



REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON PERFORMANCE AUDIT STUDY ON THE

SERVICE DELIVERY TO ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN THE COUNTRY

***(THE MINISTRY OF GENDER EQUALITY AND
CHILD WELFARE***

FOR THE FINANCIAL YEARS ENDED 2006 – 2008

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REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



TO THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

I have the honour to submit herewith my performance audit report on the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare – Service delivery to orphans and vulnerable children in the country for the financial years 2006, 2007 and 2008 in terms of Article 127(2) of the Namibian Constitution. The report is transmitted to the Honourable Minister of Finance in terms of Section 27(1) of the State Finance Act, 1991, (Act 31 of 1991) to be laid upon the Table of the National Assembly in terms of Section 27(4) of the Act.

WINDHOEK, November 2009

**JUNIAS ETUNA KANDJEKE
AUDITOR-GENERAL**

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AUDIT TEAM AND TIMETABLE

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The timetable during which the report has been completed was as follows:

Pre-study (Preliminary study):	November 2008 – January 2009
Main study up to final report:	February 2009 – November 2009

ABBREVIATIONS

OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
MGECW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
SDF	School Development Fund
EDF	Education Development Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Auditor-General is authorized to carry out Performance audits in terms of section 26 (1) (b) (iv) of the State Finance Act 1991, (Act 31 of 1991), which reads as follows: (The Auditor-General) “may investigate whether any moneys in question have been expended in an efficient, effective and economic manner”.

The report is based on “**Service delivery to OVC in the country**” within the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, focusing on the Directorate of Child Welfare which is responsible for taking care of OVC in Namibia.

The public has in recent years complained of poor service that orphans and vulnerable children in the country are getting from the government.

The following findings have been identified as the most crucial problems that are contributing to the situation.

Findings:

Identification of OVC

Due to the inadequate social workers, home visits are not done in four out of five regions visited.

Visits by social worker in constituencies and homes

Monitoring of grants

Social workers are expected to do reconstruction services or after care services whereby they are expected to do home visits to see whether the grants are being used in the best interest of the child. Reconstruction services or after care services are not done in all five regions visited.

Allowances for OVC that are placed in homes and places of safety

At five (5) out of ninety (19) children’s home visited the auditors found that these homes have not received any allowance from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare for the three financial years under review.

OVC school exemptions

OVC school fees exemptions

The schools visited are still reluctant to grant exemptions to OVC who can not afford to pay school fees. Schools are mostly granting exemption when social workers from the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare intervene.

OVC examinations and hostels fees exemption

The exemption process to obtain examination and hostel fees takes time. This results in OVC who can not afford to pay being forced to pay while waiting for the response on their exemption requests.

Education Development Fund

The Education Development Fund is not operational yet despite it being introduced by the Ministry of Education to help schools financially that are providing exemptions to OVC.

Transport

The transport problem limits the social workers to make visits in different constituencies in the region to identify and attend to OVC cases.

Conclusions

1. Social workers do not carry out enough visits to homes and constituencies to identify OVC in the constituencies.
2. The audit concluded that the Ministry takes long to approve applications.
3. The Directorate does not conduct enough home visits for reconstruction services to see whether the State grants are being used in the best interest of the child.
4. The audit concluded that the Ministry does not provide any allowance to the children accommodated in a registered children's home and places of safety.
5. Failure by the MGECW to provide counseling to children will have a huge impact on their lives and by that the Ministry has also failed in one of its objectives of improving the quality of life for OVC in the country.
6. Schools are reluctant to provide school exemptions to OVC who can not afford pay. This results therein that many of the OVC in the country loose out on their education because they are turned away by schools for not paying their fees.
7. If the Education Development Fund is implemented, schools will not have problems of turning away and exempting OVC because schools are assured of getting their money back from the Fund if they give exemption to the child.

Recommendation

1. The MGECW should fill vacant positions on the establishment for social workers in the region to conduct more investigations and home visits in the constituencies.
2. The Ministry should minimize the delays to the maximum of three (3) months to approve applications.
3. A proper filing system should be developed to avoid loss of documents that are needed for processing of grant applications.
4. The Ministry should do home visits as prescribed to monitor the progress of the living condition of the child in need of care.

5. The Ministry should ensure that all the children's homes that are registered are receiving the required allowances.
6. The Ministry should give basic counseling training to volunteers in constituencies so that they can assist social workers with counseling.
7. (a) The Ministry should make the purpose of grants given to the OVC clear to the Ministry of Education to enable the Ministry of Education to know how to deal with the school fee exemption of OVC that are receiving grants.

(b) The Ministry should help the Ministry of Education to make the exemption issue regarding OVC clear to all the schools and other parties involved (school board, councilors, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare etc) so that children will not be turned away from schools.

(c) The Ministry should coordinate with the Ministry of Education to help reviewing and to simplify procedures for applying hostel and examination fee exemptions by OVC.

(d) The Ministry should help the Ministry of Education to make sure that all the schools in the country have an Educational Sector Policy on OVC so that OVC are helped when it comes to their education wellness.
8. The Ministry should coordinate with the Ministry of Education to make sure that the "Education Development Fund" is operational so that it can help schools with refunds of their school development fund where OVC who can't pay are admitted.

Comments by the Ministry

No comments were submitted before or on 9 November 2009 as requested. (See appendix 1)

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW) acquired ministerial status in the financial year 2005/2006.

The Directorate of Child Welfare within MGECW has the overall responsibility of taking care of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in the country. This directorate must make sure that the wellbeing of the OVC is properly taken care of and all the services are made available to OVC.

This report is based on the service delivery to OVC in the country. The Directorate of Child Welfare Services is composed of two subdivisions; namely the Child Welfare Programme subdivision responsible for professional social service delivery and coordination of services, with a section of institutions, and the Child Allowances subdivision, which provides financial support to families and institutions taking care of vulnerable children.

The MGECW provides child welfare grants to OVC themselves and to families caring for OVC. Coverage of these grants has increased enormously in recent years, with the increase in applications handled by the Ministry going from some 28 000 children in 2004 to 76 000 children in September 2007. The MGECW is also appointing Communities, referring cases to social workers and registering children for social grants. The MGECW is responsible for attending to children in need of care or protection, and for removing them from the home environment and placing them in alternative care where necessary. This Ministry also provides monthly subsidies to children's homes and places of safety. It has established a position of a Community Liaison Officer in support of the Early Childhood Development, OVC and income generation in all regions.

.2 Audit motivation

Complaints in the general media indicated that:

- The MGECW is not doing enough to develop and promote welfare programmes for vulnerable groups, therefore not all vulnerable people know about the Ministry and its social allowances and welfare programmes, especially in the rural areas where the majority of the population reside.
- There are limited social welfare activities for the vulnerable children and the family's welfare.
- Maintenance grants and allowances disbursed to foster parents are not being used for the intended purposes.

In view of the above-mentioned problems the Office of the Auditor-General decided to carry out a Performance Audit on the Directorate: Child Welfare which is responsible for the OVC in the country.

.3 Objectives of the Directorate of Child Welfare Services

- To improve access to services for OVC in rural and marginalized communities.
- To ensure effective implementation of policies, legislation and programmes regarding children.
- To ensure collaboration and coordination of services and programmes for OVC and their caretakers.

1.4 The Mandate, Vision and Mission Statement

Mandate:

“Our mandate is to ensure gender equality and equitable socio-economic development of women, men and children”.

Vision:

The MGECW will ensure that Namibia becomes a society of equal opportunities for all.

Mission Statement:

“To create and ensure an enabling environment in which gender equality and the well-being of children can be realized”.

1.5 Organizational structure

The MGECW has four Directorates which are Gender Equality, Community and Integrated Early Childhood Development, General Services and Child Welfare Services.

The Directorate of Child Welfare Services is divided into two Divisions namely: Division Child Care Services and Division Child Allowances which are headed by Deputy Directors, subdivisions are headed by social workers.

1.6 Core objective of the Directorate

1.6.1 Division of Child Allowance

The objective of this division is:

- To improve the standard of living of children in need of care and protection through the provision of financial support for their maintenance and education.
- To improve the efficiency of the child allowance system so as to reduce overlap of benefits, administrative functions and increase the number of beneficiaries.

1.6.2 Division of Child Welfare programs

The objective of this division is:

- To empower families and communities to take part in children’s issues, activities, care and developments.
- To develop and implement national programs in order to facilitate standardized, developmental, community-based and inter sectoral services for children.
- To ensure the availability and accessibility of services to children in the regions.
- To build up the capacity of staff in the regions.

1.7 Financing

Below are the estimated expenditure and the actual expenditure of the Directorate: Social Allowances and Welfare Programs for the three financial years for the time period covered 2005 - 2008.

Table 1: Financial Spending of Directorate Child Welfare

Financial years	Estimate	Actual	Difference
	N\$	N\$	\$
1	95 442 000	14 932 019	80 509 981
1	13 660 000	10 483 104	3 176 896
1	16 475 046	15 949 536	525 510

Source: Budget

1.8 Staffing

The staff establishment for the period 2005-2008 for the Directorate: Social Allowances and Welfare Programs for three financial years under review that was obtained from the national budget were:

Table 2: Staff complement of Directorate Child Welfare

Financial year	Provision	Filled	Vacant	% post vacant
334 1/6	78	30	48	62
286 4/7	242	36	206	85
250 7/8	242	51	191	79

Source: Budget

The MGECW received approval in terms of Cabinet decision No 36th/07.12.04/011 for the expansion of the Division Child Welfare Services to a Directorate, namely “Directorate Child Welfare Services”.

CHAPTER 2

2. AUDIT DESIGN

2.1 Audit Scope

2.1.1 Audit object

The audit object is the Directorate of Child Welfare in the MGECW, focusing on the “Service Delivery to OVC in the Country”.

2.1.2 Audit objective

The objective of the study is to find out how effective the directorate is in improving the quality of life of orphans and vulnerable children in the country.

2.1.3 Geographical limits

The five (5) regions that were visited during the main-study are Khomas, Oshana, Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Karas.

The criteria used to select those regions are:

- Region with a high number of OVC (Khommas, Omaheke)
- Region with middle number of OVC (Oshana, Karas)
- Region with a low number of OVC (Otjozondjupa)

.1Time period covered

The audit commenced during February 2009 and covered three financial years 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008.

2.2 AUDIT METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Documents reviewed

Documents listed below have been analyzed in order to gather the required information as well as audit evidence.

- Children’s Act of 1960
- Organizational structure
- Sector Education Policy for OVC
- Exemption letters from the MGECW
- Annual reports from the MGECW (2005 & 2006)
- Regional monthly reports
- Schedules to visit OVC in constituencies
- Report on the visits to constituencies
- Number of volunteers in each region

- Number of social workers in each region
- Cabinet Directive on how to co-ordinate with the private children's homes

2.2.2 Interviews

The following staff members in the Directorate of Child Welfare were interviewed to ascertain the role each one is playing as well as to obtain relevant information:

- 1 x Director (Directorate of Child Welfare)
- 1 x Deputy Director (Directorate of Child Welfare)
- 3 x Principal Social Workers
- 2 x Chief Social Workers
- 5 x Superintendents
- 3 x House Mothers
- 8 x Volunteers

Other key players:

- 7 x School principals
- 5 x Foster parents
- 4 x Regional education directors
- 2 x Education Inspector

CHAPTER 3

3. Foster care grant, Foster Care programmes and Educational programmes for OVC

.1 Systems description

.1.1 Identification of OVC

Human resources

According to the organizational structure of the Directorate Child Welfare Services the regional offices are supposed to have five to seven social workers, one for each constituency.

Child Welfare program is a sub-division under the Directorate: Child Welfare Services. The sub-division is tasked to develop and implement national programs.

The social workers and volunteers do research in the community as well as in the constituencies and identify OVC in the region as well as giving out pamphlets on what the Ministry is offering to the OVC.

Furthermore social workers are also responsible to do home visits in the constituencies to verify the conditions of each reported case. The social worker writes a report with recommendations for placement of an OVC in institutional care. This report contains all the relevant information about the child, including the child's opinion. The report is presented to the Children's Court for approval by the court. See Appendix 3 for foster care programme.

3.1.2 Foster grant applications turnaround time

Parents are applying for foster grants through the regional office with all the relevant documents. Social workers have to do home visits to investigate the circumstances, where after a court hearing will take place and the foster parent can take a copy of the order, along with the other documents required, to the MGECW for processing. Foster parents are issued with a receipt to enquire on the application after three months. The grant is N\$ 200 for the first child and N\$ 100 for subsequent children. (See appendix 2 for the foster grant)

3.1.3 Visits by social workers in constituencies and homes

To ensure that the grants are being used in the best interest of the child, social workers are expected to do reconstruction services or after care services every six months after the placement of the child in foster care.

Where it is suspected or reported that there is abuse of foster care grants, the social workers are to investigate such matter to ascertain the reasons and means of abuse. If found to be true the social worker will call in the foster parent or guardian, and if necessary cease or put on hold the payment or do a foster transfer. The payment will be transferred to someone who will be in a much better position to take good care of the child with the consent of the child.

3.1.4 Allowances for OVC that are placed in homes and places of safety

Place of safety allowance

To obtain the place of safety grant for the child, the head for the place of safety completes and signs a place of safety claim form, which the social worker or police officer takes back to the magistrate for signing. The head of the place of safety can then take the form to the MGECW for processing the claim and paying out the money. There is a provision for the payment of an allowance of N\$10 per child per day who lives at a place of safety. This is given to an individual or an institution which has taken in children on a short term or temporary basis but the child's stay must not be longer than six months. The Ministry subsidizes children's homes according to the number of children placed there on a permanent basis.

Regions are expected to establish the places of safety, one per region for children in need of care. Therefore the duties of social workers are to sensitize the communities through the OVC forums about the places of safety. Communities should identify the places and come up with application for registering them with the Ministry. The Ministry is expected to support the places of safety through the allowance to be paid for the children that are under the care of these places. The Ministry is giving out allowances for children in the private homes only if they have court orders.

Institutional care

In instances where children are to be accommodated for more than six months, these should be with registered welfare organizations under the Ministry of Health and Social Services. A government subsidy is paid for each child living in a registered institution.

3.1.5 Counseling to OVC

A case is reported to the social workers whereby the social workers conduct the investigations of the case that has been reported. After a social worker has done the investigation then she/he will know what steps to take next whether to give counseling or do something else and all this is done before the child is placed in the house or given to a foster parent.

Social workers are to conduct follow-ups on the situation of the child where assistance has been offered by the social worker in order to assess the progress of the child.

3.1.6 Exemption from fees for OVC at schools

School and hostel fees exemption

The Ministry of Education policy provides for exemptions of needy families from paying school and hostel fees or to decrease such fees. Families suffering severe hardship are eligible for this exemption.

How to get this exemption?

A parent, caretaker, guardian or concerned community member can apply to the school board for exemption by means of writing a letter to the school board (there is no application form).

Section 25 of the Education Act directs that:

- (10) "Subject to subsection (9) the school board may partially or fully exempt any parent from the payment of the school development fund contribution.

- (11) “If a parent is partially or fully exempted by the school board from the payment of the school development contribution, the school board may apply to the (Education Development) Fund for aid to pay such contribution”.
See appendix 4 for the systems flow charts

Examination fees exemption

For the exemption on examination fees, the parent, caregiver, guardian or social worker need to complete the exemption application form from the regional education office. Attached to the application should be a letter from the parent, guardian or social worker requesting the exemption and briefly describing the learner's situation, e.g. orphan or whether the parents are poor.

If the school is convinced that the child really needs that assistance they will forward the application to the education regional office for consideration of exemption. The education regional office has the right to partially exempt the child, which means they can only grant 20% exemption at their level.

If the child is applying for full (100%) exemption on examination fees, the child has to make an application to the school and the school will forward it to head office via the regional education office. The Ministry of Education will then forward all the exemption applications to the Ministry of Finance for Treasury to approve or reject the applications.

Hostel fees exemption

Needy children can get a discount or be exempted from paying hostel fees.

How does one get this exemption

- Long before the school year starts, the parent, caregiver or a social worker should contact the regional office of the Ministry of Education for an exemption application form.
- Attached to the application form should be a letter from the parent, guardian or social worker requesting the exemption and briefly describing the learner's situation, e.g. that he or she is an orphan or that the parents are very poor.
- The Ministry requires documentary proof of the income of the parent/s, guardian or caregiver.
- Once the Ministry has approved the application, the school or social worker will be instructed to admit the child into the hostel when the school year starts.

See appendix 4 for the systems flow charts regarding examination and hostel fee exemptions:

.7 Key stakeholders

Key stakeholders	Functions
Ministry of Education	To make sure that OVC are assisted with their education by being exempted from paying school fees if they can not afford to pay.
School Board	Responsible for granting the exemption in terms of school fees.
Caregiver, Guardians, Parents	Identifying and Reporting OVC who need assistance to schools.
Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare-Social Workers	Help with investigations of conditions of OVC who want to be helped with exemptions. Social workers also write exemption letters to schools to request exemptions from fees.

CHAPTER 4

4. FINDINGS

4.1 General Findings

To qualify for the foster care grant, the foster parent has to give the MGECW the following documents:

- A certified copy of the court order from the Children's Court
- A certified copy of the child's birth certificate
- A certified copy of the foster parent's ID
- A certified copy of the marriage certificate of the parents (if applicable)
- A certified copy of the death certificate/s of the biological parents (if applicable)
- If the child is still attending school, the latest school report reflecting his or her attendance and progress

OVC can not be registered if they lack the relevant documentation. According to the National Plan of Action 2000 - 2010, it is stating that birth certificates are often a pre-requisite for accessing various forms of support and most OVC do not have such documents. Among the reasons given for failure to register births were long distances for traveling, the mother not aware that births must be registered, or the mother not aware of where to go to register the birth. The Ministry is requesting for documents like death certificates and most of the caretakers or foster parents are not in possession of such documents.

The following are problems faced by social workers together with volunteers when doing home visits:

- Most of the time it is hard to locate houses and most of the people to be interviewed are not always there since they mostly do unexpected visits in the constituencies.
- Volunteers are walking to get to the houses because there is no transport available.
- There is no accommodation for the social workers and volunteers when they are doing home visits in the constituencies, sometimes they use tents.

4.2 Identification of OVC

4.2.1 Human resources

The organizational structure of the Directorate Child Welfare Services indicates that the regional offices are supposed to have five to seven social workers, one for each constituency. Social workers are expected to do visits to different homes in constituencies and at least visit twenty homes in a month on cases reported but because of inadequate social workers, this is not done in most of the cases. See table 3 below for the number of posts for social workers vs the number actually filled. The table below is stating that almost 57% of positions are not filled according to the information. The shortage of social workers has been outlined as an obstacle in several quarterly and annual reports but the issue was not yet addressed.

Table 3

The current number of social workers in the Country:

Regions	Standard number of social workers	Number of social workers employed	Number of social workers vacant	% in number of social workers vacant
Caprivi	9	3	6	67
Erongo	5	4	1	20
Hardap	5	2	3	60
Karas	6	2	4	67
Kavango	10	4	6	60
Khomas	12	10	2	17
Kunene	5	2	3	60
Ohangwena	10	3	7	70
Omaheke	5	1	4	80
Omusati	10	3	7	70
Oshana	6	2	4	67
Oshikoto	6	2	4	67
Otjozondjupa	5	2	3	60
Total	94	40	54	57

Table illustrates a 57% (54/94) vacancy factor.

At the two regions visited (Karas and Otjozondjupa) the auditors found that there were only two social workers for each region, dividing the constituencies amongst themselves, whereby Karas is having six constituencies and Otjozondjupa is having seven constituencies. The social workers in the regions should do visits in constituencies in the regions in order to identify the OVC cases in those constituencies. According to the National Plan of Action 2000-2010, it is stated that the government has for several years struggled to fill vacant posts for social workers, as it does not receive sufficient applications from suitably qualified applicants. There are approximately 400 registered social workers in Namibia of which 53 social workers are employed by the MGECW. Many prefer to work outside the government because of work pressure and comparatively low salaries. During 2006 social workers from the Khomas region went on outreach services to regions of Omusati, Kunene, Kavango, Ohangwena, Karas and Omaheke to work on foster care placements, as there were no social workers in those regions. Due to inadequate social workers in the regions, visits in different constituencies were not done.

4.2.2 Locating homes

Social workers are expected to carry out home visits on reported cases to investigate the circumstances whereby the social worker writes a report with recommendations for placement in institutional care or for foster grant. Social workers however are experiencing difficulties locating homes in rural areas when doing home visits, since most of the houses do not have plot numbers. As a result home visits do not materialize and OVC do not get identified.

Social workers are expected to carry out unannounced visits; however nine (9) of the twelve (12) social workers and volunteers interviewed indicated that unannounced visits are not always effective. The people to be interviewed which are either the foster parent, child or both are not always available during these visits thereby impacting on identification and possible registration of OVC. This also prolongs the approval process of applications for foster grant. Follow up visits are also a challenge due to the vast distances and lack of social workers in the regions.

4.2.3 Foster grant applications turnaround time

Parents are applying for foster grant through the Regional Office with all the relevant documents. Social workers have to do home visits to investigate the circumstances, where after a court hearing will take place and the foster parent can take a copy of the order along with the other documents required by the MGECW for processing.

The auditors could not determine the time taken to process lost applications. However according to two interviews carried out it took three to nine months for approving a foster grant application at head office. According to interviews at Head Office the required period to approve an application should take three (3) months. However it takes long to approve applications because social workers are few in the regions and it takes long for them to do home visits for investigation in order to recommend the granting of the allowance per child to Head Office.

According to interviews carried out with three out of four individual foster parents, auditors were informed that the Ministry takes between three to five years to approve an application for a foster care grant because of grant application forms that are lost at the regional office and head office resulting in clients to re-apply. The objective to improve access to service for OVC in rural and marginalized communities may not be met.

4.3 Visits by social workers in constituencies and homes

Monitoring of grants

Social workers are expected to do reconstruction services or after care services whereby they do home visits to see whether the grants are being used in the best interest of the child. According to interviews with social workers at Head Office, monitoring of usage of these allowances is difficult from the ministry's side, because they do not have the monitoring tool. The Ministry depends on the community to report on cases of abuse of the grants. In cases of a child that goes to school the Ministry monitors the use of the grant through the school by asking the school principal to assess the situation of the child at school. Children are required to submit the school reports annually to the Ministry. The community can as well help the Ministry to report cases of misuse to the Ministry's representatives in their regions. The Ministry tends to concentrate on the pending reported cases instead of doing reconstruction services to determine the progress of the living condition of the beneficiaries. According to interviews with social workers it was mentioned that due to non-monitoring of grants, foster parents tend not to use the money for the intended purpose.

4.4 Allowances for OVC that are placed in homes and places of safety

The MGECW is giving out allowances for children in the places of safety only if they have court orders that state that a child is legally placed under the children's home or under a foster care parent and if they are accommodated on a short term or temporary basis but not longer than six months.

In instances where children are to be accommodated for more than six months, these should be with registered welfare organizations under the Ministry of Health and Social Services. A government subsidy is paid for each child living in a registered institution. Some of these institutions receive donor funding that enables them to operate on their own. However some institutions require MGECW's financial support through the granting of allowances. The Ministry only provides allowances to institutions for children with court orders that allow them to qualify for the grants. According to interviews the MGECW does not have a criteria on the allowance provided to the

institutions and it is always difficult for the Ministry to determine the allowance per child placed in the institution. For the registered institutions inherited from the Ministry of Health and Social Services, the MGECW uses the same allowance to provide to the institution.

At five Children’s Homes visited the auditors found that the homes have not received any allowance from the MGECW since 2006, about three years back. The reasons given by the Ministry was that the MGECW is only giving allowances for the children that have court orders. The owner of the children’s home informed the auditors that social workers do not turn up to provide them with such documents even if they promise. As a result, children are unable to pay their school fees and hospital fees. This might lead to children being deprived of their right to education and proper health care thereby remaining illiterate and in poor health conditions.

List of residential child care facilities per region visited

Residential Child Care Facility	Town	Region	Current Number of Children	Capacity
Home 1	Windhoek	Khomas	18	18
Home 2	Swakopmund	Erongo	10	27
Home 3	Rehoboth	Hardap	28	28
Home 4	Keetmanshoop	Karas	54	56
Home 5	Usakos	Erongo	30	30

The table above shows the number of children accommodated in different child care facilities visited that do not receive any allowance from the MGECW.

4.5 Counseling to OVC

Social workers are supposed to give counseling to children before placing them into any accommodation or do a foster placement. When auditors interviewed foster parents they indicated that children placed under their care were not counselled before they were given to them. It is caused by lack of social workers in the regions and the few that are there can’t attend to all the reported cases. By not giving counseling to the child it will have serious side effects on the relationship of the child with the new parent. Some children have behavior problems and can influence other children if they do not get professional counseling.

Interviews conducted with two superintendents of two private homes (Kararas region and Hardap region) visited during the audit indicated that during the years 2005 to 2008 social workers did not visit the homes to assess the general conditions of the children in those homes. Even if the homes requested the social workers to come and visit the homes they do not turn up. Social workers indicated that the reason for not visiting is mostly because there are not enough social workers in the region to keep up with the demand.

The two private homes also indicated that the MGECW places children in the respective homes without counseling them first. Since these children are from different backgrounds and gone through a lot in their lives and professional counseling was not given to them before being placed in the home, superintendents of the visited homes indicated that homes experience problems. Examples of problems experienced with children who mostly did not go through counseling are mentioned underneath.

- Behavior problems
- Lack of concentration on their school work
- Alcohol and drug abuse

The problems that these children went through in their lives affect their performance at school and some of the children still feel isolated in the community.

Superintendents have also indicated that social workers do not go back to these homes to make follow-up on the behavior/conditions of the children that have been placed in those homes. The Ministry thus fails in its objectives of helping OVC that need help from social workers.

4.6 OVC school fee exemptions

OVC school fee exemptions

Section 9 of the Education Act and Regulations 11(4) and 11(6C) (2001) make it clear that the “School Board shall exempt certain learners from paying the School Development Fund”.

OVC should not pay School Development Funds (SDF), hostel fees and examination fees if parents are unable to pay.

The role that the MGECW plays when it comes to OVC’s school exemptions is when a social worker has to write exemption letters to schools requesting the school or the Ministry to exempt OVC from paying school fees because her/his condition does not allow him/her to pay the school fees as expected.

Social workers (seven) interviewed in the five regions visited (Khomas, Oshana, Otjozondjupa, Omaheke and Karas) indicated that most of the schools are reluctant to give exemption to OVC and the schools rely on the MGECW to give OVC the exemption letters in order for schools to act on the requested exemption. This contravenes Section 25, subsection (9) of Education Act as mentioned above.

According to the regional education directors and social workers of the five regions visited, the situation is caused by schools because schools at times refuse children to attend school for free as it will result in loss of revenue to their SDF. Exemption of OVC is provided for in the education policy for OVC thus schools are supposed to grant exemption without having to rely only on the MGECW to write an exemption letter to the school. Relying only on exemptions requested by the MGECW can result in many of the OVC turned away because they do not have such letters.

Auditors were unable to obtain all the statistics within the audit period under review from the MGECW as well as from the Ministry of Education or from the visited regional education offices on the number of OVC that have been granted exemption by different schools because both ministries do not keep such records. Furthermore social workers have stated that OVC who have been given exemption letters by the MGECW do not go back to inform the social workers who gave the exemption letters whether the exemption has been granted or not.

An interview with the Deputy Director of the Directorate “Child Welfare” has indicated that the Ministry is currently working on developing a database for all the OVC in the country and such information can be obtained from the database. This database will help with getting the statistics about the OVC in the country. The Ministry of Education also does not have a database in place that

has statistics of the total number of OVC in the schools as well as those that have been exempted from paying school fees. This makes it hard to determine how many OVC cases in the country have benefited from the exemption scheme so far.

According to the interviews conducted at head office of the Ministry of Education as well as with the education regional directors of the visited regions (Omaheke, Karas, Oshana, Otjozondjupa and Khomas) there are still some schools that are forcing OVC to pay even if they can not afford to pay. This is contravening the Education Act, Section 2 and in the process denying these children their right to education. Such a problem was also reported in the “Plan of Action 2006-2010 Report”. Interviews conducted with principals at three (3) schools in each of the two regions (Oshana and Otjozondjupa) visited have indicated that most of the times if there is enough evidence that the child cannot afford to pay, schools do not reject the exemption requests. They are of the opinion that the lack of information on how to deal with exemptions among the school board members can contribute to the rejection of applications for exemption even though the school tries to avoid rejections at all times. This fact is also stated in the “Plan of Action 2006 - 2010 Report”.

OVC examination and hostel fees exemption

The Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC Policy)(2008) stipulates in paragraph 3.1.3 that “No full time learner in a school be excluded from examinations on account of inability to pay examination fees” and in paragraph 3.1.6 it is mentioned that heads of education institutions shall ensure that no learner will be reproached, individually or in class, about their School Development Fund contributions or any fees payable by their parents.

In case of hostel fees and examination fees the regional education office can as well grant discount to OVC who can not afford to pay. Regional offices can grant the discount of up to 20% of the fees and full exemption can only be granted by Treasury. In case of hostel exemption the discount as well as exemption requests are supposed to be submitted at the regional education offices before the beginning of a new school calendar year and before the start of examination.

According to the interviews conducted with the regional education directors of the visited regions, there are schools that delay the submission of the discount as well as exemption requests to their regional offices.

Education officials also expressed views that the procedures for getting exemption from Treasury are a bit long because requests have to be sent from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Finance (Treasury) resulting in children being turned away from examination and hostels by schools by the time the requests for exemptions are processed.

Late submission of these requests to the regional offices has resulted in late processing of the applications according to the regional education officer. Some schools have therefore forced children to pay the examination fees as well as hostel fees while waiting for the discount or exemption response.

According to the interviews conducted with the Ministry of Education and the MGECW, both Ministries feel that OVC that are currently receiving grants from the MGECW need to be exempted from paying school fees. The rationale behind that is that the N\$ 200 that they receive is not enough to cater for the school fees as well as other basic needs.

This was supported also by the interviews conducted with three (3) school principals in the Oshana and the Otjozondjupa regions as well as the education directors in the other respective regions visited.

Most schools are not clear whether they should also give automatic exemptions to OVC that are receiving grants from the MGECW. The current situation is that schools expect the OVC that are receiving grants to pay school fees and it is not made clear in the OVC education policy whether these children that are receiving grants should be exempted or not and it is giving schools hard times when it comes to exemptions.

Regional education directors of the visited regions and school principals of schools visited expressed their view that the MGECW should make it clear to the Ministry of Education what the purpose of the grants is which they give to OVC. They want to know if the grants are catering for school fees or not so that the Ministry of Education would know if they still need to grant exemption in that regard.

Interviews at schools in the region indicated that there are schools that do not have an “Education Sector Policy for Orphans and Vulnerable Children” at their schools, yet the Ministry of Education sent copies of the policy to the regional offices for schools. Absence of this policy at schools will result in schools handling OVC issues against the policy because they do not have any guidelines when it comes to dealing with OVC exemptions at their schools.

During the 2007/08 financial year the Ministry of Education requested the Ministry of Finance through Treasury to exempt 2 826 learners for the October/November examinations for all thirteen regions. The 2 826 candidates consisted of 1 137 (40%) grade 12 and 1 689 (60%) of grade 10 examination fees as such learners could not pay the fees. The costs amounted to N\$ 922 077. Furthermore the Ministry of Education also requested Treasury during the 2007/08 financial year to write off N\$ 1 348 552 as a result of exemption from hostel fees for all the thirteen regions and it was also granted by Treasury. The auditors were not provided with information of the other years under review.

The auditors wanted to compare the cost that the Ministry of Education incurs during a single financial year as a result of exemptions compared with the OVC that are in schools. They also wanted to find out what number of OVC have been exempted to find out if the Ministry is really doing enough to help OVC with their education.

Most of such information was not available from the relevant parties.

General Part of Education Development Fund (EDF)

The Ministry of Education has introduced a fund called “Education Development Fund” that was created for the purpose of assisting schools to recover some of their income in case some learners at schools cannot afford to pay the school fund so that these schools can get a refund where such children are schooling.

According to the “Education Act Section 9 and Regulations 11 (4) and 11 (6c) (2001) the Ministry of Education will determine how the EDF shall reimburse schools to partially offset the loss in revenue incurred through the School Development Fund (SDF) as a result of exemptions granted to OVC.

The interviews conducted with personnel at the Ministry of Education’s head office indicated that EDF is not yet in practice since the Ministry did not implement the fund yet. Non-implementation of the Fund will contribute to the turning/forcing away of OVC who cannot afford to pay. This is

because schools will not want to make losses on their revenue as a result of admitting some learners who cannot afford to pay.

4.7 Transport

Regarding the vehicles or transport allocation within the Directorate, the following is existing: Vehicles were sponsored by UNICEF for the regions Caprivi, Kavango, and Omusati during the year 2006. The number of vehicles sponsored by UNICEF and WFP was not provided to the auditors by the MGECW. In addition to this the World Food Programme (WFP) also sponsored the purchase of vehicles to the Oshana, Caprivi, Kavango, Omusati, Ohangwena, Oshikoto regions. The Ministry did purchase cars for Head office, Hardap and Omaheke. All other transport needs for pool vehicles are forwarded to the department of Transport.

The social workers in the region need to visit constituencies in order to identify problems faced by OVC. Social workers also need to confirm the background of OVC on the reported cases and conduct community sensitization meetings, to provide the community in the region with information on how to access state grants as well as to inform the community members who the service providers in the regions are. The Erongo and Omaheke regions have one car per region for the whole MGECW, while the Oshana region has not been allocated with any vehicle. Otjozondjupa has one car which is shared with other two directorates. It makes it also difficult for the social worker to get hold of the vehicle in their respective regions because vehicles are shared within the Ministry. The Karas region has one car that they are using that belongs to the government garage. The shortage of transport has always been a problem and it was outlined as a complaint in several quarterly and annual reports for the financial years under review but the issue has not yet been addressed. According to interviews, the transport problem limits the social workers to make the required visits in the different constituencies in the region to identify and attend to OVC cases.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

General conclusion

The shortage of social workers hampers the efficient and effective operation of the Directorate to help OVC in country. As such OVC cases and problems relating to OVC are not identified and addressed on time.

Specific conclusions

1. According to the structure of the Directorate of Child Welfare, there are inadequate staff members in the regions. Social workers tend not to do enough visits to homes and constituencies to identify OVC in the constituencies.
2. The audit concluded that there is inadequate transport in the regions. The transport problem limits the social workers to make the required visits in the different constituencies in the region to identify and attend to OVC cases.
3. The Directorate of Child Welfare does not conduct enough home visits for reconstruction services. This way OVC tend not to benefit from the grants provided to them.
4. The audit concluded that the Ministry does not provide any allowance to the children accommodated in a registered children's home. This leads to children being unable to pay school fees and hospital fees.
5. Failure by the MGECW to provide counseling to children will have a huge impact on their lives and by that the Ministry has also failed in one of its objectives of improving the quality of lives for OVC in the country.
6. Schools are reluctant to provide exemptions from fees to OVC who can not afford to pay. This results in many of the OVC in the country losing out on their education because they are turned away by schools for not paying their fees.
7. If the Education Development Fund is implemented schools will not have problems of turning away and exempting OVC because schools are assured of getting their money back from the Fund if they give exemption to the child.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendation

The Ministry should fill all the social worker's positions on the establishment in the Directorate to ensure that OVC are properly cared for in the country.

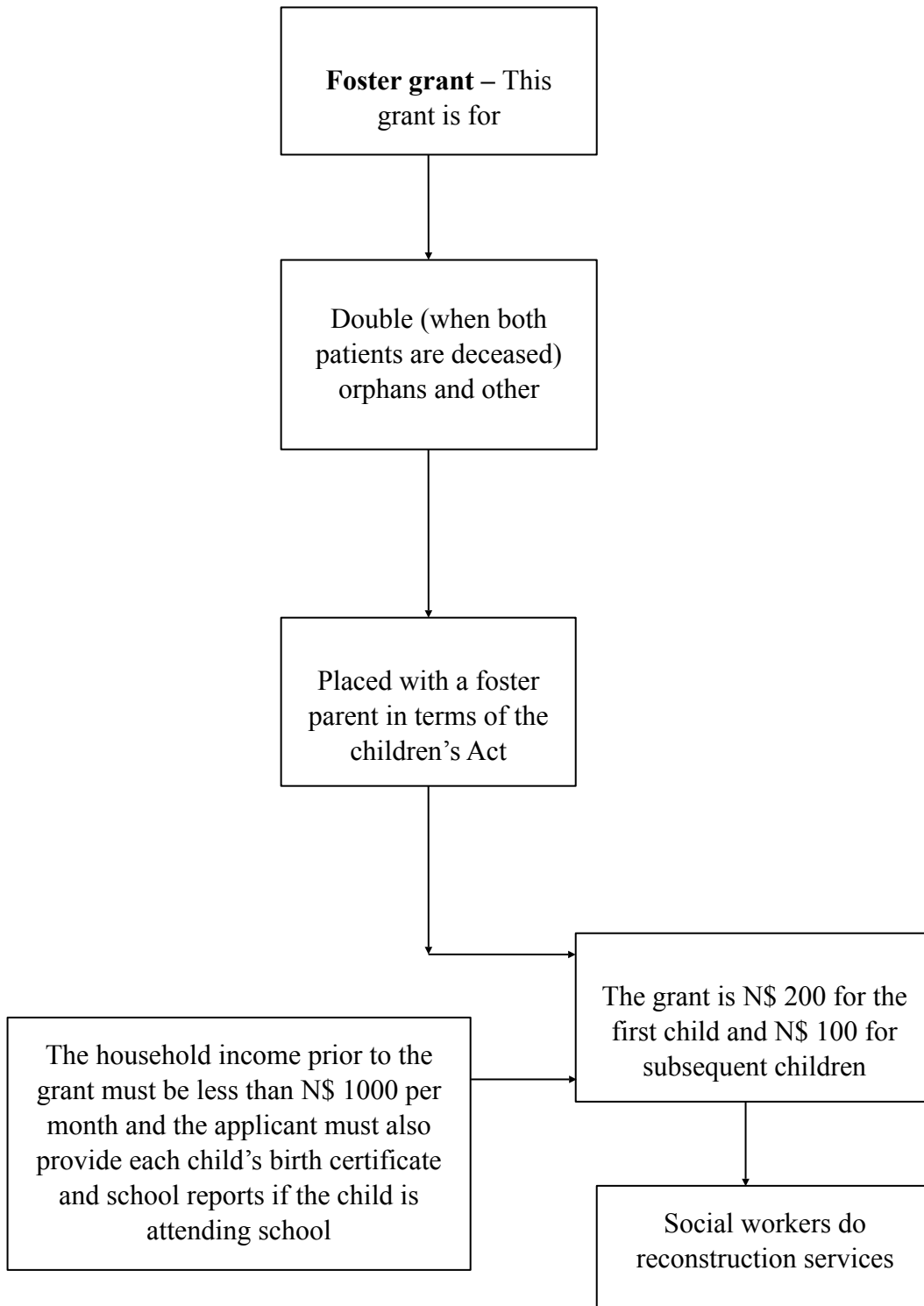
Specific recommendations

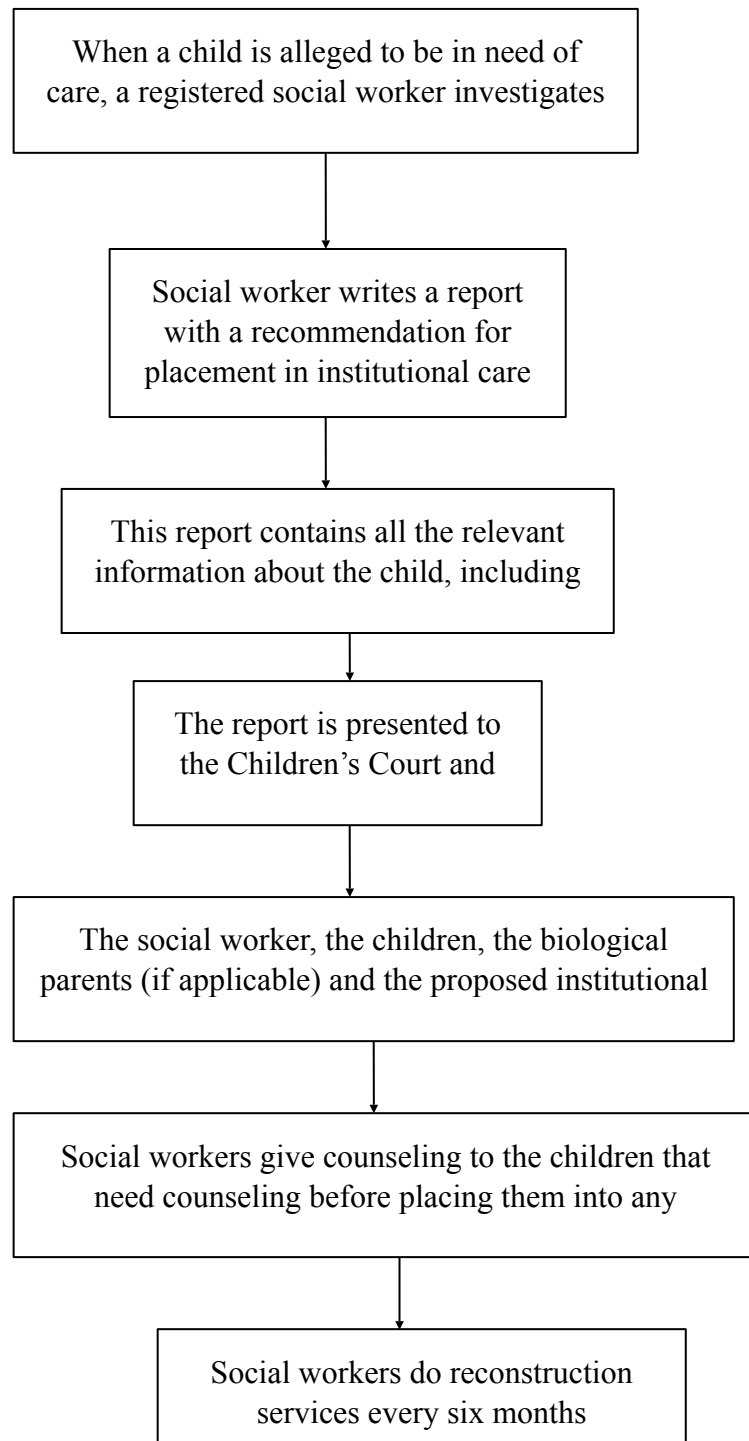
1. The MGECW should fill all vacant positions on the establishment in order for social workers in the regions to conduct more investigations and home visits in the constituencies.
2. The MGECW should allocate a vehicle to each directorate in the regions to enable social workers to do their work more efficiently and effectively.
3. The MGECW should minimize the delays to the maximum of three (3) months to approve applications.
4. A proper filing system should be developed to avoid loss of documents that are needed for processing of grant applications.
5. The MGECW should do home visits as prescribed to:
 - Monitor the progress of the living condition of the child in need of care,
 - Reduce the number of grant abuse cases and
 - Make sure that the parent/guardian receiving the grant is staying with the foster child.
6. The MGECW should ensure that all the children's homes registered are receiving the required allowances.
7. The MGECW should give basic counseling training to volunteers in constituencies so that they can assist social workers with counseling.
8. Social workers at regional level should visit constituencies frequently to conduct counseling.
9. The MGECW should make the purpose of grants given to the OVC clear to the Ministry of Education to enable the Ministry of Education to know how to deal with the school fee exemption of OVC that are receiving grants.
10. The MGECW should help the Ministry of Education to make the exemption issue regarding OVC clear to all the schools and other parties involved (school board, councilors, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare etc) so that children will not be turned away from schools.
11. The MGECW should co-ordinate with the Ministry of Education to help review and simplify procedures for applying hostels and examination fee exemptions by OVC.

- 12.** The MGECW should help the Ministry of Education to make sure that all the schools in the country have the Educational Sector Policy on OVC so that OVC are helped when it comes to their education wellness.

- 13.** The MGECW should co-ordinate with the Ministry of Education to make sure that the “Education Development Fund” is operational so that it can help schools with refunds towards their School Development Fund where OVC can’t pay are admitted.

Division Child Allowances



Child Welfare Programmes**Foster Care Programme**

Exemption procedures

School fees exemption

