INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL SERVICES
ZIMBABWE

Ministry of
Labour and Social
Services

Institutional Capacity Assessment
Department of Social Services, Ministry of Labour and Social Services, Zimbabwe
2010

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October 2010

Acknowledgements

The audit team would like to express its gratitude to all of the DSS officers, at all levels of the Department, and those representatives of the donor community, NGOs, academic bodies and other organisations who have unfailingly offered us the most courteous assistance and been unstintingly generous with their time and information. We would like to thank especially the Harare District Social Services Officer for her cooperation in releasing staff to test the protocols used during the audit. We are also very grateful to the staff of UNICEF's Zimbabwe office for their financial and logistical support for this study and for their advice and guidance.

Our thanks are due to all those who read and commented on the draft of this report. We have taken on board all of their observations and suggestions, insofar as the information available to us allowed us to do so. The team remains responsible for the analysis and assessments contained in this final version.

Executive summary

Background

Oxford Policy Management and Jimat Development Consultants were engaged by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MoLSS) to carry out a Capacity and Institutional Assessment of the Ministry's Department of Social Services (DSS). The purpose of the assignment is to assess the Department's human resources and institutional capacity, identify gaps in its ability to carry out its statutory mandate of child care and protection, and draft recommendations for action. The main focus of the assessment is on the DSS's capacity to respond to the needs of Zimbabwe's orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

The DSS has a broad spectrum of statutory responsibilities for the protection and care of children under the Children's Act and other enactments, and responsibility for the administration of a variety of public assistance programmes. It also has responsibility on behalf of the Government of Zimbabwe for coordinating the implementation, both through its own activities and those of other Ministries and non-governmental organisations, of the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (the NAP for OVC). However, under the Programme of Support for the NAP pooled donor funding for projects and programmes is disbursed direct to implementing NGOs by UNICEF, and is not administered by DSS, though the Department retains a coordination mandate. The initial phase of the audit in May – June 2010 confirmed the scale of the challenge facing DSS, the wide range of its statutory and administrative responsibilities, and the paucity of the resources which it can deploy to meet the challenge and discharge those responsibilities. It also enabled an analytical framework to be developed to inform the gathering of further evidence. Definitions of OVC vary, and there are no definitive and up to date figures for the numbers of children falling into the different categories of need, but there are estimated to be some 3.5m children living in extreme poverty in Zimbabwe and possibly 1.3m children who have lost one or both parents.

The Department's front line for the delivery of services for OVC and other beneficiaries (for example extremely poor households, people with disabilities and elderly people) are provided by the district social services offices. These offices have a complement of only 164 professional officers, but 64 of these posts are currently vacant. Issues were also identified concerning the professional qualifications of the officers who are in post, the rate of staff turnover, and the availability of physical resources (office facilities, vehicles, telephones, and computers) to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. There is apparently a high level of dependence on the goodwill of NGOs to make the resources available so that key statutory functions can be discharged, resulting in patchy provision across the country. Through a programme of fieldwork in July-August 2010 – comprising workshops, questionnaires and interviews – detailed information was collected concerning the workload, resources and concerns of the staff of the 65 district offices and the 10 provincial offices which supervise and support them, and what the priorities for capacity strengthening should be. A deeper understanding was also acquired of the structure and evolution of the Department's budget, its capacity at headquarters level to manage and coordinate field operations, and the systems for performance reporting. The evidence is discussed and

evaluated in this report. The supporting data as listed in Section 9 may be provided on request to UNICEF Zimbabwe Country Office.

Overview of DSS capacity

The assessment found deep-seated capacity weaknesses throughout the Department. It is extremely under-resourced to meet the challenges it faces, in terms of the number of vacancies among professional front-line staff, the professional qualifications and experience of many of the staff who are in post, and the physical facilities and resources at their disposal. Salary levels do not permit sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff to be recruited and retained to discharge effectively its core functions, and its dependence on facilities provided by NGOs and other public agencies undermines its ability to exercise its monitoring and supervisory responsibilities with authority.

Zimbabwe is in fact in a crisis situation where the ratio of social workers to the population of children is concerned. Although the data available do not permit comparisons to be made with precision, it appears that in Zimbabwe the ratio of children to social workers is of the order of 49,587:1, compared with 1,867:1 in Botswana and 4,300:1 in Namibia. This is an astonishing finding for a country reputed to have had the best social protection system in Africa.

Furthermore, the DSS's lack of critical resources – including in particular vehicles - places unnecessary obstacles in the path of other agencies implementing projects and programmes for OVC, by making it difficult for officers to perform the statutory duties (for example in relation to the reunification of children with families) which only they are empowered to carry out. In the medium to long term, a future can be envisaged in which the DSS resumes more responsibility for the planning of services and the allocation of donor funds to implementing agencies, and subsequently possibly takes back in-house some child protection activities that are currently carried out by other bodies funded through the PoS, while maintaining a capability for partnership and commissioning for those services that are best delivered by external providers. In the short term, however, there is an urgent and critical need for a large-scale injection of funding to ensure that the Department's statutory functions and its programme responsibilities towards children and other vulnerable groups in society can be discharged to a minimum acceptable standard, and that it does not constitute a bottle-neck in the efforts of others to provide services.

The report summarises in Section 6 its key findings, and also the key actions proposed by the audit team. These include both some actions which could be taken now by DSS management at low or moderate cost to alleviate the situation, alongside the much more costly interventions which are required to make any real impact on the Department's current condition. These key findings and proposed key actions are as follows:

Summary of key findings

i.   The DSS is extremely under-resourced to meet the challenges it faces, in terms of the number of vacancies among professional front-line staff, the professional qualifications

and experience of many of the staff who are in post, and the physical facilities and resources at their disposal.

ii. Zimbabwe's social welfare system has a huge case-load, and even by the most conservative estimates, its professional staffing is wildly out of alignment with that of other countries in the region. Lack of adequate numbers of professional personnel impedes effective implementation and monitoring of child protection legislation.

iii. There is a need for an urgent review of conditions in the Department's residential institutions for children.

iv. The lack of common shared vocabulary to describe what people do suggests a weakness in the DSS's organisational culture, and the interchangeable social welfare/social services terminology used to refer to officers within the Department indicates that the shift in philosophy signalled by the change in the Department's name has not yet taken deep root.

v. The Department's apparent difficulty in producing an accurate and up to date overview of its staffing, and the distribution of posts and vacancies, must hinder strategic management of the organisation; more minor administrative weaknesses, such as failure to date documents or to make clear the reference date to which they apply, also place unnecessary obstacles in the path of management.

vi. Lack of resources undermines DSS's professional relationships with other government bodies and NGOs; it cannot credibly present itself as playing an active, necessary and authoritative part in the local criminal justice and social protection systems if it does not have the means to carry out the most basic functions unaided. The absence of resources also impacts on the Department's ability of DSS to monitor and inspect the services for children and others provided by NGOs.

vii. Lack of official identification makes it difficult for DSS officers to obtain access to public and private premises in pursuit of their duties, particularly in the role of Probation Officer, and sometimes leads to conflict with the police and other agencies.

viii. Because statutory probation functions can only be carried out by social workers employed in the public service, the shortage of DSS staff can severely hamper the efforts of NGOs to provide child care and protection services.

ix. A substantial part of the time of professional Social Services Officers is employed on relatively routine, administrative tasks which might be performed by less highly-qualified staff.

x. The goal of the NAP is by December 2010 to have developed a national institutional capacity to identify all orphans and vulnerable children and to have reached out with service provision to at least 25% of OVC in Zimbabwe. If by "national institutional capacity" is meant capacity within the institutions of national government, this goal is not currently being met and is unlikely to be so by the end of this year. It is a goal, however,

which would apparently command the support of DSS professional staff, if conditions permitted development partner's resources to be channelled in this direction.

Proposed key actions

i. DSS management need to continue to press the PSC for improvements in SSO remuneration, for example through re-grading, and to lobby international government donors for direct funding on humanitarian grounds to enable crucial deficiencies in personnel and equipment to be rectified.

ii. If funds can be made available, priority needs to be given to the procurement of essential equipment such as vehicles and the improvement of working conditions in district offices, alongside improvements in SSO remuneration.

iii. The planned phasing-out of the Social Welfare Assistant grade needs to be reversed, and more emphasis given to the recruitment and training of sufficient staff in more junior grades to carry out tasks which are principally administrative in nature, so that the fully-qualified professional officers – whose time represents a scarce resource – can devote as much attention as possible to the child protection functions that demand the highest level of professional skill.

iv. The statutory instrument that has already been prepared, to allow non-DSS social workers to undertake statutory functions, should be made as soon as possible as a short-term measure to provide some relief until a sufficient number of social workers can be recruited to the public service.

v. The DSS needs to develop a comprehensive departmental strategic plan; review its reporting framework; take steps to improve communications, especially between headquarters and the Department's outfield; and reduce the burden of cumbersome administrative processes where possible.

vi. If funding can be secured, the Department's IT systems need to be developed to aid communication, reporting and the storage and retrieval of information, and to meet the pressing need for the distribution of up to date legislation and policy documents to the outfield.

vii. DSS needs to adopt more disciplined administrative practice with regard to dating documents, and ensuring consistency of content and the standardised usage of terminology to aid communication.

viii. There should be an urgent review of conditions in the Department's residential institutions.

Conclusion

It was believed that the most significant output of this audit would be an action plan which would set out the steps necessary to build the capacity required for DSS to re-assume meaningful leadership of the child protection and wider social protection system. However, in

view of the nature of our findings the audit team believes that this is no longer what is called for.

The accumulated evidence has indicated to us very strongly the enormity of the crisis facing Zimbabwe's social protection system, which no amount of clever planning, redistribution of effort or building of shiny new management systems will do much to alleviate without a substantial injection of additional money – either from the national budget or (by whatever mechanism) from development partners – to staunch the haemorrhage of professional expertise and to give the staff the essential tools to do the job. As the OECD Policy Guidance recognises, in developing countries generally "[t]he effective delivery of social protection requires a focus on building institutional capacity in terms of planning, coordination and the actual delivery of cash, food, inputs and other goods or services to people."[1]

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[1] OECD (2009), Policy Guidance Note: Social Protection, at
http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/63/43573310.pdf

Table of contents

List of tables and figures

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AMTO	Assisted Medical Treatment Order
ART	Anti Retroviral Therapy
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDC	Children in Difficult Circumstances
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DSS	Department of Social Services
ESPP	Enhanced Social Protection Programme
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information Technology
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MIMS	Multiple Indicator Monitoring Survey
MoHCW	Ministry of Health and Child Welfare
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Services
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PoS	Programme of Support
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWC	Public Works Component
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ToR	Terms of Reference
WASH	Water Sanitation and Health
WFP	World Food Programme
ZimVAC	Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee

1 Introduction: description of the assignment

1.1 Terms of Reference

Oxford Policy Management and Jimat Development Consultants were engaged by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (MoLSS) to carry out a Capacity and Institutional Assessment of the Ministry's Department of Social Services (DSS). The purpose of the assignment (also referred to as a Capacity Audit) is to assess the Department's human resources and institutional capacity, identify gaps in its ability to carry out its statutory mandate of child care and protection, and draft recommendations for action. The main focus of the assessment is on the DSS's capacity to respond to the needs of Zimbabwe's orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

The specific objectives of the Capacity Audit are to:

i. Conduct a desk review of existing reviews and reports on OVC in Zimbabwe so as to articulate a clear problem statement;

ii. Collect and analyze available material on the DSS's current human resources and institutional capacity to coordinate social protection programmes, including the NAP for OVC[2] programme interventions at national, provincial and district levels;

iii. Come up with a realistic strategy for capacity strengthening which will enable the DSS to fulfil its mandate to provide effective and quality services; and

iv. Draft a comprehensive evidence-based report.

The Terms of Reference specify that the methodology for the assignment is not limited to but should include:

i. Desk study of relevant literature;

ii. Consultations/interviews with national and sub-national level DSS personnel;

iii. Interviews with key stakeholders to establish wider institutional arrangements and linkages;

iv. Observation of the duty stations at sub-national level to establish the institutional structures and capacity;

v. Partner organizations will also be consulted.

The final output from the assessment is an Audit Report outlining the human resource and institutional capacity within the DSS with regards to implementing its statutory responsibilities in addition to coordinating the NAP for OVC. The report should have a workable strategy for the recruitment and retention of critical staff for the Department.

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[2] National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2004-2010.

The assignment commenced on 18 May 2010 and was therefore planned to be completed on 23 August 2010. The gathering of evidence for the audit was completed with final meetings in DSS headquarters on 12 August and an additional regional workshop (for the benefit of some staff on 20 August. Preliminary findings were presented to DSS senior management on 11 August; completion of this final report has run slightly beyond the planned period.

1.2   The team

The Capacity Audit was conducted by the following team:

Table 1.1   Capacity Audit Team Members

Name	Affiliation	Role
Dr Andrew Wyatt	OPM: Principal Consultant, Public Management and Accountability	Inputs on institutional development and reform and capacity strengthening
Professor Rodreck Mupedziswa	Jimat: Head of Department, Department of Social Work, University of Botswana	Inputs on social protection systems and institutional capacity assessment
Chris Rayment	OPM: Consultant, Social Care Services	Quality assurance; support to research and literature review
Munhamo Chisvo	Jimat: Managing Director	Quality assurance; advice on social protection sector
Ngoni Marimo	Jimat: Team Leader, Project Management Department	Planning and coordination of field work and data entry and analysis

In addition to this core team, Jimat engaged a team of experienced research assistants to conduct field work for the audit in a selection of district and provincial offices.

1.3   Structure of this report and methodology

1.3.1 Structure of the report

An inception report was submitted in July 2010, summarising the findings from the first phase of the Capacity Audit which took place in May and June, and presenting the team's detailed work plan for the remainder of the assignment. The purpose of the first phase of the audit was, first, to enable the team, through the review of published and unpublished documents and discussions with senior DSS officials and other stakeholders, to gain a better understanding of the context in which the DSS is operating, the range of OVC problems and needs which it is currently addressing or should be addressing, its official mandate and powers in relation to its statutory responsibilities and other obligations, and its structure, staffing and resources.[3] Secondly, on this basis we were able to develop an analytical

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[3] Interviews were held with representatives of the Department, UNICEF, the social work profession, and leading donors and non-governmental organisations active in the social protection sector (and

framework to inform our further enquiries, and to design appropriate data gathering instruments for our field work.

This final report builds on the findings presented in the inception report, expanding and revising them in the light of the further evidence now available, reports on the field work carried out in the districts and provinces, and proposes a plan of action for tackling the most pressing capacity problems of the Department. It is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out a statement of the challenges confronting DSS, with regard to the current social and economic situation in Zimbabwe and the Department's duties and responsibilities;

- Section 3 describes the analytical framework that was developed to ensure that DSS capacity was systematically examined, and the assessment instruments that were used for the collection of evidence in the field work phase of the audit;

- Section 4 presents our findings regarding the Department's capacity;

- Section 5 proposes an outline plan of action for tackling the most critical capacity problems;

- Section 6 provides a summary of our key findings and proposed key actions.

The Annexes are presented in a separate volume, for ease of handling, and to ensure a manageable file size.

1.3.2 Methodology

Sections 2 and 3 are based primarily on a review of the published and unpublished documents made available by the DSS, UNICEF and other interlocutors, supplemented by the information obtained from key informant interviews. However, the analytical framework set out in Section 3 was modified and developed in the light of the field work phase of the assignment, which served to test and validate some of the assumptions made, particularly as regards the nature of the work carried out at district and provincial level. Section 4 combines evidence from documentary sources, especially as regards staffing levels and comparisons with the resources deployed in other countries, with that derived at first hand from DSS staff during the field work.

Three instruments were used to collect qualitative and quantitative information in the field work: a self-administered questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and participatory workshops. These are described in more detail in Section 3.3. The quantitative data from the questionnaires was collated and analysed using SPSS statistical software.

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particularly the provision of services to children). Lists of those met during the audit, and of the principal documents examined, are attached at Annex C.

2 Problem statement: the challenges facing DSS

2.1 Numbers of orphans and vulnerable children

The challenges confronting the Government of Zimbabwe, and in particular the DSS as the principal agency charged with responsibility for the social protection of vulnerable groups, can be stated in terms of both demand and supply. This section is concerned with demand; that is to say, both with the numbers of children and others who are in need of support and assistance, and with the duties and responsibilities of the DSS with regard to them. Questions of supply – that is, the capacity of the Department to meet these needs and discharge its responsibilities - are dealt with in Section 4 below.

As far as the numbers needing assistance is concerned, in view of the focus of this audit it is important to start with OVC. The National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NAP for OVC) cites an official estimate that there would be 975,956 orphans due to AIDS by 2007. The NAP for OVC also includes estimates from various sources of some 150,000 children with disabilities, 12,000 children living on/off the streets and 5,000 children living in institutions, and 132,938 children living with HIV and AIDS at the end of 2007; the special health care needs (including Anti Retroviral Therapy) and need for life skills training of children infected with HIV or affected by HIV and AIDS are recognised in the NAP. Moreover, an estimated 26% of children aged 10-14 years are working.[4] These figures clearly cannot simply be summed – some, perhaps many, children will register in more than one category – but in 2005 an exercise was carried out to cost the NAP which based its estimates on a total of 1.22 million OVC. This figure includes 1.1 million orphans and an additional 120,000 vulnerable children. A more recent estimate, used for the purposes of the Programme of Support for the NAP for OVC, is that a quarter of all children in Zimbabwe (1.3 million) have lost one or both parents, and nearly 50,000 households are headed by a child under 18 years.[5] The Budget Estimates for the MoLSS for 2010 give one of the DSS's two objectives as being to "Increase social protection coverage to the estimated 1.8m orphans." Whichever of these figures is the more accurate, the massive scale of the social challenge they present is undeniable

The concept of "OVC" does not have a universally-agreed definition. The NAP for OVC – following the National Orphan Care Policy – defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years and an orphan as a child whose parents have died, and lists a number of categories of children regarded as vulnerable, including those who have lost one parent. Other sources, however, provide slightly different definitions of OVC, as shown in Table 2.1 below. It is probable that applying these different definitions would produce rather different total figures for the target group of potential beneficiaries of OVC programmes. However, the NAP itself does not offer any estimate of the total number of children falling within its broad

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[4] Zimbabwe Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare [2008], National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2004-2010, p.3. More recent estimates of the scale of child labour are discussed in Section 4.3 below.

[5] Jimat Development Consultants (2010), Programme of Support for the National Action Plan for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children: Outcome Assessment (Final Report, May 2010). UNICEF's country statistics also quote the figure of 1m orphaned by AIDS and 1.3m orphaned due to all causes as at 2007 (http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zimbabwe_statistics).

Table 2.1   OVC Definitions[6]

NAP for OVC	Programme of Support (PoS)	Multiple Indicator Monitoring Survey (MIMS)	Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)
Orphan			
A child whose parents have died	A child whose parents have died	Children who had lost one or both parents	Both parents deceased
Vulnerable			
Children who have lost one parent	Children with one parent deceased		
Children with disabilities	Children with disabilities		Disabled and poor
Children affected and/or infected by HIV and AIDS	Children infected or affected by HIV/ AIDS		
Abused children (sexually, physically and emotionally)	Children affected and/or infected by HIV and AIDS		
Working children	Working children		
Destitute children	Destitute children		Household extremely poor and has no assets
Abandoned children	Abandoned children		
Children living on the streets	Children living in the streets		Child living on the street
Married children	Married children		
Neglected children	Neglected children		
Children in remote areas	Children in remote areas		
Children with chronically ill parent(s)	Children with chronically ill parents	Children whose parent or parents had been ill for 3 of the last 6 months	
Child parents	Child parents		
Children in conflict with the law	Children in conflict with the law		
	Other vulnerable children as defined by their communities		
		Children who lived in a household in which an adult (18-64) had died during the past year	

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[6] Based on the compilation by Bernd Schubert (2010), Child-Sensitive Social Protection in Zimbabwe: Final Draft (Harare, March 2010).

NAP for OVC	Programme of Support (PoS)	Multiple Indicator Monitoring Survey (MIMS)	Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)
		Children who lived in a household in which a adult (18-64) was chronically ill (or who has been ill for 3 of the past 12 months)	
		Children who lived in a child-headed household	Child living in child-headed household
			Child in foster care under poor parents
			Child never been to school
			Dropped out of school due to economic hardship

definition of OVC, and reliable and up to date information does not exist on which to base such an estimate. Moreover, given that – as explored in more detail in Section 4 – the DSS lacks the capacity at present to provide services for more than a fraction of those potentially needing or eligible for assistance, it would be beside the point to worry unduly about variations in the estimated size of the group that is not being reached. These will become more relevant if and when the DSS has sufficient resources for precise programming and alignment of projected expenditure to demand to be a reality.

The recent Schubert report on Child-Sensitive Social Protection also argues persuasively that definitions of OVC of this kind are in any case unhelpful in determining how social protection interventions should target children in need. Because they are essentially just lists of examples of the kind of difficult circumstances in which children may be living, they result in substantial errors of inclusion and exclusion when used as the basis for programming and targeting support. Schubert argues instead for an approach which focuses more closely on the needs of extremely poor households: the critical figure is that approximately 6.4 million Zimbabweans (55% of the population) in 1.5 million households, including 3.5 million children, live in extreme poverty, suffering from chronic hunger and other deprivations. The priority of social protection policy and programmes should therefore be to lift these households out of extreme poverty. Further objectives related to poverty alleviation should be to prevent moderately poor and non-poor households from sliding into extreme poverty, and to make basic social services and welfare services accessible to all, including the poorest and most vulnerable groups.

The emphasis on alleviating household poverty proposed by Schubert is justified by the correlation between household wealth and many child welfare indicators. It must be borne in mind, however, that poverty is not the only problem with which the DSS has to concern itself; there are groups of children who need support and protection for reasons that are not necessarily related to poverty (though poverty is likely to increase the need for assistance from outside of the family). There will continue to be demand for services such as psycho-social support, reunification and reintegration, protection from sexual and physical abuse and neglect, the provision of mobility and learning aids for children with disabilities, representation before the courts and the supervision of children in conflict with the law,

regardless of the progress that is made in reducing extreme poverty. Figures are not available for the numbers of children potentially falling into these categories.

Nor are children the only potential clients or beneficiaries of the DSS. The adult members of very poor households, destitute individuals, people with disabilities, people with mental illness and elderly persons in need of institutional care also look to the Department for assistance. However, the programmes that the Department is currently able to operate only reach a small proportion of those in need. In January 2010 the numbers of persons or households assisted by these active programmes were:

- Maintenance of disabled persons – 3,510;
- Maintenance of elderly persons – 4,015;
- Destitute households including child-headed households – 4,140.

This total of 11,665 represents coverage of 4.7% of the estimated 250,000 extremely poor labour constrained households that urgently require social welfare interventions.[7] However, the MoLSS Budget Estimates for 2010 give the second of DSS's two objectives as being to "Increase social protection coverage for destitute families from the current 65,000 to 135,000," which indicates rather higher coverage taking all social protection programmes together.

2.2   Responsibilities of the DSS

The preceding paragraphs have attempted to indicate the physical scale of the demand for social protection services in Zimbabwe, focusing particularly on the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. The other aspect of the demand side of the challenge facing the DSS is the extent of the Department's mandate: what services is it responsible for providing?

At the highest level, the Government of Zimbabwe is a signatory to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which commits it, *inter alia*, to ensuring the survival and development of every child, to providing adequate care when parents or others responsible fail to do so, to providing special protection for a child deprived of the family environment and ensuring that appropriate family care or alternative care arrangements are available, and to protecting children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. It is also a signatory to the 2001 United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS (UNGASS) Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, the declaration "A World Fit for Children" agreed by the 2002 UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, the 1999 International Labour Organisation Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

These international commitments set the standards to which the Government of Zimbabwe aspires in its policy-making and programme development with regard to child protection and child welfare. There can be no doubt, however, that given the sheer numbers of orphans and vulnerable children potentially requiring assistance, and the broader macro-economic and

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[7] Schubert (2010), p.26. We are aware of the methodological difficulty of combining numbers of persons and of households; however, if one assumes a minimum of one eligible elderly or disabled person per household, and no overlap between the coverage of the different programmes, this figure represents an estimate of the *maximum* number of households assisted. The actual number may well be lower.

fiscal position of the country, endeavouring to meet these standards represents a very major challenge.

Zimbabwe's international obligations are reflected in a national policy framework, of which the principal components are the National Programme of Action for Children (1992), the National Orphan Care Policy and the National AIDS Policy (both adopted in 1999), and the National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (developed in 2003). At the level of legislation, the key statute relevant to the protection and welfare of children is the Children's Act (Chapter 5:06) of 1972, last amended in 2001.[8] This Act establishes in Section 2 a wide-ranging definition of a "child in need of care", which includes (but is not limited to) any child or young person

- who is destitute or has been abandoned; or
- both of whose parents are dead or cannot be traced and who has no legal guardian; or
- whose legal guardian or parents do not exercise proper control and care over him; or
- whose legal guardian or parents are unfit to have or exercise control over him; or
- who cannot be controlled by his parents or guardian; or
- who frequents the company of any immoral or vicious person or is otherwise living in circumstances calculated to cause or conduce to his seduction, corruption or prostitution; or
- who begs; or
- who is being maintained in circumstances which are detrimental to his welfare or interests; or
- who suffers from a mental or physical disability and requires treatment, training or facilities which his parents or guardian are unable to provide; or
- whose parent or guardian has given him up to another person in settlement of a dispute in accordance with custom; or
- whose parent or guardian makes him perform work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with his education or to be harmful to his health or to his physical or mental development; or
- whose parent or guardian has denied him proper health care; or
- whose parent or guardian has unlawfully removed him from lawful custody.

The Act establishes the duties and powers of probation officers in relation to the proceedings of children's courts, including adoption proceedings, and the removal of children and young persons to a place of safety. It also confers specific powers and duties on the Minister of Labour and Social Services and the Director of Social Services with regard to the establishment, maintenance and management of places of safety, remand homes and training institutions, the registration of private homes established as places of safety and registration and supervision of children's institutions, the establishment of a Child Welfare Council, the administration of a Child Welfare Fund, and the making of grants-in-aid to institutions and for the maintenance of children and young people.

A number of other pieces of legislation are also of particular relevance to the care and protection of children, including especially:

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[8] This legislation was formerly known as the Children's Protection and Adoption Act, and is still quite frequently referred to informally under this title.

- The Birth and Death Registration Act (Chapter 5:02);
- The Child Abduction Act (Chapter 5:05)
- The Customary Marriages Act (Chapter 5:07);
- The Guardianship of Minors Act (Chapter 5:08);
- The Maintenance Act (Chapter 5:09);
- The Marriage Act (Chapter 5:11);
- The Matrimonial Cause Act (Chapter 5:13);
- The Domestic Violence Act (Chapter 5: 16);
- The Deceased Estates Succession Act (Chapter 6:02);
- The Customary Law and Local Courts Act (Chapter 7:05);
- The Magistrates Court Act (Chapter 7:10);
- The Criminal Law Codification and Reform Act (Chapter 9:23).

There is thus a very extensive legislative framework for the provision of services to children in need of care and their families, and for the protection of children's rights. Although much of the legislation has not been amended for nine years or more, it represents a fully elaborated set of statute law and secondary legislation which provides a clear legal context for the work of the DSS. We examined with a sample of DSS staff at district and provincial level in our field work how content they were with the legal framework within which they had to work, and found they were quite satisfied that it provided an appropriate and sufficiently comprehensive set of powers to enable them to respond to the issues they faced. Their worries were much more related to the resources available to them to exercise these powers, as discussed below. One District Social Services Officer (DSSO) suggested that probation officers should have the same powers as a police officer to arrest a person found abusing a child, but this was not suggested by others. One slightly worrying aspect of these findings, however, was that while staff expressed a high degree of confidence overall in their familiarity with the relevant policies and legislation, it was clear that copies of the documents were in very short supply in many locations, and there were some references to using old copies that bore the former Rhodesian emblem. Of the 29 interviewees, 10 expressed satisfaction with the availability of legislation and policy documents, with the remainder commenting on their lack of access to up to date versions. This raises the concern that some officers may not be applying current policies and legislation in their day to day work.

The powers granted to the State by law to protect the rights of children are exercised not just by the MoLSS and DSS (largely through the probation officer function of social services officers) but also by a number of other institutions including the police, the court system and the health service. In addition to the exercise of these powers, the DSS is responsible for the administration of a number of social assistance schemes which provide material support in cash or in kind to vulnerable individuals or households, as listed in Table 2.2 below.

Table 2.2   DSS Social Assistance Interventions

Intervention/Scheme	Nature of intervention	Wholly targeted on OVC?	Targeting includes OVC?	Possible Benefit to OVC?
Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)	Cash for school fees, exam fees and levies	✓		
Support to Children in Difficult Circumstances	Monthly cash transfers to vulnerable children and material assistance (e.g. wheelchairs)	✓		
Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs)	Fee waiver voucher (+ block grant from MoLSS to referral hospitals/ clinics)		✓	
Public Works Programme/Drought Relief Support	Cash for work and free cash for labour-constrained households. Works projects supervised by local authorities		✓	
Institutional Grants	Per capita grants to residential institutions for children	✓		
Support to Families in Distress	Means-tested non-contributory public assistance – cash transfers and travel warrants			✓
Maintenance of Disabled Persons	Disability aids, training, project loans		✓	
Care for the Elderly	Means-tested non-contributory public assistance for elderly			
Transfers to Heroes' Dependents	Cash transfers		✓	

Source: Gandure, S., Baseline Study of Social Protection in Zimbabwe (May 2009)[9]

This is of course not a comprehensive list of social protection or social assistance interventions in Zimbabwe; a fuller tabulation, showing these schemes alongside those administered by other central government agencies, NGOs, the private sector and communities is attached at Annex A. An important issue for consideration, however, is the apportionment of the time of DSS staff between the administration of these schemes and other aspects of child protection. This is discussed in more detail in Sections 4 and 5 below.

One issue that does emerge from this tabulation is that it is not possible to draw a very hard and fast distinction between those aspects of the DSS's work that are concerned with OVC and its other responsibilities. Some of the interventions listed (such as the system for issuing Assisted Medical Treatment Orders, AMTOs) are not exclusively targeted on OVC but include OVC in their eligibility criteria. Others are targeted on the children of poor households but use a slightly different definition of OVC to that adopted in the NAP; BEAM, for example, adds some categories of eligibility such as children who have dropped out of school or have never been to school due to inability to pay fees. The Maintenance of Disabled Persons

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[9] The listing of interventions is drawn from the Baseline Study; the relevance to OVC has been deduced by the authors of this report from the descriptions provided of the different schemes. The Baseline Study also listed a Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances scheme, which it reported as providing monthly cash transfers to vulnerable children and grants to NGOs/CBOs; however, this appears to be the early designation (from documents originating in 2000) for what is referred to in more recent sources, including DSS budgets, as Children in Difficult Circumstances (CDC); the NAP for OVC receives funding from the fiscus under the CDC budget line. There is also a Children in the Streets Fund, which was instituted in 2008 but has never incurred significant expenditure.

scheme includes children (and children with disabilities fall within the NAP definition of vulnerability) but is also likely to benefit indirectly children without disabilities who are dependants of a disabled person. The programme that provides Support to Families in Distress, though poorly funded, will also in principle indirectly benefit vulnerable children who live in qualifying households.

Children living in institutions, whether government-run or privately operated, do not *ipso facto* fall within the NAP definition of vulnerability, but must have met the criteria for being in need of care to have been admitted, and are by definition living outside of "normal" family care. It therefore seems appropriate to regard them as vulnerable, and the DSS's work on their behalf – whether through the operation of government-run institutions, the provision of per capita grants for the maintenance of those in privately-run institutions, reunification and reintegration into families, or the preparation of court reports – as forming part of its work for OVC. Indeed, what this instance makes clear is that the too ready use of the term "OVC" can be unhelpful; it may be useful shorthand but it also leads (as Schubert observed) into sterile debates over who is included in the definition. In reality all children who become subject to the statutory powers granted to the Minister and to probation officers by the Children's Act or other legislation, or who fall (as individuals or as members of poor households) within the criteria for eligibility for any of the social assistance schemes administered by the DSS, are vulnerable in the sense that they have unfulfilled rights and are potentially at risk of physical or other harm. The real distinction, therefore, is not so much between what the DSS does for OVC and what it does for other children, as between what it does for children and what it does for other groups in society (such as adults with disabilities, and the elderly). Even then, resources are fungible within households, and assistance to one beneficiary may assist children who happen to be living in the same household. The Department also has responsibilities with regard to the public assistance of refugees, which will include children both unaccompanied and in families.

Finally, it should be noted that the Private Voluntary Organizations Act (Chapter 17:05) confers on the Minister of Labour and Social Services the duty of appointing the Private Voluntary Organizations Board, which is required to determine all applications for the registration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and makes the Director of Social Services the Registrar of Private Voluntary Organizations. This function is not directly or exclusively concerned with child protection and child welfare, but is of relevance because it establishes another set of tasks which the DSS must resource both at headquarters and at provincial and district level, and because of the very prominent role played by NGOs in the provision of children's services. Our field work indicates that PVO registration, monitoring and inspection occupies around 4% of DSSO time on average and around 6% of the time of other Social Services Officers (SSOs), although there is wide variation among our sample in the amount of time devoted to this function, which may correlate partly with the varying numbers of NGOs operating in different districts. However, even if not at present a major call on DSS's internal resources, the way in which this function is discharged raises some important issues regarding the Department's capacity, which are discussed in more detail in Section 4.

2.3   Synthesis

Drawing together the aspects of demand identified in this section into a brief, if necessarily simplified, problem statement suggests that:

- Due to a confluence of factors, including especially the HIV epidemic and an unprecedented economic crisis, there are very large numbers of orphans in Zimbabwe as

well as very many children who are vulnerable for other reasons, including those living in extreme poverty;

- Although its capacity for effective action in this field is severely restricted by budget constraints, the Government of Zimbabwe is committed to upholding global standards of child protection and child welfare, has in place an extensive statutory framework for protecting and enforcing the rights of children in various circumstances, and is still actively administering some programmes such as BEAM and Children in Difficult Circumstances which were instituted in 2001 as components of the Enhanced Social Protection Project;

- The DSS, though not solely responsible for all aspects of social services as widely defined, is the lead agency in the Government of Zimbabwe for coordinating the implementation of the NAP for OVC, for the administration of the principal social protection and social assistance programmes, and for the exercise of certain long-established statutory duties in relation to children in need of care, children who are in need of the protection of the courts and children who are in conflict with the law.

To summarise still further, the DSS's fundamental problem is that it is faced with **both** a very large number of potential clients, including a large but uncertain number of OVC (probably over 1.2m), **and** the legacy of an extensive framework of statutory duties and commitments to upholding global standards of child protection and child welfare, but in practice (as this remainder of this report establishes) has very meagre financial, physical and human resources with which to meet these demands.

The capacity of the Department to respond to demand and to supply the very varied services required by its diverse groups of potential clients is described in Section 4 below. First, however, it is necessary to describe the analytical framework which was applied by the audit team to support its assessment of the Department's capacity. We also offer here some observations on issues that arose as we adapted our first approximation of this framework to match our emerging understanding of the Department's work.

3 Analytical framework for examining DSS capacity

3.1 Description of the analytical framework

The analytical framework adopted was intended to ensure that the work of the DSS was examined with sufficient precision for clear conclusions to be drawn about which aspects of its mandate it is able to meet adequately, what gaps exist and what needs to be done to strengthen capacity in the short, medium and longer term. In the first place, it was important to make sure that the assessment took account of the three principal aspects of capacity – the institutional, the organisational and the individual.[10] These can be described as follows:

i. The **institutional** aspect. This includes both the laws and regulations which establish a body's mandate and define its responsibilities, duties, obligations and powers, and also the procedural requirements (which may also have the force of law) which determine the way in which critical functions such as participation in the budget process, recruitment or procurement are carried out. It also includes the ways in which working relationships are managed between Ministries, and between central government, local government and quasi-governmental bodies, the arrangements for coordination of activities between different central and local government bodies and for partnerships between government, civil society organisations and communities, and the structures of public accountability. In the case of the DSS, the institutional aspect should include the Department's relationship with the external providers of professional education and training, and its ability to secure an adequate supply of appropriately qualified social workers, whether these are directly employed by itself or by other service providers such as NGOs. This approach is wholly consistent with Douglass North's conception of institutions as "the rules of the game", both formal and informal.[11]

ii. The **organisational** aspect. This is concerned with how people are organised to enable them to play their individual roles within the institution, and includes considerations of structure, staffing, and processes and systems – such as, for example, those for internal and external communication, managing work flow, strategic and business planning, budgeting and financial control, reporting and monitoring, and the recruitment, remuneration, professional development and retention of staff. We have considered under this heading issues related to the Department's capacity to secure the critical material resources needed to support the discharge of its key functions. Structural issues include decisions about the distribution of tasks between different divisions of the organisation, and between different levels (i.e. national, provincial and district). In the frequently used analogy, if institutions represent the rules of the game, organisations are the teams that play it.

iii. The **individual** aspect. This focuses on the personal capabilities of the people who make up the organisation, including their knowledge, skills and attitudes – all of which may be enhanced by training and development activities – and also their actual behaviour in the work place, which will reflect both their underlying attitude to their work and the people they are serving, and also the examples they are set by their leaders. A

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[10] This is a commonly-applied distinction – see for example DFID (2003), Promoting Institutional and Organisational Development – and provides a useful tool for analysis, although the three aspects do not represent entirely watertight categories. In particular, there is room for dispute as to whether some issues are predominantly institutional or organisational in nature.

[11] See for example Douglass C. North (1990), *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge University Press), p.3.

further aspect of capacity at the individual level is the retention and transmission by experienced staff of institutional knowledge and memory, which represents a vital aspect of human capital and a foundation upon which future capability can be built.

All three aspects of capacity are potentially relevant to the Department's effectiveness in carrying out its business, and strengths and weaknesses may be found in any of them. This represents the first dimension of the analysis.

Strengths and weaknesses may also be identified at any of the three main structural levels of the organisation. Distinguishing between the different characteristics and capacities of the national (headquarters), provincial and district offices provides a second dimension of the analytical framework.

A third dimension is provided by the sequence of core public administration tasks that leads from identifying a problem (particularly in this context in the field of child care and protection, but potentially in any area of the Department's responsibilities), through policy formulation and the detailed planning and design of appropriate responses, to the delivery and monitoring of services. The key stages in this process are shown in the diagram below.

Figure 3.1   Key Stages in the Process from Policy to Service Delivery

	Stage	Activity at:		
		National level	Provincial level	District level
1.	Problem identification	✓		
2.	Policy development	✓		
3.	Design of interventions	✓	✓	✓
4.	Consultation/feedback	✓	✓	✓
5.	Budgeting/resource allocation	✓		✓
6.	Commissioning (contract) Partnership (MoU)	✓		✓
7.	Service delivery			✓
8.	Supervision/inspection		✓	✓
9.	Monitoring and reporting	✓	✓	✓
10.	Service review/evaluation	✓	✓	✓

Decisions to proceed at various stages (for example, Ministerial approval of a developed policy proposal, or Ministerial or senior management decision to proceed with a new programme in the light of internal consultation on the detailed design) are implied by this model but for simplicity not shown as separate stages. The model also reflects the different ways in which the delivery of services may in principle be resourced: the decision path may lead direct from internal consultation to conclusion of a partnership agreement with an external body that will fund and implement the service, or through the budget process, to

secure resources for the direct delivery of the service by the Department or its commissioning from an external provider.

The model also suggests that the Department's capacity in relation to each stage of activity should be examined at national (headquarters) level, and at the level of provincial and district offices. In practice, however, not all tasks are or should be carried out at all levels. The diagram indicates where the different activities listed are expected to be carried out, and where they are not applicable. It should be noted that at many levels (including consultation and feedback on the design of new services or programmes, and even the contracting of providers for local initiatives when funds are available) communities will also play an active part; however, the purpose of this diagram is to indicate the activities being undertaken at different levels of the Department's own organisational structure.

The assumptions made both in the definition of the key stages and about the distribution of tasks between organisational levels were tested in our field work, and broadly validated. Most respondents indicated that the list of tasks derived from this theoretical model represented the tasks of the Department quite comprehensively; most had nothing to add, and all of the items were recognisable as potential or desirable activities even if not currently performed at the organisational level concerned. The only omission that was frequently commented on was "Public Relations", a broad category of cross-cutting activity that embraces all sorts of representational, networking and liaison work on behalf of the Department, *vis à vis* communities, NGOs and other organs of government, central and local. Public Relations, our sample suggests, absorbs around 13% of effort at Provincial Social Services Officer (PSSO) level and about 2% of DSSO and SSO time.

The other significant observation to emerge from the field work enquiries was that there is very little sense of participation in policy formulation and programme design at district level, though rather more at provincial level; where policy comes from appears to be something of a mystery at district level. This is to a large extent to be expected; the field force of service delivery agencies will very often feel themselves to be detached from policy-making, which is a headquarters function. To some degree the sense of a lack of involvement in the policy process may also relate to the relative inexperience of some officers, but this correlation does not entirely hold good: comments from interviewees about their contribution to policy making included "No, it's always from the top, they do not consult us" (from an officer of 24 years' experience) and "No, it is done at head office" (from an officer of 18 years' experience). On the other hand, an officer of 29 years' experience, working at provincial level, responded: "Yes, we contribute by making them find policies that suit circumstances on the ground."

While a desire for greater DSSO involvement in policy review and policy formulation was expressed by some interviewees and workshop participants, there are few concrete examples of developments which might have been shaped differently with greater local involvement, and these are not necessarily persuasive. One issue that is cited is the move to payment of cash benefits directly into bank accounts, which it is suggested ignores the real circumstances of some destitute or mentally ill clients, but it is likely that headquarters staff were fully appraised of the pros and cons before making the decision, and determined that the disadvantages were outweighed by the benefits, not least in terms of improved financial integrity. The officers on the ground are not invariably right (or necessarily disinterested in their advice). Nevertheless, it is recognised good practice to involve front-line staff as much as possible in consultation on policy developments, and to seek their input. While district level staff do already have opportunities to influence policy through raising issues in reports and through various forums with senior management, the advantages of strengthening these mechanisms are likely to be seen in improved understanding and acceptance of initiatives as

well as in the possible avoidance of practical problems in implementation. Similarly, there is little active participation of social services officers at district level in formulation or management of the budget, and some desire for more involvement in how resources are allocated and used.

The three dimensions of analysis suggested by the considerations discussed above can be represented in the "analytic cube" diagram shown below.

Figure 3.2   A Framework for Analysing DSS Capacity
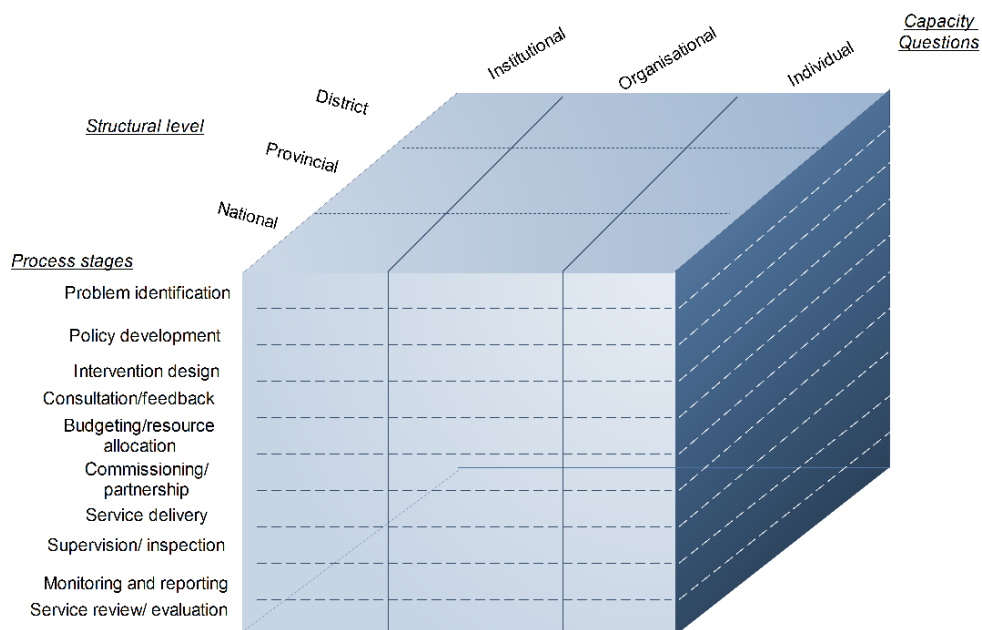
The implication of this model is that, for each key stage of activity, questions can be asked about the Department's institutional and organisational capacity, and the capabilities of its staff in terms of their qualifications, skills and experience, to carry out the required tasks effectively, and about whether different factors affect capacity at national, provincial and district level (insofar as relevant for any given task). For the purposes of this audit the focus is particularly on the Department's services for OVC, though it can be expected that similar considerations will apply to its services for other groups.

There are good reasons for not attempting to see the DSS's work for OVC entirely in isolation. First, for many kinds of social protection intervention there are – as already indicated – uncertain boundaries between different categories of beneficiaries: interventions that are targeted at poor households generally may benefit vulnerable children living in those households. Secondly, there is a zero-sum aspect to the allocation of resources, especially in view of the very slender staffing of the Department at local level. An officer's time spent on, say, processing applications for AMTOs cannot be spent on, for example, facilitating the reunification of families. Forming a proper assessment of the DSS's capacity in relation to OVC requires first an understanding of the actual work load of officers, what absorbs their time, and whether there is any way in which things could be done differently.

The model subsumes a very wide set of activities under the single stage of Service Delivery, and the assessment instruments used in the field work broke this stage down into a set of

sub-stages to examine it in greater detail, especially at district level, as proposed in the diagram below. These represent a sequence of generic key steps that are likely to apply to some extent in the delivery of most forms of social protection services, even though the actual tasks carried out by officers are likely to be different for different types of service. These steps do not accord perfectly with those used, for example, in UNICEF's Toolkit for mapping and assessment of child protection systems (UNICEF 2007), but are broadly consistent with them and are defined so as to be applicable to a wider range of services.

Figure 3.3   Analysing Capacity Issues in Service Delivery
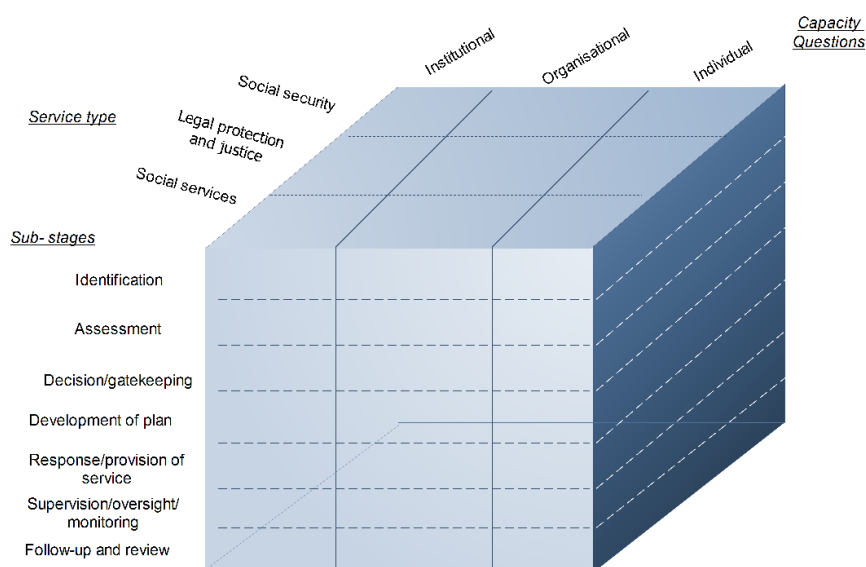
3.2   Classification of DSS services

Underlying the design of the assessment instruments used for the field work was the hypothesis that the services provided by DSS could be classified into three broad categories, as follows:

- **Social services,** which includes the range of activities undertaken by Social Services Officers to ensure the provision of a continuum of care, in the family setting or through alternative (including institutional) means, for children in response to observed or reported violations of their rights to adequate care and protection;

- **Legal protection and justice,** related very closely to the above, which embraces those tasks performed by Social Services Officers interacting with the civil and criminal court systems, with regard both to children who are in conflict with the law and those who are in need of the protection of the courts (for example to authorise removal to a place of safety), and could include matters such as assisting with birth registration;

- **Social security,** which comprises the administration of public assistance or social welfare or social assistance schemes for which DSS is responsible, which aim to provide material assistance in cash or kind to households and individuals to alleviate poverty.

It was believed that a classification of this kind would be helpful in understanding the work and responsibilities of DSS, especially at district and provincial level, as it represents groups of tasks which require different kinds of skills and experience, and make different demands on the resources of the Department. The terms used above were adopted on a provisional basis as short-hand labels for the categories, pending the results of further enquiry. Terms such as social protection, child protection, social welfare, social assistance, public assistance, social services and many others are used in very variable ways in different publications and in different organisational contexts around the globe and there is no universally accepted terminology.

In the event this three-way classification was not precisely reflected in any of the sources examined or evidence gathered. It is broadly consistent with, but not identical to, the headings used in the extant Job Description for a "District Welfare Officer." The language used in this document suggests that it is fairly old, and we were informed by the Acting HR Director that a new Job Description for Social Services Officers had been recently produced by the Public Service Commission, though a draft of this had not yet been seen by the DSS at the time of our audit. The version seen distinguishes between "Professional Duties", which comprise "juvenile delinquency" and "child welfare" (i.e. fostering, protection from abuse and neglect, advocacy of children's rights) work, "Public Assistance", "Organisations" (registration of crèches and Private Voluntary Organisations), "Adult Welfare" and various liaison and general administrative duties. This document has been re-typed from a photocopy provided by DSS and is attached at Annex B.

Another approach to describing and classifying DSS functions can be seen in the quarterly reports by the provincial social services offices to headquarters, which are compiled from the monthly returns from the districts. Although the form of reporting appears from examination of the files to vary quite substantially from province to province, we were advised by the Department's Records and Information Supervisor that the standard format should include the items set out in Table 3.1 below.

This reporting structure also distinguishes between child welfare and public assistance, but treats adult welfare programmes as a sub-set of public assistance, and groups together tasks related to the criminal justice system (juvenile delinquency) and to the provision of material support (BEAM). It might have been expected that this reporting structure would provide a definitive taxonomy of the Department's functions, but this was not borne out by the findings of the field work. The ways in which respondents describe their main tasks and link these together into broader functional groups vary quite considerably, to an extent which makes any analysis of how the Department's effort is mainly expended quite unreliable. The table at Annex D, drawn from the transcripts of interviews with provincial and district DSS staff, suggests that DSSOs and SSOs spend 51% and 45% respectively of their time on child welfare or child protection duties, and 10% and 21% respectively on public assistance work – while Social Welfare Assistants (SWAs) spend 62% of their time on public assistance. This breakdown appears to reflect the structure of the reporting format shown above, but the position is confused by the fact that some respondents regard processing AMTOs, for example, as an aspect of child welfare whereas some treat it as part of public assistance, others report it as a separate category of activity, and others still are silent about which activities they consider under the various categories of work they mention. The same problem is repeated for many activities. The transcript of the interview records from which this information is drawn is attached at Annex E.

Table 3.1   Content of provincial quarterly reports

Part	Content	Including
Part One	Administration	Staff accommodation, office accommodation, transport problems
	Human Resources	Staffing and vacancies
	Finance	Allocations and expenditure
Part Two	Public Assistance	Elderly, families and people with disabilities: numbers assisted and amounts disbursed Public works Health assistance: number of beneficiaries and amount disbursed to health authorities Pauper burials Travel warrants (rail and bus) Assistive devices Vocational training Adult welfare
Part Three	Child Welfare	Parents charged Adoption Foster care Juvenile delinquency Street children Children in institutions BEAM NAP for OVC (including CPC meetings with at least one child; child-led CPCs; birth registration; social services – medical assistance, ART assistance, public assistance, psycho-social support; extra-curricular – OVC in institutional care, children in conflict with the law)
Part Four		Heroes Disability programmes PVOs Refugees
Part Five		Social casework enquiries and investigations Public relations Conclusion

Discussion at the regional workshops showed the same uncertainties and inconsistencies about how the work of the Department should be described, as shown in the summaries of workshop outputs attached at Annex F. The concept of probation work – and the role of Probation Officer as a large component of the DSSO's professional profile – featured largely in these discussions. Some groups linked probation duties (including reports to the criminal courts on children in conflict with the law and the supervision of young offenders) and child welfare (including children in need of care, and reports to the civil courts on custody issues) together or regarded them as largely synonymous, while others regarded them as separate categories of staff.

The significance of this variable terminology is two-fold. First, at the most practical level, it introduces a substantial margin of uncertainty into any analysis of how the Department's effort is currently allocated between its main responsibilities. Secondly, the lack of a common shared vocabulary to describe what people do suggests a weakness in the organisational culture, possibly related to high levels of staff turnover in recent years and the accompanying loss of institutional memory, and exacerbated by the decline in training (which can help to inculcate a common understanding of the job). As shown in the questionnaire data summarised in Tables 9 and 10 of Annex G, only around 65% of respondents received

induction training on joining the Department, and only around half have received any in-service training subsequently. It is also relevant that the DSS's annual performance appraisal form requires staff and their supervisors to devise their own Objectives and Key Result Areas for each reporting period. While this makes the performance management system very responsive to the differing circumstances of each post, it also means that there is not a KRA and objectives structure at this level which would help to ensure a common language. Although DSS senior management might have expected the Department's RBM (results-based management) planning and performance management to have provided a set of unifying concepts and aims, the evidence from the field work suggests these have not yet made a great impact on the thinking of staff in the wider Department.

3.3   Assessment instruments for field work

The "analytic cube" models illustrated above were developed simply as a conceptual aid to considering the multiple factors that have a bearing on capacity, and to ensuring that no significant concerns were left unexamined. They were not themselves a practical tool for recording data and reporting findings. They did, however, underpin the design of the assessment instruments that were used for data collection in the field work. These were intended to explore the work of the Department in greater detail, to identify critical issues of institutional, organisational and individual capacity at national, provincial and district level, and to deepen understanding of how these impacted on the DSS's ability to perform the different components of its core tasks. The views of a number of external stakeholders on the capacity of the Department were sought during the first phase of the audit, and these perceptions have also helped to focus the attention of the audit on key issues concerning the availability of human resources, physical facilities and technological aids, particularly at district level.

The data collection was carried out at three levels. First, a self-administered questionnaire was issued through provincial social services offices to all staff at provincial and district level; 93 completed questionnaires were returned, and provided both quantitative and, to a lesser extent, qualitative evidence about the Department. Secondly, a protocol was developed for a semi-structured interview to be administered by the project's research assistants to the staff of a sample of district and provincial offices. This covered some of the same ground as the questionnaire, but the emphasis was to a greater extent on qualitative evidence. The interview format was designed to enable the issues to be probed in more depth and a greater understanding achieved of what is actually done in the districts and provinces, and by what means.

Insufficient information about the demographic structure of districts and the case-load and performance of district and provincial offices could be obtained during the first phase of the audit to enable a systematically stratified sample to be prepared. It was decided instead to visit one district office from each province (to ensure nation-wide coverage), and to ask each provincial social services officer to propose candidate district offices from the province from which a random choice could be made. In addition to the 10 district offices thus selected three provincial offices were chosen at random for inclusion in the interview process. In total 29 interviews were conducted. Both the questionnaire and the interview protocol were tested with staff of the Harare Central District Office of the DSS before wider use.

The third method of gathering evidence was through a series of six facilitated participatory workshops, in which a total of 103 professional staff participated. These workshops enabled information about the current tasks, work load and capacity of the DSS to be obtained from a

wider group of staff than could feasibly be covered by one-to-one interviews, and also provided an opportunity for views about the future direction of the Department to be sampled.

Summaries of some of the key information obtained from these sources are provided in Annexes D-G. In addition, the note at Annex H provides a fuller account narrative of the discussions at the workshops, based on first-hand observation by a member of the audit team. The full set of questionnaire data is too voluminous to be attached to this report, but can be made available on request.

4 The Capacity of the DSS

4.1 Overview

The DSS defines its mission as the social protection of vulnerable groups, through assisting households and individuals to manage better the risks to their welfare and livelihoods. This is both a more ambitious and wide-ranging view of the Department's role than the previous emphasis on the provision of social welfare services to vulnerable groups, and one that lends itself better to a vision of partnership and co-production between Government, families, communities and a range of non-state actors. To that extent it is well aligned with the realities of an extremely resource-constrained organisation that needs to operate as far as possible with and through the agency of others, in an institutional environment in which the bulk of external assistance is being channelled direct to non-state actors. As was seen in Section 2, however, the physical scale of the challenge facing the DSS, in terms of the numbers of orphans and other children in need of care, protection and support, let alone any other vulnerable groups in society, is enormous. Moreover, there is already in existence an elaborate framework of high-level policy commitments, statutory duties and administrative responsibilities which the Department must strive to fulfil. This section examines the resources available to the DSS to respond to the challenge and fulfil its mandate, and its ability to mobilise these effectively.

It is not helpful to attempt to distinguish between the statutory responsibilities of the Department and other aspects of its mandate. The Children's Act, for example, although described by one interviewee as the social services officer's bible, imposes certain duties and confers certain powers on the Minister and the Director, but these by no means amount to a coherent or comprehensive description of the functions of the Department with regard to child protection. The Guardianship of Minors Act confers a right on a probation officer to make an application to the juvenile court, the Child Abduction Act imposes a duty to report on the Director, and so on. A complete compendium of these scattered references could be compiled, but would still not provide a full account of the functions and processes that the Department needs to maintain to be able to discharge these duties and exercise these powers, or to play a part in safeguarding the rights accorded to others (especially children) by the legislation – for example through the detection and investigation of the kinds of ill-treatment and neglect that are rendered unlawful by the Children's Act. Even the 2010 Budget Estimates, under the Key Result Area of "Provide Social Protection Services", defines the Goal of the DSS as simply to "Improve access to social protection services by vulnerable groups", which is a broad enough definition to cover all of the programmes covered by the subheads which follow.

The mandate of the Department is to be found not simply in specific legislative requirements, but also in those tasks which it has been allocated administratively in order to implement the policy undertakings of the Government (some of them, as has been seen, in pursuit of obligations imposed by international agreements), using funds authorised by Parliament through the appropriations process. The operation of the BEAM initiative, and of other social protection of social security programmes, provides a good example of this. This approach is characteristic of administrations operating within a legacy derived (in large part) from the Westminster and common law traditions, as distinct to the continental European approach to public administration within which typically only those actions specifically prescribed in law can be performed by a public entity, and which therefore lend themselves to a comprehensive listing of an organisation's functions. It is one reason why departmental

strategic plans can provide a useful means of bringing together in one place, and prioritising between, the various tasks and duties which the Department has to perform.

The quarterly reporting format illustrated above shows an already long and varied list of tasks and activities. Officers' own description of their work, as summarised in Annexes C, D and E, adds further detail to this, and indicates some of the pressures which they find themselves under in attempting to perform their functions. A brief summary of our findings concerning the Department's capacity is that it is extremely under-resourced to meet the challenges it faces, in terms of the number of vacancies among professional front-line staff, the professional qualifications and experience of many of the staff who are in post, and the physical facilities and resources at their disposal. The rest of this section examines the evidence which supports this assertion, under the institutional, organisational and individual headings indicated by our analytical framework, and provides a more detailed analysis. First, however, we set out the basic facts concerning the staffing of the Department and its organisational structure. Other human resources issues, including pay and the qualifications of staff, are discussed further under the heading of Organisational Capacity below.

4.2   Staffing levels

It was a considerably more time-consuming task than anticipated to establish beyond doubt the current staffing levels of the Department. This was partly because the situation is of course constantly changing; the Acting HR Director compiles monthly vacancy returns, and with appointments, resignations, retirement and dismissals the precise numbers vary from month to month. It is, also, however the fact that DSS does not appear to have a central HR database which will produce easily, as it were at the touch of a button, an up to date profile of staffing by location and grade level or role, let alone linking that data to personal information regarding, for example, qualifications and skills. A minor and avoidable irritation is that documents provided in hard copy are almost invariably undated, so it is difficult to determine the reference date to which they apply; more disciplined administrative practice in this respect would be helpful. There were also inconsistencies between various documents, and between them and some of the oral evidence we received, regarding the number and (and names) of DSS district offices, and the number of provinces into which they are organised (several lists did not recognise the existence of the Bulawayo provincial office). Neither of the two principal source documents from which the tables below are drawn gives the complete picture; the names of some district offices have apparently changed, and the district office at Plumtree, shown in both documents, evidently no longer exists.

Without clear dating it was difficult to interpret the evidence, and the situation was undoubtedly complicated by relatively recent reorganisations and the creation of new offices. Whilst a degree of reorganisation and restructuring to reflect changing circumstances is to be expected and is commendable, it would have been helpful to the audit team – and would undoubtedly also be so to DSS senior management – if accurate and up to date staffing figures (with a clear reference date) were readily available. We have relied heavily on the figures compiled by DSS for the relatively recent national civil service audit, collating these with other data provided by the Department and with amendments provided by DSS officers at a late stage. These show that the DSS operates through 65 district and 10 provincial offices. The professional staffing of the district offices, which are responsible for the front line provision of services, is given in Table 4.1 below; it indicates that there are 164 social services officer posts in these offices, of which 64 were vacant at the point the data were compiled (believed to be June 2010).

A note on terminology is appropriate here. We have found that the terms "Social Services Officer" and "Social Welfare Officer" are used quite interchangeably, even within the same office, and official documents such as the staffing analyses cited and the organogram copied above tend to use the older "Welfare Officer" nomenclature. In the field work 6 Social Welfare Assistants, 3 acting or substantive Provincial Social Services Officers, 9 acting or substantive District Social Services Officers and 11 Social Services Officers were interviewed. The term SWA seems to have remained in quite universal use (although one respondent identified her job title as Social Services Assistant); disregarding these, 15 of the other interviewees identified their role using the words "Social Welfare" in the job title and 8 using "Social Services". In this report the terminology has been standardised on "Social Services Officer"; where appropriate we use the term SSO in a generic sense, to refer to all professional social services staff, including PSSOs, DSSOs and the SSOs who serve under them. As the change in the Department's name was supposed to signal a shift in philosophy away from a "welfarist" approach towards a more developmental approach, a further effort by senior management to standardise usage might aid communication, internally and externally, and help to reinforce this change.

In total the Department has a complement of 809 posts, of which 194 (24%) were vacant when the head count was taken. As well as its national headquarters and provincial and district social services offices, DSS operates 12 institutions – such as children's homes, training institutes, rehabilitation centres, a probation hostel, a repatriation hostel, a refugee camp and transit centre – and these account for a large proportion of the Department's total staffing. These institutes, or many of them, form part of the Department's capacity to respond to the needs of OVC. They were not examined in detail by this audit, but there is reason to believe that substantial improvements in conditions will be needed, at least in some. One interviewee told us:

> "Our institutions are a health hazard, [in one home] the toilets were not working, children were using the bushes. The stoves are not working either and there are rats everywhere."

These observations apparently contrast with the favourable findings of an earlier survey of residential institutions for children, which found that

> "Two-thirds of the institutions were assessed as providing an adequate physical environment and half of these were rated as good to very good. The facilities in the remaining third were assessed as poor with 5 institutions being assessed as very poor. Almost without exception, institutions were found to be well ordered and to maintain a high standard of cleanliness."[12]

However, this report examined 55 homes run by faith-based organisations and local and foreign NGOs and one DSS-run institution for OVC, and it is not possible to tell into which assessment category the latter fell. In view of the observation quoted above, and the known budgetary constraints of the last few years, an urgent review of the conditions prevailing in all of the residential institutions operated by the DSS would be appropriate, to ensure that they do not pose unacceptable risks to the health and well-being of their residents. A wider review of all residential institutions for children might also be timely, given the known weaknesses in the DSS's capacity to

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[12] Powell, Greg, T. Chinake, D. Mudzinge, W.Maambira and S. Mukutiri (2004), Children in Residential Care: The Zimbabwe experience (Zimbabwe Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and UNICEF, October 2004) p.14.

carry out its inspection and regulatory role in recent years, to follow up that carried out in 2004. However, the audit team does not have sufficient evidence to support a firm recommendation in this respect.

As well as the districts, professional social services officers are employed at head office, in the provincial offices (some having an SSO post in addition to the PSSO) and in the Harare Repatriation Hostel. Table 4.2 shows the distribution of posts and vacancies between the organisational levels, and Table 4.3 shows the geographical distribution of this key professional resource between provinces.

DSS Staffing: Social Services Officers in District Offices

District	Staff in post	Vacancies	Comp- lement	District	Staff in post	Vacancies	Comp- lement
Masvingo				**Mashonaland Central**			
1. Bikita	2	0	2	35. Bindura	3	0	3
2. Chiredzi	4	0	4	36. Centenary	0	2	2
3. Zaka	1	1	2	37. Guruve	2	0	2
4. Gutu	2	0	2	38. Mazoe	2	0	2
5. Masvingo	4	0	4	39. Mbire	1	1	2
6. Mwenezi	2	0	2	40. Mt Darwin	2	0	2
7. Chivi	2	0	2	41. Rushinga	0	2	2
Midlands				42. Shamva	0	2	2
8. Gweru	2	2	4	**Manicaland**			
9. Kwekwe	4	0	4	43. Mutare	5	0	5
10. Shurugwi	1	1	2	44. Chipinge	2	0	2
11. Gokwe North	1	1	2	45. Buhera	2	0	2
12. Gokwe South	1	1	2	46. Chimanimani	1	1	2
13. Mvuma	1	1	2	47. Rusape	3	0	3
14. Zvishavane	0	2	2	48. Nyanga	2	0	2
15. Mberengwa	1	1	2	49. Mutasa	1	1	2
Harare				**Mashonaland West**			
16. Harare Central	10	0	10	50. Chinhoyi	2	0	2
17. Chitungwiza	3	0	3	51. Zvimba	1	1	2
18. Highfields	6	0	6	52. Norton	1	1	2
Matabeleland South				53. Chegutu	1	1	2
19. Gwanda	1	2	3	54. Kadoma	1	1	2
20. Beitbridge	1	3	4	55. Karoi	1	1	2
21. Bulilima	0	2	2	56. Kariba	1	1	2
22. Mangwe	0	2	2	**Bulawayo**			
23. Insiza (formerly Filabusi)	0	2	2	57. Tredgold	2	2	4
24. Umzingwane (formerly Esigodini)	0	2	2	58. Fort Street	3	1	4
25. Kezi (a.k.a. Matobo)	1	1	2	**Matabeleland North**			
Mashonaland East				59. Hwange	1	1	2
26. Marondera	1	2	3	60. Lupane	0	2	2
27. Goromonzi	1	1	2	61. Nkayi	1	1	2
28. Chikomba	1	1	2	62. Umguza	0	2	2
29. Hwedza	1	1	2	63. Tsholotsho	0	2	2
30. Mutoko	1	1	2	64. Bubi	0	2	2
31. Seke	2	0	2	65. Binga[a]	0	2	2
32. UMP	0	2	2				
33. Murehwa	2	0	2	**TOTAL**	**100**	**64**	**164**
34. Mudzi	0	2	2				
				Vacancy rate	39%		

Source: "Head Count – Social Services" and "Detailed Distribution of Posts – Department of Social Services" provided by DSS, June and July 2010 respectively; updated and amended by comments from DSS management, September 2010.

Note: [a.] These posts are assumed to be vacant as no incumbents are listed on the Head Count.

Table 4.1   Social Services Officer posts

Location	Posts	Vacancies
Head Office	12[a]	2
Provincial Offices	15[b]	5
District Offices	164	64
Repatriation Hostel	1	0
Total	**192**	**71**
Vacancy rate	37%	

Source: "Head Count – Social Services" provided by DSS, June 2010.

Notes: [a.] Includes 10 Social Welfare Officer posts and 2 (vacant) Deputy Chief Social Welfare Officer posts shown in the Head Count

[b.] Includes 10 Provincial Social Welfare Officer posts and one additional Social Welfare Officer listed in the Head Count for each of 5 provincial offices: Harare, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo and Midlands.

Table 4.2   SSO posts by province

Location	Posts	Vacancies
Harare	34[a]	3
Mashonaland East	21	10
Mashonaland Central	18	8
Mashonaland West	16	7
Matabeleland North	15	12
Matabeleland South	18	14
Midlands	22	9
Masvingo	20	2
Manicaland	19	3
Bulawayo	9	3
Total	**192**	**71**

Source: "Head Count – Social Services" provided by DSS, June 2010.

Note: [a.] Figure includes Head Office, provincial and district office and Repatriation Hostel staff.

Given the prevailing vacancy rates of 24% for all staff and 37% for professional SSO staff, the strain on the DSS's staffing is evident. Moreover, it appears from the interview evidence that many of the existing vacancies – for support staff such as office orderlies as well as professional officers – are of long standing, some posts having been empty for several years. The national totals also conceal some marked regional variations, with the provinces of Matabeleland North and South having between them a vacancy rate for SSO staff of over nearly 79%. The audit team has attempted to benchmark these staffing levels against some international comparisons, as discussed in the following sub-section.

We do not have a complete gender analysis of all DSS staff. However, of those that returned questionnaires 63.4% are male and 36.6% female. The table below shows the gender and grade breakdown of the smaller group that undertook interviews.

Table 4.3   Gender and grade of a sample of DSS staff

Grade	No. of Males (% of total)	No. of Females (% of total)
PSSO	3 (10.3 %)	0
DSSO	7 (24.1%)	3 (10.3)
SSO	7 (24.1%)	4 (13.9)
SWA	2 (7.0 %)	3 (10.3)
Total	19 (65.5%)	10 (34.5%)

4.3   Comparative staffing

Protecting children from vulnerability calls for stakeholders to act in concert to serve their best interests, but as elsewhere in the developing world the non-availability of human, financial and other resources has had a critical impact on the facilitation of child protection in Southern Africa, and particularly Zimbabwe.

One key factor in assessing the capacity of the DSS to execute its mandate *vis à vis* vulnerable children in the current transition environment is the ratio of social workers to the number of children requiring assistance in one form or another. A crude comparison of Zimbabwe's situation with that of neighbouring countries in terms of the size of the social work profession is informative. The comparison, summarised in the table below, is crude in the sense that the figures of children in the selected countries can only be rough estimates.

Table 4.4   Ratio of Children to Social Workers in Selected Countries in Southern Africa

Country	Population	Population of children	Total number of social workers	Ratio of children to social workers
Botswana	1.8 million	784,000	420	1,867:1
Namibia	2.0 million	860,000	200	4,300:1
South Africa	47 million	15,000,000	12,000	1,250:1
Zimbabwe	12.5 million	6,000,000	121	49,587:1

The statistics of children indicated in the table constitute total numbers of children, as opposed to the numbers of children who may be vulnerable. In addition, the figures are not taken from the same base year, although they are all from the last five years. While rough estimates of abused children or those orphaned by AIDS may be available by country, the situation is compounded by the fact that some children will fall into more than one category in terms of their vulnerability. The numbers of social workers too can be deceptive. While in some cases (e.g. South Africa) the figures available are of total numbers of social workers in the country, in other cases (e.g. Botswana) the figures are of those social workers who are employed in local authorities and not in NGOs or the private sector. In such cases, the

number of social workers in the private sector and in NGOs is unavailable, meaning the figures in the table may not be a true reflection of the total number of social workers 'available' to service children in each particular country. For Zimbabwe the figure used is the total number of SSOs currently in post in DSS (not just those in front-line posts in districts), not all of whom are professionally-qualified social workers, and does not include social workers employed by NGOs, by local government or in the health sector. Hence the table has to be read with extreme caution. Even so, if it is read in conjunction with the notes below it does give a rough idea of the scenario on the ground as far as the ratio of children to social workers in each country is concerned.

Botswana has a total population of 1.8 million people. Of this figure about 43.6% is made up of children aged 0-14 years. Of the total number of children, perhaps over two thirds are vulnerable and in need of care. By some accounts in 2007, some 15,000 children were living with HIV and AIDS, while a further 120,000 were orphaned by AIDS. There were 428 reported cases of defilement in 2008 alone. In 2007 there were 420 social workers employed by local authorities throughout the country. Central government, NGOs and the private sector in Botswana employ a very small number of social workers. Research has shown that most organisations (both government and non-governmental) that offer child protection services are under-staffed. Some NGOs had only one social worker who also operated as programme manager. Other than that, there was also an acute shortage of professional staff trained in child protection, child welfare and children's rights. Social workers complained of heavy caseloads; some claiming to attend to as many as 25 children a day. If the figure of 420 is used, then the ratio of children to social worker in the country is roughly 1867:1. This scenario would improve slightly if the focus shifts to ratio of vulnerable children to a social worker.

Namibia has a total population of 2 million inhabitants. Of this figure 43.6% are children under 15 years of age. However, the total number of children who fall in the category of 'vulnerable' and need particular care is unknown. A couple of years ago 152,000 children were living with AIDS, while thousands had been orphaned by AIDS. One village, Mavanze, reportedly had 163 orphaned children. The challenges faced therefore include the impact of HIV and AIDS. Other challenges include gender-based violence which *inter alia* exposes children to vulnerability, as well as a growing street children phenomenon. Windhoek, the capital city, alone has over 300 street children, some of whom are HIV positive or living with AIDS. Social workers in Namibia face numerous challenges. Apart from lack of staff and shortage of related resources, problems include the unavailability of transport, which makes it difficult for the social workers to execute their duties. Social workers in Namibia are overwhelmed as the numbers of people who need their intervention continues to increase. Basing on the figures in the table above, the ratio of children to a social worker in Namibia is approximately 4300:1.

South Africa has a total population of 47 million people. Of this figure perhaps 15 million are children aged 0-14 years. A large percentage of them are vulnerable and in need of care. In 2007, 280 000 children were living with AIDS, while 1,400,000 had been orphaned by AIDS. Of the 12,000 social workers, many are not registered, while many others are associate social workers or less than professionally qualified. The social workers complain of heavy case loads, with some saying they work up to 10 hours a day. For example, at Roodeport Child Welfare Society it is reported that social workers there have to deal with up to 400 cases each, most of whom are children orphaned by AIDS. The Limpopo Province alone reportedly has an estimated 600 social workers, but the ratio in relation to children remains unfavourable. A 2005 study revealed that South Africa has half of the number of social workers needed to meet minimum services to children. The study further indicated that the shortages are particularly acute in Gauteng Province with an average of 5,395 children per

social worker. Going by the figure of 12,000 social workers nationwide, the ratio of children to a social worker would work out at 1250:1. A figure of 100 children to 1 social worker has been floated in certain literature in South Africa. It is possible that this number is based on calculations of vulnerable children, for which figures are not readily available.

In Zimbabwe, although the country has some of the most comprehensive legal instruments for the protection of children, not enough has been done to enforce these. One reason is the shortage of resources, and in particular human resources, including social workers. According to the Zimbabwe RAAAP Report, there is a disparity between the scale of OVC population, the relative strength of a well-educated and trained human resource base, and the severe lack of financial resources to enable the scaling up of OVC interventions in local communities in Zimbabwe. [13]

Estimated of the child population vary. According to some sources, in 2007 Zimbabwe had 4.7 million children aged 0 – 17 years, out of a total population of about 13 million. However, UNICEF's country statistics cite a figure of 6.024m for 2008, of whom 1.707m were under 5.[14] By some accounts, over 1 million children have been orphaned, mostly by AIDS in the country. About 3.5 million children are living below the poverty datum line, with a significant percentage of them malnourished. Cases of child rape reportedly increased by 42% in 2009. There were over half a million cases of child labour.[15] As already established, Zimbabwe employs a very limited number of social work professionals who should be responsible for the administration of the Children's Act under the DSS. In 2003, the country had about 3,000 social workers. Over 1500 have left for the UK since 2000. Birmingham City in the UK alone at one point employed 47 Zimbabwean social workers. Of those social workers that remained in the country, many are 'unaccounted for' as they have joined the private sector or NGOs, or are doing work unrelated to the profession. In 2006 the then Director of the School of Social Work, Prof E. Kaseke, observed that the Department of Social Services should have 400 social workers, and yet it had just over 100 in post. This obviously left Zimbabwe's welfare system with a huge case-load; even on the most conservative estimates, its professional staffing is wildly out of alignment with that of other countries in the region. Needless to say, lack of (adequate) personnel impedes effective implementation and monitoring of child protection legislation.

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[13] Working Party of Officials (2004), Zimbabwe Rapid Assessment, Analysis and Action Planning Report (Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare).

[14] http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/zimbabwe_statistics

[15] UNICEF (2009), *The State of the World's Children*: *Special Edition*, reported that 13% of children 5-14 in Zimbabwe were involved in child labour, and gave the child population as 6.024m, of whom 4.317m were in the 5-17 age group. Assuming the proportion engaged in labour is the same for the 15-17 age group as for the 5-14 group (in fact it would be expected to be higher), this implies a total number of some 561,000 cases. The incidence has reduced considerably from the 26% reported in UNICEF (2006), *The State of the World's Children 2007.* For Zimbabwe, however, only economic activity for three hours or more per day, or five hours or more per day of housekeeping activities, are counted as child labour, as opposed to the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of one hour or more per week of economic activity or 28 hours of household chores. According to the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare [1999], *Zimbabwe 1999: National Child Labour Survey Country Report,* at that time 1.226m children aged 5-17 (26.3%), and 0.826m children aged 5-14, were engaged in economic activity on the ILO definition, and 0.657m (14.1%) and 0.407m (8.7%) respectively on the Government of Zimbabwe's definition, with another 140,000 (3%) involved in housekeeping.

A further indication of comparative staffing levels is given by figures made available by UNICEF, which used to collect data by country on the number of Government social workers per 100,000 people. The figures for those countries for which information is available, for the most recent available years, are shown in the table below.

Table 4.5   Government social workers per 100,000 population

Country	2005	2006	2007
Angola	75	80	80
Botswana	25	25	30
Lesotho	0	0	1
Madagascar	5	5	5
Malawi	1	1	1
Mozambique	1	1	1
South Africa	0	0	15
Swaziland	4	4	5
Tanzania	No Info	No Info	1
Uganda	No Info	No Info	2
Zambia	1	1.5	2

Source: Information provided by UNICEF ESARO, Nairobi, September 2010.

It is difficult to draw precise parallels between these figures and those quoted above, in view of the definitional problems already discussed. However, it would appear that on this basis Zimbabwe would have about 1 Government social worker per 100,000 people, on a par with Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, and Lesotho. This comparison does not, however, allow for differences in the pattern of service provision, as between government and non-government agencies.

In summary, initial findings indicate that Zimbabwe currently has approximately:

- 121 social workers in post in DSS, of whom 100 are in front-line district posts;
- More than 1 million children orphaned;
- Significant levels of child abuse and neglect (but no national data);
- More than 3.5 million children living below the food poverty line.

The information above suggests that the ratio of government care services to vulnerable children is very limited and hence unfavourable. While no reliable documents are readily available which show regional/per country ratios of social workers to vulnerable children in other countries, it is clear from the examples given above that Zimbabwe is in a crisis situation where the ratio of social workers to the population of children is concerned. While countries in the region have an acute shortage of social workers, their plight is nowhere near the desperate situation now obtaining in Zimbabwe.

4.4 Organisational structure

The organogram below, provided by DSS, shows the management structure of the Department. This shows the formal division of responsibilities at Deputy Director level at headquarters, and how the provincial and district offices and institutions report to headquarters. The appropriateness of the present three-layered structure is discussed under Organisational Capacity below.

Figure 4.1   DSS organisation diagram
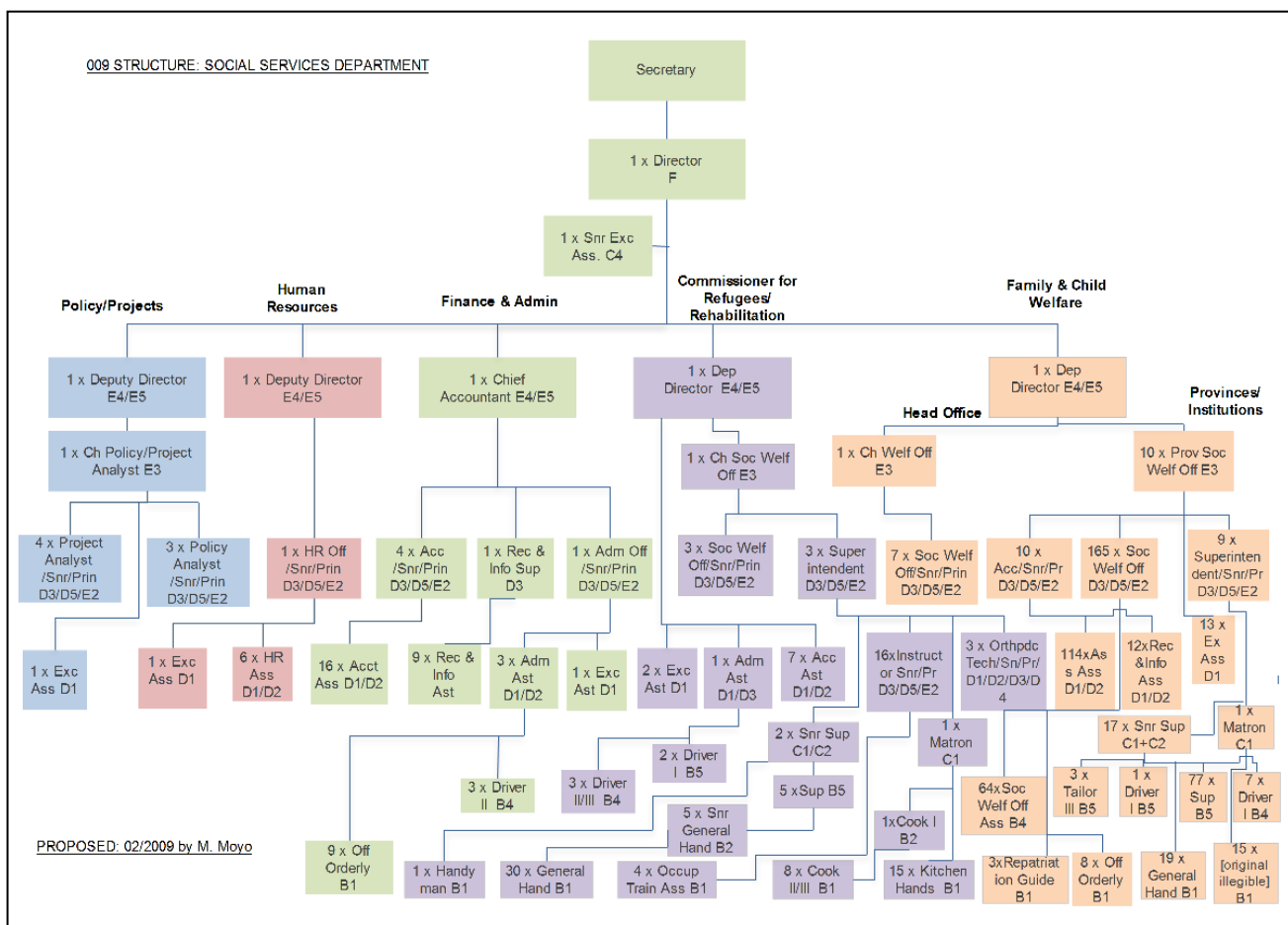
Source: Retyped from original provided by DSS

4.5 Capacity at institutional level

At the institutional level the audit has identified relatively few problems, although one of these is of major significance. Up until about 2000 Zimbabwe was widely acknowledged to have one of the best social protection systems in Africa, and the policy and legislative framework and organisational structure of this remain in place. Our research did not illuminate any areas in which this framework and structure are now clearly inappropriate to current conditions, and only a few points on which amendments to current legislation might be desirable. There is one isolated reference in our workshop records to "outdated statutes", without further explanation; we interpret this as referring to the shortage of actual copies of the current Acts – a problem referred to by many respondents – rather than to any problem

with the framing of the legislation itself. The greatest problems that face DSS lie rather in the paucity of the human, financial and physical resources that it now has to carry out the tasks required by policy and legislation, and this is discussed under the heading of organisational capacity below.

One issue that did arise from our research concerns the relationships that exist between DSS officers and their counterparts in other central and local government bodies and in NGOs. There is a widespread feeling amongst officers that they are not respected by their public service colleagues, and that their role is not generally understood or appreciated, including by the courts; the view has been reported by several respondents that magistrates do not appear to understand the purpose of probation officers' reports. To a very large degree this seems to be linked to resource problems; some officers complain that the Department is a laughing-stock in their locale because they have to beg or borrow not only transportation but stationery, typing facilities or the use of a telephone line or a printer. It is clearly difficult for an organisation to continue to present itself as playing an active, necessary and authoritative part in the local criminal justice and social protection systems if it does not have the means to carry out the most basic functions unaided. The absence of resources also impacts on the ability of DSS to monitor and inspect the services for children and others provided by NGOs; not only are they hampered from making inspection visits by the lack of vehicles of their own, but when they are able to make visits using transport provided by the NGO concerned this relationship of dependency undermines their capacity to exercise their authority and to make dispassionate and objective judgements.

A related point concerns the very widely remarked-upon lack of official forms of identification for DSS staff, especially in their role of Probation Officer; 39% of questionnaire respondents referred to this issue. The absence of proper ID can hamper access both to private households and to institutions such as prisons and children's homes, can lead to conflict with the police, and on at least one occasion has resulted in the arrest of an officer while handling an adoption case. This is largely an organisational matter, reflecting on the ability of the Department to produce and distribute the necessary ID cards (the need for which has long been known) rather than on the actual powers and authority of the officers, but we mention it here because as well as making the work of Social Services Officers more difficult in practical terms it also damages the standing of DSS officials amongst their professional peers and reduces the perceived effectiveness of provincial and district Social Services Officers amongst the governance institutions of their localities.

There is some uncertainty about the intended role of the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare (MoHCW) in the provision of child welfare services, and a wish on the part of some officers for this to be clarified; they would prefer child welfare to be unambiguously the responsibility of DSS alone. In practice, however, we did not find any specific examples of confusion or conflicting roles. MoHCW has a very small programme for the implementation of the National Programme of Action: Child Welfare, amounting to $25,000 in the 2009 budget.

More generally, there are divided views within DSS about the appropriate apportionment of staff time and effort to the Department's different functions. We found, as we expected, a strong current of opinion that held that more time should be devoted to child protection tasks, and correspondingly less to various aspects of public assistance; if these were shed the Department could transform itself into an organisation wholly focused on child welfare. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that more time should be spent on public assistance cases, on the not unreasonable grounds that these interventions save lives. Specific suggestions have been that AMTOs should be assessed solely by the Ministry of Health's medical social welfare officers, to avoid double assessment when claimants are assessed at hospitals as well as by DSS; that the hospital medical social welfare officers

should look after the whole pauper burial process when people die in hospital, and the police likewise when they die in custody; that registration and monitoring of crèches should go to local councils, reporting to the Ministry of Education; and that bus and rail warrants should be the responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs and issued by the police (as apparently previously happened).

There is little to be gained from simply identifying functions that might be carried out by other agencies unless either those bodies are demonstrably better resourced than the DSS or there is the prospect of real efficiency gains from moving them. Certainly many DSS staff in the districts believe that their Department is uniquely under-resourced, but the audit team was unable to verify this. In some cases there are apparent administrative efficiencies (for example in the handling of pauper burials) that could be simplified. But on the whole we tend to agree with the view that the disadvantage of allocating these functions away from the DSS would be the loss of a single, specialised focus on social protection within government, and the fragmentation of control of already very limited budgets. A preferable approach, in the view of the audit team, is to retain the current range of functions within DSS but to ensure that it is adequately staffed and resourced to discharge them. In part this requires there to be sufficient staff in more junior grades to carry out the more administrative functions so that the fully-qualified professional officers – whose time represents a scarce resource – can devote as much attention as possible to the child protection functions that demand the highest level of professional skill. This point is discussed further in sub-section 4.7 below.

As already observed, the registration under the PVO Act and subsequent monitoring and inspection of NGOs occupies a small but significant portion of DSS staff time at district and provincial level, and is also a headquarters function: the Director of Social Services is designated as the Registrar of Private Voluntary Organizations, and is *ex officio* a member of the Private Voluntary Organizations Board. After investigation by officers at local level the Registrar submits applications for registration to the Board, which should by law determine them, though we are informed that in practice they are also referred to the Minister for confirmation. We considered whether this was a function that could sensibly be dispensed with or transferred elsewhere, but it is clear from the field work that this work is highly valued by provincial and district officers, as being one of their few means of exercising control over the services for children and other groups that are delivered in their areas by NGOs. In fact, there are indications that the proportion of staff time employed on this function has been artificially constrained by the scarcity of resources, and that if additional sufficient human and physical resources were available much more effort would be devoted to it. It is reported that some organisations carrying out humanitarian work seek incorporation as Trusts, either deliberately to evade monitoring or because the PVO registration process takes so long; either way, this takes them outside of the Department's supervision. There is a strong desire in some quarters in DSS to regulate these bodies more effectively, which will certainly require additional resources including a good electronic register of PVOs operating in each district, and might also be aided by some amendment of the law to bring the PVO Act and other legislation into line with one another to remove the apparent loophole.

The tone of the discourse on this issue suggests that there are divergent views amongst Social Services Officers on the matter of NGOs; some seem more than others to accept the need for a positive partnership and to work together to ensure the quality and accountability of services, while some give the impression of being driven at least in part by resentment at the level of resources enjoyed by some NGOs and a desire to redress the balance by subjecting them to more stringent bureaucratic control and restriction.

This leads to the final, and most major, issue concerning the institutional capacity of the DSS. A salient feature of the institutional set-up in Zimbabwe is that the Government is not in

most respects the principal provider of social protection. Because of the combined effects of staff shortages and very constrained financial resources, in the words of one observer "Government social protection programmes are either dormant or have a very low coverage" (Schubert 2010, p. 6). At the same time, very substantial sums of money have been disbursed by international donors through mechanisms which deliberately by-pass governmental systems and aim to convey funds direct to non-state actors for the implementation of approved programmes and projects. Thus, the Programme of Support to the NAP for OVC (the PoS) represents a US$ 86m pooled fund financed by a group of OECD countries and administered by UNICEF, which is scheduled to run from April 2007 to December 2010. It funds activities across a number of areas (including school-related support, birth registration, psycho-social support, food and nutrition, health care, water and sanitation, child participation, child protection, education on nutrition, health and hygiene, economic strengthening, life-skills and vocational training, cash transfers and shelter). UNICEF works closely with (and funds) the NAP for OVC Secretariat which is housed within DSS, Ministries are actively represented in the Working Party of Officials and on the Technical Review Committee which decides on the allocation of grants, and (as already mentioned) NAP Coordinator posts have been created in each DSS provincial office. Nevertheless, it would be hard to argue that the PoS is currently a mechanism which is "owned" by the Government of Zimbabwe; it is specifically designed to ensure that funds pass direct from the donor pool to the 33 NGO partner organisations (or 32, now that Save the Children UK and Save the Children Norway have merged their operations) and 150 smaller, local organisations known as sub-grantees who implement the activities (Jimat 2010, p.iv).

This situation is clearly widely resented by DSS professional staff, who are vividly aware of their own lack of resources compared to some of the NGOs whom they see in action, and not perfectly understood in all quarters. Some believe that the funds were available to the Department, which has chosen – for unknown reasons – to pass them to NGOs rather than to its own field offices. Others appear to recognise the slender funding available to the DSS, but believe that it could command a larger share of national resources if it were a Ministry in its own right rather than a department within MoLSS (there is little reason to believe that this would make much difference). Some see their career path as leading them fairly soon into the employment of a better-resourced, better-paying NGO. There is, however, apparently a high degree of consensus around the vision for a fully-resourced future DSS which would, when political conditions permit, become a "one-stop shop" for meeting the needs of OVC, with no parallel structures like that provided by the PoS, and with all civil society organisations involved with OVC coordinated by the DSS and working under DSS leadership and supervision.

This vision is consistent with the stated Goal of the NAP for OVC, which is:

> "By December 2010, to develop a national institutional capacity to identify all orphans and vulnerable children and to have reached out with service provision to at least 25% of OVC in Zimbabwe considered to be the most vulnerable."[16]

If by "national institutional capacity" is meant capacity within the institutions of national government, this goal is not currently being met and is unlikely to be so by the end of this year. It is a goal, however, which would apparently command the support of DSS

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[16] Zimbabwe Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare [2008], National Action Plan for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2004-2010, p.11.

professional staff, if conditions permitted development partners' resources to be channelled in this direction. It should also be noted that staff do not apparently envisage a future in which NGOs cease to play a part, but one in which DSS is able to play a leading role in the delivery of services, complemented by NGOs which it is able to supervise and monitor efficiently.

4.6   Capacity at organisational level

This sub-section addresses the issues of capacity at the level of the organisation, and considers its human, physical and financial resources, its structure, and its supporting systems and processes.

4.6.1 Human resources: qualifications

Section 4.1 set out the fundamental facts concerning the DSS's staffing. There are critical and chronic vacancy problems across the organisation, affecting staffing at most levels of the Department. Although the focus was on shortages among the SSO staff who are the key providers of professional services, the staff who are in post are hampered in the performance of their duties by the lack of support staff in many offices. Although there are substantial variations in complement from place to place, the basic model for a typical district social services office consists of two professionals (Social Services Officers), a Social Welfare Assistant, a clerical/accounting assistant, and an office orderly. A provincial office should consist of a Provincial Social Services Officer and a NAP for OVC Coordinator, supported by accounting, registry and clerical staff. Where the professional posts in districts are unfilled less-qualified staff are left to provide the best service they can, with the assistance of professionals from neighbouring districts; in some cases the PSSO has to provide professional cover for the districts, rather than the supervision and management that the office should provide. Where the ancillary posts are vacant, some of the time of professional staff is diverted to basic tasks of office cleaning and maintenance. Neither outcome represents an efficient use of resources.

The professional qualifications of SSO staff are also an issue. The Director's vision, as we understand it, is of a multi-disciplinary department in which social work continues to be the leading discipline but professional posts are also filled by graduates in other related disciplines such as sociology or psychology. Typically, where there are two professional posts in an office one would be filled by a qualified social worker and the other by a graduate of another discipline. In the districts our field work examined in depth, 6 out of 10 DSSOs have a social work qualification (5 at degree and 1 at diploma level), and 4 out of 10 SSOs (3 at degree and 1 at diploma level). Other qualifications held by this group included degrees in sociology, psychology and counselling, as shown in the table below; 80% have a qualification at degree or diploma level relevant to social work or social welfare practice.

Table 4.6   Qualifications in a sample of DSS districts

Qualification	DSSO	SSO
Degree in Social Work	5	3
Degree in Sociology	0	2
Degree in Psychology	0	1
Degree in Counselling	2	1
Diploma in Social Work	1	1
Diploma in HR Management	0	1
Diploma (Other)[17]	1	0
Accounting	1	0
Diploma in Secretarial Studies[18]	0	1
Total	**10**	**10**

In the wider group sampled by questionnaire, around 78% of staff were qualified to degree or higher degree level, and 50% of the qualifications held (at certificate, diploma, degree or higher degree level) were in social work. Of the social workers, 24 are registered with the Council of Social Workers (which requires training in social work to degree or diploma level, though the latter qualification is no longer offered in Zimbabwe), but it is evident that more would be eligible to register if they chose to do so. These findings indicate that the composition of the Department overall is not in practice far adrift from that envisaged by the Director; levels of qualification remain quite high, despite odd instances of doubtfully-qualified staff. There is, however, little scope for further erosion of the social worker cadre without endangering the capability of the Department to discharge some of its key professional functions. There may also be some suggestion that there is a weakening of supply of younger qualified social workers within the Department to succeed to DSSO posts in future. Emphasis should continue to be placed on attempting to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers as well as graduates in other relevant disciplines.

The data do not entirely bear out the image of an organisation disproportionately staffed by very inexperienced recent graduates because of high turnover. Although around half of the professional workforce are 30 years of age or younger, only 3% are 24 or younger; and in the narrower sample of 10 districts and 3 provinces we found that the average length of service with DSS was 10.75 years for DSSOs, 5.5 years for SSOs and 21 years for PSSOs. The picture that emerges from the narratives is one of an organisation where a large number of new recruits leave quite quickly but more established staff have remained for some time, even if quite dissatisfied with conditions (and not least with the effort required to repeatedly train up new entrants who soon depart).

The question of whether the recruitment of professional staff from disciplines other than social work to fill Social Services Officer posts itself represents a diminution in the Department's capacity is a controversial one. The present staffing strategy, of endeavouring

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[17] The officer concerned did not state what subject the Diploma was gained in; internal evidence suggests it was social work as he would have been eligible to register with the Council of Social Workers, but this is not specified.

[18] We were asked to confirm that the officer concerned is an SSO and not an SWA; this is the case, as shown in the table.

to ensure that one of the two professional posts in a typical district office is occupied by a qualified social worker and one by a graduate from another social science discipline, is seen by some as a pragmatic response to the difficulty of attracting and retaining sufficient social workers in the face of a continuing exodus of qualified personnel to work for other organisations or abroad,[19] or even as a more appropriate pattern of staffing than the traditional approach, given the very diverse range of services supposed to be delivered by DSS in the districts and the need to plan and coordinate the activities of a large number of service providers of different kinds. To others it is a damaging dilution of the Department's core professional capability.

The audit team has considered the case for and against a concentration on social work as the core competence of the DSS. The world over, key social services tasks tend to be performed by qualified social workers. In the UK, since 2003 only persons registered with the General Social Care Council (GSCC) may practice as social workers. For someone to be registered they have to meet certain requirements, a key one of which is that they must have been trained as a social worker to a certain level of competency. In South Africa the same position obtains – for one to practice as a social worker they have to have a sound social work qualification, and have to be registered with the country's umbrella body, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP). In Botswana, while there is no registration body in place as yet, only those with a social work qualification work as social workers in the DSS and elsewhere. Thus the trend seems to be that social services provision (and in particular the provision of social welfare) is believed to be the domain of social work professionals. In Zimbabwe, before the mass exodus of trained social workers at the turn of the last decade, there was never any real debate with regard to who should work as a social welfare officer in the Department of Social Services. This was a given: by and large, social work professionals occupied these positions.

Ordinarily a Bachelor of Social Work degree lasts 4 years. This is certainly the case in South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe. In the case of Zimbabwe the key training institution is the School of Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe. There are a number of critical skills and competencies that form the domain of the social work profession. Social work as a profession operates on the basis of distinct methods, principles, values and ethics of practice. Social workers are trained in areas of micro, meso and macro practice such as case work (one-to-one encounters with clients), group work (group dynamics, therapy groups, etc) and community development/ organisation (working with communities), as well as in social administration and social research methods. Trainees are introduced to a variety of theories which are meant to enhance their professional functioning, and are granted the opportunity to apply subject-specific knowledge of major theories, ideas and frameworks to a range of practice settings. They are taught to make judgements and how to deal with moral dilemmas. They also acquire communication skills, which will enable them to deal professionally with their clients, and are introduced to language that is 'user friendly' – for example where others might use the term 'AIDS sufferers', social workers will normally refer to these individuals as 'People living with AIDS', etc. These skills are imparted using a variety of approaches during training, including role play. Practical fieldwork is an integral element of the training. In the UK, Master of Social Work candidates do on average 100 days of practicum, while in many countries in the region, the cumulative duration of the internship is around 27 weeks. The practical training is an integral element of the training; it provides trainees with a valuable opportunity for 'hands-on' work during their training.

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[19] Figures obtained by the Council of Social Workers from the GSCC show that there are 273 Zimbabweans registered to practise as social workers in England alone – far more than the current level of SSO vacancies in the DSS.

While other social science graduates might generally understand human behaviour, or how society is structured and issues around local, national and international politics, these related social science programmes such as psychology, sociology and political science are not classified as 'professional training' and hence the graduates from such programmes do not receive the same level of grounding in human service interventions that the social workers receive. The code of practice for the social work profession for instance emphasises a number of critical principles, which include the concepts of confidentiality, non-judgmental attitude, client self determination, purposeful expression of feelings, human worth, as well as issues around social justice. These are all essential for dealing with human beings. During their training much emphasis is placed on the point that social workers are not expected to just "help people", but rather their brief is to "help people to help themselves". Among the theories they are introduced to is 'strength theory', meant to help trainees appreciate that individuals have to be assisted to get onto their two feet, in the hope that they can take responsibility for their own lives.

Failure to appreciate the knowledge base of the social work profession might mean that those who are not trained in these issues may not appreciate that certain of the actions of non-social workers may actually have the effect of 'hurting' rather than 'empowering' their clients. The non-social worker, for instance, might go out of his or her way to "help" (i.e. prescribe to) the client rather than place options on the table for the client to consider (i.e. help the client to help self). Stated otherwise, non-social workers might (in good faith) make decisions on behalf of the client (and feel good about it) without realising that they are actually creating or promoting a dependency syndrome. The principle of client self-determination might thus not really be part of their repertoire. The concept of confidentiality too, among others, often gets compromised as a result of failure to appreciate its value. Similarly, there is often a tendency to use the term 'counselling' very loosely, usually mistaking advice-giving for professional counselling. There is usually failure to appreciate that it normally takes at least a couple of years of training to produce a fully-baked counsellor. Monthly district social services office returns indicate the numbers of people who received counselling at a given office, but questions of the quality of the counselling activity may hardly ever be asked if the true meaning of counselling is not appreciated.

In Zimbabwe today there exist two types of social service officers – those with a social work qualification, and those holding qualifications in related social sciences disciplines. The decision to recruit these in large numbers was taken in the light of the reality of the situation in the country, and a convincing case was made for the recruitment of this cadre. The non-social workers in post have made an enormous contribution to the work of the DSS, and the DSS is to be commended for the bold move. The point to note though is while there are numerous tasks at the district office which these cadres can perform well, there are however certain other tasks which they may be performing currently, which in fact require the skills of a qualified social worker. Failure to appreciate this fact would suggest the DSS is not absolutely certain of the standards it wishes to reach/maintain.

In our view, the ratio of social workers to non-social workers in any given social services district would ideally be at least 2 : 1 in favour of social work professionals. Ideally – if staffing levels permitted – every office should be staffed by a qualified social worker, who might then be assisted by another social worker and a social services officer from a related discipline. It should be appreciated that social work is a profession like medicine, law, nursing, etc. Parts of social work overlap with economics, medicine, psychology, sociology, politics and even education, but this does not detract from the fact that social work is a distinct profession.

In any given discipline, professionals are regulated by registration with a controlling body and they operate on the basis of ethics, while their activities are monitored through the controlling body. Those that cross certain professional boundaries may receive censure or may even be struck off the register, thus denying them the right to practice. In most countries where the social work profession is well established, national social work councils exist, and these have the responsibility to register social workers and ensure that education and practice norms are adhered to. They are often assisted in this role by national associations of social workers. Zimbabwe has both a Council of Social Workers (CSW) which registers and monitors the work of professional social workers and a National Association of Social Workers (NASWZ), which though currently not functioning very well, is the voice of professional social workers. As things stand, non-social work officers working in the DSS do not qualify to register with either of the two bodies. This suggests that should the non-social work officers cross certain boundaries in human service, nobody will reprimand them from a professional point of view.

Other than the national controlling bodies, there are three key international bodies that serve the interests of the social work profession world wide, all of which have observer status at the United Nations. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) is a body that monitors standards of Social Work education and training across the world. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) is the body that is responsible for standards among social work practitioners world-wide. The International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) can be viewed as the body that focuses on the various institutions that employ professional social workers. All three bodies exist to further the interests of qualified social workers. Incidentally, the three bodies recently held a joint international conference in Hong Kong attended by some 3,000 delegates, indicating the bodies are indeed highly functional.

In the context of the DSS in Zimbabwe, tasks performed by social workers may be divided into those which do not necessarily need the services of qualified social workers, and those that can only meaningfully be performed by qualified social workers. The tasks of producing a probation officer's report, for example, should be the preserve of a qualified social worker. This activity, if properly handled, goes beyond the 'mechanical' production of a report to be presented before a magistrate. Social workers are trained to deal with psychosocial issues around such cases, and that skill is a pre-requisite for dealing with such cases.

Counselling of clients is another task that requires the services of qualified social workers who appreciate what is involved. Social workers do understand that counselling is a structured conversation aimed at facilitating a client's quality of life in the face of adversity. They further understand that the intention of counselling is not necessarily to 'prescribe' treatment solutions, but to help or assist clients to review their problems and the options or the choices at their disposal for dealing with these problems. Thus they are aware that to provide proper and professional counselling one needs to appreciate that counselling helps clients to manage their problems more effectively and develop unused or underused opportunities to cope more fully. Social science graduates from various other disciplines might not have been equipped with such critical skills, hence this skill deficiency will need to be addressed.

In addition to the area of handling custody cases, the issues of foster care and adoption do require analytical skills which non-social workers may not necessarily be equipped with. Such cases require careful evaluation before decisions are taken in the best interest of children. The area of reunification of children with their significant others may appear straightforward, but considerable counselling to deal with the emotional aspects may be indicated. The same applies with such tasks as assessment of clients, including adults, for public assistance. Even issues around repatriation of refugees and aliens and placement of

elderly persons in old people's homes may also require counselling – a skill which social workers are equipped with during their training.

There are however a number of tasks amongst those normally carried out in DSS district offices which can appropriately be performed by non-social work officers. These include supervision of children's homes, preparation of travel warrants, handling of the War Veterans Fund, registration of children's homes and other PVOs, and assistance with birth registration.

Priority should be given, first, to increasing the recruitment and retention of qualified social workers to SSO posts to ensure that the core professional competence of the Department, as described in the preceding paragraphs, is not further eroded, and subsequently – when resources permit – to increase the complement of district offices to allow for an improved ratio of social workers to graduates of other disciplines as described above. The School of Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe, despite a high vacancy rate amongst its faculty (until very recently 50%), has the capacity to graduate some 50 students a year from its four-year degree course. The qualification is self-evidently valued and sought-after by authorities in other countries including the UK. The problem is therefore not immediately about the supply of potential recruits; it is one of attracting them to the job and holding on to them. Although the DSS plays its part in providing places for students on attachment for practical training, and devotes effort to supervising and informing them, it is a matter of concern that some interviewees reported a drying-up of the flow of students in recent years – NGOs are thought to be a more attractive destination for some students now.

In addition to recruitment and retention, attention should be given to finding ways of beefing up the skills base of non-social worker SSOs, to provide at least an introduction to some of the skills that they would have acquired through social worker training. This is discussed further under Individual Capacity, below. Moreover, it would be appropriate for the Department to encourage, or even require, suitably qualified staff to register with the Council of Social Workers. At the moment the Council is not able to discharge its professional regulatory function very effectively, but with the resources and authority that come with an increasing membership base this could change, to the benefit ultimately of the Department, of other employers of social workers, and of the recipients of services.

There is one measure available which would help to alleviate these bottle-necks in the short term. The Children's Act was amended in 2001 to make it possible for the Government to appoint a registered social worker who is not a public officer to act as a Probation Officer when a public officer is not available, and the Council of Social Workers has drawn up draft Terms and Conditions for the appointment of self-employed persons or persons employed by other agencies in this way. A Statutory Instrument is now required to put this approach into effect. It should provide a useful way to bypass in the short term the shortage of registered social workers in the public service, by allowing the role to be discharged by people who are being paid (e.g. by an NGO using grant funding) a sufficient wage to retain them and who may also have sufficient facilities available to help them do the job.

This approach clearly has cost implications for the sector as a whole; it is largely a means of procuring the services of individuals at a rate higher than the Department is currently able to afford, and to transfer these costs to the development partners through the PoS mechanism, and could be seen as driving up the costs of employing social workers. However, the Government is not in any case the sole purchaser of these skills and services; there is already a labour market in this field, and outsourcing of this kind could be seen instead as simply providing benchmarking data on what Government will have to pay eventually to fill its vacancies. In the longer term, though, this short-term fix would only serve to undermine further the position of government. Where the boundaries should be drawn between the role of the state and that of non-state actors acting on its behalf or under contract to it is

ultimately a matter of judgement and political preference. Ultimately there is little that cannot be done through outsourcing, if the state has the means (backed up perhaps by independent professional regulation) to monitor service delivery and enforce standards. It is however the view of the audit team that on balance the functions of the Probation Officer – closely bound up as they are both with safeguarding the rights of individuals (particularly in this case children) and with the exercise of the coercive prerogatives of the state – are most satisfactorily discharged exclusively by the employees of the state, as soon as resources permit.

4.6.2 Human resources: pay

Pay is certainly not the only factor which impacts on the retention of social workers and other professional staff, but it certainly cannot be discounted entirely. "Social Welfare Officers" at grade D3 are paid on a 5-point incremental scale ranging (as from 1 January 2010) from US $2,256 to $2,304 per annum. With a transport allowance of $9 and housing allowance of $8 per month, the maximum that an officer can expect to earn is $2,508 a year, or $209 a month. The poverty datum line (PDL) in Zimbabwe was set at $552 per household per month in March 2009,[20] lending force to the complaint of one workshop participant that "we are as poor as our clients". A questionnaire respondent said:

> "The social workers within the DSS have become destitute with nothing to hand for them to assist others in need of assistance. It is a shame to our country. Something needs to be urgently done to rescue the DSS. How do you expect a destitute to assist another destitute?"

One interviewee suggested that salaries should be raised just above the PDL; even this modest proposal would represent a more than doubling of salaries.

It should also be noted that a profession that deals largely with the most destitute people in society has few opportunities for extracting illicit fees from clients or other forms of rent-seeking behaviour. On the contrary, it is evident that very often SSOs' duties impose additional costs, for example feeding and caring for an abandoned baby at their own expense until a place in a home can be found, or paying the bus fare to take an abandoned child to a hospital that has agreed to take it in temporarily. These costs, or the costs of telephone calls with the officer's own cell-phone, will not be reimbursed. Nor does the professional background of social workers or other social science graduates lend itself on the whole to lucrative dual employment, unlike some other professions such as medicine, but it is likely that some officers will take opportunities for other work when it is available, simply to make ends meet.

Additional incentive packages for particular occupational groups in the public service are always likely to be resisted, as they create distortions and pressures for comparable uplifts for other groups, and are unlikely to be sustainable in the longer term. Nevertheless, given the extreme circumstances of the social services officer group – in view of current vacancy levels, and the inadequacy of staffing levels in relation to demand even if the DSD were fully staffed up to complement – the case for considering whether SSOs are correctly graded and paid in relation to the rest of the public service should continue to be strongly pressed with the Public Service Commission.

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[20] As published by the Government of Zimbabwe in *The Herald* for 26 March 2009 (http://allafrica.com/stories/200903260037.html).

4.6.3 Physical resources

The acute shortage of professional staff in the main front-line service delivery role is exacerbated by a corresponding shortage of physical facilities and resources. This not only hampers the ability of existing staff to perform their duties efficiently and effectively. There is also persuasive evidence that discontent with working conditions and frustration with the constraints they impose are significant factors in driving professional staff out of the Department. There is great consistency in the field work findings; the principal areas in which the critical resources to do the job are lacking are:

- **Transportation.** No district office has a vehicle; there would seem to be typically one car at the provincial office. 92% of questionnaire respondents referred to the lack of a vehicle and/or fuel as an obstacle in their work. Officers are reduced to making home or institutional visits only to clients within walking distance, or to relying on transport provided by NGOs, the police or local authorities whenever this is available. This not only, as already noted, restricts severely their ability to carry out their duties and to reach out to clients; it also undermines their ability to act independently and authoritatively in a regulatory or enforcement role. The "wish list" from some respondents amounts, for each district, to one or more 4x4 vehicles for the SSOs, a motor-bike for the SWA, and a bicycle for the office orderly. Even one vehicle would be a start.

- **Computers.** These are practically non-existent at district or provincial level. Most respondents have never had one; a few report having old and semi-functional or broken machines in the office. Even in the few cases where word-processing facilities exist it is likely that documents will have to be taken to another organisation to ask for them to be printed as there is not a functional printer. 78% of questionnaire respondents referred to the lack of computers and/or a printer as an obstacle to their work. Many offices do not even have a working typewriter and have to beg typing facilities from NGOs or other organisations.

- **Telephones.** Some offices do not have a working landline; some that do only have one handset so that all calls have to be made and taken in the reception area, which does not aid confidentiality. No officer reported ever having an official cell phone; calls were usually made using officers' own phones, but there was no reimbursement of the cost of airtime. Provision of a working landline for every office would be a prerequisite of developing a working DSS computer network, which would greatly improve internal communications and reporting, information sharing, record keeping and case management, as well as enabling officers to have access to a wide range of professional information through the internet. It would also facilitate the use of fax machines, which some staff have expressed a desire for, but which might seem a less pressing need given a working computer network.

- **Photocopiers.** Also lacking, though any procurement should be linked to decisions about the provision of computers and printers (integrated copiers/printers/scanners are most likely to offer a cost-effective solution).

- **Documents and stationery.** Many offices are lacking supplies of forms and bond paper, and copies of current legislation and policies. Some (more worryingly) may be working from outdated versions. Several officers reported having resorted to keeping one clean copy of a form on file, then requesting clients to go and photocopy it outside before they could be assisted. Computerisation would obviate the need for provision of hard copies of documents to every location, as they could be made available through a departmental network, through the internet (for example by access to the Parliament of Zimbabwe website for legislation, though this is not entirely up to date), or simply by distribution on CD. Forms could be printed from templates as required, or filled in electronically.

- **Office space.** Some respondents were satisfied with their office space, but for most provision of decent offices – including essential facilities such as working toilets and dedicated space for confidential interviews with clients – was a priority.
- **Office furniture.** Adequate tables and chairs, and in some cases also essential consumables such as light bulbs, are required. Although not mentioned by respondents, office equipment should also include sufficient lockable units for the storage of confidential records.
- **Staff accommodation.** In some, particularly rural, areas an adequate supply of acceptable living accommodation for staff is lacking; some Ministries reportedly provide accommodation in these circumstances.

These physical facilities and resources should not be regarded as a secondary issue, compared to the supply of qualified personnel and their remuneration. Without decent working conditions and the ability to do the job for which they trained competent staff will not stay – and if they do say their work will be much less efficient and effective than it should be. Moreover, there is a widespread perception amongst stakeholders that lack of DSS capacity – whether because of vacancies or because the staff in post do not have the means to travel – can cause a critical bottleneck that seriously hampers the work of NGOs and other agencies. Under the current arrangements for supporting the NAP for OVC there are many projects being undertaken by NGOs (as well as those carried out by international bodies such as the IOM) where much of the service can be provided by a non-state actor but a critical part of the process can only be undertaken by the statutory authority, typically the social services officer acting in the role of Probation Officer. Examples would include the assessment of children in residential institutions and their families for reunification, the assessment and return to their place of origin of repatriated migrant children, the removal to a place of safety of a child at risk of abuse who has contacted a helpline, the application for renewal of court orders so that children in institutions are eligible for AMTOs and per capita grants. Very often social services officers are dependent on the goodwill of NGOs to provide them with transport or even the means to type up court reports to carry out these functions, and this does not ensure predictability, consistency or sustainability in the child protection system. In these circumstance DSS is not only not carrying out its own functions effectively, but is also preventing those who are in receipt of PoS funding from making the best use of it. Some NGOs also report that the proportion of grant funds disbursed through the PoS that can be used for internal and administrative purposes is being restricted, so their ability to make this kind of assistance available may be reduced in future.

Another problem linked especially to lack of transportation concerns the loss of coverage by DSS of some of its key target groups. If visits are limited to those that can be carried out on foot (or very rarely by public transport) the number of clients who can be reached is restricted to those within a narrow radius of the office or those who are able to make their own way there by some means. The likelihood of there being an officer available to assist anyone who does come to the office is reduced both by vacancies and by the time spent by staff on laborious visits. This in turn, coupled with declining confidence that there will be any money available if a client does succeed in being seem, depresses the number of people who are willing to make the effort; some field work respondents report their office as being much less busy than it had been in the past, with few callers. This phenomenon of suppressed demand means that the first effect of any initiative to improve capacity is likely to be a perception, paradoxically, of increased pressure on staff and on budgets.

4.6.4 Financial resources

Underlying, of course, the DSS's weaknesses in human resources and physical facilities is the critical shortage of financial resources.

The table below shows the Department's voted allocation and actual expenditure for the years 2005-2009. It is difficult to draw many conclusions from these data; interpretation is confounded by the unusual macro-economic context. The inflation rate in Zimbabwe had already reached triple figures by 2001, and is estimated to have peaked in September 2008

Table 4.7   DSS Budget and Expenditure 2005-2010

	2005 (Zim$ bn)			2006 (Zim$ bn)[2]		
	Voted Allocation	Expend-iture	Net Variance	Voted Allocation	Expend-iture	Net Variance
Employment costs[1]	19.921	19.921	0.0%	0.142	0.206	45.1%
Goods and services	18.34	18.444	0.6%	0.112	0.111	-0.9%
Maintenance	1.057	1.004	-5.0%	0.004	0.004	0.0%
Programmes	417.717	417.612	0.0%	1.726	1.723	-0.2%
Capital	1.611	1.248	-22.5%	0.011	0.010	0.0%
Total	458.646	458.229	-0.1%	1.995	2.054	3.0%

	2007 (Zim$ bn)			2008 (Zim$ bn)		
	Voted Allocation	Expend-iture	Net Variance	Voted Allocation	Expend-iture	Net Variance
Employment costs[1]	22.37	22.37	0.0%	9,298.2	9,298.2	0.0%
Goods and services	19.408	19.45	0.2%	20,657.0	0.252	-100.0% [3]
Maintenance	2.722	2.42	-11.1%	0.014	0	-100.0% [4]
Programmes	461.923	460.268	-0.4%	1,500,002.3	1,500,001.4	0.0%
Capital	2.53	1.496	-40.9%	1.5	1.5	0.0%
Total	508.953	506.004	-0.6%	1,529,959.0	1,509,301.4	-1.4%

	2009 (US$ mn)			*2009 (Zim S$bn)*	2010 Estimates
	Voted Allocation	Expend-iture	Net Variance	*Voted Allocation*	(US$mn)
Employment costs[1]	0.622	0.862	38.6%	*25,822,125*	1.121
Goods and services	0.321	0.600	86.9%	*36,920,100*	0.489
Maintenance	0.058	0.028	-51.7%	*4,672,500*	0.080
Programmes	36.095	2.038	-94.4%	*1,870,962,380*	23.000
Capital	1.49	0	-100.0%	*87,850,000*	0.845
Total	38.586	3.528	-90.9%	*2,026,227,105*	25.535

[1] Includes salaries plus housing allowance, transport allowance and cash-in-lieu of leave (all three discontinued in 2009) and other allowances

[2] Figures reflect reissue of Zim$ in August 2006 with three zeroes removed

[3] Saving due to hyper-inflation: most suppliers preferred foreign currency

[4] Saving due to hyper-inflation: bulk of money released at end of year when suppliers no longer accepting Zim$

Source: DSS Appropriation Accounts 2005-2009, Budget Estimates 2009 (Vote 3.IV) and Budget Estimates 2010 (Vote 32.III)

at almost 500 billion (10^9) percent. Hyperinflation eroded the real value of accrued tax liabilities and the government's budget revenue fell from almost US$1 billion (25 percent of GDP) in 2005 to US$133 million (4 percent of GDP) in 2008. Expenditure shrank from about US$1.4 billion (37 percent of GDP) in 2005 to US$258 million (8 percent of GDP) in 2008, causing an almost complete collapse in the provision of public services. In October–November 2008 the Zimbabwe dollar virtually disappeared from circulation, and dollarization was recognized by the official transition to use of hard currencies, putting an end to hyperinflation.[21]

In these circumstances, it is impossible to plot trends in expenditure; the real purchasing power of disbursements is hard to compare from year to year, and the ability of the Department to spend its allocation was affected during 2008 by the retreat of suppliers from the Zimbabwe dollar. Two points do stand out, though. First, up until 2009 expenditure had generally been managed very tightly in line with the Vote, after allowing for virement between under-spending and over-spending budget lines within the Vote subheads. For the first time in 2009 there was a significant under-spend overall, attributed to the withholding of budgeted resources by the Treasury under the new cash budgeting system, which releases cash monthly depending on the funds available to government in order to maintain fiscal discipline and macro-economic stability. (The apparent overspend on salaries is attributed in the Appropriation Accounts to under-provision in the initial Estimates, perhaps due to the transition to US dollars.) Provision for 2010 represents a considerable reduction on the 2009 budget, though a large increase on actual expenditure (outturn).

Secondly, as also shown in the following Table 4.8, the proportion of the Department's spending attributable to programme expenditure (the majority of which represents transfer payments to poor persons and families) has represented a fairly consistently high proportion of the total, up until 2009 when the impact of the non-release of funds fell most heavily on the programmes (to the tune of some US$34m).

Table 4.8   DSS Programme Expenditure as % of Total

	Total Expenditure (US $mn)	Programme Expenditure (US $mn)	Programme as % of Total
2005	458.229	417.612	91.14
2006	2.054	1.723	83.89
2007	506.004	460.268	90.96
2008	1,509,301.40	1,500,001.40	99.38
2009	3.528	2.038	57.77
2010 (Estimates)	25.535	23.000	90.07

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[21] IMF Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 09/53 (May 6, 2009)

Table 4.9   DSS Programme Expenditure as % of Total

	2005 (Z$bn)	% of Total	2006 (Z$bn)	% of Total	2007 (Z$bn)	% of Total	2008 (Z$bn)	% of Total	2009 (US$m)	% of Total
Basic Education Assistance Module	190.00	45.50%	0.649	37.69%	29.49	6.41%	0.4	0.00%	0.017	0.83%
Children in Difficult Circumstances[1]	3.06	0.73%	0.048	2.79%	2.45	0.53%	0	0.00%	0.068	3.34%
Drought Relief	141.00	33.76%	0.460	26.71%	348.16	75.64%				
Public Works (Drought Relief)							1,500,000.5	100.00%	0.003	0.15%
Health Assistance	5.83	1.40%	0.093	5.40%	3.49	0.76%	0	0.00%	0.189	9.27%
Maintenance of Disabled Persons	27.91	6.68%	0.106	6.16%	5.78	1.26%	0.15	0.00%	0.365	17.91%
Maintenance of Elderly Persons[1]	18.00	4.31%	0.09	5.23%	6.9	1.50%	0	0.00%	0.026	1.28%
National Heroes Dependants Assistance	6.00	1.44%	0.05	2.90%	10.09	2.19%	0.35	0.00%	0.100	4.91%
Public Assistance - Families[1]	23.99	5.74%	0.195	11.32%	45.66	9.92%	0	0.00%	0.900	44.16%
Pauper Burial[1]	1.63	0.39%	0.013	0.75%	5.99	1.30%	0	0.00%	0.030	1.47%
Community Recovery Programme					0.50	0.11%	0.03	0.00%		
Poverty Assessment Studies & Monitoring[1]	0.10	0.02%	0	0.00%		0.00%				
Poverty Assessment Study Survey III						0.00%				
HIV and AIDS Awareness[1]	0.02	0.00%	0	0.00%		0.00%	0	0.00%		
Children in the Streets Fund[1]							0	0.00%		
Grants for Institutes for the Disadvantaged	0.07	0.02%	0.004	0.23%	1.77	0.38%				
Support to Government Institutions									0.335	16.44%
Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre			0.014	0.81%		0.00%				
Registration and monitoring of NGOs[1]							0	0.00%	0.005	0.25%
Millennium Development Goals										
Total	417.61	100.0%	1.722	100.00%	460.28	100.00%	1,500,001.4	100.00%	2.038	100.00%

[1] Zeroes represent de minimis expenditure in some years

Source: DSS Appropriation Accounts 2005-2009

Examination of the pattern of spending by programme shows few consistent patterns, as demonstrated in Table 4.9 above. In 2005 and 2006 the two most substantial programmes by some margin were BEAM and Drought Relief; by 2007 Drought Relief represents over 75% of the total; and in 2008) this programme – now identified in the Appropriation Accounts as Public Works-Drought Relief – completely dwarfed the rest of the Department's expenditure. The figures for this year are very distorted by hyperinflation, which rendered meaningless the amounts to which beneficiaries were entitled under other programmes; only the Public Works programme was denominated in amounts which reflected the rapid erosion of value of the currency. The impact of the priority given to drought relief in 2008 was noted in the evidence collected from DSS staff in the districts and provinces; it was suggested that this function overloaded DSS officers, was a distraction from other key functions, and should rest instead with another Ministry (Local Government or Public Works).

In 2009 all programmes were affected by the withholding of funds under the cash-budgeting regime, but the largest proportion of what was spent fell under the headings of Maintenance of Disabled Persons and Public Assistance for Families, closely followed by expenditure in support of Government institutions.

For comparison, the Department's estimated expenditure for each programme for 2010 is shown below:

Table 4.10   DSS Estimated Programme Expenditure 2010

	2010 Estimates (US$m)	
	Expenditure	% of Total
Basic Education Assistance Module	15.225	66.20%
Children in Difficult Circumstances	1.000	4.35%
Children in the Streets Fund	0.070	0.30%
Community Recovery Programmes	0.020	0.09%
Health Assistance	0.700	3.04%
HIV and AIDS Awareness	0.005	0.02%
Maintenance of Disabled Persons	0.800	3.48%
Maintenance of Elderly Persons	0.700	3.04%
Millennium Development Goals	0.005	0.02%
National Heroes Dependants Assistance	0.700	3.04%
Paupers Burial	0.600	2.61%
Poverty Assessment Study Survey III	0.015	0.07%
Public Assistance Families	1.000	4.35%
Public Works (food shortages)	1.100	4.78%
Registration and monitoring of NGOs	0.060	0.26%
Support to Government Institutions	1.000	4.35%
	23.000	100.00%

Source: DSS Budget Estimates 2010 (Vote 32.III)

These figures are shown graphically in the pie-chart below.

Figure 4.2   DSS Budget 2010
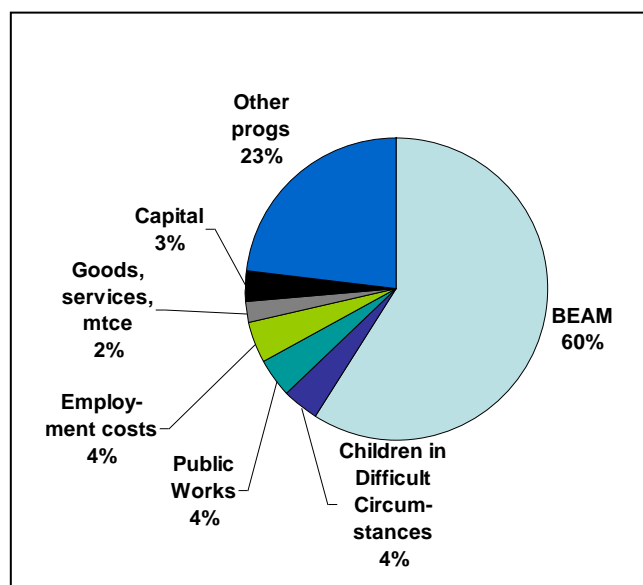
For the current year the predominance of BEAM is even more marked than in previous years. In fact, it is the only programme for which significant provision has been made, representing 59.6% of the DSS's total budgeted expenditure and 55.3% of the MoLSS's total budget. This means that the bulk of the social protection budget is being devoted to supporting the education budget through the payment of school fees. Moreover, the PoS provides equivalent support to BEAM, spending nearly $4.6m in Term 3 (October-December) of 2009. More generally, it is instructive to see the Department's projected programme expenditure for the current year in relation to that of the PoS, which disbursed $22m in assistance to OVC through grants to civil society organisations in 2009. Granted that DSS's programmes are not wholly directed towards OVC, it is nevertheless the case that the Department's work is not entirely dwarfed by the PoS. If the Department were able to have released and to spend the amounts planned it would be a more or less equal partner with the donors in the provision of social protection.

It is also informative to see DSS's total expenditure in relation to the entire Government of Zimbabwe budget. In 2009, when DSS's voted allocation was around $38.6m, the total budget was $1.9bn – that is to say, DSS represented around 2% of total Government expenditure. This might suggest that, if there is the political will to do so, quite significant additional resources for this Department could be found from relatively small proportionate savings elsewhere. It is impossible to tell what proportion of the total user fees for education and health are provided through BEAM and AMTOs, because fee revenues are accounted for wholly at local level and do not feature in the national budget estimates or appropriation accounts.

The policy reasons for the emphasis on BEAM are understood: like the AMTO scheme, it was conceived as a mitigation of the impact on the poorest in society of the introduction of user fees under the structural adjustment programme. It was therefore seen as part of the social protection rather than the education budget. Nevertheless, it is the case that the bulk of the Government's social protection expenditure is now devoted to the important but

relatively limited objective of keeping poor children in school through the payment of school fees and levies and examination fees. If the financing of the schools sector were differently structured this expenditure would not be needed, and there is evidence from other countries that direct funding of schools to provide free education is a more cost-effective means of achieving the same end. The remainder of DSS's programme expenditure represents relatively small sums of money which nevertheless absorb quite large amounts of administrative time: public assistance and AMTOs together take up 17% of DSSO time, 28% of SSO time and 88% of SWA time.

4.6.5 Organisational structure

The audit team considered whether the current organisational structure of the DSS is appropriate.

The provincial social services office appears to play a typical "middle level" role in distributing instructions and guidance in one direction, and aggregating and reporting information in the other. The question has to be asked as to whether, when resources are severely constrained, this is an affordable element of the machinery. However, given the evidently very limited technological resources of the Department at district level, we concluded that it would be impossible to maintain control and oversight direct from headquarters; technology is a critical determinant of how flat an organisation can afford to be. Provincial social services officers also play a role in providing professional supervision of social workers and the conduct of cases at district level, when resources permit. They also provide a backstopping social worker and Probation Officer capacity when district level posts are vacant, and this can clearly restrict severely the time available for supervisory and managerial activities.

It was suggested in several quarters that further decentralisation of the Department to sub-offices within wards would be desirable, and make its services more accessible. This is true, but cannot be contemplated without a huge step-change in resources. At present the district-level network is barely sustainable.

The division of functions between senior officials at headquarters does not seem to present any significant difficulties, though the Deputy Director of Family and Child Welfare does carry a large burden of responsibility for the field operations of the Department at provincial and district level. It is not evident that there is any one else at senior management level with responsibility for the management and resourcing of these offices (for example, ensuring that adequate premises and equipment are available), although this might be seen as a significant task in its own right. There is also some uncertainty in the Department at large, as already noted, about whether the NAP Secretariat is part of the DSS or a separate entity. From the headquarters perspective it is evident that the Secretariat is clearly part of the Departmental structure, with responsibilities which include supervision, quality assurance and monitoring of child care and protection programmes, facilitating capacity development across the Department, standard setting and designing strategies to respond to emerging challenges. At district level, however, this perception did not seem to be universally shared, and there was some sense that the NAP as a programme and the Secretariat represented a parallel structure standing somewhat apart from the rest of the Department; higher pay levels certainly played a part in this judgement (see comments recorded in Annex H).

Finally, the possible need for a new strategic planning and performance management function to be developed is discussed below. If this takes place, it might require a strengthening of the Division of Policy and Special Programmes to provide an appropriate central home for this new function.

4.6.6 Organisational systems and processes

A few points were identified in our assessment which need to be noted under this heading. Some have been alluded to already.

i. First, and perhaps most significant, there is a need for a comprehensive departmental strategic plan, which would identify, prioritise and estimate the resources required for each of the Department's functions, provide an aid to advocacy for additional funding and a blueprint for future capacity development should resources become available, and facilitate an organisation-wide performance management system that would link Departmental objectives and targets with those of individual staff. It has been suggested that the NAP for OVC was intended to be a comprehensive child protection plan for the DSS, but it does not endeavour to capture all of the Department's functions, and even in the area of child protection is not seen in that light by staff. The NAP and its Secretariat are overwhelmingly (if mistakenly) associated by staff with the work of NGOs under the PoS rather than with their own functions, and this is reinforced by the separate nature of NGOs' monthly reporting under the Activity Report Book system, and by the treatment of the NAP for OVC as a separate and rather subsidiary component within the Department's own quarterly reporting format. One interviewee commented: "I am the NAP district officer, which is a separate entity, but the boss of NAP says that NAP implementation of programmes is supposed to be done by [the] social welfare officer." It is impossible to know how many officers would subscribe to this notion of the NAP as a "separate entity" (the implementation of which is apparently somewhat resented), but from the tone of other references in interviews and workshop discussions the audit team would not expect this to be a unique viewpoint.[22]

It is perhaps inevitable that the NAP, which began as a way of mobilising resources to respond to the deepening OVC crisis triggered by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, cannot wholly successfully take the place of a strategic plan which is focused on the Department's own management needs as an organisation.

ii. Secondly, a plan would provide a framework for more focused reporting against key indicators within the Department. There is currently a very elaborate system of monthly and quarterly reporting from the districts to the province to headquarters, from which the Deputy Directors extract information for their monthly reports to the Director, who in turn consolidates them into reports to the MoLSS Permanent Secretary, the Minister, Prime Minister and President. The system produces a huge amount of narrative together with statistical returns, but does not – as far as the audit team was able to ascertain – facilitate the production of a set of aggregate key performance figures for the Department as a whole. The NAP Secretariat is able to consolidate its monitoring data from implementing agencies into a single table of results for the year; a similar high-level monthly report for the Department as a whole, structured around well-selected measures of inputs and outputs (and possibly outcomes), would be a great aid to management and accountability. A computerised reporting system would simplify and ease the whole process.

Such a performance management framework would also underpin the staff appraisal system. There is a functioning system at the moment, and compliance appears to be

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[22] The officer concerned is an SSO of eight years' standing, not a new recruit. Although DSS management may feel that the views expressed are misguided, they do point to the need for further communication and building of common understanding with district staff.

good; the only drawback is the lack of a coherent upwards linkage to departmental objectives or targets.

iii. Communications between headquarters, the provinces and districts are not so good as they might be. Field offices feel themselves to lack proactive policy guidance from head office, and that responses to requests for advice can be tardy; there is also a desire to be more actively involved in policy formulation or (more particularly) policy review, and in budget preparation. In this context it should be noted that several respondents have expressed a desire to receive feedback on the findings of this audit. At the most basic level, communications are thought too often to be oral rather than written, which leads to misunderstandings, distortions and (it is implied by some) the potential for "deniability" of instructions by head office. The preference for oral communication probably owes much to the lack of a reliable postage system mentioned by some respondents, but would be obviated by the possibility of email communication between offices.

iv. Some administrative processes seem unduly cumbersome. For example, public assistance claims are approved at district, province and HQ level. Whilst the need for tight financial controls to ensure compliance with the cash budgeting system is understood, this triple-lock seems disproportionate, especially as the processing at HQ seems to involve a further check of the validity of the claim, not simply a cash flow control.

4.7   Capacity at individual level

It is not the intention under this heading to report on the capabilities or performance of individual members of staff, but rather to identify any weaknesses of capacity which relate to the skills, knowledge or disposition of the Department's human resources as a whole, and which might be tackled through training or other developmental activities as well as through changes in other factors which affect the recruitment and retention of appropriate staff. The question of the formal qualifications of social services staff has already been discussed at some length, but it remains to consider some other issues related to the individual skills and competences of DSS staff.

Our field work indicated that around one-third of staff received no formal induction training when they joined DSS, though many of those who did receive induction commented very favourably on how valuable they found it, and how important it had been in helping them avoid mistakes in their job. Some of those who had benefited from induction reported receiving further induction when they moved into a new role. In some cases, however, the closest to induction that was available for a new SSO was an introduction to the office by the SWA who had been left "holding the fort" after the departure of the previous incumbent. Around half of the sample had received no further in-service training since joining, and we found a considerable enthusiasm and appetite amongst staff for the provision of appropriate training and professional development opportunities.

The field work data reported in Annexes F and G include suggestions for a very wide range of topics on which training would be appreciated, reflecting the diversity of issues with which officers have to deal. The most frequently-cited subjects were IT skills and counselling. The second of these apparently reflects an appreciation of the complexity of counselling interventions, and we note that there are providers of relevant training available in Zimbabwe, including the Zimbabwe Open University which of course specialises in open and distance learning. The first topic will become an organisational priority if funding does become available to enable a capacity-building strategy based on computerisation to be adopted. In that case, however, the need will be not only to provide end-user training of the

kind envisaged by these respondents but also to develop a team of people at headquarters (through training or recruitment) with the technical skills and knowledge to maintain and administer a national network, and to develop new skills and habits of working amongst senior managers to make the most of the reporting and data analysis opportunities that even a relatively simple system might offer. It is too easy for investment in IT capacity to be wasted after a short time because the skilled staff are not retained to provide technical support and keep the system running.

Amongst DSS staff we found that both officers with social work qualifications and those without felt that they lacked skills in some of the diverse areas associated with social work practice. Those who already had social work qualifications were of the view that training workshops and refresher courses should be arranged for them. Virtually all the non-social workers who were present at the workshops expressed interest in acquiring at least some basic social work skills, and the provision of a postgraduate programme in social work to provide a conversion route from other disciplines into professional social work would meet this need. It might also help to address DSS's problems in maintaining its levels of social worker staffing, though the cost implications will need to be weighed carefully against those of recruiting and retaining graduates who have already undergone four years of preparation to practise as social workers. The existing University of Zimbabwe MSW programme will not meet this need unless the entry requirements are revised, as they stipulate that applicants' first degrees should be in social work. Other training routes should also be explored. For example, REPSSI (the Regional Psycho-Social Services Institute) offers an 18-month certificate course through distance learning on "Community-Based Work with Children and Youth", which consists of 6 modular courses of which the last is 4-week field attachment; this might well be appropriate for non-social worker SSOs, if affordable.

The desire for regular internal workshops – for example at provincial level – to enable officers to share experience, learn from each others' practice and gain knowledge of new policies or new developments in the social protection field has also been quite widely expressed. Such events would be a relatively low cost way of providing some continuing professional development, and ensuring that more junior staff can learn from the experience of those who have been in post longer. There is a concern among some senior officials that institutional memory and accumulated professional knowledge have been eroded by high staff turnover and vacancy levels, and the audit team believe that this fear is well-founded, especially as the Department has not been able to counter these effects through the provision of continuing professional development or even universal induction training. Mentoring is hampered by turnover and vacancies, and there is not a comprehensive case management system which would ensure that systematic knowledge about the progress of individual cases or the handling of types of cases can be passed on when there is a gap between post-holders.

Internal experience-sharing workshops could also help to unify the Department. First, they might provide opportunities for headquarters, provincial and district officers to get together and share their concerns, and counter some of the complaints about poor communication and lack of support that have been voiced. Secondly, they might enable some of the tensions and resentments that undoubtedly exist between social worker and non-social worker SSOs to be reduced through facilitated discussion and the experience of training together.

Another question of training and development concerns the role of the SWA. It is evident that much of the case work undertaken by social services officers requires the application of professional skills of a high order. To take one example – cited as it is an area in which shortage of DSS capacity can delay NGO activities – assessing families and children for reunification, ensuring that families are adequately prepared and have sufficient material

resources and following up the reintegration over time requires sustained and careful professional attention. This is also a situation of high risk for children if not done well, as they may be returning to a place of danger. Other tasks, however, are of a more routine and administrative nature, especially in the field of public assistance. It appears that 17% of DSSO time and 28% of SSO time is spent on public assistance and the processing of AMTOs (and the figures may be higher because of the variations in how tasks are classified that have already been discussed). Although these are by no means unskilled tasks – they demand, as well as knowledge of the procedures and regulations, communication skills, possibly counselling skills and the ability to identify other problems that might require intervention – they may to a larger extent than at present be able to be carried out by less highly qualified staff. If this work is to remain with the DSS, SWAs may with appropriate further training be able to take on more of it. Although existing staff at this level are already heavily loaded, if there is any prospect of additional recruitment it may prove easier to attract and retain people at this lower, non-graduate level of initial qualification. There are presently only SWA 65 posts in the DSS, of which 12 are vacant, and we are aware that the grade is being phased out as part of the initiative launched in 2004 to professionalise the civil service. In this case it is apparent that the drive towards the employment exclusively of more highly-qualified staff, though laudable itself, cannot be sustained at current salary levels. A case should be made to the Public Service Commission for the reinstatement of the SWA grade as a short to medium term expedient, the filling of the existing vacancies, and possibly the conversion of some vacant SSO posts to SWA posts for the time being if they remain difficult to fill.

5   Tackling the most critical capacity problems

The capacity building and workforce development requirements of the DSS need to be directed towards enabling it to play in future an increasing role in the coordination of NAP activities nationally and locally, including the identification of OVC and targeting of interventions, at the same time as discharging its key statutory functions under the Children's Act and other legislation. At present a very large proportion of the support provided to OVC is channelled through the PoS direct to non-state actors. The need is to develop a strategy through which the DSS can develop its capacity so that it can play a more substantial role in the coordination of NAP activities implemented by other organisations, at the same time as delivering its own statutory functions with regard to OVC effectively and meeting its obligations to other vulnerable groups. There seems to be widespread acceptance of the idea, both within DSS and amongst other stakeholders, that in due course the DSS will (when political conditions permit) assume ownership and control of a grant-awarding system, similar to and probably based on the current PoS system, for allocating funds to implementing agencies, as well as taking on (or resuming) direct responsibility for some services that are currently delivered by other, non-state providers.

However, a strategy to build the capacity necessary will require a substantial programme of financial and technical support. In the medium term, a period of normalisation can be envisaged in which it becomes possible and desirable for development partners to channel assistance through government systems and to reinforce government leadership in accordance with accepted aid effectiveness principles. A key question, looking forward to this future, is what the DSS should be doing now to enable it to take over from UNICEF in due course the management of the PoS pooled fund and grant-awarding machinery. It is assumed that these existing arrangements will provide a useful platform on which to base the DSS's own commissioning capacity and systems, so as to secure the continuation of the range of activities in support of OVC currently being delivered in the country, while ensuring their alignment with Government policy priorities and harmonisation with other services, and their administration in accordance with the key attributes for governmental social protection programmes of predictability, consistency and transparency, and durability.[23] It is also assumed that the Government of Zimbabwe and its development partners will agree on a continuation of the NAP ("NAP 2") and the PoS mechanism in much their present form for a transitional period beyond 2010. This will provide the immediate context in which such capacity and systems development can take place.

During the initial, inception phase of this assessment it was believed that the most significant output of the audit would be an action plan which would set out the steps necessary to build the capacity required to re-assume meaningful leadership of the child protection and wider social protection system. The audit team proposed at that stage that their assessment, rather than simply being a diagnostic report plus recommendations of the usual kind, would separate the factual and analytical material from a plan of action or change strategy on which stakeholders could principally focus. However, in view of the nature of our findings we believe that this is no longer what is called for; the accumulated evidence has indicated to us very strongly the enormity of the crisis facing Zimbabwe's social protection system, which no amount of clever planning, redistribution of effort or building of shiny new management systems will do much to alleviate without a substantial injection of additional money – either from the national budget or (by whatever mechanism) from development partners – to staunch the haemorrhage of professional expertise and to give the staff the essential tools to

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[23] See Gandure 2009, p.18, for a discussion of these attributes.

do the job. A very blunt assessment of the Department's current capability, as seen from the front line, was given by an officer of 13 years' experience, who said that:

> "It is in shambles. 2010 started on a high note in terms of staff, but now officers are leaving to neighbouring committees where they are promised better remuneration and better working condition. However the few that are remaining are geared up to perform on low remuneration and poor conditions."

This report therefore stands principally as an advocacy document, which endeavours to marshal the case for additional funding in as cogent and well-evidenced way as possible.

It is difficult on the basis of the information so far available to cost with precision what might be required. However, some approximate calculations can be offered to suggest the order of magnitude. Looking at staffing alone, the provision in the 2010 Estimates of $1.121m for employment costs, for 615 staff in post, implies an average wage of $1,823 per annum (compared with a national poverty datum line of $6,624). It is reasonable to assume that, as expenditure on employment costs has been at or over budget in recent years, the Estimates have been based on staff in post rather than making provision for filling complemented vacancies. Within this total, employing the existing 121 SSOs at an estimated $2,485 per head (taking the mid-point of the salary scale, plus allowances, as the basis for estimation) will cost $300,685 p.a. If SSO salaries were raised to give average earnings equivalent to the PDL, and all existing vacancies in the establishment were filled, this would add $971,123 p.a. to employment costs (an increase of nearly 87% on the current budget).[24] Adding a further SSO post at the same rate in each district, to get closer to the optimum balance of social workers to other disciplines described earlier (assuming that social workers can be recruited at these enhanced salary levels), would add another $430,560 p.a. In other words, the recurrent cost of even these modest measures to improve recruitment and retention and improve levels of service would require an increase of something like 125% on the current Departmental budget for employment costs, without taking account of the knock-on effects to restore differentials with other grades or occupational groups.[25]

The costs of the physical resources required are rather harder to estimate. Simply procuring a suitable vehicle for each district, at an estimated cost of perhaps $40,000 each, would cost $2.6m in initial capital outlay, to which would have to be added the annual costs of fuel, insurance, tax and maintenance. Procuring one or more standalone computers and printers for each office would cost rather less, but establishing the kind of wide-area network, with servers and appropriate software, that would give the Department real benefits in communication and information management in return for this investment is a considerably larger project that calls for specialist advice to establish the likely order of costs. Other costs will depend on the conditions prevailing in each district; providing acceptable office space may only require some refurbishment in some locations but will certainly need new construction in others. What is needed is a detailed survey of all district and provincial offices against a checklist of essential facilities, to produce a costed plan covering capital outlay and running costs for the first and subsequent years. Such an assignment might be most cost-effectively carried out by a national NGO, which might already have a presence in many or most regions, and first-hand knowledge of the costs of maintaining offices and procuring and

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[24] Further labour market analysis would be required to establish a realistic reservation wage level for this group of professional workers.

[25] If external support were to be made available to the government to permit the payment of higher salaries, it would be essential to provide it in a manner that is fair and equitable, with measures put in place to reduce opportunities for cronyism, nepotism and corruption.

operating a vehicle fleet. Such an organisation might also have the specialist knowledge to provide the IT advice needed, or that might have to be sourced separately.

A large increase in funding by some means will be needed to make an appreciable impact on the Department's fundamental problems. However, there are things that DSS management can be undertaking now, independently of any commitments to a major change in resource levels. No action is entirely cost-free – even if the cost can only be measured in terms of the opportunity cost of management time – but some represent internal changes in practice that would be relatively cheap to implement. Others would require some modest expenditure, which might conceivably be found from the re-allocation of internal resources or through the support of a willing partner. Both of these represent strands of work that could be undertaken by the Department, given sufficient commitment to change, independently of one another and of the major changes that can only materialise given a large-scale commitment to inject additional resources into the system. We therefore present them in the table below as parallel work-streams rather than a tightly-sequenced plan or series of platforms. There are, as indicated, some cross-linkages – for example, it would be necessary to carry out the proposed survey of office conditions before embarking on the envisaged investment – but otherwise these activities can be managed separately. The case for vehicle procurement is so clear-cut that it could be carried out in advance of a more comprehensive condition survey if funds were available.

One possible route for provision of such assistance, if willing development partners were available, would be through a fund like the Education Transition Fund which would help to ensure that resources were directed, with no chance of diversion, to the intended purposes. Using an intermediate fund of some kind, possibly administered by one of the development partners, to manage the vehicle and other procurement needed to re-establish the operational capability of the Department would also meet concerns that the DSS does not at present have the capacity to absorb and utilise effectively large amounts of external funding should these become available.

Prioritisation of these proposed actions depends on the availability of funding. In our view the provision of vehicles (and fuel) would make the single biggest impact on the provision of services at district level, but will require significant external funding. On the other hand, the low-cost actions shown in the first column could be embarked on immediately. The actions in the middle column might be started quite quickly provided some modest internal or external funding could be earmarked. The table should therefore be read as presenting three more or less independent streams of activity, each of which can be begun as soon as resources are available; there are only limited sequencing connections between them, as shown by the arrows. Within each column the proposed actions are shown in priority order, from the top.

Table 5.1 Proposed actions for DSS management

Low cost actions	Medium cost actions	High cost actions
Improve the quality, frequency and responsiveness of head office communications with the field.	Issue official ID cards to all SSOs.	Procure a fleet of suitable vehicles for district offices.
Continue to press PSC for improvements in SSO remuneration, possibly through re-grading.	Launch a regular series of provincial training and experience-sharing workshops.	Increase SSO salaries to reservation wage level, with average earnings at least equivalent to the PDL.
Seek reinstatement of the SWA grade, active recruitment into the grade and possibly re-designation of some SSO posts.	Develop and implement a programme of continuing professional development for all SSO and SWA staff.	Recruit to fill existing vacancies, and increase SSO establishment in districts.
Develop a Departmental strategic plan and related reporting and performance management systems.	Commission a condition survey and costed facilities improvement plan for all district and provincial offices.	Implement a programme of facilities improvement for district and provincial offices (including officer accommodation where necessary).
	Commission a costed plan for development of a DSS IT network.	Develop and install a Departmental ICT network.
	Develop a postgraduate social work conversion course with a suitable provider.	
	Consider procuring bicycles for staff where these would be helpful, in advance of a programme of motor vehicle procurement	
	Ensure, through communications and joint workshops, that other stakeholders are aware of enhanced DSS capacity.	

For the longer term development of the Department, a view will need to be taken in due course of where the boundaries should lie between direct action by the state and the delivery of services by others in partnership with or under contract to the state. Of the activities currently undertaken by non-state actors funded through the PoS, how many – if any – should eventually be carried out by the DSS itself, and how many should continue to be delivered through the present channels, albeit subject to more active control, coordination and supervision by the Department? The answer to this question will depend in part on the extent to which the DSS can recruit and retain sufficient numbers of professional staff to deliver services, as well as on more theoretical considerations. The vision of the future for the Department should take full account of the standards of international best practice in the provision of child care and child protection services that have been developed by UNICEF and other authorities, whilst being realistic about what will be achievable and desirable in the Zimbabwean context. It should also draw clear distinctions between responsibility for ensuring the provision of services, planning and coordinating them, and ensuring that

standards of service are met; the funding of those services; and their actual delivery to individuals, households and communities.

However, these issues do not have to be confronted in the short or medium term; the most pressing concern is to find the means of developing capacity so that the DSS can discharge its core functions even to a minimum acceptable level. This can only happen if the donor community can find ways of assisting substantial capacity development, in spite of the prevailing restrictions on providing direct support to the Government.

6 Summary of key findings and key actions

For convenience, our key findings and proposed key actions are summarised below:

6.1 Key findings

i. The DSS is extremely under-resourced to meet the challenges it faces, in terms of the number of vacancies among professional front-line staff, the professional qualifications and experience of many of the staff who are in post, and the physical facilities and resources at their disposal.

ii. Zimbabwe's social welfare system has a huge case-load, and even by the most conservative estimates, its professional staffing is wildly out of alignment with that of other countries in the region. Lack of adequate numbers of professional personnel impedes effective implementation and monitoring of child protection legislation; Zimbabwe is in a crisis situation where the ratio of social workers to the population of children is concerned.

iii. There is a need for an urgent review of conditions in the Department's residential institutions for children.

iv. The lack of common shared vocabulary to describe what people do suggests a weakness in the DSS's organisational culture, and the interchangeable social welfare/social services terminology used to refer to officers within the Department indicates that the shift in philosophy signalled by the change in the Department's name has not yet taken deep root.

v. The Department's apparent difficulty in producing an accurate and up to date overview of its staffing, and the distribution of posts and vacancies, must hinder strategic management of the organisation; more minor administrative weaknesses, such as failure to date documents or to make clear the reference date to which they apply, also place unnecessary obstacles in the path of management.

vi. Lack of resources undermines DSS's professional relationships with other government bodies and NGOs; it cannot credibly present itself as playing an active, necessary and authoritative part in the local criminal justice and social protection systems if it does not have the means to carry out the most basic functions unaided. The absence of resources also impacts on the Department's ability of DSS to monitor and inspect the services for children and others provided by NGOs.

vii. Lack of official identification makes it difficult for DSS officers to obtain access to public and private premises in pursuit of their duties, particularly in the role of Probation Officer, and sometimes leads to conflict with the police and other agencies.

viii. Because statutory probation functions can only be carried out by social workers employed in the public service, the shortage of DSS staff can severely hamper the efforts of NGOs to provide child care and protection services.

ix. A substantial part of the time of professional Social Services Officers is employed on relatively routine, administrative tasks which might be performed by less highly-qualified staff.

x.   The goal of the NAP is by December 2010 to have developed a national institutional capacity to identify all orphans and vulnerable children and to have reached out with service provision to at least 25% of OVC in Zimbabwe. If by "national institutional capacity" is meant capacity within the institutions of national government, this goal is not currently being met and is unlikely to be so by the end of this year. It is a goal, however, which would apparently command the support of DSS professional staff, if conditions permitted development partner's resources to be channelled in this direction.

6.2   Key actions

i.   DSS management need to continue to press the PSC for improvements in SSO remuneration, for example through re-grading, and to lobby international government donors for direct funding on humanitarian grounds to enable crucial deficiencies in personnel and equipment to be rectified.

ii. If funds can be made available, priority needs to be given to the procurement of essential equipment such as vehicles and the improvement of working conditions in district offices, alongside improvements in SSO remuneration.

iii. The planned phasing-out of the Social Welfare Assistant grade needs to be reversed, and more emphasis given to the recruitment and training of sufficient staff in more junior grades to carry out tasks which are principally administrative in nature, so that the fully-qualified professional officers – whose time represents a scarce resource – can devote as much attention as possible to the child protection functions that demand the highest level of professional skill.

iv. The statutory instrument that has already been prepared, to allow non-DSS social workers to undertake statutory functions, should be made as soon as possible as a short-term measure to provide some relief until a sufficient number of social workers can be recruited to the public service.

v.   The DSS needs to develop a comprehensive departmental strategic plan; review its reporting framework; take steps to improve communications, especially between headquarters and the Department's outfield; and reduce the burden of cumbersome administrative processes where possible.

vi. If funding can be secured, the Department's IT systems need to be developed to aid communication, reporting and the storage and retrieval of information, and to meet the pressing need for the distribution of up to date legislation and policy documents to the outfield.

vii. DSS needs to adopt more disciplined administrative practice with regard to dating documents, and ensuring consistency of content and the standardised usage of terminology to aid communication.

viii. There should be an urgent review of conditions in the Department's residential institutions.

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8 Management Response

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES – FEBRUARY 2011

ANALYSIS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

Brief Background

The DSS capacity assessment was undertaken by a team of independent consultants – Oxford Policy Management and Jimat Development Consultants from May to October 2010 with financial and technical support from UNICEF. The team produced a report in two volumes that provides empirical information on the Human resources and institutional capacity of the Department of Social Services (DSS) to fully discharge its functions across all its structural sections. The report, over and above confirming the reality of weakened capacity, generally provides clear and particular challenges that have over the years gradually depleted the DSS' capacity to deliver on its statutory mandates. It is a good starting point and point of reference for any future attempts and actions directed towards addressing capacity development needs of the DSS. It in particular presents a clear analysis of staffing, skills, institutional strength and practice standards that have a bearing on the work of the DSS. The report though has some technical weaknesses arising out of the methodology employed during the research phase of the assessment as well as the analysis structure used to draw conclusions out of the team's findings. Some of the striking weakness which the DSS and all other stakeholders need to take cognizance of when making use of the report are documented here under.

Analysis of Report

- The conclusion in the executive Summary that " it appears that in Zimbabwe the ratio of children to social workers is in the order of 49,587:1 compared with 1,867:1 in Botswana and 4,300:1 in Namibia. This is an astonishing finding for a country reputed to have had the best social protection system in Africa" is misleading. This conclusion is premised on the consultants' findings in Chapter 4 – item 4.3 page 32 where a comparative analysis of children to social worker ratio for Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe is done. The conclusion from this analysis is invalidated by the following:

  o The variable used for comparison, i.e., total child population and total number of social workers is not uniformly defined for all the comparison countries. For other countries, the numbers are a total aggregation of Social Workers (South Africa and Botswana for example) while for Zimbabwe it is only those employed by the DSS and excludes all other Social Workers serving children.

  o The definition of who is a child is also varied in countries used for comparison with most of them defining a child as a person in the ages 0-14 for Botswana and South Africa and 0-15 for Namibia while for Zimbabwe they used 0-17. This then means the base child population being used will automatically be higher for Zimbabwe and comparing the ratios for the four countries therefore becomes problematic.

  o Some of the arguments raised, for example to say that Zimbabwe in 2003 had 3000 social workers and that over half have left also do not add much value to the above cited conclusion. All the 3000 were certainly not in the DSS and if

we are to use that figure to show the "social work strength" of the country, then the remaining 1500 should still be used for that purpose and the ration will significantly change. It is also interesting to note that there was no attempt whatsoever to establish the numbers of social workers employed by other government and quasi government departments yet a quick conclusion that, of the social workers remaining in the country, "many are unaccounted for as they have joined the private sector, or NGOs or are doing work unrelated to the profession". This is an unfortunate analysis as it does not prove in any way that those who have joined the NGOs and the private sector are not doing work related or unrelated to child protection.

   o Comparative establishments between different periods were not done yet there is a statement that "This is an astonishing finding for a country reputed to have had the best social protection system in Africa". Information on what was the establishment in the DSS during the period Zimbabwe was "highly reputed for its social protection system" and what the child population was would have presented a better case for proper comparison and analysis.

- In Chapter 4, page 37 there is lack of statistical backing in paragraph 2 to bring out the significance of the issue being raised. The consultants state that "the view has been reported by *several respondents* that magistrates do not appear to understand the purpose of probation officers' reports". The extent of the "*several respondents*" needs to be established for the DSS to come up with a relevant course of action that may include engaging the Ministry of Justice depending on the magnitude of this anomaly.

- Similar sweeping statements characterise most parts of the report which makes it difficult for policy response. Some examples where there is no statistical backing of assertions in the report include:

   o Page 38 - ; "*some seem more than others* to accept the need for a positive partnership and to work together to ensure the quality and accountability of services, *while some* give the impression of being driven at least in part by resentment at the level of resources enjoyed by some NGOs and a desire to redress the balance by subjecting them to more stringent bureaucratic control and restriction"

   o Page 48 -; "*Some respondents* were satisfied with their office space, *but for most* provision of decent offices – including essential facilities such as working toilets and dedicated space for confidential interviews with clients – was a priority"

A.1   Table 4.6, page 41 indicates that there are three people with counseling (2 DSSOs and 1 SSO) 1 DSSO with an Accounting qualification and 1 SSO with a Diploma in Secretarial studies. Interview 7 describes the respondent as a Social Welfare Officer, yet the person only has O Level as the highest level of education. One hopes that the views of this person who is clearly not a SSO were not analysed together with those of bona-fide officers.

- Verification with Human Resources has shown that it is not possible for these "Officers" to have been employed into these posts as their records for all the officers in the DSS show that all Officers have degree qualifications in Social Work, Sociology and Psychology. To even suggest that these "Officers" probably have Diplomas in

Social Work and then obtained other qualifications is not possible as records show that there are only 2 Officers with such diplomas. Volume 2 page 109 (Interview 21 - 14.6.10) for instance show that the Officer has been in the DSS for only 4 years yet the qualification presented is a counseling degree.

This cannot be possible as there is a clear policy not to recognise counseling as a professional qualification in the DSS. Another Interviewee – page 113 Interview 22, states Professional Qualification as CIS and has been in the DSS for 2 years, suggesting that the DSS recruited an accountant in 2008 as a DSSO. Our observation on these anomalies is that:

- o While it is stated that 29 in-depth interviews were held, there was little probing by the interviewers to verify some of the information they were receiving against the DSS and public service policies and regulations that guide Human Resources (HR) in recruitment. Alternatively, a verification interview with HR would have addressed some of these issues.

- o There are DSS Offices without Officers at the moment and are being manned by Social Services Assistants (SSAs) and Accounting Assistants. At times the only person in the Office at a particular time may even be an Office Orderly and these tend to view themselves as the acting DSSO or SSO on that particular day. A verification of whether the person is confirmed in that post or was just in an acting capacity would have helped as it has become clear that these people are not Officers.

- While the presentation of findings shows that the interview schedules required information on years of service by the interviewees, the analysis in the main report and conclusions made seem to be only basing on what the individuals said without contextualizing within their years of service. Some views raised in the report clearly show that the Officers would be lacking enough information as they would still be relatively new in the DSS.

Conclusion

The report is quite useful for different DSS as it brings out pertinent issues that relates to relevant operational matters. It points out for instance to serious challenges in material resources, lack of critical operational documents for Officers and the need for improvement in systems and procedures in the discharge of duties. It raises important recommendations that the DSS can put to good use in refining its systems as well as in coming up with a strategy for capacity development. While the above cited weaknesses of the report are critical, it is important to look at the bigger picture in terms of the value addition the capacity assessment will surely bring to the work of the DSS in general. It is highly recommended though that the DSS Capacity Assessment Report be read along with this analysis report in order for it to be understood in its proper context.

9   List of Supporting Data

May be provided on application to UNICEF Zimbabwe Country Office
Child Protection Section

Annex A   Social protection interventions in Zimbabwe
Annex B   Job description for District Social Welfare Officer
Annex C   List of people met and documents examined
                   C.1   People met
                   C.2   Documents reviewed
Annex D   Time analysis
Annex E   Interview findings
Annex F   Regional workshop findings
Annex G   Questionnaire data
Annex H   Perceptions of the key issues emerging from the workshops