successful intervention by social workers
- Assisted with food parcels/social grant administration
- Case consultations and advice
- Social workers accompany CYCWs to court
- Good relations with social workers facilitated training opportunities

Social workers' accounts of successes experienced in working with CYCWs

- CYCWs report issues
- Assist with school enrolment
- OVC's needs are met
- Assisted to establish a crèche
- Assist with awareness campaigns
- Successful family preservation



Direct quotes: CYCWs

- ▶ *“I had a client who was physically disabled and had developmental delays. I referred the case to the social worker who intervened by assisting the child with admission in a special school. The child was also an orphan living with his aunt and the social worker assisted her with the foster care grant application as well as to receive a care dependency grant. The child was also exempted from paying school fees” [Angela].*
- ▶ *“I referred a case of orphans that were living with their aunt and were also struggling financially. The social worker then assisted with foster care placement and now they receive foster care grants. Another case was of a child who did not have a birth certificate and could not attend school as a result. The social worker assisted with a letter that we took to Home Affairs and the child got his birth certificate.” [Gabby].*



Direct quotes: social workers

- ▶ *“Since CYCWs are community-based they get to see most things that we cannot see. We have a lot of successes when they report community members that misuse the social grants. We were even able to get some loan sharks arrested by the police who would take people’s social grant cards to pay off their debts.” [Una].*
- ▶ *“There was a case of child neglect I dealt with. I involved a CYCW to do monitoring and to support the family. I received feedback that the child’s mother is always at home and when she needs assistance she contacts the CYCW and their family life has been preserved. So since the Children’s Act emphasises early intervention the CYCW did a great job in preventing the child to be removed from home. The presence of CYCWs in the community helps a lot in terms of child protection.” [Viola].*



Participants' accounts of the challenges experienced in working together

• **CYCWs' accounts of the challenges experienced in working with social workers**

- Unavailability of social workers
- Social workers neglect their duties
- Lack of role clarification between the two professions
- Undermine CYCWs
- Role confusion in the community
- Lack of communication
- Lack of assistance and resources

• **Social workers' accounts of the challenges experienced in working with CYCWs**

- No challenges
- Undertake tasks for which they are not trained
- Maintaining of confidentiality and ethical code
- Role confusion in the community
- Misrepresenting themselves as social workers
- Do not inform social workers and lack of communication
- Place pressure on social workers



Direct quotes: CYCWs

- ▶ *“Social workers’ availability is very limited. When they become available they are always in a hurry and do not attend to the cases we refer to them. They take a very long time to address the children’s needs, but mostly never attend to them. I have not voiced these concerns with the social worker because of fear that she would think I want to know better, or take over her job at the same time undermining her, because it once happened to my colleague. The social worker even told me herself and since then I am not able to open up.” [Queen].*
- ▶ *Some social workers are not clear with our job description; they feel like we are spying on them. Some feel like we want to take over their jobs since we work in similar ways, whilst some think that we want to teach them how to do their jobs especially when we consult with them on what clients would have reported... there is no progress with their cases.” [Innocent].*
- ▶ *“There was an incident where the social worker felt like I was spying on her or causing confusion to the client. We worked with the same family and I was assisting the family with budgeting which is part of the Isibindi model. The social worker was not happy and I had to terminate my services with that family.” [Jacob].*
- ▶ *“Sometimes they think that we want to take over their jobs. They misinterpret us and it is, because they do not understand our work. They undermine the CYCWs. After reporting cases to them and seeking help from them they promise to intervene in that particular case but never do. This will lead our clients in not trusting the service we render to them because of these empty promises.” [Harold].*
- ▶ *“When we pressure them they state that we are boring and always want first preference we cannot stand in a queue. Being told to stand in a queue like any other client makes me feel small, especially that we are always in the community and get first-hand information that they might not have access to.” [Florence].*
- ▶ The feelings stated by the CYCWs are clearly a reflection of unclear guidelines of collaboration. These findings correlate with Molepo’s (2015:299) findings in his study on the challenges and coping strategies of CYCWs in the South African context. The author illustrated poor stakeholder relations with other professionals like social workers in this context. The study reviewed how the emergence of CYCWs as part of the social services professions would likely generate tension for other professions like social workers.



Direct quotes: social workers

- ▶ *"I cannot pick on any challenge that I have faced when working with them, because like I mentioned previously that I worked with them for a very long time and relationship building was very important. We always discussed cases together."* **[Viola]**
- ▶ *"CYCWs have taken over our work. They sometimes attempt to do things they are not trained for and will not do it as we would. This work which is of not of good quality taints the image of the social work profession."* **[Terry]**.
- ▶ *"There is also a confusion in identity. Community members often call CYCWs social workers and when they complain they just refer to social workers not rendering effective services, but they would have been in contact with a CYCW."* **[Seth]**.
- ▶ *"Some CYCWs also work with our clients and they do not even inform us and most of the times we give the client different messages which is not good for our image in the community".* **[Una]**.
- ▶ *"The challenge comes when they expect me to work in a way they would, not bearing in mind that I have a very high case load; I sometimes feel like they know better about my job than me."* **[Xuxa]**.

Participants' suggestions on improving the working relationship between CYCWs and social workers

CYCWs' suggestions to improve the working relationship

- Establish a local social work office
- Improve communication and regular meetings
- Educate social workers regarding CYCW's role
- Social workers must do their work
- Minimise social workers' caseloads
- Use a multi-disciplinary approach in practice
- Register CYCWs
- Recruit and employ more social workers and provide transport
- Enrol CYCWs to study Social Work

Social workers' suggestions to improve the working relationship

- Clear role differentiation
- Regular meetings and case discussions
- CYCWs must identify themselves correctly

Participants' accounts of other resources that support them in their work with OVCs

Other resources used by CYCWs

- NGOs and CBOs
- South African Police Services (SAPS)
- School teachers
- Clinic professionals eg. Doctors, nurses, occupational therapists and psychologists
- Librarians
- South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)
- Ward councillors
- Community developers/Municipalities
- Other departments: Department of home affairs, department of education and department of agriculture
- Nature reserve personnel
- OVC

Other resources used by social workers

- School teachers
- Local clinics
- South African Police Services (SAPS)
- South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)
- Early Childhood Development centres (ECDs)
- Herdsmen
- World Vision
- CBOs
- Department of Health
- Church leaders



Conclusion

- ▶ The two professionals' responsibilities are very similar except for when social workers render statutory services, hence there are overlapping boundaries.
 - ▶ Social workers and CYCWs are interdependent in rendering effective services to OVC.
 - ▶ There is room for improvement in the working relationship between social workers and CYCWs.
 - ▶ The challenges affecting social workers and CYCWs have an effect on services they render to OVC.
 - ▶ Finally, there are other resources available to assist both social workers and CYCWs to enhance effective services to OVC.
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Recommendations

- ▶ Both professional roles be re-visited and clear guidelines for collaboration be set by the DSD and NACCW.
- ▶ To strengthen the multi-disciplinary approach in practice, regular meetings, trainings, and workshops should be held to educate the social service professionals and keep them updated with new information
- ▶ A larger scale study should be conducted, since this study was based on three selected towns in the Free State province of South Africa.



THANK YOU

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