

# **Establishing Context: Identifying the Opportunities to Support Child Behavioral Health**

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# Presentation Outline

- Overview of Mental Health and Children in Ghana
- Pressing Child Mental Health Challenges in Ghana
- Current Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Infrastructure in Ghana
- Competing Issues Children, Adolescents and Families that Impact Child Behavioral Health in Ghana
- Efforts at Addressing Stigma in Ghana
- Roles of Professionals, Community, Cultural and Religious Leaders Play in Creating Effective Approaches to Child Behavioral Health in Ghana
- The Role of Professionals: Social Workers.

# Overview Mental Health and Children in Ghana

- Ghana is a country with a population of about 27 million and a gloomy track record with regard to caring for people living with mental illness (Human Rights Watch, 2014).
- Out of the estimated 2.4 million people with mental health problems, 67,780 (i.e., 2.8%) received treatment in 2011 (Roberts, Mogan, & Asare, 2014).
- After 40 years, Ghana reviewed its mental health legislation: Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846), which was passed in 2013.
- However, there has not been much improvement in mental healthcare delivery in Ghana, since the passage of the Mental Health Act, Act 846.
- While the Act provides new vigor and interest in mental health, there is no sufficient comprehensive, aggregate in-country data for planning purposes, hence it is difficult to make reliable estimates (Roberts et al., 2014).

# Overview Mental Health and Children in Ghana

- ❖ Children and adolescents constitute a huge proportion of Ghana's population and are exposed to a number of physical, economic, social and reproductive health risks and challenges.
  - A little more than one person in four (26.5%) in Ghana was a child less than 10 years (Population Census of 2010).
  - A little less than a quarter of all persons in Ghana in 2010 were adolescents aged 10-19 years and this was made up of about 12% and 11% respectively of the 10-14 and 15-19 year olds.
- ❖ Even though the Act seeks to prevent discrimination and offer equal access to treatment for all mentally ill persons, within a rights-based framework, to date, not much has been done to address the mental health needs of children.
- ❖ About 75% of mental disorders in adulthood have their onset in youth, and persistent disorders in adulthood are those with onset during the 12-24 years (Patel, Flisher, & McGorry, 2007).

## Ghana's Mental Health Score Card

AREA	COMMENT
Service Provision	Significantly underfunded - only 1.4% of the health expenditure budgeted for mental health, and spending skewed towards urban areas,
Mental Health Facilities	123 mental health outpatient facilities, 3 psychiatric hospitals {Accra, Pantang, and Ankaful}, 7 community based psychiatric inpatient units, 4 community residential facilities and 1 day treatment centre.
Mental Health Professionals	18 Psychiatrists, 1,068 Registered Mental Nurses, 19 Psychologists, 72 Community Mental Health Officers and 21 Social Workers.
Type of Treatment Provided	Majority of patients treated in outpatient facilities and psychiatric hospitals and many of the inpatient beds provided by psychiatric hospitals.

Source: Roberts, Mogan, & Asare (2014)

-  The above score card indicates that psychiatric hospitals in Ghana are over stretched and therefore would be unable to provide adequate care, consequently, paving the way for the mentally ill to be exploited.

# Psychiatry Cases Common in Ghana

## ❖ Intellectual Disability:

- A lot of birth problems, e.g., Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder.
- Many babies are traumatized right from the neonatal period.

## ❖ Seizures

## ❖ Autism

## ❖ ADHD

# Key Child Mental Health Challenges in Ghana

- Child Negligence and Abuse (sexual, physical, psychological)
  - Children with mental health problems are hidden
- Harmful Cultural Practices (FGM, trokosi, child marriage, bridal abduction)
- Teenage Pregnancy and Motherhood
- Caregiving (sick, elderly, siblings, house helps)
- Child Labour, Child Trafficking, Child Prostitution
- Juvenile Recidivism, Youth unemployment , Drug abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Death
- Disability, Bullying, School Drop Out
  - Mentally ill children are vulnerable and are likely to be mistreated
- Lack of Support from Family, School, and Community

# Current Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Infrastructure in Ghana

- ❖ Mental health services for children and adolescents are more or less non-existent in the country (Roberts et al., 2014).
- ❖ Not much information specific to children in the available statistics provided on the mentally ill in Ghana.
- ❖ Not much information on the percentage and categories of children living with mental health disorders.
- ❖ The literature is silent on child mental health disorders in Ghana.
- ❖ There are limited practice standards for treating children living with mental health disorders (lack of professionals and other resources).
  - Adult psychiatrists provide treatment for children.
  - No training facilities: training available in Nigeria.
  - Accra Psychiatric Hospital (about 20 children) and Pantang (5 children) attend to children once a week.

# **Current Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Infrastructure in Ghana**

- ✿ Although all the teaching hospitals (Kumasi, Korle Bu, Tamale, 37 Military hospital) have psychiatric wings, there is relatively poor health facilities accorded to children and their needs.
- ✿ The interest of children are under represented in the planning of Health facilities (Asirifi, 2009).
- ✿ Lack of attention to the impoverishing impact of mental disorders on children, adolescents and their families (Kleintjes, Lund & Flisherm 2010).
- ✿ Late detection of disorders and inadequate provision of effective services for the treatment of mental disorders during childhood and adolescence.
- ✿ Korle Bu Runs HIV Clinic on Thursdays – About 200 Adolescents are attended to.

# **Current Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Infrastructure in Ghana**

- No dedicated clinic for children at both Accra Psychiatric and Pantang hospitals - Children are seen in adult facilities. Pantang is now working with donors to establish dedicated consulting rooms for children.
- One child psychiatrist (Dr. Selassie Addom) and 3 to 4 visiting Ghanaian child psychiatrists who are resident abroad, visit yearly to teach medical students.
- Child abuse centre in Korle Bu is dedicated to Child Abuse cases.
- Mental health problems are usually sent to prayer camps and other traditional healers first, thus, get to health facilities late.
- Children at Borstal Institute are left behind though they have mental health issues.

# Competing Issues Children, Adolescents and Families Face in Ghana

- Poverty:
  - Inability of caregivers, especially mothers to work to earn income to support the family.
  - Additional expenditure due to the illness (e.g., autism –average 600 GHC/ month for tuition, excluding other expenses).
- Prevalence of communicable and non-communicable leading to the neglect of mental health issues.
- Trauma
  - FGM, trokosi, child marriage, bridal abduction
  - Teenage pregnancy and motherhood
  - Caregiving (sick, elderly, siblings, house helps)
  - Child labour, child trafficking, child prostitution

# Competing Issues Children, Adolescents and Families Face in Ghana

- Conflict
  - Domestic violence
  - Divorce
  - Unaccompanied child migrants
  - Parents blame each other for the cause of child mental health disorders.
  - Non-acceptance of children with mental health challenges in communities due to ignorance.
- Preference for faith and traditional healers
  - Mental health problems are sent to prayer camps and other alternative healing centers first.
- Limited support for children with mental health challenges
  - Teachers, Special Schools, Government.

# Efforts at Addressing Mental Health Stigma in Ghana

- Given that mental health stigma is a major issue in Ghana, many people report mental health problems very late.
- A program- Mental Health Gap Action with WHO has been established to train primary health care practitioners to offer mental health services at the community level.
  - There are 10 modules and 2 out of 10 modules focus on child mental health problems.
  - They are based in community clinics with two trained professionals in each of the 10 regions in Ghana.
  - They solicit for funds to organize training in their regions (Training of trainers).
  - An outreach clinic at University of Ghana counseling center with support from a psychologist and visiting psychiatrist.

# **Efforts at Addressing Mental Health Stigma in Ghana**

- The current Mental Health Law emphasizes community care and collaboration with other stakeholders like faith-based healers, to help reduce stigma.
- Trained community mental health nurses organize home visits and offer treatment at prayer camps to help reduce stigma.

# **Roles of Professionals, Community, Cultural and Religious Leaders in Creating Effective Approaches to Child Behavioral Health in Ghana**

## **○ Professionals:**

- The need for collaboration between child psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, social workers, occupation therapists, speech therapists.

## **○ Religious Leaders:**

- The need to collaborate with professionals to reduce their belief that mental health issues are spiritual.
- Awareness creation regarding mental health.

## **○ Traditional Leaders:**

- Evaluate cultural practices in order to maintain useful ones and modify those that are harmful.
- Chiefs and Queen Mothers to be engaged to explain and educate their communities on mental health issues.

# The Role of Professionals: Social Workers

- Social work professionals are crucial in delivering and maintaining excellent mental health services:
  - identifying and accessing local services which meet people's needs at an early stage, helping improve overall mental health outcomes and reducing the risk of crisis and more costly demands on acute health services.
  - providing outpatient and outreach services aimed at supporting patients in their homes and communities.
  - providing short-term and continuous culturally specific refresher courses and training programs to community partners utilizing social work interventions and ethical principles (dignity and worth of clients, importance of human relationships, self-determination and privacy and confidentiality).

# **The Role of Professionals: Social Workers**

- incorporating diversity (gender relations, patterns of mental health services use) in the training of faith and traditional healers to enable them respect the human rights and dignity of their clients.
  - facilitating support groups for caregivers of persons with mental health challenges.
  - dissemination of findings of mental health related research.
  - working closely with the Mental Health Gap Action to raise funds and organize training in communities.
  - training students to specialize in mental health at the Master's level.
- The practice of these ethical principles, as well as competent cultural awareness and knowledge, could minimize the stigmatization associated with mental health in Ghana.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
ATTENTION AND TIME**