

Care Reform in Ghana: Achievements and Challenges

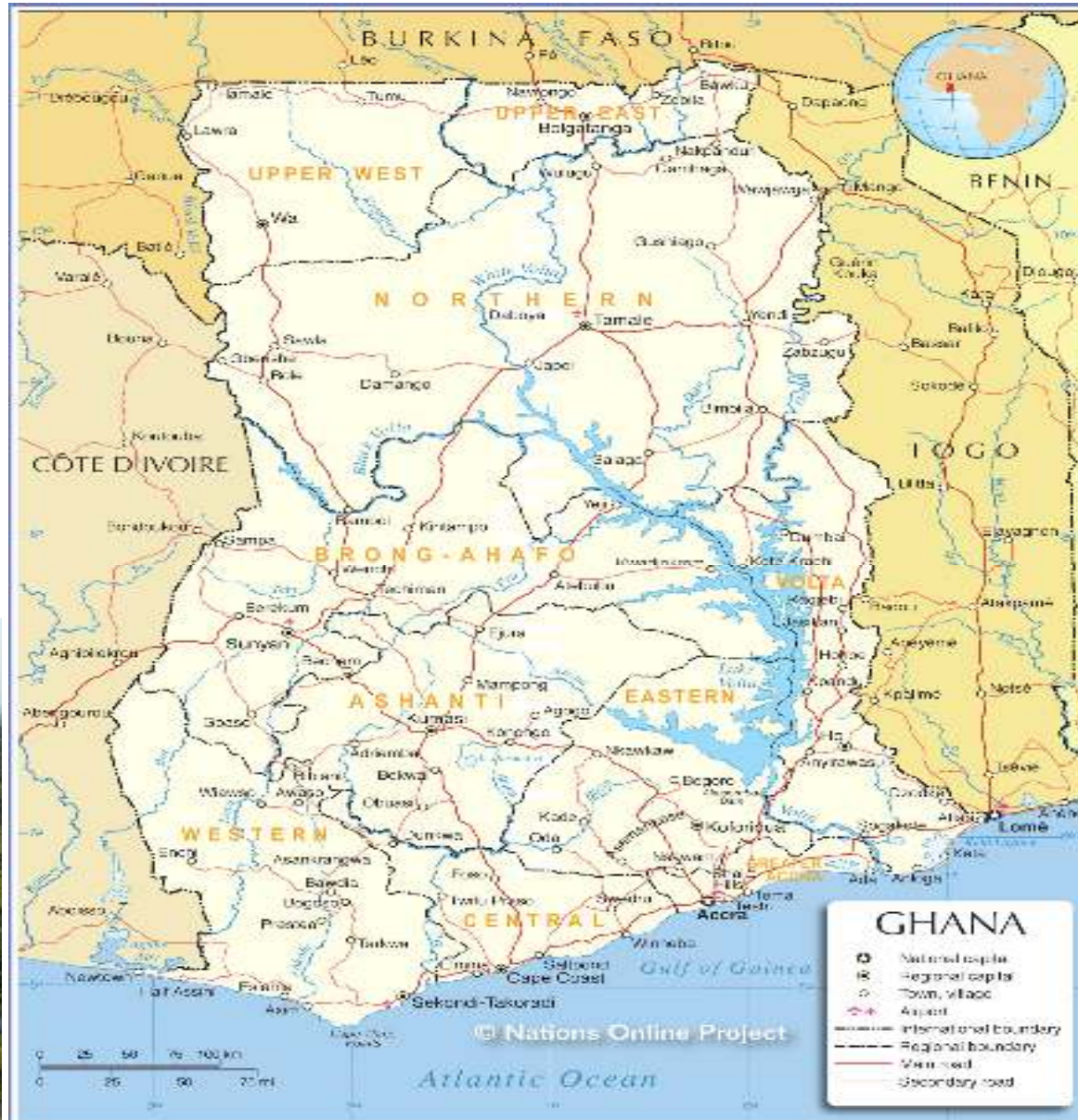


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Map of Ghana



Main Demographic, Economic, and Social Indicators

Population	24.97 million (Ghana Statistical Service, 2010)
Population of children under 15	42 percent of the population
0–14 years (%)	38.7
15–24 years (%)	18.8
Life expectancy male/female (years)	63/68
Infant and child mortality rates (under 5) (2012)	72 per 1000 births
Gross domestic product per capita	\$1,387.9 U.S. dollars (USD) (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014)
Human Development Index: 0.579 ranking	135 out of 187 (UNDP, 2013)
Poverty rate (population below the international poverty line)	28.6% live on less than \$1.25 USD per day (UNDP, 2013)

Cultural and Historical Influences on Care



- Traditional forms of care
 - Informal foster care by extended family
 - Community care (e.g., Queen mothers)



- Religious and belief systems
- Introduction of residential homes for children (RHC) by colonial administration
- Evolution of RHCs from the precolonial to postcolonial era

Background to Childcare Reform

- Rapid growth of RHCs: (from 10 in 1997 to 148 in 2006)
- Comments from the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Ghana's country report
- Mapping and census of RHCs in 2006 by Ghana's Department of Social Welfare (DSW) with funding from OAfrica
- Most RHCs did not meet standards set in the 1998 Children's Act (Article 108 and 109).



Background to Childcare Reform (2)

Establishment of the Care Reform Initiative (CRI)
in **2007** by the Government, UNICEF, and
OAfrica, with the following **objectives**:

- Promote family-based care
- Deinstitutionalization and reintegration of children
- Prevention of unnecessary separation of children
- Alternative to residential homes (adoption and foster care)



Key Actors in Care Reform

- Ministries, departments, and agencies
- Families, communities, and individuals, including
 - Religious groups and organizations
 - Traditional chieftaincy system—Chiefs & Queen mothers
- Committees and networks
- Social workers and institutions such as universities
- The United Nations and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- Development partners and donor partners
- RHCs

Major Outcomes for Children Resulting from Care Reform



- Improvement in foster care and adoption regulation through development of guidance instruments
- Reduction in residential care
- Development of policies, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and regulations.
- Supporting family strengthening

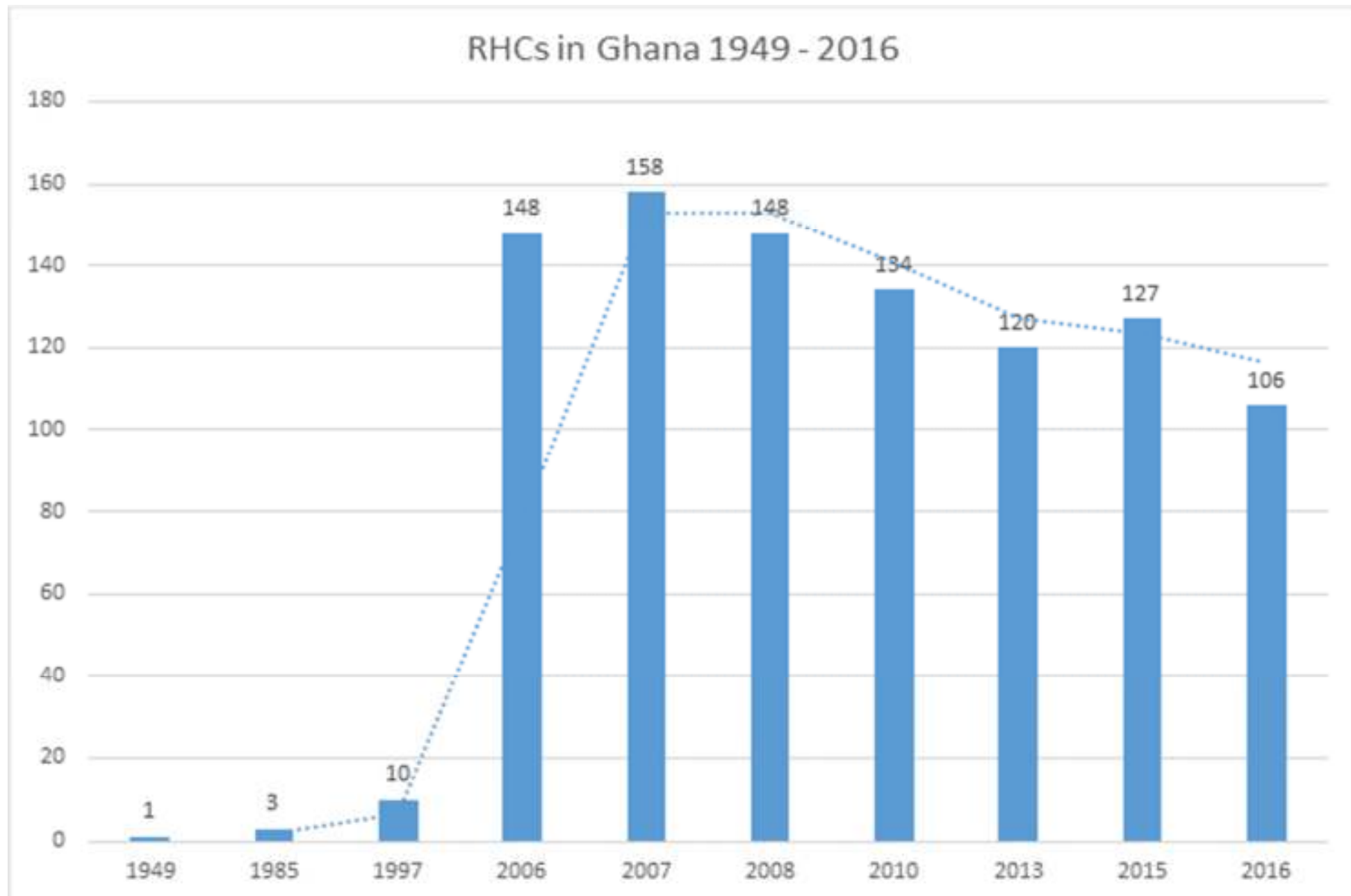
Major Outcomes for Children Resulting from Care Reform

- Sustainable political will in support of care reform (2006–ongoing)
- Creation of the CRI (2007) and a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) unit within the DSW (2017)
- Creation of multisectoral monitoring teams (ongoing)
- Capacity building of key sector stakeholders (ongoing)
- Shift from residential to family-based care
- Increased and consistent funding (The United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF] and The United States Agency for International Development [USAID]/Displaced Children and Orphans Fund [DCOF])
- Standards developed for RHCs (2010)

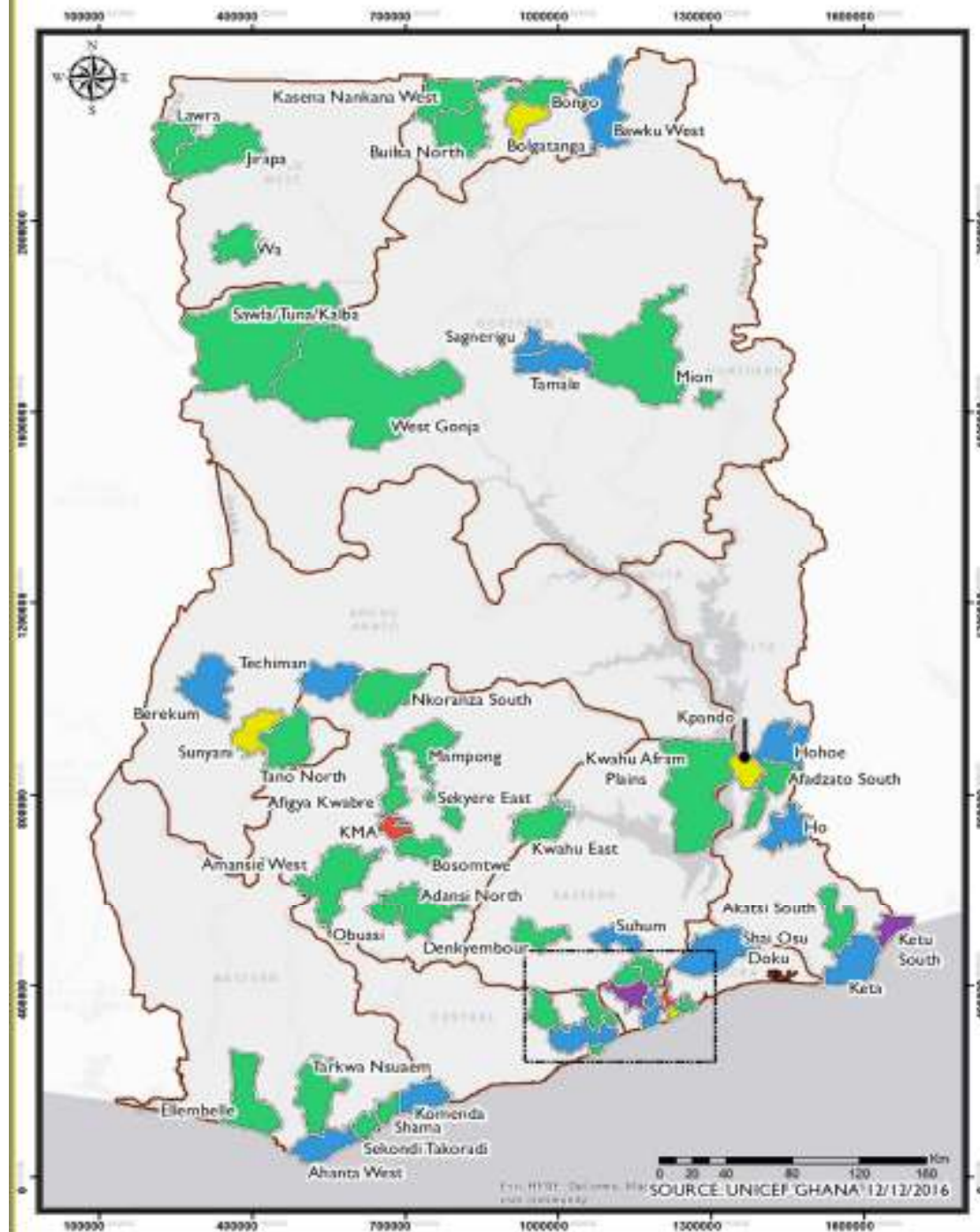
Major Outcomes for Children Resulting from Care Reform

- In 2016, the DSW turned down an estimated 40 applications from NGOs to establish RHCs.
- Applicants encouraged to design programs and projects promoting family-based care
- 85 RHCs closed down (2007–2017)
- As of April, 2013, 1,577 children reintegrated back to their parents and extended families (Country Care Profile, 2015).

Major Outcomes for Children Resulting from Care Reform



RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS (RHC) IN GHANA- OCTOBER 2016



MAP LOCATOR



LEGEND

RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTION
No. RHC8



Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Prevention of Unnecessary Family Separation

Present

- Better Care for Children Committee to coordinate the implementation of the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
- Conditional cash transfer programme through the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme since 2008
- Training of the workforce on alternative care and child protection, development of SOPs for DSW, and community development to raise awareness

Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Prevention of Unnecessary Family Separation

What is under way

- Engagement and mobilization of communities (child protection toolkit)
- Social drive and communication campaign to be launched on 31 August 2017
- Development of an information system and case management system

Factors that facilitated or made change possible

- Government commitment (LEAP)
- Stakeholder coordination
- Advocacy



Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Residential Care

Present

1) What has been done in terms of

- Child and Family Welfare Policy
- 2010 standards and checklist
- Mapping and monitoring of RHCs



2) What is under way

- Revisions of the 2010 standard
- The roadmap for licensing and closure of RHCs
- Piloting of a monitoring system for children in formal care, including RHCs

3) Factors that facilitated or made change possible

- Openness of some RHCs/NGOs to shift from residential care to family-based care

Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Foster Care

Present

1) What has been done

- Legal reform provision on foster care in lieu of residential care (e.g., Child and Family Welfare Policy)
- Foster parents—354 identified, 100 screened and trained; partner NGOs identified 80 foster parents



Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Foster Care

2) What is under way

- Legal reform provision on foster care in lieu of residential care (e.g., Child and Family Welfare Policy)
- Complete screening and training of foster parents
- Development and finalization of the training and operational manual
- Pilot of monitoring system of children in foster care

3) What factors facilitated or made change possible

- NGO collaboration
- Government commitment—Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP)/DSW
- Awareness, sensitization, and advocacy on foster care and adoption regulations and procedures

Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Kinship Care

CRI in Ghana currently focuses on traditional kinship care through its gatekeeping mechanisms.



Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Adoption

1) What has been done

- Legal reform and policy including the Children Amendment Act 2016
- The Central Adoption Authority was established.
- Regulations on adoption are being developed and finalized.
- A moratorium was placed on “unregulated” adoptions.

2) What is under way

- Passage of the regulations and finalization of a training manual.

3) Factors that facilitated or made change possible

- Government commitment
- NGO support and collaboration
- Advocacy



Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Family Reunification and Reintegration

Present

1) What has been done

- Tools have been developed to assess and document the reintegration of children.

2) What is under way

- Strengthening of DSW's reintegration capacity
- Profiling and documentation of reintegrated children

3) Factors that facilitated or made change possible

- NGO support and expertise
- RHC openness to deinstitutionalize children, in collaboration with DSW



Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Workforce: limited capacity of DSW at all levels
- Finance: limited financial resource to implement the reform
- Weak coordination among key stakeholders including NGOs and RHCs
- Limited understanding of the CRI and lack of evaluation to assess the impact of the reforms on children in care and their families



Key Challenges and Opportunities

- Weak monitoring and enforcement of standards of RHCs and foster care
- Weak legal enforcement of reintegration procedures
- Capacity building in case management, referral mechanisms, and M&E are necessary



Key Challenges and Opportunities

Present

Family Strengthening

- Challenges accessing operational funds from the District Assembly Common Fund/Government of Ghana
- Donor project funds seen as the only reliable source of income for implementing child protection activities
- Limited information on NGO programmes

Monitoring Children in Formal Alternative Care

- Standardised, reliable monitoring system necessary to support care reform. Standardised data needed for:
 - Monitoring trends in formal alternative care
 - Case management by district officers and RHCs



Key Challenges and Opportunities

Possible untapped resources and opportunities

- Social drive to be launched to change behavior
- Broader child protection system strengthening
- Implementation and enforcement of the law
- Intersectoral and interdepartmental collaboration
- District- and community-level stakeholder collaboration
- Staff capacity: well-organized trainings on reintegration for DSW staff and NGO partners



Recommendations

- Ghana should undertake a programme evaluation of the first 10 years of implementation of its CRI to assess the following:
 - Governance and leadership
 - Relevance
 - Effectiveness and efficiency in programming
 - Funding
 - Sustainability issues
 - Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
 - Coordination and collaboration
 - Changing trends and political dynamics



Recommendations (1)

Country Care Profile

Ghana

- Efforts should be intensified in the reintegration of children. More collaboration will be sought from other stakeholders to ensure efficiency.
- Progress was made in early years, with more than 1,500 children (**more than 40% of children**) reintegrated.
- There is a need to better address **underlying causes of family separation** and institutionalization of children.



Recommendations (2)

Country Care Profile

Ghana



Better Care Networks | UNICEF | USAID | PEPPAR

- The **system strengthening approach** is seen as an opportunity to **prevent children from being placed in institutions and family separation**.
- Addressing children in residential homes must be done within the legal and policy framework.
- There is a need to recognize informal care, and reform should be built on **positive indigenous models**.
- Residential homes are a **measure of last resort for children** and should be emphasized as part of the behavior and social change interventions.



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Acknowledgments

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