ON DIFFERENT TERMS
SOCIAL WORK AMONG VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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The aim of this study is to get a deeper understanding, from a Swedish context, of how you can do social work with vulnerable and orphaned children in a developing country such as Uganda. We have investigated this through the example WEBALE, an NGO working in a context where among other things HIV/AIDS, poverty and a defective social safety net have led to social problems affecting children. Further, we have also aimed at acquiring a deeper understanding of what it is that motivates the volunteers and the director to work with vulnerable children at WEBALE. In order to fulfil this aim, the research has the following two key questions: What is the motivation for the teacher volunteers and the manager to work with vulnerable children at WEBALE? How do the teacher volunteers perceive the social work with the children in everyday life at WEBALE and what experiences do they have from this? The study is a field study with a phenomenological and ethnological approach. We were present at and took part in the everyday life of the informants at the school and orphanage in Uganda for eight weeks. The investigation uses a qualitative method where four interviews and participant observations were carried out. The results are analyzed in connection with theories on social work defining preventions and interventions, where theories on risk- and protection factors and the salutogenetic theory on SOC have been used. The analysis is also connected to theories on social work with children from a developmental-ecological and attachment-theoretical perspective. The results show what it is that motivates the volunteers and manager to work as volunteers in this specific contest through personal accounts of their background. Our observation is that the motivation of the volunteers and the manager to work with orphaned and vulnerable children is closely connected to their own background and childhood. The biggest reason for this kind of a life choice seems to be a sense of coherence and the largest motivating factor is that the work they do feels meaningful. The results further highlight the social work that is carried out and how the volunteers perceive their work at WEBALE. The study shows that the volunteers (who mainly consist of teachers) carry out what can be called social work, according to the definitions of interventions and preventions within various fields, such as health, education, emotional and behavioural development, ability to take care of oneself, social behaviour, family and social relations, and identity.

Keywords: Antonovsky, attachment theory, BBIC, developing country, developmental-ecological theory, intervention, motivation, orphanage, orphans and vulnerable children, prevention, protection factors, risk factors, salutogenes, social work, SOC, Uganda, volunteers.
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We would like to dedicate this thesis to all the orphans and vulnerable children, worldwide and especially at WEBALE in Uganda, who are victims of injustice such as infection/affection of HIV/AIDS, poverty and lack of adult protection. Never give up!
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.............................................................................................................5
2 PROBLEMATIZATION OF CONTEXT..............................................................................5
   2.1 Aim and research questions....................................................................................7
   2.2 WEBALE School and Orphanage .......................................................................7
3 RESEARCH ON SOCIAL WORK ..................................................................................8
   3.1 Preventions ...........................................................................................................9
      3.1.1 Risk factors................................................................................................10
      3.1.2 Protection factors and Sense Of Coherence.............................................10
   3.2 Interventions .......................................................................................................12
   3.3 Social work as depending on the context .........................................................13
   3.4 Social work with children ..................................................................................14
      3.4.1 The Child’s need in the Center...............................................................14
      3.4.2 Theoretical starting points within BBIC................................................15
      3.4.3 Areas of need within BBIC.......................................................................15
4 METHOD.....................................................................................................................17
   4.1 Qualitative approach.........................................................................................17
   4.2 Practical approach............................................................................................18
   4.3 Interviews ..........................................................................................................19
   4.4 Participant observation .....................................................................................19
   4.5 Validity and reliability .......................................................................................20
   4.6 Selection .............................................................................................................21
   4.7 Method of analysis............................................................................................22
   4.8 The role of the researcher................................................................................22
   4.9 Research ethics................................................................................................23
5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS.......................................................................................24
   5.1 The volunteers’ personal accounts about themselves and their
   relationship to WEBALE.......................................................................................24
      5.1.1 Charles.....................................................................................................25
      5.1.2 Thomas...................................................................................................27
      5.1.3 Sarah.......................................................................................................28
      5.1.4 Fred.........................................................................................................28
   5.2 The volunteers’ motivation for working with the orphans and
   vulnerable children in an NGO such as WEBALE........................................29
      5.2.1 Altruistic motivation.................................................................................30
      5.2.2 Personal motivation.................................................................................32
      5.2.3 Religious motives.....................................................................................34
   5.3 Summary.............................................................................................................34
   5.4 Social work at WEBALE..................................................................................35
      5.4.1 School, health and leisure-time...............................................................36
      5.4.2 Psycho-social support.............................................................................39
      5.4.3 Practical knowledge.................................................................................45
6 DISCUSSION..............................................................................................................46
7 REFERENCES.............................................................................................................51
   7.1 Literature...........................................................................................................51
   7.2 Interviews.........................................................................................................52
   7.3 Webpages/links.................................................................................................52
8 APPENDIX................................................................................................................54
   8.1. Photos............................................................................................................54
   8.2 Interview guide................................................................................................57
1 INTRODUCTION

In our social work programme we have learnt that social work is a broad field with a next to unlimited number of problem areas to work with, and thus the same number of occupational opportunities. Social work can include a large variety of methods and can imply different tasks in different contexts. In our field of studies, we have mainly studied social work from a Swedish perspective and social work in Sweden has been the basis of our studies.

At the same time, our common interest for developmental issues, work to obliterate poverty and to increase global justice and sustainable development has grown during our studies. A few years ago we came in contact with a small association in Malmö which cooperates with a Ugandan non governmental organization (NGO), WEBALE, which runs a school and an orphanage for Ugandan orphans and vulnerable children. We decided to get involved in the association and in the Autumn of 2009, we joined them on a study trip to Uganda, visiting the school and orphanage. Although we spent under two weeks there, the study trip and the visit at WEBALE had a deep impact on us.

We started asking ourselves more questions about what social work is and if it can mean different things in different situations. The observation we made of the volunteers at WEBALE during our visit in 2009 was that they work with several things outside teaching. Although practicing teaching, we believe they also practice social work (even though they might not be conscious of this or identify it as such). Since most children in the school also live in the orphanage and are orphans or vulnerable in various ways, our observation is that the volunteers thus received a considerably greater role in the lives of the children than “merely” teaching them in the four school subjects. Most volunteers live within the school compound and are available 24 hours a day. Our visit at WEBALE made us interested in what social work may include in a foreign context, outside the framework we are used to. Through a field study at WEBALE we would like to highlight the social work that is carried out there. WEBALE thus serves as an example of how an NGO can work with orphans and vulnerable children in a developing country such as Uganda.

In order to be able to carry out the study we will return to Uganda and WEBALE and spend eight weeks on the field. We find it necessary to visit the school and orphanage again in order to find answers to our research questions. Being present while carrying out the study is of utmost importance in order to acquire a deeper understanding of how reality at WEBALE is constructed and perceived.

2 PROBLEMATIZATION OF CONTEXT

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a truly global phenomenon affecting a large number of people in practically all countries. The impact of HIV/AIDS has been enormous and affecting the developing world and poorest countries the most (Cox & Pawar, 2006). Like many other sub-Saharan African countries in the 1980s and onwards, Uganda was ravaged by HIV/AIDS and many people in Uganda died because of the infection, just as many people have had their lives affected by it. Due to
HIV/AIDS, many children have been orphaned and Uganda is facing the challenge of a growing number of vulnerable children. Uganda estimates to have about 17.1 million children below the age of 18 years, of whom 14% have been orphaned and 51% are considered either critically or moderately vulnerable (NSPPI-1, 2010).

It is clear that there are several different factors that contribute to aggravate the problem. Besides HIV/AIDS and other diseases, there are factors such as the current level of poverty, high population growth rates, child labour, inadequacy of support services, weak implementation of existing laws and the growing phenomenon of child abduction and murder (NSPPI-1, 2010). Moreover, Uganda is a country that historically has been heavily afflicted and is still underdeveloped due to the infusion of massive corruption, guerilla war and poor infrastructure. Many Ugandans are exposed to vulnerability in a country where communities are divided by class. 75.6% of the population in Uganda lives on less than $2 a day, which is within the UN definition of poverty (Human development report, 2009).

Social problems are inherited by the urban communities, where the family serves as the final safety net. In a society such as this, which is organized around the family structure and where there is no public safety net, to be orphaned can have an even larger stigma attached to it. Therefore, the situation for these children is especially alarming in countries such as Uganda, with no developed welfare system to provide sufficient care for the AIDS orphans (Cox & Pawar, 2006). In the light of the increasing number of vulnerable children and the growing knowledge of the despicable conditions they live in, the Government of Uganda in 2004 formulated the National Orphans and other Vulnerable Children Policy and the first National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions, Fiscal Year 2005/06-2009/10 to guide all stakeholders in responding to the vulnerable children crisis (NSPPI-1, 2010).

When evaluating the plan now, it is clear that its goals were not met. The support only reached around 11% of the children in the target group, which is far below what the government counted on. This is one example of how defective the Ugandan public safety net is. When it comes to education, the Ugandan government has invested in making primary school free of charge. However, this means that not every child in Uganda has access to education. First, other fees are added although the education per se is free of charge. The child or the family has to provide for the school material, such as books, school uniform and other necessary things, which is unrealistic that the poor families or a street child would be able to pay. Second, the government schools in Uganda are generally known to have an unacceptably low standard. Corruption and lack of funding result in the schools being understaffed and the buildings dilapidated. It is not unusual to find an entire primary school run by only two teachers.

Moreover, government schools do not always reach children at risk. For instance, it is usual in the countryside that families do not encourage their children to attend school, since they are needed in the household and to provide for the family. The report Protecting hope: Situation Analysis of vulnerable children in Uganda 2009 describes how the Government of Uganda despite many efforts to improve the circumstances of vulnerable children still lack comprehensive and up-to-date information about their numbers, geographic distribution, characteristics, and needs, even though the government has focused attention on the problem
(Kalibala & Elson 2010). A conclusion can be drawn that millions of orphans and other vulnerable children in Uganda do not receive the help and support they need from the society that they are entitled to (ibid).

We believe that poverty, HIV/AIDS infection/affection and other risk factors that can make school and education unavailable for children generate a negative spiral that, in a worst case scenario (which unfortunately is not unusual), can leave the child no other option than ending up on the street, in the slums, and with no other choice than to support him- or herself through for example criminality. Vulnerable children can also be exposed to sexual exploitation, which doubles the risk factor, since they then risk contracting HIV, or if already infected, passing on the virus (Cox & Pawar, 2006). According to UN’s *Millenium development goals*, every child shall have the right to get primary education, but in Uganda school attendance is not compulsory. Educated children will have a better starting point for the future and potential opportunities for a dignified life (The Millennium Development Goals Report, 2007).

2.1 Aim and research questions
The overall aim with this thesis, with the Swedish context as a starting point, is to get a deeper understanding of how social work can be carried out among orphaned and vulnerable children in a developing country such as Uganda. We aim to use WEBALE as a way of investigating this. We would like to highlight the work that is carried out and how the volunteers view their own work, hence acquiring a deeper understanding of social work through the work situation and experience of the volunteers. Furthermore, we would like to understand what it is that motivates the teacher volunteers and the director to work with vulnerable children at WEBALE, and whether there is a factor in their background that has caused them to work there.

We are able to break down our overall aim into two research questions:
- What are the motives of the teacher volunteers and the director for working with vulnerable children at WEBALE?
- How is social work with children in everyday life at WEBALE perceived by the teacher volunteers and what experiences have they made?

2.2 WEBALE School and Orphanage
The idea of WEBALE formation came as a result of members affected and infected with HIV/AIDS who were clients of the same home care AIDS clinic. After realizing a pressing need to support one another to cope with the threatening HIV/AIDS pandemic, WEBALE started as a support group, registered as a charitable community based, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization. From the start, the purpose with WEBALE was to enhance the capacity of people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS and to actively participate in prevention and care initiatives with the vision to improve the health status for the infected and affected, especially the children. WEBALE also had the vision to improve the standards of living, providing care and support to orphans and other vulnerable children and strengthening the social economical capacity of families for purpose of orphans and vulnerable children support. Their objectives are including advocating for children’s legal rights by enhancing community participation to orphans and vulnerable children’s care and support. They also include promoting positive living and positive behavior to both infected and other community
members, hence fighting consequences of being infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, such as stigma and discrimination.

Today, the main task of WEBALE and the most extensive work is the combined school and orphanage on the countryside. Here, WEBALE works to support children’s rights to education, shelter, protection, health and life skill training, for a better life in the future. The key words that the school and orphanage base their work on are love, care and responsibility. According to the organization’s webpage, they are “a small community, or perhaps a very big family is a better way to say it, entrusted to the care and schooling of HIV-AIDS orphans and affected children in our area”. They describe themselves as a modest place of hope for the children they support. A goal for the organization is that the children will “learn well and grow strong so they can build a new Africa”.

The school and the orphanage are located in a small village approximately 50 kilometers from Kampala. In spite of the closeness to the relatively modern capital, our perception of the village is that it is situated in the middle of nowhere, because of the defective infrastructure. There are large differences and contrasts between the material standard of the village and what we are used to in Sweden. There are no computers and therefore no access to the Internet for the volunteers at the school and orphanage. The class rooms and children’s dormitories are provided by solar panels, which generate enough energy for lights, but nothing further. The volunteers live in simple houses or huts with straw roofs and dirt floors. There is no running water, but a well with a manual pump. The toilet consists of a hole in the ground and bucket showers are taken within four tin walls, which serve as a shower room. There is no modern kitchen; the food is cooked over a fire (see photos in the appendix). Most of the volunteers have mobile phones, but apart from this there are few possibilities of being connected to the outside world while in the village.

Around 150 children live at the orphanage and an additional 60 children from the neighbouring villages attend the school. There are eight teacher volunteers, who share the responsibility for the 210 pupils together with the administrator, the food staff and a matron. Most of the teacher volunteers have some kind of teacher training, but only the administrator has graduated from teacher training on academic level. The volunteers have worked at the school different lengths of time, some have been there since it started and some have worked at WEBALE less than a year. The director comes to WEBALE a few days a week, and spends the rest of the time working with administration at the WEBALE office in a town around 20 kilometers away.

3 RESEARCH ON SOCIAL WORK

While writing this essay, we have looked for similar research on the topic social work with children at orphanages in developmental countries and how the volunteers in developmental countries are motivated to work with, for instance, vulnerable children. Although we have not been able to find research that is similar to ours in aim and key questions, there is a lot of literature, research and reports on the topic of work preventing HIV/AIDS. Therefore, we have chosen to
draw from research that concern social work in general and have applied this to our material.

Social work has emerged as a very broad profession and basis for theories, both within individual countries and in a global sense (Cox & Pawar, 2006). The International Federation of Social Workers and the International Association of Schools of Social Work have decided on a general definition of social work, which has been accepted globally by many countries.

“The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work” (IFSW, 2003).

Another way to practically explain social work is to describe social preventions and interventions.

**3.1 Preventions**

One way of defining the work *prevention* is “to prevent something from happening which is not desirable” (Sahlin, 1992 in Ander, et al, 2005, p 14, our translation). When speaking of preventions in social work, it refers to preventing behavioural patterns that may lead to social problems. Apart from wanting to prevent something undesirable from happening, the term *prevention* furthermore has its starting point in ‘believing the problem to be amendable’ (ibid). Preventive work is geared towards early efforts, i.e. efforts made in an early stage of an expected negative development. Often preventive efforts are directed towards children and youth and a central part of preventive social work consists of protecting them from “unsuitable environments and situations” (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006, p 97, our translation). These efforts can be made on various levels, and often the efforts are needed to be made on various levels simultaneously, in order to make the preventive work successful (Ander, et al, 2005).

Within social work, there are three levels in which to work preventively: universal, selective and indicative. *Universal efforts* happen on a societal level and are directed towards the entire society or a large part of it, in order to prevent various problems from arising. These are preventions on a large scale, where everyone in a certain population takes part in the preventions in the same way (Forster, 2003). For instance, it can take the form of educational programs, city planning, access to health care, leisure activities, pre-school or jurisdiction (Ander, et al, 2005). *Selective efforts* happen on a group level and are directed towards groups of people who are within the danger-zone of developing social problems (ibid). In these groups, problems are likely to arise if preventions are not made immediately. Examples of such risk groups are people who risk developing an addiction, criminal behavior, become homeless or prostitute themselves. *Indicative efforts* happen on an individual level and could for example include work directed towards individuals encountered in visiting work and who are offered individual treatment of various kinds (Ander, et al, 2006). This type of work is not only to prevent future problems to arise for an individual, but also to help the individuals who are already exposed to serious problems by preventing the problems from continuing (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006).
It is possible to tackle social problems by working with different preventive methods. *Situational prevention* implies changing various factors in the environment in order to reduce social problems (Forster, 2003). *Social prevention* means tackling social problems by various efforts directed towards groups or individuals (ibid). Here, efforts are made for the identified risk group with specific plans to reduce and counteract problems.

### 3.1.1 Risk factors

Preventive work thus focuses on factors that lead to a reduction or prevention of social problems, what is not working or what does not show a desirable development. One way of forming efforts and directing them towards the individuals that truly need them is to look for *risk factors* (Forster, 2003). This implies factors which are liable of leading to an increased risk of social problems in the future. Research has shown that the more risk factors that can be identified in an individual (in a group or in a society), the greater is the risk for problems. The various factors add up and together create an even bigger problem, bigger than its specific parts (ibid). It is important to mention here, however, that there are children and youth with many risk factors who never develop problem behaviour (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006). Often similar risk factors lead to different types of problems, which implies that prevention of one problem simultaneously can lead to prevention of other problems (Forster, 2003). Forster (2003) therefore states that discussing prevention of future problem behaviour in general is taking a practical viewpoint, rather than trying to prevent certain specific individual problems. Something that proves to be a challenge is evaluating the effect of preventative social work, since its aim is preventing the problems from arising.

There are thus a number of risk factors connected to growing up as a child in a poor and under-developed country. When a disease such as HIV/AIDS affects a family and the society is unable to provide a safety net that takes care of the consequences of the disease, the results can be devastating, both on an individual and societal level. Since the origin of a problem in society happens gradually, efforts should be encouraged as early as possible in order to prevent a negative development (Börjeson, 2008). The longer a child is forced to live on the streets, in neglect, in a home with domestic violence or abuse, or in a similar situation, the greater is the risk that the child's social problems increase by degrees, which we believe can make it harder for the child to come back and to be integrated in society. Therefore, the timing of the efforts made to prevent social problems is of great importance and can affect the child's opportunities for a hopeful future.

### 3.1.2 Protection factors and Sense Of Coherence

Moreover, it is possible to focus on the factors that prevent the social problems from arising, i.e. the *protective factors* in society, among groups and individuals. This way of working preventively is called *promotive work* and implies a strengthening of that which is healthy and functioning (Ohlsson, 2001 i Ander et al, 2005). Something which is frequently highlighted in research on protective factors is the importance of a sense of coherence (SOC) (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006). The sociologist Aaron Antonovsky, who lived the latter part of his life in Israel, based the salutogenic theory of SOC on studies of vulnerable people. Antonovsky studied the Jews that had survived the Holocaust and who had been able to create a new life in another country after the war and to remain healthy in
spite of the terrifying experiences they had been through earlier in life. The results of his studies showed that a sense of coherence is an important factor that protects against traumatic experiences (Antonovsky, 2005). According to the studies, the individuals who had had a sense of coherence in their childhood had resources to create a new and good life after the trauma of the Second World War. Those who did not find a sense of coherence had problems handling the traumatic experiences and their continued lives were characterized by helplessness and powerlessness (Tamm, 2002).

Antonovsky has a holistic view of human beings. According to him, they need to be seen in the context of their entire life, which is a system-theoretical thinking. The theory emphasizes health and vitality and highlights the possibilities and resources instead of focusing on the problems (Tamm, 2002). The salutogenic view puts an emphasis on the origin of health and the central question for Antonovsky was how individuals can remain at good health in spite of challenges such as stress and disease. He defines these as stress triggers that “become a strain to or exceed the resources of the system” (Antonovsky, 2005, p 177, our translation). One conclusion he arrived at was that a human being wards off chaos and creates order through making his/her reality coherent (ibid).

SOC consists of three cooperating components: comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness (ibid). The first term comprehensibility refers to experiencing inward and outward stimuli as intelligible. An individual with a high sense of comprehensibility has a stronger idea of the world and the order and clarity of various situations, and thus perceives information coherently and has a high level of understanding in various situations. When information is predictable and explainable, comprehensibility is created in an individual (ibid). Antonovsky (2005) defines the second component in this model manageability, which refers to an understanding of the resources available in order to handle different situations. With the help of these resources, which is perceived by the individual to be at their disposal, they can meet the demands they face in various situations. Resources can be found within, but also found in others. An individual with a high level of manageability has learnt to affect their life situation and does not feel like a victim of stressful circumstances. It implies being aware of the fact that life has both good and bad sides and that you have the resources you need to manage in difficult situations (ibid).

The third component, meaningfulness, refers to how a human being finds some things important and certain situations in life and courses of events significant and worth getting involved in and becoming a part of (ibid). When an individual with a high sense of meaningfulness faces accidents or hardship, they accept them as the conditions of life and try to find a meaning in the difficult situation (ibid). In conclusion, Antonovsky defines the three components in the following way:

“The sense of coherence is a global perspective which expresses to what extent one has a penetrating but dynamic sense of trust that (1) the stimuli that originate inside and outside oneself during the course of life are structured, predictable and comprehensible, (2) the resources necessary for facing the demands that these stimuli put on you are accessible, and (3) the demands are challenges, worth investment and involvement” (Antonovsky, 2005, p 46, our translation).
All three components are important for a sense of coherence. Antonovsky describes them as “indissolubly intertwined” with each other (ibid, p 48, our translation). He also describes the three components as being more or less central. **Meaningfulness** seems to be the most important component and has a central significance (ibid). Human beings function in a way that makes them adaptable to all situations as long as they find hope and a sense of meaning. If a situation or event is not perceived as meaningful, there is nothing to motivate the individual to get involved and in such a case, it does not matter if the level of **comprehensibility** and **manageability** happens to be high (ibid). In conclusion, Antonovsky (2005) says that in order that different problems should be handled with success, SOC in its entirety needs to be applied.

Therefore, there are ways to also work preventively through creating a positive and desirable development for an individual or a group. If the individual, for instance, lives in a context with multiple risk factors, such as children growing up in a poor and under-developed country affected by HIV/AIDS, different kinds of protective factors can balance out the risk factors. If the child’s family for some reason cannot take care of the child, and if the social safety net of the country is not enough, a negative development of the child or social problems do not have to be the necessary consequence, according to the theory of protecting factors and SOC. Instead, the child can have the opportunity to a sense of coherence through protecting factors, such as comprehending, managing and a sense that life is meaningful. This can in turn lead to increased health for the child and in a broader perspective have positive effects on society at large.

**3.2 Interventions**

To intervene means to ”come between, mediate, take care of, get involved or interfere with” (Denvall & Jacobson, 1998, p 223, our translation). When referring to an authority or an expert intervening, the interventions ”have the intention to change or regulate the current conditions for individuals or groups of individuals” (ibid). An intervention can be seen as a “process of influence” happening through various means and with various intentions in mind (ibid). An overall purpose with intervention is to change the current conditions for the better, through stepping in or taking care of the situation. It is the thought that problems exist due to lack of social support and the identification of these problems in individuals or groups of individuals that lead to interventions being carried out. According to Malcolm Payne, intervention strategy has two aims: 1) helping clients to resolve problems of concern to them; 2) giving a good experience of problem-solving so that clients improve future capacity to deal with difficulties and are more willing to accept help” (1997, p 107). Traditionally, family and close village relations have functioned as social support, but today’s late-industrial, society which is increasingly characterised by individualism, more people become dependent on interventions and support by society (Denvall & Jacobson, 1998).

According to Denvall and Jacobson (1998), society has a large responsibility when it comes to intervention in the everyday lives of individuals. These interventions can both be opportunities of a positive change and a step towards social change, but they can also become a way for the “experts” of society to oppress individuals. From this point of view, a social worker, therefore, has a lot of power. Through their unique position in society, they have the opportunity to “add resources to individuals who need them for their survival” and at the same time “the power to powerfully intervene in the most intimate of relationships, for
instance between parents and children” (ibid, p 239, our translation). The role of intervening, therefore, comes with a big responsibility to ask oneself who will benefit from the intervention and what the consequences will be. Denvall and Jacobson (1998) suggest three basic conditions for intervention: motive, knowledge and action.

Through asking questions such as “Why is a change needed, and for what?”, “What do we know of the situation and the tools that can change it?” and “In which way should the intervention be carried out?” a knowledge basis for the intervention can be created. This knowledge, together with a discernment of how to judge the situation and the desire to attain a positive change for the client, provides the social worker with better tools to make decisions on stepping in and taking measures (ibid). It is therefore of great importance to have a self-critical attitude and it is necessary to weigh decisions ethically before making interventions in the everyday life of an individual. Thompson (2009) emphasizes the importance of having a clear focus in interventions in the area of social work, and to always keep reminding oneself why an intervention is needed and what role one has as a social worker. He further states the importance of remembering the values one is guided by, since they can often “be a guide to dealing with the complexities and can help to guide us through what sometimes seems like a jungle of complex demands, challenges and pitfalls” (Thompson, 2009, p 205).

3.3 Social work as depending on the context

Even though we use the terms *preventions* and *interventions* as a starting point, it is not always clear what the definition of social work is. On the basis of our study, we have discussed and reached the conclusion that social work can be carried out by practically anyone, but that the more important question is in what context it is carried out. The understanding of social work is strongly connected to the country, and the social worker is dependent on the context in which they live. Broadly speaking, many things relating to the interaction between individuals or structures in society affected by the living conditions of individuals, could be called social work, and is not limited to the work carried out by people with a degree in social work.

We believe social work mainly to be defined by the target group, if it concerns vulnerable individuals. For instance, if a teacher in an “ordinary” school has a chat with an “ordinary” child without special needs during a break, you would not call it social work. However, if the school is a school for children who are orphaned and vulnerable in various ways, and if the teacher knows that this particular child has great difficulties and needs extra support, the small talk with the pupil during break could be called social work.

Moreover, it concerns general risk areas, for instance a school class being informed on sexual health or risks connected with narcotics (i.e. universal prevention, see above) would count as social work. In this case, it is not primarily the target group that defines it as social work, since the information will reach all pupils in the class, not only vulnerable pupils. Instead, this is prevention of what has been defined as a social problem, in this case sexually transmitted diseases or addictive behaviour. What is defined as social problems is something that changes over time and can look different in different contexts. For example, in today’s Sweden it is clear to people that smoking is something that can affect the smoker’s health in a negative way (and others in their immediate surrounding), with risk of
for instance lung cancer. Therefore, it is natural that every pupil at some point during their primary education will receive information on these risks, as a way of preventing a social problem. However, only around 60 years ago, this was not the case. In the 1940s and 1950s, smoking was largely practiced by the educated and wealthy individuals in society, and was therefore regarded as an attribute of social standing. With these examples, we would like to show that social problems and social work are terms that are hard to define and have to be defined in the context in which they are used.

3.4 Social work with children
The last decades, the position of the child in society has been strengthened, much due to United Nations’ Convention on the rights of the child published in 1989 as a legally binding international instrument. The mission with the Convention is to “advocate for the protection of children’s rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential” (UNICEF, 2010). The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles by “setting standards in health care, education and legal, civil and social services” (ibid). The articles include the child’s right to protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, and the right of the child to education (UNHCHR, 2010). Uganda, like Sweden, ratified the child convention as early as 1990 (UN, 2010). Among the articles, the Principle of the child’s best in article three can be mentioned, which states that the child’s best always should have priority in every decision affecting the child (Unicef). Article two states that every child has the same rights and the same value and that no one can be discriminated.

3.4.1 The Child’s need in the Centre
During the 1980s, a debate started in England concerning the bad conditions within institutional and family care for children. A report showed that a child that had been taken in custody and placed by the social authorities due to defective family conditions faced even worse conditions when raised in the placement location than what they would have had in their biological family. This debate resulted in a research and investigation program put in place by the British government, in order to be able to better judge the results of the care given to children (Socialstyrelsen, 2006).

The system of follow-up came to be called Looking after children system (LACS). The team of researchers developing LACS found seven areas of need, showing what factors can contribute to a positive development for a child. The following areas of need were mentioned: health, education, emotional and behavioural development, identity, family and social relations, social behaviour, ability to take care of oneself (ibid). The researchers reached the conclusion that the concept of seven areas of need is universal and can either be used as a tool for investigating, planning and follow-up or it can be used by social workers and other lines of profession as a model of thought when considering children’s and youth’s development (ibid).

Critique was also directed towards the child welfare commissions in England, because of their lack of systematics in describing and analyzing a child’s needs, and in their follow-up. A knowledge overview showed how children can be affected if their parents are addicts or if abuse is present in the home, which resulted in another model of investigation called Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (AF) (ibid). The seven areas of need from
LACS was the starting point and these were connected to six aspects of the caring ability of the parents together with factors in the child’s family and environment, creating a triangle. With this triangle, the aim was to emphasize the importance of a holistic view of a child’s development (ibid).

The connection of LACS and AF was called the Integrated Children System (ICS) and in 1995, the system was ready to be used in the English municipal councils. ICS is the predecessor to what is called BBIC in Sweden, the Child’s need in the Centre, which was in use in Sweden from the year 1999 (ibid).

3.4.2 Theoretical starting points within BBIC

The superior development of theory within BBIC is the developmental-ecological perspective of the psychologist Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979), which emphasises that a holistic view on the child is central. “According to the developmental-ecological view, the development of the child happens in the context, in the interplay and in the interaction of various factors in the environment.” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 20, our translation). In Bronfenbrenner’s (1978) model there are three different levels of society, on which the child interacts. These levels are the micro-level which is the interaction between the child and its local environment, for instance family, friends and school. “Between these local environments there is an interplay and the relations between them in turn create a system, the meso-level” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 20, our translation). The third level, called the exo-level, is not a level that the child comes in direct contact with. However, this level can still affect the child’s development indirectly. Through this, Bronfenbrenner (1979) wants to highlight the holistic view on the child, and how its developmental opportunities are affected by the interaction with its environment on various levels (ibid).

Another theory that BBIC is based on is the theory of attachment, which is important for the child’s psychological development. “The theory of attachment is about the process resulting in a psychological tie between the child and its closest caregivers. (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 21, our translation). All infants attach to their caregivers, whether or not the caregiver is capable of caring. The attachment is later significant for the continued developmental process of the individual. If the child experiences difficult separations, mistreatment and neglect, this can have negative consequences for the child’s development. If, however, the child has good caregivers and thus a secure attachment, the child will develop good relationships with others and manage challenges later in life (Bowlby, 1969).

In the BBIC manual, theories on risk- and protective factors are also found, together with theories on critical periods in the child’s development (Socialstyrelsen, 2006).

3.4.3 Areas of need within BBIC

In the manual on BBIC (2006) from the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare, an account is given for what is meant by the seven areas of need and the risks in the child’s development if the needs cannot be sufficiently met by the family. Further, good care on the parents’ part is described in general terms when it comes to meeting the child’s needs and how this affects a child’s development positively (ibid).
Researchers have thus outlined needs of a child that are universal and important for the child’s development. Below a short description will be given of what is meant by the area of need, according to the directions of the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006), and give suggestions on how the child’s needs can be met within the different areas of need.

**Health**

The area includes psychological but primarily physical health. The child needs regular health check-ups, dental check-ups, eye check-ups and to receive vaccinations. It is important to prevent ill-health through appropriate food and exercise. Older children need information on and guidance in the development of the body and sexuality. They also need norms when it comes to smoking, alcohol and narcotics (Socialstyrelsen, 2006).

**Education**

According to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen, 2006), school is the second most important institution after family and functions as an essential preventive effort for children. Pre-school can be an important complement to the children who do not receive the care they need from their parents (ibid). In order for children to develop into well-functioning adults later in life, it is of importance that they learn to read, count and write (ibid). Parents should be involved in the schooling of the child and see to it that the child attends school regularly. In order to receive a positive schooling, an advantage is if the teacher is involved and has knowledge about the child’s situation, and children who are in need of extra support in school should receive this. Children need to play and socialize with other children, have access to books and receive help in developing skills and leisure-time activities (ibid).

**Emotional and behavioural development**

"Children need the opportunity to create safe and secure attachments in an emotionally warm and supportive environment.” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 57, our translation). Having a secure attachment to your caregivers creates good conditions for the child to develop good relationships and manage challenges in the future. If the child cannot attach themselves to their parents in a safe and positive way, it is important that the child has other substitute caregiver in their local environment to whom they can attach themselves. They also need adults who are involved and can set boundaries for the child and follow their schooling and leisure-time activities (ibid).

**Identity**

"Identity refers to the experience of being one and the same person despite of external changes, and of a clear boundary between one’s own personality and other people” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 30, our translation). For the development of the child’s identity, it is of importance that the child knows about themselves, their background and of their personality. For the child to develop their identity in a positive way, the child needs confirmation and encouragement from their caregivers. The child also needs to feel acceptance from their family and their environment. In addition, the child needs positive role models of the same gender and ethnicity and an open atmosphere in the family to talk about origin and family relationships (ibid).

**Family and social relations**

16
The child’s ties to parents, relatives, siblings and friends are important since the relationships that a child has in their childhood create a basis for new relationships later in life. It is of importance that a child has at least one close friend. According to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen 2006), children who have this have a better self-confidence than children who have no friends. The child needs stability through few caregivers who are responsible for the child. The child needs tenderness and physical touch and support from an adult in order to be able to develop good friendships outside the family (ibid).

*Social behaviour*

Studies in social psychology show that “good behaviour and public appearance is an asset in order to manage well in adult life” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 30, our translation). The child therefore needs to learn how to act in an appropriate way in different contexts, and tend their hygiene and clothing (ibid).

*Ability to care for oneself*

“This area comprises the practical competence that a child gradually needs to acquire in order to develop as an independent adult” (Socialstyrelsen, 2006, p 31, our translation). The child therefore needs support in caring for itself. Smaller children need to learn to eat and dress themselves, while older children may need guidance in caring for a home of their own or their economy (ibid).

### 4 METHOD

In the following section, we present the methodology, selection, mode of procedure, method of analysis and ethical considerations.

#### 4.1 Qualitative approach

This is a qualitative case study where our primary data are based on observations from the field and on qualitative interviews. For a researcher, the qualitative approach is preferred if you “seek to understand the informant from his or her personal perspective and frame of reference and seek to acquire as complete of a picture as possible of the situation of the informant” (Olsson, 2007, p.64, our translation). We chose this approach since we found it most likely to help us reach our aim and answer our key questions, since our object of research is what the personnel do in their everyday work at WEBALE, which can be counted as social work. We also wanted to get insight into their personal experiences of their situation in order to acquire a deeper understanding of their motivation to work with vulnerable children in this specific context.

The qualitative approach was suitable for the aim of our study well, since its view on knowledge is holistic, where the researcher sees the entire picture as something more than the separate parts (Olssen, 2007). Because we used a qualitative approach, we had more flexibility in our mode of procedure, for instance when it comes to formulate and reformulate questions we wanted to have answers to. The flexibility also allowed for the key questions we started with, to deepen and be reformulated where necessary during the course of the trip.
The qualitative approach is mainly inductive "i.e. it develops abstraction, terms, hypotheses and theories rather than testing existing theories" (Meriam, 1994, p 27, our translation). In this way, we first collected information from the field and then tried to understand this through appropriate theories.

This study has two key questions, both of an exploring character since it is the investigation of the questions that are in focus. The first question has a phenomenological angle of approach, i.e. seeks to find out the informants’ opinions, emotions and attitudes about a phenomenon and goes into this topic in depth. (Denscombe, 2009).

The second question concerning the social work at WEBALE has an ethnological perspective, which mainly aims at acquiring a detailed picture of what happens in everyday life (Denscombe, 2009). This was attained by/through spending two months on the field where we used our observations to collect information concerning this question.

### 4.2 Practical approach

Knowing the Ugandan countryside to be unique environment and context to us, we have chosen to use observation and interviews as a method of collecting data, in order not to lose valuable information. Using various methods is called triangulation and we have used this in order to acquire as broad and extensive empirical findings as possible for our aim and questions (Merriam, 1994). This has made it easier for us to understand the phenomena we have come in contact with and we see it as a strength in our material, since these methods of collecting data have complemented each other on different levels. When it comes to the distribution of work, we have both been involved in each part of the essay. However, we decided to take main responsibility for different parts of the writing, instead of writing everything together. In the end, the parts we wrote were of equal size.

During the course of our research, we have been present at WEBALE where the individuals and the activities we wanted to research are, and this method is therefore called field work. “The method can be described as naturalistic and aims at seeking knowledge about individuals and social groups in the contexts where they live and work” (Kaijser, 1999, p 24, our translation).

We spent eight weeks in Uganda while collecting material for our study. We chose to spend one week at the school at a time and then travel into town for two to three days in order to organize the material we had collected, to discuss and gain new strength and energy in order to then go back to the school again refreshed and reenergized.

What we did not know when we decided to write this thesis at WEBALE was that the pupils would have their long Christmas break the greater part of the period we were aiming at spending at WEBALE. Many of the children who usually live at and attend the school went back to their families or relatives during the break and it turned out only 60 out of 146 pupils would stay at WEBALE during out time there. Several of the teachers working and living at WEBALE would equally go back to their families and friends. This resulted in us not receiving the picture of what the school and the interaction between teachers and pupils looks like the major part of the year. This, however, had the result that we better got to know the
ones that stayed and could also look closer at the interaction and activity with the smaller number of children at WEBALE.

4.3 Interviews

"An interview is carried out with a particular aim, namely that the interviewer seeks the knowledge, points of view, thoughts, experiences of something from another person. Not only the content (what is said) but also the form (the way to say things) is important." (Keijser, 1999, p 57, our translation).

The qualitative interview primarily helped us answering the question concerning the teacher volunteers, the administrators and the director’s motives for working at WEBALE. This method was important since we were interested in going deeper in order to find out the background of the interviewee, in order to better understand their motive for working at WEBALE.

During the interview, we also had the opportunity to ask questions around our key questions concerning the social work at WEBALE and how the interviewees experience and view working with vulnerable children. Through the interviews, we could furthermore follow up, complement and straighten out question marks on things we had observed.

We chose to carry out semi-structured interviews, which means that we entered the interviews with questions and themes already prepared, which we asked our informants. These questions were open-ended, with space for attendant questions (see the interview guide in the appendix). We saw this as a flexible and relaxed way of carrying out the interviews, which matched the context we were in. When making the interviews, we had the area principle as a starting point, which means starting in the periphery of the field and move towards the centre and asks more sensitive questions as the interview continues, in order to finally land in general questions (Dalen, 2008).

We made four personal interviews, i.e. interviewed one person at a time (Denscombe, 2009). During the interviews, we were both present, but decided beforehand who would lead the interview, while the other was present and listened, took notes and finally filled in with attendant questions if needed.

We recorded the interviews with a dictaphone, so that we would be able to be as concentrated on the interview as possible in the actual interview situation and not have to write simultaneously. We chose this method particularly since the interviews were carried out in a language that was not our mother tongue and it was a security to be able to go back in our material and listen to it and analyse it at a later point. We used a dictaphone with an mp3 function and a usb-connection, so that we both would have easy access to the material on our respective/separate computers. Although the transcription was time-consuming, we chose to transcribe the entire interview material, so as not lose anything in the analysis process.

4.4 Participant observation

We also chose to use the method of participant observation; “The method thus implies that the researcher spends time in and takes part in the social context that is studied – he or she converses with, spends time with, perhaps works together with individuals and have similar experiences as they – and continually take notes
about the location and what is said and done there” (Kaijser, 1999, p 74, our translation).

We found the ethnographic research method of participant observation matched our study aim, since the second key question aims at investigating what it is that happens in everyday life at WEBALE that can be counted as social work. Since we were going to be present on the field for a longer period of time and be present in the everyday life of individuals, we soon realized that participation was a prerequisite for acquiring the material we were seeking. We found it very practical and natural to use this method of collecting data, since the objects and subjects we wanted to study were present within a limited and accessible geographical area, where we lived and spent time in during our observations. It probably would have created an awkward situation both for us and the ones we observed, if we would only have observes and not participated in the everyday activities. This was therefore a way for us to be accepted and for the participants in our investigation to feel comfortable with and trust us.

In order to document our observations, we continually took field notes, which according to Olsson & Sörenssen (2007) should be as concrete and free from interpretation as possible. We therefore structured our field notes in two categories. One category consisted of concrete observations as free as possible from evaluation and one category which was more similar to a personal diary, where it is possible to write freely about what one thought and felt in various situations.

One has to be conscious of the fact that the presence of the researcher can affect the group and its pattern of interaction, which can be negative for the research, since it is the behavior in everyday life that is sought to be investigated (Denscombe, 2009). This was something we discussed back and forth to reach the conclusion that the value of the observations outweighed the possible affect we could have on the group. Since the Western volunteers had been present at WEBALE the last/previous year, we also saw this as a factor that could help reduce the contrast we made as white Westerners at the school, in comparison with if this had not been the case.

Critique directed toward participant observation as a method of collecting data is man’s subjective perception that can lead to unreliability (Merriam, 1994). We tried to avoid this as much as possible through seeking to take objective field notes and avoid our own evaluation.

4.5 Validity och reliability
”Validity concerns the extent to which research data and methods to acquire data are regarded as exact, true and accurate” (Denscombe, 2009, p 425, our translation). The validity thus means measuring that which one aimed to measure and there is a clear connection between the theoretical and the empirical. The study is then regarded to carry high validity (Olsson & Sörensen, 2007).

During the entire field study, we have continually and separately made observations and taken field notes. At the return to Sweden, when comparing our notes, they proved to be similar, mentioning the same or similar situations in everyday life at WEBALE. This resulted in a sense of security in the validity of the material we had collected. In some cases, when we were not present at the
same time, we were able to observe different things in different places, and thus able to complement each other’s observations. Overall, our observations are very similar.

When it comes to the validity of our observations, if we have been able to "blend in", we believe we have been able to participate in the everyday life in a natural way, both from the perspective of the teachers and the children. We have been able to be part of the activities and get our questions answered in an uncomplicated way. Our interviews have also been proceeding smoothly. The interviewees understood our questions and we believe the interview climate was such that the interviewees were free to be honest and open, also when referring to things of a personal and in many cases private nature.

We are aware of the fact that to a large extent and through our ethnographical perspective, we use ourselves as an instrument to acquire the information we need for this thesis. We can neither be neutral nor passive and it could therefore be argued that our method of collection of observation material is subjective. Since we come from a different culture and culture than the one we have chosen to investigate, this may also be regarded as a cultural reflection, that our “Western eyes” have missed important parts, or that we have emphasized areas that a Ugandan social worker might not have paid attention to. We do not claim to be able to see this context with any other eyes than our own, formed by the Swedish context we have been brought up in.

Reliability “implies that an instrument continually gives the same data” (Denscombe, 2009, p 424, our translation), i.e. one will reach the same result if the study is carried out again under the same conditions. Reliability is important in quantitative studies, but has no great importance in qualitative investigations, since the results cannot be generalized (ibid). We have chosen not to claim that our material can be generalized for bigger contexts than this particular location and in some aspects for the particular individual we chose to interview.

4.6 Selection
As stated earlier, we came in contact with WEBALE almost three years ago through our association, which supports WEBALE. Therefore, it was a strategic choice to get in contact with and carry the study out at this particular orphanage and school.

Our interviewees in the study are heterogeneous, not randomly but strategically selected. During the time we spent at WEBALE, eight teachers were working there. Three of these teachers lived within walking distance from WEBALE and five of the teachers lived at WEBALE during the terms. Since the largest part of our stay there coincided with a term break, only three of these teachers were staying at the school and we chose to interview one of these teachers. We also chose to interview one of the teachers living in the vicinity, since we learnt that this teacher had been working at the school for a long period of time and grown up in the village where the school is located. Further, we chose to interview the school administrator, who has the overall responsibility for what happens at WEBALE and who we learnt has a similar past to the children living at the school. We also found it natural to interview the founder of the school, the driving force behind the establishing and development of the school. Even though our area of study is limited, the selection of interviewees proved hard, since we would
have found it interesting to interview everyone working at WEBALE’s school and orphanage. Since this study is of limited extent, however, we had to limit ourselves to interviewing four people.

4.7 Method of analysis
Since our approach is qualitative, our analysis consists of words and descriptions of our material from a holistic perspective. We have coded our material and grouped the codes into themes (Denscombe, 2009). In practice, this means looking at the material and trying to find central themes in the text. These themes are broken down into words called codes. Between the codes, we have tried to identify connections, in order to be able to group the codes believed belong together, and found a theme we found matched the content of these codes. Then we looked for terms from theories that would help us understand and summarize the themes we had found.

When it comes to the observation material, we have used a similar method as with the qualitative interviews, of looking at our field notes and grouping the material according to similar activities/events. We gave these events different codes and then tried to find suitable themes that summarized the content of the codes (Fangen, 2005). We have chosen to illustrate this by selecting particularly central observations from our field notes and then applied our theory, in order to show the preventions and interventions we found being carried through at WEBALE.

4.8 The role of the researcher
In this section, we will discuss our role that may be relevant to our study process and results. We will discuss issues related to our identity and background such as issues of race, gender relations, age and our involvement in the association that supports WEBALE’s school and orphanage.

The role of the researcher is important for the research process, especially regarding the qualitative study and particularly when it comes to ethnographical studies where the researcher to a large extent uses him-/herself as a tool in the investigation (Denscombe, 2009). According to Denscombe (2009, p 100, our translation), “the identity of the researcher, his/her values and ideas become part of the equation”. Therefore, it is particularly important that we as researchers try to describe who we are, since this may have an effect on the results of our study.

Before we decided to do our study at WEBALE’s school and orphanage wrote to the director and asked if we could visit the school in order to write our thesis. Our question received positive response and we were welcomed to come and do our investigation. We hope and believe that the positive response not was a result of the fact that we are part of the association supporting WEBALE but because they see it as a good opportunity to enlighten people on the efforts WEBALE and similar grass root organizations make. However, we have observed and discussed the fact that we can seem to be in a position of power, since we are both members of the association affecting the support to WEBALE and at the same time we carry out an investigation. We have therefore tried to be clear with our connection to WEBALE’s school and orphanage, to prevent questions to arise regarding this.

Because of our personal connection to WEBALE, as far as possible we would like to avoid doing an evaluative study of the organization WEBALE. Instead, we would like to do a study that focuses on how and what is done in social work in
this specific context and acquire a deeper understanding of the motives of the workers behind their work, i.e. how, what and why. We have been clear in pointing this out to those working at WEBALE, so that they do not perceive the reason for our investigation to evaluate them, but because we are curious and want to learn what social work can look like in a context that is different from the Swedish one we are used to, and that we want to hear their own experiences from and motivation for working with social work at WEBALE.

Furthermore, we have discussed the situation of finding ourselves in a developing country, in a culture different from ours, and how this might affect us and the thesis. We have adapted as well as possible to their lifestyle while on the field. While making our participant observations, our aim was to become as much a natural part of their everyday life as possible. Although this worked well and we believe to have received access to their sphere, we still stood out. First, our skin colour stood in contrast to the people living and working at the compound. Wherever we went, children would shout “Muzongo!” after us, which means ‘white person’. This difference was impossible to hide or get away from. White people are associated with the Western world and often with wealth. However, our experience was what white people predominantly were connected with something positive, and we were well-received wherever we went. Second, we are two young women. How this affected our study is hard to tell. Women in Uganda have a fairly strong position in society, thus our role as female students and researchers should not have had a negative impact on the investigation. The school has both male and female staff. The majority of the people we observed and interviewed, however, are men. We found it easy to get in contact both with staff and children during our stay.

Another aspect that may be important to consider is age and how this can affect the investigation. We found that several teachers at the school were in our age. We believe this to be to our advantage, since older people often seem to have a hierarchical status, something which we did not want to have attached to ourselves as researchers.

4.9 Research ethics
There are four research-ethical principles within research pertaining to social science, formed by the Swedish Research Council: the demand of information, the demand of agreement, the demand of confidentiality and the demand of utilization.

According to these principles, the researcher is to inform the people affected by the research of the aim of the investigation. The informants in the study have the right to decide if they would like to be part of it or not and can discontinue an interview whenever they want without being questioned by the researcher. The informants should be given anonymity and their personal information be kept in a place where no outsider can have access to it. Finally, the principles state that the material collected for the research should not be used for anything else than the specific purpose of research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

From the beginning, we made sure that the teacher volunteers, administrator and director were informed that we were students from Sweden, coming to WEBALE to write our thesis in social work. We told them about the aim of our thesis and carefully pointed out that we did not want to do an evaluating study, but that we
were interested in learning more about and trying to understand how they work and what experiences and thoughts they have concerning their work. We also found it important to emphasise that it was not our aim to use the children in our thesis, since they are already a vulnerable group, and clarified that it was the work of the staff that we wanted to study.

We are aware that anonymity might be hard to attain in a work place as small as WEBALE. In the section where the results of the participant observations are presented, it will not be possible to distinguish who did what. When it comes to the interviews, it will possible be clear to people familiar with the school and orphanage who said what. We informed our interviewees of this at the time of the interview and every informant agreed to still be interviewed. Several expressed that many of the staff already knew their background and motivation behind working at WEBALE and that this was no secret.

We have, however, chosen to de-identify the name of the school and orphanage to the outside, not because this was the wish of the organization, but on the basis of research-ethical principles. One can never be sure what will happen in the future, how the school will develop and what the relationships will look like. Therefore, we have chosen to do this de-identify out of respect for the organization and its staff.

Although a thesis on this level, from a research-ethical perspective, does not allow us to investigate and write about the children, we have not been able to avoid observing the children, since part of our aim is to observe how the teachers act in their interaction with the children in everyday life.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In the presentation of results and in the analysis, we have given our informants fictitious names. The following names will be used:

Director: Charles
Administrator: Thomas
Teacher 1: Sarah
Teacher 2: Fred

We start by looking at key question 1 which consists of two parts: the personal accounts of the volunteers and their relation to WEBALE, and their motivation for working with orphans and vulnerable children in an NGO such as WEBALE.

5.1 The volunteers’ personal accounts about themselves and their relationship to WEBALE

In order to get insight into the motivation of the volunteers for working with orphans and vulnerable children in the present conditions, an important part is to understand what background the informants have and in what way and context they grew up. Three out of the four personal accounts of the informants’ own background are more or less connected to the story of how WEBALE’s school and orphanage started. Through analyzing the results of our first key question by connecting it to Antonovsky’s theory of SOC, we can explain the subjective
reasons behind the informants’ motivation for working as volunteers at WEBALE. We can also get insight into what this means for the informant, through the way the individual describes their story and the way in which they have been able to comprehend, manage and find meaning in their situation.

5.1.1 Charles
Charles is the founder of WEBALE’s school and orphanage and sees himself as the vision bearer and the planner of the organization. Charles is the spider in the web of the organization. If he is not at the school or orphanage or at the WEBALE office, he will be found at meetings on issues concerning HIV/AIDS.

The director Charles grew up under hard circumstances himself, in an exposure that made him vulnerable. He was rejected by his father at an early age and had no siblings that could support him. This led to feeling deserted, by having to face difficulties and suffering alone. In 1992 he learnt that he was HIV-positive, news that would change Charles’ life forever. To receive such news and start thinking about what consequences there are to being HIV-positive meant that he almost went under. His counselor said he would not survive and gave him between two months and two years more to live. He ended up in a crisis and did not know if he was the only one facing this problem, or if there were others in the same situation. This was during a time when knowledge about HIV was still poor and it was taboo to talk about it. Due to stigma and discrimination, very few HIV infected persons opted to seek medical care and receive medication. Furthermore, information on anti-retroviral drugs and how much they cost was not easily accessible, so many thought the medicine would be more expensive than it turned out to be and therefore did not even try to get hold of it.

Charles was exposed to various stress triggers that made his situation something that Antonovsky (2005) could call cluttered (our translation), i.e. chaotic, unstructured and inexplicable. In spite of this, Charles chose to visit a hospital for treatment and was there referred to other infected individuals. When he had the opportunity to meet other HIV-infected people who were open with their disease, he asked them about their life stories and about their relation to HIV. He was wondering how others had been treated while growing up, if they had had similar difficulties and suffering as he had. When there turned out to be several individuals around him with similar experiences as his, he had more hope to be able to do something about his situation. Together, they started a network, WEBALE, to support each other and together be able to process the suffering they were going through.

Charles started to experience inner and outer stimuli as intelligibly apprehensible and structured, and he could now understand and explain his situation, something that according to Antonovsky (2005) is the first step to sense of coherence. Charles saw his situation and the origin of the problem as more comprehensible. Antonovsky (2005) claims that individuals with a high sense of coherence view information as a potential resistance resource which will be sought when useful, which describes how Charles acted.

An important factor that led to him contracting HIV is, according to Charles, the lack of parental care and love. There was no one that could guide and advise him properly. After some time, most of the people in the network were parents themselves and Charles realized that their children would probably face problems
by being rejected because of the stigma associated with HIV, as well as eventually becoming orphans and without the kind of parental care and love they would need not to end up in the same misery as their parents. There was a great lack of social safety net and the number of orphans in the country was already larger than the resources to care for them. Charles turned to a friend who was working at an orphanage and asked her to take care of his children when the time had come for him to pass away. The woman said she was already overwhelmed with children to care for, and that there was no possibility to receive more. However, she encouraged Charles and said he did not need to worry about his children, because he was not going to die yet. Charles was encouraged by the meeting with the woman at the orphanage and realized there was a way for him to protect the children, and that was through becoming dependent on his friends in the network.

"However weak somebody is, if there is a collective effort, maybe a problem can be solved./.../ We can destroy a problem if collectively we are together."
(Interview, 14/12/2010)

He started mobilizing other HIV-infected people for his cause from three different districts and challenged them to join the network. He often got the response that he "disturbed them in their waiting to die", but he did not give up and continued his own and their common fight against the disease. Charles had now developed a way to manage the situation.

According to Antonovsky (2005), this course of events can be thus analyzed that Charles to a large extent experienced that he had resources in other people who were in a situation similar to his own. With these resources, Charles could now meet the challenges he faced by the stimuli he had been overwhelmed by (ibid).

By the year of 1997, several of the members of the organization had passed away due to AIDS, and consequently some of their children had become orphaned street children. Charles continually gathered the network and challenged them and himself to action, but because of lacking financial resources, among other things, many believed that there was nothing they could do.

“That was now the beginning but many of them thought I was crazy because I was trying something that was impossible and impracticable to them.” (Interview, 14/12/2010)

Charles met the orphans on the street, whose parents had been part of the network, and felt very touched by meeting them. The children he met were around 9-11 years old and they were telling him about the challenges they were facing on the street and how there were no other alternatives for them. Charles understood that even though the network did not fully support his vision, he had to act. He got involved and regarded the opportunity to change the situation for these children as important, which gave him something which Antonovsky (2005) would define as the third component, meaningfulness.

Charles took these orphaned street children off the street and brought them to a small village outside the capital, an area free from the negative sides of the slum that had earlier been their home. At this point, there were 37 children living together in the countryside. Eventually, in 2001, the care was developed to also include schooling. From the start, Charles planted the idea in the network and the
children that WEBALE is possible if there is a collective responsibility and the children later can take care of and replace the network and continue the cycle of good spirit.

5.1.2 Thomas

Thomas is 29 years old and has been part of WEBALE’s school and orphanage since its start. The last five years he has had the role of administrator and lives together with his family at the school and orphanage.

The administrator, Thomas, became an orphan at an early age. He lost his father when he was in grade five in primary school. He had an uncle who paid his school fees the last two years of primary school, but after that, things got difficult for him and he could no longer continue his schooling. He tells us how he underwent suffering and felt as though he was left without any person to take care of him. Even though his own father was still alive, Thomas felt as though his father did not show him any love.

Similarly to Charles, Thomas’ life was filled with various stress triggers, according to Denvall & Vinnerljung (2006) called risk factors. Life experiences characterized by ambiguity, an overload on problems and slight possibility of participating in decision-making characterized Thomas’ life (Antonovsky, 2005). A relative of Thomas’, who knew Charles, connected them and Charles visited Thomas and took him on. Thomas lived with Charles and in the beginning he joined him in his previous job as an electrician. Eventually, Charles financed Thomas’ continued schooling, which meant that he could finish secondary school. Thomas tells us how he was encouraged by Charles to continue fighting and never give up. Charles said to Thomas that it was time to continue with life. So Thomas fought his way through and got good results on tests, which led to a governmental sponsorship, which paid for half the university fee. Charles paid the other half so that Thomas could get a teaching degree, and he graduated only one year ago. During his entire time at university, he followed WEBALE’s development closely and attended the meetings with the network, even prior to the school and orphanage were founded. In these meetings, drama, singing and music were used to discuss and process their situation.

Thus, Thomas acquired more comprehensibility of his own situation. His manageability increased due to resources such as social and financial support, stability, home and occupation, which are examples of what Antonovsky (2005) defines as general resistance resources that are important for reaching a higher sense of coherence and move in a desirable direction in the continuum of increased health. Ohlsson, (2001 in Ander et al, 2005) would define the same thing as protection factors. Thomas listened when the network discussed their problems and has a particularly strong memory of the day when Charles was pleading with the network for a common solution for their children.

“"I remember one thing that Charles told them. I was there when he asked the members that today, we are here, tomorrow, we don’t know when we are going. And our children, what is going to happen with them, in terms of education? He kind of mentioned it as kind of a job, to have a school to have these children from our late members, like members who are now dying. So he said please, please, please, we should gather our members, the children of our fellow members and put them somewhere.” (Interview, 25/11/2010)
5.1.3 Sarah
Sarah is 29 years old and has been a teacher volunteer at WEBALE since she finished her studies four years ago. She teaches the younger children in the second and third grade of primary school the four basic subjects. She lives with her family in a neighbouring village.

The teacher Sarah was born and grew up in the village where WEBALE’s school and orphanage started, although at that time there was nothing but forest there. Her father passed away when she was a small child and her mother had to raise her and her siblings on her own. The mother had enough resources to finance part of her schooling, so Sarah attended a governmental school until fourth grade of secondary school in a village nearby. Sarah remembers that a man was visiting the village and speaking of his plans to start a school and a center for AIDS orphans. The man whom she later learnt to know as Charles got in contact with Sarah’s mother, who was an influential person in the village. Every village is organized with a leadership, the Local Council Members, with a chairman who makes decisions concerning the village and their inhabitants. Sarah’s mother brought Charles to the Local Council Members and asked for permission to start the school and orphanage. Charles received a positive reply and brought the first children to the village and Sarah got to know him and the work he was doing. She witnessed how they had to live very simply in the beginning. At that point, there were no school buildings and Charles and the children had to sleep on the ground in the shade of the trees to start with. When Sarah had finished her senior year of secondary school, she had a longing to help with the project in her village.

“So as I went for my college, I came back and said: I should also go and start helping him!” (Interview, 4/12/2010)

According to Antonovsky (2005), people with a sense of coherence see themselves as actors instead of victims. Thus, in difficult seasons or with a difficult background or life situation, they can get out of a problem and take action instead of staying in the problem and remain passive. This corresponds to concept of coping, which describes a human being’s ability to manage stressful and emotionally demanding situations. The choice to act, as Sarah did, against injustice caused by social problem in a country where society is not enough, shows that she has what Antonovsky (2005) would define as manageability and which is the second component in his theory. The fact that she finds it important to get involved in the work with the orphaned and vulnerable children proves meaningfulness, which is the third component in SOC.

5.1.4 Fred
Fred is 25 years old and has lived and been a teacher volunteer at WEBALE since the beginning of 2009. He teaches the older children mathematics, in grade four to seven of primary school.

The teacher Fred grew up in the city together with his mother. His father was financially well off and paid for Fred’s schooling including secondary school. His father then ended his financial support of Fred, which made him feel neglected and let down and he was very angry with his father. Fred’s journey to the teaching profession was not straight, since his dream from childhood was to become a medical doctor, but because of lacking resources he had to change his plans when
the financial support was cut off. He started working as a substitute teacher, but was not satisfied with the situation at the school at which he was working. Through a friend, Fred was connected to Charles in 2008, who told him about WEBALE, which touched Fred. Charles brought Fred to the village where he was able to see WEBALE with his own eyes. To start with, he was reluctant to move out to WEBALE. The hut where he would live had no light and was very simple. He was used to a comfortable house in town, varied food from restaurants and living close to friends. Moving out to the village would make a large contrast to the life he had lived in the city. The first night he hardly slept at all, because he was afraid and was contemplating whether he really was prepared to live in such simple conditions. He felt lost and out of place. When he met the children the next day he thought to himself that if these children are here, it might be a good place for him to be at, as well, a place where he can do good to other people.

According to Antonovsky (2005), a way of creating a higher sense of coherence is re-defining what is meaningful in one’s life. Something that was important at an earlier point, but which is no longer possible, can be defined as something less important, if something else in life can be elevated and prioritized as more meaningful. Fred was inspired by Charles and by the work he and the network were doing for the orphans and vulnerable children and found it interesting. This led to him wanting to become a part of WEBALE and help the children. Charles had become a role model and a father figure for Fred.

"I think of him in steps of my dad, everything he does, I feel I should do. He inspires me when he is helping the children" (Interview, 3/12/2010)

5.2 The volunteers’ motivation for working with the orphans and vulnerable children in an NGO such as WEBALE

Motivation is an important part of professional life and often something that helps people go to work. The major difference between fully paid work and voluntary work (which however can imply some form of incitement) is that if motivation leaves the volunteer, there is not much that keeps him/her at his/her work. We can therefore conclude that a volunteer has a certain motive or underlying reasons for doing his/her work. There can further be many various motives or reasons why people work voluntarily. What motivates one person does not necessarily motivate another. At our study visit at WEBALE, we were curious of and interested in what factors drive and motivate the volunteers to work at WEBALE. In Sweden, we are used to involvement in associations and various forms of voluntary work. Nearly half of all citizens carry out around 16 hours of voluntary work every month (Svedberg, et al, 2010). At the same time, it is difficult to compare this with voluntary work which involves far more than a normal main occupation, which is the case with the volunteers at WEBALE.

There are many Western studies on what it is that motivated individuals to voluntary work in the Western homeland. However, this type of research concerns voluntary work that takes up a minor part of the person’s time, since it rarely includes voluntary work as a fulltime occupation. There are furthermore studies that describe Westerners motivation for voluntary work in developing countries. Neither example of research is relevant for our study, since it proves difficult to compare to volunteers in a developing country who work more than fulltime and do not have any other primary occupation. It is hard to find research on motivation for voluntary work in this category of volunteers. One of the world’s
largest organizations with voluntary work is the Red Cross. According to them, people who choose to work voluntarily have different needs and expectations and that it is important to understand what it is that motivates them. In an article from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2007), it becomes clear that a challenge for this organization is the “lack of analysis/awareness of volunteer motivation” and that there is an “insufficient awareness of volunteerism”. In countries in Africa, the extended poverty results in volunteers often being young and unemployed and financial incitement is a problem (ibid). However, since voluntary work can offer work experience and opportunities of education, many volunteers know that the skills they acquire through their voluntary work can give them the opportunity of career development (ibid).

There is a clear connection between the background of the informant and why they work with vulnerable children today. Every informant in the present study was vulnerable and exposed to various risk factors as a child, they were either orphans or neglected or abused in different ways. We have chosen to group the informants’ underlying reasons for voluntary work in three parts: altruistic reasons, personal reasons and religious reasons.

5.2.1 Altruistic motivation

Thomas strongly feels he wants to help the children, because he knows they do not have anyone else. According to him, these children will never receive 100% of what they need. From his own experiences of childhood that caused him a lot of suffering, he has a driving force not to let these children suffer in the same way he did. In a practical way, he is able to help children in the same situation he lived in, by breaking the pattern and preventing a reproduction of the let-downs of the adult world and instead be there for these children. He is motivated by a feeling inside that he should be helping others. According to him, through his own background and vulnerability, he understands the situation of these children and how they function.

According to Antonovsky (2005), an attribute of people with a high sense of coherence is the belief that problems can be changed and that one has the ability to change chaos into order and confusion into clarity. For Thomas, a big part of his work includes finding solutions to difficult problems and situations. He says it is not an easy task to be at WEBALE, but sees every day as a challenge. Since he has higher education, he would be able to find a more highly regarded job and earn considerably more than he does today. His explanation to why he still has chosen to stay at WEBALE is because he recognizes himself in the children. He was once an orphan and went through the same kind of suffering that the children at WEBALE go through. The only way to have a heart for the project, he says, is to have the same experiences as the children. Another motivation for him is to continually be challenged.

"Working in a NGO, maybe like WEBALE, I don’t look at it as something easy, and I’ve never found anything to be easy since I joined this place. It’s like a kind of problems and solutions. Daily, daily problems. However, to me myself I feel it’s very challenging and I’m even training myself to see and become someone to resist the problems. Not only resist the problems, but also find the quick solutions. And the whole thing becomes very interesting." (Interview, 25/11/2010)
For Sarah, it is important to help the children get better opportunities in the future. She says that many orphans or children vulnerable in many ways never get to the school and therefore misses out on education, which she believes to be the most important factor for a better future. Therefore, she wants to be part of supporting these children that have been given the opportunity to come to WEBALE. If she can help these children, it can result in them moving on in life and sustaining the life of their families and other people. She is also motivated by helping the children by being like a parent to them, to be someone who is there for them and does not let them down. She has her own experiences of being an orphan and knows what it feels like. Therefore, she believes that if she helps them, they will believe they have parents, and not feel discriminated by other people.

"The best thing is helping the orphans, yes. You help them to feel at home, feel they also have people who care for them. And sometimes when they see other teachers going away, they cry. They think we are now left alone, yet we have been used to such and such teacher. So helping them is the most important". (Interview, 4/12/2010)

According to Fred, there is a strength that he shares with the children that comes from having to take care of oneself, when there is no parent that can help. In this way, he has a lot in common with the children. He was not orphaned, but he was let down and neglected by his father, as some of the children at WEBALE. This has given him a strength that others do not have. When he realized that some of the children do not have parents who care about them, he realized they were in the same situation he had been in when he was younger, and this moved him to help them and want to be there for them. He tells us that the drive to help is strong and one of the most important reasons why he works as a volunteer. Often he gets a lot in return from the children in form of encouragement. They are thankful for the help he gives them and it means a lot to him to hear that his help has made a difference for someone.

This is also a motivation for Charles, when he notices how people in his surrounding encourage him, believe in the work he does and have positive attitude to it. When he sees that people are willing to support the school one way or another, it means that he has been able to show others that the impossible is possible, which becomes a drive for him. Charles runs the organization with the ambition and aim to restore hope for people who are going through difficulties. For many of the individuals in his surrounding, every day is a challenge and HIV is the primary reason for many of the problems people face. According to Charles, HIV makes infected people desperate. To receive the news of being HIV-positive has an enormous impact on the infected one. It is connected with a considerable physical challenge and stress that make many lose hope of a functioning life. As with the other informants, Charles’ own experiences have largely affected the fact that he chose a work situation and lifestyle connected with being involved in WEBALE. He wants to help people who have lost hope to regain it by noticing that they are not alone in their problems and by understanding that there are people in a similar situation who care about them and who want to help them in a practical way. Charles believes that if a person regains hope, they can change the course of their own life in a positive direction. This is why it is so important to be part of restoring hope in people. If the guardians of the children regain hope, they can break a negative circle by being there for their children and not transfer their hopelessness to them. This can create the conditions
for a better future in the new generation. There is a tendency that parents do not tell their children that they have HIV. When the parents pass away, the children do not know the reason for their death and also have no knowledge about HIV or how the virus is spread. Charles is therefore motivated to encourage the parents to reveal their status to their children, talk about the problem and make them understand how they can avoid ending up in the same situation. In the same way, he works preventively with the children, by empowering them to be responsible citizens and finding ways to prevent the spreading of HIV.

“Understanding the cause of the problem and make the rest also to understand the cause of the problem, because without understanding the cause of the problem there could be repetition of the same problem continuing.” (Interview, 14/12/2010)

5.2.2 Personal motivation

Although the staff at WEBALE is called volunteers, they do not work entirely voluntarily. Depending on the role they have within the organization and whether or not they live at the school and orphanage, they receive an allowance every month in the form of a symbolic sum of money. However, the economy does not always allow this, and sometimes several months can pass before they can get paid. They also receive food, accommodation and treatment by a nurse, through working at WEBALE. For the volunteers who live and the school and orphanage, gruel for breakfast is included, along with another two meals per day, often consisting of brown beans and posho (an East African dish made of maize flour and water). The allowances are one reason why the informants have chosen to work at WEBALE; it is a motivation that affects them, since they do not have another income and since they have family and other people in their community living in poverty and in need of financial means to create better life conditions. The informants also dream about a regular salary in order to secure the future for their children by paying for their secondary and academic education and dreams of for example one day having their own home.

Another factor that motivates many of the informants to work at WEBALE is the opportunity for a larger network of contacts. According to Fred, it means a lot to be able to get to know new friends through work. Those who work at WEBALE share every day together. Especially to Fred and the others living at the school and orphanage, the importance of the fellowship among the volunteers becomes clear.

"There is no bigger thing than getting friends /.../ If you have a big problem you talk to your friends at WEBALE. I have this problem can you help me he says ok, we shall try. Every time friends are there to help you and also you help them, like that." (Interview, 3/12/2010)

By working at WEBALE, they meet visitors from various parts of Uganda and the world. These visits mainly consist of people from different NGO’s that support WEBALE and travel to Uganda from Europe, USA and Australia to make study visits or carry out projects. Although most visitors only stay for a shorter period of time, Fred finds it encouraging for the volunteers to have the chance of getting to know people from other countries, who then think about the volunteers and children and tell their story as they go back to their home country.
Fred is also motivated by learning new things. He finds himself continually developing as a person through various challenges and acquiring valuable experiences by working at WEBALE. Among other things, he learns how to manage different problems and how to handle the children that come to him for help. He has had an increased understanding of how people function and a deeper social ability and competence which he regards as important for creating relationships and deepen friendships, which he believes in turn to lead to a happier life.

The informants put a lot of emphasis on results and success for the children, such as good grades. Thomas finds everything he does for WEBALE worth his efforts when he knows the children are achieving well on the national exams. One reason why it is so important for Thomas to see the results is because of who the children are. Since he is working with vulnerable children, he knows that they have worse chances than other children. Many of the children are without hope and some of them are almost wild when they come to WEBALE. Therefore, to work with these children and develop them to something good becomes a motivation. He then has proof that his work and efforts make a difference. At the end of each year, the national exams take place, and for the children in the seventh grade in primary school, they are particularly important, since they partly will determine the future of the child. Even though Sarah does not teach the seventh grade in primary school, it is still a motivation for her to see the oldest children get good grades on their exams. She feels part of it, since she laid the foundation while teaching them when they were younger. Fred explains that when the children get good results on the exams, this proves to him that he can help them change their own situation, which motivates him to be a volunteer and gives him a sense of success in his work.

There is a clear connection between Sarah’s personal story of herself and her motivation for volunteering at WEBALE. Since the school and orphanage are located in her village where she was born and raised, WEBALE means a lot not only to her but to the entire village. She wants to help at WEBALE in order to simultaneously help the village to develop. There are moreover practical reasons why she works at WEBALE, since the school compound is situated close to her new village and she can walk to and from work.

Charles founded WEBALE as a way to make sure that his own children would not be left to a life on the streets if orphaned at an early age. It was a way for him to quiet his worries and mental stress of being HIV-infected, in particular since he had received the news that he was to die soon. Something that also motivates him is to see his vision come to pass and to prove to those who did not believe him that he has been able to found a school and orphanage.

Both for Thomas and Fred, the gratitude they feel towards Charles is a great motivation. Thomas is aware of the fact that he would not be who he is today if it had not been for Charles. He feels that if one has benefited in some way from the project, this is a reason to contribute and give back into it. He gives his own examples of how he has had the opportunity to get an education, to learn to speak English, but even more importantly that he has been “saved” from a life of misery and instead gets to be a part of building the national, although on a grass root level. Because of the care Charles has shown him, he wants to help others in a similar situation that he was in as a child. If he would leave WEBALE, he would
leave Charles and the organization in a difficult situation, since he knows that it would be difficult to find anyone to replace him. Fred has dreams of getting further education and a career, but at the same time the interest in and loyalty to WEBALE is a big drive.

"Even if I would go and become someone in the world I think I should come back to WEBALE. Because Charles, he was so good, he was good to me". (Interview, 3/12/2010)

5.2.3 Religious motives
In Uganda, the majority of the population is Christian, and a minority is Muslim. We believe that religion has a more important role for people in Uganda than what we are used to in Sweden, which is generally known as one of the most secularized countries in the world. For the informants, their faith in God and their religious identity plays a significant part and motivates them to be volunteers. For Sarah and Fred, their Christian faith is a reason why they work as volunteers with vulnerable children. They describe how they view blessings, something with which God rewards a person who is good to their neighbours.

"If you help the needed, then God gives you blessings. So I think it is very good to work with such people, the orphans and the vulnerable". (Sarah, Interview, 4/12/2010)

According to Sarah, God's blessings are not always clear, but she is convinced that she will be blessed in one way or another by caring for and helping these children. Fred describes blessings as something more than appreciation. It is God’s way of rewarding the one who does something good for someone else, in particular for the vulnerable, who are often orphans. Sometimes, the blessing cannot be seen immediately but is something one notices when looking back at one’s life. Fred tells us an example of how he lost something that was very precious to him and how it later in an unexpected way was returned to him. It is a mystery to him, but when he thinks of this situation it becomes proof to him of God showing his blessings to the ones who help the orphans.

5.3 Summary
It is not an obvious matter of course that the informants in this study would find comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness in their lives. There is no type of personality or coping strategy that always leads to dealing successfully with stress triggers (Antonovsky, 2005). They are people who are motivated by a desire to solve their problems, which initially implies clarifying the kind and dimension of the problem and the reality that surrounds it, and furthermore to manage it through choosing the resources that best helps tackle the problem (ibid). In all cases, the reason for the problems of the informants was strongly connected to HIV and/or insufficiencies of various kinds in their childhood. When the informants had become adults themselves, and three of them had children of their own, they realized how they can handle their own life situation and help others, in whom they recognize themselves, to comprehend and manage their situation. When the generalized picture of the world as meaningful and comprehensible focuses on the specific situation, which according to our analysis is the case with the informants in this study, one is ready to act (ibid). According to the informants’ own accounts of themselves and their motivation for working with orphans and vulnerable children, they have directed this action described by
Antonovsky (2005) to deal with the problems that earlier hindered and limited them, both on an instrumental and emotional level, but which today might be the primary reason why they are volunteers at WEBALE. There are no guarantees in life, and reality might continue to bring difficult situations, disease, disappointments, failures and other stress triggers. However, the likeliness that a person will manage the situation in a way that does not impair adaptation is greater for individuals with a strong sense of coherence. From the various opportunities reality provides, the chance is bigger for these people to use them and facing a stress trigger might have a less of an effect on them than on individuals without a sense of coherence, and maybe even have positive effects (ibid).

Although the three components of SOC are closely related to one another, Antonovsky (2005) finds meaningfulness the most central one and this is an obvious motivation component for every informant in this study. People with an involvement and an ability to care for others are always able to find understanding and resources. Working as a volunteer in conditions such as the ones in the school and orphanage at WEBALE implies a lot of challenges. In spite of this, the informants in this study have chosen to work in this way, because they find it meaningful in various ways, which would prove Antonovsky’s (2005) theory that people can adapt to almost anything, as long as they have a sense of meaningfulness.

5.4 Social work at WEBALE
In the following section, we will present the second key question which concerns the social work done at WEBALE. This question is divided into three themes: school/health/leisure-time, psychological support and practical knowledge. In order to find explanations to the social involvement at WEBALE, we can look at the exo-level.

WEBALE came into being due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Many in the country have contracted the virus and died. This has resulted in a large number of children being orphaned. Because of the corruption in the country and the lack of social safety net, people cannot trust the state and have had to take action themselves. When the parents fall ill, die or/and neglect their children, the children are often cared for by extended family. As a consequence to the large number of orphans in Uganda, more and more NGOs such as WEBALE have come up as an alternative for the HIV/AIDS affected and/or in some cases neglected children. In our study, we have not investigated the exo- or meso-level, but the focus of our study is the micro-level, i.e. the interaction between the child and the individuals in their local environment, in this case the personnel at WEBALE’s school and orphanage (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Social work consists of preventions and interventions on various levels of society. The largest intervention at WEBALE is stepping in and bringing the children from their families, extended family or the street to WEBALE. The purpose is to give the children good schooling, which aims at providing them with the same opportunities as other children. When it comes to preventions to hinder negative development in groups and individuals who are in the risk areas of developing negatively, the children at the orphanage is a risk areas, since they do not have the same opportunities as other children, who receive the care they need by their original families. It is, therefore, our opinion that social work with children can
consist of meeting the needs of this risk group in order to avoid undesirable negative consequences from arising. Our starting point in this analysis is the seven areas of need for the positive development of children and if and how these are met by the staff at WEBALE (Socialstyrelsen, 2006). Since the preventive work happen on an individual level, we are dealing with indicative efforts (Ander, et al, 2006).

5.4.1 School, health and leisure-time
This theme includes health and education from the seven areas of need that children need in order to develop positively, according to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006).

WEBALE school and leisure-time
There are 146 children living at WEBALE and another 60 attending the school from nearby villages. None of the Ugandan volunteers working at the school and orphanage have studied social work. Most teachers are volunteers and teach classes in nursery school until seventh grade in primary school. The idea is to have ten employed teachers at the school, teaching the four basic subjects: mathematics, social studies, science and English. During the time we spent at the school, only eight out of ten teachers were present, since earlier in the Autumn two had left their job suddenly and there had been no time to recruit new ones yet. The aim is for the children at WEBALE to get as good a schooling as possible, in order to manage in the competition with other children. The teachers tell us that the pupils in seventh grade in primary school every year do a national exam, which is significant for their continued schooling. They proudly show their results from seventh grade in primary school as the best in the district.

As we interview mathematics teacher Fred on what he regards as the most important aspect of his work at WEBALE, he answers:

"The important thing is guiding the children and giving them more knowledge. Giving them the courage to do mathematics because in the past the children hated mathematics. So you have to show them that mathematics is possible so they can get the courage to do it and if they are doing it so well they will be happy and if you guide them and they are good children it will also show that you are really moving on with the children". (Interview, 3/12/2010)

According to Fred, it is important to encourage the children in their learning process and try to give them a positive faith in themselves and that the school subject is not impossible. Fred further tells us that he does not only teach mathematics, but also helps the pupils by career guidance.

"Someone says I want to be a doctor and he hates mathematics. So you have to tell him, please, when you want to be a doctor you have to move on with the subjects so they can get more courage". (Interview, 3/12/2010)

The school and orphanage is located in the Ugandan countryside and the children have large areas on which to move around. They have access to volleyball, football, tennis balls and skipping ropes. There are novels for them to read and sometimes they have access to card games, puzzles and other games. We see them play games and read each day around the school compound and sometimes the staff also participates in these activities.
"Today the teacher volunteers and the Western visitors have arranged a full day of activities for the pupils. Fred has arranged games, such as water games and blindfold games, etc. First we muzungos (white Westerners) are to compete against the teachers in various games. The children are sitting around the edges of the field and shout, laugh and cheer the two teams on. Both the children and the teachers jump up and down when the teachers win the first game, which consists of using your hands to fill a soda bottle with water." (Observation, 24/11/2010)

The staff at the school have more than one role. Many (however not everyone) of the teachers live in the school compound and can both follow the children’s schooling and leisure-time. Apart from teaching, they are responsible for the children and the main caregivers in their everyday life. According to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006) it is an important component for the caregivers to supervise and be involved in both the child’s schooling and leisure-time. According to Denvall & Vinnerljung (2006), this holistic overview of the children’s life can be seen as a protective factor, since the caregivers are aware of what the child is doing in both school and leisure-time and can thus prevent an undesirable behaviour from arising, such as for instance skipping school. School is the most important preventive institution (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006). To have good connection with school and teachers that are involved and understanding is a strong protective factor that help the children are well and do well in school, something that can be seen in their national exams (ibid). According to Denvall & Vinnerljung (2006), schooling itself can develop a child through its socializing function. The children at WEBALE both learn to read, count and write and how to behave towards other people. Having access to books, children in their own age and other leisure-time activities is also important since it encourages a positive development and thus can be seen as a strong protective factor (ibid). To encourage that which is healthy has ripple effects. Children should have leisure-time activities to get stimulation and the exercise that is considered sufficient for good health, both physically and psychologically (Socialstyrelsen, 2006). The fact that the children at WEBALE have many friends in the same age and access to leisure-time tools and large space to move around keeps them continually physically active and makes them look strong and healthy.

**Food and health**

WEBALE has a kitchen that consists of a small house with two large pots over an open fire, where all food for the school is cooked (see photos in the appendix). All children are served meals three times a day. As for the volunteers, gruel made of maize flour and water is served in the morning and for lunch and dinner brown beans and posho is served. Lack of nourishing food is a result of low financial resources. Within the school compound there is also a clinic run by WEBALE’s own nurse. In the clinic, there are among other things painkillers, malaria medicine, IV and injections. There are also a few beds where the children and volunteers can rest when needed.

Here follows an observation of what it might look like when a child is ill and needs extra care:

"After lunch Fred takes a look at the boys dorm, which is newly cleaned. In the dorm, there is one remaining mattress, where a boy is lying down. Fred walks up to the mattress to see who it is. It is Max, and he has malaria. Fred asks a few
children to get food from the teachers’ leftovers, which will be given to Max. Fred helps Max to sit up through taking him by his arm and encouraging him to come out of the dorm and have his food.” (Observation, 3/12/2010)

The children at WEBALE do not receive a particularly varied food, which can be identified as a risk factor, since this can lead to ill-health (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006). One protective factor, however, is the clinic at the school where the children can turn at symptoms of illness. Whether regular health check-ups are carried out or not we do not know, since we did not take part in information concerning this, neither did we observe such activity.

Norms concerning smoking and alcohol
Fred tells us how he shares his experiences with the children in order to guide them in what he considers a good direction concerning for instance smoking and alcohol. By using himself as an example, he believes, the children can get a bigger perspective and more easily understand the message.

"I can drink beer but it’s not good, you try to show them that you can try things but they will have side effects. If you will drink too much of beer you will become drunk you may even die. Like I give them an example of an old man who drank too much alcohol and as he was walking he fell in to these small holes with water so he didn’t turn, he didn’t have any energy and he died just because of alcohol. I try to show them I have done very many things when I was young and if they are doing it it’s not good, they should stop. /…/ But I told them please everything you do now I did it but it’s not right. So I show them you share the experiences. If you don’t show them you passed through the same experiences they may not get the whole picture.” (Interview, 3/12/2010)

Consumption of alcohol and tobacco can, according to Denvall and Vinnerljung (2006) be defined as a risk behavior and naturally something a child should refrain from in order to avoid damaging consequences, such as addiction. According to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006), it is of importance that the caregivers give the child norms concerning alcohol and smoking, since their attitude towards these things will have an impact on the child’s attitude to them. The fact that the teachers in the school can be good examples implies that they function as protective factors for the children.

Guidance concerning body and sexuality
Fred tells us that apart from guiding the children in mathematics, he has also had counselling with the older boys and girls and in the interview he gives example of how this counselling can happen when he notices that a guy and a girl have entered a love relationship at WEBALE. For him, this type of counseling is a way to help the child get a nuanced picture of what their future can look like by pointing to different plausible scenarios and prepare the child for the effects of their action.

"Like a boy/girl relationship. You see some boys going for dating the children, the girls in school and I think, to me it’s not clever for them to have such a relationship. So you call one by one so you can tell them please you shouldn’t do that you shouldn’t do this. /…/ After counselling them, if it was a boy and a girl relationship you talk to them, show them it’s not the right way to do it, give them examples ask them what they want to become in the future like that. Someone says
I want to be a pilot, I know it may not be so simple but you may not say oh no you may not be a pilot. So you have to show him or her that if you want to be that type, that pilot, then you should not do this so early. When you do it in the early stage in the school you’ll be pregnant” (Interview, 3/12/2010)

The interviews with the volunteers together with our observations clearly show that the staff at WEBALE is involved in the children, both as teachers and when giving the child career guidance for the future. They further seem to be able to openly talk about things outside the teaching framework, such as possible consequences of love relationships, in order to prevent early pregnancy and present norms and consequence thinking concerning smoking and alcohol. Through bring attention to the risk behavior and risk areas around a child that can lead to negative consequences, the teachers are working preventively, preventing problems to arise (Denvall och Vinnerljung, 2006). They do this by showing their conviction and by presenting norms and creating boundaries for undesired behavior, such as the use of alcohol and tobacco that can lead to addiction and love relationships that can lead to pregnancy.

5.4.2 Psycho-social support
This theme includes emotional and behavioural development, identity and family and social relations from the seven areas of need which children need in order to develop positively according to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006).

Social work from the perspective of the informants
WEBALE organization consists of two legs, of which is the office where the administrative personnel and social workers work. Thus, there are social workers within the organization, but during the two months we spent at WEBALE, they never visited the school in order to work with the children. The office is located in a town between 15 and 20 kilometers from the school and orphanage. This part of the organization we have only visited once during our stay in Uganda. The other leg of the organization consists of the actual school and orphanage which is located in the countryside, and this is what we refer to when we use the name WEBALE. The volunteers who work, and in many cases also live, at the school and orphanage are: the administrator, teachers, food personnel, a cook, a nurse and the director. Apart from working professionally at WEBALE, they are also the primary caregivers of the children, since most children both live, attend school and spend their leisure-time at WEBALE. It is therefore the teachers and other personnel living and spending time at the school and orphanage that are responsible for caring for and supporting the children. The informants whom we interviewed are aware of the fact that they do not only teach or run the administration of the organization, but also do social work although they are not educated or employed as such.

In our interview with Fred, he tells us how the teachers apart from teaching also perform the social work at WEBALE, since they are they once spending time with the children in everyday life. He tells us that he is employed as a teacher and that he is viewed as a teacher by the organization, and not as a social worker.

"So it’s not counted that we are social workers although we do the social work but they think we are teachers and they don’t realize that we are also social workers. /.../ Sometimes when the children have feelings of the heart, they have
lost parents, so if you see someone sitting so sad you say, ahh Why? Why is it so? Why is it that Amanda is so sad? You have to go in talk to her slowly, ah please, what’s wrong? She will tell you and if you can get a solution to that she will be happy I think. Here it’s mixed with teaching. From teaching in the class, even sometimes in the class you may be teaching and then you feel like you have to stop the lesson and then you do the social work. (Interview 3/12/2010)

For Sarah, the largest difference between being a volunteer at WEBALE and working at another school is the social work, which according to her implies working with people and helping them in different ways.

"This job differs because it involves caring for the children. You know for others schools a teacher just goes there mainly for teaching, so he goes there for the purpose of teaching and after teaching he goes away. But at WEBALE it is different because you have to carry out other responsibilities like caring for those children, maybe for the sick, you have to look after them, you take them to hospital, yes". (Interview, 4/12/2010)

According to Thomas, social work can be carried out by anyone, not necessarily by someone who has a degree from a university. Instead, social work is about the meeting with people, how and with whom it is carried out. Social work also implies problem-solving.

"Social work, well social work is all about group and relationship /.../ You have to understand who your opponent is, what are you going to do, and how are you going to go about it /.../ So social work itself basically is something that runs around socialisation in terms of problems, and how to solve them /.../ To be a successful social worker, to me, I feel you should have to be a real mother or father. You should have that kind of parental feeling of others". (Interview, 25/11/2010)

Apart from his role as an administrator, where he practically is in charge of the school by among other things finding volunteers, carry on the daily management, official work, deal with educational issues which is within his field, he also has a line of other roles, of which he defines several as social work. One example is how he carries out counseling for the children. It can concern instances where a child needs to talk about their traumatic experiences or the loss of family members who have passed away. Among other things, he tells us about an HIV-positive child who was burdened and whom he found crying in then dormitory or in the classroom, and how he comforted and encouraged him.

"Such a person, you have to call him or her, embrace him, talk to him, ask what is happening, try to put yourself in such position, as if you are also such a person. You have to reduce yourself up to that level, so that child will know, we are many, I am not alone." (Interview, 25/11/2010)

Group belonging
The Director Charles says that his most important task is to restore hope to the parents of the children, since he is the one who is in closest contact with this group. Furthermore he points out that it is important to help and encourage the children who have been affected by HIV/AIDS, so that they at present and in the future shall have equal chances in society as other children. Charles also tells us
in the interview that what distinguishes WEBALE from an ordinary boarding school is that one has a bigger personal responsibility at WEBALE. If a child skips school, it is a common concern among the personnel at WEBALE. He further says that the organization is almost like his family.

"This is almost like my own family I’m now the father of the family. Now father of the family of different sections". (Interview, 14/12/2010)

Sarah, Fred and Thomas similarly speak of working for a sense of group belonging between the children and WEBALE, which becomes their home and the teachers become their parents. Sarah says that she and the other volunteers almost become parents to the children, and she actively works for them to get this feeling of having parents who care about them, a role she is happy with and wants to go along with. According to Fred, it is important to let the children feel welcome to come to him just as if they were an ordinary family.

"You support the brain psychologically so she will feel even if these other people have parents but we can also have the same. /…/ Most of them like me I think of that. I don’t chase them away, ah go, no I try to be kind so when you help them in situations they feel that we are at home". (Interview, 3/12/2010)

"Well, I’m more or less a father or mother almost, I do all their duties. You will find me doing the official work, yes, like I told you, you will find me even in the garden, you will find me, if a child is sick, I’m carrying the child to take to the clinic. We are bathing the children, sometimes you can even find me cutting the children, the hair, hehe. You cannot get other teachers doing that! So we do all the work that is seen around here". (Thomas, Interview, 25/11/2010)

Fred moreover tells us how he takes responsibility for supporting, encouraging and affirming the children in various ways in everyday life at WEBALE:

"Ok, so you try to be kind, you try to be like open and welcoming, you let the children come to you and if they need anything you can help them booth like financially, even if it’s just a sugarcane but sometimes it’s about money to fit in to a group and also you can help them with psycho-social support if they are sad they come to you and you can talk to them." (Interview, 3/12/2010)

The informants at the school give a picture of how they think it is to work at WEBALE’s school and orphanage. We have the understanding that what the informants do, apart from teaching or performing other tasks within the organization, and which they define as social work are various forms of counseling. They give advice, support and guidance, encouragement, comfort and try to make the children feel comfortable at WEBALE, and give them a feeling that this is their home. The teachers also give the children the opportunity to express themselves and process their situation through different forum.

"The children sing a lot. Some of the teachers have taught them songs about WEBALE and some of the songs are stories about their lives. For instance: ‘When I was at home / And my mother/father gone away / I had a lot of work to do / Uncle Charles came to me / and he told me don’t cry / he brought me to join my friends.’ They have different songs for different occasions, for example songs
What the informants describe in their interviews is also confirmed through our observations, which often give account of how the volunteers give physical touch and affection in everyday life and what the everyday interaction looks like between the children and primarily the teacher volunteers. We have experienced the atmosphere at WEBALE as calm and peaceful and often the children stay close to their teachers also in their leisure-time. The teachers are allowing towards the children, and it seems natural that the children always move about the teachers. If the teachers are busy repairing something, at least a handful of children help them. The everyday interaction can refer to holding a child by their hand, tickle and plays with them.

"One teacher sits in the shade outside a hut and listens to the radio. A small girl sits by the teacher's side. The chat, laugh and sing while listening to the radio."

(Observation, 26/11/2010)

"A teacher watches a few children on the steps playing Yatzy which we had taught them. He also wants to learn the game and sits down together with the children on the steps and give them his attention. When they are done with the game, the teacher starts playing with one of the small children, lifts him up and cuddles and plays with him."

(Observation, 15/12/2010)

There are some risk factors surrounding the children at WEBALE. They are not “merely” poor and orphaned, but they also live at an institution together with 145 other vulnerable children and have relatively few adults around them. Instead of being part of an “ordinary” family constellation, where they attach themselves to a fewer number of people, such as parents and siblings, at WEBALE instead they attach themselves to the volunteers at the school and to the other children with whom they grow up. According to the theory of attachment, it is relevant for the psychological development of the child to have predictable and stable adults in their near surrounding, and a prerequisite for being able to create good relationships also in the future (Bowlby, 1969). The volunteers are the primary caregivers of the children, since they are present in their immediate surroundings and thus become the persons with whom the children attaches themselves. We perceive that the volunteers are willing to take up the role as caregivers and be emotionally approachable for the children. The fact that this takes place is an important protective factor for the child’s emotional and behavioural development to proceed positively according to the theory of attachment (Bowlby, 1969). The volunteers at WEBALE also encourage through positive strengthening of that which is healthy in the children and encourage, affirm and take time to listen to the children. Through our interviews and observations, we have also had the understanding that the volunteers are eager to see the children getting a sense of group belonging to WEBALE.

Several of our informants describe WEBALE as a big family, where Charles has the role of the father of the organization, Thomas as the father of the orphanage and the school and the teachers are as parents to the children. To feel accepted by the people in one’s surrounding and to be able to attach to someone in the immediate environment is important to have a sense of belonging to the group and in order to be able to strengthen the development of one’s identity.
(Socialstyrelsen, 2006). It is thus significant to work for group belonging, since a sense of belonging to a group is regarded as a protective factor and helps the child to develop positively (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006).

**Positive role models and the importance of knowing your background**

Uganda’s official language is English, and all teaching is in English. In a tribal society such as Uganda, there are numerous tribal languages, which most people have as their first language. Personnel and pupils therefore seldom speak to each other in English, but choose to speak in their mother tongue. Both volunteers and children at WEBALE come from different tribes and therefore around different languages are spoken. Luganda is however the largest language in this part of Uganda, which most can speak and understand. The group of volunteers at WEBALE consists of both men and women with different personalities. Through our observations and interviews, it seems to us as though the children can turn to different personnel depending on what they are looking for. Someone might give more comfort and care, while someone else is more joking and playful. Someone is calm and someone else more energetic. Something which all personnel have in common is that they are role models for the children at WEBALE.

Fred is aware of the fact that the children are fond of him and look up to him and he tells us how he as a teacher and social worker can guide and give counseling to the pupils through giving himself as a concrete and positive role model both when it comes to school and future but also private concerns such as relationships to parents and love relationships.

"Maybe some boys will come and say, oh, for us we want to become footballers, to play football so they hate going to the class they are more interested in football. /.../ You tell them, footballers have to go to school they don’t only play football. Footballers have to learn English, they had to study before they became footballers they kick and they play football /.../ Because that’s why you see us sometime play football with them to show them we also love football but at a certain time to play it. It’s not every time you wish to play football” (Interview, 3/12/2010)

Most of the children at WEBALE are somehow affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They have lost their parents or relatives and/or have HIV themselves. The director says in his interview that it is important to try to influence the parents who have contracted HIV/AIDS to tell their children about their disease, from which they suffer, in order to prevent the same fate to be repeated in the children. Fred and Thomas also tell us that they make sure to tell each child about their background. It should not be a secret or a sensitive topic, since most children at WEBALE are orphans and affected by HIV/AIDS.

"Because you keep telling them this is an orphanage everyone is an orphan you should not feel sorry for the parents who died.” (Interview, 3/12/2010)

Thomas believes that the children have a need to get their questions concerning their background answered. Sooner or later, the children come with questions about their family and childhood. Thomas says he notices when the children are in such a season, and how it affects their achievement in school. They wonder why their parents are no longer alive or why some have parents and they have not and they then turn to the volunteers to be able to talk about it. For some children, both
parents are alive, but they came to WEBALE due to neglect or abuse. Because of his own experiences of neglect by his father, Fred tells us how he can meet children with this background who turn to him to talk.

"When they come to you they say ah, my dad has money but he doesn’t want to give me fees then you try to show him that you have also passed through the experience and you give him the way you should follow”. (Interview, 3/12/2010)

We perceive that the volunteers try to help the children in any way they can to keep in contact with their relatives or guardians. Since most of the children have difficulties in meeting their relatives or guardians, sometimes because of the distance between WEBALE and the towns or village where their relatives live, the volunteers help the children by for instance lending them their mobile phones, so that the children can make a phone call.

"One of the children turns to one of the teachers and asks if he can borrow the teacher’s mobile phone to call his mother and wish her Merry Christmas. The teacher lets the child borrow his phone. It seems like parents and other relatives of the children have the mobile numbers of the teachers and that the teachers allow them to call. If a child asks to make a phone call, the teacher makes the judgement if it is important and if so the child can borrow the phone”. (Observation, 25/12/2010)

Another observation concerned how the volunteers allowed the child to know their origin and hold on to their identity. The volunteers give the children space and opportunity to practice their faith/religion. The children generally have the same religion as their family; most of them are Christians, some are Muslims. Even within the group of Christian children, there are three denominations: Catholics, Lutherans and born-again Christians. Every day is started with prayer and the teachers and children meet in different groups so that every child can pray in the way they are used to from their family. In the village, or in neighbouring villages, there are different churches and on Sundays some of the volunteers accompany the children there.

"Some of the children want to go to church and one of the teachers accompany them, although it is his ‘day off’. The teacher takes each child by the hand and walks off to church with them, sits next to them in the church pew, sings with them and lets them borrow the book he brought.” (Observation, 26/12/2010)

The children at WEBALE have often had traumatic experiences, such as neglect, abuse, extreme poverty or death within the family, which have resulted in them coming to WEBALE. The volunteers tell us how the children from time to time revisit the experiences they have had. Trauma is a risk factor that can make the children psychologically unwell and make them achieve less in school (Denvall & Vinnerljung, 2006). The fact that the volunteers take time to sit down with the child and listen to and affirm them in their stories and thoughts is therefore an important preventive work to help the child to process. We had the impression from our informants that they find it important for the child to know their background and that there is an opportunity for the child to openly talk about what caused the disease and death of their parents or of other close relatives. This gives the child an understanding why they have come to WEBALE. According to theory of SOC by the sociologist Antonovsky, this would be a way of creating
comprehensibility for the child, which helps the child to handle the situation (Tamm, 2002). Knowing your background seems to serve the child’s process of identity development according to BBIC (Socialstyrelsen, 2006). Our informants describe it as important for the child to know their background so that the children in the future will be able to take responsibility and not end up in the same situation as their parents, which seems preventive in the long run and is one of the main aims of the intervention of taking the children away from their original families to WEBALE. According to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006) it is important that children have good role models, for example of the same gender and ethnicity. Children and youth are more likely to live up to rules and expectations when they feel belonging and attachment to the ones presenting the norms (Denvall och Vinnerljung, 2006). According to the theory of attachment, the child does not want to risk the relationship to the person they are attached to by going against the current norms. Instead the chance that they child will obey is considerably greater if there is a good relationship between the child and the adult than if this is not the case (Bowlby, 1969). The fact that the teachers have good relationships with the children and are good examples themselves serves the positive development of the children and functions as a protective factor. Since the children and volunteers originate from different tribes and represent different genders, the child always has someone to identify with and look up to.

5.4.3 Practical knowledge
This theme includes social behaviour and ability to take care of oneself from the seven areas that a child needs in order to develop positively according to the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare (2006).

Take care of oneself
At the WEBALE compound there is always a line for using the water pump. This pump daily supplies the children, personnel and several villagers with water, since there is no running water in the village. The children drink, shower and wash their clothes in the water from this pump. Since WEBALE’s resources are barely sufficient, there is no money for buying clothes for the children and we understand that many of the clothes at disposal at WEBALE are donated or come from the children’s parents or guardians. This means that the children only have a few changes of clothes and have to use them until they fall apart. The children therefore learn how to mend their clothes by sewing up the holes by hand.

"Sarah sits outside the volunteer house together with a few children. Some of the children are sewing and mending their clothes. Sarah helps one of the children to pull the thread through the eye of the needle, so that the child can sew and fellowship with them in the meantime". (Observation, 25/11/2010)

Since WEBALE has a relatively small adult working force in comparison to how many children attend the school and live there, this naturally has consequences. The children who live at WEBALE have to do a big part of the practical everyday tasks themselves since there is no access to adults that would have time to for instance wash the clothes of 150 children. The children do everything from cleaning their dorms, washing their clothes by hand, carrying home logs from the forest that are sued for cooking on the fire, to comforting each other, cutting or shaving each other’s hair, helping the kitchen personnel to cook, or under supervision of personnel planting, tending to and harvesting the crops on the
school’s plantation. When we ask the director, Charles, what he finds most important for the children to learn, he tells us that apart from the teaching, it is important to teach the children tasks that will benefit them in their future. Examples of this could be cooking one’s own food and keeping accounts of the small resources one has.

"Now the most important thing I can teach the children besides giving the best education, I treat this child like any other child who is in a normal home and basic skills. You see not all basic skills are acquired from school and not all schools are giving skills like WEBALE are doing. /.../ They grow knowing ok if you want a chicken you rare it and unlike those who are there they know yes when you want a chicken you go and buy and you groom them that to whatever resources you have, you have to use it in a profitable way. How if you bought a chick it can produce then you can sell one. So that is such additional skills.”

(Interview, 14/12/2010)

"We hear how the teachers ring the bell in order to call for the children’s attention and the children immediately walk over there to see what is happening. It is time for collecting firewood in the forest. The wood is for the kitchen, in order to be able to cook the food over the fire. All children know they need to help out with this, so no one is complaining, but walk happily and familiarly into the forest. The older boys are responsible and bring axes to cut down the wood with. The other children help carry. Today the kitchen personnel are away, so the older girls prepare and cook the food”.

(Observation, 3/12/2010)

On this theme, we mostly have observations from everyday life at WEBALE. In our eyes, and thus seen from the Swedish context we come from, we find that the children do very much when it comes to practical tasks at WEBALE. They do their laundry, cleaning, washing dishes, hygiene and clothing all by themselves. It is possible to see the fact that the children take such big responsibility of caring for themselves, both as a protective factor and a risk factor. It can be a risk factor if it hinders the children from being children with play and leisure-time, since they instead might have to work and maybe have no time for their school work (Socialstyrelsen, 2006). It can also be seen as a protective factor, since the children learn to take responsibility and care for themselves at an early stage, by learning how to cook and clean, which they will benefit from both now and in the future (Denvall och Vinnerljung, 2006). In order to analyze this theme, however, we need to contextualize the area. Many parents in Uganda do not allow their children to attend school. Instead they have to help out with the work in the home. At WEBALE, all children attend school and furthermore they learn the chores they presumably would have learnt if they lived at home with their parents. We therefore choose to see this as a strong protective factor that the children learn these tasks, since they will later come out in society possibly without parents or relatives to help them.

6 DISCUSSION

The results we have reached in this study concern two key questions. The first key question is connected to what it is that makes people get strongly involved in the lives of other people in a context of a developing country such as Uganda.
This was investigated by using WEBALE and its volunteers as an example. In our opinion, the motivation of the teacher volunteers and director for working with orphans and vulnerable children is strongly connected to their own background and childhood. In a country and time so marked by HIV/AIDS and its consequences, our informants have been formed by the context they grew up in, which has led to a certain way of acting later in life. The primary reason for making such a life choice seems to be a sense of coherence and the biggest cause of motivation being that the work that is carried out feels meaningful.

Something worth noticing is the common trait among the informants of growing up with absent fathers. In the informants’ accounts of their lives, we learn that the fathers either passed away at an early age or neglected and treated their children badly in various ways. From a gender perspective, we can analyze the role of the father in the family of a patriarchal society such as Uganda. We understand that the father generally is the provider of the family and that he in many ways has a superior position within the family. If he passes away, or abandons the family, there is a significant risk that the family ends up in greater poverty and financial destitution. Since the mother mostly stays at home and does not have the same opportunities for education and therefore less opportunity to provide for the family, this can result in many of the basic needs of the child not being met, for example through lack of food, home, education, etc, which can lead to social problems and social destitution. One reflection on the role of the informants in working as volunteers at WEBALE is that the ones who have grown up with absent fathers want to take responsibility for children in a similar situation. Therefore, they prevent the children from being affected more by the misery caused by the fact that they have grown up in a society with hierarchical structures where the man is superior to the woman in the way mentioned above.

All informants have more or less grown up under challenging and problematic circumstances, which we have explained as connected to issues concerning HIV/AIDS, poverty, neglect and abuse. It is interesting to ask oneself why these individuals managed well in spite of their background and the issues they have been exposed to, which according to Denvall & Vinnerljung (2006), can be defined as risk factors. We have partly explained this through connecting with the theory of SOC and salutogenes, but another concept which is relevant in this context is resilience. It is difficult to give a general answer to why some children manage well, adapt and grow up to be secure adults, but the Helmen-Borges (2005) criteria show what this resistance force can imply. The term resilience includes both recovery and resistance and can according to Helmen-Borges (2005, p 9, our translation) be defined according to the following criteria: “good psychological function in children in spite of experience of risk, a normal function in abnormal conditions, and considerable individual differences in children in the way they react to risk”. The accounts of the informants show that different protective factors were present in their lives and that these have helped the informants to develop resilience. Examples of such factors given by Payne (2007) and which could be found in the informants are: ability to identify and objectify their problems, i.e. pointing out the problem and placing it outside your own burden of debt. For instance, Charles has understood that his precarious family background led to lack of parental care, which according to him in turn led to him contracting HIV. Other factors can be having the ability to reflect on one’s situation, have hope for the future and psychological support in the form of an
important person (Payne, 2007). For example, *Thomas* had support from *Charles*, who encouraged him to “continue with life” and “never give up”.

**The second key question** is connected to how social work with orphans and vulnerable children at a non-governmental and non-profit school and orphanage in a developing country such as Uganda can be carried out, perceived and described. Here, WEBALE is also used as an example, where the objects of investigation are no formal social workers, but where we from an earlier visit at WEBALE, have a hypothesis that social work is still carried out in a number of activities. We present in our results that the volunteers (who mainly consist of teachers) carry out what can be defined as social work, according to the definition on interventions and preventions in various areas, such as health, education, emotional and behavioural development, ability to take care of oneself, social behavior, family and social relations and identity.

There are thus many signs that indicate that the volunteers at WEBALE seem to meet the children’s needs within a field of social work, although they lack education in social work and work as teachers at WEBALE. Simultaneously, we notice that there are many things missing in order to fully meet the needs of the children. We come to a speculative conclusion that there are insufficient resources. WEBALE is run by private individuals and different support organizations donate means. However, in our opinion they do not have sufficient resources to meet all the needs of the children. One problem we have identified is the fact that there are too few personnel for the number of children living at the orphanage. There is also no organized plan of what is required by the personnel outside teaching, their actual area of responsibility. Something we noticed is that not all social work at WEBALE not only is carried out by the adults, but what we have seen through participating in their context is that the children many times function as social workers. Since there are ethical difficulties connected to making a study on children, we chose only to write about the social work carried out by the adults. However, we could not avoid noticing everything the children did for one another and we believe it would have been rewarding to study this.

It was not our intention to do an evaluating study on what needs WEBALE can and cannot meet. Instead we have chosen to look at the things they do and the needs that this meets. It is furthermore impossible to compare a Ugandan orphanage to a Swedish one for various reason, which in itself could be the basis of a different study. However, to give an example into the enormous differences, we will mention a situation we learnt about during our time in Uganda, of a home for single placed children in Malmö. This home was criticized by the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare because of what they considered to be insufficient resources. The home was designed for eight vulnerable children and around ten personnel, which the National Swedish Board of Health and Welfare did not find enough. At WEBALE there are 146 boarding children and at the time of our stay there, there were eleven adults. With this example, we would like to highlight the large differences we understand that there are and the fact that it is difficult to compare Swedish guidelines for social work with children to how things function in reality in an NGO in a developing country, with all that this implies concerning conditions and possibilities, limitations and injustice.

As was mentioned, 75.6% of the Ugandan population live in poverty (Human development report, 2009). Since this study gave us the opportunity to be present
on the field in the Ugandan countryside, we have experienced that poverty continuously is present in practice every day, in every meeting with a person and in every talk. Resources are low and the needs so very big that the most basic rights and circumstances, such as for example food and clothes, are hard to meet in everyday life. Everywhere in society, there are vulnerable children suffering and in need of support and help. In spite of insufficient resources at WEBALE, we perceive the children there look healthier and stronger than many of the other children we met in the nearby villages. With this lack of resources, they cater for the education of around 200 children, and the care need of around 150 children with the help of people who are not educated social workers but in spite of this every day work with both prevention of social problems and supporting what is healthy and good in the children. The extent of the poverty makes the comparison between Sweden and a country such as Uganda impossible. Instead, we need to contextualize the situation to the conditions in the same area and country as WEBALE. It would have been interesting to do a comparative study in Uganda on children taken care of by NGOs and children who are in the same situation but are not taken care of by anyone. Possible questions would be investigating different themes on the way the children taken care of feel better and get better chances for the future.

Something worth reflecting on is whether the child in this context feels better/worse than children in Sweden living under “normal” circumstances. Obviously there are clear differences on the exo-level, which can be regarded as social injustice, for example many of the rights we can take for granted in Sweden, from education, health care, social insurance system to functioning infrastructure, material standard and job opportunities. Although the children at WEBALE do not have their needs fully met or all the resources which children in Sweden are used to, this does not automatically decide that they feel worse than children in Sweden. Of course, it is impossible to generalize in this way, and it would not be possible to investigate in an adequate way, but it is possible to freely reflect on it. The way we perceived the children during the short time we spent at WEBALE is that most of them seem happy, thankful, helpful and socially competent. They seem strong physically and psychologically and have a lot of strength and energy. It is easy for them to laugh and they seem to have fun together. This obviously characterizes life for many children in Sweden, but in comparison to the children we got to know in Uganda, the development of psychological ill-health and ADHD, self-harm behavior such as eating disorder and cutting oneself seems to be more frequent among children who live in difficult conditions in Sweden. Bullying and the experience of loneliness further seem more frequent in Sweden than in Uganda. A free speculation on this is that we live in different cultures, where the Swedish culture is formed by individualism, while the culture we have experienced in Uganda to a larger extent is formed by collectivism and fellowship. Stating this as an objective is obviously impossible. It is however our experience and something we have discussed which seems relevant to mention in this study.

It was exciting to travel to Uganda and get to know new contexts and people who live in conditions different to ours. Through this journey and study, we have acquired an increased insight into the way social work can be carried out in a different context than the one we know from our home country. Apart from having developed in our way of thinking about social work and getting new perspectives on our future professional role, we have also developed on a personal level and
had valuable experiences. We have learnt to know and take part in people’s lives and create connections and received friends for life. The opportunity of this field study in Uganda has been incredibly rewarding and meaningful.

If we would be able to make another journey, we would have liked to visit Uganda during a longer period of time. Prior to our trip abroad, we were aware of the fact that two months is a relatively short period of time for an ethnological study. Even though we had time to do a lot and are thankful for the material we have been able to collect, our experience is that we have only scratched the surface of various ways of doing social work with children in a different context.
7 REFERENCES

7.1 Literature


7.2 Interviews
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Interview with"Thomas”, WEBALE, Uganda, 25/11/2010

7.3 Webpages/links
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8 APPENDIX

8.1. Photos
In order to get an increased understanding of the context and the conditions in which the volunteers at WEBALE live, photos of the school area, volunteers accomodation, kitchen, latrine and washing facilities are attached below.

The school area
The volunteers accommodation

The volunteers accommodation and the kitchen
The kitchen

The volunteers latrine

The volunteers washing facilities
8.2 Interview guide
When did you begin work here?
How did you get to know about WEBALE?
Could you please tell us about your tasks and assignment, what do you do?
How does an ordinary day for you look like?
What do you think about working in a NGO?
Could you please tell us what you think is the most important things with your work?
What do you think are the most important things you can learn the children beside the subject that you are teaching?
When do you feel like you have succeeded in your work?
How do you think this job differs from other jobs at schools?
What do you think is the difference between working as a volunteer teacher at a center like WEBALE and full paid teacher at an other school?
If you could choose for yourselves where would you like to work? Why?
What do you consider to be social work?
Do you think you can do social work, even if you are not a social worker? How?
What would you consider to be social work at WEBALE that you do?
What do you think about working with orphans and vulnerable children?
When a child at WEBALE comes to you with a problem, how do you handle it? Can you give an example?
We have heard about some children being visited by ancestors, have it come to your acknowledge? Can you tell us about it?
What do you think is the most important factors that made you a volunteer at WEBALE?
Can you see any connections between your background, childhood or youth and you working at an NGO with vulnerable children today?
Can you give us three different factors that motivates you to work at WEBALE?
What is your ambition with working here?
What is the best thing about working here?
When is working here difficult and problematic for you?
Is there anything else that you want to add?