

GHANA WITHOUT ORPHANS



MANUAL FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



Bethany
CHRISTIAN SERVICES



MANUAL FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you (James 1:27, NLT).

GHANA WITHOUT ORPHANS (GWO)

WITH SUPPORT FROM BETHANY CHRISTIAN SERVICES GLOBAL GHANA

2020

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Ghana Without Orphans (GWO) is exceptionally grateful to the Almighty God for making this Manual for Vulnerable Children's Ministry a reality. We are also deeply grateful to First Fruit, Bethany Christian Services Ghana and Global teams, especially Naa Adjorkor Mohenu (Country Director, Bethany Christian Services Global Ghana) for her sterling and exemplary leadership, supervision, encouragement, and commitment to see this project become a manifestation.. We cannot overlook the invaluable technical support and directions provided by Mr. Isaac Yeboah Agyei (Program Manager, Foster Care, Bethany Christian Services Global Ghana) and Miss. Esther Kum-Tabia Eshun (Intern, M. Phil. Social Work, University of Ghana) for the development of this manual. From the depth of our hearts, we also appreciate the Executive Committee of GWO including Rev. Maxwell Obeng (Circuit Minister, Bethany Methodist Church, Dzorwulu Accra) Rev. Humphrey Patterson (Executive Member of Association of Children's Homes and Orphanages - Ghana) Rev. Richmond Joseph Tetey, (District Minister & Minister In-Charge, Royal Priesthood Congregation, Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Abeka, Accra) and Rev. George Abaidoo (Founder, GWO and Head Pastor, Assemblies of God, Calvary Grace Chapel, La Accra) contributing and overseeing the development of this manual. To all who have contributed and supported GWO through this process, we say May God Richly Bless You. You all won't lose your reward in Jesus' Name - Ayekooo!!.

Section 1:

INTRODUCTION

Children are a heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. (Psalm 127:3-4)

The ability to have children is a special blessing from God to man since creation (Gen. 1:28). Hence Jesus' recognition of children as heirs of God's Kingdom. From one generation to another, humans also have the same blessing to reproduce and remain custodians of the earth and worshippers of God.

Beyond Biblical recognition, societies all over the world pay attention to the wellbeing and development of children because they constitute a vulnerable group. Children are adorable and have potentials for the world's future, yet weak and fragile. They may be adaptable, resilient, and eager to learn, yet require protection and guidance. Therefore, it is not surprising the protection and care of vulnerable children are essential in every culture and social establishment including the church. The influence of Christianity in shaping the way vulnerable children are cared for in society can be traced to the early days of the church.

According to James 1:27 true religion is demonstrated by the care of the fatherless and widows. In the Roman Empire, Christians were noted for their fierce advocacy against child abuse and the adoption of abandoned babies (Bareither, 2019). However, Benz and Lindberg (2020) recount a gradual shift towards orphanages from the 4th century, which was continued in the middle ages mainly by monasteries. According to them, orphanages became popular with most churches having an orphanage. In the 17th century, the orphanages took the form of schools after the model of August Hermann Francke (a Lutheran clergy noted for his orphanage). However, the approach to caring for orphans and vulnerable children started changing when Johann Friedrich Oberlin, another Lutheran pastor from Alsace, initiated the Comprehensive Care For Individuals And Communities, which provided services that

strengthened communities to care for children better, both effectively and efficiently (Benz and Lindberg, 2020).

Moreover, scientific evidence emerging after World War II, corroborated that the best environment for the wellbeing and development of children is the family and sparked a significant change in focus from the orphanages' system to family-centred care (Jolley & Shields, 2009). The United Nations for that matter enacted the Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) in 1990 and the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care (UNGAC) in 2010 to safeguard children globally and set standards on how children should be cared for in case of emergency. The UNCRC and UNGAC emphasise the need to keep children in families always, with orphanages serving as the last option for children, who will be moved into a family in the shortest possible time (UN, 1990; UN, 2010). Ghana was the first nation to ratify the UNCRC on 29th June 1990 (BCN and UNICEF, 2015). As such, the Children's Act, 1998 (560) and the Children's Amendment Act 2016 (937) prioritise family centred care for children and prohibit any effort to separate children. Also, the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana emphasises the need to prevent family separation, insisting that poverty alone cannot justify any attempt to separate a child from a family (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2015).

Despite these legal provisions, many children remain in orphanages with several lacking significant service in families (NDPC, 2020). Though the state has the responsibility of caring for vulnerable children, the role of the church continues to be paramount in ensuring children are protected in families (Bareither, 2019). Ghana's culture for caring for vulnerable children traditionally centres on families, mostly the extended family (Frimpong-Manso, 2014). However, changing trends and economic hardships have affected this phenomenon (BCN&UNICEF, 2015).

In 2007, the government of Ghana introduced a Care Reform Initiative (CRI) intending to change focus from orphanages to family-based care, but the Ghanaian society continues to depend largely on institutions (BCN & UNICEF, 2015). As of 2016, a total of 95 Residential Homes for Children (RHC), cared for 2,900 children with 85%

of them being separated from at least a living parent (Hickman, Adams & Country Core Team, 2018). Also, 32 children were in foster care though 89 foster parents were available (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2018). In 2014, the number of children living on the streets in Accra alone had risen to about 90,000 (Asante, 2014). An extended version of the CRI known as the Accelerating Child Care Reform Programme was also implemented from 2015 to 2020 to support the implementation of the CRI (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2018). As a result, manuals and tools have been developed to guide the implementation of foster care and adoption services in Ghana.

Lessons from the history of child care indicate that the role of Ghanaian churches cannot be ignored in making adoption and foster care a reality in Ghana (Bareither, 2019; Benz and Lindberg, 2020). Ghana's 71% Christian population (GSS, 2010) buttress the role of the church especially in advocating for family-based care. Churches can establish vulnerable children's ministry to support the recruitment of foster and adoptive parents and care of vulnerable children in communities. This will not only solve a national problem but enhance discipleship in churches as required by the great commission (Matt 28:19-20).

For the above reason, Ghana Without Orphans (GWO), a movement of Christians and organisations working to promote family-based care, with the support of Bethany Christian Services Global has developed this manual to encourage and guide churches through the process of establishing a ministry to care for vulnerable children. This manual demonstrates God's plan for vulnerable children with Biblical examples. It guides the user through 8 steps to launching a ministry for vulnerable children, adapted from the work of Jason Weber and Paul Pennington (2009).

Section 2:

GOD'S PLAN FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN

A father of the fatherless, and a defender of the widows, is God in His holy habitation. God settles the lonely in families... (Psalm 68:5-6, BSB)

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matt 19:14)

Children are the means through which God continues His work on earth across generations. To equip all children to do his will, God places them in families even when they lose connection to their birth family (Ps. 68:6). The Bible has several examples of how God used the mechanism of the family to prepare vulnerable children to do his work.

Biblical Response To Vulnerable Children's Needs

The Story of Esther

In the citadel of Susa lived a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin named Mordecai. He lived with his cousin named Hadassah also known as Esther. Esther had no father or mother because they had died, so Mordecai took her in and brought her up as his own in a God-fearing manner. Through that, she stood for the Jews and saved them from Haman's plot of destroying them. Mordecai's act of fostering the vulnerable child – that is his cousin Esther, ended up saving all Jews in the town from the plot against them. This has been of significant benefit to generations.

The Story of Moses

The book of Exodus tells us about a boy who was born to a Levite woman. This woman in fear of losing her son as a result of king Pharaoh's decree to kill all male children, left him on the Nile River after she had hidden him for three months and could not continue any longer. The Pharaoh's daughter on the other hand saw the child, had pity on him, adopted, and raised him in the palace as her own. This little boy was named Moses which means "I drew him out of water". This boy Moses later became the one who led the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians. Abandoned children are not without a great future. Taking care of a vulnerable child or adopting that child means helping that child to reach his/her full potential in the future, which will be of tremendous benefit to yourself and generations to come.

The Story of Jesus and Our Adoption by Faith

We cannot talk about stories that emphasise the importance of adoption/fostering or helping vulnerable children, without talking about baby Jesus. His mother Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit while she was promised in marriage to Joseph. Irrespective of the circumstances surrounding his birth, Joseph accepted baby Jesus as his own, and the couple raised baby Jesus in a God-fearing manner. Jesus grew to become our saviour and carried our sins on the cross, giving us eternal life. We have received adoption and have therefore become sons of God through this same Jesus. (Galatians 4:5-7, Ephesians 1:5, Matthew 1:18-25).

These three stories emphasise the importance of family and children in the plan of God. It is in the family that these individuals got the best training and protection and were able to develop and become a source of hope for generations. Therefore, children today also need to be in families to thrive and give back to the community in the future.

So, it cannot be stressed enough how important the family is in development of a child. Ultimately, it is the family that is responsible for shaping a child and influencing their values, skills, socialization and security during these childhood development stages.

Principles For Caring For Vulnerable Children

Christian Principles

Love: In taking care of vulnerable children, love is one of the most important principles because, without love, accepting and taking care of others would be difficult if not impossible. The Bible further emphasises this by demonstrating God's love for us and admonishing us so many times to love one another. (Colossians 3:14, John 15: 12, 1 Corinthians 13: 13, Romans 13: 8, 1 John 4: 8).

Giving: For God so loved the world that he gave (John 3: 16). Giving is an important principle in taking care of vulnerable children. This is because the child becomes yours and you provide for the needs of the child in terms of material and emotional needs. (Proverbs 3:9, Luke 6:30, Proverbs 3:27)

Patience: Patience in care giving is a necessity because children can be troublesome. Foster children or adopted children on the other hand have emotional or other social situations and backgrounds that can cause them to misbehave. Patience will guide caregivers in raising these children right and appropriately. It will help caregivers shape children and point them in directions that will be beneficial to their growth and development. (Proverbs 15:18, Ecclesiastes 7:8, Proverbs 14: 29).

Sacrificial Parenting: Sacrificial parenting implies modelling the example of Christ in our relationship with children. Parents should always remember the sacrifice Jesus made, even dying on the cross, for us to qualify as children of God and be ready to also do the same for their children (Michelle, 2020).

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! (Philippians 2:5-8).

From the above scripture, Jesus sacrificed his divinity (i.e., nature of God), assumed the nature of a slave, and lost his life, all to restore the lost children of God. Thus, sacrificial parenting means sacrificing one's status including rights, privileges, resources (material, emotional and spiritual), etc, and lowering oneself to the level of a child to nurture and restore that child to developing into responsible God-fearing

adults. This is the kind of parenting vulnerable children need. Sacrificial parenting also implies being a parent to every child you encounter.

Eli's Example of Sacrificial Parenting

Samuel, though born to Elkanah and Hannah, was raised by Eli the priest. This was because he was an answered prayer to his mother Hannah, and she had pledged to give him to God for service. Eli being the priest, assumed parental responsibility of Samuel. Eli trained him in the ways of God and gave him guidance and good counsel. Even when God revealed to Samuel that he would destroy Eli's house, he still guided him to go according to the ways of God. In the end, Eli raised a prophet for Israel by sacrificing to be a parent for Samuel.

Discipleship/The Great Commission: Caregiving, foster care, or adoption is one of the major ways Christians can use to disciple others and children to be precise. This is also known as social evangelism. These activities or responsibilities draw children closer to Christian caregivers, allowing them to train them in the things of God. Just like the bible says "train a child in the way he should go so that when he grows, he will not depart from it. The ability to making disciples of Christ is the ability to training children in the things of God (Romans 10: 14-15, Luke 6:40).

Scientific Principles – The Two-Way Interaction (Nature and Nurture)

According to scientific evidence, the development and growth of children is based on the interaction between genetics (nature) and environmental (nurture). Therefore, the intimate environment of a family provides an avenue for children to develop their potentials (Siegel & Bryson, 2012).

Cultural Principles (Extended Family Tradition)

Traditionally, the care of children is not limited to the nuclear family. The extended family (uncles, aunts, and grandparents) are culturally obliged to take over the care of children during emergencies (Frimpong-Manso, 2014).

The Church As An Agent Of Change In The Care Of Vulnerable Children

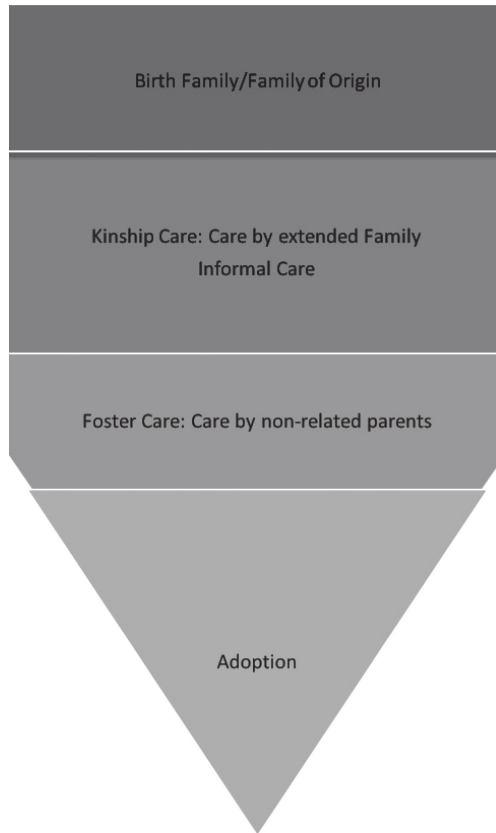
You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matt. 5:14-16)

The church since history has led in the transformation of society and care for the vulnerable. In promoting family-based care in Ghana, the church remains a strategic agent for social change and transformation. For this to happen, the culture for caring for vulnerable children by churches must change first. Jason Jonson (2016) provides insight on how churches can transform their culture of caring for vulnerable children:

- Everyone must be involved: caring for vulnerable children is not for a few people but everyone can do something. Vulnerable children's ministry should become normal to every member of the church. For example, some members can provide funding to members who are fostering. (1 Cor. 12:14-20).
- Caring for vulnerable children in families should be part of the foundational culture of churches. It must be consistently communicated through sermons, special events, and other activities of the church year-round.
- Caring for vulnerable children must be connected to all ministries in the church. Room should be made for every ministry to have a role.
- Finally, leaders should be able to take input from the members. The bottom-up approach will help in transforming the culture of members.

The changing church culture of caring for vulnerable children over residential care will lead to a bigger social transformation in the future.

UNDERSTANDING FAMILY-BASED CARE PROCESSES IN GHANA



Prevent Family Separation

Separation of a child from the family because of factors such as economic and social issues causes that child to suffer various forms of trauma due to the destroyed attachment that existed between child and family. Also, the Child and Family Welfare Policy of Ghana prohibits the separation of a child from the family due to poverty. To ensure that children are not at risk of being separated, their families of origin must be supported to provide better care for them. The introduction of livelihood support programs, such as small-scale businesses and income-generating activities alongside

education, is one of the best ways to help families in need to provide the care and love needed by their children. This will not only prevent children from being vulnerable but help reunify separated children with their families of origin. The provision of love and better care to reunified children by empowered and strengthen families prevent reunified children from returning to an institution or their vulnerable state. Again, there is a need to support children who have been reunified because living outside the family of origin has both social and psychological effects on the development of the child.

Kinship/Informal Care

Traditionally, when parents have been unable to look after their children due to death, illness, imprisonment, or absence through work, the children's upbringing has been taken on by their relatives, this being informal, as is required by the Ghanaian culture (Frimpong-Manso, 2014). Kinship/informal care is defined by the Foster Operational Manual 2018 as "any private arrangement provided in a family environment, whereby the child is looked after on an ongoing or indefinite basis by relatives or friends...without this arrangement having been ordered by an administrative or judicial authority or a duly accredited body" (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2018a, p. 10). The emergence of existing laws and policies allows for the formalisation of kinship care. This system is properly monitored to protect children. The formalisation of kinship care is called Kinship fostering.

Foster Care

Foster care is designed as a temporary service that responds to crises in the lives of children and families, an expectation exists that children who enter care will either return to their birth parents as soon as possible, or will be provided with safe, stable, and loving families through reunification with other relatives or adoption. Some children, however, remain in foster care for extended periods. Foster care serves children who have experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect. The foster care process in Ghana is carried out by either the Department of Social Welfare or an accredited agency. To foster a child in Ghana, the processes are as follows:

- One needs to apply through the Department of Social Welfare or an accredited agency. The application form should be accompanied by all relevant documents.

- This is followed by a home study to investigate the capacity of the parent to foster. The home study and all other documents are submitted to the Foster Care Placement Committee.
- This committee recommends the approval or disapproval of the application, forwards it to the Foster Care Services Unit who reviews it, and approves training for the applicant.
- The Department or approved agency then arranges a 30hour training for the approved applicant, after which the approved applicant will be given his/ her license, which is valid for three years and subject to renewal. The license will however be renewed based on a satisfactory review of the eligibility and suitability of the status of the applicant.
- The Department will then enter into a foster care agreement with the approved applicant.
- The license of a foster parent can however be revoked if the circumstance of the foster parent changes so much that it is no longer in the best interest of the child.

Source: Foster Care Regulations 2018 (L.I. 2361)

Adoption

This is the legal transfer of the parental right of a child from a biological parent to another person permanently. Adoption is done by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) or an authorised agency like Bethany Christian Services. The situation of a child justifies the initiation of the adoption process and not because a person has applied to adopt that child. Thus, the child should be abandoned and in need of care and protection or the child's birth family has relinquished the rights and obligations towards the child.

- Apply to the region where that person resides
- A married applicant shall apply jointly with the spouse or with the consent of the spouse of the applicant.
- On submission of the application, the DSW or an accredited agency authorised by the DSW shall conduct a home study in respect of the applicant in the community where the applicant resides and prepare a detailed home study report.

- The DSW or agency authorised by the DSW shall organise training programmes following the training manuals prepared by the DSW for applicants before placement and a certificate shall be issued to the applicant upon completion of at least 30 hours of training.
- The DSW shall assess the Adoption Application and Home Study and then forward it to the Central Adoptions Authority who will determine the eligibility of the Prospective Adoptive Parent
- The authority shall match an eligible and suitable parent to an adoptable child based on the needs of the child indicated in the child study report and the Home Study Report of the applicant
- The authority or authorised adoption agency will prepare the child for placement through counseling and introduction to the prospective adoptive parents
- The Authority shall then confirm the matching of the prospective adoptive parent with the adoptable child based on the outcome of the engagement between the child and parent.
- The child is then placed with the adoptive parent after confirmation for not less than one month under the supervision of the DSW
- The DSW shall prepare a Social Enquiry Report to support an application for Adoption Order and Attach a signed and dated authorisation from the Director.
- Where the court grants the adoption, the adoptive parent shall
- Submit a copy of the adoption order to the authority; and
- Obtain a new birth certificate for the child per the adoption order
- The DSW or an accredited agency authorised by the DSW shall monitor the adoptive family every six months during the first two years after the adoption order and once a year during the following three years
- The DSW or accredited agency shall provide appropriate counseling and post-adoption services to the adoptive family.

Inter-Country Adoption Process

- A person who wishes to adopt a child through inter country adoption shall apply to the central authority
- The central authority shall conduct a home study and determine the eligibility and suitability of the applicant to adopt a child inter-country
- Where the central authority determines that an applicant is eligible and suitable to adopt a child from Ghana, the central authority shall issue a letter of approval and forward it together with the home study report to the authority
- The authority shall acknowledge receipt within 5 days and advice the central authority to procure and complete the application form.
- An application for inter-country adoption shall be made in the English Language per law submitted to the authority through an accredited adopted agency
- The authority shall consider the application together with the accompanying documents to access the eligibility and suitability of the applicant to adopt a child from Ghana
- The authority shall not process an inter-country adoption application unless the application is accompanied by a letter of approval issued by the central authority of the receiving state.

Source: Adoptions Regulations 2018 (L.I. 2360)

Section 3:

STEPS TO LAUNCHING A VULNERABLE CHILDREN CARE MINISTRY

Which of you, wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost to see if he has the resources to complete it? Otherwise, if he lays the foundation and is unable to finish the work, everyone who sees it will ridicule him...(Lk. 14:28-29, Berean Study Bible)

In establishing every ministry there is the need to have it properly planned. This is to ensure that you have a clear approach to achieving your objectives fully. As a guide to establishing vulnerable children's ministry, Jason Weber and Paul Pennington (2009) in their book titled *Launching an Orphans Care Ministry in Your Church*, proposed eight steps to launching a ministry to care for vulnerable children. This manual has adopted the eight steps to guide local churches in Ghana to establish their much-needed vulnerable children's care ministry. The eight stages have been grouped into three phases as follows:

Phase 1: Introduction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approach a key leader with your vision 2. Identify passionate families to join you in prayer 3. Dream together about the possibilities
Phase 2: Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Determine your channels of vulnerable children's ministry 2. Plan the strategies of your ministry 3. Establish a leadership structure
Phase3: Execution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a formal proposal for church leadership 2. Launch and operate your vulnerable children's ministry

Phase One: Introduction

Step One: Approach A Key Leader With Your Vision

Having a vision for the church requires talking to church leaders about it. However, to ensure church leaders understand and accept this vision, a key church leader is first required. The key church leader must be one with a key position in the church who also has a lot of experience in the church. The vision is therefore put before him with biblical demonstrations of the need for vulnerable children's care and how other churches have also taken this upon themselves and are doing well. The importance of approaching a key church leader with your vision of vulnerable children's care ministry is for direction concerning church procedure, support in prayers, and also support when it comes to pushing the vision forward before the rest of the leaders. To share the vision, one must:

- Identify a key leader in the church (consider their role and experience)
- Explain the vision to the leader
- Listen to his inputs and concerns
- Consider them and incorporate them into your plans towards achieving your vision

TOOL

Approaching a key leader and sharing your vision is a very essential part of the project. Therefore, individuals need to master this skill and know their way about protocol. This section is to guide individuals on how to go about this, considering they may not have much time to discuss this further with the leader.

CHECKLIST

- Book an appointment with the church leader
- Dress appropriately
- Do enough research on the vision you want to discuss
- Find biblical instances to support your motive
- Your approach must be brief and concise
- Be open to questions and contributions

Example of brief approach to a key leader

Good day, Elder John, I hope the family is well. I have a great concern about the number of children going through difficulties in this community. The Bible makes us understand in Matthew 25: 43- 45, Psalm 82:3-4, James 1:27 that helping the vulnerable is the greatest form of Christianity. The Lord has therefore lain upon my heart that this church establishes a ministry for vulnerable children and families. This ministry will help vulnerable children (Children with disabilities, orphans, or those whose families struggle to provide them adequate care) in the community by supporting families of children in need of adequate care in their biological families and helping other children by placing them in foster care or for adoption. By so doing, these children will grow to become God-fearing, thriving, and responsible adults. It will reduce the number of children on our streets who often engage in social vices, which affects the whole community. The church will also retain and prepare the next generation to continue to implement our vision in the future. This is my vision Elder, and I would need your guidance and support in this regard to make this a reality

Step Two: Identify Passionate Families And Individuals To Join You In Prayer

Prayer is an important foundation of every church project or program. Having a ministry to care for vulnerable children would require families. Thus, it is necessary to identify families and other individuals in the church who are also very passionate about orphans to join you in prayers. The team can set up prayer meetings where they meet to pray for the vision, vulnerable children, and the church in general. Prayers need to be invested into the vision for ideas and God's intervention into the plans and preparations for the church to have a ministry for vulnerable children. To begin praying about the vision, one must:

- Identify families and individuals who are interested in serving and taking care of vulnerable children who are themselves prayerful.

- Set meeting days, times, and meeting venue/platforms to pray into the vision
- Invite them to join in the prayer meetings

TOOL

PRAYER GUIDE

- o Identify scriptures to inspire and support your prayer topics
- o Pray for the church at large throughout the world that the Lord should manifest himself
- o Pray for good health and strength for people around the world
- o Pray for the country for peace to reign for development
- o Pray for your church that the members will have a heart for vulnerable children in the church
- o Pray about the vision of having a vulnerable children's ministry
- o Pray for guidance from God on how he wants this ministry to be run
- o Pray for God to bring you supportive individuals and families
- o Pray to God for outstanding leaders of the ministry
- o Pray for the vulnerable children themselves, that God will give them a deeper understanding of this opportunity and take advantage of it

Step Three: Dream Together About The Possibilities

This step requires that the team comes together after prayer and considers how the ministry is going to be run. This is where ideas, dreams from each member regarding the ministry are put forth for prayerful and careful consideration. The team develops themes around vulnerable children's care. This is where all the necessary questions come up and they try to find solutions to them. At this stage, members come up with their most passionate concerns and the team thinks of how to address them within the ministry. For the above discussion, the following is advised:

- Discuss the need in the community and dream of change with interested people
- Share ideas and take submissions from interested people with regards to possibilities of the ministry

- Note them down and consider how best to in-cooperate them in the vision to create a mission and objectives

TOOL

Discussion pointers

- Consider the number of vulnerable children in your church and neighbourhood, what do you think would be of great help to their situation.
- If your church leaders agree to the ministry, what would you have the church do within the first year of the project?
- If the team is given a bottomless pit of funds to help vulnerable children in the church, what would they do with it?
- If the ministry was the team's full-time job, what measures would they put in place and what would they achieve within a year

Phase Two: Planning

Step Four: Determine Your Channels For The Vulnerable Children Care Ministry

This is where the team decides which channels are going to be put in place. Every local church has significant people that the ministry team can utilise or call upon to ensure that the right thing is done the right way. Some church members may be lawyers or judges, some of them may be social workers, others may work in orphanages, others may be detectives and many more. Usually, the care of vulnerable children has three channels: family preservation and empowerment, foster care, and adoption. The family preservation and empowerment channel supports vulnerable children in their birth family to have adequate care, in terms of feeding clothing, schooling, etc., and empowers the family to be self-sufficient. Thus, it centres on equipping families to meet their children's needs so that they are not at risk of harm or separation. The foster care channel focuses on placing at-risk children into foster care so that they are provided temporary safety with safe God-fearing families who provide care. The adoption channel also looks at going through the necessary procedure by law to ensure that vulnerable children have a permanent, safe, loving, and godly home. Churches have a choice as to where they wish to serve. The following is recommended:

- Identify channels that can be used to take care of vulnerable children in the community and church
- Explain the three main channels of caring for vulnerable children (i.e., support their families, foster care, and adoption)
- Identify professionals in your church such as lawyers, social workers, judges, and many more who can help facilitate the ministry.
- Evaluate how these channels can be applicable in your church.

TOOL

Evaluation of the current situation

Kindly answer the following questions

Does your church support mission work?	Yes	No	Maybe
Does your church have strategies for supporting vulnerable people?	Yes	No	Maybe
Will your church members be interested in vulnerable children's ministry?	Yes	No	Maybe
Do church members know about foster care, adoptions, and family preservation and empowerment?	Yes	No	Maybe
Does your church have resource persons (e.g., Lawyers, judges, social workers) to help facilitate the ministry?	Yes	No	Maybe
Are there agencies/organisations your church can partner with for the ministry?	Yes	No	Maybe
Which channel do you think would be best for your church? (Kindly tick as many as apply)			
Family preservation and empowerment	Yes	No	Maybe
Foster Care	Yes	No	Maybe
Adoption	Yes	No	Maybe
Total Score			

NB: 5 and above Yes means there is existing strong support for vulnerable children's ministry in your church

4 Yes means there may be existing support for vulnerable children's ministry in your church

3 and below Yes means there is less support for vulnerable children's ministry in your church (revisiting phase 1 can help improve support for the ministry)

Step Five: Plan The Strategies Of Your Ministry

At this stage, the team considers the goal of the vulnerable children care ministry and develops objectives to achieving the goal. The team sets out a step-by-step strategy with timelines on how to achieve short term and long-term goals of the vulnerable children's ministry. This includes how to use options such as fundraising to support the project, visitation of families, setting up a support group for adoptive parents, foster parents, and vulnerable children, and many more. To develop a plan, the following is advised:

- Revisit your vision and the plans you have made so far
- Set up objectives to achieving your goal of setting up a vulnerable children's ministry in your church
- Set up step-by-step strategies to achieve your objectives
- Consider the roles of appropriate state agencies (Department of Social Welfare, Police, Court, etc) and other partners such as adoption agencies, NGOs, health facilities, and schools

TOOL

SAMPLE 2 YEARS PLAN FOR LAUNCHING A FAMILY PRESERVATION AND EMPOWERMENT CHANNEL

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year one (Setting up structures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitisation of the church on family preservation and empowerment Development of work plan for the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putting up bulletins of Bible quotations and pictures of caring for vulnerable children on church notice boards. Watching videos in the church about the plight of vulnerable children and the short and long-term effects. Use of all church media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram pages to educate church members and the public on the ministry Word ministrations on the care of vulnerable children in our societies and the role believers can play Set meeting days for ministry leaders to develop a work plan for the program Set fundraising goals/measures to get funds to support the activities Engage appropriate partners (DSW, NGOs, etc.) and professionals Decide on components of the family preservation and empowerment program through professional advice Set inclusion criteria Raise funds to support the program Set monitoring and evaluation measures Define the success of the ministry on the vulnerable children

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year two (1 st operational year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enroll vulnerable children/families into the program through a partner (an NGO providing services to families is recommended) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Screening and identification of vulnerable children in the church and community who need support with partner NGO. Investigation of the background of identified vulnerable children (child/family assessment) with partner NGO. The orientation of identified children and parents on the family preservation and empowerment program with partner NGO Identify the kind of support families of identified children need with advice from professionals Provide psychosocial support for vulnerable children and families through partner NGO Empower vulnerable family heads with skills to support the family Provide support to families until they are self-sufficient
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous Monitoring and evaluation of the program with partner NGO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the problems vulnerable children are facing despite the support with partner NGO Establish a support group for identified families, prayer meetings, and other social support activities. Update church leaders and members on the progress of the program through church media and meetings

SAMPLE 2 YEARS PLAN FOR LAUNCHING A FOSTER CARE CHANNEL

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year One (setting up structures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sensitisation of church members and community on Foster Care Partnership with NGOs, Foster Care Agency, and state institutions in charge of foster care such as the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular announcements about the foster care program through the community information center and church media pages Post pictures of foster families on church notice boards and media pages Organise drama for community members at community centers depicting ways of fostering and some of the fostering success stories. Invite professionals to church and community information centers or radio stations to orient the people on foster care Contact DSW officials as well as any foster care agency in the locality about our vision and discuss with them the role they can play as officials in ensuring the success of the foster care channel

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year Two (1 st operational year)	Enroll church members and interested community members as Foster Parents with DSW and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification and referral of families who are interested in fostering to DSW and partner NGO for screening (i.e., assessing their eligibility as well as home study) • Orient families on the foster care process through partners • Assist DSW/partner foster care agency to train families in foster care and ensure they are licensed • Work together with DSW to ensure families have gone through all legal procedures for children to be placed • Support the placed child and family (emotionally, spiritually, materially, etc.)
	Monitoring and evaluation of the Foster Care channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up support groups with monthly meetings to monitor, share, pray and support each other in fostering • Regular announced and unannounced visits to foster families to support DSW/partner NGOs responsible for monitoring • Identify families that are not doing so well and notify partner organisations or DSW. • Provide counseling and other possible support (e.g., recommending appropriate professionals) to enable them to do well • Assess the program with partners and identify aspects of the program that can be made better

SAMPLE 2 YEAR PLAN FOR LAUNCHING AN ADOPTION CHANNEL

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year one	Sensitisation of the church and community on the legal procedures of adoption Partner with DSW and adoption agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular announcements of the adoption program in churches and community information centers or radio stations Regular posting of pictures and success stories on notice boards and all church media pages Adoption success stories to be displayed through drama at community centers Sermons on Gods mandate on adoption Adoption professionals to educate the church and community on the legal adoption processes and the effects of not following them Identify organisations that work on adoptions (DSW and Adoption agency) Discuss the vision with them and identify the role they must play

YEAR	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES
Year 2 (1 st operational year)	Identify families interested in adoption and support them to complete the adoption process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and refer families interested in adoption to partner agency/DSW Orient the interested families in the adoption process with DSW or adoption agency Assist families with application forms and all other legal procedures Provide support (spiritual, emotional, or material, etc.) for both child and prospective adoptive family Follow up with prospective adoptive families and assist till the adoption process is completed
	Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular calls and visits to adoptive families to check up on them Assist agency/DSW to psychosocial services to adoptive families Set up a support group of adoptive families and organise activities for them Identify aspects of the program that could be better and develop initiatives to make them better

NB: This is only a guide and should be adjusted to suit the context of your church and locality

Step Six: Establish A Leadership Structure

Find out from your key church leader on how leaders are elected for the various ministries and guidance on how to get leaders for the vulnerable children's ministry. Investigate and learn from other effective ministries how their leadership works to apply it to the ministry. Build the structure of the ministry; identify people capable of filling structured positions in the ministry with their specific roles and responsibilities. The following would guide you:

- Find out how your church goes about its leadership positions
- Investigate vibrant ministries and how they go about their leadership positions
- Set up a leadership structure according to the objectives of the vision
- Identify leaders from within interested families and individuals
- Explain the assigned roles and responsibilities of every leader

TOOL

OPEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Does your church have a prescribed leadership model?

What is your church's greatest ministry, how is their leadership structure and how is it run?

When given the chance what changes would you make to your church's greatest ministry's leadership structure and style?

Do you already have an idea of how the vulnerable children's ministry leadership structure is going to be? Please explain

Do you already have people in mind for the various leadership positions as well as their roles and responsibilities? -----

----- If No, how do you plan on getting the right leaders for the ministry? -----

Phase Three: Execution

Step Seven: Develop A Formal Proposal For Church Leaders

This stage requires the team to draft a formal proposal to the church leaders. Presentations on the vulnerable children's ministry should be planned and prepared before meeting church leaders. This should consist of scriptures that talk about the mandate given to us by God to take care of vulnerable children and families. The various objectives, channels, and strategies on going about the ministry should be well explained. Prayers are still necessary at this point to seek the acceptance and blessings of leadership in the ministry. To develop a proposal and presentation, the following is recommended:

- Develop a formal proposal for church leaders
- Go through the proposal and show it to other key persons within the group to go review
- Draw your presentation outline
- Rehearse your presentation over and over
- Identify appropriate outfit for the presentation and build your confidence
- Present your proposal to the church leaders

TOOL

PROPOSAL GUIDE

1. Introduction:

What is the background of ministry (country, community, church, and cultural context)?

2. Problem Statement:

Why do we need this ministry?

What do we want to change with this ministry?

3. Objectives:

What are your expectations?

What do you want to achieve with this ministry?

4. Proposed Solution (Vulnerable Children's Ministry):

How will this ministry solve the problem and meet your objectives?

How are going to operate this ministry?

What activities will you be doing?

5. Budget and Funding:

What will you need?

How much will each activity cost?

How much money do you need?

How will you raise the amount needed?

6. Benefits and Beneficiaries:

Who will benefit from this ministry directly and indirectly?

How will they benefit in the short-term and long-term?

7. Impact:

What changes or improvements in the church and society will this ministry bring?

How will this ministry affect the future?

8. Conclusions:

Recap and summary of your main points for the proposal

Step Eight: Launch And Operate Your Vulnerable Children's Ministry

The team decides on a day for the big launch of the ministry. The various plans and preparations regarding the lunch, announcements, and involvement of the whole church are key at this stage. The team can implore church media in creating awareness before and after the launch. There can be frequent bulleting on statistics of vulnerable children in the country and their vulnerabilities on church notice boards. The ministry is launched with every leader diligently doing their best while prayers are still ongoing for the ministry. After the launch, the operation of the ministry commences with all leaders continue to perform their roles to ensure the achievement of the set objectives and goals. There should be period reviews (quarterly or monthly) and annual reporting to track the progress of the ministry. Things to do are:

- Decide on a day for the launching of the project
- There should be frequent announcements using all forms of church media, to engage the whole church and build their interest in the project
- The team should come together and continue praying towards the launch and the project itself
- Launch the project before the whole church in grand style.
- Ensure all leader perform their roles and track progress
- Set time for periodic reviews and annual reporting

TOOL

IDEAS FOR LAUNCH OF VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Sermon on care for the vulnerable- The Biblical mandate for Christians to take care of the vulnerable.
- Invite professionals from either your church or other professional agencies to talk about their experiences with vulnerable children in Ghana
- Invite professionals from adoption agencies and foster care agencies to educate on the legal processes.
- Invite adoptive parents and foster parents to share their experiences
- Build a board of pictures on caring for vulnerable children, foster families, and adoptive families.

[illegible]

CONCLUSION

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the light. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jh. 14:6). The words of Jesus direct us all to consider His example in everything we do as Christians. Jesus's birth and family life are a perfect example of the significance of family to every child. The stories of Moses, Samuel, and Esther reveals that the family is the Biblical way to caring for vulnerable children. God has an agenda to bring all men to himself. Caring for children in families lies at the core of God's agenda. God does not save an individual without his/her family (Act 16:31). Therefore, in a time where Ghana is seeking to promote family-based care against orphanages, the church must encourage Christian families to open their doors to care for vulnerable children and in so doing disciple them. Donations and gifts in the church must also be channelled in vulnerable families and families caring for vulnerable children, either through adoption or foster care.

Every church in Ghana is being called to keep families together and every Christian is being called into the vulnerable children's ministry. Who is hearing the voice of the Master calling? And who is ready to respond?

May the Almighty God bless you for accepting his call to minister to vulnerable children.

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"

(Isaiah 6:8, NIV)

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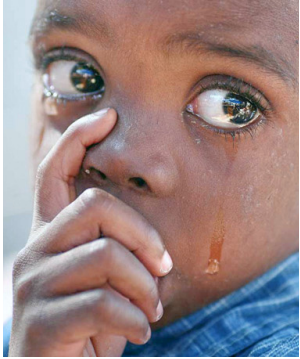
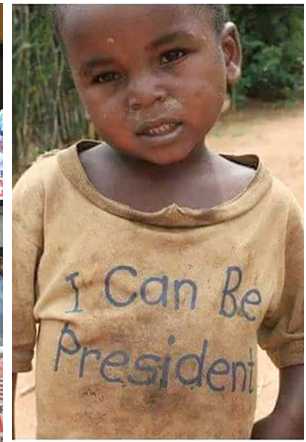
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