

Adoption in Africa

Socio-cultural and economic determinants of attitudes towards fostering and adoption in South African families

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Overview

- Rationale, aims and methodology
- Review of evidence
- Quantitative findings
 - Fostering and adoption
- Qualitative findings
 - Barriers to adoption
 - Economic and socio-cultural disincentives to adoption
- Recommendations



Rationale

- Increasing popularity of formal fostering over other forms of care
- Cumbersome, expensive and non permanent
- Lowering uptake of adoption
- National study commissioned by the Directorate of Adoptions and International Social Services



Aims

- To examine available legal framework and existing evidence
- To develop a more detailed profile of adoption patterns using existing national data
- To identify barriers to adoption
- To understand attitudes and perceptions towards fostering and adoption



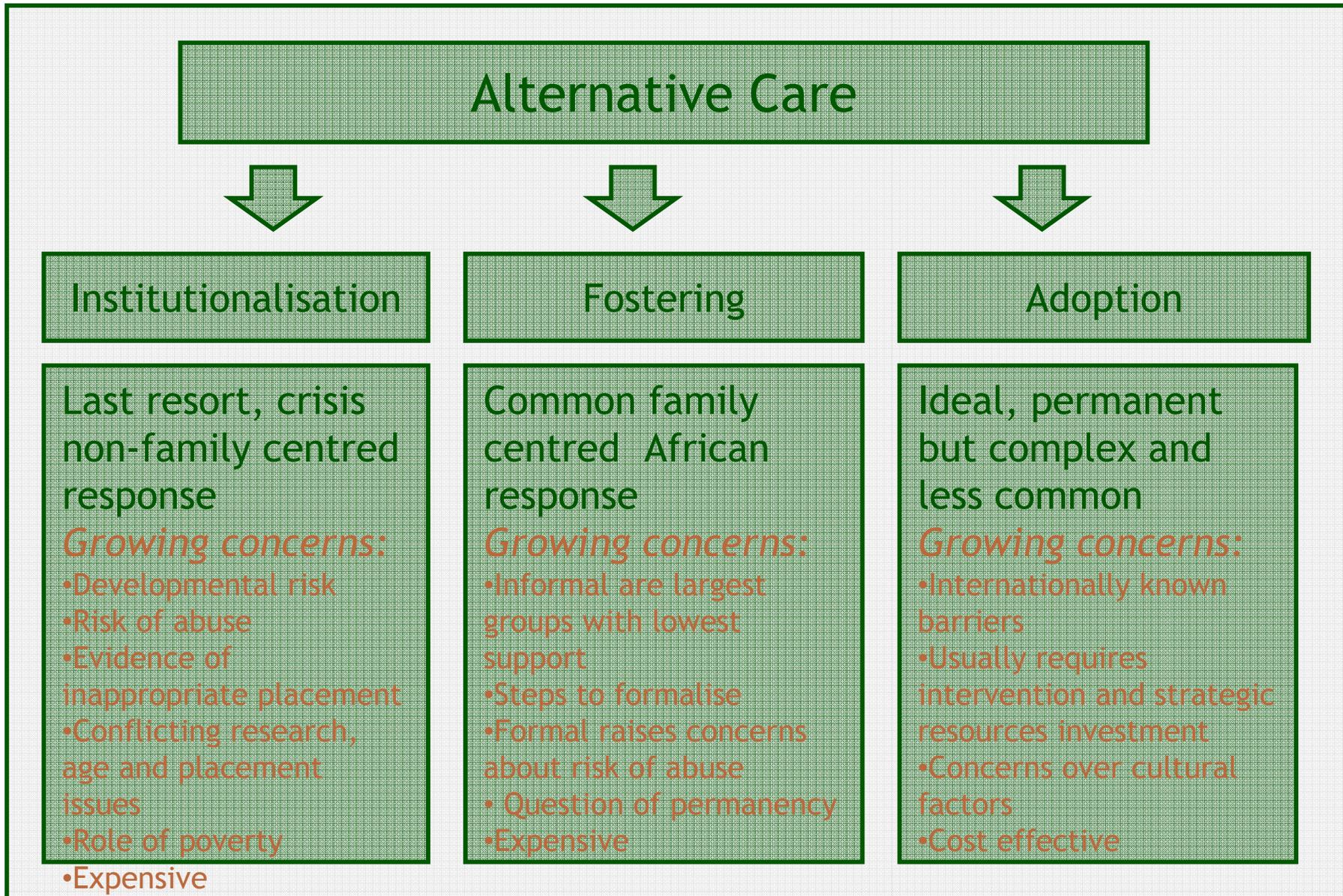
Methodology

Three approaches to address aims

- Desk review
 - Legislation and other literature
- Quantitative analysis
 - Rates and patterns of adoption (National adoptions register data)
- Qualitative survey
 - Attitudes, perceptions and barriers (focus groups and key informant interviews)



Desk review findings



Quantitative findings

- Who is in need of fostering or adoption?
 - Numbers of children is poorly quantified
 - Estimated orphaned 2007 = 3,679,00 (double orphan estimate = 19% 699,010)
 - Estimated CHH 2007 = 150,000
 - Estimated residential care 2007 = 12,920
 - Formally fostered 2010 = 510,713
 - Total cumulative adopted 2004-2009 = 12,081



Quantitative findings cont.

- What are the patterns in adoption?
 - Adoption has remained stable but low with a possible decreasing trend

Fast facts

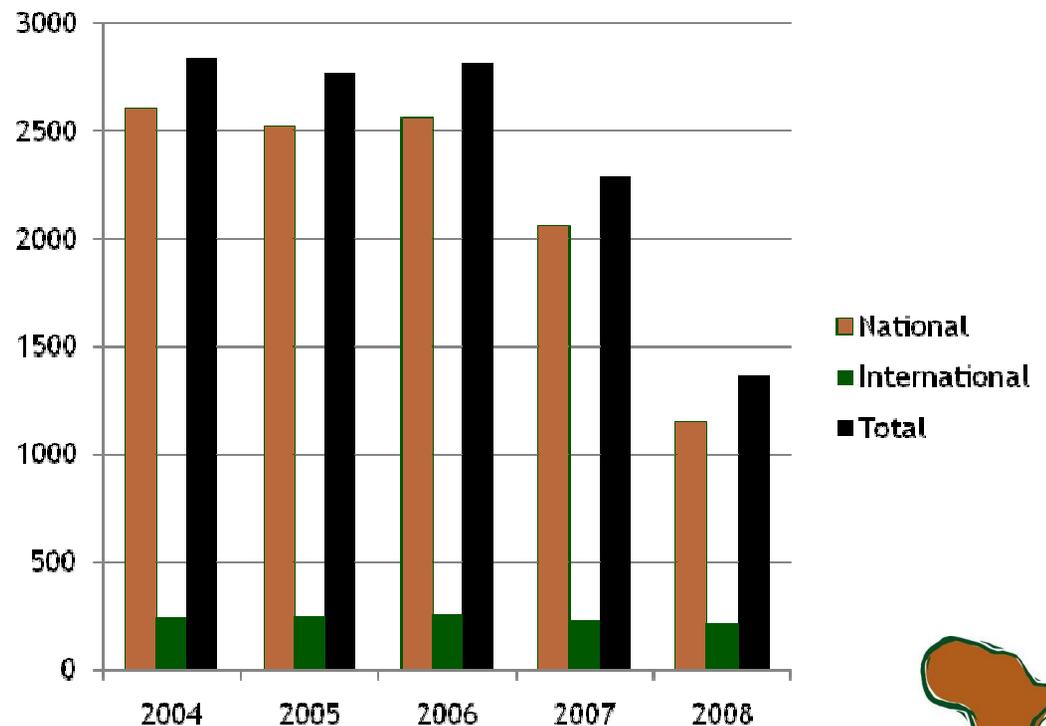
International adoption: Stable, low, mostly black children to Europe

National adoption: Within culture - mostly white, >1 year, illegitimate, no gender preferences, adopted by white, single adults.

Age/race interaction (black/older - white/younger)

Largest family typology fostering and step adoptions.

Abandoned children the smallest group of adoptees.



Qualitative methods

- Sampling
 - Four of nine provinces
 - Purposive, convenience sample, snowballing techniques
- Key stakeholder interviews
 - 10-15 per province across three sectors
 - Public/private sector social and health services
 - Community and traditional stakeholders
 - Non profit sector



Qualitative methods

- Focus groups
 - Six groups in each of the four provinces
 - Mix of urban and rural
 - 17 groups run, 11 further key informant interviews

Description	Eastern Cape	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo
Foster parents who are fostering kin children				
Foster parents who are fostering non-kin children				
Adoptive parents (adopted in the last five years)				
Prospective adoptive parents (adoption in process)				
Parents with biological children (no fostered/adopted)				
Childless adults (>25 years with no children)				



Qualitative analysis

- Transcription into data source
- Thematic analysis within groups using interview guide categories
 - Initial coding, review across groups
 - Final coding and counting to determine common themes
 - Matrix analysis, search for outliers
- Triangulation against quantitative data



Qualitative findings

- Knowledge barriers to adoption
 - Poor public awareness
 - Misperceptions about adoption
- Systemic and administrative barriers
 - Long waiting periods
 - Administrative burden
- Social worker attitudes
 - Prejudices and gate keeping



Quotations

“We didn’t have much information about adoption—where to start and who to talk to”

Prospective adoptive parent

“Yes, I have [heard about it] and you have to be employed, financially stable, married and have a house to meet the requirements of adoption but for us in the rural areas that information and those options are scarce” *Biological parent, Limpopo*

“I’ve thought about adoption before but I don’t think about it anymore because of what I have heard—the experience and the long application process. It would be too much for me to handle”

Childless female, 33 years, Limpopo

“I appreciate they have to be careful, but we are not the bad guys, they place a huge burden of administration on you as a prospective adopter, paperwork, proof, fees and you work hard to show you are serious and able. In turn they should be accountable and efficient.”

Prospective adoptive parent, KwaZulu-Natal

“Before I could take these children in, they said I had to go to court and all these things - so for their and my sake - I ended up fostering them as the adoption process was just too long” *Non-kin foster parent, Gauteng*

“Obviously there are not that many children in need of homes then, so I might as well explore other options, I thought I was doing the right thing looking to adoption, but if there are no kids, well then I might as well look at surrogacy or something” *Prospective adoptive parent,*

KwaZulu-Natal



Qualitative findings cont.

- Economic determinants of attitudes to adoption and fostering
 - Many willing adopters are filtered out
 - Foster grant and the lack of an adoption grant is a disincentive
 - Openness to financial assistance being linked to service delivery
 - Socio-political undertones and frustration over implied ‘perverse incentives’



Quotations

“I think there should be remuneration that goes with it so that people could be comfortable with it. I’m not saying money should be an issue but it is an issue, because people are very poor” *Government social worker, Gauteng*

“One of the major problems is finance. It doesn’t matter how attractive you are going to make adoption seem, if people don’t have the means they are not going to do it” (*Commissioner of Child Welfare, KwaZulu-Natal*)

“Government helps us with fostering more than with adopting, All in all the government must give money to those who adopt as well” *Kin foster parent, Eastern Cape*

“I can easily afford the love a child needs, it costs me nothing but it is worth everything to this child, I can sit with them and I can hold them when they cry and I can promise to be there, and I can make sure that I am - much more than a volunteer in a dormitory with 20 kids I can do that, but I can’t so easily afford the schooling and the food and all the things they need, I am willing to work but I can’t find work, that’s why I need the grant, not because I am greedy or want money for myself, but because I need to take care of this child’s needs, I love this child so how can you expect me to not want to give this child everything” *Non-kin foster parent KwaZulu-Natal*

“I know there are people who misuse it, I am not stupid, as a community leader I have had to deal with that issue a few times, but that is what is disappointing when they say people are misusing, there are many more honest people in my community than those who are doing wrong things, isn’t that what a democracy is, doing things that work for the majority “ *Community Leader, KwaZulu-Natal*



Qualitative findings

- Socio-cultural determinants of attitudes towards adoption
 - Unnecessary and cumbersome
 - Severing family of origin ties is in contradiction to culture
 - Importance of lineage and ancestral lines
 - Permanency is not an issue



Quotations

“Adoption?... hmmm, I don’t know, I don’t really see the point - in our culture these children are our responsibility and we know that a piece of paper would not change that? So what is the point?”
Kin foster parent, KwaZulu-Natal

“Even if people change a child’s name, or do whatever they want in court, that is my child and she belongs to my people. No court needs to tell us that or give us permission to have our child, she is part of us”
Community Leader, KwaZulu-Natal

“When you are born, there are certain things about ancestors which they require of us. They know who our child is and where he is. Just imagine if you adopt a Biyela child and join the child to the Mthembu’s. There will be war between the Biyela and Mthembu ancestors, both ancestors will fight over the belonging of the child”
Biological parent, Gauteng

“When you are related to the child it is easy. You don’t need adoption. Like some of us here we have been raised by grannies and aunts. In a case of a kin, you should not make that child to hate his father’s family. Maybe he still has a father and if you take that child and adopt him you can only cause problems between families”
Biological parent, Gauteng

“I understand that it may help the child in terms of the law, but it could limit the social support the child has access to because effectively by doing that you can really offend the family of origin and you can cause the child to be cut off from its extended family. It really doesn’t fit very well with the existing cultural norms, so we should be thinking about how we adjust to that”
Key informant, researcher, KwaZulu-Natal



Qualitative findings cont.

- Strongly held prejudices around adoption
 - International adoption is wrong
 - Same sex couple adoption is wrong
 - HIV positive parenting is wrong
- Some evidence of social responsibility issues emerging
 - Based on knowledge and awareness
 - Social complexity around value systems



Recommendations

Which children need what and where...

- Legislative limitations
 - Fewer than SSA countries, implementation requires training and resources
- National data and decentralisation
 - Drive national decision making, resource allocation and public awareness campaigns with regular evaluation.
 - RACAP and system development, improve feedback loops



Recommendations

Which families need what and how....

- Attitudinal interventions
 - Increased knowledge and improved attitudes of social workers as gatekeepers (reduce prejudices)
- Disincentives to adoption
 - Develop strategies to approaches to remove disincentives such as loss of financial support
 - Develop strategies to reduce administration and
 - Offer service oriented incentives around health care and education, encourage social responsibility



Recommendations

In a complex social and cultural space...

- Alternatives to adoption
 - Clearly identify for whom adoption may not be appropriate for and seek alternative ways to increase security and permanency
- Socio-cultural sensitivity
 - Establish mechanisms and strategies to deal with cultural barriers to adoption, particularly for abandoned children

