

# No funding for trained social educators

The Msimbazi orphanage in Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania is home to 45 motherless children whose mothers died in childbirth. The children live in the orphanage until they reach the age of three after which they are sent to live with families or distant relatives. The children's home is staffed by local women. There is no funding to train social educators and social workers

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The 2 to 3-year-olds walk quietly about the yard sucking their lollipops. Toys that would not be approved for use in a Danish institution lie strewn about the concrete floor. On the clothes-line hang more than 40 bibs and in a little while it will be lunchtime. Corn mush and vegetables. The babies lie dozing in their separate cots, all by themselves.

The staff of 23 look after the toddlers. The women have no formal training; only a course in caring for small children. Sister Etienne, head of the Msimbazi Children's Home, cannot afford trained staff.

"A trained social worker earns a monthly salary of TZS 400,000 (DKK 1,600), an amount we can't possibly afford to pay. I am also very pleased with the women who work here," says Sister Etienne.

Most of the staff have been with the orphanage for many years. Sister Etienne does not want to

comment on their working conditions. The staff do not go on courses and staff meetings are unheard of. She refuses to discuss their salary.

"Everyone says they are paid too little. We don't hold staff meetings. It's regrettable and it is difficult to bring everyone together. Some are at work while others are on holiday. But I am here every day, 365 days a year, and I talk to staff when problems arise, so I don't think we need staff meetings," she explains.

## Incompetent authorities

Sister Etienne has run the orphanage for 20 years and does not bemoan the fact that she cannot afford to hire social workers. She mentions that the Social Authorities have employed trained social workers but she does not feel they are any better than her own untrained staff.

The authorities and their staff are supposed to take care of the children's families and ensure that they are ready to receive the children when they are older. The fathers cannot afford to have the babies at home. They have to work for a living. The social workers are also responsible for sending the children to their new homes but Sister Etienne questions the efforts of social workers as well as the efforts of the trained staff.

"Every month I send reports to the authorities but I never hear back from them. They are also supposed to come every two months to check up on the children's home but they have only been here twice in the 20 years I have been in charge. Once, I asked for their help in tracing a child's family. The social worker got back to me quickly and explained she couldn't find the family. Then I asked one of my staff to take a bus into the villages and find the child's relatives and she did. So what



do I need trained social workers for? And at those wages. But we haven't the means to do this kind of field work. Bus tickets are expensive," she says.

### They need roots

In Sister Etienne's opinion the biggest challenge lies in working with the families, which is why she regrets the lack of seriousness on the part of the social services. She doubts they even visit the homes to which the children will be sent.

Despite this, she is a great believer in the children being sent to live with relatives after their stay at the children's home - even though many of the children rarely receive visits from the families.

"Between 20 and 25 children leave the children's home every year and I've only had to send children on to another children's home for older children on six occasions. At the other children's home they are given a bed, food and an

education but they have no roots and receive little love. It is after all only a job for the staff who work there. I'm thinking about the children's future, and it is far better for them to be with a family that teaches them norms, rules and traditions," concludes Sister Etienne with a firm look in her eye.

The interview is over. Sister Etienne is a busy lady. She walks briskly down the dark corridor and stops next to the first child she sees. Sister Etienne smiles and speaks to one of her staff. Workmen are hammering and banging overhead. The roof is being renovated before it caves in. Sister Etienne's final words before bidding me farewell echo in my ears.

"I don't have a collection of happy stories to tell. But many of the children do well - despite the odds.