



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
7 October 2024

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports submitted by Ghana under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020^{*}, ^{}**

[Date received: 25 June 2021]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to and references for the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Foreword	3
I. Introduction	4
II. General measures of implementation	4
III. Definition of the child	7
IV. General principles	7
V. Civil rights and freedoms	9
VI. Violence against children	11
VII. Family environment and alternative care	15
VIII. Disability, basic health and welfare	18
IX. Education, leisure and cultural activities	23
X. Special protection measures	30
XI. Follow-up to the Optional Protocols	34

Foreword

Children constitute a larger proportion of the Ghanaian population and are also considered as a vulnerable group. It is therefore imperative to take at heart issues that affect their well-being and development. In the light of this, the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has taken necessary measures to create a congenial environment for the promotion, protection and development of its children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was signed on 29th January, 1990, and ratified on 5th February, 1990 by Ghana. After the ratification, government's commitment to child rights implementation has improved progressively. The policy and legislative environments have been enhanced and significant efforts have also been made to commit resources towards the strengthening of our institutions to ensure better child protection and development. The relationship between government, international development partners and civil society organizations has been very positive.

This report constitutes Ghana's 6th and 7th combined report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) spanning the period 2015 to 2019. It outlines the efforts and measures taken by the Government of Ghana and its partners to fulfil its obligations under the convention and also the challenges it encountered in fulfilling its obligations within the reporting period. The report thus takes into account how these policies have been translated into programmes and activities to promote and protect the rights of children through an assessment of issues bordering their civil rights and freedom, health, education, basic welfare and access to justice.

It is my firm belief that the report will serve its intended purpose for the UN Committee and also provide an insight into the state of children living in the country as it adds to existing reports on children and invariably, becoming a valuable document for policy makers and Ghanaians at large.

I. Introduction

1. This report is Ghana's consolidated 6th and 7th State Party Report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that takes stock of Ghana's commitment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) over the reporting period of 2015 – 2020. The compilation of this report was coordinated by the Information, Research and Advocacy Division of the Department of Children of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP). In doing so, a Technical Working Group (TWG) was commissioned by the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection. The objective of the TWG was to oversee the compilation of the report. After the inauguration of the TWG, the Department of Children (DOC) with technical support from UNICEF designed the questionnaires based on the list of questions from the UNCRC and submitted to the government agencies who could provide answers raised by the UNCRC for the report. Subsequently, deadlines were set for the submission of the information requested from partners.

2. The next phase was the compilation of the report. This process assumed a participatory and collaborative approach. It went through various review processes and assessment stages. Three Strategic Regional consultative meetings were held in the Northern, Ashanti and Eastern Regions of Ghana with stakeholders, including children, to discuss the structure and contents of the report. A final national validation meeting was subsequently held with all stakeholders in Accra.

3. This report is structured under eleven (11) clusters, as per the CRC Committee's Guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.3). The report discusses interventions designed to reaffirm the four core principles enshrined in the CRC and further domesticated in the legal context of the country. Some of the achievements and challenges faced in implementing child rights in the country have been identified discussed and recommendations made in portions of the report.

II. General measures of implementation

A. Measures taken to review and bring domestic legislation and practice into full conformity with the Convention and the Optional Protocols

4. The spirit and principles of the CRC are explicitly reflected in Ghana's legal texts and child protection system. The Children's Act, Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, and Juvenile Justice Act all make provisions specifically to ensure conformity of Ghana's laws to the CRC.

B. Data collection

5. Significant improvements have been made in the collection of data and documentation of statistics on child rights and protection issues in the last decade. Some of the gains include the documentation and development of database systems at the MoGCSP, Domestic Violence Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service, and other government agencies.

6. The Ghana Statistical Service's Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) now cover a wider array of child protection issues such as child labour, children engaged in psychotropic substance abuse and other current issues affecting children.

C. National strategy and corresponding plan or plans of action for children

7. There is no composite national strategy for children. However, all new policies for children that have been adopted in the country within the reporting period have corresponding

plans of action. For instance, the plans of action for the Child and Family Welfare policy and the Justice for Children policies have been evaluated and have shown the following results:

- (a) Invisibility and non-clarity of roles of some agencies with mandates on child rights;
- (b) Inadequate coordination capacity to implement activities projected in the work plans;
- (c) Limited co-operation between main child-focus agencies (both governmental and non-governmental) to partner and work on child protection issues;
- (d) Inadequate finance, human and material resources, facilities, and capacities of agencies, governmental departments and ministries responsible for activities and policies concerning the welfare, protection and development of children.

8. Hence, there is the need to put together a comprehensive national strategy that identifies current issues affecting children, with clear time lines and indicators to address them.

D. Co-ordinating implementation of the CRC and the Optional Protocols

9. Since the last reporting, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which is the main government Ministry with the overall responsibility for coordinating the implementation of all child-related issues, has improved child rights coordination and monitoring through the Department of Children (DOC). The DOC has established National and Regional Protections Committees, which identify child rights issues at the national, regional and community levels for appropriate action to be taken. The Committees have representation from all relevant agencies whose mandates relate to child rights implementation. The DOC also undertakes periodic situational analysis (the last in 2018), which allows identification and follow-up solution of current and emerging issues affecting child protection and development.

E. Budget for the implementation of the Convention and the Optional Protocols

10. Currently, there is still no special budget allocation for the CRC and so most child focused state agencies rely on project budgets for the implementation of projects related to either the Convention and/or the Optional Protocols. Other state agencies and civil society groups focused on CRC implementation also implement their projects with specific budgets clearly outlined in their annual plans and projections on CRC for a specific period.

F. International assistance and development aid for the implementation of CRC

11. The co-operation between the Ghanaian government and the international community including non-governmental organizations has been positive. The UN system, especially UNICEF, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organisation (ILO) have been very supportive in providing funds and technical support to both state and non-state child-focus agencies to promote the CRC, especially in the area of education, health, child protection (births registration, water and sanitation, child rights publicity etc.).

12. Through partnerships and alliances, Ghana has also received a lot of international assistance for research, awareness and advocacy, monitoring, capacity building, and support for service delivery.

13. Other non-state agencies such as Plan Ghana, ActionAid Ghana, World Vision International (WVI) and European Commission have also provided funds, material resources and other forms of technical support to improve education, health, water and sanitation (see Table A 11 in Annex C) for children.

G. Role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child

14. The Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) is the independent national human rights institution, which is a major facility for children to seek remedies for violations of their rights. It has a special unit (Women and Children's Unit for women and children's rights issues. CHRAJ has regional and district offices and receives complaints on child rights infractions at all levels, and is accessible to children.

15. To enhance its independent monitoring role and also promote human rights protection, CHRAJ embarks on periodic human rights monitoring and publishes its findings periodically in its report 'The State of Human Rights (SOHR) Report' in which child rights issues are specifically covered. CHRAJ is financed by government, and also enjoys some partnership funding from donors such as DANIDA and UNDP. The Commission still faces financial challenges for its operations.

H. Measures Taken to Make the Convention Widely Known (dissemination)

16. Measures are varied and include the following:

- (a) Translation of the Convention into six Ghanaian widely spoken languages (Ga, Ewe, Twi, Dagbani, Dagare and Nzema);
- (b) Media discussions on topical CRC issues by State and private electronic and print media, with children being active participants;
- (c) Production of child friendly versions of the Convention and other child-related laws and policies;
- (d) Production and distribution of State Party reports with support from UNICEF;
- (e) Organization of seminars, workshops and meetings aimed at promoting the rights of the child by state agencies (DOC, DSW, GES, GHS, DCD, Non-Formal Education Division, DOVVSU, CHRAJ);
- (f) The establishment of community based rights of children clubs, regional child panels, and children parliament at the national level which provide children unique platforms to create awareness, build their capacity and express their views on child right issues;

I. Cooperation with civil society organizations

17. Cooperation with civil society organizations has been positive. Representatives of these groups are always represented in policy-related programmes to make inputs in the planning and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention. The MoGCSP has established Technical Committees on Child Protection at the national, regional and district levels to discuss and address Child Protection issues and has representation from civil society.

J. Industry and children

18. Over the years, some activities of some industry sectors have had negative impacts on the enjoyment of the rights of children, for instance, in the agricultural sector and in some fishing communities, such as on Lake Volta, where children (both boys and girls) have been found to be victims of trafficking, ill-health and lack of opportunities for schooling.

19. In mining communities, children are sometimes engaged in small-scale mining using mercury, digging in deep pits and operating machines. The media has reported incidents of children being engaged to crush heavy rocks and carry heavy loads which are detrimental to their health. The education of children in the extractive industry is heavily affected as many prefer to work and make money than schooling, affecting enrollment and retention.

20. In spite of the challenge, industry has made significant contribution towards the realization of the rights of children in Ghana. Over the years, the activities of business corporations have been beneficial to the enjoyment of children rights through infrastructure development and provision of financial support towards enhancing the education, health and welfare of children.

III. Definition of the child

21. A Child is defined in Ghana as any person below the age of 18 (same as in CRC) by the Fourth Republican Constitution and The Children's Act 1998 (Act 560). Under Ghana's legislation, boys and girls are equal before the law. Other age definitions exist, such as:

- (a) Age of eligibility for voting (18 years);
- (b) The legal age for alcohol consumption (18 years);
- (c) The age for admission to formal employment (15 years);
- (d) Minimum age (both boys and girls) for marriage (18 years);
- (e) Age for obtaining driver's license (18 years);
- (f) Age for sexual consent (16 years);
- (g) Age for enlistment into the armed forces (18 years);
- (h) Age of a juvenile and criminal responsibility (12 years);
- (i) Right Age Enrolment (RAE) at School (4 years). The GES has launched a campaign to encourage all parents to enroll children in school at the age of four to help in early detection of learning difficulties and provision of appropriate support.

22. Details of the above definitions can be found on pages 11-15 under the 'Definition of the Child' Cluster of the State party's 2nd and 3rd periodic report, which are still relevant and currently apply in Ghana.

IV. General principles

A. Non-discrimination

23. During the reporting period, Ghana has undertaken pragmatic measures that focus on reducing discrimination against groups of children:

- (a) Public education by government and non-government organisations such as the DOC, CHRAJ, DSW, DOVVSU, NCCE, Ghana Legal Aid, and other Civil Society Organisations (CSO) on the provisions of non-discrimination the Constitution and other legislations;
- (b) Formulation of policies such as the Persons with Disability Policy, Child and Family Welfare Policy, Justice for Children Policy, Social Protection Policy etc;
- (c) The passage and enforcement of laws that enhance affirmative actions and suppress discrimination among children and other vulnerable groups such as girls and children with disabilities;
- (d) Rehabilitation and establishment of schools designed for the blind, deaf, mentally handicapped Ghanaian children, and refugee children in refugee camps. Regular schools now provide architectural designs to make them more disability-friendly;
- (e) Registration, counselling, medical and other remediation assistance for persons with disabilities;
- (f) Support for vulnerable groups through the LEAP, School-Feeding, provision of bursary packages (including school uniforms, writing materials, furniture, teaching and

learning resources), and other social protection interventions for limiting inequality gaps in Ghanaian society;

(g) Special scholarship schemes for needy and brilliant children, with focus on girls and other vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities, and the provision of bicycles to facilitate movement of girls to and from school;

(h) Integration of children with learning difficulties including those with disabilities into the regular basic school system by MOE and GES.

B. Best interests of the child

24. The principle of the best interest of the child is included in the Constitution and further expressed in the Children's Act, the Juvenile Justice Act and the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1971 (Act 367) amongst others. Specifically, sub-section (2) of section 2 of The Children's Act espouses that all courts are bound to take the principle as a guiding standard to their decisions regarding children. At the institutional level, agencies such as the CHRAJ, DSW, DOVVSU and the DOC consider the principle in the implementation of their projects and activities concerning children.

C. The right to life, survival and development

25. The right to life, survival and development are important rights guaranteed children in Ghana. In fact, Ghana's laws make right to survival a fundamental human right that is guaranteed to all persons regardless of age and sex. Act 29 further provides that the abetment of suicide and attempted suicide is a criminal offence. The Criminal Code of 1960 (Act 29) prohibits abortion unless it is endorsed by a registered medical practitioner. Article 29 of the 1992 Constitution and article 6 (2) of the Children's Act, guarantee all children the right to survival through the provision of adequate social services such as nutrition and health. In relation to adolescent girls who get pregnant and sometimes want to abort to enable them further their education, the GES has a re-entry policy that allows the girls to remain in school, go and give birth and return back to school.

26. As part of the efforts to improve quality and increase access to health services, new facilities have been built and a number of existing facilities have been upgraded. Significantly, health services for the mother and the child have improved throughout the country. This is reflected in the reduction of maternal, child and infant mortality rates.

27. Public awareness campaigns against superstitious beliefs concerning children with disabilities and other child victims of abusive socio-cultural practices have been enhanced by the DSW, DOC and other child-rights institutions through the use of town-hall fora, community durbars, and radio and television broadcasts.

D. Respect for the views of the child

28. The laws of Ghana take into consideration the principles of respect for the views of the child and the maximum development of the child. Provision on respect for views of the child is found in Section 11 of The Children's Act. This provision grants the children the right to express an opinion in any matter which affects their development. Section 38, Sub-Section 2, of Act 560, also outlines the rights of the child at family tribunals. Additionally, Children have the rights to send complaints, whether directly or through an intermediary, to the CHRAJ for consideration.

29. The vibrancy of the Ghanaian media and public engagements of the DOC, CHRAJ, DSW, NCCE, NGOs, CBOs, FBOs on children's rights is gradually improving Ghanaians' appreciation of the need to listen to the children and take their views in matters concerning them. Some interventions to improve the views of children include:

(a) Periodic national, regional and community sensitization programmes on the CRC by both government and non-government organisations with focus on children's rights;

- (b) Training for professional (teachers, doctors, lawyers, police, prison officers, and judges) on aspects of the CRC;
- (c) Integration of the CRC into the training curriculum of some law enforcement agencies;
- (d) Establishment of Student Representative Council (SRC) in second cycle institutions to serve as platform for the views of students in school;
- (e) Establishment of in-school children's rights clubs;
- (f) Establishment of Children's Parliament in 2019 to periodically discuss emerging issues concerning the welfare of children;
- (g) Involvement of children in the drafting and formulation of policies.

30. In spite of the legal protection, within many Ghanaian families and households, the views of children are hardly taken into account in matters that affect their development. This has a socio-cultural dimension as traditionally, children are generally regarded as young and immature to be entertained around the discussion table. Further to this, many children in Ghana have inadequate knowledge about child rights. For instance, the 2018 situational analysis (MoGCSP/EU/OA, 2018) of children survey indicates the majority of the children (8-17 years) sampled did not know whether children have rights or not. The results of the survey also revealed that five in ten of the children's opinions are not sought on academic subjects. The study also revealed general misconception among adults about what constitutes children's rights.

31. The successes chalked on child participation are limited due to the continued perceived notion that children must be seen and not heard. In institutional settings children may have some significant representation in expressing their views and opinions on matters that affect their welfare. On the contrary, out of school children and other vulnerable groups such as street children do not have channels of communicating their views on matters affecting them. It is hoped that establishment of the Children's Parliament will serve as mechanism for reflecting children's views and concerns in national debates

V. Civil rights and freedoms

A. Birth registration, name and nationality

32. Registration of births has been enhanced (see Figure 5.1 in Annex C) in the country according to reports and records provided by the Births and Deaths Registry (BDR). Though the BDR has improved on its performance, it has the following operational challenges:

- (a) Financial and human resource capacities – though the Registry has some number of staff, not all posts are filled at the district level;
- (b) Ignorance and inaccessibility of registration service in certain parts of the country, which results in low registration of the deaths in some parts of the country;
- (c) Inability to sustain its public education programmes to improve awareness and knowledge about births and deaths registration;
- (b) There is often a lack of resources such as paper for printing birth certificates.

B. Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information

33. Freedom of expression and the right to seek, receive and impart information are rights guaranteed to all Ghanaians in Article 21 (1) (a) of the Constitution. Every Ghanaian, including children, are guaranteed the rights of speech and expression, Section 11 of the Children's Act further provided that "no person shall deprive a child capable of forming views the right to express an opinion, to be listened to and to participate in decision affecting

his/her well-being, the opinion of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”.

C. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

34. Article 21 (1) of the Constitution protects freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and in article 28 (4) it prohibits deprivation on reason of religious or other beliefs. The Children’s Act also protects children’s right to the aforementioned under section 11. No child in Ghana is denied the right to practice the religion, or manifest the beliefs, of their choice.

D. Freedom of association and of peaceful assembly

35. Article 21 (1) (d) and (e) of the 1992 Republican Constitution grants the right to association and assembly to all Ghanaians, including children. There are no restrictions on the conditions under which children are allowed to join or form associations, however in schools, all child groups and associations are subjected to the rules and regulations of the GES and the schools in question.

36. Though the exact numbers are not known, there exist a number of children’s organizations and associations, such as the Girl Guides, Boys and Girls Brigade, Boys Scouts, Child Rights Clubs to mention a few. These children’s associations are used to advocate and disseminate information on the rights and freedoms of children.

E. Protection of privacy and protection of image

37. The protection of privacy and protection of the child’s image is guaranteed under the Constitution, Article 18 (2) specifically, the Children’s Act, the Juvenile Justice Act, and the Criminal Code Amendment Act of 1998. No special restrictions for children are included beyond those of general nature mentioned in Article 18 (2) of the Constitution. The Children’s Act and the Juvenile Justice Act protect the right to privacy in civil and criminal judicial proceedings.

F. Access to information from a diversity of sources and protection from material harmful to a child’s well-being

38. Article 21 (f) of the Constitution guarantees the right to information, subject to such qualifications and laws as are necessary. Hence, there are no legal obstacles to providing children with national and international sources of information. In educational settings, children are provided with adequate information sources to develop their social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health. Most Ghanaian children have easy access to information through television broadcasts, libraries, newspapers, Internet and social media channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc.

39. The Constitution, The Children’s Act, and The Cinematography Act protect children against morally hazardous information from the mass media. Article 28 (1) (d) of the Constitution protects children from “physical and moral hazards.”, likewise, section 6 (3) (a) of The Children’s Act.

40. In spite of the legal protection, the advancements in communication technology has led to a proliferation of mobile telephony, social media platforms and other multimedia channels, which makes it very easy for children to have access to all kinds of harmful images and information.

41. A position paper published by the MoGCSP (2018) on child online safety shows that there is no legislation or policy which directly guarantees children’s safety online in Ghana. The paper furthermore indicates ignorance of many Ghanaians about the threats and risks the internet poses to children and young people. According to the position paper, the Information & Communications Technology for Accelerated Development (ICT4AD) Policy exist, but it

does not make provisions for the protection of children online. Further on, the sector regulator, the National Communications Authority (NCA), has also not developed any specific guideline or policy for industry players and users on child online protection regulations.

42. Since the last reporting, one of the major steps taken to ensure cyber security and child online security is the establishment of the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) in 2018 under the Ministry of Communications to be responsible for Ghana's cyber security development, including cyber security incidents response coordination within government and with the private sector.

43. In line with the Committee's recommendation of increasing awareness, the NCSC has launched an Internet Watch Hotline, which will be a key portal to remove child sexual abuse material and make the internet a safer place for children. The NCSC has already commenced an extensive public child online protection education drive on many of the FM stations in Ghana, and is advising parents and guardians to report all cases of child online abuse to the Centre. Government agencies such as the NCCE, MoGCSP, DSW DOC, DOVVSU, CHRAJ and the MMDAs may have to complement this drive.

G. Role of the media with regard to the promotion and protection of child rights

44. Both the electronic and print media have played major roles in promoting and protecting children's rights. The media has facilitated child rights behavioural change promotion and publicity regarding the role of the State and family by producing child-rights centred programmes on radio, TV and other social media channels to make the CRC widely known to the public. With over 500 private radio and TV stations, many of these child-focused programmes reach millions of Ghanaians (NMC, 2019).

VI. Violence against children

45. Violence against children still prevails in Ghana, however, measures (some of which are in line with the Committee's concluding observations) have been undertaken to suppress all forms of violence against children at home, educational institutions and other settings where children find themselves.

A. Abuse and neglect

46. According to DOVVSU, neglect and failure to provide maintenance for children constitutes the most common form of child abuse in Ghana. DOVVSU records indicate that between 2015 and 2019, a total of 22,654 cases of non-maintenance and 348 cases involving exposure of children to harm neglect were reported (see Table 6.1 in Annex C).

47. The government of Ghana through the DSW, CHRAJ and DOVVSU, have worked in various capacities to prevent and address child abuse, neglect and maintenance cases that have come to their attention.

48. An Inter-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures (ISSOP) has been developed for partners in dealing with child abuse issues. It details the minimum standards for the management of child abuse cases and also provides pathways for the referral of cases across sectors.

49. The DSW, DOC DOVVSU, CHRAJ and other civil society partners have made significant strides in strengthening capacities in data collection, analyzing and documentation on child abuse, recovery and social integration. These groups have also taken significant steps to enhance public awareness on violence against children, including child neglect and abuse.

B. Measures to prohibit and eliminate all forms of harmful practices

50. Some forms of harmful socio-cultural practices still prevail in Ghana. These include early and forced marriages, *Trokosi*¹, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Incidentally, all the harmful socio-cultural practices affect girls more than boys. For instance, more girls than boys, fall victim to child marriage, which continues to be a challenge to the Ghanaian society. The results of the 2016 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS, 2017) show that 19 percent of women aged 20 to 24 years in Ghana got married before the age of 18 years. Between 2014 and 2016, one hundred and thirteen cases of forced marriages were reported to the Police. These statistics indicate that early marriage still prevails in Ghana.

51. Although the practice of *Trokosi*, though criminalized in the State party since 1998, is still practiced, and anecdotal evidence suggest on a reduced scale in certain rural communities in the south-eastern coastal area of the country in spite of the legal protection in the Constitution (Article 28(3), the Children's Act and the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act of 1998 (Act 554). During the reporting period, no *Trokosi* complaints were received by CHRAJ, the Police or any Local Authority. CHRAJ and some Civil Society Organizations (CSO) have been also continued to engage the public on negative traditional practices.

52. FGM is carried out in the northern parts of Ghana, and in the southern parts of Ghana it is prevalent among migrants who carry their customs with them when they re-locate. According the 2016 MICS (GSS, 2017), one percent of girls aged 15-19 had undergone FGM/C. Results of the survey (GSS, 2017) further shows that 94 percent of boys and girls aged 15-19 who have heard about FGM want the practice to be discontinued.

53. During the reporting period, Ghana continued to undertake pragmatic steps to eliminate adherence to harmful sociocultural practices. Following are some initiatives carried out by agencies whose mandates focuses on child protection, which have helped in enhancing people's perceptions and conceptions about these negative socio-cultural practices:

- (a) Application of law and policy formulation;
- (b) Community sensitization by MoGCSP, CHRAJ, NCCE, DSW, DOVVSU UNICEF-Ghana, and CSO groups to control harmful and abusive socio-cultural practices;
- (c) Increased media campaign/publicity and strong advocacy network activities;
- (d) Increased research and documentation.

C. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Sexual Exploitation

54. Children are protected by law from sexual exploitation and abuse. The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1998, (Act 554) criminalizes a range of sexual offences in articles 11-13. The range of offences has been outlined on pages 74-75 of the 2nd & 3rd periodic report. Ghana's laws protect both boys and girls from any form of sexual exploitation.

55. Though there is not much statistical data available to determine sexual exploitation of children media reports and records of DOVVSU indicate that sexual exploitation prevails in the country. Media reports and information on social media, shows the engagement of children in commercial sexual exploitation. There is generally a challenge in the reporting of sexual exploitation cases due to traditional notion of tarnishing the image of families of both perpetrators and victims in the event that community members get to know about a sexual incident. In order to avoid the shame and stigmatization, some families fail to report cases involving sexual violence.

¹ The *Trokosi* system of ritual enslavement, a customary practice, which was prevalent in the south-eastern coastal area of the country. It is a practice which violates many human rights mainly of girl children. Victims committed to shrines in reparation for the sins of their relatives.

56. The causes of child sexual exploitation in Ghana are economic deprivation and irresponsible parenting, and lack of adequate shelter for some children of poor parents, peer pressure and the quest to become rich at an early age.

57. Both government agencies and civil society groups work to identify, counsel, offer livelihood skills training, reintegrate or resettle child victims of sexual exploitation, most of whom are migrant children in the cities such as Accra, Tema, Kumasi, Cape Coast and Takoradi.

58. The role of both government and non-government organisations in educating and sensitising the public on the various forms of sexual abuse and what to do if a child becomes a victim has been positive through the use of both print and electronic media.

59. The establishment and strengthening of agencies such as DOVVSU of the Police Service, CHRAJ, Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Secretariats of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection have been significant for ensuring cases are dealt with speedily.

D. Sexual abuse

60. Records at DOVVSU and media reports indicate significant occurrence of sexual abuse in educational institutions and households in Ghana. Cases of home-related violence have been reported by the media, whilst records at DOVVSU of the Ghana Police Service also provide information as to the occurrence of the phenomenon. Table 6.2 (see Annex C) presents the number of sexual abuse cases reported to DOVVSU between 2014 and 2019. The cases comprise both cases that occurred in households and educational settings.

61. There are institutions set up to enforce the rules and regulations on child sexual abuse in Ghana. Notable amongst them are DOVVSU, MoGCSP, DSW, FIDA, and the Ghana Legal Aid Board. These institutions including the media provide various services for the prevention of and protection against sexual offences in the country.

E. The availability of helplines for children

62. There is no specific helpline for children. There is a ‘Helpline of Hope Call Center’, which was established in 2017 and housed within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection office premises. The hotline is a general facility for all violence victims; including male and female adults and children. The call center has a toll free number and operates from 8am to 5pm each day. The languages spoken include but are not limited to Twi, English, Ewe, and Hausa. In 2019, a total of 4,481 calls were received. These calls comprised report of cases, follow up calls on cases and request for information about issues.

F. The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment

63. The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment is clearly espoused in Ghana’s laws on children. Under article 15 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable. No person whether or not he is arrested, restricted or detained shall be subjected to torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, or punishment and other conditions that detract or is likely to detract from his dignity and worth as a human being. Juvenile offenders are guaranteed the right to be kept in lawful custody in cells specially designed for them. Furthermore, article 28(3) provides that “a child shall not be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.

64. Awareness campaigns have been launched and are on-going to sensitize the general public on the dangers of subjecting children to cruel and degrading treatment.

65. In spite of the legal protection and the public awareness, there have been many media reports of instances when children have been victims of varying inhuman treatments. The

2016 MICS report indicates about 17 percent of children are subjected to severe physical punishment in the country (GSS, 2017). Incidentally, there are concerns about reporting of cases, however, if reports are received, the Police and other relevant agencies deal with them based on the nature of the inhuman and degrading treatment in question. The Police on their part have also used both the electronic and print media to encourage the public report all cases when they occur.

G. Corporal Punishment

66. Government made gains during the reporting period in ensuring the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment in educational institutions. The Ghana Education Service (GES) has taken a number of actions aimed at abolishing corporal punishment in schools, which resulted in the introduction of Child Friendly Safe-School programming. The Safe School programme has developed a Resource Pack, with support from UNICEF, to help prevent school-based violence, including Gender-Based Violence as well as equipping teachers, Guidance and Counselling Coordinators, children and adolescents with the needed skills to ensure that schools are free from all forms of violence. The Head Teachers handbook has been revised and teachers are being made aware of likely prosecution where children are abused. The new GES guideline requires that the cane be not used in schools and doing so is at the teacher's own risk of being reprimanded. A manual on positive forms of discipline has been developed to assist teachers.

67. In spite of the steps taken by the GES to prohibit corporal punishment in schools, the 2018 Situational Analysis (MoGCSP/EU/OA, 2018) results show that some schools still use the cane. The survey results also indicate teachers use other corrective methods, such as weeding of the school compound, physical drills such as pulling of ears, kneeling down and carrying of weights, suspension, writing lines of sentences and dismissal from school depending on the severity of the case.

68. Unlike in the institutional settings where there are some regulations to the use of corporal punishment, there is none at the household setting to control corrective methods (Kyei-Gyamfi, 2011; MoGCSP/EU/OA, 2018). The 2018 Situational Analysis (MoGCSP/EU/OA, 2018) indicates that children in Ghana are subjected to differing corrective measures at home for various degrees of misconduct, with the cane being the most common form of method used. The results further show sex differentials in the corrective methods used by parents at home. For example, whereas more males than females are subjected to the cane (41.7 percent males against 27.3 percent females), the reverse is reported in relation to the use of counseling and advise as corrective method (39 percent males against 48.8 percent). This may suggest that parents in Ghana take into account the sex of their children when enforcing a corrective method.

69. On the whole, the situational analysis report suggests that most parents in Ghana believe in correcting children when they go wrong. The challenge, however, is that most believe in meting out violent punishment on deviant children, which could have different harmful effect on children (MoGCSP/EU/OA, 2018). The Government is committed to intensify public awareness on the effects of corporal punishment and the importance of introducing alternative non-violent types of corrective methods at home.

H. 'The Ghanaian Against Child Abuse' (GACA)

70. Since the last report, the one most significant initiative on violence against children is the launch of 'The Ghanaian Against Child Abuse' (GACA) in 2017 to campaign to suppress abuse and violence against. The main goal of the campaign is to promote the wellbeing of children, prevent abuse and protect children from harm. The introduction of the GACA initiative has led to many achievements.

VII. Family environment and alternative care

A. Parental guidance

71. The 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana and the Children's Act provide guidelines for placement of children in a family environment and alternative care. Generally, every member of the family in Ghana plays a part in the socialisation and upbringing of the child. However, the legal and cultural framework places the duty of caregiving and provision of the needs of the child on biological parents.

72. Section 15 of the Children's Act makes it a punishable offence for a parent or guardian to neglect his or her responsibility towards a child. Additionally, people who have adopted a child or fostered a child are legally bound to provide maintenance and guidance for that child. Details on parental responsibilities can be found in paragraphs 132-135 on page 30 of the State party's second periodic report are still relevant and currently apply in Ghana. Through the Child and Family Welfare Policy, 2015, the informal sector has been empowered to work hand in hand with the formal sector to help parents to better understand their roles and perform their responsibilities.

B. Parents' common responsibilities, assistance to parents and provision of childcare services

73. Legal consideration of parental responsibility is found in the Children's Act, sections 5 and 6. Failure to exercise parental responsibility has also been criminalised under section 79 of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act 1998 (Act 554). These laws take into consideration the principles of non-discrimination, respect for the views of the child and the maximum development of the child.

74. The government of Ghana and its partners have introduced pro-poor initiatives to empower families economically. For instance, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) is a social intervention for the extremely poor households who cannot meet their minimum daily nutritional needs. It was started in 2008 and funded partly by DFID, World Bank and GOG. Since 31st May 2018, the LEAP programme has been supporting poor households with cash grants. The LEAP cash grants to poor households has helped reduce financial burden and improved parental responsibility in many poor households.

75. In addition, the National School Feeding Programme also allows the feeding of millions of school children with one hot nutritious meal at school each school day. This has increased school enrolment, attendance and retention by 80 percent. It has also served as an incentive, encouraging parents who do not favour girl education to place their girls in school to enjoy the benefits school feeding brings.

76. District Assemblies and some charitable institutions have instituted scholarship schemes to support needy but brilliant children in basic and secondary schools. In some instances, special scholarship schemes have been instituted for girls to address gender imbalances.

C. Separation from parents

77. There are provisions in Ghana's laws to ensure children are not separated from their parents. For instance, Section 5 of The Children's Act assures children of the right to grow up with their parents unless it is established that it is not in the best interests of the child. Under this article, a child must not be separated from its parents unless living with its parents would: "(a) lead to significant harm to the child; (b) subject the child to serious abuse; (c) not be in the best interest of the child." Such determination must be made by a competent authority. Section 19 of the Children's Act also mandates the DSW to investigate all suspected and actual cases of abuse and neglect. In the same Act, both Child Panels and Family Tribunals have been given the mandate to determine matters of access, custody, paternity and maintenance.

78. Children who are separated from their parents, are provided adequate care and protection until they are reunited with their parents or relatives. They are provided places of safety, which could be with an approved relative, a foster parent or in a residential home for children. Within seven days, DSW is required by law to apply for a care order from the Family Tribunal (court). The care order gives DSW the authority to take custody of the child and determine where the child should be placed until he/she is reunited with his/her parents. The care order removes a child from a place of harm to a place of safety for a period of three years, subject to review. Case plans and care plans are prepared and implemented to create a better environment for the child to develop.

79. Following are a number of interventions in place to prevent children from separation from their parents:

- (a) Implementation of the LEAP programme and other social protection interventions to strengthen families and create the stability needed for them to stick together;
- (b) Swift processing and handling of Family reconciliation cases by the DSW to save many marriages and families from breaking down;
- (c) Organisation of social education programmes to raise awareness about the importance of the family and the need for family stability.

D. Family Reunification

80. The Children's Act provides for the prevention of the denial of the child the right to be with parents unless it is proven by a court that the parent is insane or abuses the child or exposes the child to moral and physical danger. Within this context, any application for family reunification, whether internal or external, takes into account the best interest of the child and is dealt with expeditiously.

81. Family reunification is a step in the process of child reintegration. The DSW makes sure that the process is duly applied in the best interest of the child starting with identification and child assessment, followed by family tracing and family assessment. At this stage decisions are taken by officers to reunite the child or wait until an appropriate time based on the capacities of the family. Children are being reunited with their parents from the children's homes and the shelters. According to the DSW, it has reunited 1,897 children from children's homes since 2010. Post-reunification follow-ups are done to ensure the progress of children reunited. DSW Officers work in collaboration with community mentors to ensure better protection for reunited children. Community mentors help supervise children reunited with their families.

82. Where children are separated from their parents, the Ghana Police, NADMO and other partners trace the whereabouts of the children or parents and reunite them. Where disaster strikes, International Red Cross and the International Social Services combine efforts and trace parents or children as the case may be and reunite them.

E. Recovery of maintenance for the child

83. There are instances where some parents fail to provide for their children and steps are taken to ensure parents are active in the recovery of the maintenance of the child. The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) of Ghana has made provision for the recovery of maintenance for children who are neglected by their parents. Maintenance cases are handled by DSW as part of their child welfare programmes. Complaints for recovery of maintenance are lodged with DSW Offices throughout the country. The cases are handled by experienced Social Welfare Officers, rulings are made and parents who are liable to maintain are made to pay maintenance allowance for the up-keep of their children. Legally, 'maintenance' covers all children unless a child is employed and earns income. However, persons above eighteen years who are still in school or undergoing some form of training still qualify to enjoy maintenance from their parents under the traditional system.

F. Children deprived of a family environment

84. The DSW of the MoGCSP is the state agency responsible for providing homes or family for children deprived of their family environment. Measures taken to provide conducive family environment to children include adoption, care, placement and fosterage.

G. Adoption (national and inter-country)

85. The DSW is the only institution with the mandate to place children into adoption. The DSW places children in adoption with interested persons and processes reports to the courts for the legalisation of the adoption, to ensure that the child to be placed is not rejected in the event of the death of the adoptive parent. During this period, if DSW finds out that the adopter(s) and the placed child are incompatible, the child will be returned to the DSW.

86. The applicable law and procedures on the basis of which adoption is determined is in the Children's Act, sections 65-86 and the Adoption Rules.

87. Ghana's Parliament passed the Children's (Amendment) Bill, 2016 into Law, amending the Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) to make provisions in respect of foster-care and adoptions to meet International Standard. The new the Law was necessitated because the placement in foster-care and adoption was uncoordinated, making it impossible to track the whereabouts and welfare of children who enter the alternative care system. Individual officers of the Children's Department and Homes, both private and public, place children in foster-care and adoption without feeling obligated to account for their decision to superior officers or the Department. There was also no effective system to monitor children sent out of the country for inter-country adoptions. The revised Act addresses those and other matters. The amendments to Act 560 will also enable Ghana to better comply with alternative care provisions of the CRC, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the 1993 Hague Convention, which Ghana acceded to on 16th September 2016.

88. Two manuals have been developed, namely, the Foster Parent Training Manual and the Foster Care Operational Manual. The first one serves as a guide for Social Welfare Officers who are frontline officers in foster care. The second was developed to empower caregivers and strengthen families. Efforts have also been made to initiate a number of complimentary measures towards resolving the many challenges associated with childcare practices, especially for children in need of alternative care.

89. To push further the implementation of the formal foster care programme that ensures that fostered children's rights are guaranteed, the DSW developed a user-friendly foster care training manual with support from UNICEF, USAID and Civil Society Organisations for enhancing quality care for foster children in homes.

H. Measures to ensure protection of children with incarcerated parents and children living in prison with their mothers

90. To safeguard the right of these children, all the seven female prison establishments in the country have designated baby friendly units, which hosts the child and the parent until such a time that the child is weaned and adopted by family members or taken into the custody of the social welfare department. For example, the Nsawam prison had children with incarcerated parents whose average age were between 2-6 months during the reporting period (see Table 7.1 in Annex C). Whilst in custody, arrangements are made for the postnatal services. They are also equipped with personal hygiene and parental skill necessary to foster the growth of the child.

VIII. Disability, basic health and welfare

A. The rights of children with disabilities

91. The laws of Ghana provide for the welfare of Persons with Disability (PWD) in the 1992 Constitution and the Children's Act. The Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) provides PWDs with accessibility to public places, employment and transportation, along with other rights such as the family and social life, education and their protection against exploitation and discrimination.

92. Although legislation and the policy provide the framework for protection and guaranteeing the rights of the children with disabilities, a lot more has to be done to change the attitudes of parents and society. The 2018 Situational Analysis (MoGCSP/EU/OAAfrica, 2018) reveals that the negative attitudes arise from entrenched socio-cultural beliefs about PWDs. Hence the need to increase public awareness towards recognizing the child with disabilities as an individual with equal rights.

93. The government allocates about five percent of the District Assembly Common Fund to support persons with disabilities and other vulnerable children in every district as part of efforts to improve their welfare.

94. Through intensified social education throughout the country, children with disabilities enjoy their right to family life and social activities. For example, the DSW implements projects enabling children with disabilities to participate in social, economic, creative or recreational activities.

95. There is improvement in access to public places and services as most new public buildings are constructed with PWDs in mind, thus making them disability friendly.

96. Nine Rehabilitation Centres for the training of PWDs are providing vocational and technical training for them. This has contributed significantly in helping a number of PWDs acquiring skills for decent living.

97. Government continues to support PWDs, including children with disability through the PWD Fund. Every District Assembly has opened a bank account for PWDS and funds are transferred every quarter to support PWDs in the district. The support includes the following:

- (a) Educational support;
- (b) Support for mobility aids and other aids;
- (c) Start- up capital;
- (d) Support for working tools and equipment.

B. Health and health services

98. Articles 28 (4) and 30 of the 1992 Constitution provides for medical attention to all Ghanaian children, and Section 8 of The Children's Act also emphasizes that no person shall deprive a child access to health, medical attention or any other thing required for his/her healthy development. The Ministry of Health (MOH) is the government agency that provide health services for all Ghanaians, including children. The MOH's Child Health Programme comprises all child health activities aimed at promoting and maintaining the optimal growth and development of children.

Survival and development

99. Ghana's laws recognize survival as a fundamental human right, which is guaranteed to all persons regardless of age and sex. The right to survival is articulated in Article 29 of the 1992 Constitution and article 6 (2) of the Children's Act, guaranteeing the provision of adequate social services such as nutrition and health to all children. Significant efforts have been made to increase the number of health facilities, and improve the conditions of the

existing health facilities, to make them capable of providing a wider range of quality services throughout the country.

Health and health services, in particular primary health care

100. Efforts to improve the health and welfare of all children living in Ghana have been made over the years. Significant successes have been achieved in reducing illness and deaths resulting from vaccine preventable diseases. New vaccines have been introduced into the EPI schedule. Nutrition counselling and services have been provided to mothers and caregivers to improve the nutritional status and wellbeing of their infants and children. Malaria prevention through the use of long-lasting insecticide nets, prompt and appropriate treatment of childhood illnesses and growth promotion are among some of the initiatives undertaken to improve the health of children. Recently, focus has been placed on the health and well-being of new-borns. The resultant decline in new-born deaths will further accelerate the decline in under-five mortality. Efforts have been made to:

- (a) Support the provision of integrated outreach services to hard-to-reach communities;
- (b) Engage stakeholders at the community level e.g. Community Health Committees, and mother-to-mother support groups to mobilise for improved neonatal and child health services;
- (c) Scale up the coverage of neonatal and child health services using print and electronic media, community radio, social media for community mobilisation and education.

Efforts to address the most prevalent health challenges, to promote the physical and mental health and well-being of children and to prevent and deal with communicable and non-communicable diseases

101. Within the reporting period, the following interventions were carried out to address this subject matter:

- (a) The Expanded Programme on immunization (EPI) with 13 antigens are being delivered; with malaria vaccine piloted in highly endemic regions;
- (b) Introduction of drone service for delivery of essential medicines (including vaccines) to hard-to-reach areas;
- (c) Enhancement of Malaria control through insecticide bednet distribution free for pregnant women and children at 18 months. There is also an enforcement of testing before treatment. Currently rapid test kits are available in over 90 percent of service delivery sites across the country;
- (d) Integrated Management of Newborn and Childhood illness is fully operationalized;
- (e) Introduction of Scaling Pneumonia response innovations (SPRINT) to improve treatment of pneumonia through the use of Amoxicillin dispersible tablets at lower levels and improving availability of safe oxygen;
- (f) Adoption of Chlorhexidine for umbilical cord care and behavior change communication to address unhealthy practices in cord care. This change in policy in 2018, based on existing evidence and WHO recommendation, is one of the measures to reduce neonatal mortality arising from sepsis. Health worker training, listing of the new medicine on the NHIA list and behavior change communication have all been undertaken to facilitate a smooth transition;
- (g) The introduction of the Girls Iron-Folate Tablet Supplementation (GIFTS) programme for adolescent girls. This routine distribution of iron/folate tablet to girls in schools is reducing the high burden of iron-deficiency anaemia among them. It is a collaborative initiative by the Ghana Health Service and Ghana Education Service with technical and financial support from development partners (UNICEF, Canada, KOICA, CDC, USAID and WHO).

Reproductive health rights of adolescents and measures to promote a healthy lifestyle

102. Ghana has a program dedicated to the health and development of adolescents. The aim is to provide comprehensive health services and accurate information to empower the adolescents to make informed decisions regarding their health and development.

103. The Program has defined a minimum package of services, which include Sexual and Reproductive Health. The rights of the adolescent to reproductive health services is enshrined and protected by the Program's policy and guidelines. Every adolescent is entitled to the broad range of services regardless of age or marital status and does not need parental consent for services, except for comprehensive abortion care services, which requires adult consent or *locos parentis* for a minor adolescent.

C. Measures to protect children from substance abuse

104. The Narcotic Control Commission Act, 2020 (Act 1019), which is an amendment of the Narcotics Drugs (Control, Enforcement and Sanctions) Law 1990 (PNDCL 236) still bans narcotic drugs and establishes the Commission to stem the flow of drugs into the country. Ghana signed and has ratified the various United Nations Conventions and Protocols on drugs, i.e. the 1961 Single Convention, 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1972 Protocol Amending the 1961 Single Convention and 1988 Convention against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. In line with UN guidelines, Ghana tackles issues related to drug control and related controlled substances that affect younger people, especially children. In effect, the use of psychotropic drugs is an area government strives to fight not only among children but also among adults.

105. The 2019 report on treatment facility data showed that 2.3 percent of 303 persons who sought treatment were between 15-19 years. Though tramadol is a legal drug, its abuse among the youth is reportedly widespread. The 2018 Situational Analysis on children survey showed a little close to one percent (0.7 percent) of children sampled reported engaging in psychotropic drugs, whilst same proportion (0.7 percent) admitted ever using tramadol. Both psychotropic drugs and tramadol use is higher in males than females according to the survey results. Tramadol usage was higher among children aged 13-17 than children less than 13 years (MoGCSP/EU/OAAfrica, 2018).

106. The government has taken stern stand on drug abuse and illicit drugs, and is quick to impose sanctions on any person found in conflict with the law. The Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana (PSG) has taken the issue seriously. PSG issued a statement cautioning the general public on the proliferation of the use of Tramadol, and asked parents and guardians to pay attention to the actions and movements of their children. The Narcotic Control Commission (NACOC) also carry out public campaigns to stem the flow of drugs into the country, including public sensitization programmes targeted at the school going populace and communities.

107. Tobacco and alcohol use among children also constitutes a matter of grave concern. The 2016 MICS (GSS, 2017) results indicate that one percent of adolescent girls and six percent of adolescent boys age 15-19 have ever used tobacco, whilst nineteen percent of girls and twenty-two percent of boys in same age category have ever used alcohol. Reportedly about 90 percent of cases at the Accra Psychiatric Hospital annually, are drug abuse related, and the majority of the cases involve young people. These reports provide enough evidence to suggest that substance abuse is fast gaining grounds in Ghana among the youth.

108. The numbers indicate a worrying trend, especially where children affected with drugs have no safe haven for treatment, since most treatment centres admit only adults. Therefore, as provided in section 27 (c) of the Narcotics Control Commission Act, 2020, rehabilitation centres should be set up to help address the issue. For instance, the establishment of drop-in centres across the country will help vulnerable groups such as children with drug use problem have access to treatment. NACOC, NCCE, DOC, DSW and their CSO partners may have to intensify their educational drive among young people on substance abuse.

D. Social security, childcare services, standard of living and measures taken

Social security

109. Though the extended family system has weakened, it has for many years been the traditional way of providing social and economic security to family members in times of need, as an in-built safety net for the care of children and other vulnerable members within a family unit. The system encourages well-to-do members to take care of less endowed within the family.

110. The emergence of modern systems through social change and the promotion of economic growth, and other pressures from urbanization have contributed to a gradual decline of the extended family system. Gradually, primary reliance on the extended family moved towards dependence on more semi-formally institutionalized social security systems. Most of the security systems in place are not for children specifically, however, since their parents benefit, but have indirect effects on the children (including those born out of wedlock). The Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) is an example of such a system run by government.

111. Children benefit from subsidies from the National Health Insurance Scheme, which takes the form of waivers on premiums if their parents are registered.

112. Faith-Based Organisations (FBO) also provide social security by offering support to their members in times of need for educational, healthcare, and other areas of development.

113. The Maintenance and Custody, Child Subsistence Grant, Alternative Care and Child Rights Protection Programmes, which are run by the DSW, are designed to protect and ensure social security for children. According to the DSW, approximately 3,000 cases are handled each year.

114. The adoption of the Child and Family Welfare Policy in 2015 was to empower parents, care-givers and families to retain primary responsibility for the security and welfare of their children by providing basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, health care and education), support in times of distress or sickness, support for the child's socialisation and identity development.

E. Child care services

115. There are child care services dotted around the country, which allow parents to engage in other and economic and social obligations, whilst providing child minding for parents. These services are provided by both the public and private operators but are supervised by the DSW. Sections 115-120 of the Children's Act outline the procedures to run a child-care centre. The DSW has the mandate to enforce the guidelines for the operation of the centres and to monitor them.

F. Standard of living and measures taken

Child poverty

116. Children in Ghana are not spared from poverty. The Multi-Dimensional Child Poverty report (NDPC, 2020) indicates many children in Ghana experience significant deprivations despite the commendable economic growth and social development interventions implemented over recent years. The report reveals that about 73.4 percent of children are classified as multi-dimensionally poor compared to 28.2 percent who are identified as monetary poor. A higher proportion of multi-dimensionally poor children living in rural areas (81.5 percent) than those living in urban areas (62.5 percent). The majority of Ghanaian children face at least four deprivations on average. The Upper East, Northern (now Northern, Savanna and North East regions) and Volta (now Volta and Oti regions) regions have significantly higher percentages of multi-dimensionally poor children than the other regions.

117. The report further reveals human rights deprivations. In basic human rights highest are among the 0-4 age group, with more than 4 in 5 (82.9 percent) children experiencing over

four deprivations, most prevalent being in areas such as sanitation (83.4 percent), child protection (63.5 percent), housing (62.1 percent), and learning (52.6 percent). The most significant deprivations in the 5-11 age group include sanitation (82.7 percent), housing (60.4 percent), child protection (56.2 percent), and water (51.9 percent). The most vulnerable children in these age groups are reported to be in the rural areas, the Northern and Volta regions, and households where the head had no education.

118. Some measures taken to reduce household poverty and improve the standard of living among children include; Capitation Grant, free ante-natal and post-natal services provided for pregnant and other women in need of maternal services, School Feeding Programme, free school uniforms and text books initiatives, enhancement of the LEAP programme, and the implementation of the Free Senior High School education.

119. There is sufficient evidence that even though the above-mentioned measures have contributed to a large extent in reducing financial constraints on many poor families and communities, the living standards of most Ghanaian children are still low.

Water and sanitation

120. Access to utility and some key social services have drastically improved in recent decades, but significant challenges still persist. These challenges include among others lack of facilities, poor infrastructure, limited maintenance, and costliness of the services, leading to issues of access, affordability and utilisation. Only 21 percent of the population have access to basic sanitation (NDPC, 2019). The 2018 National Annual Progress Report (NDPC, 2019) indicates that one in four Ghanaians had access to improved liquid waste management, the percentage of solid waste collected and properly disposed of in sanitary landfills decreased from 80 per cent in 2017 to 75 per cent in 2018, and the proportion of communities achieving open-defecation free status reached 16 percent. Only 19 percent of Ghanaians, however, have access to safely managed drinking water services. The 2019 VNR further illustrates inequalities in the proportion of population using improved drinking water sources by location in 2017, as 65 percent in urban areas have improved drinking water services as compared to just 17.9 percent in rural areas.

121. Although EMIS statistics (see Table A11 in Annex C) indicate improvements in the number of schools with water, toilets and urinals, much more efforts are needed to make these facilities available in all schools. The 2018 Situational Analysis report (MoGCSP/EU/OAAfrica, 2018) reveals that two in ten children spend more than fifteen minutes to access water for their household use. Again two in ten of respondents spend more than fifteen minutes to dispose solid waste, whilst about one in four children reported spending more than fifteen minutes to access toilet facilities. The report further indicates that access to toilet facilities is inadequate in most communities due to lack of toilets in some homes, insufficient number and poor state of public toilet facilities. These results show inadequacies in the provision of water and sanitation facilities, which may have varying adverse effects on the development of children, especially girls whose responsibility it is to fetch water or dispose solid waste in most households.

G. HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child

122. Within the reporting period, a lot was done to reduce the prevalence of HIV in the country, bringing the current HIV prevalence in the general population to 1.6 percent with regional variations. The highest prevalence is in the Eastern (2.8 percent), followed by Western (2.7 percent), and Greater Accra (2.5 percent), and lowest in the three northern regions (<1 percent). The national prevalence of HIV among children and adolescents (2019 Spectrum Estimates) indicates slight decline in both children 0-14 years and 15-19 (see Table A8 in Annex C). The awareness and knowledge rates in Ghana are very high but there is still a significant gap between level of awareness and behavioral change and efforts are being intensified to bridge the gap.

H. Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

123. In line with the Convention, measures are taken to ensure that adolescents have access to health services provided by competent service providers. The concept of Adolescent and Youth-Friendly Health Services underpins all interventions aimed at promoting health among adolescents. The elements of this concept have been integrated in routine services and where the infrastructure allows, adolescents benefit from bespoke health services and information designed with their interest at its core.

I. The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health

124. Following are the new health policies, plans, standards etc.:

(a) Revised Child Health Policy and Standards (2017 – 2025) - improving earlier documents making provision for targeted effort to address the needs of the older school child, aged 5 – 9 years;

(b) Revised National Newborn strategy and action plan (2019 -2023) - The first strategic plan laid much emphasis on Essential Newborn Care, to ensure the best of care around the time of delivery. This revision lays more focus on care for the at-risk, small and sick newborn. Improving the quality of care for these newborns in hospital is a priority in line with the MOH's National Quality Strategy;

(c) Provision for improving nurturing care - Growth monitoring for children has been improved with routine monitoring of height-for-age in addition to weight-for-age. Health workers' capacity has been built and the requisite equipment provided for the various Child Welfare clinics. Additionally, nutrition counseling has been improved to augment these services;

(d) Routine screening for new entrants to pre-school and SHS free-of-charge. Referrals made for those who need preventive services or treatment;

(e) Capacity building for nurses in SHS infirmaries to be better placed to address the needs of the adolescent child;

(f) Gap analysis for health sector readiness to address the needs of abused children. Inadequate skills of providers was identified as a major gap. Training module developed and used to train providers. Also disseminated to training institutions to update their curricula;

(g) Quality of care strategy by MOH of 2017 - GHS developed operational guidelines. Ghana is among first wave countries participating in Global Quality of Care Network, aimed at halving maternal, newborn and child deaths in selected health facilities by 2022. Quality improvement initiatives are underway;

(h) Launched the Nurturing Care framework in June, 2018 after World Health Assembly launch. Now mainstreaming elements into various programmes and policy documents e.g. training package for community health nurses and caregivers developed, piloted and evaluated. Plans to scale-up.

IX. Education, leisure and cultural activities

A. The aims of education with reference also to the quality of education

125. A major objective of the school system, as designed by successive Education Reform Programmes since 1987, is to make education more relevant to the socio-economic realities of the country, so that the Ghanaian children will be able to live a productive and meaningful life. This has been the main trajectory of the concepts behind the education reforms.

The right to education, including vocational training and guidance

126. The Constitution of Ghana provides for free, compulsory basic education for all children, while secondary education in its various forms including technical and vocational is to be made generally available and accessible and progressively free. The Children's Act, 1998 (Act 560) also provides the legal framework for the full development of the child. Section 8 of the Act espouses the right of the child to education and any other requirement for the child's educational development. It also includes regulations on formal education and apprenticeship in the informal sector.

127. The Education Act, 1961 (Act 87) provides for free compulsory primary education for all children of school age. The major educational reforms introduced in 1987 sought to increase school enrolment rates higher than population growth and strengthen the relationship between educational content and national socio-economic aspirations.

128. As part of processes to ensure availability and accessibility to quality education. The following measures are pursued:

- (a) Infrastructure development, refurbishment and maintenance;
- (b) Management reform, restructuring and training;
- (c) Curriculum review;
- (d) Improvement in the capacity of teachers at the basic education level;
- (e) Community participation;
- (f) Functional literacy programmes through non-formal education; and
- (g) Improvement of teacher education programmes.

129. The government has made significant efforts with support from international and national partners in the private sector to provide children access to basic schools. Between 2015 and 2019, the government has constructed 3,601 new basic schools. Many rehabilitation works have also been undertaken.

B. Early childhood care and development

130. Ghana has enhanced its systems since the adoption of the Early Childhood Care Policy in 2004. In 2005 an Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Secretariat was established. Since the establishment of the Secretariat, it has been the main coordinating entity for the implementation of the ECCD Policy and related programmes and activities across sectors in the country. The Secretariat co-ordinates the operations of the National ECCD Coordinating Committee, a multi sectoral body established to coordinate ECCD implementation at the national level. Following are the new initiatives carried out within the reporting period:

(a) Development of ECCD Standards (0-3 years) – In 2018 the ECCD Standards (3-years) was developed to ensure that quality care is delivered in a suitable environment, the development and safety of children aged 0 – 3 being of paramount concern. The DSW has been using the Standards as training material for stakeholders. It also served as a reference document for the development of a training manual for care-givers of children with disability, and a curriculum or framework for 0-3 year olds in day care programmes (ongoing);

(b) Development of ECCD Interventions Directory – The ECCD Interventions Directory of 2018 sought to document existing and upcoming programmes, projects and interventions for children aged 0-8, their parents and caregivers. ECCD programmes of MDAs, NGOs and CSOs were collated and provided relevant information on objectives, coverage, target population and implementation status of the programmes. This document helped to improve documentation and monitoring of ECCD programmes across various sectors;

(c) Mapping of ECCD Programmes, Interventions and Services – To further enhance documentation and monitoring of ECCD implementation, a mapping of ECCD

programmes and interventions was conducted in 2020, aimed at covering a wider range of stakeholders. The mapping is ongoing and responses are to be analyzed to identify gaps in ECCD programming and provide a database of ECCD programmes for effective monitoring;

(d) Evaluation of the ECCD Policy - Evaluation of the ECCD Policy commenced in January 2020 and was ongoing at the time of report compilation. The evaluation is to assess the status of implementation of the Policy and determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. It would also make strategic and operational recommendations for review of the Policy.

Pre-school education

131. Between 2015 and 2019, the country saw significant increases in the number of pre-schools in the country, revealing the growing nationwide appreciation of the importance of giving more attention to child survival, growth and development. Figure 9.1 (see Annex C) indicates the number of preschools in the country between 2014 and 2019.

132. From Figure 9.1, the number of crèches increased from 6,218 in the 2014/2015 academic year to 9,543 in 2018/2019 school year, representing a percentage increase of 53.5. The total number of kindergartens has also increased from 20,960 in 2014/2015 academic year to 22,273 in 2018/2019 school year, representing a percentage increase of 20.6.

133. Within the reporting period the total number of children enrolled in crèche increased from 334,399 in 2014/2015 to 506,166 in 2018/2019; this represents a percentage increase of 51.4. The total number of children enrolled in kindergarten has also increased from 1,766,715 in 2014/2015 academic year to 1,832,693 in 2018/2019 school year, also representing a percentage increase of 3.73 (see Table 9.1 in Annex C).

Gross and net enrolment ratio for creche and kindergarten

134. The period also saw an increase in the gross enrolment rates from 10.9 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 14.9 percent in 2018/2019 academic year. The net enrolment ratio also followed the same trend. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) gender gap was in favour of boys (11.0 percent) to girls (10.9 percent) in the 2014/2015 academic year, then moved in favour of girls (12.0 percent) to boys (11.9 percent) in the 2015/2016 academic year; and remained in favour of girls for subsequent years however, increasing from 12.0 percent in 2015/2016 academic year to 14.9 percent in 2018/2019 academic year (see Table 9.2 in Annex C).

135. The gross enrolment rates decreased from 128.8 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 112.4 percent in 2017/2018 and an increase to 113.9 percent in 2018/2019 academic year. The net enrolment ratio also decreased from 82.7 percent in the 2014/2015 academic year to 73.8 percent in the 2018/2019 academic year. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) gender gap was in favour of girls (131.1 percent) to boys (126.6 percent) in the 2014/2015 academic year, moved in favour of boys (115.6 percent) to girls (115.5 percent) in the 2016/2017 academic year; then continued in this trend although decreasing to 114.2 percent for boys and 113.5 percent for girls in the 2018/2019 academic year (see Table 9.3 in Annex C).

C. Basic education

136. There have been immense improvements in quality and increase in the number of basic school infrastructure within the reporting period. Government has increased the Capitation Grant by 100 percent from GH¢4.50 to GH¢9.00, also restructuring the disbursement of Capitation through the introduction of an equal amount to all public schools as Base Grant. In line with this, 50 percent of the Grant is disbursed equally to all public Basic schools at the beginning of the academic year to bring about equity.

137. Government absorbs 70 percent of the 2017 BECE registration fees as subsidies for all registered candidates in both public and private JHSs then in 2018 absorbed 100 percent of the registration fees of 356,344 registered candidates from public JHS for the conduct of the 2018 BECE.

138. The Ministry of Education completed the review of Kindergarten and Primary 1-6 Curriculum. The revised curriculum emphasizes the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills at the early grade levels. According to the MICS (GSS, 2017), only 11 percent of children aged 7-14 have foundational numeracy skills, and 21 percent foundational reading only.

139. In fulfillment of government commitment to ensure that all 4- and 5-year-olds have access to Kindergarten, the Ministry of Education commenced a programme to provide KG in 1,171 primary schools of which 90 KGs were completed in 2018.

140. As part of a programme to rehabilitate and rebuild an estimated 8,286 ‘collapsing’ basic and second cycle school structures posing a threat to students and teachers, the Ministry of Education reconstructed and rehabilitated 52 collapsing school structures in 2018.

Primary school gross and net enrolment

141. The reporting period witnessed both the Gross and Net enrolment rates wavering with the Gross Enrolment Ratio wavering from 110.4 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 111.4 percent in 2016/2017 academic year then to the current 105.3 percent (2018/2019 academic year). The Net Enrolment Ratio increased to 91.5 percent in the 2015/2016 academic year from 85.4 percent in the previous year (2014/2015 academic year) and then decreased to the current 87.3 percent (2018/2019 academic year). The GER and NER gender gap, although decreasing over the reporting period has been in favour of girls. The GER indicates 111.7 percent for girls and 110.9 percent for boys in the 2015/2016 academic year and 105.3 percent for girls and 105.2 for boys in 2018/2019 academic year. The NER gender gap ratio decreased from 91.0 percent in the 2015/2016 academic year to 87.4 percent in the 2018/2019 academic year for boys as against 92.0 percent to 87.1 percent for girls in the same period (see Table 9.4 in Annex C).

JHS school gross and net enrolment

142. Table 9.5 also indicates the GER/NER by gender trends in the JHS schools from 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 academic years. The period has seen both the GER/NER rates wavering. There was an increase in the GER from 85.4 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 88.0 percent in 2016/2017 academic year then decreased to the current 86.2 percent in the 2018/2019 academic year. The Net Enrolment Ratio increased from 49.0 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 50.3 percent in the 2015/2016 academic year, then decreased to 48.4 percent in current 2018/2019 academic year.

143. The GER and NER gender gap analysis over the reporting period was observed to decrease significantly, however in favour of boys. The GER indicates a significant decrease (87.1 - 85.6 percent for boys), however was wavering for girls within the reporting period. The NER gender gap ratio that favoured girls in the 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 academic year took a downturn to favour boys between 2015/2016 to 2018/2019 academic year at the JHS level (see Table 9.5 in Annex C).

Number of JHS schools

144. The number of basic education schools has significantly increased within the reporting period, and Figure 9.2 provides the details (see Annex C). The total number of schools at the primary level has increased from 21,309 in 2014/2015 academic year to 25,847 in 2018/2019 academic year, a percentage increase of 21.3. At the JHS level, the number of schools also increased from 13,840 in 2014/2015 academic year to 17,622 in 2018/2019 school year, a percentage increase of 27.3.

D. Secondary education

145. The expansion of second cycle education has been massive within the reporting period. Since the last report, the one most significant change in the education sector was the introduction of the Free Senior High School (FSHS) programme, which has become a major flagship programme that has seen an increase in number of children with access to secondary

education. Enrolments in SHS grew from 804,974 in 2014/2015 to 1,155,841 in 2018/2019 as indicated in Figure 9.3 (see Annex C) representing a percentage increase of 30.4.

146. During the reporting period, Ghana recorded significant increases in enrolment in SHS schools (see Figure 9.3 in Annex C). The period saw increases in both the GER/NER rates. There GER ratio increased from 45.6 percent in the 2014/2015 academic year to 62.6% in the 2018/2019 academic year. The NER also saw an increase from 22.5 percent in 2014/2015 academic year to 33.7 percent in 2018/2019 academic year.

147. The GER and NER gender gap analysis was observed to increase over the reporting period. While the GER gender analysis was observed to be in favour of boys, the NER was in favour of girls.

Number of SHS schools

148. The number of Senior High schools increased from 863 in 2014/2015 to 963 in 2017/2018 and decreased to 937 in 2018/2019 (see Figure 9.4 in Annex C).

E. New interventions to enhance quality of secondary education

Free senior high school (FSHS) programme

149. The Government of Ghana with plans to absorb tuition, admission, library, science centre, ICT, examination and utility fees, boarding and meals cost and also to provide core textbooks launched the Free Senior High School (FSHS) Policy in August 2017. The broad objectives of the policy were:

- (a) Remove cost barriers through the absorption of fees approved by the Ghana Education Service Council;
- (b) Expand physical school infrastructure and facilities to accommodate the expected increases in enrolment;
- (c) Improve quality through the provision of core textbooks and supplementary readers, teachers rationalization and deployment;
- (d) Improve equity and quality through implementation of 30 percent of places in elite schools for students from public junior secondary schools, and
- (e) Prioritise programme to support and reform Technical, Vocational, Educational Training (TVET) institutions at the senior high school level and facilitate skills acquisition.

150. The FSHS policy is in its third year of implementation. The policy as at 2018 estimated that about 181,000 students would have been denied secondary education due to lack of financial capacity of parents and students to pay for SHS.

151. In 2018, the Ministry of education supplied and installed 8,738 White Boards and Accessories to replace the chalk board as part of measures to facilitate teaching and learning in SHS in order to improve quality. In addition, the Ministry supplied iBox education portals and solar panels to 125 SHS, and E-Learning Multi-Media laboratories in 242 SHS.

152. To bridge shortfall in staff at the Pre-Tertiary level of education, Government in 2018 recruited 19,650 teaching and non-teaching staff and deployed them to schools across the country. Furthermore, approximately 8,872 teachers were also recruited and deployed to various Senior High Schools to assist in the implementation of the double track system.

F. Mechanisms to ensure all-inclusive-education

Education of girls

153. A variety of mechanisms are in place to ensure access and participation of all children, especially girls. The Girls' Education Unit, established to facilitate and advocate the education of the girl-child undertakes regular sensitisation and awareness creation

programmes to encourage families to send their children to school. Some NGOs are assisting in this effort by providing some small grants to families to undertake income generating projects. The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) for example, has supported women's groups in Northern Ghana with grants to enable them send their girls to school.

154. The Government continues to partner NGOs, international and local donors to ensure that education professionals receive gender training and continue to address barriers to clear a way for girls to make progress in basic education, especially till junior high school. Teachers have also been trained to demonstrate professional competence in gender issues. The government in partnership with UNICEF and other donor partners has put in place measures to promote 'safe schools' and a gender responsive environment through availability of tools, resources and training to address inclusion, corporal punishment, school-related gender-based violence and menstrual hygiene management.

155. Under the Inclusive and Special Education programme, basic schools in 48 districts across all ten regions are currently practicing Inclusive Education (IE). Since 2012, UNICEF has supported the Special Education Division to implement and expand IE in 14 districts.

156. In 2017, Government intensified efforts to reach many in the very complex area of special needs including children who are autistic, and those who learn differently from the majority of learners.

157. Funds were released for the payment of feeding grant for the 2016/17 academic year and first term of 2018/19 academic year to cover over 7000 pupils in all public special Schools.

158. As part of efforts towards the Complementary Basic Education (CBE) programme which started in the 2012/13 academic year and operating in 43 districts in the three Northern Regions (Brong, Ahafo and Ashanti), access has been provided to 186,000 out of school children over the last five cycles (2013/14-2017/18) with 49.4 percent female participation. Of the number enrolled, 146,000 have completed and transitioned into the formal education system since the inception of the programme, a cumulative completion rate of 78.5 percent.

Education of children with disabilities

159. Children with disabilities live under difficult circumstances, which are usually not met either at the family or state level. In terms of education, most public schools do not have facilities and structures in place for persons with disabilities. Children with disability find it difficult to access public buildings, transport and other facilities. Recreational facilities are insufficient even though their situation may be different in special schools. In addition to discrimination, they also face stigmatisation. The Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) seeks to bridge existing gaps between persons living without disabilities and persons with disabilities.

160. Increased efforts are being made to promote inclusive education; provisions are also made to support children with severe forms of disability and retardation to access schools.

G. Vocational and technical training

161. Vocational and Technical education is a key component of government's drive to ensure the provision and availability of quality education for young people. Hence, the government has established vocational and technical training institutions (see Table 9.7 in Annex C) with the objective of providing skilled human resource base for the manufacturing and other productive sectors of the economy. Intermediate Technology Transfer Units (ITTUs) are in all the regional centres under the Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology Industrial Services (GRATIS) initiative to offer apprenticeship training in various vocations and to provide refresher courses for artisans.

Enrolment in technical/vocational institutions

162. With respect to enrolment, the total number increased from 42,513 in the 2014/2015 academic year to 76,770 in 2018/2019 school year, a percentage increase of 44.6 (see Table 9.8 in Annex C).

Challenges of vocational and technical training education

163. Vocational and Technical education is faced with the following challenges:

- (a) Limited number of vocational and technical institutes;
- (b) Lack of facilities and materials for training students;
- (c) Inadequate technical teachers or facilitators;
- (d) Limited number of training institutions for technical teachers;
- (e) Difficulty in career progression;
- (f) Negative societal perception of vocational education being a preserve of school dropouts and academically poor children;
- (g) Perception of training offered to students in training institutions not in tune with the skill set needs of industry.

H. Cultural rights of children belonging to indigenous and minority groups

164. The children in Ghana are not segmented into indigenous, minority or any other groupings. The laws recognize all children as equal regardless sex, ethnicity, religion, physical and mental appearance and place of residence. There are laws and policies in place to prevent non-discrimination and adopt equality principles in the provision of services for all children.

I. Leisure, recreation and cultural activities

Leisure and recreation

165. The education curriculum of Ghana includes time for leisure. There are two breaks on school timetables during which children engage in play, sporting activities and games, and relax. Every year all schools take part in sporting competitions organised by the GES. Many schools have clubs and children opt to join a club of their choice.

166. There are designated places for children's leisure and recreation. The DOC of the MoGCSP manages the Efua Sutherland Park, which serves as the major national recreation and entertainment park for children, also a venue for other social functions for both children and adults. There are similar parks in the country, which are owned by private entities but the Efua Sutherland Park receives the highest patronage in terms of child programmes. The Park is currently not utilized due lack of play equipment for children. Plans are far advanced to renovate it and equip to a state of the art standard. Government plans to have similar parks in all the districts.

J. Cultural activities

167. The GES has a Cultural Education Unit, which ensures that cultural education is actually monitored in schools, especially at the basic level. Article 39 of the Constitution provides for the conscious introduction of cultural dimensions to relevant aspects of national planning. Children can develop and exhibit Ghanaian culture through festive and cultural events, dance performances, drama and poetry, creative writing, exhibitions of arts and artifacts, artistic creation, and textile designs. The National Commission on Culture (NCC) also has training programmes for inculcating some of Ghana's rich cultural experiences, values and traditions, to facilitate preservation and promotion of socio-cultural heritage.

168. Culture is also taught at the tertiary level of education. The School of Performing Arts at the University of Ghana teaches and trains students to learn all the aspects of the performing arts and culture through innovative research and performance practice to meet the nation's human resource needs in the growing cultural industry.

169. Schools and youth groups also organise excursions for children to cultural heritage and historical sites in the country. Such trips enable children to have first direct experiences of the diversity of Ghanaian culture and gain knowledge of some of important historical sites in the country. Children who belong to youth clubs once in a while get the opportunity to take part in cultural exchange activities between Ghana and other countries.

X. Special protection measures

A. Children seeking refugee protection, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, internally displaced children, migrant children and children affected by migration

170. Children who are not nationals or citizens of Ghana and for certain reasons seek refugee protection in the country are given special protection by providing them and their parents with shelter, food, counselling and other emotional support for their survival. The processes required of children to be granted refugee status are provided in paragraphs 198 and 199 on page 69 of the 2nd & 3rd periodic state party report.

171. Other children in distress situations, such as those separated from parents, unaccompanied migrant children, are sent to the Ghana Immigration Service for the migration procedures. The children are subsequently sent to the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), who collaborates with their partners for the provision of shelter, food, counselling and other emotional support services.

B. Children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group

172. A situation of children belonging to minorities or indigenous groups does not exist in the country. Ghana's laws recognize all children as equal, and do not categorize them into sub-groups.

C. Children in street situations

173. Currently, the street children phenomenon still poses a huge challenge for the people and government of Ghana. Most children in street situations (found in the major cities of Accra and Kumasi) are migrants from the Northern parts of the country (Anarfi et al., 2003; Kwankye et al, 2007, 2009; Kwankye, 2011). The major factors that push and pull children into street situations are rural-urban drift, parental poverty, harsh economic conditions prevailing in certain communities and the quest of some children to make a decent living in urban areas. Statistics on the exact number of children in street situations is unknown, however, the results of the 2016 MICS (GSS, 2017) indicate they exist.

174. Some of the initiatives undertaken to reduce the phenomenon include equipping street children with livelihoods skills, re-integrating them into families, placing them into formal and non-formal education, as well as granting them business training and micro-grant support to their parents/guardians.

175. In spite of the challenges to address the street children phenomenon, the support from civil society such as NGOs, CBOs, Faith Based Organisations (FBO's), and Traditional Authorities to confront the problem through their identification, rehabilitation and reintegration has been very positive.

D. Children in situations of exploitation, including measures for their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

176. Psycho-socio counselling programmes exist within specific institutions such as DSW, DOVVSU, CHRAJ, and some NGOs to provide support for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of victims and survivors of situations of exploitation and cruel treatment. These services are however very few and available to only a limited section of children.

E. Economic exploitation, including child labour

177. The laws of Ghana provide for the protection of children from all forms of economic exploitation, which includes child labour in settings such as the fisheries, mining, quarrying, markets and in agriculture. Specifically, Article 28 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees protection to children against exploitative labour, and The Children's Act prescribes sanctions against breach. Act 560 places the minimum age for employment at 15 years and permits "light work" at age 13, but prohibits engagement of children below 18 years in "hazardous labour". The Act provides that work should not interfere with the child's education, health and development. It also prescribes sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of Article 32 (2) of the CRC.

178. In spite of the legal protections espoused in the laws, children and young people engage in child labour under hazardous conditions. The 2018 Situational Analysis shows that four percent of children aged 13-17 are engaged in paid work. The results of the 2016 MICS (GSS, 2017) also indicate that a significant percentage of those aged 5-17 engage in child labour. The survey results show that 29 percent work under hazardous conditions, 15 percent engage in economic activities for 43 hours or more per week, and seven percent engage in household chores 28 hours or more per week. Again, according to the 2016/17 Ghana Living Standards Survey, up to 14 percent of all children are engaged in hazardous work, while 21.8 percent are engaged in child labour, seriously curtailing their development potential (GSS, 2017). These statistics indicate that child labour is still prevalent and needs to be addressed.

179. Interventions in place to fight child labour and exploitation include:

- (a) On-going community sensitization programmes through fora, workshops, media programmes, posters and adverts;
- (b) Projects for the withdrawal and rehabilitation of child victims of economic exploitation;
- (c) Observance of World Day Against Child Labour and Child Trafficking, and
- (d) Translation of Act 560 into local languages.

F. Child trafficking and abduction

180. Within the reporting period, the Government of Ghana has enhanced its systems to combat human trafficking. These include the strengthening of legislation and institutions. Steps have also been taken to improve capacities to capture reliable data on number of children trafficked in the country. Currently, there are various procedures and processes that help the Human Trafficking Secretariat and the agencies to proactively handle cases of child trafficking. Following are some achievements in combating human trafficking:

- (a) The review, printing and dissemination of the Human Trafficking National Plan of Action (NPA) on the elimination of human trafficking. The Plan uses the four P approach in combating Human Trafficking, which includes children;
- (b) The establishment of focal units and desks in the various law enforcement agencies and Attorney General's office to handle issues of human trafficking;

(c) The adult shelter was fully operationalized on 1st February, 2019 and victims given comprehensive trauma informed care and support, which included children aged 16 to 18 years;

(d) An amount of GH¢1,000,000 has been approved and released to MoGCSP for the Human Trafficking Fund to protect victims and implement the Human Trafficking National Plan of Action (NPA);

(e) The continuous meeting of the Human Trafficking Management Board (HTMB) since 2017 and the Child Protection Compact (CPC) Agreement Technical Working Group meetings to strengthen child protection mechanisms in the fight against child trafficking;

(f) Printing and dissemination of Information, Education and Communication materials. There are media engagements, press conferences and media launch of our programs to educate the general public. Social media handles and platforms disseminate awareness raising campaign materials;

(g) Specialized training program on child trafficking, migration and child exploitation for shelter staff, law enforcement officials, judges, attorneys and stakeholders to build their capacities to combat child trafficking;

(h) Sensitization of communities identified as sending and receiving victims of child trafficking on the dangers associated with child trafficking and its impact on the child. Majority of these communities are along the Volta Lake and sea area communities.

G. Children in conflict with the law, child victims and witnesses of crimes

181. The administration of Juvenile Justice in Ghana is in line with the relevant international instruments and rules on the administration of Juvenile Justice. The welfare principle of the Children's Act section 2 (2) regarding the best interest of the child applies in all cases involving juveniles.

The administration of juvenile justice, the existence of specialized and separate courts and the applicable minimum age of criminal responsibility

182. The same laws as outlined in paragraphs 127 to 129 of Ghana's initial report apply to the rules governing the administration of juvenile justice and in the country. The Children's Act established Child Panels, Family Tribunals, and has further enhanced the rights of the child in conflict with the law.

183. The Ghana Prisons Service plays a central role in the administration of Juvenile Justice as it runs the only Senior Correctional Centre hitherto known as the Ghana Borstal Institute, which is a detention facility for children in conflict with the law. The Center is responsible for correcting child offenders, through evidenced based therapeutic intervention programs.

184. The Center specifically engages inmates in a variety of academic education and non-academic or vocational training programs. These programs are aimed at enhancing the capacities of the children for their social functioning. Some children are taken through Junior High and Senior High School Programs. Those who are not on the formal education programs are enrolled in the vocational training programs including carpentry, blacksmithing, auto mechanics, vulcanizing, ceramics etc., to equip them with employable skills when they are released.

185. Aside the academic and vocational programmes, the Centre has also instituted programmes that seek to safeguard the rights of the children in detention, as well as equip the officers to streamline their actions and inactions in the best interest of the child. Overall, these programmes are aimed at creating an enabling environment in the Center to forestall any violent behavior among the inmates as well as elicit appropriate and responsible decisions within the context of children's rights.

186. The challenges faced by correctional institutions:

- (a) Inadequate funds for the procurement of training materials;
- (b) Inadequate supply of bedding facilities;
- (c) Lack of funds for administrative expenses and other welfare packages;
- (d) Inadequate funds to register the JHS and SHS examinations candidates in the correctional centers.

Children deprived of their liberty and measures to ensure that any arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be used a measure of last resort and for the shortest amount of time and that legal and other assistance is promptly provided

187. According to Section 4 of the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, any person above the age of 12 may be deemed to be criminally responsible, and hence may be deprived of liberty in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act. The treatment for a juvenile convicted of a criminal offence takes various forms depending on the nature of the offence:

- (a) Committal to a correctional institution for a period between six to eighteen months or three years for serious offences such as murder and defilement;
- (b) Diversion from institutionalisation by release on probation, restitution or payment of compensation etc., as under section 26 of the Juvenile Justice Act. When released on probation the juvenile offender is supervised by a Probation Officer/Social Worker. The freedom of movement of the probationer (child) is restricted and the child is assisted to reform within the home environment;
- (c) The content of the probation order is enforced to the letter provided it is in the best interest of the child;
- (d) Order to release to a fit person.

188. Regarding life imprisonment, under the Criminal Procedure Code 1960 and the Juvenile Justice Act, no juvenile or young offender can be imprisoned for life. Under the Criminal Procedure Code, all crimes committed by juveniles and young offenders are punishable by a standard three-year period in a reformatory school or institution. With the aim of improving this system, the above-mentioned article of the Juvenile Justice Act limits the maximum sentence to three years.

The sentencing of children, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment

189. The Criminal Procedure Code 1960 prohibits the death penalty imposed on a juvenile (12-17 years of age) or young offender (17-21 years of age) as mentioned in paragraphs 51-52 on page 13 of the 2nd and 3rd periodic report. Section (46) (1) of the Juvenile Justice Act, stipulates that the maximum sentence a juvenile (revised to 12-18 years) or young offender (revised to 18-21 years) can receive is three years in a junior correctional centre, upon conviction of a crime normally punishable by death.

Physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration

190. Psycho-socio counselling programmes exist within specific government and non-government institutions in the country. Some of the government institutions include such as DSW, DOVVSU, CHRAJ, and examples of the non-government are the Ark Foundation, Human Rights Advocacy Centre and FIDA. These institutions provide support to victims of violence and cruel treatment.

XI. Follow-up to the Optional Protocols

A. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

191. Ghana has still not ratified the Optional Protocol. A memo for the ratification has been drafted and pending submission to the Cabinet Secretariat at the time of report compilation.

B. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict

192. The Optional Protocol was ratified by Ghana on 17th July 2009. Since ratification, no official report has been submitted on the implementation of the Protocol.

193. Ghana's law does not allow persons under the age of 18 to enlist, including voluntarily, in the Armed Forces, and there is no mandatory conscription of children of any nature.

194. There have been no wars fought within the boundaries of Ghana, nor has there been any prolonged rebel activity. There are no child soldiers in Ghana, and children do not take part in any form of hostilities. Occasionally, there have been reports of ethnic fighting and chieftaincy disputes in several parts of the country that affect children through displacement, and reducing children's access to health care and education when they occur. There is no official record of children charged for war crimes committed while they were recruited or used in hostilities.
