

Ghana Country Profile

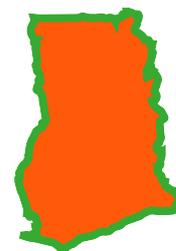
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Ghana Country Brief and Fact Sheet



Laws, Policies and Guidelines Related to Care for Children

Key international policy instrument	Country response
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	Ratified, 1990
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)	-
The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (1993)	Signed, 2017
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)	Signed, 2005
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified, 2012

Key national legislation, policy instruments and frameworks

Child protection and care is embedded in the **Children's Act 1998**

This legislation includes provisions on child and family welfare; rights of the child; fostering, adoption, child maintenance, and institutional care.

National Guidelines and policies supporting child protection and care legislation include:

- National Standards for Residential Homes for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Ghana, 2010
- National Plan of Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children, June 2010
- Guidelines for the Operation of Children's Homes, 2004; The Child and Family Welfare Policy 2014
- The National Social Protection Strategy, 2007 which provides safety nets for vulnerable and excluded groups
- The Regulations for Care and Protection of Children without appropriate parental care in Ghana, 2008
- **The Five-year Road Map for the closure of Residential Homes for Children in Ghana, 2017**

Key Figures and Statistics

There is **no accurate data** on children without adequate parental care across Ghana.

However, data from the Department of Social Welfare shows that 3,586 children are accommodated in 115 Residential Homes for Children across the country as at October 2016¹.

In their 2017 statistics, UNICEF revealed that 17% of children do not live with a biological parent but are in informal foster or kinship care.

These figures also revealed that **85% of institutionalised children had at least one living parent**².

According to the National Street Children Policy Framework, it was estimated that there were approximately 33,000 children living and/or working on the streets (figures as at 2006)³. Children on the streets often end up being institutionalised.

Social Protection and Alternative Care Options

The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report (UNICEF, 2016) and Ghana Poverty Mapping Report (2015) indicate that poverty levels remain high⁴. However, the government is implementing social protection programmes to address poverty among the most vulnerable. Such programmes include the LEAP cash transfer program, the National Health Insurance Scheme and the School Feeding Programme.

The inequality gap is widening in the country. The Ghana Poverty and Inequality Report shows that child poverty stands at 28.3%, with 1 in 10 children living in extreme poverty. As a result, **poverty has been identified as a major underlying factor in the institutionalisation of children in Ghana**, causing unnecessary separation of children from their families, and increased cases of child trafficking.

Alternative Care

Formal foster care in the country remains undeveloped as an alternative care solution. The 17% of children reported by UNICEF not to be living with their biological parents (see above) are, for the most part, in informal foster care arrangements or kinship care⁵.

Foster Care Regulations intended to improve the practice are pending approval in the Parliament.

Institutional care is still rife in the country. There is no clear policy against institutional care. This could be attributed to poor political will, poor general awareness on the harmful effects of the practice, and lack of technical know-how.

The Five-year Road Map for the Closure of Residential Homes for Children in Ghana is currently a working document for a Care Reform Initiative. However, it does not envisage closing down all institutions. Institutional care is poorly supervised and monitored. In

¹ DSW, Five-year Road Map for the closure of Residential Homes for Children in Ghana, 2017

² UNICEF, Care Reform within Ghana's Child Protection System, June 2017

³ Ghana Child and Family Welfare Policy, Nov 2014

⁴ Ghana Statistical Service, The Ghana Poverty and Inequality, UNICEF 2016 and Ghana Poverty Mapping Report, May, 2015

⁵ UNICEF, Care Reform within Ghana's Child Protection System, June 2017

October 2016, data from the Department of Social Welfare revealed that of the 115 known institutions, 75% of them were not licensed⁶.

On adoption, according to a government report, of the 17 adoption agencies that existed in the country, only three were officially registered; this led to malpractices. Between 2010 and 2012 alone, over 1,120 Ghanaian children were adopted with the majority being sent to the United States of America and Europe⁷. It has only been since January 2017 that The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption was enforced to curb such malpractices.

Subsequently, a Central Adoption Authority has also been established and vital amendments made in **The Children's Act** to address these concerns.

Fast Facts and Latest Developments

- In 2017, Bethany Christian Services was contracted to train foster parents: 40 foster carers were recruited by the Department of Social Welfare with the support of UNICEF; currently those trained are awaiting licensing.
- FosCA, a civil society organisations' coalition for Foster Care, supported the Government to draft the foster care regulations and an accompanying training manual.

Recommendations

- **Enhance community and family based care to be inclusive of children with disabilities.** Enable them to benefit from growing up in a community and family environment by providing appropriate care and support at the family level to prevent the need for placement of children in institutional care.
- Ensure that policies and legislation and national plans of action **prevent and address violence against children in all forms of alternative care.**
- **Strengthen oversight through monitoring and supervision** of the child protection and care system to protect children from unnecessary removal from their families and communities.
- **Strengthen data collection** in the child protection and care system to enable evidence based interventions and coordination of the overall care system
- **Laws, policies and national plans of action should be amended to discourage institutionalisation** of children.
- Institutions are significantly harmful to children below the age of three hence the government should adopt a legal ban on children under the age of three being placed in residential care
- The government should **expedite approval of the foster care regulations** allocate more resources to the practice, and ensure implementation of foster care as an alternative to institutionalisation of children.
- **Strengthen the social workforce** by ensuring that the country has enough, well trained and remunerated staff to carry out and sustain care reform efforts.

⁶ DSW, Five-year Road Map for the closure of Residential Homes for Children in Ghana, 2017

⁷ Joy News on New Children's Amendment Bill to streamline adoption process, October 2016 retrieved from (<https://www.myjoyonline.com/news/2016/October-12th/new-childrens-amendment-bill-to-streamlines-adoption-process.php>)



Transform Alliance Africa

These Country Fact-Sheets developed by Transform Alliance Africa (TAA) Members are a snapshot of important national information relevant to care reform. They provide an overview of key policy and legislative frameworks, alternative care approaches and social protection, and latest developments in the sector. Note that the fact-sheets will be updated after every 6 months. If you have information relevant to care-reform please send an email to the Coordinator stephen@transformallianceafrica.org. We will consider the information in our next update.