

Home Based Orphan Care Programme

Concept

Home Based Orphan Care strikes different meanings to different people. The CFWRZ drawing from its implementation experiences defines a Home-Based Orphan Care as care for orphans or vulnerable children which can be equated to hospital care, but which enables the individual, the family and the community to cope with illnesses or difficulties that orphans and vulnerable children have at home building on existing community support systems.

In the case of rural communities the community support system will encompass the traditional leadership (The Chief, Kraal Heads etc), the Councilor, relatives of the orphan or vulnerable children, Community Based Organisations working in the Community and to some extent Government departments.

Home-Based Orphan Care Programme is not a new phenomenon. The concept draws its form from the extended family system. It is easily understood from the concept of the home based care for people infected with HIV/AIDS who were bed ridden and hospitals could not accept or continue to care for them. It was noted that these people could live longer if they were cared for at home and given the utmost attention which they deserved but could not get at home. The following points help to explain the characteristics of the two concepts.

Hospital

Looks at curative aspects
Death is a failure of medicine
Care is routine
Pain is acute

Home

Looks at home/family care
Death is inevitable, a natural phenomenon.
Care is client centered
Pain is chronic

There are many notable advantages of home based care which are: individualised care, the person is cared for by those who know and love him/her, privacy is ensured, the diet that the ill person eats is the one he/she is used to, has adequate time to rest, community members contribute towards the welfare of the ill person, remedies are cheaper and can be applied with little interference, traditional medicine and support systems can be called, spiritual support can be provided, other family members can be called to provide care.

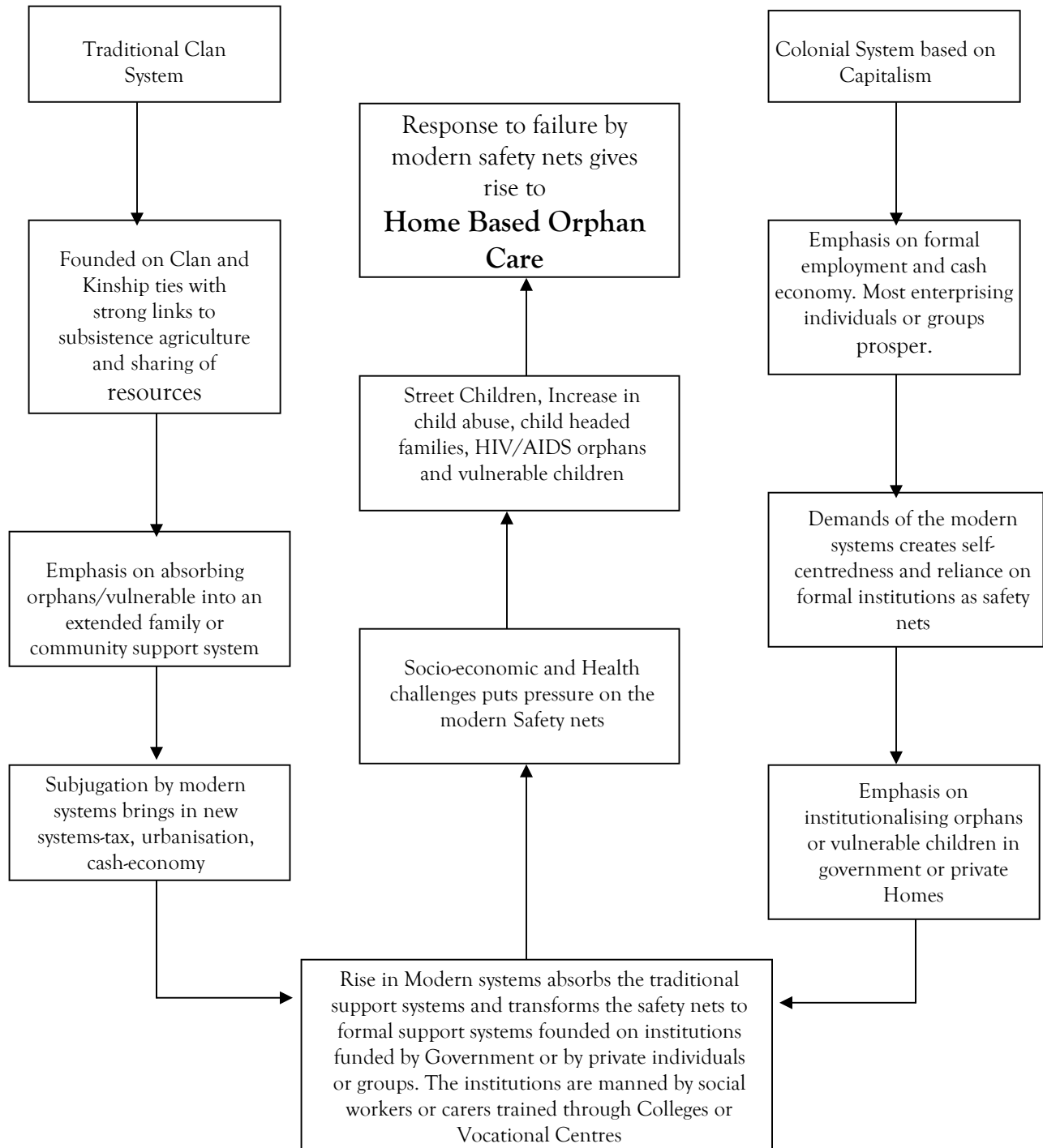
Despite these advantages just like any other system, there are also disadvantages to this type of support system. The disadvantages are that the immediate family may not be there to provide care, financial and material resources may be inadequate and the family providing care may develop burnout and give up the support.

The model attached as an annexure 1 has been developed by the CFWRZ to show how the extended family system and the failures of the modern institutionalisation concept combined to bring about the home based orphan care programme. The family is the primary environment in which children grow and develop a framework for their whole outlook on life. It is the most important support system in a child's life. Without it children become vulnerable, emotionally deprived, financially desperate and open to abuse and have a greater risk of contracting HIV. The gradual break up of the extended family system has over the years been replaced by institutionalization of children. The insidious nature of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe has shown glaring weaknesses of institutionalizing children. Institutions are particularly poor at providing for children's psychosocial needs. Current thinking shows that a healthy family environment is important in dealing with problems faced by orphans or children in difficult circumstances. One of the most important developments in this approach is that children are best cared for in their own communities.

As the name implies, home based orphan care is simply providing a family support or community support system to orphans and vulnerable children to experience family life and all the safety nets that family life provides. Foster parents or extended family support or an existing community support system should ensure that it makes the orphan or vulnerable children welcome and should also create self confidence.

Annexure 1

Historical Perspectives in Orphan Care



Home Based Orphan Care Programme Intervention Areas

1. Early Childhood Education

- Early Childhood Development (ECD) training
- Facilitate access to education for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs)
- Provision of play centre equipment and materials

2. Health and nutrition

- Support establishment of nutrition gardens
- Support establishment of herbal gardens for minor illnesses treatment
- HIV/ AIDS awareness campaigns
- Support provision of clean water through drilling of boreholes
- Support construction of blair toilets or ablution facilities

3. Psychosocial Support

- Provision of counseling services to OVCs
- Support establishment of kids clubs
- Support establishment of recreational facilities for OVCs

4. Food security for OVCs

- Distribution of farming inputs
- Promote food production
- Facilitate access to draught power to child/ granny headed families
- Promote use of modern farming techniques

5. Economic empowerment for OVC families

- Income generating projects – poultry, soap making, tuck-shops, beef fattening, goat and sheep farming
- Revolving fund scheme
- Community credit and loan schemes

6. Community Capacity Building

- Facilitate development of child care skills
- Promote good family life education
- Promote positive parenting skills

Successes

The communities have realized that the welfare of OVCs is a community responsibility and they should not wait for outside help (donors) but initiate community-based programmes aimed at improving the lives of OVCs.

The HOCP has managed to stand up to push the political and social leadership like Members of Parliament (MP), Councilors and Traditional Leaders (Chief, Kraal Heads etc) to assist orphans and children in difficult circumstances to access education, health, shelter and food. Through lobbying of traditional leaders, land has been allocated for farming to ensure food security amongst OVCs and traditional safety nets have been

strengthened through the formation of Child Protection Committees at village level. Through collaboration with stakeholders from the registry department orphans have been given back their right to identity as through the home-based orphan care programme they are able to access legal documents such as birth and death certificates.

The Home-based Orphan Care Programme has managed to bring about change in the attitudes, practices, policies and laws of influential individuals, groups and institutions. It has assumed an important role of championing the interests of children who can not stand up for themselves. For example, the communities now put the interest of the OVCs ahead of their own by giving them first preference when screening for food aid and other relief programmes.

Challenges

Some caregivers or guardians may not have adequate knowledge on how children grow and develop and often they find it difficult to care for them and thus accompanying difficulties like abuse are not easily detected.

CFWRZ noted a common trend of problems faced by Care Givers with the primary problems being that of lack of respect by orphans, lack of access to education and health by orphans as well as starvation.

Lessons learnt

Children develop well among the people that they know, the Home-based Orphan Care programme involves making sure that they are not uprooted to areas with different norms and values such as institutions.

The people who are closest to a situation should be major players in describing the situation. An outside perspective can only be built on what is in place. In other words, the person that is feeling the burden of having to sustain a wound is best qualified to describe the pain or severity of the wound inflicted on him/her. It follows then that if a healing process has to be done, a description of the pain and the exact position if it is not clearly visible can only be highlighted by the person with that injury. Placing the affected into the forefront builds consensus and ownership of the processes taken.

Conclusion

It is our hope that with the ever increasing negative impacts of HIV/AIDS, the demand for orphan care will continue to escalate at unimaginable levels. If unchecked, failure to prepare well for community based responses to this calamity will render all our efforts to fight this calamity hopeless. A learning organisation is not only prepared to meet the ever changing humanitarian challenges but also the internal crises that results from abrupt change. Many years of fruitful experiences in the field but undocumented is like a tree without its roots. No amount of wisdom can surpass years of experience that have been carefully collected, documented for sharing and future programming to attain better developmental practice.