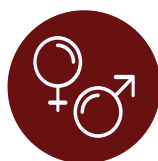




2021 CHILD PROTECTION BUDGET BRIEF




All women and children have the right to protection from violence. All forms of violence can cause harm to women and children, reduce their sense of self-worth, affront their dignity, and hinder their development, including their capacity to become productive citizens able to contribute to the socioeconomic development of Ghana. Prior to the pandemic, survivors of gender- and sexual-based violence faced average costs in excess of 900 GHS to pursue justice, in contravention of multiple laws designed to ensure that justice can be pursued at no costs to survivors. Inadequate and inconsistent funding allocated to efforts to combat human trafficking have also hindered the effectiveness of the Government's response to adequately support survivors. There have also been increased financial pressures on foster parents, which is likely to negatively impact the children in their care. It is vital that the Government protects and increases financial support to key child protection budgets.

Evidence suggests that during the Covid-19 pandemic, there have been increased levels of violence against women and children, with what appears to be lower levels of reporting to the police. Without responding and preventing violence against girls, women and boys, Ghana will not achieve several SDG targets.

Delays in cash disbursement for child protection programmes have significantly impacted on the ability of the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) to deliver on their mandate. Furthermore, a review of the MoGCSP's expenditure outturns highlight a lack of funding for combatting human trafficking and domestic violence, in addition to significant disparities between actual spending and revised allocated budgets. In 2020, 90% of the Ministry's budget allocation was for goods – a positive sign for supporting operational activities. However, 69.6% of that budget is earmarked for the Ghana School Feeding Programme, and 27.7% to support the LEAP programme. Only 0.6% was set aside to support the core operations of the Ministry. This is highly inadequate and needs to be addressed to ensure that child protection efforts are effectively supported.

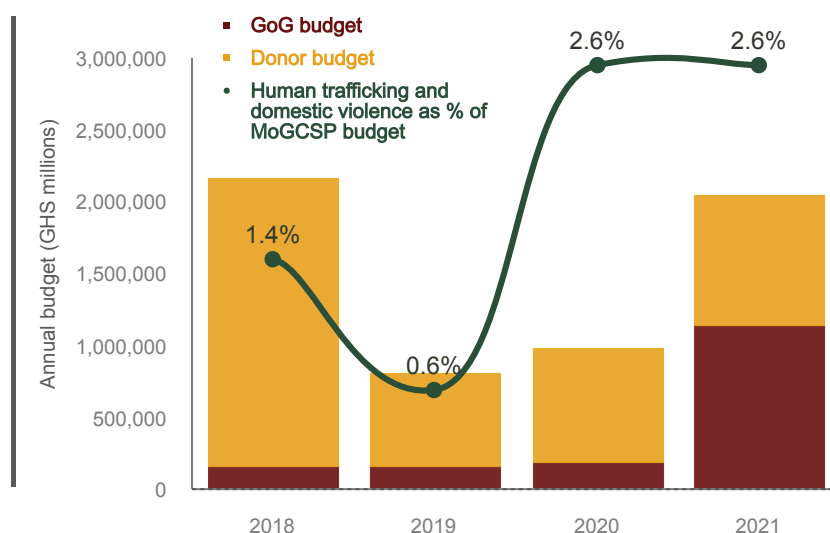
1 Increase funding of the Human Trafficking Fund to GHS 1 million per year and provide specific budget allocations to organisations that combat human trafficking. Despite efforts so far, the Human Trafficking Secretariat continues to receive inconsistent and inadequate funding, with delayed cash disbursement affecting its ability to deliver its mandate.



The Human Trafficking Act, Act 964 was promulgated in 2005. This Act established the Human Trafficking Secretariat to coordinate all activities to combat human trafficking in Ghana. The Secretariat implements the Human Trafficking Act by undertaking activities to prevent, protect, and collaborate with other agencies to prosecute and combat human trafficking in Ghana and to coordinate with law enforcement agencies to rescue victims.

As indicated in the graph to the right, the budget allocated by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to the human trafficking Secretariat since 2017, both in nominal terms, and as a proportion of the total Gender Ministry's budget. The total budget of GHS 2.1 million for 2021 is a significant increase (107%) over the 2020 allocation, with much of the increase coming from the Government. While this is a welcome and positive step, inconsistent funding over the years has hindered the effectiveness of the Secretariat's coordination activities. The MoGCSP should aim to increase the proportion of total expenditure allocated to the Secretariat, ensuring that the total budget allocation remains consistent when accounting for changes in donor expenditure, and increases as a minimum in line with inflation in future years. Furthermore, it must ensure that disbursements are timely to ensure that the Secretariat is able to undertake its duties.

Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection budget trends





2

The Government of Ghana is urged to provide GHS 2 million to the Domestic Violence Fund to uphold statutory provisions in the Domestic Violence Act to ensure that survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence do not have to fund their own medico-legal services to pursue justice. Evidence shows that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated violence against children and women, while reported cases appear to be falling. There is currently no functional government shelter in the country for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, leaving survivors to return to their abusive homes.



Violence against children and women takes many forms including physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse, and may involve neglect or deprivation. According to the 2016 Domestic Violence Survey, nearly three in every ten women in Ghana experienced domestic violence in the past 12 months, with 38 per cent of girls aged 15 – 19 years having experienced at least one act of sexual violence. It is estimated that child abuse costs the Ghanaian economy between GHS 926 million to GHS 1.4 billion per year.

Evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated violence against children and women. A rapid assessment conducted by UNICEF on violence and abuse at home during COVID-19 in May 2020 revealed that 32 per cent of respondents (adolescent and young people) reported having seen an increase of abusive and violent behaviour within their families during the past two months. Despite this prevalence, reporting of these cases remains low. In 2019, Ghana Police Service registered a total of 1,285 cases of child sexual abuse, falling to 1,047 in 2020.

22%

Nearly four in ten girls aged 15 to 19 in Ghana have experienced domestic violence in their lifetime, with 22 per cent of girls having experienced at least one act of sexual violence in the past 12 months.

International evidence has found that sexual and gender-based violence against women and children increases inequality, with survivors of child abuse earning on average 5% less than others over their working lives. In Ghana, this violence deepens household poverty as child and women survivors often need to pay for medico-legal services to seek justice. This is due to a lack of funding for officers that provide frontline service delivery. There are, for example, no vehicles for DoVVSU officers, preventing them from accompanying survivors to access medical services. There is no provision of office spaces to support privacy for survivors when reporting their cases, which contributes to victims' unwillingness to report their cases. Perhaps most seriously, there is no functional government shelter in the country for survivors, often leaving them to return to their abusive homes.

The average survivor incurs costs exceeding GHS 900 per case on average. This is in contravention of several legal provisions aimed at extending free medico-legal services for the child and women survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence. While there is some coverage for survivors that are in possession of an active National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) card, it does not cover the cost of Medical Reports which can range from GHS 300 to GHS 1000 depending on the nature of cases. In situations where victims cannot afford it, the doctor will not testify in the courts and the cases will be dropped.

We therefore recommend that the Government of Ghana allocates and releases at least GHS 2 million to the Domestic Violence Fund per year and makes it accessible to all women and child survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. This should include the operations of shelters for the child and women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. This will make it possible for the Judicial Service to implement Section 65 of the 1993 Courts Act to compensate witnesses. Furthermore, it will support the provision of the basic material support for victims of domestic violence, for training the families of victims of domestic violence, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of domestic violence into communities, and for training and capacity building of persons connected with the provision of shelter, rehabilitation and reintegration.

All forms of violence can cause harm to women and children, reducing their sense of self-worth, affront their dignity, and hinder their development, including their capacity to become productive citizens contributing to the socioeconomic development of Ghana. Without responding and preventing violence against girls, women and boys, Ghana will not achieve several SDG targets, notably 1.3, 5.2, 5.3, 8.7 and 16.2.



3

The Government of Ghana should establish a dedicated Foster Care Fund with an allocation of at least GHS 1 million per year, with a further GHS 1 million to the DSW, to increase the provision of foster care in Ghana, and reduce financial burdens on those that are currently fostering children. Foster care is widely recognised as the most suitable alternative care for children unable to live with their families. However, foster parents are currently under increased financial burdens as a result of Covid-19. And furthermore, despite their negative outcomes, residential care and orphanages remain the predominant pathway for children. Further funding is required to expand the scheme and improve outcomes for those already in foster care.



Children will always need a safe space where they can be nurtured to grow, when their biological parents are unable to provide this care. The most prevalent pathways of formal alternative care for vulnerable children are orphanages and residential care. Children in residential settings, particularly those who enter at an early age or stay for an extended period of time, can experience social, emotional and cognitive delays, and negative effects on their physical growth, neurological development and mental health.

The 2007 Care Reform Initiative (CRI) aimed to limit the use of residential facilities, and to provide family-based care alternatives. Formal foster care is a route for children to grow in family-like settings that has only recently been introduced in Ghana. It is widely recognised as the most suitable alternative care for children unable to live with their families. Indeed, recent evidence shows that foster children had better standards in their placements contrasting with their life before coming into care.

237

children

Despite being widely recognised as the most suitable alternative care pathway for children unable to live with their families, only 237 children are currently in foster care in Ghana

At present, according to DSW, there are 237 children placed in foster care, and 904 certified foster carers. DSW does not provide direct financial support to foster parents but may provide in-kind support and reimbursement of expenses. Recent evidence highlighted that lack of financial support is a key issue for foster parents and may serve as a deterrent for prospective foster parents.

Another recent study that explored challenges faced by foster parents during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond shows that financial challenges have worsened, with many having lost their livelihoods. This will have a further impact on children in their care. The establishment of a Foster Care Fund would help to alleviate the financial challenges foster parents are facing due to the pandemic. There is an even stronger need for it now given the social and economic challenges many foster parents are currently facing.

Providing adequate financial support is vital to help foster parents provide a stable environment, and to limit their sense of entitlement to children. There are no doubts that when foster parents are financially sound, they will derive more joy in the work that they do. Researchers have found that the higher the motivation of an adult carer, the higher the likelihood of a more stable placement. It also increases the likelihood for the foster child-parent relationship to be long lasting, even after the placement.

In order to provide this support, the government should allocate and release a minimum of GHS 1 million per year into the Foster Care Fund. The purpose of the fund would be to make payments to support foster care parents, and to make foster parenting more accessible. Furthermore, to support an expansion of the foster care programme, the government should allocate a minimum of a further GHS 1 million per year to the DSW.



4

The Government should waive the GHS 10 late registration fee to ensure that recent gains in registration rates are not lost. This is highly necessary given the significant drop in birth registration rates during the pandemic.



A birth certificate is the primary legal document for obtaining recognition of individuals before the law. It safeguards their human rights and access to essential social services. Birth registration, like many social services, has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Ghana had steadily improved its infant births registration rate, which increased from 64% in 2017 to 80% in 2019. These gains have been diminished, resulting in the infant birth registration rates for 2020 to drop to 67.7%. That means that the births of 286,576 children born in 2020 have not been registered. This is despite the efforts by the Government of Ghana to support the Births and Deaths Registry with the provision of over 120 motorbikes and vehicles to support mobile birth registrations during the same period.

As per the Registration for Births and Deaths Act, 2020 (Act 1027), children under the age of 12 months shall be registered for free. After that, a late fee of GHS 10 is charged on the registration of each birth. The imposition of a fee in this challenging economic situation constitutes a barrier to registration and may worsen the situation further. In recognition of the difficulties faced by individuals in accessing registration facilities with the onset of COVID-19, the United Nations recommends countries to allow for late and delayed registration, and to implement fee waivers. To enable Ghana to achieve SDG target 16.9 of providing legal identity for all, including universal birth registration by 2030, we are therefore encouraging the Government of Ghana to waive the late birth registration fee for at least two years. Such a measure would compensate for the interruption caused by COVID-19 and help reduce the backlog of unregistered births.

5

The Government should establish expenditure lines for sub-programmes with common expenditure codes for child protection. This is because there is a lack of detailed budget data for child protection sub-programmes, and a lack of dedicated sub-programme expenditure for larger departments that play a direct role in supporting child protection.



Child protection interventions are multi-sectoral, with the responsibility for their delivery sitting across a range of Government Ministries and Agencies. At present, it is not possible to adequately track and monitor the funding that is provided to key programmes and sub-programmes that support child protection in Ghana. This problem is compounded by the lack of dedicated sub-programme expenditure within larger departments that play a direct role in supporting child protection.

The government's activities relating to human trafficking are a prime example of this issue. It is currently not possible to observe the funding that is allocated to the Human Trafficking Fund. There are a range of other organisations which need to coordinate in the effort to combat human trafficking; they include the Ghana Police Service's Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), the Economic and Organised Crime Office (EOCO), and the Ghana Immigration Service's Anti-Human Smuggling and Trafficking Persons Unit (AHSTIP). There is, at present, no financial information contained within these organisations' PBBs that outline the resources available to these activities.

This lack of visible budgets hinders effective collaboration between departments. It has also led to funds from the Human Trafficking Secretariat being used to provide in-house training to departments that should be providing funding for training from within their own budgets. For example, the Secretariat provides training for members of the police to better respond to incidences of human trafficking in taking care of victims; this reduces the capacity of the Secretariat to provide its core coordinating function. While this training is a vital part of Ghana's response to human trafficking, it should be funded by the Ministry of the Interior.

This lack of clear expenditure data is not unique to human trafficking; it is an issue across child protection services. In absence of a costed multisectoral child protection plan, it is currently difficult to track expenditure for different interventions that have child protection objectives. This reduces accountability for child protection and prevents monitoring of whether funding commitments have been met. The Government should develop a costed multisectoral child protection plan and introduce expenditure lines for sub-programmes that cover child protection interventions, with a common budget code, that will better facilitate monitoring of expenditure in this area.