

**Submission to the national assembly portfolio committee on Social Development
on the children's amendment bill [B19B-2006]**

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Clause	Proposed Amendments	Motivation
136(1)	<p>(c) a child over the age of 15 years has assumed the role of a care-giver in respect of the children in the household</p> <p>We recommend that this clause does not make reference to age and be rephrased as:</p> <p>(c) a child or children has/ have assumed the role of a care-giver in respect of the household</p>	<p>While this clause is aimed at protecting the very young children from living in a child-headed household, it makes many assumptions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The reality is that there are households in which the oldest child is not 16 years and above, and where it would be in the best interest of the children to remain in such a household if the other clauses in this section are fulfilled. 2. Child-headed households do not always necessarily have one child at the head of the household. Different children may head the household at different times depending on the responsibility of the time and the decision that needs to be taken. 3. The eldest child may be over the age of 15 years, but developmentally or for other reasons unable to be the child

		<p>at the head of the household.</p> <p>4. There is an assumption in this clause that there is always more than one child in a child-headed household. Research from the General household survey (2005) shows that 54% of child(ren) only households consist of 1 child, and 82% consist of 2 children or less</p>
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A database of child-headed households

There has been mention in various forums of the creation of a database of child-headed households that would be located in the Department of Social Development.

While there is need to identify child-headed households in order to intervene and provide the necessary services,

- It is unrealistic to develop a database of child-headed households.
- It is even more unrealistic to maintain such a database for various reasons.
 1. The nature of child-headed households is that they are not a fixed entity and do change, i.e. some child-headed households have an adult present at certain times and not others, or children may move in with family at certain times and be alone at others.
 2. The resources that would be required to maintain such a database would be far better utilized in strengthening services at local levels to meet the needs of not only children in child-headed households, but of all children in need.
 3. To target child-headed households as a specific category of children that should be captured in a database in order to direct services to them is unrealistic in a context where the vast majority of children in many of the areas most affected by HIV/AIDS are living in poverty. Children in child-headed households need the same services as do all other children

The bottom line is that we need to improve access to services through better provisioning and information about services at all levels and in all sectors. This is already done in the Bill in the strategy clauses that compel the MEC to maintain a record of all the services within a province e.g. section 77(2)(a).

We recommend that the records of all services are kept on one administrative database and are accessible to the public, for example through schools.