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Experiences of Children Living in Foster Families in Kajiado County, Kenya

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Dedication

*To all children who live in alternative care arrangement
away from their own family especially those that participated in the study.*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement.....	4
Dedication	5
Table of Contents	6
Abbreviations	9
Executive Summary	10
 INTRODUCTION	 12
Background	13
Legal Framework	14
Statement of the Problem	15
Research Objectives	15
Scope and Delimitation	16
Definition of Terms	16
Significance of Study	16
 LITERATURE REVIEW	 18
Global Perspective	19
Charitable Children Institutions	20
Foster Care	21
 METHODOLOGY	 24
Research design	25
Target Population	25
Sampling Size	25
Sampling Techniques	26
Research Instruments	26
Trustworthiness of the Study	26
Data Collection and Analysis	26
Ethical Considerations	27

FINDINGS	28
Demographic Characteristics	29
Gender of Respondents	29
Age of Respondents	29
Class of Respondents	30
Period Spent in Care Family	30
Experiences of Foster Children at Charitable Children Institution (CCI)	30
Basic needs	30
Food	30
Living environment	31
Typical daily routine	32
Relationships	33
Relationship with other Children	33
Relationship with Guardians at CCI	33
Relationship with God	34
Preparation for future	35
Education	35
Life skills	35
Spiritual development	35
Children well-being	35
Prospects of becoming a better person	36
Life career	36
Children well-being	36
Happiness	37
Sadness	37
Experiences of Children in Transition from CCI to Foster Families	37
Children's concept of home	38
Preparation for Transition	38
Reasons for being fostered	39
First encounter with foster family	39
Farewell	40

Children’s Experiences in Foster Families 40

Welcome into the ‘new’ Family 40

Provision of Basic Needs 41

Food 41

Living Environment 41

Education 42

Relationships 42

Relationship with God 42

Relationship with Foster Parents 42

Relationship with Children in the Foster Family 43

Promotion of Wellbeing 44

Life skills 44

DISCUSSION 46

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 53

Conclusions 54

Recommendations 55

References 56

APPENDICES 60

Appendix 1: Consent Form for the Foster Child 61

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule 63

Abbreviations

ACE-Advanced Childhood Experiences

ACRWC-African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child

AIDS-Acquired Immune Deficiency syndrome

CCI-Charitable Children Institution

DCS-Department of Children Services

HIV -Human Immunodeficiency Virus

NACOSTI-National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

NCCS-National Council for Children Services

OVC-Orphans and Vulnerable Adults

UNCRC-United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child

UNICEF-United Nations Children Education Fund

UN-United Nations

Executive Summary

Foster care is perceived as a viable alternative in the care for and protection of vulnerable children particularly for those whose family situation is deemed as dysfunctional as to present reasonable risk to their wellbeing. In the context of a governmental policy Kenya that seeks to redirect foster care practices towards more use of family-based foster care, this study was undertaken to seek a proximate appreciation of the experiences of children whose lives now oscillate between two alternative care environments, namely, foster family settings and Charitable Children Institutions (CCIs).

Kenya has a huge number of children that grow up in need of alternative care, with an estimated 3.6 million of these being orphaned or classified as vulnerable (UNICEF, 2015). The alternative care structures, while embedded in a rich national and international legal framework, are not adequately implemented. Even basic registration of CCIs has significant gaps (UNICEF, 2014).

Research from global to local sources shows the huge disadvantages for children growing up in institutions other than families and give ample rationale for the move of the Kenya Government to de-institutionalize as many children as possible by bringing them into family-based care.

The study adopted the phenomenological research design, purposive sampling 26 preteens and teenagers living, during the school term, in a CCI that doubles up as their School and then moving to live with foster families during the school holidays. The latter was a recently introduced new move that enabled the CCI to comply with new government directives.

Interview schedules were used to collect data which was then analysed using an inductive thematic approach. The focal area of the field study were the experience in the CCI, the transition to the foster families and the experience in the latter for each of the interviewees.

Among important findings of the study includes an overall happy environment for the children in the CCI, including a good variety in diet, and adequate sense of safety among other key basic needs. The children present with a sense of security in the home as their regular and predictable programme as well as well elaborated system of values this CCI makes them feel clear of their way. Above all the children are confident of a great education that they receive in the home, and this makes them very hopeful and even resilient.

Transition to the foster family homes seems to be overall rather poorly managed due perhaps to the lack of preparation of the staff for the role of assisting the children to prepare for the transition. In particular, the children did not experience a sense of choice in the transition matter. It was a decision communicated to them. This may not have facilitated ease of transition, and indeed the some of the reports of the children indicate some anxiety in the transition period. But in most cases the children had positive experiences in the foster homes anyway. It may be observed that the fact that most of the foster families were in relationship to the school as a faith affiliate may have helped the children to make an easy transition to the family homes despite lack of adequate preparation. Concerning the experience of reception in the foster family majority of the children felt welcome, appreciated and accepted.

The findings of this study provide information that will be used to improve foster care in Kenya. In particular, there is much to be learned from the positive experiences accrued by the children while in the CCI. Among these is the security provided by a strong institutional tradition and system of values. If in addition, the foster families to which the children are sent share the same values, this can be an advantage for the consistency of their upbringing and their psychological security.

The study also shows the dire need for ongoing training of care-givers throughout the spectrum of foster care. Many of the successful experiences of the study point to the importance of establishing traditions as those of the school, as well as predictable systems. The gaps in the foster care system that this study unearthed are also clearly gaps in the accompaniment processes, both in the CCI and in the foster families.

Life-skills training also needs to be increased for children in foster care. This can help them build up resilience in the changing seasons of their lives and enable them to draw more value from them. Their psychological experience and preparedness needs to be taken on board in the decisions that affect them.

In all the study serves to confirm the adroitness of the policy direction taken by the Government of Kenya regarding family-based foster care; it is a useful supplement to CCI care when the latter is necessary.



INTRODUCTION

Background

Every child has a right to care and protection for their holistic development (UNCRC 1989). In Kenya, children make up to 42% of the country's population. An estimated 3.6 million of these are orphans or classified as vulnerable (UNICEF, 2015). According to the UN (2010) the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children. The integrated care of orphans and other disadvantaged children in their natural environment in African settings is an old practice but this is different from institutional care of OVC where community link is absent (Nsagha et al., 2012). In African traditional practices, child care was a community responsibility. Situations where children were vulnerable and lacked parental care, were approached by the society making intervention through kinship, guardianship and foster care. However, the increased numbers of vulnerable children due to the impact of HIV and AIDS coupled with high levels of poverty, political and economic instability, and armed conflict, has overwhelmed many communities and weakened the ability of extended families to meet traditional care-taking expectations (Embleton et al 2014; Assim, 2013). Consequently, other models of care and support have emerged in sub-Saharan Africa to address the growing orphan crisis, including institutional care (orphanages)

and community-based care (Embleton & Brainsten 2014) commonly referred to as alternative care models.

UNICEF (2017) estimates indicate that at least 2.7 million children are living in residential care, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. The accurate statistics and monitoring structures still remain an ongoing challenge worldwide (UNICEF, 2017). Thus, children living in alternative care situations bear common issues of concern across countries. Residential children's homes commonly known as Charitable Children Institutions (CCIs) in Kenya is the most commonly used alternative care due to its availability and ease of accessibility. Research findings from Save the Children Fund, - UK, (2009) observed that institutional care of young children is harmful to children's development and negatively affects neural functioning at the most critical and unparalleled period of brain development, causing physical, intellectual, behavioral, social and emotional skill deficits and delays. The experience of child care agents and the findings of research suggest that institutional care for children fails to provide holistic development of children. In the process of searching for permanent solutions to institutionalized child care, a foster family model could be one of possible options. In South Africa, the majority of foster care placements were kinship foster care placements and the report from a social worker has to

be considered before a child is placed in foster care (Minsi & Botha, 2016).

In Kenya there are over 700 Charitable Children Institutions (CCIs), housing approximately 40,000-42,000 children (DCS, 2012). According to UNICEF (2014), out of 700 CCIs in Kenya (CCI), 591 are legally registered. Therefore one of the weaknesses of the current practices of institutionalized child care infrastructures in Kenya is the existence of non-registered children homes, indicating weakness in the legal apparatus regulating child care in CCIs. Such weakness may result in “structural neglect which may include minimum physical resources, unfavorable and unstable staffing patterns, and social-emotionally inadequate caregiver-child interactions” (Marinus et al., 2014). The most common pitfall impacting on child care institutions range from disproportionate numbers of children to staff, untrained staff, lack of care and plans for children, and lack of resources for proper protection (*Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya* 2014). This contravenes the standards of living adequate for the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development (United Nations Assembly, 1989).

According to Guidelines for the *Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya* (2014) some CCIs lack proper admission processes; individual care plans for children; proper documentation and information management; professional

management; clear exit strategies; thoroughly monitored tracing and reintegration; and referral procedures. Over the years research on institutional care for children has exposed negative outcomes concerning holistic child development. Johnson, Tang et al (2018) affirms that early institutionalization derails development.

Informal foster care has been a common scenario in child care, however currently the care reform in Kenya targets formal fostering. This is in line with international, regional and national legal framework which recommends foster care when there is inadequate or inappropriate care within their own family (UNCRC 1989, ACRWC 1990, Children Act 2001). The following section outlines the legal framework upon which foster care is anchored.

Legal Framework

UN Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children reaffirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and provide concrete guidance aimed at guaranteeing the protection and wellbeing of children and adolescents who lack parental care or are at risk of finding themselves in that situation (UN Guidelines of alternative Care of children 2010).

The Constitution of Kenya 2010, Article 53, and Section 2 indicates that the best interest of the child is paramount in every matter concerning them. The Children Act, 2001 has provisions for administering foster care, in Part XI (Sections 147–153) and Schedule 4 with the detailed implementation as stipulated in *The Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya* (2014). This new approach presumes that family-based child care will provide a better overall environment for the holistic development of a child.

The Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya 2014 specify the process which includes pre-transition, transition and post transition supervision and support to the child and family to assure quality care is provided to children and adolescents (UN Guidelines 2010). The pertinent question however, remains; what is the socio-cultural and psychological impact of transition from CCI to foster family on children, and how does this transition impact on the rights of the child to ensure their holistic wellbeing?

Statement of the Problem

In the last two decades, the increasing numbers of orphans and vulnerable children as a result of effects of HIV and AIDS and poverty has seen an upsurge in CCIs as an option to offer interventions (Republic of Kenya & UNICEF, 2013). Research has clearly shown that long-

term institutional care is not in the best interests of children and does not offer the nurturing environment necessary for the holistic development of a child (Köker, n.d). Being a signatory of international treaties, Kenya recognizes the need to implement the UN guidelines on alternative care of children to ensure formal and legal alternatives to family care. In 2014 the guidelines were prepared for the *Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya* aimed at regulating Guardianship and Foster-care and other alternative family care of children in the country (Government of Kenya & UNICEF, 2014). The “ideal” conditions mentioned in the guidelines presume smooth transition from CCI to alternative families and consequently, enhanced well-being of children. However, there is limited information on the gap between theoretical and practical implications of deinstitutionalization. This study aimed at exploring experiences of children in the process of transition and adaptation to the new model of foster care in family homes.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify fostered children's experiences in Charitable Children's Institutions
2. To investigate the experiences of

foster children during the process of transition from children homes to foster families

3. To examine the fostered children's experiences while in the foster family care

Scope and Delimitation

The scope of this study is to explore experiences of selected children in a CCI who live with foster families during their school holidays. The study specifically targeted preteen and adolescent aged children living in family foster care during their school holidays, taking into consideration that at this age children can express themselves and are not likely to filter information owing to their cognitive developmental level. The study adopted the case study design of qualitative research paradigm which enabled an in-depth analysis of the experiences of children.

Delimitations of this study included geographical area, demographic population and time frame for research. The study was delimited to Kajiado County. The sample size of this study was delimited by two factors: (1) current experience of Charitable Children Institutions, and (2) Current experience of Alternative Family Care. The study is also delimited by the factor of time, thus it employed a cross-sectional approach to data collection and analysis.

Definition of Terms

Foster Care-Placement of a child in need of care and protection from a Charitable Children Institution (CCI) to a non-relative family ready to care for them.

Foster Family-A family caring for a foster Child

Foster Child-A child under the care of foster parent or parents within the family home of the foster family

Experiences-effects encounter of a child in foster care on their feeling

Significance of Study

This research aim to establish the experiences of children who live with foster families with a hope of exploring the experiences of transition from CCI to Foster Family for the purpose of informing future practice and policy development in foster care in Kenya.



LITERATURE REVIEW

Foster care is a situation where children are placed by a competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children's own family that has been selected, qualified, approved and supervised for providing such care (UN Guidelines 2010). This definition offers different categories of Foster care arrangements including non-relative foster homes, relative foster homes (known as "kinship care"), group homes, institutions, and pre-adoptive homes (Foster care, 2015). The understanding of foster placement in Kenyan context has been clarified by the Children Act 2001 as Placement of a child with a person who is not the child's parent, relative or guardian and who is willing to undertake the care and maintenance of that child.

According to Petroski, Cappa, Gross (2017) the available data of children in foster care represent 25% of the global Population of Children. A study done on why children were in foster care revealed that children were in foster care as a result of neglect (78%), physical abuse (48%) and sexual abuse (35%). Other placement reasons were emotional abuse (77%), no available caretaker (30%), and parental substance or alcohol abuse (30%) (Oswald, 2010; Petrowski, Cappa, and Gross, 2017; Oswald, 2010; Bunkers et al., 2014). Additionally, besides maltreatment, there are genetic, prenatal toxic factors,

psychiatric disorders and intrauterine exposure to drugs, alcohol, and nicotine (Bunkers et al., 2014; Doore et al., 2016).

Global Perspective

Currently in the United States, in 2013 there were 402,378 children in foster care and 172,575 (42.9%) were 11 years or older (Children's Bureau, 2014). While this number is high, it represents a significant decline in foster care placements over the past decade, with the number of children in foster care decreasing by almost a quarter between 2002 and 2013. Of these children, 9% were in long term foster care, 23% were waiting for adoption, and 49% were to be reunified with their parents or primary caretakers. Forty-six percent of the children were placed in non-relative foster families and 24% in relative foster families.

In Germany, 47,517 children were living in foster care at the end of 2005 (German Federal Statistical Bureau, 2008). Seventy-eight percent of children entering foster care in Germany in 2006 had previously received assistance from the child welfare system (German Federal Statistical Bureau, 2007). In England, in 2011, 52,300 children were living with foster parents (Department for Children, 2011). Of the whole population of 59,500 children looked after, 36,700 were looked after because of abuse or neglect, 3,300 because of

the child's disability, 3,800 because of parental illness or disability, 4,900 because of family in acute stress, 6,300 because of family dysfunction, 1,200 because of socially unacceptable behaviour, 130 because of low income, and 5,200 because of absent parenting. Hence in spite of all these placements in foster care, children face multiple developmental and behavioral problems in many foster children institutions (Bunkers et al., 2014).

Charitable Children Institutions

An estimated eight million children living in institutions in the world, though, given gaps in global statistics and indications that there are many unregistered children's homes, the true figure may well be much higher (Better Care Network). Lumos and Maestral International (2017) draw attention to the fact that 80-90 percent of children living in orphanages across the world have at least one living parent, a reality acknowledged by Bunkers et al., 2014 & Oswald et al, 2010.

Many orphanages in Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia rely on donations and international volunteers, and children are often used as a commercial entity to attract funds and may be sent out to beg or perform on behalf of centres. In some cases, children are kept in destitute

or unhealthy conditions in order to present their dire situation to appeal to donors and volunteers (Browne 2017). Evidence is already pointing to alarming irregularities, including recruitment of children for international adoption, "child laundering" through altering and forgery of records, inducement of birth parents to relinquish children, and extortion of funds from prospective adoptive parents (Cheney & Rotabi, 2014). Additionally, poor regulations and oversight means that abuse is often rampant. There is a high risk of sexual exploitation by international volunteers because many residential care centres and tourism operators offering volunteer placements do not require police clearance reports, do not conduct background checks, and do not provide adequate supervision of volunteers once they are spending time with children (Cheney & Rotabi, 2014). Eighty years of research has shown the negative impact of institutionalization on children's health, development and life chances (Berens, A., Nelson, C., 2015).

The most common adverse effects that children who grow up in residential care experience include: developmental delays; behavioural problems; attachment disorders; lack of life skills; Institutionalisation; and difficulty forming and maintaining healthy relationships (ACCI Relief, 2016). The literature is extremely clear

that residential care should be a last resort for children separated from their parents, following family support, community support, and fostering. As such, the literature strongly supports deinstitutionalization and reintegration of children in own families whenever possible and provision of extra support to families as the best intervention. Evidence shows that many children can recover from problems experienced in residential care when placed in family care environments, although they have incomplete catch-up compared to their never-institutionalized peers (Van Doore, 2016).

Foster Care

Children in foster care are faced with maltreatment, emotive and interactive issues which subsequently result in poor performance, difficulties in relationships, and engaging in high-risk behaviours (McLaughlin et al., 2012; Pecora, 2012). Children in foster care further face additional challenges related to separation from family, disruption in friendships and school connections, as well as stigma of being in care which can impact their mental health (Leslie et al., 2011). Young people with a history of maltreatment may also use substances as a coping mechanism to address mental health needs (Jones, 2010; Gallagher, 2015). Research has shown that more than

70% of children in foster care have aspirations to get postsecondary level education (Courtney, Terao, & Bost, 2004), however it is only 39% who manage to register in a two year or four year Institutes of higher learning. Further still, it is only 10% students who progress to attain a bachelor degree by age 25 (Courtney et al., 2011). Foster children have also a higher chance of dropping out of college after their first year (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, & Damashek, 2011), suggesting their challenges in postsecondary education are more complex than financial support alone.

The foster children suffer from a lack of life skills and preparation to become independent in life. Lack of life skills can then lead to poor educational results for students with a history of foster care (Courtney et al., 2011). Other challenges faced by children in foster care may include: lack of permanence, stigma, resistance to fostering due to cultural belief about child rearing, frequent changes in placement often mean changes in neighborhoods and schools, which contribute to difficulty in maintaining relationships and educational achievement (Okpych, 2012). In one study, 30% of foster alumni reported 10 or more school changes from elementary through high school (Van Doore, 2016).

Furthermore, employment challenges further compound stressors related to

limited financial and emotional support. Early pregnancy, lack of community and emotional support. Educators, staff, and mentors need to understand and be prepared to address the unique challenges encountered by foster children (Dworsky & Pérez, 2010). Even though the children may need someone to advocate for them in order to overcome the challenges faced, they need to feel empowered and encouraged to have a voice in decision-making (Piel & Lacasse, 2017). A review of current and past research acknowledges the challenges and provides opportunities for improved systemic and programmatic support for foster children and youth to live a holistic life.

In spite of the large amount of literature related to children in foster care, maltreatment, abuse, neglect and mental health, few studies have focused on children living in family foster care in Kenya. Beside methodological reasons these different rates across countries may be associated with socio-cultural factors such as differences in structure and quality of social and child protection services, in poverty rates, in rates of violence against children, and in selection factors like age at first placement, and the relative number of placements in foster families.

To understand these differences, further research in different countries and in rural settings with its different

child welfare and healthcare systems is needed to get more information about experiences impacting on the holistic health of foster children (Cohen, 2010). Research has concentrated more on the experiences of children in CCI, Foster families and transition to independent living. However, the experiences of the child during the transition period from CCI to foster family is scantily researched despite the fact that could impact on the overall experiences in foster family. This research therefore explores the experiences through the whole journey of transition from the CCI through the foster family.



METHODOLOGY

This section outlines in detail the research design, research method, research approach selection of sample, data collection method, data analysis and ethical consideration.

Research design

This study adopts a phenomenological research design which “attempts to comprehend people’s perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular phenomenon” (Pathak, 2017, p.1719). This approach was chosen because there is inadequate information regarding the relocation of children from Charitable Children Institutions (CCIs) to foster care families. Qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis will be employed in this research. Creswell (2009), points out that qualitative research enables a researcher to collect data from a natural setting at the site where the participants are experiencing the issue under study. This study chose the exploratory approach in order to address the scarcity of information on factors underlying new experiences of young teenagers.

Target Population

Target population for this study was pre-teenagers and teenagers between the ages of 10 and 18, who were transferred from a charitable institution in Kajiado to foster care families. The

National Council for Children’s Services (NCCS) manual stipulated the choice of this age group: “They 10 - 18 years old pre-teen and teenagers employ logical thinking and use abstract thought... they have increased ability to generalize facts, they have increased memory and ability in decision making. They develop identity if they have internal stability and continuity, well defined models and having positive feedback” (2011, p.15). (Fr. Henry to give source)

Sample Size

The study was based on choice of homogenous sampling which implies that sampled individuals shared similar backgrounds and experiences. In other words, only pre-teen and teenagers who were living in a CCI and had on one occasion or more spent some time in a foster family during school holidays were chosen for this study. Out of the accessible population in Kajiado County, one CCI with a group of 28 preteens and teenagers was selected using purposive methods of sampling. This study involved 24 girls and 2 boys determined by the gender among the children fostered from the selected CCI. The sufficiency of sample size was based on the principle of *saturation*. This implies that the data satisfaction is determined in the process of data collection.

Sampling Techniques

The study used purposive techniques to identify the sampled individuals for interviews. Purposive sampling involves intentionally choosing sites or individuals that are “information rich” and who can help in learning and understanding the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). The charitable institutions provided a sample of preteen and teenagers who moved from their premises to foster families during holidays.

Research Instruments

This study collected the data by means of personal interviews. Thus, the Interview Guide facilitated data collection in face-to-face interviews. This guide consisted of three parts: (1) questions related to stay in charitable institutions, (2) question related to transitions period, (3) questions related to stay in foster families.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In qualitative research, validity simply means the credibility of research findings (Creswell 2014). In order to ensure a high quality of findings of this study the instrument for data collection was subjected to the following procedures: (1) Critique and evaluation by colleagues, (2) critique and evaluation by experts in

the area of study. Validity in qualitative study is mainly an inference of the findings (Maxwell, 2013). This study employed five typologies developed by Maxwell (1992): (1) descriptive validity, (2) interpretive validity, (3) theoretical validity, (4) generalizability, and (5) evaluative validity.

Data Collection and Analysis

Prior to data collection permission from Tangaza University College was obtained and Informed Consent of the CCI and participants was procured. The first stage of data collection involved building up rapport with the interviewees. The oral interviews were conducted in the natural settings of participants. Each interview took 40 minutes to one hour. Since all of the participants were minors (below 18) they were interviewed in a big hall with glass windows allowing openness to allow teachers to view the interviews process from outside. Five interviews were carried out simultaneously at different corners of the hall giving participants comfort of seeing one another during the interviews. Each participant was asked a series of questions from the interview guide and where necessary, some probing was employed to facilitate the interviewees’ comprehension of the questions or the interviewers understanding of the responses given.

Since the study needed to bring out some patterns and trends, this data was also coded in such a way that it could be entered into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Accordingly, since the data was collected from only 26 respondents, for each question, all the possible answers were grouped into themes which were later coded as choices to enable the researcher create a quantitative data set that could be analyzed for frequencies and percentages to give the trends.

The data collected from the participants was essentially qualitative and hence was analyzed through an inductive thematic analysis approach which involved identifying, analyzing and reporting themes and patterns in qualitative data (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It was thus done through a combination of thematic-content analysis, in view of providing saliency to emerging themes. Despite employing the two approaches, the outcome of the two data sets was reported interactively where each data set complemented the other data set thus creating a wholesome picture of the situation of the children's experiences in the CCI, during their transition and in their foster homes.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with all logistical and ethical guidelines as required by the relevant institutions. Approval

was sought from the Ethics Review Committee of Mount Kenya University and after a confirmation by NACOSTI. In the field, respect for the site and for participants was observed first by gaining permissions from relevant authorities before entry to the site. Informed assent was sought from the CCI and the participants themselves by giving them information about the purpose of the research, process, ethical consideration and dissemination. Further the participants were requested to sign an assent form in acceptance to be involved in the research. The information obtained from interviews and focus group discussions will remain confidential. Personal information was coded to conceal identities of children; interview notes were coded to ensure that the respondents' names remain private.



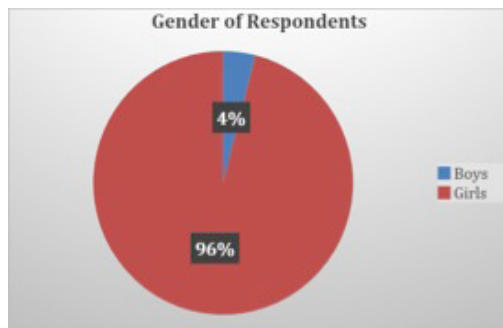
FINDINGS

This section presents the finding of the study that aimed at exploring the experiences of children living in foster families in Kajiado County, Kenya. The findings are presented based on themes generated from the research questions. The section consists of the following subsections: children’s experiences in Charitable Children Institutions, experiences of Children in Transition from CCI to Foster Families, children’s experiences in foster families.

Demographic Characteristics

This section presents data about the respondents of the field research study by categories of gender, age, class and the length of time spent in the alternative care system.

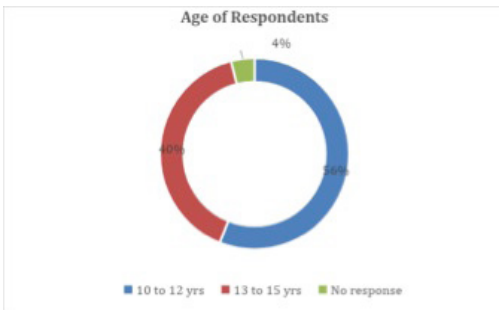
Gender of Respondents



This study sought to identify the experiences of fostered children in Charitable Children’s Institutions, during the process of transition from children homes to foster families as well as their experiences while in the foster family

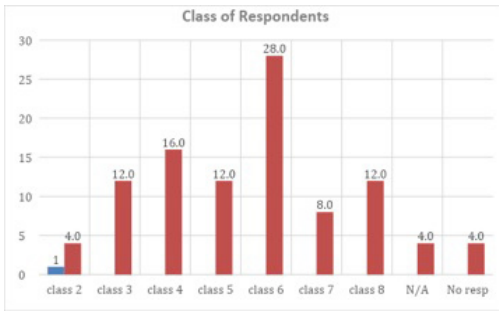
care. As a mini-study, it reached out to 26 respondents. Figure 4.1 shows the gender distribution of the respondents to be such that the majority of the respondents (96%) were girls while the boys constituted the minority at 4%. This apparent gender bias on the part of the respondents could be rooted in the ultimate purpose for which the children were taken to the CCI thus, to avoid the cultural practice of FGM.

Age of Respondents



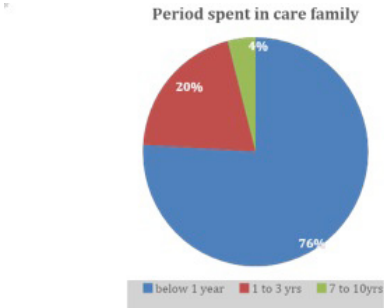
Having noted that the study mainly involved girls and only a few boys. The researcher was interested in establishing the age distribution of these respondents. Figure 4.2 below therefore shows that the age distribution of the respondents involved in the study is such that the majority 56% were between the ages of 10 and 12 followed by those aged between 13 and 15 at 40% and finally 4% of the sample who did not indicate their ages. This simply means that the children who participated in this study ranged between 10 and 15 years of age.

Class of Respondents



Since the age distribution of the children respondents was spread out between 10 and 15 years, it will be expected that the children’s classes/grades will range between 4 and 8 with a few who were 15 years old regarded as being overage. And indeed from figure 4.3, it is clear that the grade that has the majority of the respondents (28%) is grade 6 and which rightfully lies within the age bracket of 10 to 12 years that forms the majority of the respondents in terms of age distribution.

Period Spent in Care Family



It was a fact that not all the children at the CCI had not gotten there at the same time but different times. It therefore became important to the researchers

to establish the period for which the children had been staying at the CCI. And according to figure 4.4 above, a majority of them had lived there for between 7 and 10 years. This means that most of them came to the CCI at an early stage and were now getting to the end of their primary school education cycle hence were to soon transit from the CCI to foster families.

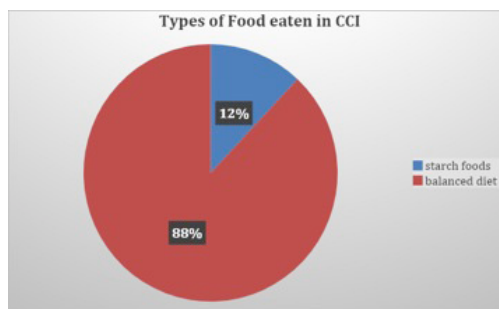
Experiences of Foster Children at Charitable Children Institution (CCI)

As has been stated in the preceding sections of this report, the study partly sought to establish and understand the experience of children in CCI. And in so doing, various themes emerged. These included provision of basic needs, relationships, living environment, relationships, wellbeing and preparation for future.

Basic needs

Food

Concerning food, the researcher was interested in finding out the nutritive value of the food stuffs they eat particularly in terms of whether or not the food consisted a balanced diet. And so, during analysis, the responses were assessed in terms of whether they constituted a balanced diet. The results are presented in the following figure:



Among the types of food mentioned by children include githeri (mixture of maize and beans), chapatti, Ugali (maize meal) and meat and green vegetables. Among the responses given by the respondents include the following:

“We eat githeri, ugali, chapatti, cabbage and sometimes meat” (Respondent 1).

“We eat porridge, bread, tea with mandazi, sometimes, cabbage and meat” (Respondent 2).

“Porridge, rice, Ndengu, ugali tea and bread” (Respondent 6).

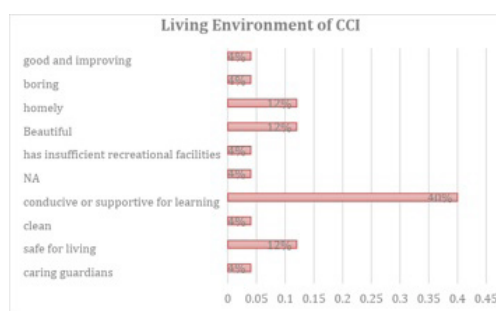
However, despite this general trend showing the food eaten at the CCI, a minority (12%) of the interviewed children mentioned foods that were basically contain starch while about 9% reported that food was insufficient.

The food is little but good” (Respondent 10)

Food is little, not usually enough (Respondent 2).

Living environment

When asked to indicate how they find their home (institution) where they live, several respondents pointed out various aspects of their living environment. Their responses were as presented on the chart below:



From the chart, it is clear that the majority of the children found the environment as conducive/supportive for learning followed by those who felt that the environment is comely, beautiful and safe for living, each reported by 12% of respondent respectively. There were, however, sentiments by minority such as the feeling that the environment was good and improving, it was boring, it has caring guardians and that it is clean. This set of sentiments were reported by 4% of the respondents for each sentiment. There were a minority of the respondents (4%) whose responses were not consistent with the demands of the question. Other responses as given by the respondents also point to the fact that there was general safety within the institution as illustrated by the presence of a fence, a lockable gate, a day and night watchman. Such sentiments were

captured as presented in the following verbatim expressions:

There is a watchman sina uoga
(I am not scared) (Respondent 26).

Those who indicated that the environment was conducive and supportive for learning appear to have said so based on the fact that they found it to be clean and endowed with necessary facilities for learning (academic development), enjoyment and recreation, thus:

[We have] “dorms, classes, water, fields, garden; it is clean and we feel safe [here] (Respondent 24).

[Our environment is] “Cool, good climate, nice table[s], “nice classes and...good sleeping” We have a multi-purpose hall and we are free to use it [at any time] (Respondent 7).

However, despite this general positive view of their living environment, there were those, albeit a few, who found the environment rather boring mainly because of lack of opportunities to be exposed to the life outside their home thus:

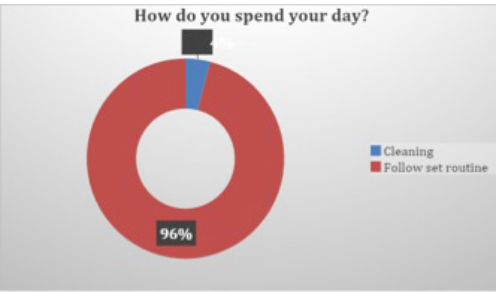
Living environment is fine, though boring we never go out (Respondent15).

Notable however, in their experience, 4% of the children noted that the CCI had been improving in its services. Further probing of the respondents revealed that this was particularly with respect to infrastructure, and boarding facilities as indicated by their qualitative expression thus:

The environment [is] good. It is improving in building and academics. When we came we were sleeping 2 or 3 in one bed now there are more dorms now everyone has a bed alone. Academics is good, we have enough books”. (Respondent 26).

Typical daily routine

When asked about a typical day in the CCI, 96 % of the Children indicated that they are engaged in structured daily routine schedule. And even the remaining 4% of the respondents indicated that they do cleaning, which in essence, is part of the daily routine. These include: Prayers, Daily chores, Study, Play Normal institutional routine. The analyzed responses for this question is presented in the figure below:



Upon further probing, the children gave further details on what exactly they did as part of their daily routine.

We get up at 5am, personal hygiene, we go for Morning Prayer, breakfast, then morning prep, then daily lessons and games two days a week (Respondent 14).

I spend my days here waking up at 5 a.m. At 5:30 take breakfast at 6 a.m. attend classes at 6:50 we have the first lesson at 4 in the evening on Monday we have music on Tuesday we have prayer on Wednesday we have games and Thursday we have debate on Friday we prepare for the Sabbath (Respondents 7).

I Wake up, pray, preps teachers teach and we have breaks (Respondent 20).

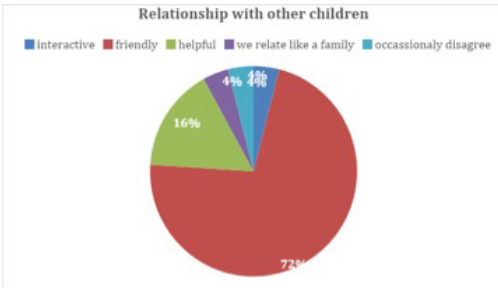
Relationships

Three types of relationships existed for the children: relationships with other children, relationship with the guardians at the CCI and relationships with God.

Relationship with other Children

Concerning the relationship of the children at the CCI with their fellow children, a majority of them (72%) relate in a friendly manner with a further 16% indicating that they draw much help

from the manner in which they relate. The remaining respondents were divided equally in terms of their perceptions at 4% each, where they indicated that the relationship was interactive, they occasionally disagree and that they relate like a family.



The indications of the mentioned forms of relationships were done by various respondents in various expressions, thus:

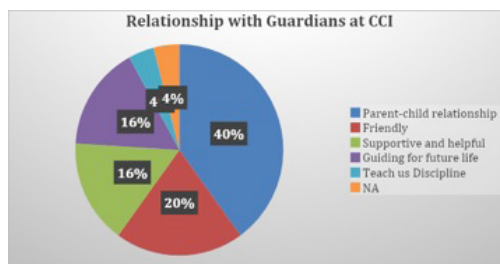
We live like brothers and sisters; we help each other (Respondent 6).

We do not discourage one another, we are sisters and brothers... [we] care for one another”) (Respondent 26).

We don’t fight, we love one another (Respondent 11).

Relationship with Guardians at CCI

The study also sought to establish the children’s relationship with the guardians at the CCI. The findings to this were as presented in the figure below:



From the distribution of their responses, it is clear that the majority of the children found the relationship to be that of parent-child relationship followed by 20% of them who found their relationship with their guardians to be friendly. There is also a part of them 16% who felt that their relationship was characterized by support and help while the other part constituting 16% found the relationship to be one that gives them guidance for their future life, an idea closely related to that of a minority of 4% which indicated that they learn discipline from the guardians. There is, however, a small minority (4%) whose responses appeared not to be consistent with the question.

Despite these indications of a positive relationship with the guardians, further probing during interviews with the children revealed some strained relationships with their guardians, albeit a few, thus:

Some teachers are very unkind and they insult children, especially when they remain behind during school holiday” (Respondent 2).

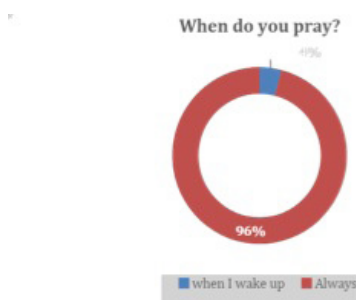
Some teachers are very unkind in their insults...they beat us when

we have not really done anything”
(Respondent 13)

I was caned for poor academic work (Respondent 1).

Relationship with God

During the interviews with the children, the researcher sought also to establish their relationship with God. They were thus asked to indicate when they pray.



Findings indicated a strong sense of recognition and need for God in their lives and giving them a bigger purpose as an overwhelming majority of the children indicated that they pray always while a minority of 4% indicated they pray when they wake up, which in a way, still indicates a strong relationship with God in that they dedicate each day to God for His guidance, for instance, some respondents expressed the frequency of always by outlining the times that they pray, thus:

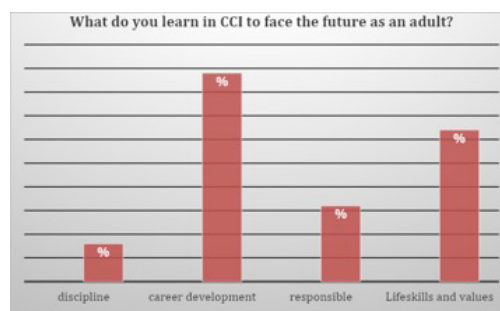
We pray every time, we start class, before meals, before sleeping, and I also pray personally (Respondent 12).

Preparation for future

In this section we present findings related to how the children feel that they are being helped to prepare for their future.

Education

The children living in the CCI are not meant to live there for their entire lives. The CCI should serve as a temporary home, but most importantly, a preparation site for their future lives. When asked about how the CCI helps them prepare for their future, their responses were distributed as indicated in the following figure:



From this distribution, a majority of these children (44%) experienced the education provided at the CCI as that which helps them in terms of career development followed by those who felt that it has provided them with life-skills and values at 32%, both of which prepares them for future life. The other ways in which the children felt that the education acquired at the CCI was helpful to them as future adults is that it makes them disciplined (8%) and responsible (16%).

Life skills

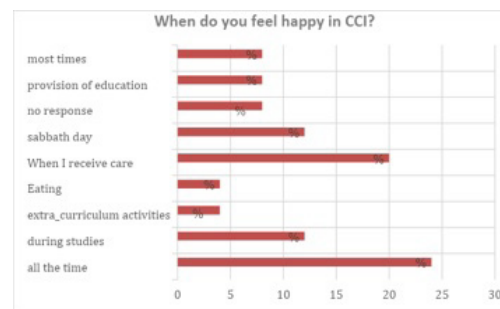
Among the life-skills the children indicated that they learnt included the value of hard work, responsibility, hygiene, discipline prayerfulness and organizational skills. Others indicated skills such as sewing, making bangles, knitting and tailoring. These they indicated that they learnt them at the CCI as well as through seminars and workshops.

Spiritual development

In terms of spiritual development, they mentioned a number of aspects including encouragement and how to pray, knowing about Jesus, knowing the true church is “Saturday church” meaning the real Sabbath day is Saturday. They also indicated learning the bible, how to explain the verses and being a leader (leadership),

Children's happiness

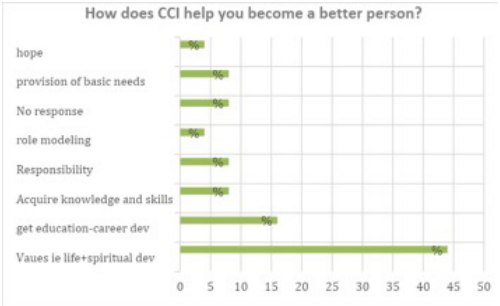
The children were asked about their well-being. The question posed was framed thus: when do you feel happy at the CCI? Their responses are as presented in the following figure:



From this distribution, it appears that the majority of the children (24%) were happy all the time. This was followed by 20% of them who indicated that they were happy when they receive care with two other categories constituting 12% each reporting that they were happy on Sabbath day and during studies respectively. There was, still, two other groups of children of 8% each who indicated being happy most times and when receiving education of whatever kind. Two other groups of 4% each, however, indicated being happy during eating and during extra curriculum activities. Nonetheless, there was this group constituting 8% and which did not give any response to this question. It would therefore be generalized that nearly all the children at the CCI are happy for various reasons and at different times as indicated on the figure.

Prospects of becoming a better person

While the CCI sought to make the children better persons in future, the study sought to establish the children’s view or prospects of becoming better persons. Their responses are presented in the figure below:



The majority of children (44%) indicated that the CCI helps them become future good persons by imparting values needed in their life as persons as well as spiritual values. This was followed by 16% who felt that they are bound to become better persons in future given the education they are acquiring at the CCI which enhances their career development. Other ways in which they felt they are getting helped by CCI to become better persons is by the CCI developing in them a sense of responsibility (8%), knowledge and skills (8%), provision of basic needs (8%), role modeling (4%) and hope (4%). Nonetheless, 8% of the respondents did not give any response to this question.

Life career

The belief that the children were undergoing a preparation for future was demonstrated by children through their hope to join prosperous careers. This was noted from their views during the interviews, thus;

I will become an important person
(Respondent 1).

I want to be a pilot (Respondent 5).

Children’s well-being

The children were asked about their well-being. The question posed was framed thus: when do you feel happy at the CCI?

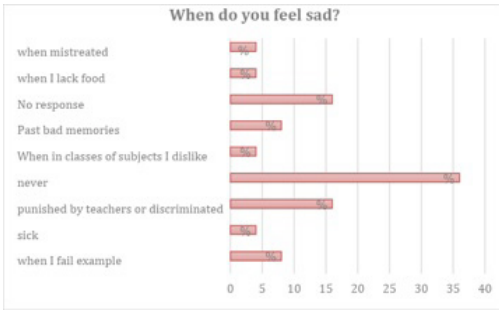
Their responses are as presented in the following figure:

Happiness

From this distribution, it appears that the majority of the children (24%) were happy all the time. This was followed by 20% of them who indicated that they were happy when they receive care with two other categories constituting 12% each reporting that they were happy on Sabbath day and during studies respectively. There was, still, two other groups of children of 8% each who indicated being happy most times and when receiving education of whatever kind. Two other groups of 4% each, however, indicated being happy during eating and during extra curriculum activities. Nonetheless, there was this group constituting 8% and which did not give any response to this question. It would therefore be generalized that nearly all the children at the CCI are happy for various reasons and at different times

Sadness

Having asked the question of when the children feel happy, they were also asked when they feel sad. Their responses are presented on the following figure.



From the distribution, a majority of the children (36%) indicated that they were never sad. this was followed by those who never gave any response to this question (16%). Either way, it can be argued that all these two groups of children are those that can be considered to be saying that they are happy.

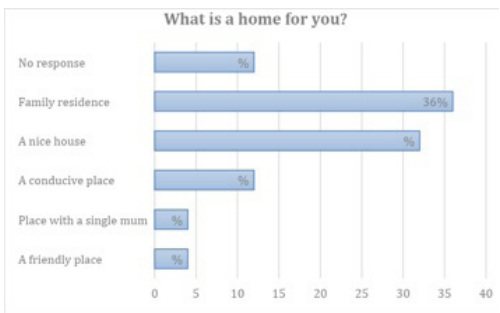
But what is most important here is the fact there are quite a number who have indicated that they are indeed sad at certain times. These are; when they are punished by teachers or discriminated (16%), when they remember their past bad memories and when they fail examinations both at 8% each, while the other reasons were each mentioned by 4% of the children as when sick, when in class (during lessons) of subjects they dislike, when they lack food and when mistreated. Notable, however, is the fact that the children expressed sad moments related to both their personal experiences at the CCI and also back in their families such as punishment, sickness, loss of parents and lack of food.

Experiences of Children in Transition from Charitable Children Institution (CCI) to Foster Families

This section presents findings about the children’s experiences of the transition from the CCI to the foster families.

Children’s concept of home

Regarding the Experiences of Children in Transition from CCI to Foster Families, the first theme was conceptualization of a home. The children were asked what, according to them is a home. Their responses are as follows:



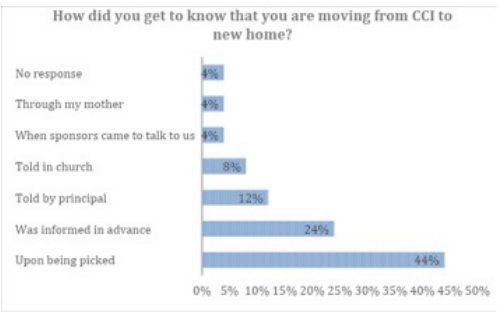
According to the majority of the responses of children (36%), a home was described as a family residence followed by 32% of the children describing a home as a place (dwelling) with a nice house, with another 12% indicating that a home is a conducive place (for living). There were two other groups of children constituting of 4% each and who indicated that a home is a friendly place and a place with a single mum respectively. There were 12% of the children who, nonetheless, never responded to this question. Further probing gave further attributes to the home such as:

A [home] is a rescue center.
(Respondent 21)

A [home] is where people care for me (Respondent 26).

Preparation for Transition

In terms of the preparation of children to move to the foster home, they were asked a question concerning whether on how they knew they were going to stay with foster parents during the holiday and the following data was obtained.



From this findings, it appears that majority of the children (44%) got to know that they were moving from the CCI to their new home upon being picked at the CCI while 12% indicated that they were informed in advance with a further 12% clarifying hat they were told by the principal as 8% were told in church. A further 4% indicated that they got to know when their sponsors came to talk to them while another 4% indicated that they got to know through their respective mothers. Some specific voices by the children on this question include the following;

65 % of the children indicated that they were not aware or they had met the person who came for them but did not know of the Foster parent relationship. 34 % of the children interviewed were aware that they would go with a family during the holiday either through the principal or learnt during a visit by the foster parent.

The Principal told me to prepare someone was coming to take me to Nairobi” (Respondent 21).

I knew when the sponsor came to pick me (Respondent13).

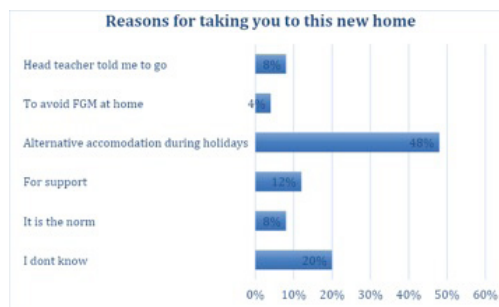
I didn’t know before that.... (Respondent 10).

Mother came on Saturday called me told me she loves [and] advised me. She did not say I was going with her... (Respondent 21).

[I knew my foster family] through my real mother, she said I go with the able family to educate me. Then from foster parent I was brought to the rescue center. I was very small in 2012... (Respondent 26).

Reasons for being fostered

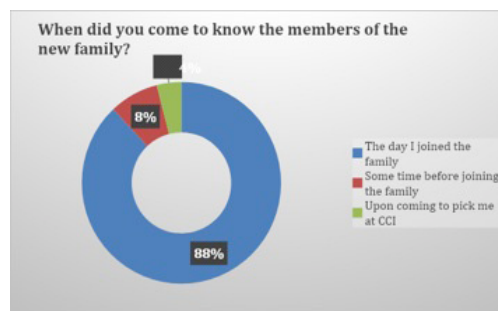
The study sought to identify the reasons why these children were taken to foster homes from the CCI. The findings to this question are as presented in the following figure:



From the distribution of the responses, the majority of respondents (48%) indicated that they were taken from the CCI for alternative accommodation during holidays, followed by those who indicated that that they were moved to homes for support. Those who indicated that it was the norm and those who indicated that they were told by the headteacher constituted 8% each. There is, however, a sizeable group of the respondents, constituting 20% who were not aware of reason for going to foster family.

First encounter with foster family

When children arrive at the new family, they begin to familiarizing themselves with the other members of the new family. In this study, the researcher sought to know how this happened. The findings were as presented in the next figure.

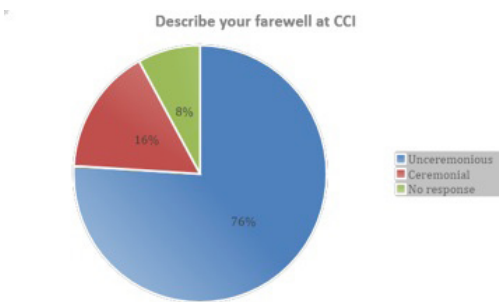


From the distribution of the responses, a majority of 88% of the children apparently met the members of the foster family the day they went to live with them. Another 8% of the respondents indicated knowing them

a sometime before joining the family while a minority of 4% knew them upon coming to pick the children at the CCI.

Farewell

The exit of the children from the CCI towards their respective new homes is usually marked by different occasions. In this study the children reported different ways in which they bid farewell to the CCI as they set off for their new homes, thus:



The majority of these children (76%) reported that their exit from the CCI to their homes ‘new’ homes was unceremonious, meaning, they just left without any ceremony. Only 16% of the children reported having had a ceremonious exit from the CCI as they headed for their new homes. A smaller minority of 8% did not give any response to this question. Nevertheless, during the interviews, a majority of the children reported being picked by their ‘new’ mothers and were escorted to their respective picking points by their colleagues thus:

Nilizindikizwa na wanafunzi wengine nikachukuliwa na mama

(I was escorted by my classmates and my foster mother came and picked me) (Respondent 22).

I left [CCI] on closing day, the woman picked me (Respondent 9).

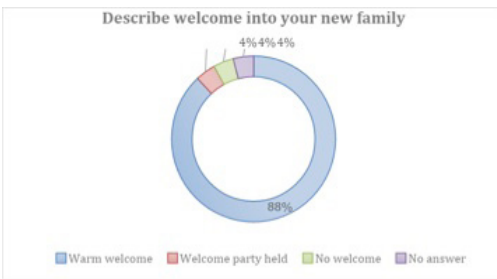
From the various reported ways in which the children exited, it is apparent that the exit from this CCI to the new families is rarely a marked occasion, rather, the concerned parent just comes and picks the identified child and goes away to their home.

Children’s Experiences in Foster Families

This section details the findings of the experiences of the children once they had transited into the foster families.

Welcome into the ‘new’ Family

Children from CCI settling in the new families is often characterized with a variety of experiences. In this study, the children reported various experiences as presented in the following figure:



From the figure it is apparent that a majority of the respondents (88%) were received warmly hence ‘a warm welcome’ while the remaining were distributed equally into those had a welcome party held for them, those who had no welcome at all and those who had no answer at all. In general therefore, the majority of the children were apparently welcomed warmly into their respective new families. Some of the confessions of their welcome into their new home include the following:

They sang a song for me, [then] we prayed together (Respondent 3)

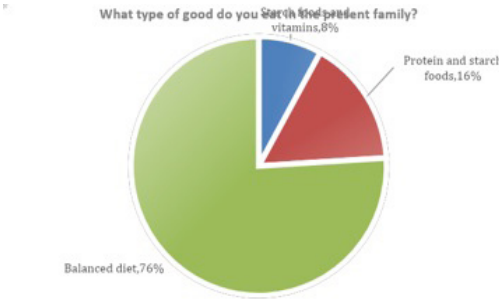
They bought me clothes, they gave all I did not have, told me to live like in my parents’ home. I was happy [I was] not left in school (Respondent 12).

Provision of Basic Needs

The basic needs were classified into three categories – food, relationship and wellbeing

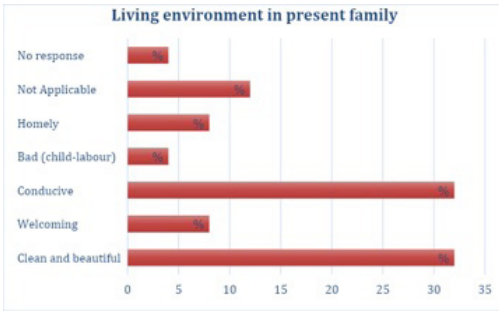
Food

The food varieties mentioned as eaten in those families were classified as protein, vitamins and carbohydrate foods. The responses by the children were grouped and distributed as appears on the following figure.



Living Environment

The children were asked about the living environment of their present family. Their responses are presented in the following figure.



From the distribution, it is apparent that the majority of the respondents indicated that the living environment is clean and beautiful (32%) and conducive (32%) followed by 8% who felt that the environment was homely. This is exemplified by one of the respondents who said:

Everything in this home is nice (Respondent 1)

It is, however, notable that some children, though a minority of 4% reported that the home

environment was bad as they were made to work a lot (child labour).

The home is good, but a lot of work – cleaning clothes, cleaning compound (Respondent 15).

The environment was bad...I did not feel loved. Children did not like me. [I was] “Left me to come to school alone. (Respondent 11).

Notable also is the fact that 12% gave responses that were not applicable to the question while a further 4% gave no response to this question.

Education

Regarding education, 7.6% of the respondents mentioned that the foster families encouraged them to work hand in education. Indeed, one family reportedly paid fees for the fostered child. Such experiences were captured even verbatim thus:

Hard work is the key to success, I went tuition in the new home (respondent 23)

Relationships

Relationship with God

Holistic development of children include spiritual formation which has to do with

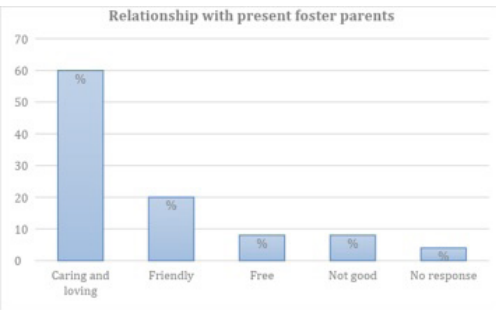
the relationship with God. One way in which children are taught to be in a good relationship with God is through prayers. The children were asked when they pray and the following figure presents their responses.



Generally, the children appeared to have a good relationship with God given that all of them indicated a certain frequency of praying with a majority 32% indicating praying every day. Notably, even those who constituted the minority at 8% indicated that they pray two times a day.

Relationship with Foster Parents

When foster parents pick these children from the CCI, they are expected to develop a parental relationship with the children for their well-being. This study sought to establish the relationship that developed between the children and their foster parents after leaving the CCI.



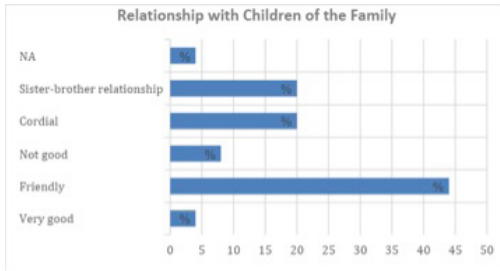
The findings indicate that nearly all the children reported a good or positive relationship with their foster parents. Their responses were distributed thus; 60% indicated that the foster parents were caring and loving as 20% of the children found the foster parents to be friendly and a further 8% to be free with them. There was, however, a minority of the children (8%) indicated that the relationship was no good while 4% did not respond to this question. This overwhelming report on positive relationship was mainly manifest in the fact that the children reported being treated as part of the family, cared for and their fees paid for them and, sometimes, given surprise gifts of clothes, shoes and handbag for church thus:

One of the respondent emphatically said, [they] “they gave me surprise gifts of clothes, shoes, handbag for church... all new things...I did not have the bags for church before (Respondent 27).

The relationship was therefore generally a good and positive one. This needs to be sustained as it is a good practice and, at the same time, there is need to probe further on the cases where the relationship is not good with a view of addressing the underlying issues.

Relationship with Children in the Foster Family

While settling in the new home, children need an atmosphere that is enabling for them to adapt well. The children were asked for the kind of relationship they had with the children in the foster family.



The findings on this aspect indicate nearly all the children had a positive relationship with the children in the foster families as described variously by 44% as friendly, 20% as cordial and another 20% as sister-brother relationship. There was, however, some 4% of the children who indicated that the relationship is not good while another 4% gave responses that were not applicable to the question posed. Those reporting a positive relationship used indicators such as there being brotherly (or sisterly for that matter) love and care for one another.

Nonetheless, those who reported bad or unfriendly relationship described it in terms of being left to work alone, being beaten (especially by the foster mother and sometimes by foster siblings to the extent of some of the children reporting that they never wished to go back to

those foster families. For instance, during the interview, one of the children described the experience at her foster family as follows;

Not happy...mother and elder daughter were beating me... was not happy.... don't want to go back there... (Respondent 15).

Despite these voices of negative experiences, it is noted that the majority of the children had positive experiences. This however, does not mean that the negative experiences are not worthy of taking note of. In fact, there is more need to address these negative experiences whether legally or otherwise, and with reference to the requirements of the procedures of fostering children.

Promotion of Wellbeing

For the promotion of the children's well-being, there is need for Emotional support which could be done either at home or during the learning process. In this study, voices from the children indicated a general acknowledgement that they were well taken care of, at least, going by the voices of the children thus:

They make me feel happy, when I become adult [1] will remember these parents, they have uplifted my life... (Respondent 14).

Life skills

Children need to acquire some life-skills especially at a time when they are growing up. In this study, children indicated gaining life skills from the foster families including how to cook, washing utensils and generally, the value of hard work.



DISCUSSION

While the family is the main social institution that provides the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, some children, due to various unfortunate circumstances, never get this opportunity to grow up in their family but in an integrated care of sort. And while there has been a long standing African tradition of treating the raising of children as a responsibility of the community or kinship for that matter, the present society has tended to incline itself more towards the institutionalization of child care for disadvantaged children. This has, however, come with a range of challenges that have led to a new thinking of de-institutionalizing child foster care, mainly owing to the many negative attributes that have been identified about this type of care. However, these challenges have not been fully investigated in all their ramifications.

This mini-study sought to identify the experiences of fostered children in Charitable Children's Institutions, their experiences during the process of transition from children homes to foster families and their experiences while in the foster family care. The study was done on the families living in Kajiado County.

Overall, it showed that the majority of the children had positive experiences during their stay in the CCI, during transition to the foster homes/families

and in their stay in their respective new homes. Concerning their stay at CCI, the children generally had a balanced diet, lived in an environment that they regarded as good and with a routine that gave them an opportunity to develop a good relationship with God.

The fact that children mentioned different varieties of food shows that there was an effort to provide different nutritional needs for growth and development provided at CCI besides giving the children a feeling of contentment and satisfaction. Notably, these findings are consistent with Braitstein, et al (2013) who established that CCI offered better nutrition for better growth and development for separated and orphaned children compared to other living in community and the streets. While the children are provided with food and different varieties of it, hence overall good quality of food, some of the children appear to experience a shortage of it hence some level of deprivation. This, according to Vinicius et al (2011), can lead to long-term consequences which go beyond poor physical growth to deficits in social, psychological and intellectual functioning.

At the same time, whereas the children appear to be happy with the environment within which they live, it is apparent that the environment is lacking in community engagement which is key to development according

to the guidelines for alternative care for children of Kenya. Besides the National Standards for Good Practice in Charitable Institutions(2013) encourage networking with communities by supporting children to attend community churches, schools attending social events.

Good Childhood routines refer to observable, predictable, and repetitive behaviors that occur daily or weekly in the context of care-giver-child interactions in the home environment (Mindbell & Williamson 2019). Routine promotes a structure life which leads to productivity, order and wellbeing. The children do not appear to have much problem to do with the environment as they have regarded it as good. Equally, the environment was described as that which gave them an opportunity to develop a good relationship with God. Accordingly, the children's relationship with other children was friendly and that with their guardians was characterized as a parent-child one. On the whole, the CCI appeared to promote cordial relationships with children. Cordial relationships with guardians remind children about the best experiences with their parents. This contrast with earlier finding that the caregivers such as housemothers have a big numbers of children to look after hence no time for individual child support. This could imply that The Standards for good Practice in Charitable Children Institutions (2013)

are being implemented specifically on ration of workers to children, professional qualification of and the roles of all workers in child development in the CCI. However, despite this general cordial relationship, there were pockets of experiences of mistreatment manifested in such ways as hurling insults at the children, especially during the holiday when left behind at the CCI.

While studies such as the one by Save the Children Fund, - UK, (2009) and (Berens and Nelson, 2015) have indicted institutional care of young children as harmful to children's development and one that negatively affects neural functioning at the most critical period of brain development, causing physical, intellectual, behavioral, social and emotional skill deficits and delays, this study did not report any major experiences that could lead to such effects. However, this does not mean that this study is advocating for institutionalization of children's care per se, but rather, has pointed out certain issues that could still be addressed to straighten the institutionalization process. In any case, the study has also brought out some negative aspects of home-based care just the same way institutionalization has some challenges.

At the same time, while literature, including ACCI Relief (2016), has severally pointed to a number of adverse effects that children who grow up in residential care experience suffer, including

developmental delays; behavioral problems; attachment disorders; lack of life skills; and difficulty forming and maintaining healthy relationships, this study has established that children interviewed acknowledge that they are being taught life-skills as well as forming positive relationships both among themselves and with their guardians. And for the other challenges such as attachment disorders, behavioral problems and developmental delays, this study found out none of such cases.

Contrary to findings of other studies which have pointed out to an apparent lack of life skills and preparation to become independent in life and which in turn often leads to poor educational results for students with a history of foster care (Courtney et al., 2011), this CCI was found to prepare the children well for their future and adult roles in various ways including provision of life-skills, inducing in them some discipline and career development. And while these results depict the CCI as doing the best to provide a holistic care to the children (despite certain aspects still wanting), the general situation is that there are still issues that require fixing. For instance, while at the CCI, the children reported some unfavorable experiences such as being beaten. There is, therefore, an indication that children have an understanding that when treated in a certain way such as being caned it is their fault. Although, there is need to correct

those who error, corporal punishment is banned in Kenyan schools by Children Act 2010 Article 13(1) Article.53 (d) of the Constitution of Kenya ..., all forms of violence, ...

The Department of Children Services (DCS), with partners shall ensure that the foster child's active participation and decision-making in his/her placement is upheld and emphasized, according to the child's age and evolving capacity (Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya 2014. This implies that the child should be accorded the opportunity to engage in planning and decision making on issues concerning them including alternative care placement. This was not the case with some of the children interviewed. Most seemed to have limited knowledge on the transition process. In most cases, the information was given a day before the actual move or the same the same day they were going to foster home. There were cases, albeit a few, where some children had met the foster parent though still not aware of the relationship up the day they are picked from school. in other cases, some were completely unaware about their foster families and were only picked the day they went to the foster home. It is, however, worthy of noting that child participation in matters concerning them is paramount for their support which seem not to have got sufficient attention from the data obtained. But in the present study,

results show that there seems to be no consultation with the children in the process of transition to foster family which imply decision are made for them and they have no choice regarding the matter. This could be for various reason including indicating the positioning of children as less powerful in adult society, and the power dynamics embedded in these relationships at least according to a study by Ucembi (2013). But these abrupt transfers, as experienced by children in the study, can surely interfere with the children psychological well-being. This certainly reveals some departure from the procedures where such children should be prepared well in advance and, if possible, have several meetings with the children before the transfer to the foster home happens.

On another level, the Children Act 2001 Article 147. (1) States that, where a child has, by virtue of a care order, been committed to a rehabilitation school or to a charitable children's institution, the Director in conjunction with the manager of the institution may place the child with a foster parent, for such period as the Director may from time to time authorize. It is also recommended where possible children in CCI should be staying with their families during school holiday to promote bonding in preparation for reintegration. In such situations, child participation is key. The research sought to establish the knowledge of children on their care

arrangement by asking the child why they were taken to foster families. The responses of the children point out four main reasons as; alternative accommodation during holidays, for support (for education or personal needs), to avoid FGM, it being the norm and that the teacher told them to go (to the home). There was, however, a sizeable part of the sample, 20% to be exact, who indicated that they did not know why they were being moved to the foster families. With reference to UNCRC Article 12, Child participation is a substantive right that promotes children participation in making decision that affect them, becoming actors in their own live while challenging the old school of thought that all decisions are always made for a child.

The departure from the CCI to the respective new homes was marked differently, but on the whole, it was low-keyed and unceremonious. It was also marked by descriptions of unfamiliar people who came to pick the children thus; one respondent observed that "I left [CCI] on closing day, the woman picked me". The use of the term 'woman' is a casual reference of a female depicting a possibility of lack of attachment to the person who picked the child. The language indicates a situation where there is devoid of parent- child relationship paramount in settling in of the child. Thus, the event seemed mechanical, with no emotional

attachment on what was happening one feel like the children were indifferent. It can be construed from this scenario that pre-placement the children might not have been well prepared. But again, this is could be attributed to lack of prior planning for the transition which includes: lack of information about the family, failure to meet the family before, pre-visit to the foster home, counselling for the children as per Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya 2014.

Concerning the experience in the foster family, majority of the children reported feeling welcome, appreciated and accepted as expressed through signals such as being waited for, use welcoming words, being given food, new clothes, a bedroom and also singing and praying together upon arrival. This kind of reception could be construed to mean that the families have had training on fostering and also were intentional on how to welcome the foster child to feel at home at onset. There were, however, instances of indifferent attitude expressed just being told that they were welcome and that was all.

Pertaining to the provision of basic needs, guidance is drawn, for instance, from the Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya (2014) which partly direct that foster parents, biological families and foster care agencies have a responsibility to ensure that a child in foster care enjoys all the

rights (education, food, shelter and clothing) specified in the UNCRC. In line with this, it is notable that there was no mention of negative experiences with regard to food as far as the foster family care was concerned. Positive reports concerning the living environment were in line with the observation made elsewhere in the literature reviewed that foster care systems aim to provide a safe and nurturing environment that meets the needs of children and youth so that they can thrive (Leslie et al. 2005). And while the living environment was not without some bottle-necks, these could have been brought about by lack of proper assessment before the placement of children in foster family as per the Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya (2014) which partly require that prior to placement, the Children's Officer, in collaboration with relevant partner visits the foster home to assess conditions in the home, the suitability of other household members and to check that members of the family have consented to the decision.

The mention of encouragement to some of the children by their foster parents to work hard in their education as well as some families paying fees for the fostered child is an indication that foster families were aware of child right to education as stated in the Constitution of Kenya (2010) Art. 53 (1) (b), "every child has a right to free and compulsory

education.” Besides, foster families inculcated practical skills in children and this is to be highly encouraged.

In terms of relationships, the children reported on their relationship with God, with their fellow children in the foster family and with the foster parents. Generally, majority of the children reported positive relationships with their foster parents, a finding that is consistent with those of a study done by (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018). The same nature of relationship was also reported on the relationship with the children of the foster family. Nonetheless, there were instances of children being over-worked within the households and not being given enough time for leisure and recreation. This, however, is in violation of article 12 of ACRWC on ensuring leisure, recreation and cultural activities for children. These are situations that need to be investigated further and addressed.

Finally, on matters of well-being, there was a general observation that the majority of the children reported being well accepted by other children in the foster families elicited a feeling of joy and happiness in the fostered children. At the same time, a majority of the children reported being facilitated to be better persons while in the foster family.

The general situation as far as relationships while in the foster family is indicative of a situation of parents

having undergone parenting skills training as directed by Guidelines for the Alternative Family Care of Children in Kenya (2014, p. 62).



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sought to identify fostered children's experiences in Charitable Children's Institutions (CCI), investigate the experiences of foster children during the process of transition from children homes to foster families and to examine the fostered children's experiences while in the foster care families. In view of the findings of the study along the lines of these objectives, the study made the following conclusions.

Conclusions

- Concerning the experiences of fostered children's in Charitable Children's Institutions (CCI) the study concludes that while in general, the children's experience of the living environment is enabling enough in that it is clean, has the necessary academic and recreational facilities hence can support their growth and development, there still exist environments which some children find deficient of opportunities for their growth. This means that certain elements of the living environment particularly the social aspect seem to have been overlooked.
- In terms of education received, the children generally enjoy the learning processes in the institution for its perceived ability to be equipping them with knowledge and skills for posterity as well as opportunities to develop and strengthen their relationship with God as well as becoming better persons hence giving them hope beyond the CCI.
- In spite of the general cordial nature of relationship between the children and their guardians, the children's relationship with their guardians and which is characterized by friendliness, and interactions that encourage the children feel free to relate to the guardians, there still exist pockets of experiences of mistreatment manifested in such ways as hurling insults at the children, especially those left behind during holidays.
- The children wellbeing was catered for through the provision of a balanced life and provision of necessary life requirement such as food, care and love, education. However, it emerged that some children have had advanced Childhood experiences such as bereavement that seem to be affecting them.
- It is equally notable that in terms of life career development, the children generally find their stay at the institution together with their education there to be one that makes them hopeful by enabling them see a future where they can sustain themselves using the skills they are acquiring.
- The experiences of the children during transition from CCI to foster families generally indicate that they are done rather abruptly and without adequate prior

arrangements, a finding which implies the possibility of interference with the children's psychological well-being.

Concerning the children living in foster families, it is notable generally, the living environment was reportedly safe as characterized by provision of education and encouragement to work hard in school, good relationship with foster parents and the family at large as well as being allowed to develop a relationship with God. However, there are still streams of evidence of children being subjected to a lot of work (child labour) as well as instances of neglect and even mistreatment.

Recommendations

- While in the CCIs the children appear to have less opportunities for interaction with the community outside their institution thereby limiting them in some way. It is therefore recommended that as part of learning, among the outdoor activities should be community engagement to be achieved through interaction with the community through shopping, attending church activities outside the school and generally going out.
- There need for further assessment of children psychological wellbeing and offer therapy where necessary to improve the children wellbeing.
- There is need to put emphasis or rather enforce the requirements on the Guidelines for Alternative Family Care for Children of Kenya(2014) ensuring the right procedures of transition from CCIs to foster families and ensuring that the agencies involved assume their roles in the foster care process.
- There is need to strengthen the assessment of the targeted foster homes before transiting children to the foster homes (refer to the guidelines)
- There is need to educate children on their right and responsibilities and also the processes of reporting any incidences of abuse while in Foster families.
- Empower the children as agencies of their own wellbeing ensuring their participation in the planning of their transition to foster families.
- Relevant authorities must undertake to psychologically prepare the children in such institutions who later get transferred to foster families to avoid cases of psychological instability whenever this transfer happens.



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Assent Form for the Foster Child

We are from Tangaza University College, Institute of Youth Studies and are interested in understanding the experiences of children in foster care. We would like to have like to interact with you through an interview to understand your experiences while you we at the CCI during the transition to be with your foster family and now that you are settled in your new home.

This study is aimed at generating knowledge on the process of foster care informed by the children themselves to improve future foster process and also enhance the current processes and practices for the best interest of a child. The information obtained will be handled with high confidentiality and names coded to avoid identification of the participant and their families. The study outcome will create knowledge in the area foster care and will be shared with the department children services and other agencies involved in foster care to inform policy and practice. The research outcome will also be shared publicly though publication, and public lectures.

I will go through the consent form with you to ascertain you understand everything to help you decide whether or not you will be happy to participate. You will sign this form if you are happy to participate and your foster parent will give us consent to interview you by signing this form too.

Title of Study: Experiences of Children Living in Foster Care Families in Nairobi Region, Kenya

Name of Researchers: Josephine Naita Nkangi, Dr.Henry, Catherine Kisasa, Dr.Catherine Marari,Anatasio Nyagah,Beatrice Churu

The researcher has explained to me what the research is about, how it will be conducted and for what purpose.

YES/NO

I understand the research will consider confidentiality and will not use any information in a manner to identify me.

YES/NO

I understand the finding of the research can be shared publicly though publication, lectures, and with department of children services and I am happy with this.

YES/NO

I understand I can withdraw from this study at any point without any explanation.

YES/NO

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study

Participant Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Experiences of a New “Home”: A Case Study of Children Living in Foster Care Families in Nairobi County, Kenya

Demographic Information Form	
Code or Pseudo name:	06
Age:	[13]
Gender:	M <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/>
Class:	[4]
Period spend in Foster Care Family (In months):	[Three weeks]
Date, <i>11th October 2019</i> place, <i>Kajiado</i> and hour of interview <i>40 Minutes</i>	

Experiences of a New “Home”: A Case Study of Children

Living in Foster Care Families in Nairobi County, Kenya

Experiences of children in Child Care Institutions (CCI)

- A). What type of food did you eat in CCI?
- B). Describe the living environment of CCI.
- C). What was your relationship with other children in CCI?
- D). What was the relationship with your guardians in CCI?
- E). How did you spent your day in CCI?
- F). When did you feel sad or happy in CCI?
- G). What did you learn in CCI to face the future as an adult?
- H). Describe how CCI helped you to be a better person.
- I). When did you pray in CCI?

Experiences of children-in-transition from CCI to “new home”

- A). Describe, what is “home” for you.
- B). How did you get to know you are moving from CCI to “new home”?
- C). What is the reason for taking you from CCI to thin “new home”?
- D). When did you come to know the members of your new family?
- E). Describe your farewell in CCI and welcome in your new family.

Experiences of children in Foster Families

- A). What type of food do you eat in your present family?
- B). Describe the living environment of your present family.
- C). What is your relationship with children of this family and & neighborhood?
- D). What is the relationship with your present foster parents?
- E). How do you spent your day in your present family?
- F). When do you feel sad or happy in present family?
- G). What do you learn in present family to face the future as an adult?
- H). Describe how present family helps you to be a better person.
- I). When do you pray in present family?