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# Care Reform within Ghana's Child Protection system

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# Outline of Presentation

- ✓ Situation of Child Protection in Ghana
- ✓ Care Reform Initiative in Ghana
- ✓ The Strengths and Gaps in Residential Care in Ghana
- ✓ The Ghana National Standards for Residential Care
- ✓ The systems strengthening approach
- ✓ Current Interventions
- ✓ Future Outlook

# Child Protection issues in Ghana

## 9 out of 10

children in Ghana are subject to some form of **physical or emotional abuse** on a regular basis
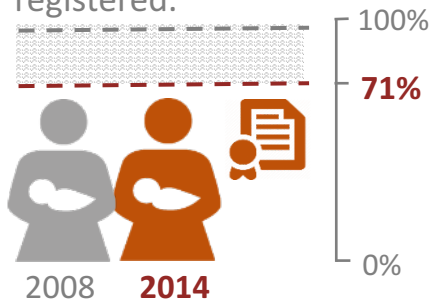
MICS 2011

## 2 out of 3

girls aged 15-19 experience **sexual violence** during past 3 years

DHS (2008)

**Birth registration has stagnated at 71%** for children under 5, meaning one third of children are not registered.

100%

**71%**

0%

2008    **2014**

## 34%

of children were **beaten by a teacher at school** during the previous month

GoG / UNICEF Ghana: Child Protection Baseline Research 2014

Alternative care within Ghana's Child Protection system– **UNICEF** for every child

# Children in need of care and protection



**17%** of children **do not live with biological parent**

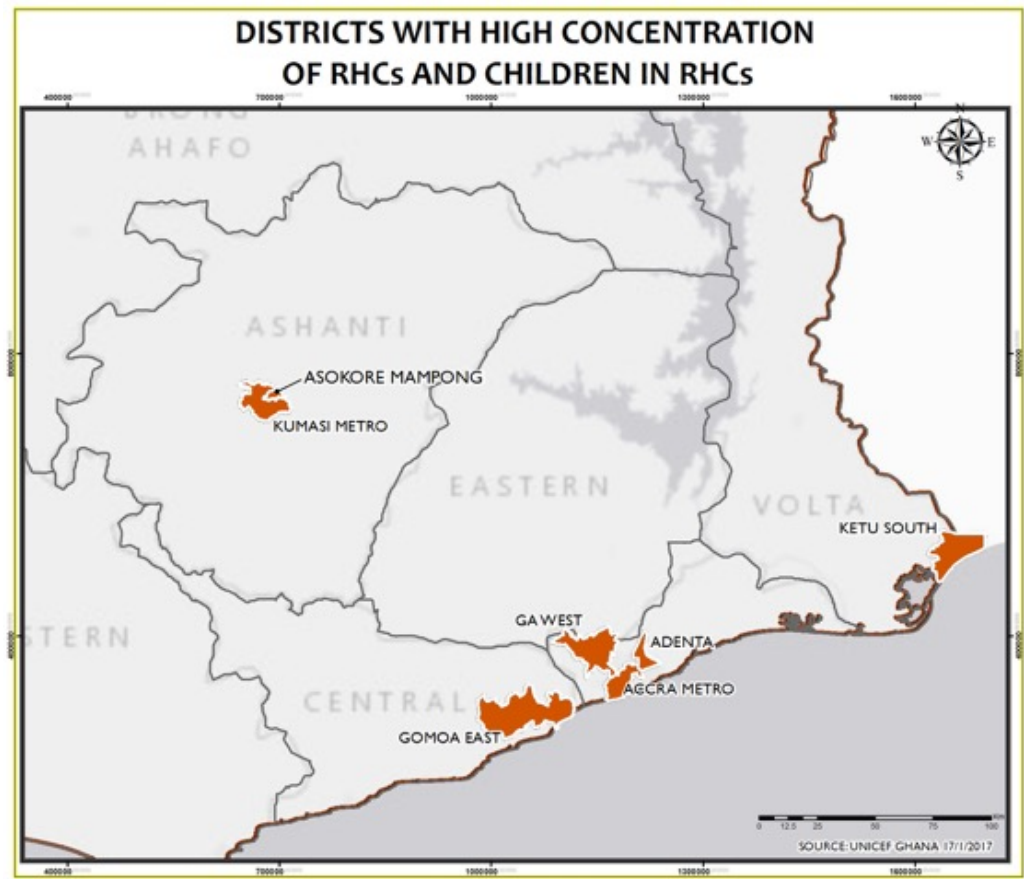Most children in **informal foster- or kinship** arrangement

About **3,200** **children in residential care**

(0.0004% of Ghana's children) – "orphanage"

**85%** of them have at least one living parent

**Slow decrease** of children in residential care since Ghana's Care reform commenced in 2006 (estimated 4,000 children) **but this is changing in 2016**

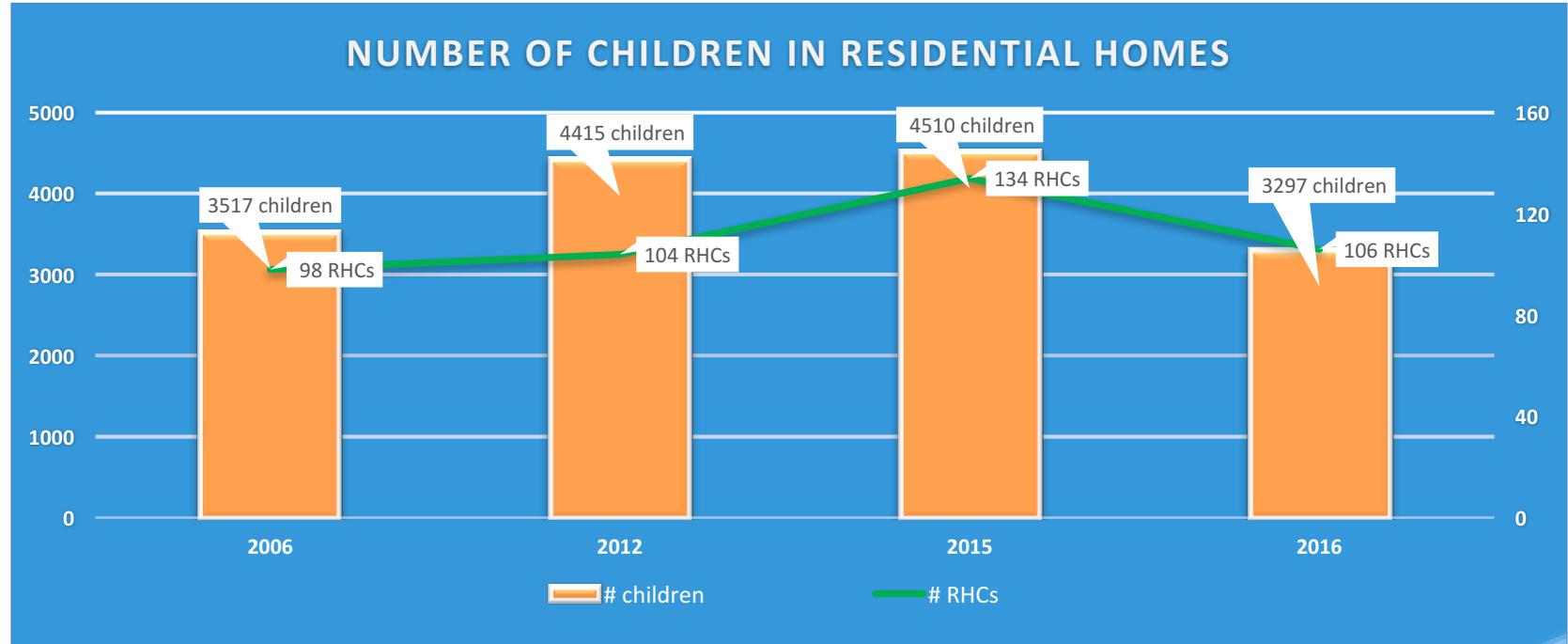# Geographical concentration of children in residential care



DISTRICTS WITH HIGH CONCENTRATION OF RHCs AND CHILDREN IN RHCs

SOURCE: UNICEF GHANA 17/1/2017

Residential facilities **exists in all regions** of Ghana **but can be found in only 57 out of 216 Districts**

High concentration in **seven districts referred to as 'hot spots'** (Mostly in the Southern half of the country). Targeting these will reach about 1/3 of the **3,200** children currently in residential care (2016 DSW data)

Institutional care does **not follow socio-economic patterns**

# Trend of Children in Residential Homes



NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL HOMES

- 2006: 3517 children, 98 RHCs
- 2012: 4415 children, 104 RHCs
- 2015: 4510 children, 134 RHCs
- 2016: 3297 children, 106 RHCs

# children  # RHCs

# Ghana's Care Reform


Children in a residential facility playing

- The **Children's Act of 1998** mentions Standards for **Residential Homes**

- Care Reform Initiative launched in 2006 with the objectives:
  - Promote family based care

  - Strengthen gatekeeping mechanisms

  - Reintegration of children

  - Prevention of unnecessary separation of children

  - Alternative to Residential homes (Adoption, foster care)

# Lessons learnt and recommendations from Country Care Profile (2015)



Country Care Profile

Ghana

Better Care Network | unicef unite for children | with financial support from USAID | PEPFAR

- Ghana's Care Reform is about **10 years old**

- Progress was made in early years with more than 1,500 children **(more than 40% of children)** reintegrated. Number of children was **not reducing** and the focus was narrow

- Needed to better address **underlying causes for family separation** and institutionalization of children

- **System strengthening approach** was seen as an opportunity to work more **preventative** and with a **broader coalition** of actors

- Addressing children in residential homes must be done within the **broader context of alternative care** and **child protection system reform**

- Recognition of informal care needed and reform should built on **positive indigenous models**

- Residential Homes are a **measure of last resort for children** and emphasized as part of the behavior and social change interventions

facilities differ from geographic area and include;

- Children rescued from child trafficking —mostly Volta & Central
- Children taken away from the street — mostly Ashanti, Accra & Central
- Children who are double orphans – Central, Ashanti & Volta
- Children abandoned - Ashanti, Accra & Volta
- Child Protection concerns (abuse, neglect etc) – Ashanti, Accra, Volta & Central
- Other reasons mentioned in all regions of study relate to vulnerabilities due to poverty, financial constraints and ill health of parents. This was mentioned in the majority

# The National Standards for Residential Care

- Developed as part of the care reform initiative in 2010
- Ensures that, children in residential care facilities live in a supportive, protective and caring environment

The document is used:

- For ensuring **minimum standards** of care for children
  - a criteria for **accreditation** of facilities
  - **Supervision** by managers for the safety and development of children
  - **Monitoring** of facilities in line with provision of minimum standards

# The National Standards for Residential Care – General

**Strengths**

- It provides minimum standards (guided by international and national frameworks) to guide the establishment and monitoring of residential care facilities

- Some district level offices are in regular contact with RHCs during admissions and reintegration, however this is not always done consistently

**Challenges**

- Weakness is in the enforcement of these regulations

- Inadequate capacity of the social workforce

- Gaps in tracking residential homes and children in residential homes as well as reintegrated children – (the numbers usually do not just add up)

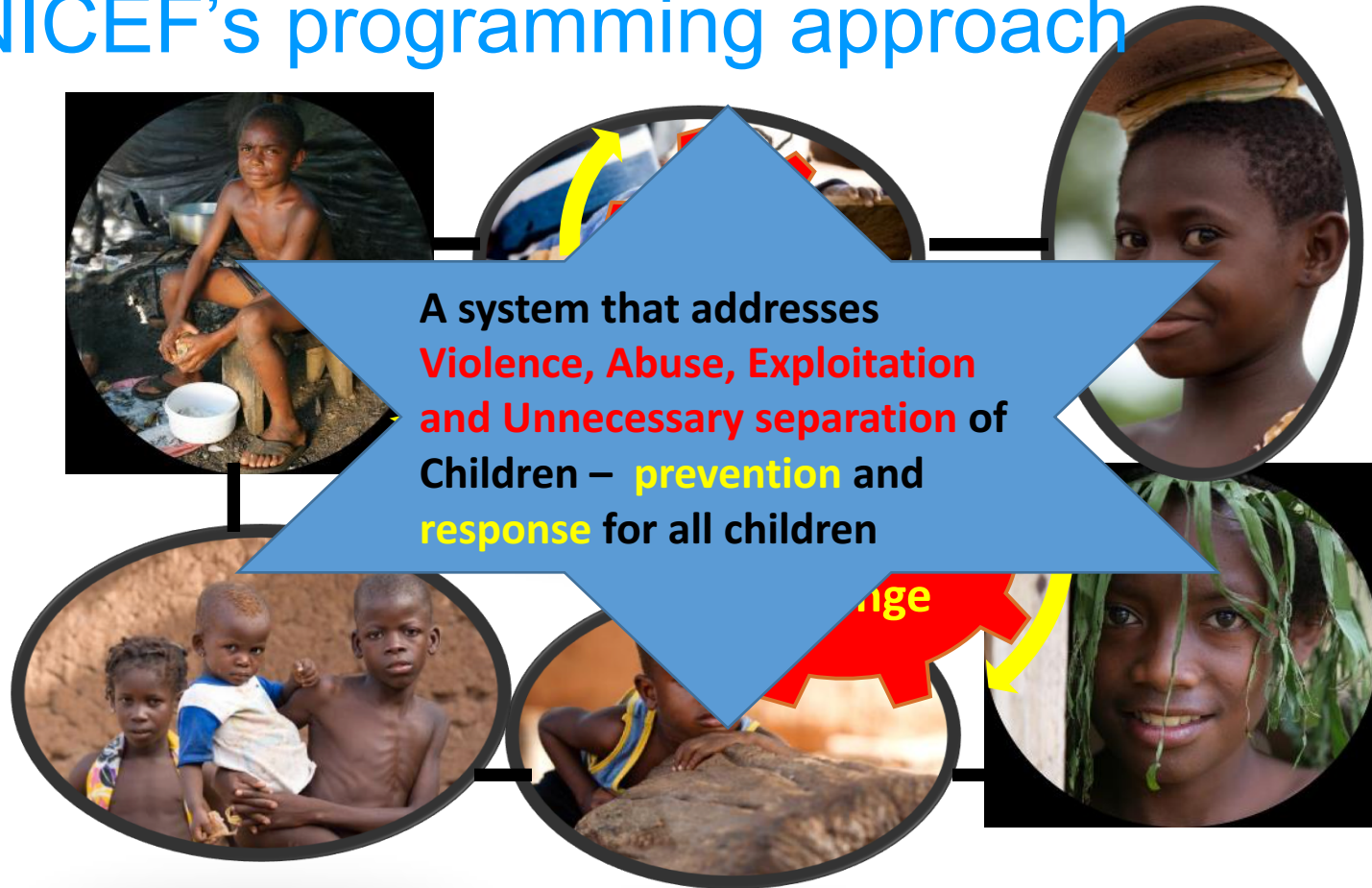# The National Standards for Residential Care -VAC

**Strengths**

- The standards under behavior management tackles VAC with a reporting  mechanism guiding children and guardians

- There is opportunity to study the situation of violence in residential facilities given these

- A code of conduct for staff and volunteers of residential homes is part of the standards

- The standards have a complaints mechanism indicating what children, relatives and staff  should do if they have any complaints.

**Challenges**

- Inadequate investment in training of managers of RHC on child care including behaviour management, or supervision

- The regulations do not talk about violence between children in the residential home which is usually an issue of concern

- Some managers  and care givers tacitly support the use of corporal punishment and may apply to the children in their care

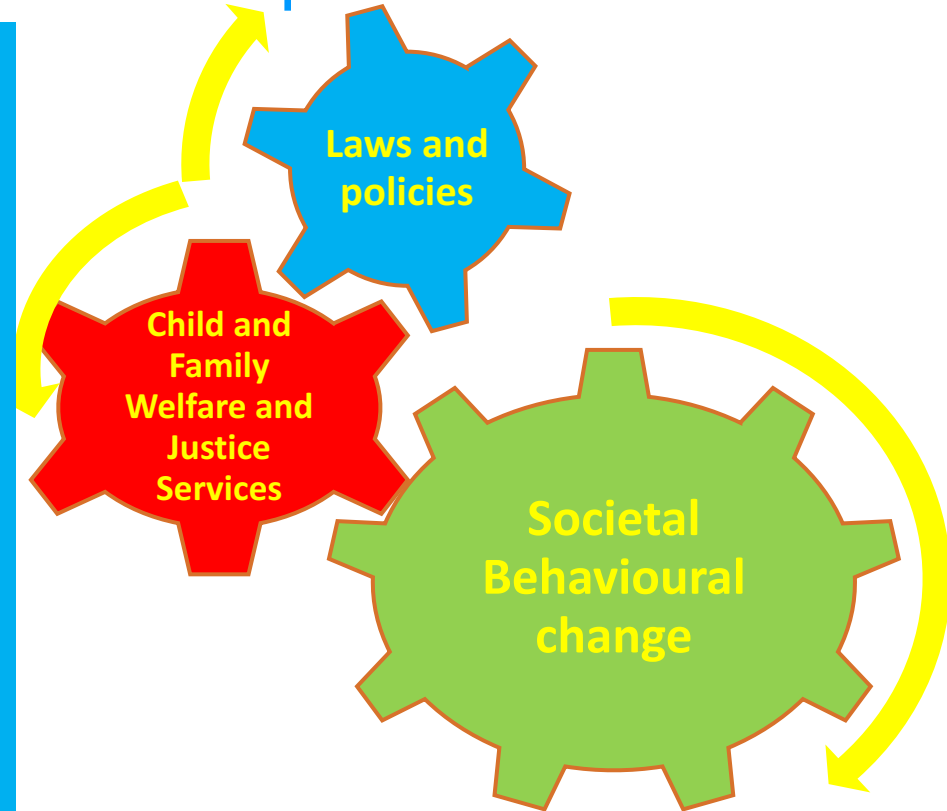# Child Protection System strengthening - UNICEF's programming approach



A system that addresses **Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Unnecessary separation** of Children – **prevention** and **response** for all children

# Accelerating Ghana's Care Reform through system-strengthening – progress made and plans for 2017

**Policies, laws and regulations:**

- **Child and Family Welfare Policy (2015)** stresses importance of family-based solutions for children in need of care and protection
- **Children's (Amendment) Act  2016**
- (Act 937)
- **Draft Foster care and Adoption Regulations**;
- **Hague Convention** accession

**Planned for 2017**

- Passage of the Foster Care and Adoption Regulations
- Revision of the Standards for Residential Homes
- Develop a Road Map to close unlicense

Laws and policies

Child and Family Welfare and Justice Services
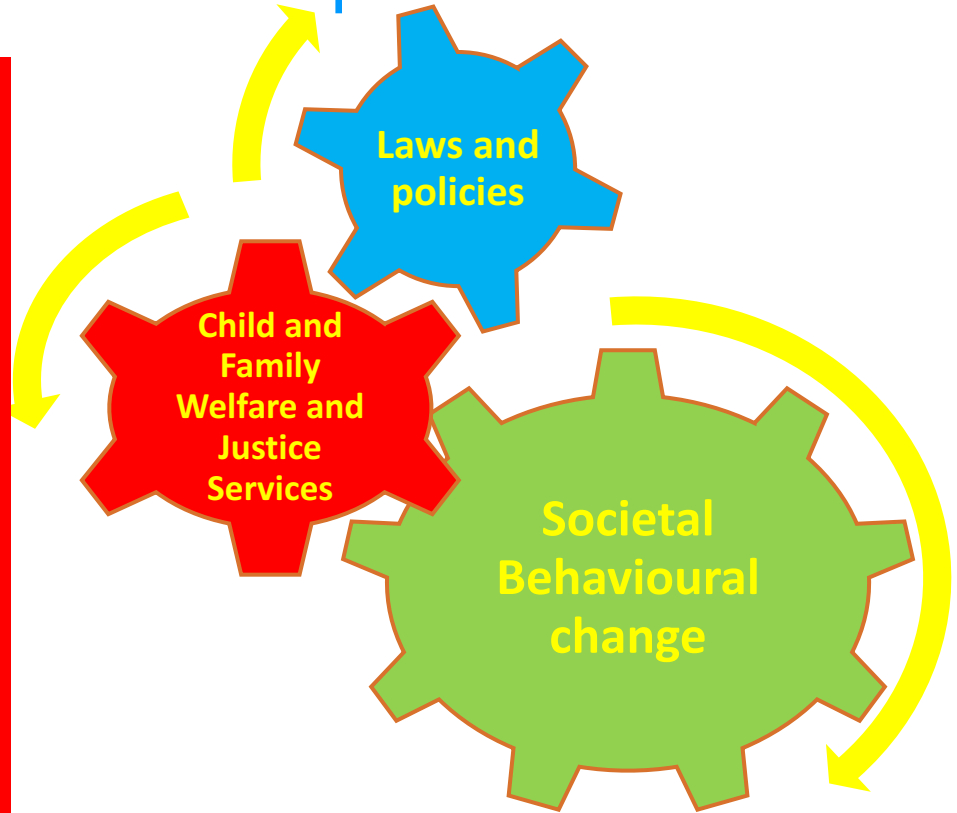
Societal Behavioural change

# Accelerating Ghana's Care Reform through system-strengthening – progress made and plans for 2017
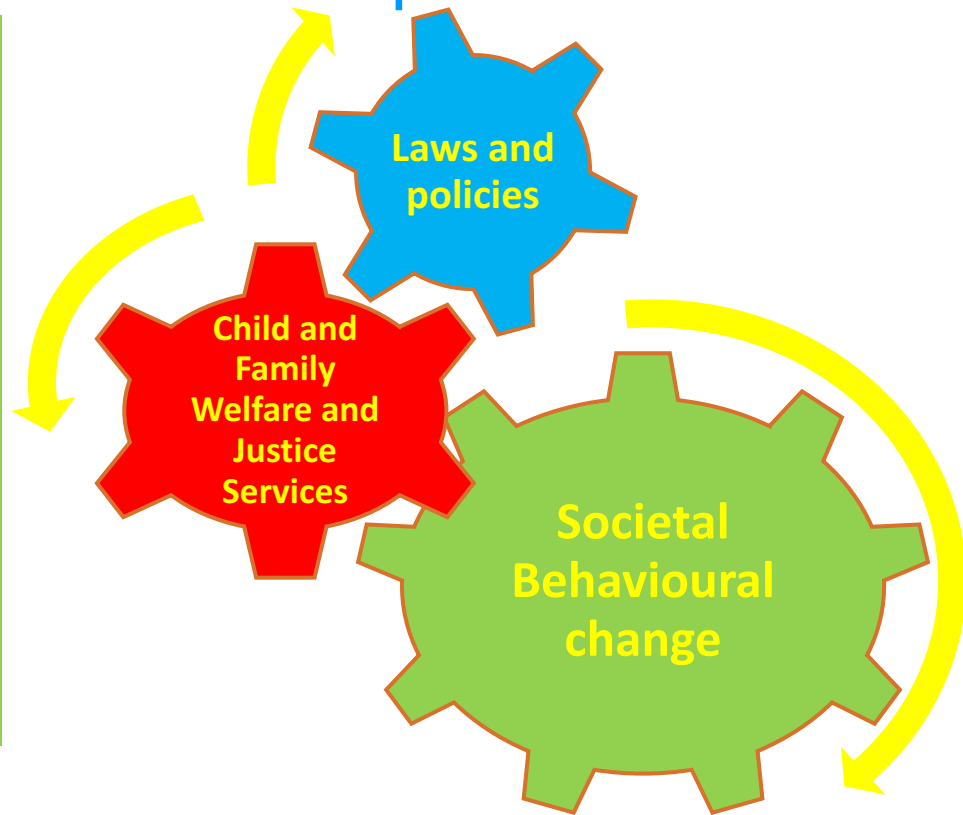
## Child and Family Welfare Services

- Long-term capacity-building through partnership with School of Social work and University of Development Studies for integration of child protection *(including alternative care)* in teaching and learning

- Integration of child protection *(including alternative care)* in curriculum for Police; Health and Education sectors

- Capacity building of DSW and stakeholders on case management, gatekeeping and reintegration of children

**Laws and policies**

**Child and Family Welfare and Justice Services**

**Societal Behavioural change**

# Accelerating Ghana's Care Reform through system-strengthening – progress made and plans for 2017

**Behavioural and Social Change**

- Messages on "Importance of family" part of Communication Strategy, implemented by a coalition of actors under guidance by Department of Community Development

- Social drive 'campaign' conceptualized, brand under development - to be launched in 2017
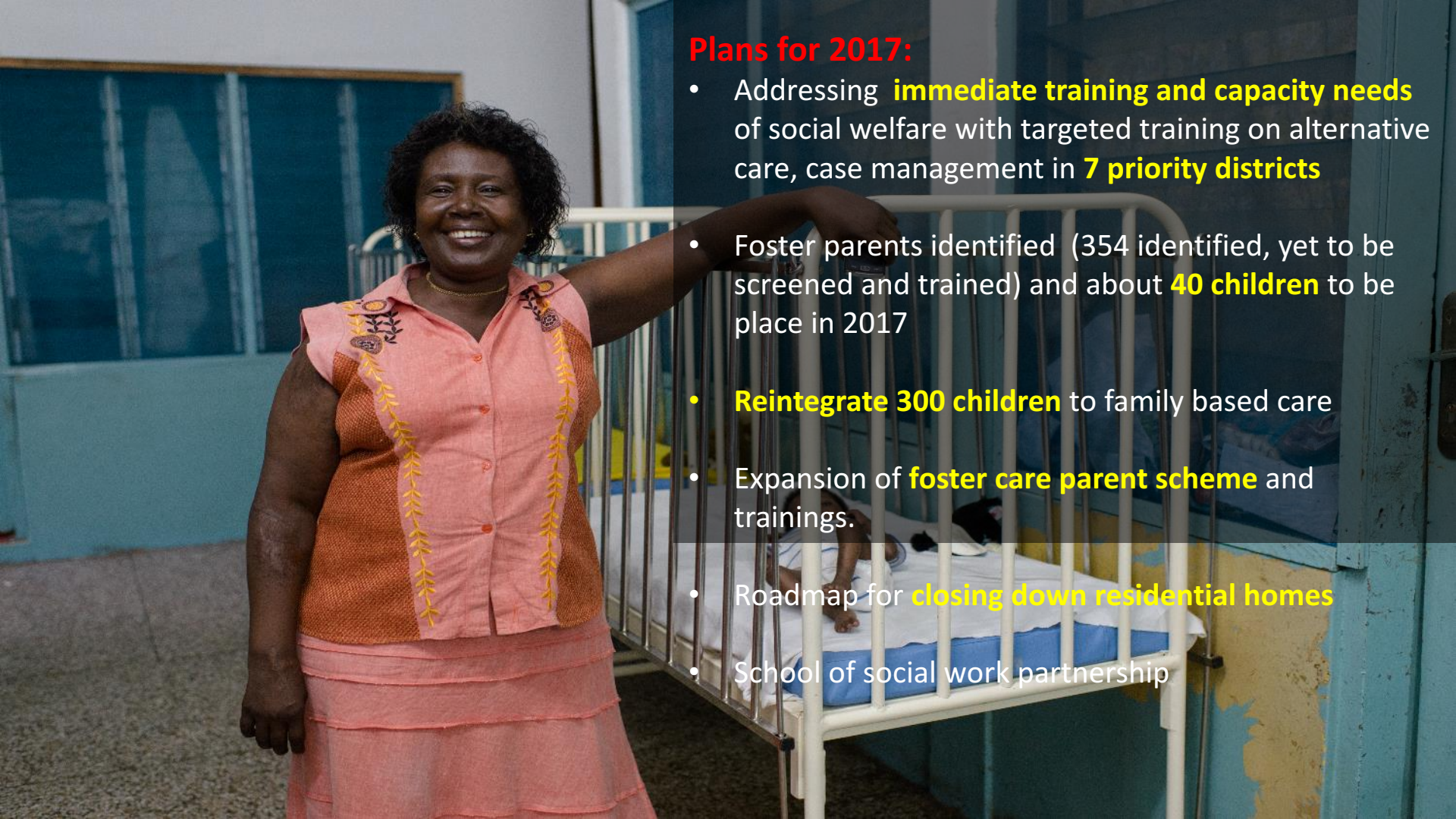
Laws and policies

Child and Family Welfare and Justice Services

Societal Behavioural change

The Child and Family Welfare Policy expects Social Welfare to work more preventative and more closely with other sectors and informal actors, supporting families, preventing child maltreatment, unnecessary separation and facilitate reintegration.

Achievements in 2016:

- Some 300 (about 10%) of children reintegrated
- Workforce strengthening and reform initiated in 20 districts with the aim of aligning social work practices with Policy expectations – led by ILGS/GoG

**Plans for 2017:**

- Addressing **immediate training and capacity needs** of social welfare with targeted training on alternative care, case management in **7 priority districts**

- Foster parents identified (354 identified, yet to be screened and trained) and about **40 children** to be place in 2017

- **Reintegrate 300 children** to family based care

- Expansion of **foster care parent scheme** and trainings.

- Roadmap for **closing down residential homes**

- School of social work partnership

**Plans for 2017:**

Pilot new 'real-time' system solution for **tracking** children in care, efficient **case management** and **monitor children's wellbeing post reintegration**

Opportunities to create synergies with social protection , monitoring LEAP

New partnership with **civil society organizations** to support Social Welfare in the process of follow-up on children's post-integration situation

**Plans for 2017:**
**traditional leaders and faith-based organizations  -** a resourceful and with a role to play in aiding formal service providers in finding local solutions to family challenges and reintegration processes and  will be engaged in 2017

Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious  Affairs is leading engagement with traditional leaders **on child protection**

# Future outlook

**1:** Strengthen **social welfare workforce capacities** of the Department of Social Welfare and contribute to the professionalization of social work in Ghana;

**2:** Support the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to strengthen the **formalized alternative care** system

**3:** Support the Government of Ghana to develop formal gatekeeping structures to **prevent the unnecessary admission and readmission** of children into residential care and promote family-based care alternatives

**4:** Strengthen **community-based child protection capacities** and linkages with the District Social Welfare Office to strengthen families and prevent unnecessary separation

**5:** Develop and implement a national-level child care reform **monitoring & evaluation system**

**6.** Scale up the **behavioral and social change** component of the program

# THANK YOU