

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

**COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES**

**CENTRE FOR SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES (CSPS)**

**EXAMINING FOSTER CARE UNDER THE CARE REFORM INITIATIVE:  
EXPERIENCES OF IMPLEMENTERS AND FOSTER PARENTS IN ACCRA**

**BY**

**STELLA MAWUSI MAWUTOR**

**INDEX NUMBER 10233496**

**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON  
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENT FOR AN AWARD  
OF MA IN SOCIAL POLICY STUDIES DEGREE**

**JULY, 2015**

**DECLARATION**

I, Stella Mawusi Mawutor, hereby declare that except the references to other people's work which were duly acknowledged, this dissertation is as a result of my own independent work which was carried out at the Centre for Social Policy Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, under the due supervisor of Professor Ellen Bortei-Doku Aryeetey, and that this has not been presented partly or wholly elsewhere for the award of another degree.

**k**

.....

**STELLA MAWUSI MAWUTOR**

**(1023349)**

.....

**DATE**

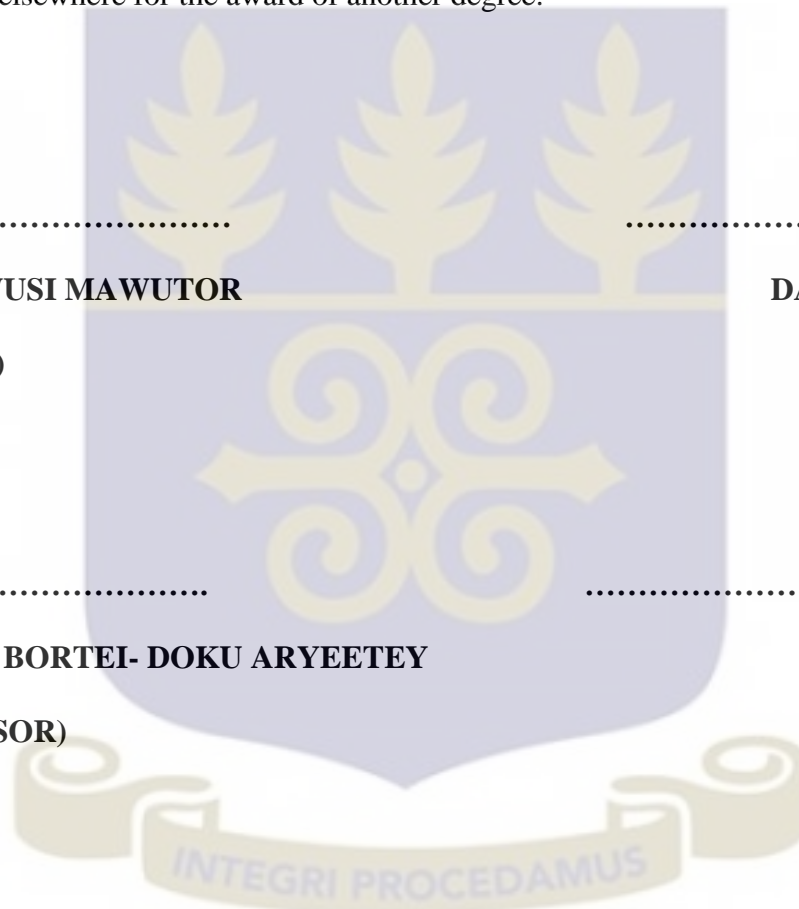
.....

**PROF. ELLEN BORTEI- DOKU ARYEETAY**

**(SUPERVISOR)**

.....

**DATE**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am so grateful for the mercies of God which carried me through moments of extreme discouragement and disappointment in the process of carrying out this research. I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Professor Ellen Bortei-Doku Aryeetey who has encouraged me to finish up this research and the sleepless nights she had spent to patiently provide useful suggestions to guide this research which resulted in the final output.

I wish to acknowledge the Director and staff of the Centre for Social Policy Studies (CSPS), both academic and administrative, who have been like a family to me and provided all the moral support during the cause of my study at CSPS – Legon. I wish to thank the staff of Bethany Christian Services who have allowed me to undertake this study with their organization and all the necessary support afforded me. To the staff of the DSW, I wish to say thank you, especially Mr. Sakyi- Boafo who went to every extent to provide documents and reports which were not easily accessible and my Director, Mr. Nat-khing Tackie, for all the encouragement he gave me. The last but definitely not the least appreciation goes to my husband Rev. Seth K. Mawutor and our two children Sedzordzi and Sananu for their immense support, even sometimes at their inconvenience. God bless richly bless you all!

## ABSTRACT

This study adopted a case study approach to investigate the foster care component of the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) of the Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP, Ghana) from the perspectives of both programme implementers and foster parents. Serious attention was given to efforts made to ensure the availability of a pool of family-based foster parents for the programme in Accra and experiences associated with it. The topic was seen to be relevant considering the current global policy direction of encouraging home-based care for children in need of alternative care as against the Residential Facilities for Children (RCF) as the first option of care. A qualitative method was adopted to gather data through an in-depth interview with 25 purposively selected respondents comprising fifteen (15) foster parents and ten (10) programme implementers from the DSW and Bethany Christian services. Data was analysed by thematic analysis (Attride-Sterling, 2001). The data was analysed using variables borrowed from the systems theory. The findings unearthed the multi-dimensional experiences of both implementers and foster parents, including recruitment and retention issues, which has a bearing on the availability of foster parents and the sustainability of the programme. As part of the recommendations some suggestions were provided to ensure sustainability of the programme.

## TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF ACRONYMS .....	viii
CHAPTER ONE .....	9
INTRODUCTION .....	9
1. 0 Background to the Study .....	9
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	12
1.3. Objectives .....	14
1.4 Research Questions.....	14
1.5. Significance of the Study .....	15
1.6 Limitation of the study.....	15
1.7 Organization of the Study .....	16
CHAPTER TWO .....	17
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	17
2. 0 Introduction.....	17
2.1 History of Foster Care.....	17
2.2 Standards for foster care programmes .....	20
2.3 Categories of foster parents.....	23
2.4 Factors that Account for effective Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents.....	24
2.4.1 Recruitment Strategies and Awareness creation .....	25
2.4.2 Motivation as a tool in the recruitment and retention of foster parents .....	27

2.4.3 The role of support in the retention of foster parents.....	29
2.5 Capacity Building .....	32
2.6 Placement of children with foster parents.....	33
2.7 The Role of Biological parents .....	34
2.8 Accountability Mechanisms – Data management and Information sharing .....	35
2.9 Theoretical Framework.....	37
2.10 Conceptual Framework.....	39
CHAPTER THREE .....	45
METHODOLOGY .....	45
3.0. Introduction.....	45
3.1 Research Design.....	45
3.2 Study Area .....	46
3.3 Target Population.....	47
3.4 Samples .....	47
3.5 Sampling Procedure - Purposive Sampling .....	47
3.6 Selection of Foster Parents.....	48
3.7 Selection of Implementer (Key Informants) .....	48
3.8 Data Collection tools – In-depth Interviews .....	48
3.9 Direct Observation.....	49
3.10 Ethical Consideration.....	49
3.11 Data Analysis.....	49
3.11.1 Organization of raw data.....	50
3.11.2 Respondents’ Identification .....	50
CHAPTER FOUR.....	51
PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....	51
4.0 Introduction:.....	51
4.1 Characteristics of Implementers.....	51
4.2. Characteristics of foster parents:.....	52
4.3. Steps taken by DSW and BCS as partners to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and the experiences associated with the process (Objective One).....	56

4.3.1 Awareness Creation .....	58
4.3.2 Screening of potential foster parents.....	59
4.3.3 Pre-service training and licensure .....	60
4.3.4 Placement of children.....	60
4. 4.0 Experiences associated with recruitment process .....	61
4.4.1 Recruitment challenges:.....	61
4.4.2 Retention Challenges .....	63
4.5.1. Funding Challenges.....	65
4.6.1 Information management challenges .....	67
4.7.0 Factors that mediate the decision and continuous availability to provide care for OVC (Objective two) .....	71
4.7.1. Motivation.....	71
4.7.2 Support for fostering.....	74
4.7.3 The Biological family factor .....	80
4. 8 Summary and Discussion of key findings.....	83
CHAPTER FIVE .....	91
SUMMARY, CONCLUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	91
5.0 Introduction.....	91
5.2 Summary .....	91
5.2.1 Objective one – Steps taken by the DSW and Partner NGO (Bethany Christian Services) to establish a pool of foster parents and the experiences associated with the process. ....	92
5.2.2 Objective 2 – Factors that mediate foster parents’ decision and continuous availability to provide care.....	93
5.3 Conclusions.....	94
5.4 Recommendations:.....	94
REFERENCES .....	98

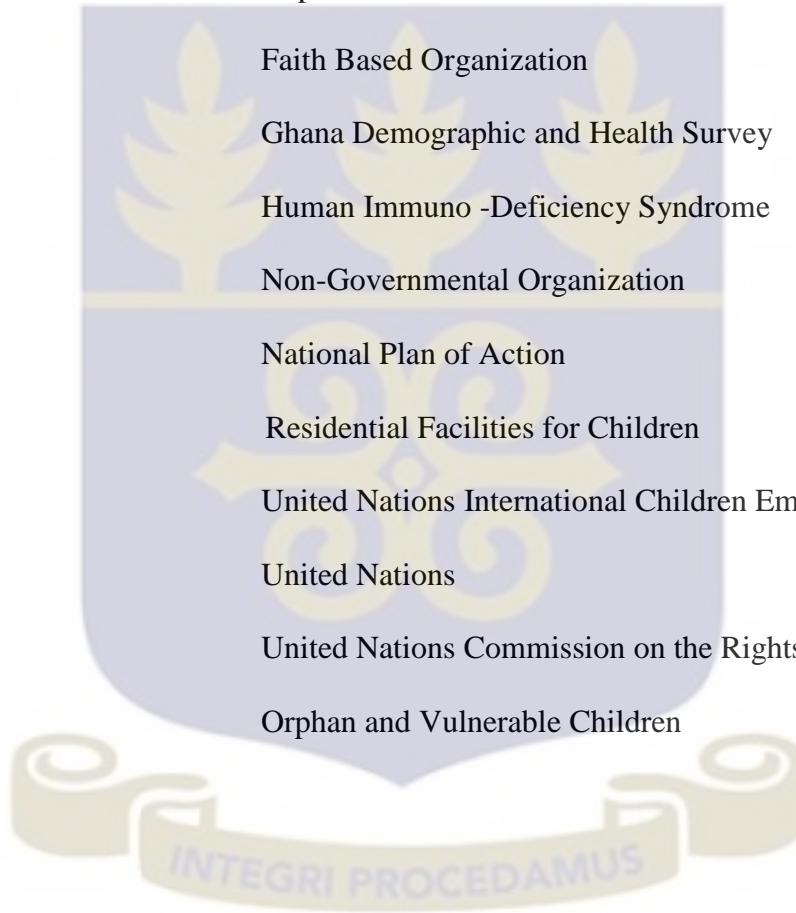
## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Years of Experience of Implementers	52
Table 4.2: Age Distribution of Foster Parents	53
Table 4.3 Educational level of foster parents	53
Table 4.4: Marital status of foster parents	54
Table 4.5: Current no. of children being fostered	56



## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Based Organization
CRI	Care Reform Initiative
DSW	Department of Social Welfare
FBO	Faith Based Organization
GDHS	Ghana Demographic and Health Survey
HIV	Human Immuno -Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPA	National Plan of Action
RFC	Residential Facilities for Children
UNICEF	United Nations International Children Emergency Fund
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Commission on the Rights of the Child
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. 0 Background to the Study

Every society, in order to provide protection for its children, develops systems towards the attainment of this goal (Airies, 1962; UNICEF, 2010; Agbenyiga' 2012). Foster care is one of such widely acknowledged social arrangement by which society demonstrates a shared concern and responsibility towards children, especially the orphan and vulnerable ones. Foster care has generally been classified into two main categories of kinship foster care also known as relative foster care and non- kinship foster care. Within this broad categories are other variants such as short term, long term, and respite care which are practiced both within the formal and informal sector in many countries. Kinship foster care has been identified in Ghana and some other countries in the West African sub-region, as an age-old traditional social protection mechanism which ensures, among other functions, that children are protected and afforded the needed social capital for their survival and development (Isiogu-Abanihe, 1985; Kalbride & Kilbride, 1994; Nukunya, 2003; Apt, 2005; Kuyini, 2009).

In Ghana, the traditional concept that the child belongs not only to his or her biological parents but also to the extended family and the community as a whole, prompt their up-keep and support by members of the extended family and other well-meaning members of the community in the event of orphan-hood or other similar social mishaps. Thus, foster care served as a bulwark against neglect, abuse or destitution of children and ensured their well-being (Nukunya, 2003; Apt, 2005). It was, however, not without its excesses of physical and emotional abuse in the

foster homes, including usage of the children as domestic helps in some instances (Apt, 2005; Kuyini et al., 2009).

However, developments over the past two centuries such as disease, poverty, migration, urbanization, parental neglect which has contributed to the weakening of the extended family system, among other challenges, have compromised this social support system for children, rendering them more vulnerable to destitution (Freundlich, 1997; Tower, 1996; Nukunya, 2003; Bass 2004). These challenges have, therefore, prompted society to institute new mechanisms and strengthen existing ones to ensure adequate protection of children by both family and State (Tower, 1996; Shannkoff & Meisels, 1990). Consequently, the United Nations Convention on the Child (UNCRC) offered a global policy direction for the protection of children in need of parental care (UN 1989). Article 19 and 20 of the UNCRC required that children in need of care are afforded the benefit of enjoying a continuum of care options such as kinship care, foster care, adoption and residential care, but with priority to home-based care, including foster care (UN, 2010).

Ghana, as a member of the UN, is relatively challenged with a growing number of Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and there is every indication that the number continues to increase every year (GDHS, 2014). In tandem with the UNCRC (1989), therefore, Ghana adopted a Children's Act in 1998 (Act 560). The Act enjoins the State to intervene for children in need of care and protection by developing various care options including adoption, foster care and institutional care programmes (Part IV section 18). However the over reliance on the institutional care option, due to limited formal avenues for caring for Orphan and Vulnerable

Children, (Manful & Badu-Nyarko, 2011) led to the proliferation of Orphanages in Ghana (Cskay, 2009). This was accompanied by allegations of physical and sexual abuse and human trafficking in these Institutions that were supposed to provide care for these children (Adongo, 2011).

In response to these challenges, the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), partnered by the United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), embarked on the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) in 2006. The goal of this reform was to de-emphasize the over reliance on institutional care which has been found to have negative impact on children (Marshall, Reeb, Nelson, & Zeanah, 2008; Tottenham, et al., 2010, Adongo, 2011) and move towards a range of integrated family and community-based care services for children in need of parental care (DSW, 2006). The ultimate goal of this programme is to establish a more consistent and stable approach to caring for OVC in Ghana by ensuring that each child has the privilege of growing up in a stable, supportive and loving family (Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, 2010)

The main components of the Care Reform Initiative therefore are:

- To prevent the institutionalization of children due to family disintegration by linking them up with family-strengthening strategies such as Social Grant Programmes, including Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), scholarships, food packages, access to National Health Insurance among others.
- To reintegrate children with their families in cases of separation, or to find loving relatives who are able to create a caring and stable environment for the child in the absence of their biological parents.
- To find adoptive parents, preferably Ghanaian families, for children when the options of family re-integration fails.

- To provide temporary or permanent family-based care for children, in the form of foster care, when family re-integration or adoption is not possible immediately.

Consequently the objectives of the foster care component of the CRI are to develop a formal foster care programme which would;

- Sensitize and create public awareness in foster care and adoption
- Identify and find Foster (adoptive) parents for children who cannot be placed with parents
- Register and retain foster families for child placement
- Implement child care and parenting skills for foster (adoptive) families providing care in their own homes.
- Develop and implement foster and (adoptive) database that follows up all referrals
- Develop guidelines for foster care

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Formal foster care, as intended by the CRI, seeks to recruit; train; and support individuals who are not family members, but are willing to voluntarily provide a home and parental care for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC). The objective of this formal foster care programme is to provide a temporary home and family for children who can live neither with their biological or extended families immediately, due to challenges in the home, while permanent placement solutions are being ‘worked out. It seeks to limit the use of Residential Facilities for Children as the first placement option due to its negative impact on children (Marshall, Reeb, Nelson, & Zeanah, 2008; Tottenham, et al., 2010; Adongo, 2011). The National Plan of Actions for OVC (2010 - 2015) led by the DSW, among other objectives, aims at increasing the use of foster care

as a placement option for children in need of care and protection instead of Residential Facilities for Children (RFC). In this vein the DSW and NGOs would work together to recruit and pay foster parents in order to increase the use of foster care for children under five (National Plan of Action for OVC 2010 – 2012, revised 2010 – 2015).

A major problem, despite this objective, is that there is still a challenge of an inadequate number of trained foster parents with whom children in need of parental care can be placed. Thus, observations and personal experience by this researcher as a worker with DSW in the field of child protection indicates that the staff of the DSW continue to resort to the use of Residential Facilities for Children (RFC) as the first placement option, instead of placing them with trained foster parents. What could have been the cause of the departure of practice from policy? In an attempt to answer this question it has been identified that few studies have been undertaken in this new foster care programme, particularly, those designed to explore the experiences of actors within the CRI programme. This lack of information is more evident in low and middle income countries embarking on foster care as an appropriate alternative to large-scale institutionalization of children who need parental care, especially in African countries (Family for Every Child, 2015).

The study therefore seeks to unearth challenges that contribute to the inadequacy of trained foster parents as a placement option for the care of OVC as intended by the CRI programme. The study would be carried out from the perspectives of implementers of the programme and the foster parents recruited under the CRI by identifying their experiences with the programme.

### **1.3. Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to undertake a study on specific actions taken to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and the experiences that goes with the process. This would be carried out from the perspective of both the programme implementers and foster parents as two key actors associated with the programme.

The specific objectives are:

- To examine steps taken by the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and Bethany Christian Services (NGO), as partners, to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and the experiences associated with the process.
- To investigate factors that mediate the decision and continuous availability to provide care for OVC from the perspective of foster parents recruited under the CRI programme in Accra

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The Research questions which this study seeks to answer are:

- What steps have the Department of Social Welfare and Bethany Christian services taken to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and what are the experiences associated with the process?
- What factors mediate the decision and the continuous availability to provide care for OVC from the perspective of foster parents recruited under the CRI in Accra?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

The formal foster care under the CRI requires research to evaluate its effectiveness. However since its inception in 2006, hardly any research has been done on the programme. This study is intended to fill in the gap as well as add to the body of knowledge in this fledgling area of child protection in Ghana. It does not only contribute to knowledge of the workings of the formal foster care arrangement for children but also provide an impetus for further research and enhancement of both policy and practice in the field of child protection in Ghana.

### **1.6 Limitation of the study**

As a qualitative study that seeks to examine people's experiences, the research design should include a lot more observation as one of the tools of data collection in addition to the in-depth interview by spending much more time with respondents. However time and resource constraint were major limiting factors. Efforts were, however, made to conduct the interviews in the natural settings of service delivery - the homes of the foster parents and the offices of key informants. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to make observations which would not have been possible under other settings.

Photography which should have been extensively used as a data collection tool to depict the environment and living arrangement of the foster children was not employed due to the sensitive nature of the study, such as intrusions into privacy of respondents. This was particularly important due to the earlier challenge of some participants' unwillingness to participate in the study.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter provided a general background to the study. The second chapter reviewed relevant literature that pertained to the study. The third chapter outlined the methodology of the study. Chapter four dealt with the analysis of data and finally, chapter five summarized the study by highlighting the finding and provided recommendations.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter focuses on literature on the history of foster care, standards, implementing agencies, categories of foster parents. It also reviews relevant issues that make a strong and effective foster care system such as recruitment and retention of foster parents, support and capacity issues as well as data on prospective parents. It also discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework into which the study has been situated.

#### 2.1 History of Foster Care

The History of foster care varies from country to country due to socio-cultural, historical and ideological differences. Prior to its formalization in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, foster care in the USA was practiced as a method of bonding out poor children to a master tradesmen who provided for their sustenance in exchange for their labour. This was followed by the era of the Society against Cruelty of Children, which used institutional care as the preferred method for caring for children in need, mainly to eliminate the abuses in the bonding out practice. Children Aid Society championed by Charles Loring Brace, in opposition to institutional care, introduced the orphan train, where orphaned and other poor children were sent to rural areas to reside with rural farmers. The New Era which followed the Children Aid Society was more voluntary and sectarian in nature and leaned towards family preservation interventions such as campaign for mother's pension and day nurseries to assist poor families and children.

Barbell & Freudlich (2001) argued that in the past three decades foster care in the US was used as a response to child abuse and neglect, shaped by numerous social factors, including changing values of child welfare services and a heightened awareness of child abuse in the 1960s, following the battered child syndrome publication by Kempe et al., (1962). The consequence of this was the enactment of mandatory reporting laws on child abuse and neglect, such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 (CAPTA), amended in 1996 (PL 104 – 235) These laws led to a rise in reporting on child abuse cases, and the use of foster care by social services agencies as an intervention method for these children. Another factor was a constellation of social problems such as poverty, homelessness and drug abuse which exposed families and children to risk, but without the complementing social services, even in the wake of weakening informal and extended family support system.

Australia's foster care system which is voluntary in nature began with Sydney's first settlement when children were boarded out to respectable but poor working class families in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. This State boarding-out schemes were the initiation of charitable societies such as churches and ladies organizations, with minimal government payments to foster parents. The foster care system was characterized by a heavy reliance on altruism and volunteerism which was cost effective to Government. There was a constant shift between foster care and institutional care between 1930s – 1980s, with cost being the main consideration, as foster care was considered the cheaper of the two options. Both the foster care system and the institutional care system, however, continued running concurrently, until the 1990 when most large institutions were closed down on account of the high cost and the poor care environment (Dickey 1980; Picton and Boss, 1981; Ramsland, 1986).

In Europe, Camel et al., (2015) argued that despite ideological differences and differing welfare regimes, fostering is a preferred choice for children who could not live with their families and fulfills the upbringing role on behalf of society. Citing Jackson, (2006) and Kolanckiewicz, (2012), Cameron et al., (2015) in their brief historical account of foster care argued that, formal foster care in England dates back to the Curtis Committee in 1946 which recommended that care provision for children in public care should be as close as possible to those of the family settings. In Poland, on the other hand, foster care was based on the concept of wet-nursing for babies in abandoned babies' homes as well the custom of raising children outside the family of origin which existed in knightly, noble families (Camel, Reimer and Smith, 2015).

Foster care within the African context is argued by Isiogu-Abanihe, (1985) as an age old traditional practice widely undertaken in West African countries, including Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leon and Nigeria where children are sent away to be raised by relatives and non-relatives. While it served the purpose of redistributing resources available for child up-bring in society, it also had the tendency to impact negatively on the survival of such children so placed, depending on how children outside their home are treated within each culture (Isiogu-Abanihe, 1985).

Within the Ghanaian context, as found elsewhere, foster care is an age-old informal social protection mechanism for vulnerable children, where extended family members assume responsibility for less privileged children or orphans. Though it served as a traditional child welfare and protection mechanism, Apt, (2005) in her study on foster care in Northern Ghana also found out that, though it was beneficial to children in terms of their social wellbeing, fostering was not without its excesses where children were also used as domestic help in the receiving households. Kuyini and others, (2009), in their work on the subject also found out

that fostering is a traditional practice in Northern Ghana inspired by the ideals of altruism, reciprocity and socio-cultural values where children are placed with family and kin for the purposes of keeping family ties alive. The result of their research also pointed out the fact that though children reported experiencing intimidation, physical and emotional abuse, they were all the same satisfied with their living condition in their new homes.

An analysis of the above literature from the various countries indicates clearly that despite the geographical differences, foster care is an age old intervention aimed at promoting the well-being of children for various reasons including destitution, abuse, neglect, poverty and other social consideration, such as reciprocity and altruism. The current study, unlike the others, however focuses on formal fostering arrangements.

## **2.2 Standards for foster care programmes**

In administering foster care programmes, standards must be adhered to, but these standards vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The UN guidelines on alternative care, however provides a general framework for the delivery of a range of care options, including foster care by specifying the responsibilities and roles of actors towards each other and towards the children in care (UN, 2010). The Guidelines indicate that programme implementers are to competently assure the quality of caregiving through proper assessment, recruitment procedure, capacity building, matching and placement of children as well as providing general support to foster carers to deliver their roles. Some of these supportive roles include counseling, training and continuous skills and professional development of foster carers. All these programmes must be

developed and backed by available human and financial resources and sound statistical data (UN, 2010).

In countries such as the US, laws and policies involving standards and licensure vary from state to state. However a basic home safety requirement is demanded by all States in order to reduce predictable risk to the child's health, safety and well-being. The goal is thus to provide a nurturing home in the interest of the child, while permanent solutions are being found.

Standards for foster care in the UK also require that the foster parent meets requirements through assessment by a fostering panel consisting of suitable persons drawn from the community. The requirements for licensure include background assessment of both the potential foster parent and the household. Fostering services are provided by both the local authority and independent foster care service providers. The responsibilities of the foster parent include provision of health, education, training and leisure for the child in care. Unlike the case of the USA and Ghana, the UK regulation is silent on age requirement to become a foster parent (The Fostering Services [England] Regulations, 2011).

In Scotland, the panel system has been developed for the screening of foster families. The panel is composed of six members, including foster parents, legal and medical practitioners drawn from the community with knowledge and experience in the field. The panel meets and assesses not only potential foster parents but also those already placed with children to intermittently assess their continuous service provision for the children, as well as the suitability of each child with each family. The capacity of the panel is built through regular training and information from research and best practices (Scottish Government 2009; Scottish Executive 2005).

Ghana's standard regulation for foster care, Foster Care Regulation, (2007) which is still awaiting parliamentary approval is relatively new compared to countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States which has been pacesetters in the foster care arena. Qualification for licensure of foster parent consists of 5 parts involving a declaration of interest by the applicant through the acquisition of an application form; clearance and record checks; fire safety inspection; home study; and pre-service orientation course. The application form demands that applicants should be at least 21 years and above.

In Ghana the DSW is the government agency responsible for the implementation of the CRI and its foster care component (NPA, 2010). However, Agbenyiga (2012) argues that the lack of resources coupled with the ideology of less state involvement in the provision of social services in Africa (Mkandawire, 2010) has led to a diminishing role of the DSW as a public sector welfare agency (Agbenyiga, 2012), a role that has been taken over by NGOs which are comparatively more resourced.

The clearance process includes a clearance from any criminal activity by the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police Service (CID) and any further background check at the discretion of the DSW. The home study report involves interviewing the prospective foster family and members of his or her household. The final placement process of the child, after meeting the above requirement, is determined by a foster care placement committee consisting of a Social Welfare Officer, a Probation Officer, and the manager of the residential facility which must be based on a social enquiry report. This should be followed by subsequent supervision and follow up by the DSW. The regulation specifies the responsibilities of the foster parent towards the child which should include provision of health, education and leisure among others. The DSW is also responsible for training or the approval of training manual for foster parents. The

ability to retain the license to foster is dependent upon ability to work with the DSW, the ability to fulfill the caregiving role and a continuous in-service training at least twice a year (Foster Care Regulation, 2007).

A few observations made during the review of the foster care regulation of Ghana, the USA and the UK indicates that all three countries have similar pre –licensure procedures which include background assessment of potential foster parents and their households by an assessment committee. They all identified the authority responsible for the administration of foster care programmes with responsibilities for training, and support for foster parents. However, best practices worth emulating in a few countries such as Peru and Scotland has been highlighted by Family for Every Child, (2015) due to their implications for a successful foster care system. For example in Peru, the unique element in the foster care programme was the thoroughness of the screening of the potential foster families through the use of specially developed assessment tools. Also a psychological assessment of the entire membership of the foster family is carried out in addition to an in-depth home study, a visit to the work place and an assessment of the socio-economic background is undertaken in order to ascertain the suitability of a foster home for the child. The thoroughness of the programme was such that out of 426 foster families that were assessed only 74 were recruited.

### **2.3 Categories of foster parents**

Foster care which is the provision of parental care for children other than their biological parents is provided under many modules in the world. Foster parents have generally been categorized into kinship fostering, which is also known as relative foster care and non- kinship carers also referred to as traditional or conventional foster carers. Whiles the recruitment and retention of

unrelated foster parents has been acknowledged as a global challenge, kinship foster care complements the non-kinship foster care and is run concurrently with the non-kinship or formal type. This is care provided by extended family members during periods of distress and has been acknowledged as prevalent in most countries ( Berrick, 1998; Colton et al., 2008 ). Though both kinds of foster parents have the ultimate goal of child protection, there are some marked differences in their status within the foster care system. With regards to policy and practice across the globe, there is clear distinction between kin and unrelated foster carers in terms not only of training, but also standards, accountability and remuneration (Berrick, 1998; Colton et. al., 2008). For example, Ghana's foster care regulation (2007), which is still in its draft stage, makes provision for both kinship and non-kinship care, but while non-kinship families require training and licensure, the kinship foster parents are not required to do so. Within this broad category of foster parents may exist other continuum of care options such as respite care, short-term care, medium-term care and long-term/permanent care. Also, within this category may exist other variations such as foster care for children with special needs (Australian Foster Care Association, 2001)

#### **2.4 Factors that Account for effective Recruitment and Retention of Foster Parents**

The UN Guidelines on Alternative care requires that for children in need of parental care are adequately catered for, there should be efforts to establish a pool of foster parents in each locality (UN, 2010). However the recruitment and retention of foster parents have been identified as a challenge which plagues foster care services all over the globe (Colton, William & Robert, 2008). Many factors have been identified to contribute either positively or negatively to the recruitment and retention of foster parent. In this vein, factors such as awareness creation and

recruitment strategies, motivation and support, have all been identified as relevant factors in maintaining adequate number of foster parents at any given time to provide care for children.

#### **2.4.1 Recruitment Strategies and Awareness creation**

In their study on recruitment and foster family service, Cox et. al., (2005) found out that foster families discovered about the need to foster through a variety of sources. Their study which utilized a National Survey of former and current foster parents in the USA identified that about thirty – six percent (36% ) first heard about the need for foster parents through other foster parents whiles 28% heard about it through mass media (television, radio, poster, or other advertisement). Community organizations constitute, nine percent (9%) of the findings, whiles four percent (4%) found out through a church or other religious organization. Other sources which constituted 24% included : nine percent (9%) who first heard about the need for foster parents while inquiring about adoption, Six percent (6%) who listed multiple sources, four percent 4% who learned of fostering from foster children, and the remaining one percent (1%) of respondents who had themselves been foster children. They concluded that foster parents who got involved through religious organizations were likely to foster longer than those whose source of information was through the mass media. However citing Coyne (1978), Horejsi,( 1989) ,Sacks & Case, (1968) and Smith & Gutheil, (1988) among others , the study also found out that though the media campaign has the advantage of recruiting diverse families interested in fostering while at the same time educating the community at-large about the purposes of foster care and the role of foster parents in the lives of children, it also generates large volumes of enquiries while the attrition rate between initial enquiry and a final decision to foster is also high.

Buam and others (2001) also found out that awareness about the need for foster care was the most influential factor in making decision whether to engage in fostering or not. Their study ,while emphasizing the importance of educating the community about the crucial need for foster parenting, also identified that foster parents are positively influenced by the personal account of persons with previous experience in fostering. This was the outcome of a study to identify the influences on the decision to become a foster parent.

In a comprehensive studies of the foster care system in the UK, Triseliotes, et. al., (2000) identified that the most effective method of recruiting foster parents were by word of mouth, feature articles and advertisements in the local press and documentaries on TV , but with the most effective being word of mouth. Clarke, (2010) in agreeing with the assertion of Triseliotes et al. (2000) further argued that word of mouth is only effective if foster parents receive good treatment from the Agency which serves as a way of motivation. In identifying factors which challenged the recruitment efforts in the UKs foster care system, they found out that although a lot of effort went into recruitment activities, it was unsystematic, episodic and lacked a clear cut policy or direction. Also the study found out that formal campaign activities were constrained by budgetary challenges and inexperienced staff and a lack of clear targeting and marketing approach.

In a similar study on recruitment in South Australia which retrospectively followed recruitment campaign by the South Australian Government, Delfabbro et al., (2008) concluded that, other methods such as promotional talks held in their community by staff, newspaper adverts, internet and radio and TV adverts rather than the campaign, achieved much success in recruiting the foster parents.

The above studies seem not only to highlight the need to employ a variety of strategies in the recruitment of foster parents in order to achieve a maximum result, but also suggests the need to engage in careful planning with qualified staff to competently administer the recruitment programme.

#### **2.4.2 Motivation as a tool in the recruitment and retention of foster parents**

In administering an effective care system, motivation plays a vital role in getting people to avail themselves to foster. Colton and others (2008) in a study to unearth factors that influence the recruitment and retention of foster parents undertook an international cross cultural analysis of foster care practices across the globe. They identified that individuals engage in foster care based on their individual motivations which include factors such as altruism, the desire to have a child of one's own to raise and love; the sense of duty or obligation experienced by many kinship carers; or in a few cases the desire to improve their own condition through exploiting the child or system. Colton et al., (2008) citing Glover, (2006) & Iwasaki, ( 2006) identified that in countries such as China which had a one child policy and Japan characterized by low birth rate (1.4), foster parenting is motivated by the desire to obtain a second child or to adopt.

Similarly in a study to examine factors that influence the decision of foster parents to continue or quit to foster, Geiger et al. (2013) also identified motivation and self-efficacy as personal factors that influence the decision to foster. They however classified the motivation as intrinsic which was expressed as the satisfaction derived from providing for the needs of children, a sense of duty towards children and community and the loving interactions they have with the foster children. Self-efficacy on the other hand was expressed as their ability to influence decisions and outcomes for themselves and the children (Geiger et al., 2013) .The study which was the result of

an online survey of 649 foster parents in a state located in South West Australia, utilizing a mixed method triangulation approach also argued that foster parents are more likely to continue fostering based on their own internal source of motivation.

Rhodes et al. (2008) also identified reasons why people undertake fostering to be either child-oriented or self-oriented reasons, but with the child oriented reason being the most endorsed while the self-oriented reason being the least endorsed. The top child-oriented reasons in order of hierarchy were to provide a child with love, to provide a home for children who otherwise would be in an institution; to help a child with special problems; and the need to do something for community/society. The self-oriented reasons which were the least endorsed were to increase family income; being single and wanting a child; the desire to replace a dead child; getting a child to help improve marriages; or the need for a child to help with chores or work in family business. Rhodes et. al (2008) further extended the argument beyond enquiring into the reason to foster by linking how the reasons could be applied to the utilization of foster families in providing care. By utilizing data from a national survey of current and former foster parents to examine the relationship between reasons to foster and types and length of services provided by foster parents the key findings from the study seems to suggest that parents who are self-oriented caregivers may have fewer place for children, while those who are child oriented may have more room for children. Utilization however depends on foster care workers' decisions and on children's needs as well as foster parents' interests and motivations.

The implication for this study seems to suggest the need for a careful assessment of reasons for fostering by Agencies - which might help in identifying potential care givers with high level of caregiving. Thus by systematically collecting information about reasons for fostering Agencies

might have a clearer picture of its family foster homes through careful assessment and planning of strategies for recruitment, training, and retention.

### **2.4.3 The role of support in the retention of foster parents**

Support for foster parents has also been identified as playing a major role in having available pool of foster parents for the care on children in need of parental care (Cox et al. 2005). In a study based on data from an exploratory research project in Southern Ontario, Levasseur, (1999), in a 12 paged questionnaire that sort to identify what type of support foster parents require to maintain a successful foster home found out that the most important support they require were respect, affirmation and acknowledgement from case workers. The questionnaire which was mailed to 163 active, regular foster homes listed by two participating agencies indicated that of the respondents completing the questionnaire, 88% were foster mothers. Out of this number only 55% claimed that both parents shared equally in the foster care giving.

In another research which was phenomenological study undertaken on the experiences of seven foster caregivers with formal and informal support in western Australia, utilizing a semi-structured interview, Cavazzi et al. (2010) identified that foster parents had both negative and positive experiences with fostering. Among the issues that caused the negative experiences was lack of support from formal agencies which was displayed by not showing appreciation and acknowledgment for their role as care providers. This reflected in inadequacy of information disclosure on the child; infrequent contact from agency staff; unsatisfactory response in crisis; non-involvement in decision making and non-appreciation of attachment between caregiver and child during placement termination; and a general disregard for the role of foster parents. The components of social support included emotional support as expressed in words of

encouragement, while care and practical support was explained as the provision of goods and services such as assistance with respite care and transportation services. Financial consideration which was related to practical support has to do with reimbursement received for the purposes of meeting the basic needs of the children in their care. Finally with regards to their informal network, caregivers reported a feeling of isolation due to negative response from family and friends. The study concludes by recommending and encouraging the need to provide instrumental and emotional support to caregivers by strengthening communication between service providers and caregivers.

Financial support has also been identified by Chamberlain and others (1992) as playing a significant role in the fostering experience. The process involved randomly assigning foster parent to three study groups as follows: 1) foster parents who received a small increase in stipend and additional intensive support services; 2) foster parents who only received a small increase in stipend; and 3) foster parents in traditional foster care setting. Their conclusion of the findings indicated that that small increase in stipends led to lower drop - out rates and a decrease in reported child problem behaviors. There was an increase even in the group without added support services. Similarly Duncan & Argyris (2007) also identified the role of financial support in the retention of foster parents.

Cox et al, (2005) for example utilizing data from a National Survey of Current and Former Foster parents to examine how foster families in the US discovered the need to foster and its effect on their service provision concluded that foster parents who got involved through religious organization were likely to foster more than those whose source of information is through the mass media. The main crux of their finding was more to draw attention to the role of social support on foster parents' retention.

In a longitudinal study to examine the effect of family resources and psychosocial problems on retention, Rhodes et. al., (2003), collected as part of a larger study of foster family applicants recruited during pre-service MAPP training in 3 counties in a southeastern State in the USA. From this sample large sample, a sub sample of 131 families was selected. Findings of the study indicated that almost 50 percent of families who started pre-service training did not complete it. Of the 131 families who completed training, 46 percent had already discontinued or planned to discontinue fostering at six-months. The study also found out that families with more resources, especially income, were more likely to continue fostering while African American and single-parent families were less likely to continue. It also found out that families with more psychosocial problems and fewer resources were more likely to express uncertainty about continuing to foster. This study has implication for the retention of foster parents, with respect to the support they receive.

When foster parents are adequately supported research has found out that it plays an important role in forming a bond of attachment between foster parents and children (Bostock 2004). It also promotes placement success, retention of foster parents and best outcome for children placed in care (Wilson et al, 2004). The benefit of support services such as respite care, professional and mutual support from professionals and colleague foster carers as well as financial assistance have been found out by Maluccio et al. (2006) to contribute significantly to positive outcomes. The repercussion of inadequate support has been identified by the Australian Foster Care Association (2001) to include high rates of resignation, placement breakdown, anger and frustration among foster parents and a general unsatisfactory outcome in the foster care system.

## 2.5 Capacity Building

Capacity building of foster parents has been identified as an important quality assurance measure that ensures that children placed in care receive adequate protection. It is therefore an important component for providing a good quality foster care programme which reduces placement breakdown and good child- outcomes (Martinez, 2012; Human Rights Watch 2014).

The Guidelines on alternative care (UN 2010) requires that Foster Carers 'capacity to work with children must be assured through a proper assessment procedure (paragraph 113). Further quality assurance measures include the need to ensure that Foster carers possess the necessary professional skills and that care is taken in their selection, training, and supervision (Paragraph 71). They are to receive the necessary capacity building through training to enable them deal with challenging behaviours, handle children with special needs, including HIV, chronic mental and physical disabilities (paragraph 116 – 117).

The need to develop diverse training programme to improve the capacity of foster parents have been identified in several studies. For example Pacific et al. (2005) have found out in an experimental study that electronic means such as DVD can be used to provide training for foster parents at home and asserted is effective in helping foster parents in assisting to manage anger out- burst. Besides its ease of delivery and access to foster parents, the study was also identified to be cost effective.

Similarly, Buehler et al. (2006) in the result of their model training curriculum also found out that training for foster parents increased their skills and competencies in several areas including safety, nurturing, education and mental health. Both studies which was undertaken in the USA goes to assert the effectiveness of continuous and varied training on the improvement of the parenting skills of foster parents.

In a longitudinal study to examine the effect of family resources and psychosocial problems on retention, Rhodes et al., (2003), collected as part of a larger study of foster family applicants recruited during pre-service MAPP training in 3 counties in a southeastern State in the USA. From this sample large sample, a sub sample of 131 families was selected. Findings of the study indicated that almost 50 percent of families who started pre-service training did not complete it. Of the 131 families who completed training, 46 percent had already discontinued or planned to discontinue fostering at six-months.

## **2.6 Placement of children with foster parents**

The process of placing children with foster parents is an important facet of the foster care system which has repercussions for a successful care giving. Placement difficulties has been found by Brian and Argys (2007) as not resulting from unavailability of homes but rather a challenge of matching of the needs of children with certain characteristics with the willingness and characteristics of potential foster carers. They further identified the relationship between placement and economic incentives received by foster parents by asserting that financial compensations plays a role in the placement and quality of care received by foster children by facilitating their placement in desirable homes. The characteristics of the foster child, the characteristic of the foster parent, and characteristics of the biological parent as well the characteristics of the case worker and agency have all been found to enhance or disrupt placement.

In their study on foster parents' reasons for fostering and foster family utilization, Rhodes and others, Cox, Orme & Coakley (2006), also argued that the reason why people foster also determines whether they will have an available place for children at any given time. They found out that foster parents whose reason for fostering was to help children with special problems,

those who wanted to provide a family based care, those who wanted a larger family , those who want to foster after their children were grown and those who foster because they wanted a larger family also provided more placement for children. On the other hand, parents who are motivated by companionship, wanting to be loved by a child, or because they are single and want a child were likely to provide fewer placements than parents fostering for other reasons. In addition those who want to foster to adopt, or provide a home for specific children are less likely to have placement at any given time. The implication of this study seem to suggest that foster parents willingness to be placed with a child at any given time is also linked to their reasons or motivation to foster.

### **2.7 The Role of Biological parents**

Positive child outcome is the result when biological and foster parents co-operate in parenting. This was the outcome of a study conducted by Linares et al. (2006), to evaluate the effectiveness of a two-component intervention training aimed at improving parenting practices between foster parents and biological parents. The study sought to point out the feasibility of joint training programme for foster parents and biological parents as intervention programmes to improve child outcomes.

A qualitative study conducted on family involvement with children placed in therapeutic foster care in four countries, Jivanjee, (1999), found out that biological families desire to be involved in decision making with regards to their children, to be involved in their care and to receive regular updates on their progress. Their resentment stemmed from exclusion from the lives of their children in care. The findings of the study further indicates that professionals have the belief that family re-unification, and positive family relationship occurs when biological families are involved in care of children in foster care. Though the studies were conducted in different

settings they highlighted the importance of interaction between biological families and foster families and the resultant positive outcome for children who have been placed in alternative care.

In another research which was phenomenological study undertaken on the experiences of seven foster caregivers with formal and informal support in western Australia, utilizing a semi-structured interview, Cavazzi et al. (2010) identified that foster parents had both negative and positive experiences with fostering. They were however negatively affected by negative behaviours displayed by the children and stressed from negative influence of biological parents in the lives of the children.

The above studies indicate a mix reactions and outcomes in the role of foster parents in the lives of children. However requirement from the UN guidelines on alternative care emphasis on the need and importance of the biological family and the need for family re-unification for children in alternative care (UN, 2010)

## **2.8 Accountability Mechanisms – Data management and Information sharing**

One element of the foster care system is the accountability requirement (World Vision, 2012, UNICEF, 2009). The UN guidelines therefore stipulate that policies and programmes in the Alternative Care settings for children without parental care should be based on information and sound statistical data. The guideline also emphasis the vital role of information sharing and networking and therefore encourages that all elements in the foster care system should appreciate and develop procedures that enhance this process (paragraph 70).

Indeed, data collection and National databases have been identified as among the accountability mechanisms of the child protection system which ensures the monitoring of trends and feed backs for the purposes of directing and informing policies (UNICEF, 2010; World Vision, 2011).

Thus goal 5 of the Ghana National plan of Action for OVC has emphasized the development of a foster care and adoption database to follow-up on all referrals (NPA, 2010 -2015).

Separate studies undertaken by the UNDP and UNICEF have identified data and information management as a major challenge in the Ghanaian Public Sector (UNDP, 2010; UNICEF 2011). The multiplicity of data generated at sector level without the support of the Ghana Statistical service has resulted in data inconsistencies and reliability

Organizations in the child protection sector are no exception to this national canker. A study on the mapping and analysis of the child protection sector by UNICEF, (2011) found out that even though individual agencies in the child protection sector have mechanisms in place for information collection and regular reporting from the lower to national levels, there is a challenge with uniformity and disaggregation of data for meaningful tracking and determination of case outcomes. Moreover, the report identified that child protection agencies have been slow in the utilization of a computerized data management and rather continue to transmit data through print reporting format (UNICEF, 2011).

The challenge of systematic and disaggregated data collection on children, especially, vulnerable children has also been acknowledged by the National Plan of Action for OVC (2010- 2012) as one of the main hindrances to resource prioritization and advocacy on children's issues in Ghana. Thus poor data and information on children has been one main observation against Ghana by the UN Committee on the Right of the child (NPA, 2010).

In asserting the value of database in information management Lessing & Scheepers (2001: 69) outlined the challenges that comes along with the manual file system as follows:

- Data Redundancy: duplicity of files in multiple files

- Data unavailability and sharing: Reluctance of data owners to share or avail data, difficulty in data retrieval due to multiplicity of and scattered nature of information
- Lack of flexibility: delays in data retrieval
- Ownership of data: It is not clear who owns the data in order to be assigned oversight in maintenance and its integrity
- Data confusion: where the same is maintained in so many places thus having varied meaning in different parts of the organization
- Poor security: due to the multiple ownership and scattered nature of data, the responsibility for data protection also becomes porous (Maritz 2003).

## **2.9 Theoretical Framework**

The study of foster care as a social phenomenon has been studied using different approaches, usually informed by the objective of the study. This research adopts a systems approach to the study with the aim of appreciating the issue from the perspective of selected actors who together contribute to an effective foster care programme in the CRI.

A system can be defined as “a group of independent but interacting (interrelated) components comprising a unified whole and working together towards a common goal by accepting inputs , and in a structured conversion process, producing required outputs”(Lessing and Scheepers, 2001:37). A system as advanced by Russel Ackoff (1981) cited by Laszlo &Krippner (1997) is set of two or more interrelated elements with the following properties:

1. Each element has an effect on the functioning of the whole.
2. Each element is affected by at least one other element in the system.
3. All possible subgroups of elements also have the first two properties.

(Ackoff, 1981, pp. 15-16.)

The "Systems Approach", according to Chen, (1975) ,” is essentially a way of perceiving and thinking through a problem by identifying and focusing on the critical elements pertaining thereto” (Chen, 1975: p. 34). The systems theory originating from the field of biology and postulated by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1928) initially as general systems theory (Laszlo A. & Krippner S. 1997), states that an organism’s survival depends on a constant interaction with its environment through the exchange of matter and energy. This interaction with other systems in the environment he classified as either a direct or an indirect input which the organism actively processes into an output. The organism itself, as a system, and all other system, generally constitute subsystems which is glued together to form a whole system. The whole system upon which other systems depend is characterised by a complete network of interdependencies necessary for the functioning of the whole and its subsystem. The functioning or survival of each subsystem and of the whole is characterised by a complex network of interdependencies but also guided by boundaries. This theory has been expanded to other fields and disciplines such as cybernetics, business and the humanities and could therefore serve as a tool of analysis for any phenomenon.

Thus the systems approach adopted by this study, is informed by its aim of analysing the foster care component of the CRI from the experiences of programme implementers and foster parents (subsystems) as individual elements of the programme and how they function and interact together to impact the effective implementation of the foster care programme. The adoption of this approach is with the view that a comprehensive care of the OVC, which is at the center of the foster care system, requires the interaction of implementation capacities at different levels

(subsystems) in order to achieve this objective. A systems approach would thus be adopted for this study because of the multiple level of experience of actors - implementers and foster parents.

## **2.10 Conceptual Framework**

The Conceptual framework of the study is a combination of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care model (UN, 2010) and UNICEF (2009) and World Vision (2011) systems approach to child Protection model all of which fits into the systems theory. In order to provide a clearer understanding of these models, a little elaboration on them is offered below:

The UN guidelines on alternative care, however provides a general framework for the delivery of a range of care options, including foster care by specifying the responsibilities and roles of actors towards each other and towards the children in care (UN, 2010). It outlines the various actors, both public and private their complementary role in the foster care system towards children in need of parental care. The Guidelines indicate that programme implementers are to competently assure the quality of caregiving through proper assessment, recruitment procedure, capacity building, matching and placement of children as well as providing general support to foster carers to deliver their roles. All these programmes must be developed and backed by available human and financial resources and sound statistical data (UN, 2010).

The systems approach to child protections on the other hand, consist of components and actors which interact together to provide the child with the needed protection. The components comprise of the following:

- Laws, policies, standards and regulations (normative)
- Services and service delivery mechanisms
- Capacities

- Cooperation, coordination and collaboration mechanisms
- Accountability mechanisms
- Circle of care
- Children's resilience, life skills and participation.

(World Vision, 2011)

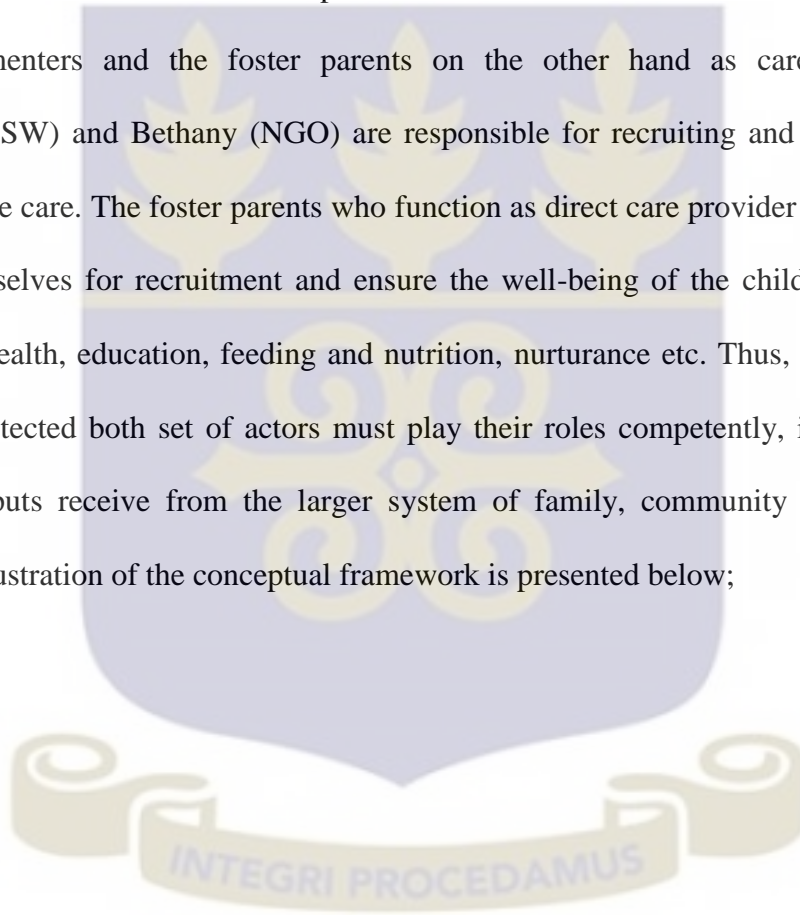
Applied to the Foster care system under the CRI the above enumerated components comprise

- Laws, policies, regulations such as the UNCRC, Ghana's 1992 constitution, the children's Act of 1991(Act 560), the Care Reform Initiative (2006), the foster care regulation (2007), the National OVC policy among others.
- Services include activities of implementers both within the public and private sector (e.g DSW, NGOs, Foster parents). For example, the development of a foster care data base, public education, recruitment, training, placement of children, and development of care plans.
- Capacities include technical and financial abilities of the implementing departments and NGOs, Social workers and foster parents.
- Cooperation, coordination and collaborative mechanisms involve the ability of stakeholders to work as a team.
- Accountability mechanisms include monitoring and evaluation activities which are specific to each stakeholder to ensure that the system works. E.g. information management, supervision and reporting systems.
- The children's resilience and participation has to do with the child's personal qualities and ability to adapt to the foster care environment.

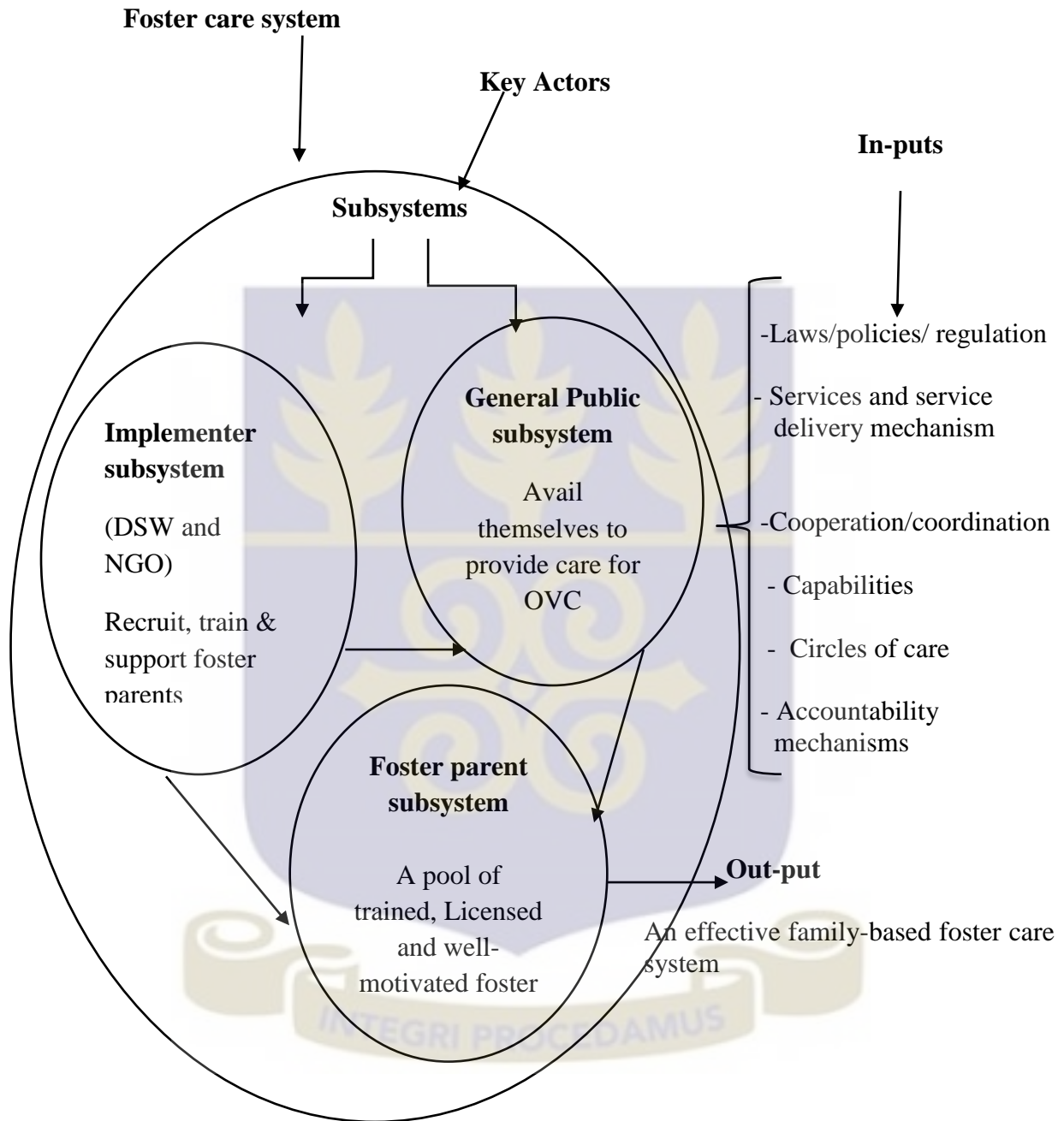
All these inputs are fed into the foster care system to ensure that children in foster care receive adequate protection.

### **Systems Approach to Foster care Under the CRI**

This research however is limited to two key actors in the foster care system and their roles to provide protection for children in need of parental care. These actors are DSW and NGOs on one hand as implementers and the foster parents on the other hand as care providers. The implementers (DSW) and Bethany (NGO) are responsible for recruiting and supporting foster parents to provide care. The foster parents who function as direct care provider on the other hand must avail themselves for recruitment and ensure the well-being of the children by providing maintenance – health, education, feeding and nutrition, nurturance etc. Thus, to ensure that the child is well protected both set of actors must play their roles competently, informed by their capacity and inputs receive from the larger system of family, community and the State. A diagrammatic illustration of the conceptual framework is presented below;



**Conceptual Framework – Systems Approach to Foster Care under the CRI**



Authors own construct (2015) - Systems Approach to Foster Care – Based on World Vision (2011) and UNICEF’s (2009) Systems approach to child protection

The Variables as applied in relation to this concept has been are described below:

**The Independents Variable:** The DSW/NGOs and the Foster parents are the independent variables whose interaction shape the family- based foster care system under the CRI

**Dependent Variable:** The availability of a pool of trained foster parents to provide care for OVC is dependent on the ability of the Implementers subsystem and the foster parent subsystem's ability to interact effectively.

**Input** - All the variables are impacted by the in-puts from the larger system based on cultural beliefs, law and policies and the resources available within the larger society, including governments and international donors.

### **1.7. Definition of Concepts**

Concepts as used in the study are defined below:

**CARE REFORM INITIATIVE (CRI)** – Ghana's programme offering a paradigm shift from institutional to family and community based care of orphaned and vulnerable children

**CARE PLAN:** A comprehensive, goal oriented, time limited, individualized programme of action for a child and his family developed in cooperation with the family, the child and the prospective foster parents

**FOSTER CARE/ FOSTERAGE:** Situation where children are placed by competent authority for the purpose of alternative care in the domestic environment of a family other than the children's own family that has been selected, qualified and approved and supervised for providing care (UN Guidelines on alternative Care, 2010, para. 28c.ii)

The terms foster care and fosterage are used interchangeably depending on the context.

**FOSTER PARENT:** An adult who voluntarily offers to provide a home and parental care for a child who is not related to them by blood, marriage or adoption and who may or may not receive compensation for their services.

**IMPLEMENTER** – A person or organization who has been given the administrative authority to organize and administer services in the Care Reform Initiative and its Foster care component

**EXPERIENCES:** Events, occurrences, issues or activities that impacted the execution or performance of a duty, responsibility or an activity

**MOTIVATION:** Factors that propels a person to undertake an activity or to do something. It can either come from within (intrinsic) or without (extrinsic).

**ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILD:** Any person below 18 years who has lost one or both parents, and who is exposed to moral or physical or psychological danger as a result of neglect and/or incapacity whether or not one of the parents is alive (DSW, 2006).

**PLACEMENT:** The act of relocating a child or children into the care of a foster parent or a caregiver either than one's biological or natural family for the purposes of receiving care.

**KINSHIP CARE:** Family-based care within the child's extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature

**DATABASE:** Collection of information items that are organized and stored in machine-readable records and which are accessible and manipulated by computer designated elements in the records. (ERIC- Thesaurus)

**CAPACITY:** facilities, material resources, skilled personnel, and funding needed to operate a child protection system (UNICEF, 2010).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0. Introduction**

This Chapter presents the methodology of the study. Research methodology outlines the general road map adopted by a study to arrive at its finding. This chapter provides information on the procedures undertaken for this study, specifically the design, target and study population, the sample size, sampling procedure, sources of data, data collection instruments, data handling and analysis and ethical considerations. This study basically sought to study Ghana's policy attempt at promoting family based care for orphaned and vulnerable children utilizing formal foster care. It sought to study the workings of the foster care system under the Care Reform Initiative by exploring the experiences of programme Implementers and foster parents in Accra.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design typically seeks to provide a structure to a study by providing direction to the process of data collection and analysis. It is informed by the type of research question one intends to answer, whether it is descriptive or explanatory in approach (De Vaus, 2001). This study adopted a qualitative method, utilizing a case study approach. The case study approach is appropriate when the objective of the study is to study in-depth an individual, programme, policy, activity, event, processes (cases) which are time and activity bound, in a holistic manner. Its aim is not to generalize but shed light on an aspect of social life (Gary, 2011). This approach was considered appropriate for this study because of its focus on a policy – foster care as being implemented under the Care Reform Initiative. The objective can be answered better by

unearthing the practical and lived experiences and knowledge rather than gathering and quantifying their opinion on the subject matter.

### **3.2 Study Area**

The study was conducted in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. It covers the Accra Metropolitan Area, Tema Metropolitan Area, Ledzekuku-Krowor Municipal Area; Ashaiman Municipal Area; Adenta Municipal Area; Ga East Municipal Area; the Ga West Municipal Area; and Ga South Municipal Area (Ghana Statistical Service - GLSS 5 & 6). It is located within the Greater Accra Region of Ghana which serves both as the Capital of the Greater Accra Region and the administrative city of Ghana.

Accra is of diverse population due to its special characteristic as the political and administrative capital of Ghana and a hub of commercial activity, which makes it an attractive destination for persons of all walks of life. The region has a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and diverse occupational and professional background. The population of Accra is estimated at 3756423, comprising 1816828 males and 1939595 females. Its adult population structure like the rest of Ghana is youthful (Ghana population & Housing Census, 2010). The Greater Accra Region in which Accra can be located has a predominance of Christians (82.9%), compared with Islam (10.2%).

Accra was purposively selected for four reasons. The first reason is the fact that Accra is the first Region where the CRI was implemented and thus unlike the other jurisdictions in Ghana a substantial number of the foster parents who were recruited and trained were resident in Accra. Secondly, the NGO which is collaborating with the DSW to operate the foster programme was also located in Accra making access to the research participants easier. The third reason was that

the head office of the DSW which is the heart of the CRI is located in Accra which makes accessibility to Key informants easy. Lastly, proximity to the research site was critical in this low budget study.

### **3.3 Target Population**

The target populations for the qualitative research consist of three main groups. The first group consists of all foster parents recruited under the CRI, currently fostering children and located in Accra. The second group comprises all programme implementers both with the DSW and NGO who are currently involved with or have experiences with the Care Reform Initiative and are resident in Accra.

### **3.4 Samples**

The samples comprised of the following:

- ❖ Fifteen (15) Foster parents
- ❖ Ten (10) Key informants from the Department of Social Welfare and a fostering Agency involved in the CRI foster care programme.

### **3.5 Sampling Procedure - Purposive Sampling**

For the qualitative approach involving the foster parents, programme implementers and the focus group discussion, purposive sampling approach which is a non- probability sampling technique was used in selecting participants. The appropriateness of this purposive sampling for a qualitative design is the need to select respondents based on special qualities, characteristics or attributes desirable to obtaining the desired result which could otherwise not be achieved in a probability sampling techniques. This is because the desired characteristics or attribute required

to achieve the needed result does not occur randomly in the general population. For this study the special characteristics required is the relationship and special insight that participants possess due their working relationship with the CRI and its Foster Care component. The only exception is the participants in the Focus Group Discussion who were obtained from the general public but for whom the qualitative approach was appropriate.

For the qualitative interviews the Key informants were purposively selected based on their knowledge and experience in the CRI while the selection of foster parents was on the basis of having been placed with a child and the special experiences and insight gained in providing care experience which would not be available to other ordinary person in the general population.

### **3.6 Selection of Foster Parents**

A current list of 63 foster patents was obtained from Bethany Christian Services, a Non-Governmental fostering Agency in Accra working in partnership with the DSW. Out of this number, thirty were located in Accra. A total of 15 were purposively selected based on their willingness to participants in the research. The rest declined on the basis of confidentiality.

### **3.7 Selection of Implementer (Key Informants)**

Key informants comprising staff of the Department of Social Welfare who had an experience with the programme were also purposively selected based on their insight and experience with the Care Reform Initiative.

### **3.8 Data Collection tools – In-depth Interviews**

Data was gathered from programme implementers (Key informants), Foster parents and the focus group by means of an in-depth interview using a semi-structured interview guide. Direct observation was also employed by the researcher so that information that could not be revealed

by the use of the interview guide were captured. An in-depth interview was identified as suitable for the study due to its ability to explore and elicit response from participants. An interview guide has been identified as the best data collection tool in a qualitative research due to its ability to explore and unearth opinions which may not be possible in a survey approach. Moreover the private and sensitive nature of foster care required a qualitative approach to protect the privacy of respondents

### **3.9 Direct Observation**

The in-depth interview was triangulated with direct observation method. By this method field notes were taken during the home interviews with foster parents. The use of photography was however minimally employed due to the sensitivity of the issue under study, especially considering the initial declining of some foster parents to participate on the basis of confidentiality.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

The researcher followed scientifically the laid down procedure in obtaining data from respondents. There was informed consent from all the participants. Respondents were given the option to withdraw any time they were willing. Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents was ensured in the research. Participants were not exposed to any form of harm or psychological discomfort. The data collection lasted for 2 weeks.

### **3.11 Data Analysis**

The thematic analysis approach (Attride-Sterling 2001), was adopted for the qualitative approach. By this analysis method emerging issues are first identified by quotes which are described and the grouped together by basic themes, organizing themes. Following this the superordinate issue or global theme is identified

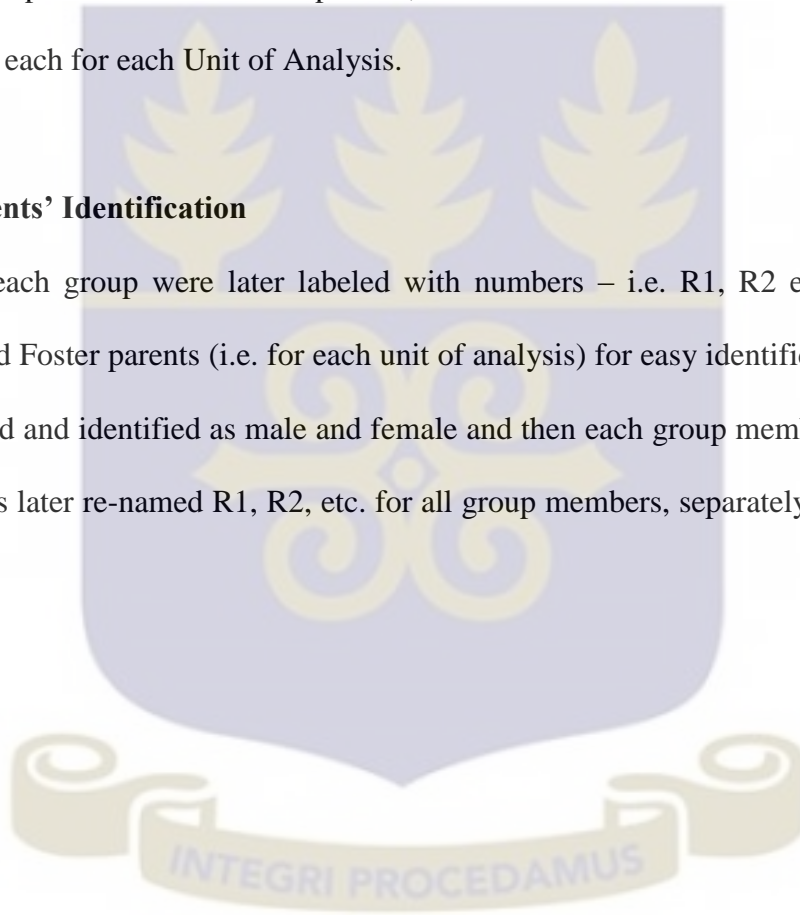
Following procedure was adopted to organize data.

### **3.11.1 Organization of raw data**

Twenty-Five (25) Tape-recorded interviews from the field were stored in separate word document files. A folder was the created separately for each unit of analysis, including both for the Programme Implementers and foster parents, This were then transcribed by word document and then a folder each for each Unit of Analysis.

### **3.11.2 Respondents' Identification**

Participants in each group were later labeled with numbers – i.e. R1, R2 etc. separately for Implementers and Foster parents (i.e. for each unit of analysis) for easy identification. The focus group was labeled and identified as male and female and then each group member with an initial pseudo name was later re-named R1, R2, etc. for all group members, separately for the male and female groups.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents and discusses the results of the study which have been divided into two sections according to the two objectives of the study, to reflect the findings from the two main units of analysis, i.e. Programme implementers (Key Informants) and Foster Parents. The demographic characteristics of participants are presented first, followed by a presentation of the findings and finally the discussion of the findings.

#### 4.1 Characteristics of Implementers

Ten (10) programme implementers (Key informants) were interviewed for the study. Seven (7) were from the Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the remaining three were from (Bethany Christian Services [Bethany]) an NGO. They comprise three females and seven males. The length of years they have been engaged with implementation of the foster care programme ranged from 7 months to 5 years, with half of the implementers being involved in the programme for less than one year. For a programme that started about 8 years ago, this seems to suggest a challenge of high staff attrition rate and thus the loss of institutional memory, especially with the notoriety of Ghana's public sector record keeping (UNICEF, 2011; UNDP, 2010). They were all tertiary level personnel with qualifications ranging from Diploma in social administration (50%) to Bachelor of Arts (BA) in the Social Sciences (50%). This seems to suggest that personnel engaged with the programme have some level of education that could enable them perform their duties effectively. Details of the years of experience of programme implementers have been presented in table 4.1 below:

**Table 4. 1: Years of Experience of Programme Implementers (Key Informants)**

No. of years with programme	No. respondents	Percentage
Below one year	3	30
1 year	2	20
3 years	1	10
4 years	1	10
5 years	2	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

#### **4.2. Characteristics of foster parents:**

A total of fifteen (15) foster parents participated in the study with the following demographic characteristics.

**Sex of Respondents:** Three (20%) of the foster parents were males while the remaining twelve (80%) were females. Without attempting to generalize the findings, the sex composition of respondents however seem to suggest a high dominance of females in the foster care sector which is similar to a study by (Levasseur, 1999), in which 88% of respondents were foster mothers.

**Age distribution:** There is an absence of persons below ages 21 – 30 from the table which seem to suggest that persons within this age group were not keen on fostering even though the Children’s Act of 1998 (Act 560) and the foster care Regulation (2007) (in draft stage) pegged the minimum age of fostering at 21 years. Similarly the ages above sixty (60) were insignificant

which may seem to imply that this age group is equally not keen in fostering, even though they were not limited by age. The predominance of ages 31 – 60 indicates seem to suggest the critical ages between which people consider fostering. Details of the age distribution of foster parents have been presented in Table 4.2.

**Table 4. 2: Age distribution of foster parents**

AGE RANGE	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
31-40	4	27
41 -50	4	27
51 -60	6	40
61-70	-	0
71 -80	1	6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**SOURCE:** Field Data (2015)

**Level of education:** The participants were of various levels of education, cutting across the basic to the tertiary. Those with Middle School Leaving Certificate (MSLC) and the Secondary School certificate were dominant in the group and constituted 40% each. The remaining 20% were of the tertiary level qualification. Details of the level of education of Respondents are in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3: Educational level of foster parents**

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
MSLC	6	40
SHS	6	40
Tertiary	3	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**SOURCE:** Field Data (2015)

**Marital Status:** Even though table 4. 4 seem to suggest a predominance of married persons, it was also quite obvious that all other categories were equally represented in the table. This seems to suggest that one's marital is not a barrier to fostering.

**Table 4.4: Marital status of foster parents**

MARITAL STATUS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Married	6	40
Single	3	20
Widowed	3	20
Divorced	3	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

**SOURCE:** Field Data (2015)

**Occupation:** Respondents were engaged in various fields of endeavor with minority (20%) being in the formal sector, while the majority constituting 80% was in the informal sector such as dressmaking, auto-mechanic, baking and trading. However one of the elderly foster parents even

though living independently in her own apartment is unemployed and depends on her children and for financial support.

**Ethnicity:** The foster parents for the study were of two ethnic groups in Ghana. Nine were of the Akan while the remaining six were of Ewes ethnic group. This seems to indicate the absence of other tribes in Ghana but cannot be used to imply and draw conclusion that other ethnic groups do not foster.

**Religion:** All the foster parents were of the Christian faith. It is worthy to note that involvement of foster parents in the study was based on a list of foster parents provided by the fostering Agency and the willingness of participants to engage in the study.

**Number of Biological children:** Ten (10) constituting 66% of participants had their own biological children while the remaining five (5) constituting 34% had no children of their own.

**Number of children being fostered:** At the time of data collection, all fifteen foster parents had children in their custody, with ages ranging between 1 to 12 years. The total number of children they had at the time of data collection was 30. The total number of children fostered by each respondent in the past was difficult to retrieve from the Agency due to data unavailability. Even though respondents gave account, it was out of memory with no empirical evidence to back it. It was evident from the data that some foster parents had more children than others. This was explained as in the words of a respondent,

*“...we try as much as possible not to separate siblings and then we also place them according to the needs of the children and then according to the financial resources of parents.” R10, Key informant from Agency.*

This, accordingly, confirms the study by Rhodes (2006) that foster home utilization is also informed by the agency case worker, the needs of the child and the availability of placement. However parents who had one child placed in their custody constituted the highest number of respondents.

**Table 4 .4 – Current number of children being fostered**

<b>NUMBER OF CHILDREN FOSTERED</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Foster parents with one child	9	60
Foster parent with 2 children	2	13.3
Foster parents with four children	3	20
Three five children	1	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100</b>

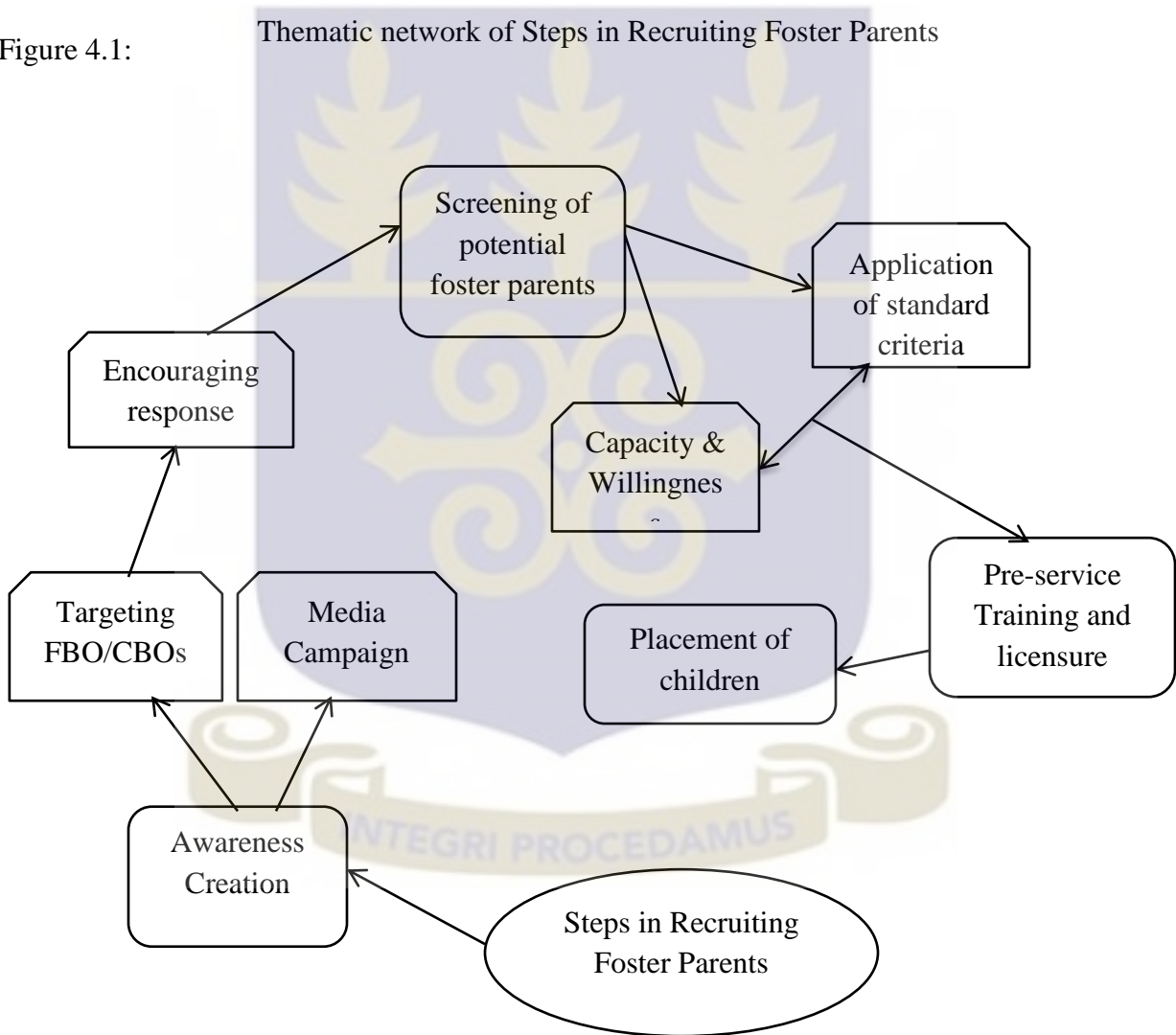
**SOURCE:** Field Data (2015)

#### **4. 3. Steps taken by DSW and BCS as partners to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and the experiences associated with the process (Objective One)**

For a successful foster care programme, the availability of foster parents with whom to place children is very crucial. From the perspective of the UN guidelines on alternative care (2010), which is one of the conceptual guidelines adopted for this study, this requires efforts from competent authorities to effectively undertake this venture. Thus the first objective of the study was to examine the steps taken by the DSW and its partner NGO, Bethany Christian Service, to establish a pool of foster parents and their experiences with the programme. In finding out from participants how they identified and selected foster parents for the programme, all the ten (10)

implementers identified activities undertaken in the recruitment process. The responses were grouped together into the following four steps with identified activities under each step as indicated below. This was followed by a brief elaboration on the process. A thematic presentation of the recruitment process has been illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Thematic network of Steps in Recruiting Foster Parents



Source: Author's construct from Field Data (2015)

#### 4.3.1 Awareness Creation

Awareness creation involved activities undertaken to sensitize the public about the need for foster carers. Findings from key informants indicate that two main recruitment strategies were employed. This involves giving talks at churches, mosques (FBOs) and community based groups such women's groups (CBOs). The second method was by media advertisements and campaigns which included TV and Newspaper advertisement.

- ***Education of FBOs and CBOs***

Eight of the participants mentioned that sensitization was carried out either at churches or mosques or community groups. The response from majority of respondents also indicated that some response was obtained through this channel. However this was not without its associated challenges. The quotes below elucidate the response on awareness creation:

*“There was a program to educate churches and faith based organizations on the importance of fostering children. After the training people wrote their names and that is one main way of targeting parents” - R1, a key informant with the DSW*

*“We do it on television, we started going to the churches, we started going to women's organization to tell them about foster care; so from that you would get people who are ready to enter into the program.” R3, a key informant from the DSW*

- ***Media campaigns***

The second method of awareness creation involved media sensitization which was captured by five (5) of the respondents. A statement by one of the respondents has it that:

*“In fact when it comes to awareness at the national level, we have had a number of sensitization meetings with the media. The media has been our partner and we have had sensitization meeting*

*with the media, a press conference with the media, we have had about four sensitization meetings with the media, the last one was in June this year.” – R4, DSW key informant*

#### **4.3.2 Screening of potential foster parents**

All participants were adept in mentioning that screening was undertaken in the recruitment process which included background assessment of potential foster parents to ensure their suitability to care for children. The screening was in two categories:

- ***Willingness and Capacity to foster***

Respondents indicate that people who wish to foster must first demonstrate willingness, readiness and the capacity to undertake the venture as captured in the following excerpts from Key Informants:

*“If you want to be a foster parent in accordance with Section 62 of the Children’s Act, you should be somebody who is willing and is capable to assume that responsibility in place of a biological parent, you should be ready to care and maintain, you should be willing to do it.” R4 key informant from DSW*

- ***Application of standard criteria***

Secondly the foster parents must apply themselves to a determined criterion to ensure their suitability. The process as stated by respondents were social background check which includes clearance from any criminal record by the police; medical report to declare one’s health status, assessment of financial capability; letter of commendation from a religious leader, adequate accommodation, the need to meet age requirement which should be twenty-one years and above

and the approval of one's, spouse if married. Thus qualification to become a foster parent was outlined by respondents as indicated below:

*“We look at the criteria for qualification to ensure that people who are actually trained and then licensed to be foster parents are people who are actually qualified or meet the minimum criteria to become foster parents. So we looked at the age of the person in accordance with the law. The person who wants to foster should be above 21 years ... anybody who wants to foster should also be somebody who has been testified as medically fit by a medical officer... we carefully look at evidence of employment and evidence of one's financial capability ...” R4 Key informant from DSW.*

*“...before you go in you have to have a good standing financially, morally, physically, health wise. You'll have to have a good standing in these areas before you can take care of these children.”R2 Key informant DSW*

#### **4.3.3 Pre-service training and licensure**

Majority of respondents mentioned that training is afforded the foster parents before a child is placed with them. This was a one- time certificated programme provided for foster parents as collaboration between DSW and Bethany.

*“Bethany is assisting so.....they have been helping with training of the foster parents and once they train Social Welfare also goes in with the certificate” -. R4 Key informant from DSW*

#### **4.3.4 Placement of children**

After training the final activity of recruitment was mentioned as the placement of children. This involved the process of allocating children in need of parental care into the care of foster parents.

#### **4. 4.0 Experiences associated with recruitment process**

Recruitment and retention of foster parents have been identified as a challenge which plagues foster care services all over the globe (Colton, William & Robert, 2008). As it stands, various steps were taken to ensure the availability of foster parents by the Programme Implementers. As graphically depicted in Fig. 4.1 above, this included awareness creation, screening, pre-service training and finally placement of children. These findings resonate with the assertion of available research about the need to utilise a variety of strategies in building a pool of foster parents (Colton et al. 2005; Buam et al. 2001; Triseliotes et al. 2000; and Delfabrano et al. 2008). The above enumerated activities yielded some response which, according to a list obtained from DSW, 82 individuals and couples were enlisted and trained as foster parents in Accra. Respondents, however, identified that the process was not without its challenges which were categorized under recruitment and retention challenges as enumerated below. These findings have been presented and thereafter, graphically depicted in thematic network in fig 4.2 below to aid reader understanding.

##### **4.4.1 Recruitment challenges:**

It is expected that foster parents that have been recruited and trained, would be available for to receive the OVC into their care, as intended by the programme. However this was not the case due to the following challenges which were identified under the major theme of recruitment challenges:

##### ***4.4.1.1 Preference for adoption over fostering***

It was found out during the recruitment process that only few people responded to the massive recruitment exercise because majority was not ready to offer themselves to become foster parents

because they prefer to adopt rather than foster the children. They were not willing to take care of children who may return to their biological parents after they had invested in them. These experiences of respondents were captured in the following quotes:

*“One area is that people come in that they want to foster but at the end of the day you would realize that the interest is more on adoption than fosterage. So somebody who comes in that I want to be a foster parent has at the back of the mind that at the end of the day I want to foster to adopt”- R4 key informant from DSW*

*... people do not want to care for these children so that when they grow they go back to their mothers” ....” R3 key informant from DSW*

#### **4.4.1.2 Public misconception about the programme**

For some of the respondent, the concept of formal foster care programme is still illusive to the Ghanaian populace, hence it was identified that people were not appreciative of the concept enough to enable them offer their services. Statements from two of the Key Informants captured it vividly:

*“But foster care in Ghana is still a little bit difficult and so a lot of people still don’t appreciate foster care....” R3 key informant from DSW*

*... “most Ghanaians are not used to this foster care issue and so you need to spend much time to try to explain everything about foster care to that person at the end of the day, we get only about one or two people.” R10 Key informant from NGO*

#### **4.4.2 Retention Challenges**

After the foster parents have been recruited and trained, it is expected that they will be available to receive the OVC. It was later discovered to the dismay of the Implementers that some of the trained foster parents were not available to receive the children. This was as a result of the following:

##### ***4.4.2.1 Placement challenges***

After the training of the foster parents, the process requires that they be allocated with children in need of care. However implementers encountered issues with the placement process. This challenge was identified by Eight (8) of the participants as one major setback since it became apparent that they could not manage this expectations. This had to do with two main issues - delays in placement and difficulty in satisfying the preference of the foster parents so recruited. This issue has been expatiated below:

##### ***4.4.2.2 Placement Delays***

Once foster parents are recruited and trained, it is their expectation that they be placed with children soon. Respondents however found out that they were unable to meet this expectations of the foster parents early enough. This resulted in a lot of waiting parents who kept on calling on the Agency for placement. The delay, consequently, affected a sustained interest of the foster parents in the programme because of their heightened expectations that they will be placed with children in a short time. However, long delays are common in DSW's ability to meet these expectations. For the implementers from the Foster care Agency, this serves as a disincentive to undertake further recruitment activities because they will be unable to satisfy the foster parents. This challenge was mainly highlighted by three (3) of the NGO key informants. Below are a few sample quotes that better illustrate the issue:

*We have a lot of clients that we have trained but the problem is the children... we have waiting families those who are ready to have children but we don't get children.” R9 Key informant from NGO*

*“Another problem is we are not able to get children for almost all the trained foster carers. So if we have trained a number of families or carers and we have not yet placed them with a child why then do we have to train more people, because we need to provide enough rooms for others to be on board.” – R10, Key informant from NGO*

#### ***4.4.2.3 Difficulty meeting the preference of foster parents***

Closely linked with the placement delays was the fact that implementers had difficulty satisfying the preference of the foster parents. Trained foster parents are given the privilege to choose the particular child they want to foster, as part of the matching and placement process. This however became an issue when the preferences of foster parents could not be met immediately, even though there were other children available who equally needed care. It was found out that some trained foster parents were not willing to availing themselves to receive children whom they could not adopt eventually. These issues was particularly related to people who needed children to adopt and were, therefore, using foster care as a stepping stone to adoption. This challenge was reiterated by six (6) out of the ten (10) Key Informants from both the DSW and the fostering Agency and was vividly elaborated by the following sample quotes by the respondents:

*“...sometimes their preferences do not meet the children we get, so that one too becomes a problem. May be you bring a child, the person will say “I told you I want a girl and you brought a boy so I don't want it”. R9 key informant from NGO*

*“But once we train them and give them the license they refuse to accept just any child because they want to get babies they can adopt, very young children they can adopt.” R1 key informant from DSW*

#### **4.4.2.4 Diversion into operating RFC**

It was also found out that some of the trained foster parents diverted their activities into operating RFC (orphanages), once they receive the foster care training. Thus it was discovered that the trained foster parents were not available to receive the children because they have gone into other communities outside Accra to establish Residential Facilities for Children (orphanages) with the foster care license. One key informant expressed his frustrations in the following words:

*“Another challenge is that after they have been trained and the children placed with them, they go to communities and set up orphanages and then they increase the number of children that they have been placed with and they start taking other peoples’ children“ - R1 Key Informant from DSW*

#### **4.5.1. Funding Challenges**

It was also found out that there was a challenge with funding which is an important input in administering the programme, both for the demand and the supply. Inadequate funding made it difficult for the programme implementers to effectively carry out their mandate. This finding is supported by the assertion of Mkandawire (2010) who identified funding challenge as the bane of public intuitions’ ability to perform effectively. Funding challenges was further explained under the following themes:

#### **4.5.1.1. Lack of local source of local sources of funding**

It was found out that, even though government supports the process of implementation of the foster care programme, funding from government and other local sources were lacking. Thus they are challenged with funds for both administration and support for foster parents. This challenge came from a total of Eight (8) respondents (7) from the DSW and one (1) from the NGO. This challenge was well articulated by one respondent as follows:

*“The Government of Ghana has been supportive of the program. When it comes to the area of finance that is where we have problems... government direct funding has not been forthcoming, support from government has mostly been administrative to cater for the General Office activities but not basically with the items with program under care reform” R4 Key informant from DSW*

#### **4.5.1.2 Limited Donor funding**

It was also identified that the main source of funding was from donors such as UNICEF but this was limited to certain activities such as committee meetings and technical support. Bethany’s support was also from its mother organization from abroad but this was also insufficient to fund all activities under the programme. Below are few statements from participants which captured the happenings on the ground:

*“UNICEF has been the main financiers when it comes to the implementation of the OVC and the care reform initiative program,” – R3 Key informant from DSW*

*one challenge is that the activities of these regional OVC committees are funded by UNICEF but there is a limitation, UNICEF funds their meetings and the challenge is that after the meetings*

*there are constraints financially so you meet you take a decision...you meet nicely and you draw up your program but after the meeting you don't have money and becomes a problem – R4 DSW key informant*

*“Well it is an international organization, it is sponsored, even though we try to get other local people to support, the participation is not really encouraging” R10 Key informant from NGO*

#### **4.6.1 Information management challenges**

One key finding that emerged from informants was the absence of information management system by which implementers could effectively track and manage the foster parents that they were able to recruit and train. Observations made during this study also indicated difficulties exist in retrieval of information on the foster parents, particularly with respect to the actual number of foster parents, their current locations and addresses. This finding corroborates the assertions made by UNDP and UNICEF about challenges with information management in the child protection sector as well as the slow utilization of computers in Ghana's Public Sector in general, resulting in the multiplicity and fragmentation of data (UNDP, 2010; UNICEF 2011). This issue was raised by nine (9) out of the ten participants. Two key emerging issues was the absence of a centralised database for the purposes of coordinating information and improper reporting mechanism. These issues have been further expatiated below:

##### **4.6.1.1 Absence of a centralised database**

It was found out that even though there was an indication of setting up a centralised data base for the purpose of tracking and monitoring the foster care system, this was yet to be implemented.

Thus it was found out that there were challenges with record keeping and the coordination of data. The result was data fragmentation among the programme implementers and also issues of missing records in some instances, an unavoidable menace associated with manual system of record keeping (Lessing & Scheepers 2001, UNDP, 2010; UNICEF 2011). This was found to impede implementers' ability to track and keep pace with the status of the foster parents. Below are a few statements which throw more light on the issue;

*Talking about the database, yes we are actually in the process. What has happened is that for now we can talk about database developed but not fully, but partially developed. We hope to make sure that we have a fully developed database as times goes on R4, key informant from DSW*

*'The challenge we have is that some people were here before us and they started the program, so sometimes you take a file, you see that the file is not complete. There are certain things missing in the file and it becomes very difficult to retrieve these things. – R9 Key informant from NGO*

#### **4.6.1.2 Information management mechanisms**

Another finding which depicted a challenge with information management was accountability issue which resulted in a challenge with report sharing among the DSW and its service partners in the NGO sector. While there was an indication that the Foster Care Agency was to give periodic reports to the DSW, it was found out that there were issues with adherence to this arrangement due reluctance by the NGO in sharing information about its activities with the DSW. This invariably resulted in a disconnection in the information sharing and management

domain of the programme and the system's ability to track the performance and the utilisation of the licensed foster parents in the programme.

*“The NGO’ are supposed to report to Social Welfare annually. But what I have seen is that they ..., a lot of them don’t like submitting reports to Social Welfare unless we press them. R3 Key Informant from DSW*

*As far as I am concerned I have not had any of them approaching us, but then it is our duty to send our report, but then I think, I don’t know. But if we are not doing the right thing they would have been here – R10*

*These are some of the things, at the initial stage they (NGO) were even afraid to give us information, but I said my friends we are working together so if you give data to Social Welfare department, are you afraid?” R4 - Key informant From DSW*

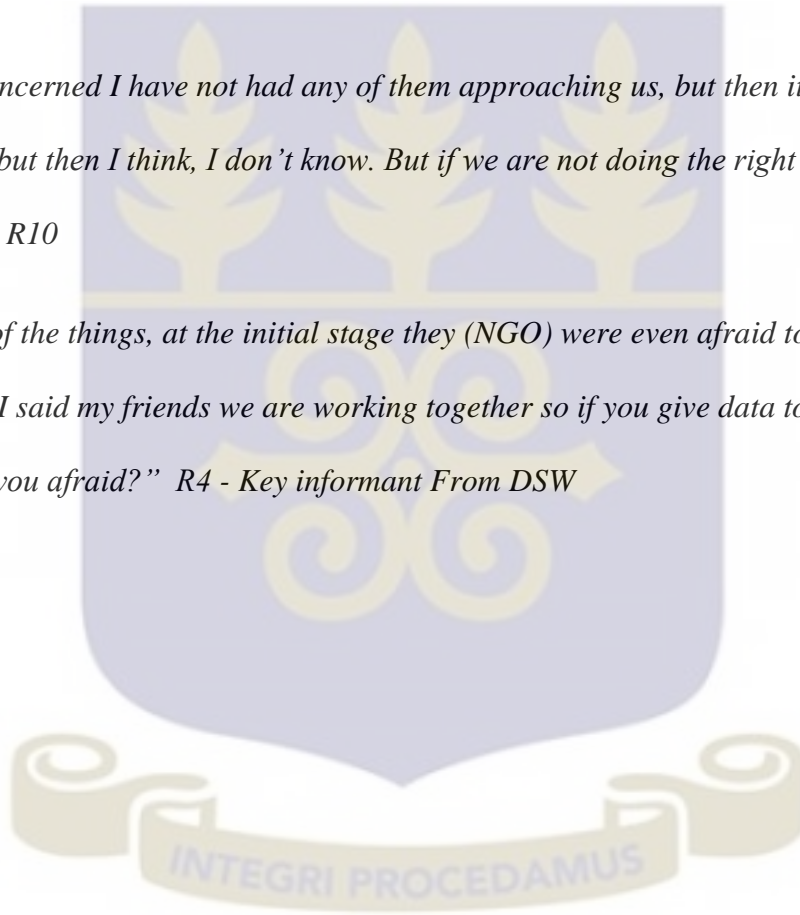
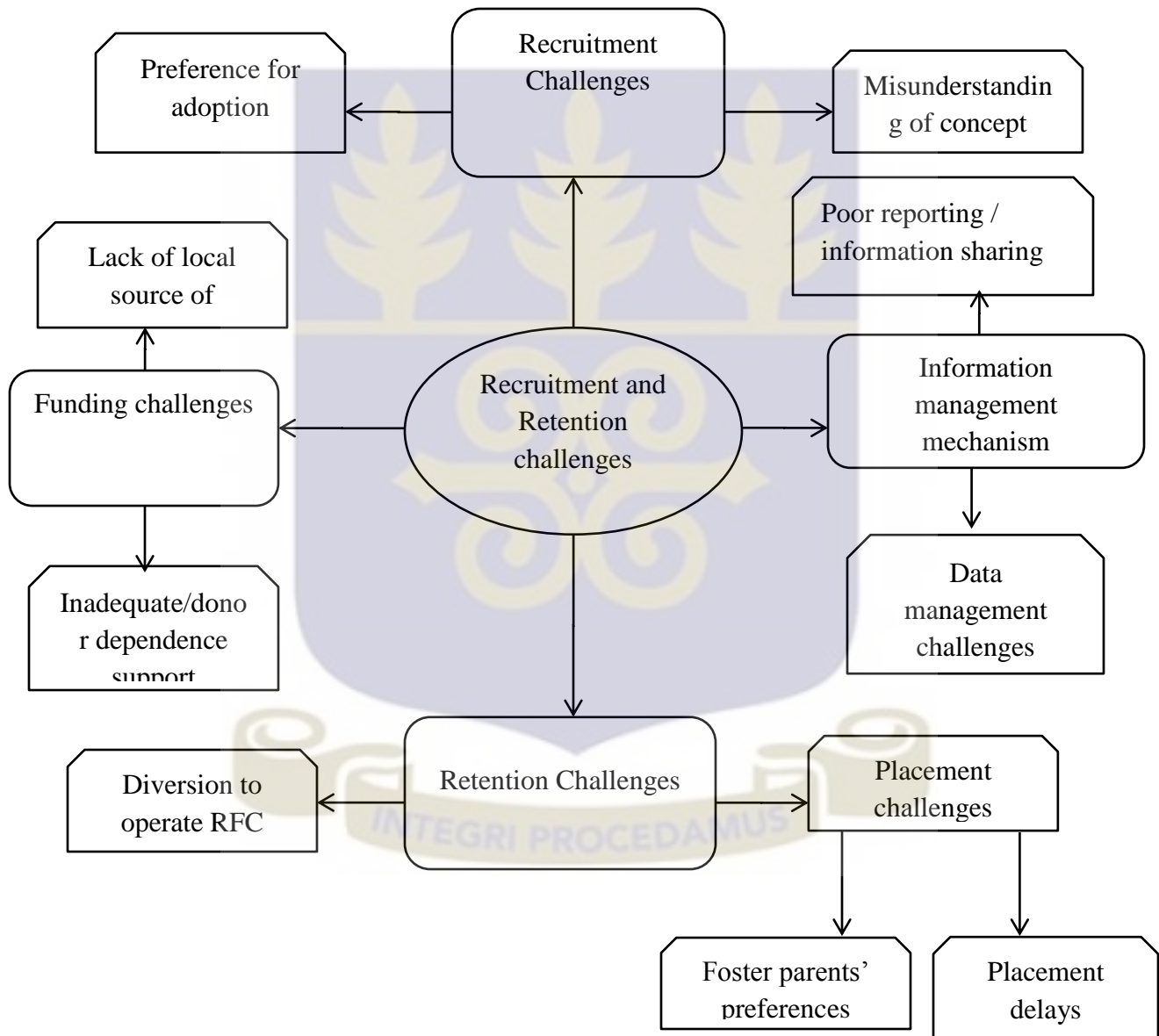


Figure 4. 2: Thematic network: Experiences of Implementers in building a pool of foster parents



Source: Author's construct from analysis of Field Data (2015)

#### **4.7.0 Factors that mediate the decision and continuous availability to provide care for OVC (Objective two)**

Foster parents play a vital role in the foster care system because they are an important human resource upon which the family-based foster care system is dependent. This section reports finding on the second objective of the study which sought to investigate factors that mediate the decision to foster and the experiences associated with fostering from the perspective of foster parents recruited under the CRI programme in Accra. The emerging themes have been presented and discussed below:

##### **4.7.1. Motivation**

In response to the reason behind the decision to become foster parents, respondents cited various reasons which were grouped under a major theme of motivation. This was further grouped under sub-themes of child-centered motivation, self-centered motivations, religious persuasions and concern for the community.

##### **4.7.1.1 Child-oriented motivation**

Out of the Fifteen (15) foster parents, Nine (9) constituting 60% were motivated to foster because they love children and were concerned about their well-being and moreover have the ability to care for them. In this vein respondents stated that they had been involved in child related and humanitarian activities which served as a guidepost to their current engagement as foster parents under the CRI.

*'I love children. I feel I love children and will be able to care for them. I can love them like their own parents. Because even there are some parents I know who are unable to care very well even for their biological children, as I do for these children.'* – Foster parent R2 – 32 year old single woman

*It requires love; it's a big challenge because the work itself is actually difficult. But for some of us this is what we chose to do -* Foster parent R3, 56 year old man

*'I think, it is a calling, it's a calling and it's a passion. If you don't have that passion, if you don't have that calling, you can never do this work that I'm doing.'* – Foster parent R4, 52 year old woman

#### **4. 7.1.2 Self-oriented motivation**

Self-centered motivation refers to personal considerations rather than the needs of the child which serves as an initial consideration for people decision to become foster parents. Findings indicated that forty percent (40 %) of respondents were inspired by personal objectives as the initial mediating factor in their decision to foster OVC. This does not, by any means, imply that the level of care provided by these foster parents was sub-standard. The self-centered motivation was classified into the following sub-themes:

- ***The desire to adopt a child***

A fifth of the foster parents, constituting twenty percent (20%) of respondents, took up the care of OVC because they wanted a child to adopt. The desire to adopt was identified with respondents who had no children of their own and through the Foster care Agency, were using

fostering as a stepping stone to achieve this aim. Thus the findings indicated that considerations, other than the child also propelled some of the foster parents to engage in the programme as have been illustrated below:

*“... when I came up with this idea of fostering a child to the point, may be adopting finally, they were all very supportive. They all gave me their support to go ahead. It is very good, if along the line God himself blesses me with my own, fine. If he doesn't, I'll take this child as my own” – Foster parent R5, 46 year old woman*

- ***The desire for stipends and use of extra time***

The remaining 20%, on the other hand, were involved because they had additional time on hand which they could use to engage with the children and also benefit from the extra stipends that comes along with it. This second response was identified with the elderly respondents;

*“...Some were asking “grandma, are you sure you could undertake this venture at this age?” I said I could... I could use it as a way of keeping me fit and active and even in the process would not need to ask them for any financial assistance since I would be receiving some small stipends - Foster parent R1, 75 year old retiree.*

#### ***4.7.1.3 Religious persuasion***

Equally, Eighty percent (80 %) of the foster parents said they had undertaken the venture because they believe it is required of them by their religion. Thus the desire to abide by their religious teaching which admonishes that they care for others was the push factor for their decision. Interestingly, all respondent indicated that they were of the Christian faith. It therefore

goes to say that in this case the Christian religion and its admonitions served as a mediating factor in the decision to become foster parents. The statement below from one of the respondents illustrates this point;

*It's our service to God. Service to God does not only mean sitting in the chapel. So we have to help each other and that's all that I'm trying to say' – Foster parent R3, 56 year old man*

#### **4.7.1.4 Love for the community**

Forty percent of the foster parents said they have chosen to undertake care of the OVC because of their concern about the well-being of the community. They believed that one way of service to the community is through assisting children in need. One respondent stated it aptly in the following words:

*One issue is that the people in this area do not send their children to school. This place is a sort of slum area so we decided to start this programme to assist them. Most of the time you see the children in the neighbourhood roaming about aimlessly – 50 year old female foster parent*

#### **4.7.2 Support for fostering**

Besides the motivational factor which was found to have been a deciding factor for foster parents the respondents, other factors have equally been identified by this study to play in their decision to continue fostering. Findings from this study indicate that support received by the foster parents play a vital role in their continuous availability to provide care for OVC. It was found out that support received by the foster parents during the decision making process and also after the

placement of children played a major role in sustaining their interest in the programme. Support for fostering, involves assistance received by the foster parents to enable them provide care for the children. This included emotional and material and financial assistance received.. Even though most of the foster parents provide care for the children out of their own resources, other sources of support were also available to them. These were classified into informal and formal support.

While respondents were satisfied with the level of support received from the informal sources of family and friends the contrary was the case for the formal support received from the programme Implementers.

#### ***4.8.2.1 Informal support***

Informal support for foster parents came from family and friends. All the fifteen (15) foster parents said they received support from the informal source either by way of encouragement (emotional support) or through financial and material assistance or both. This form of support came from their children, spouses and extended family members to enable them execute their responsibilities. Forty percent (40%) who reported an initial opposition mainly from their extended families due to lack of understanding of their actions later gained their approval after the initial hiccups.

- ***Emotional support***

Emotional support refers to all the intangible or non- material assistance expected by the foster parents and serves as a source of empowerment for the foster parents to continue avail themselves for fostering.

The following were statements from some of the foster parents about support from family members.

*“They gave all the support, my mother, my father, my parents and my brother, my siblings. They all gave me their support to go ahead.”-Foster parent R 10 – 46 year old woman who is fostering to adopt from*

- ***Financial/material support***

Some respondents in addition to the emotional support from family and friends also reported that they were afforded material and financial support. This response came from forty percent (40%) of respondents. The response below is from one of the respondents with respect financial and material support she received from family members;

*started facing challenges from my own family ...but to the glory of God, they’ve now understood what I’m doing and are also ready to support., ....they will just buy dresses, shoes and everything for them, and once in a while they will just call, how is (name withheld) doing?; - .”*

*Foster parent R8*

*“Our families have been very supportive. The last time we travelled to our home town with one of the children.my mother asked whether my wife has given birth to a girl, and when I explained to her that we are engaged in foster parenting, she was extremely happy. My brothers were overjoyed and carried her all over the place.” R 3, 52 year old male foster parent*

#### ***4.8.2.2 Formal support***

Formal support is all assistance received from the foster care Agency, including financial assistance, mentoring and supervision to enable them provide adequate care for the children. Out of the 15 foster parents, 9 said they received monthly financial support between four hundred and five hundred Ghana cedis per child from the Agency, depending on the child’s age to provide for

feeding, clothing and toiletries. The agency also paid the school fees and medical expenses of the children besides the maintenance allowance. The remaining six (6) were not receiving any financial support. Six out of the nine parents who received remittances from the foster care Agency were ,however , not satisfied, citing reasons of delays in disbursement of funds, the inadequacy of the amount as well as the non- refund of monies spent on the children. They had to supplement the cost of child maintenance from their own resources. These sentiments were expressed in the following statements by some of the respondents:

*“I am given four hundred Ghana cedis (GHC 400) a month for each child. Initially, the arrangement was Two hundred and Fifty Ghana cedis (GHC 250) but it has been increased to four hundred Ghana cedis (GH C400)” – Foster parent R1*

*‘I enrolled her in school and sewed her school uniform and provided her other educational needs. But when they were coming for her, there was nothing. So I had to ask the woman whether I will not be reimbursed for all the expenses I incurred on the child. She then reassured me that I will be reimbursed and subsequently requested that I should submit the bill. I think the total amount was one thousand Ghana cedis (GH1, 000). She gave me only part of the money.’*  
*Foster parent R6*

*...“one challenge is financial challenge....they have some incentive they give the woman. But if the child is a baby, every week she buys Nun 1 then later Nun 2 and by the end of the month my wife spends over Eight hundred cedis instead of the five Hundred Ghana cedis they give her. Apart from that sometimes there are many other things.”- R13, 54 year old male foster parent*

*I think that during the training programme, they promised to help the carer... to set up the carer to enable them to become self-sustaining so that they can provide for the children adequately. For example, if you want to operate a shop, they will help you. Initially that is what they said. They said they will help the foster parent to work but it didn't materialize. We have reminded them several times – R6, 50 year old female Foster parent*

*it's from our own resources. It comes from us. For example if this child happens to fall sick at night I will not wait for the Agency. I will have to use my own money to buy medicine for him. Even though I told you earlier that they take care of the child's medical expenses, there are others we must bear ourselves. For example, he is coughing now and we must get him some medicine to relieve him.*

However three out of the remaining 6 who opted to freely provide care for the children still lamented on the absence of occasional incentives in the form educational support, provision of food and additional hands for child care. The absence of this form of support is thus affecting the motivation of these foster parents.

*“if there is any area of need, it's for a helper who can assist me whenever the children are more than one.” Foster parent R 2*

*“ I made mention of it when they were bringing eh...(name withheld), that “ well you are always bringing me children to foster but you have not considered giving me a grain of rice that oh you should take this and take care of these children.” What I want is, If they can give me official letter to take to SOS schools so that they can also help me with the eh.....school fees of the children.” Foster parent R4, 52 year old, fostering four children.*

Three of the remaining foster parents who were fostering to adopt however said they were not interested in any such material or financial support from the Agency but were adequately prepared to provide the needs of the children. In response to her satisfaction with the agency support this is what one of the participants who were fostering to adopt stated:

*“In fact from the word go, I made up my mind to take care of that. So financially I’m O.K.”*

*Foster Parent R5*

- ***Emotional Support***

With respect to emotional support which was defined as encouragement, counselling or advice received by foster parents all respondents said they felt unsupported in the form of regular visitation and supervision and counselling. There was also no counseling whenever the children were taken away after they had developed attachment. Twelve of the foster parents which constitute Eighty percent (80%) voiced out their displeasure about the absence of any counseling services to help them cope with emotional challenges, especially whenever the children have to be taken away for permanent placement. They were equally dissatisfied with the frequency and quality of visit paid them by the staff of the fostering agency Three (3) of the foster parents were equally concerned about the absence of an association of foster parents with whom they can share experiences as well as receive support and encouragement. Thus it was found out that the emotional care of the foster parents in term post placement counseling, regular visitation was inadequate, leaving the parents vulnerable.

The dissatisfaction of the foster parents about the state of affairs has been elucidated in the expression below:

*...for now I don't even hear much from them! They have been here once, they've seen the child has settled in, may be because of what they've seen and all that it is OK may be that is why they are prolonging their visit to check on me (laughing).*

*"As for me I have spoken to them about it several times. You see when we are informed about the departure of the child early we are able to adjust emotionally. But when we are informed promptly that's where the pain becomes unbearable. There was one recent case when one of the children was leaving, I tried to see them off to the gate but I couldn't. It is very painful" – R6*

*'Sometimes I just leave the house for town, but for how long can I stay in town. I leave for town because there is no one in the house and I feel lonely, so I go out; but when I go out for how long can I stay in town? Even if I stay out for three hours, four hours by all means I will come back to the house. You come back you feel sad. Sometimes I don't want to continue with the programme"*  
*Foster parent R2, 32 year old foster mother*

*We want more meeting so that if anyone has any peculiar challenge, it could be identified and addressed. When we hear other people's experiences, we learn from it and improve upon what we are doing. But now it's like we are working individually. It's not very helpful."* Foster parent R3, 56 years year old male

#### **4.7.3 The Biological family factor**

Unpleasant encounters with the biological parents of the children also affected some of the foster parents' sustained interest in fostering since they view this not only as a lack of appreciation and support for their good services but also a disruption of the smooth care they have been providing for the children placed in their custody. Even though majority of foster parents had no

encounter with the biological parents, because in their case the parents of the children were not known, the remaining twenty percent (20%) who had met the biological parents raised concern about the apparent lack of appreciation and support for their good works .

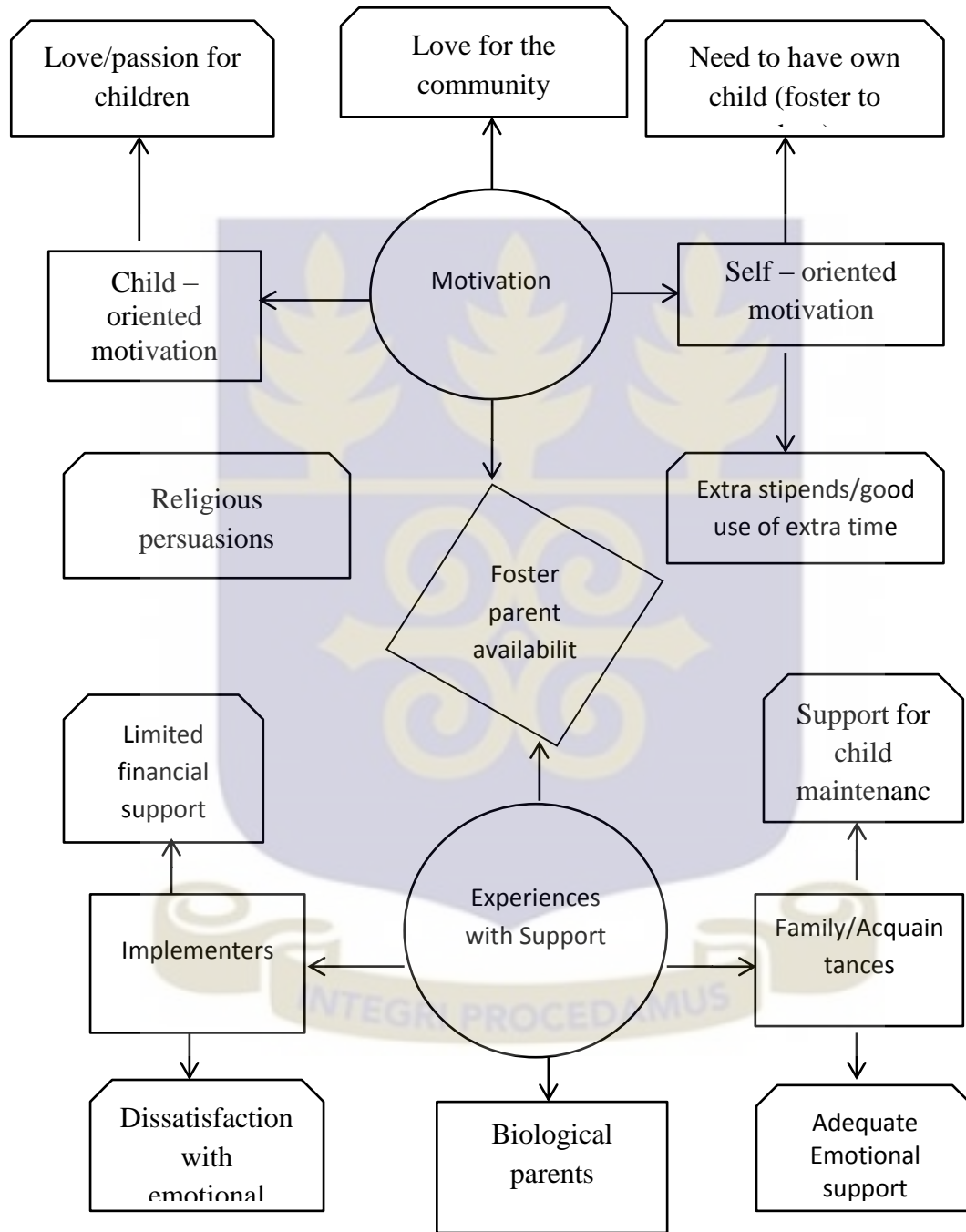
From their perspective the behaviour of the foster parent was a disincentive for fostering since they did not acknowledge their contribution as significant persons in the life of the children despite all sacrifices they had made for the child. This is what one female foster parent had to say:

*“...a woman whisked the child out of my hands and informed me she is the child’s biological mother. She was really surprised when she realized the child could now walk and exclaimed ‘He could stand on his feet!. As for my husband he could not withstand the behaviour of the child’s biological mother and so he left and I followed later”. - Foster parent R11*

This finding was inadvertently corroborated by an implementer when she said:

*“my only problem I have with foster care is that you see the time the family will develop love for the child then the biological families will just pop up from nowhere then they will say they are coming for the child. I have a problem with that... because it is really heart breaking. Sometimes you can see some families, their heart broken. R9 Key informant from NGO*

**Figure 4.3: Thematic network – Factors that mediate foster parents’ availability to provide care**



Source: Author’s construct from Field Data

#### **4. 8 Summary and Discussion of key findings**

This study has identified relevant issues that confound the availability of foster parents for the foster care component of the CRI. These issues emerged from an analysis of data collected from the field. The major issues identified include recruitment and retention challenges, funding challenges and issues of accountability with respect to proper information management mechanism. These findings emerged from data analysis of the first objective of the study which came from the perspective of the programme implementers.

The second objective which focused on the foster parents recruited under the programme and their experiences, identified motivation as a strong factor that mediate their decision and availability to provide parental care for the OVC. Equally relevant was the issue of support, especially its inadequacy from the formal sector of programme implementers.

The theoretical basis of this research which is the systems theory, postulates that the survival and functioning of every system is dependent on inputs from its environment and other systems. This interdependence require co-operation from all subsystems to achieve this goal, but must be guided by boundaries. In this respect the conceptual framework of this research requires input in various forms, including human and financial resources and ability of stakeholders. It further requires competencies from the agencies put in place to administer these programmes. Additionally, there must be accountability mechanisms put in place to ensure that the system works (UNICEF 2009; UN 2010; World Vision 2011). Thus the following discussions are made in line with the findings as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study;

- *Recruitment and retention challenge*

Recruitment and retention of foster parents was identified as a major challenge which confronted the availability of foster parents. This pertained to getting adequate number of persons on board due to the general public's preference for adoption as against foster care and difficulties in appreciating the concept of formal fostering. This finding confirmed that of Colton, William & Robert, (2008) who identified recruitment and retention of foster parents as a global challenge. Though respondents gave account of following the necessary steps of recruitment through awareness creation, screening of potential foster parents, training and licensure, it was found out that some of the foster parents recruited were unavailable to receive the children who needed care. The assertions of Cox et al., (2005) and Triseliotes et al., (2000) who emphasize the utilisation of a wide variety of recruitment strategies and proper assessment and screening of potential foster parents before recruitment seem to hold sway in this case. Their assertion which emphasized the use word of mouth through personal experiences of existing foster parents as well as proper evaluation of the reasons behind their decision to engage in fostering is worthy of emulation. Perhaps the example of countries such as Peru and Scotland who were particular about the quality of foster parents by adopting stringent screening methods through a well-composed assessment panel, involving a variety of professionals and expertise as well as the use of psychological assessment tools (Family for Every Child, 2015), needs to be studied by Ghana's foster care system in order to ensure the quality and adequacy of foster parents available in the system. The UN guidelines on alternative care which is a conceptual framework which provides guidelines to this research, actually requires of programme implementers to

competently assure the quality of caregiving through proper assessment and recruitment procedures.

- *Placement challenges*

The ability to competently handle placement issues by implementing agencies is an important element in the UN guidelines for alternative care. This is very vital in maintaining the continuous relationship between the implementation subsystem and foster parents subsystem and ultimately to ensure the survival of the foster care system. Thus delays in child placement and the inability to meet or manage these expectations had repercussions on the retention of the foster parents. Interestingly, some of these parents who could not withstand the delays eventually diverted into operating RFC (orphanages). Brian and Argys (2007) who also identified placement as an important facet in the retention of foster parents found out that the issue is not only about the unavailability of foster homes but rather a challenge of matching the needs of children with the characteristics and willingness of potential foster parents. The willingness dimension, from the perspective of Cox et al., (2005), indicates that the reasons why people choose to foster also have a bearing on their availability to receive children at any particular time. These assertions go to emphasize the need to do due and proper diligence to recruitment activities by implementation agencies through the proper assessment of potential parents.

- *Funding Challenges*

The ability to recruit and retain foster parents for the programme was equally associated with funding. It was identified that there was no local source of funding, either from the government or individual philanthropic sources. Thus, the only source of funding which was from donor

partners was also perceived as inadequate to do proper diligence to the recruitment and adequate support for foster parents as well as the general administration of the programme. The UN guidelines on alternative care (2011), the conceptual framework which underpins this study requires that capacities of the implementation agencies, including financial and technical capacities should be developed for effective child protection. The absence of funding has far reaching implication not only for the implementers' capacity to deliver effectively but also the foster parents' willingness and availability to offer their services. The assertions of similar researches about the implications of funding and financial support for foster parents are an important issue for consideration (Brian and Argys, 2007).

- *Accountability mechanism*

The systems theoretical framework which underpins this study requires the availability of accountability mechanism as well as cooperation and coordination among subsystems for the effective functioning of any system. The challenge with accountability mechanism as well proper co-ordination between the implementation subsystems, specifically with regards to information management and information sharing between service partners, has a lot of implication on the foster care systems' survival . The absence of a centralised database and challenges with reporting mechanisms and its associated challenge of data fragmentation was found to have confounded the systems' ability to track and monitor existing licensed foster parents to ensure their effective utilisation. This finding is not different from existing research which identified information management and fragmentation of data as well as the slow utilisation of computers as one of the major challenges that confronts Ghana's Child welfare system and the public

sector as a whole (UNICEF, 2011, UNDP, 2010). The negative impact of manual data systems, including data unavailability and the reluctance of data owners to share or avail data, as identified by Lessing & Scheepers (2001) seem to be the case in this study. The absence of this important element in the programme, invariably, affected the implementers' ability to coordinate and complement each other's efforts, as team members, through reports and information sharing. Funding unavailability has been identified as a major disincentive to sustaining an effective foster programme due to its implication on the recruitment and retention of foster parents (Cavazzi et. al., 2010; Chamberlain et. al., 1992; Moreland & Reid, 1992; Duncan & Argyrs, 2007). For example Chamberlain and others (1992) in identifying the role of financial support in the fostering experience concludes that the small increase in stipends to foster parents led to lower drop - out rates and a decrease in reported child problem behaviors. Similarly Duncan & Argyrs (2007) also identified the role of financial support in the retention of foster parents. The expression of dissatisfaction with level of financial and emotional support received from the Agency is an issue that has implication for the retention of foster parents . Thus co-operation and coordination component, illustrated by the systems theoretical and conceptual framework underpinning this research and which is required to feed the effective functioning of the foster care system appears to be under threat.

- *Motivation for foster parents*

The findings from the study indicate that motivation was a major deciding factor in the decision of foster parents to enroll into the foster care programme of the CRI policy. For this study, motivation was classified under four emerging themes of self - oriented and child oriented

motivations, love for community and religious persuasions of respondents as mediating factors. Child - oriented motivation stemmed from love and passion for children while self- oriented motivation has to do with the desire to adopt a child, the availability of extra time on hand as well as the need for the additional stipends that comes along with providing care for the child. This finding is consistent with other studies which equally identified motivation as a deciding factor in getting people to foster. For example, Geiger et al. (2013) and Rhodes et al.,( 2008) also found out that individuals engage in foster care based on their individual motivations which include factors such as altruism, the desire to have a child of one's own to raise and love; the sense of duty or obligation; and in a few cases the desire to improve their own condition through exploiting the child or the system. Similarly, Cox et al (2005) also identified religious motivation as a factor that influences decision to foster. From the perspectives of Rhodes, et al. ( 2008), Geiger, et al. ( 2013) and Cox et al,( 2005) the source of motivation also has an influence on placement availability . The implication of the above findings is far reaching for ensuring the availability of foster parents for the CRI. This is so, considering the argument of Rhodes et al., (2008), that a careful assessment of reasons for fostering by Agencies might help in identifying potential caregivers with high level of care giving. This argument is based on the premise that lack for consideration for the motivational factor might be a contributory factor to the unavailability of foster parents in the foster care system. Interestingly, the demographic analysis of respondents in this study shows that they were all religious persons, particularly from the Christian religion which orientation admonishes its followers to love and care for others. Moreover, contrary to the assertion of the implementers about being challenged with the demand and preference of foster parents, the foster parents in this study were ready to receive any child

placed with them with joy which is an indication of the influence of motivation in ones' readiness and willingness to self-avail as a foster parent.

The study also revealed that, although most of the foster parents made personal investment into caring for the children, additional support, including financial and emotional support was an important issue of consideration. Support in this case came from two main sources of formal and informal arenas. While the foster parents were satisfied with support received from the informal domain of family and friends with respect to financial, material and emotional support, this was not the case with the formal arena. Findings indicated that majority of the foster parents were not totally satisfied with the emotional and financial support available to them from the formal sector of programme Implementers. Even those who offered to foster on voluntary basis expected occasional incentives, the absence of which apparently wearied their resolve. The assertion made by the foster parents about the lack of support invariable can be linked with funding challenges. Support for foster parents and also the lack of it has been identified as having a lot of impact on the foster care system, including foster parent retention, placement and child outcome (Cox et al. 2005; Levasseur, 1999; Cavazzi et al. 2010; Chamberlain and others 1992; Duncan & Argyris 2007; Rhodes et. al., 2003; Bostock 2004; Wilson et al, 2004).

- **Observations**

It was equally observed that the implementers had difficulties in accessing the residential addresses and telephone numbers and other personal details of the trained foster parents for easy tracking. Thus the DSW and Bethany were unable to fully utilize all the trained foster parents and were therefore dependent on the few whom they could easily access and whom they considered as more available for placement.

It was further observed that there was no proper designation for the foster care component of the CRI. Thus the foster programme which should have been given an individual attention was fused into the CRI programme without any properly designated office or programme officers. In respect to the systems theory, the absence of a boundary for the foster care programme invariably has implication for its ability to give a good account of its activities including the ability to ensure the availability of foster parents.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study. It ends with conclusions, followed by some recommendations and suggestions which are considered, in line with the findings made, to be relevant for improvement on policy and practice in the foster care programme and ultimately the child protection sector.

#### 5.2 Summary

The study examined the foster care programme of the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) in Accra, with specific focus on actions taken to ensure the availability of foster parents for the programme. This was informed by an observed problem of limited number of foster parents as a placement option for the care of children in need of parental care for which reason staff of Social Welfare, a government sector child protection organization, still continued to place children in need of parental care in RFC as the first placement options, contrary to relevant global and national child protection policies. Findings made indicate a challenge in the recruitment and retention of family based foster parents. This was in spite of some identifiable contributions made by both programme implementers and foster parents, as two key actors in the foster care system, towards the programme.

**5.2.1 Objective one – Steps taken by the DSW and Partner NGO (Bethany Christian Services) to establish a pool of foster parents and the experiences associated with the process.**

***Recruitment of foster parents:*** Recruitment of foster parents was the major issue identified as affecting the availability of foster parents. The two main themes that emerged from the recruitment process were preference for adoption over foster care and a general misconception about the programme from the public. This finding was from the perspective of the implementers and not the public. Perhaps further research is required from the general public's perspective. In terms of getting adequate numbers on board the programme, however, this was identified to have confounded the recruitment process. This were issues that the implementers had a daunting task correcting, with implications for getting adequate number of willing disciples on board.

***Retention of foster parents:*** The ability to retain foster parents is very crucial to any foster care programme. In this regard, placement challenges were identified. Delays and difficulties in meeting the peculiar child preference of some foster parents were the two main issues which could not be effectively managed by the programme implementers, resulting in attrition of foster parents, some of whom were identified to have diverted their attention into operating RFC.

***Funding:*** Findings also identified the absence of local sources of funding, making the programme a donor dependent one. Funding for the programme which mainly came from donor partners such as UNICEF was limited to prescribed programme areas such as OVC committee meetings. The absence of local sources of funding invariably has implications for its sustainability, especially support for its foster parents

***Accountability mechanisms/Information management:*** Equally relevant was a challenge with data management, resulting in accountability issues. In this regard, data fragmentation, data retrieval and information sharing between programme implementers were identifiable outcomes, culminating from the absence of a centralised database which could have been useful for monitoring and tracking foster parents availability.

### **5.2.2 Objective 2 – Factors that mediate foster parents’ decision and continuous availability to provide care**

***Motivation for foster parents:*** For the foster parents who got on board the programme, motivation was identified as the main mediating factor that influenced their decision. This stemmed from child- oriented and self- oriented motivations, religious inclinations as well as love for the community - all of which has been found to have implications for their continuous availability to foster care.

***Support for foster parents:*** Availability of support from both the formal and informal source was equally identified as a relevant to respondents’ continuous engagement in the programme. Even though the foster parents, as their contribution towards the programme also committed their personal resources to child maintenance, it was found out that additional support in terms of emotional, financial and material support from formal sources of programme implementer and the informal sources of family and friends were of considerable help. Comparatively, however, support they received from the formal source was found to be inadequate. This includes placement counselling and irregular supervision and visit from implementers.

**Biological parents/family factor:** A final but not the least challenge identified was the biological parent factor which served as a disincentive to fostering. Of particular mention were the unceremonious demand for the child and other disruptions from the biological family, with little appreciation or disregard for their roles as significant others in the lives of the children.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The findings above were made in line with the main objective of this research, which sought to examine specific actions taken to ensure the availability of foster parents under the CRI in Accra and the process. This is to ensure the adherence to the policy of ensuring that orphan and vulnerable children grow up in the family based setting instead of RFC who's negative effect has been documented (children (Marshall, Reeb, Nelson, & Zeanah, 2008; Tottenham, et al., 2010, Adongo, 2011) In this vein, foster parents are considered an important human resource and actors in the foster care system for the success of the programme. Consequently it is required that every effort is made to ensure their availability which has been found to be the current challenge. The following recommendations are, therefore, being expounded for consideration. This is being done in line with findings made

### **5.4 Recommendations:**

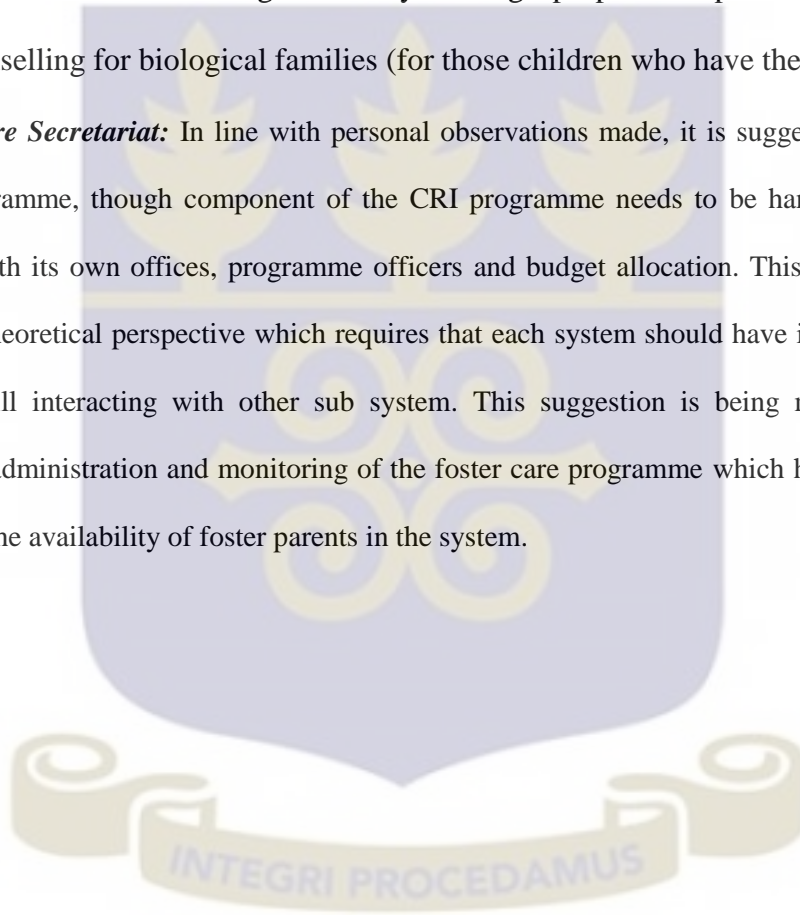
In line with the government's attempts to provide social protection for the vulnerable, including OVC, foster parents are considered relevant as private sector partners to complement this effort. Findings obtained from the study as enumerated above points out relevant factors which contributed to the unavailability of foster parents. In view of the fact that these findings have a bearing on the sustenance of the programme, the following recommendations are being advanced for consideration by both policy makers and programme implementers;

1. **Recruitment of foster parents:** Public education on the formal foster care programme with adequate explanation about its role in the child protection system needs to be reconsidered. Meanwhile the recruitment process should be expanded to involve other strategies, including the involvement of successful foster parents. This is to address the misconception from the public and the preference of adoption. Perhaps further research from the public's perception about the programme could be undertaken.
2. **Retention of foster parents:** Efforts are needed to retain the foster parents after resources considering the fact that resources are expended for their recruitment. This should include an effective management of their expectation through adequate engagement to educate them on possible challenges with placement, including delays..
3. **Funding:** Adequate allocation of resources to the foster care programme requires consideration. This may include efforts to incorporate the programme into the main governments budgeting system to compliment support received from donor partners to ensure its sustainability. In this vein it should be a partnership. Otherwise the programme should be linked to other social intervention programmes like leap which are already in the government of Ghana budget allocation.
4. **Information Management Mechanisms:** There should be an improvement in the information management system of the foster care programme. This should include a centralised database for the purpose of monitoring to ensure proper accountability which is an important component of the systems theoretical perspective for its sustenance. This would prevent the challenge of data fragmentation and its attendant negative impact on monitoring and tracking of foster parents already in the system.

5. ***Assessment and screening mechanisms:*** There is a need to undertake a proper assessment of the foster parents in order to understand their motivation for the programme since this has an implication also for their availability to have placement for the children at any given time. Perhaps the example of Scotland and Peru which undertakes in-depth assessment of foster parents through the involvement of various professionals with expertise which has a bearing on the programme needs to be considered. The current assessment mechanism in Ghana's foster care system which consists of only a probation officer, the manager of a residential home and a social welfare officer is a recipe for assessment errors. Moreover a proper psychological assessment of the potential foster parents and their continuous evaluation as is the care of OVC needs to be looked at (Family for Every Child, 2015).
6. ***Support for foster parents:*** Policy makers and implementers need to incorporate incentives into the programme as a way of motivation for persons who opt to voluntarily provide care for the children. This may include scholarship and other reward packages such as awards schemes and a special day instituted in their honour for service to humanity. This does not discount the role of financial support, such as regular stipends which have been identified as crucial to foster parents' retention and the availability to have a placement for the children at any given time. This again brings to the fore, the earlier suggestion in objective one above, to link them to other social intervention programmes such the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme (LEAP), and flexible loan schemes such as the Micro Finance and Small Loan Center (MASLOG) to assist with capital for those engage in business and skill improvement programmes to empower them. Equally, emotional support for the foster parents is important for

consideration. In this regard, available human and financial support such as adequate allocation of counselors and professional social workers and financial allocation for monitoring and supervision needs to be considered.

7. **Biological parents factor:** Since the role of the family in the life of the Ghanaian child cannot be discounted, there is the need for professional management of the relations between the foster and biological family through proper care plans including pre and post counselling for biological families (for those children who have them)
8. **Foster care Secretariat:** In line with personal observations made, it is suggested that the foster care programme, though component of the CRI programme needs to be handled as a separate system with its own offices, programme officers and budget allocation. This is in line with the systems theoretical perspective which requires that each system should have its own boundaries, though still interacting with other sub system. This suggestion is being made to ensure an effective administration and monitoring of the foster care programme which has implications for ensuring the availability of foster parents in the system.



## REFERENCES

- Adongo, S. T. (2011). Realising the rights of children in Ghana: Towards homes without walls. *The Way Forward project Working Group*. Addis Ababa.
- Agbenyiga, D. (2012). Defining Childhood : A Historical Development Perspective. In R. K. Ame, D. L. Agbenyiga, & N. A. Apt, *Children's rights in Ghana: Reality or Rhetorics?* (pp. 12 - 29). London: Mot Juste.
- Ame, R. K., Agbenyiga, D. L., & Apt, A. N. (2012). *Children's Right in Ghana: Reality or Rhetorics?* Accra: SAGA.
- Apt, N. A. (2005). *A study of child domestic work and fosterage in Northern and Upper East regions of Ghana*. Accra: UNICEF.
- Apt, N. A., & Akuffo-Amoabeng, B. (2007). *Department of social welfare institutional assessment*. Accra: Accra: Ministry of Manpower, Youth and Employment.
- Aries, P. (1962). *Centuries of Childhood: A Social history of family life* . New York: Vintage Books.
- Aryeetey, E. B.-D., Afranie, S., Andoh, P., Doh, D., & Bosiako, T. A. (2012). *Where should they stay? Exploring the options of caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Ghana*. Accra: University of Ghana:Centre for Social Policy Studies Technical Paper No 1/12.
- Aryeetey, E. B.-D., Afranie, S., Andoh, P., Doh, D., & Bosiakoh, T. A. (2012). *Where should they stay? Exploring the options of caring for orphans and vulnerable children in Ghana*. Accra: University of Ghana.
- Attride-Stirling, J. (2001). Thematic networks: An analytic tool for qualitative research Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Research*, 285-405.
- Barbell, K., & Freundlich, M. (2001). *Foster Care Today*. Casey FAMily Programs.
- Bass, L. E. (2004). *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa*. New York: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
- Bostock, L. (2004). *Resource guide 6: Promoting resilience in fostered children and young people*. London, UK: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).
- Buam, A. C., Crase, S. J., & Crase, K. L. (2001). Influences on the decision to become or not become a foster parent. *Families in Society - the Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 82 (2), 202 - 213.

- Buehler, C., Rhodes, K. W., Orme, J. G., & Cuddeback, G. (2006). The potential for successful family foster care; Conceptualizing competency domains for foster parents. *Child Welfare* 85(3), 523 - 558.
- Buehler, C., Rhodes, K. W., Orme, J. G., & Cuddeback, G. (n.d.). The potential for successful family foster care: Conceptualizing competency domains for foster parents. *Child Welfare*, 85(30).
- Cavazzi, T., Guilfoyle, A., & Sims, M. (2009 - 2010). A Phenomenological Study of Foster Caregivers: Experiences of formal and Informal Support. *Illinois Child Welfare. Volume 5. Number 1* , 125 - 141.
- Chamberlain, P., Moreland, S., & Reid, K. (1992). Enhanced services and stipends for foster parents: Effects on retention rates and outcomes for Children. *Child Welfare*, 71(5), 387 - 401.
- Chen, G. K. (1975). Systems Approach. *Interfaces*, Vol.6, No 1 , 32 - 37.
- Colton, M., Roberts, S., & Williams, M. (2008). Recruitment and Retention of Family Foster Carers: An International and Cross-Cultural Analysis. *British Journal of Social Work*, 38, 865 - 884.
- Dickey, B. (1980). *A Short History of Social Welfare in Australia*. Melbourne: Nelson.
- Duncan, B., & Argyrs, L. (2007). Economic Incentives and Foster Care Placement. *Southern Economic Journal*, 114 - 142.
- England. (2011). *Children and Young Persons. The fostering Services* . England.
- Forbes, B., Luu, D., Oswald , E., & Tutnjevic, T. (2011). *Systems Approach to Child Protection: A world Vision Discussion Paper*. USA: World Vision International.
- Forbes, B., Luu, D., Oswald , E., & Tutnjevic, T. (2011). *Systems Approach to Child Protection. A world Vision Discussion Paper*. World Vision International.
- Forbes, B., Luu, D., Oswald, E., & Tutnjevic, T. (2011). *System Approach to Child Protection*. World Vision International.
- Frimpong Manso, K. (2013). From walls to homes: Child care reform and deinstitutionalisation in Ghana. *. International Journal of Social welfare*, 23: 402 - 409.
- Geiger, M. J., Piel, H. M., & Lietz, A. C. (2013). A Mixed Methods Study Examining the Factors Influencing Foster Parents' Decision to Continue or Discontinue Providing Foster Care. *. Children and Youth Services Review* 35 (2013), 1356 -1365.
- Heylighen, F. (1998, October 14). *Principia Cybernetica, Brussels*. (F. Heylighen, Ed.) Retrieved June 7, 2016, from Principia Cybernetica Web: <http://cleamc11.vub.ac.be/sysarppr.html>
- Hudson, P., & Levasseur, K. (2012). Supporting foster parents: Caring voices. *Child Welfare* 86 (6), 853 - 877.

- Isiugo - Abanihe, U. C. (1985). Child Fosterage in West Africa. *Population Development Review*, 11(1), 53 - 73.
- Kilbride, P., & Kilbride, J. (1994). To have and to share: Culturally constituted fostering in family settings. In J. B. (Ed.), *When there's no place like home: Options for children living apart from their families* (pp. 321 - 329). Baltimore: MD: Apul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Linares, L. O., Montalto, D., Li, M. M., & Oza, V. S. (2006). A Promising Parenting Intervention in Foster Care. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74 (1), 32 - 41.
- Manful , S. E., & Badu-Nyarko, S. K. (2011). Where are the HIV Orphans? Exploring Characteristics of Vulnerable Children in Public Residential Care in Ghana. *Journal of Global Social Work Practice* 4(1), 1 - 8.
- Marshall, P., Reeb, B. F., Nelson, C. A., & Zeanah, C. H. (2008). Effects Of Early Intervention On Eeg Power And Coherence In Previously Institutionalized Children In Romania. *Development And Pathology*, 20, 861-880.
- Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. (2010 -2012). *National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. Accra: UNICEF.
- Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. (2010). *National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Ghana*. Accra: UNICEF.
- Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare. (2010). *National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Ghana*. Accra: UNICEF.
- Mkandawire, T. (2010). How the New Poverty Agenda Neglected Social And Employment Policies in Africa. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities: A Multi-Disciplinary Journal for People-Centered Development*, 11:1, 37 - 55.
- Nations, U. (1989). *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: United Nations.
- Nukunya, G. K. (2003). *Tradition and change in Ghana*. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.
- Pacific, C., Delaney, R., White, L., Cummings, K., & Nelson, C. (2005 ). Foster parents college: Interactive multimedia training for foster parents. *Social Work Research* 29(4), 243 - 251.
- Picton, C., & Boss, P. (1981). *Child Welfare in Australia: An Introduction*. Harcourt: Brace Jovanovich.
- Republic of Ghana. (1998). *Children's Act of Ghana*. Accra.
- Rhodes, K. W., Orme, J. G., Cox, M. E., & Buehler, C. (2003). Foster Family Resources, Psychosocial Functioning, and Retention. *Social Work Research*, 27(3), 135 - 150.
- Rhodes, K., Cox, M. E., Orme, J. G., & Coakley, T. (2006). Foster Parents' Reasons for Fostering and Foster Family Utilization. *The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Volume 33: Issue 4, Article 9.

Tottenham, N., Hare, T., Quinn, B., McCarry, T., Nurse, M., Gilhooly, T., et al. (2010). Prolonged institutional rearing is associated with atypically larger amygdala volume and difficulties in emotional regulation. *Developmental Science*, 13 (1), 46 - 61.

Tower, C. C. (1996). *Understanding Child Abuse and Neglect*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Triseliotis, J., Borland, M., & Hill, M. (2000). *Delivering Foster Care, British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering*. London: BAAF.

United Nations. (2010). *Guidelines for Delivering for the Alternative Care of Children*. New York: United Nations.

Wilson, K., Taylor, C., Pithouse, A., & Sellick, C. (2004). *Knowledge review # 5: Fostering Success: an exploration of the research literature in foster care*. London, UK: Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

World Vision International, (2011). *System Approach to Child Protection*.



## **Appendix – Data collection Instruments**

### **Interview Guide for Implementers**

#### **Consent for Interview**

My name is Stella Mawutor a student of Centre for Social Policy (CSPS) , University of Ghana, Legon. This interview is being conducted for a research for in partial fulfillment for the award of a degree in Social Policy Studies. I wish to obtain your permission to conduct this interview with you. Information obtained from you is meant purely for academic purposes and would not be shared with anyone outside this research. Also your name would not be used to make sure that you are not identified with any particular response. You are permitted to withdraw your participation at any point in the interview.

Thank you.

#### **Demographic Information**

Can briefly tell me about yourself?

1. Organization
2. Your educational level
3. Your Job schedule
4. How long you have been working with the CRI or the foster care programme?
5. What is the motivation of your organization to engage in the foster care programme?

### **Awareness creation and recruitment**

6. How did you get people to enroll into becoming foster parents?
7. How have you ensured that the persons you engage for fostering are the right people to do the job?
8. Tell me about some of the challenges you encountered in the process of recruitment?
9. How has public support for the programme been so far?

Probe : Cultural acceptability etc.

### **Placement of children**

10. What criteria do you use in placing children with foster parents?
12. Tell me about some of the challenges you have encountered in identify and ensuring the suitability of foster parents and foster children?

### **Capacity building**

12. What kind of training do you give to foster parents to enable them provide care?

Probes : curriculum etc.

13. How do you fund the programme?

Probe: Initial allocation of funds, continuous budgetary allocation

### **Information management**

14. Do you have a database for the programme? If no how far have you gone with the development of a database?
15. What systems have put in place for keeping information on the children and parents?(if no question 13)
15. Have you had an occasion when you were challenged with information on the children?

Probe : Information retrieval, adequacy, availability

16. Do you foresee any future challenge to the sustenance of the programme?

Debriefing: Do you have any question, comment or clarification or suggestions you want to make besides what we have discussed.

Thank you.

### **Interview- guide for foster parents**

#### **Consent for Interview**

My name is Stella Mawutor a student of Centre for Social Policy (CSPS), University of Ghana, Legon. This interview is being conducted for a research for in partial fulfillment for the award of a degree in Social Policy Studies. I wish to obtain your permission to conduct this interview with you. Information obtained from you is meant purely for academic purposes and would not be shared with anyone outside this research. Also your name would not be used to make sure that you are not identified with any particular response. . You are permitted to withdraw your participation at any point in the interview.

Thank you.

#### **Demographic Information (foster parents)**

Briefly describe yourself:

1. Age
2. Educational background
3. Marital Status
4. Ethnicity
6. No. of children in Household
7. No. of Children being fostered
8. No. of years you have been engaged as a foster parent

9. No. of children fostered

**Demographic information (Child/children being fostered)**

11. Age (years):

12. Gender:

13. Level of education:

14. Years of current placement:

15. Family characteristics:

**Motivation to foster**

16. Can you tell me about how you became involved in this current practice of fosterage?

**Probes:** significant events in your life that informed the decision; decision making process;

**Capacity building**

17. Before you were enrolled what did you know about being a foster parent?

18. Did you receive any training for the current fostering? If you did, what new knowledge have you acquired?

19. Tell me about any additional knowledge you expect to have to enable you provide adequate care for the children placed with you?

**Experiences with placement**

20. Do you decide which child you prefer to foster? Probe: sex, age, colour, behaviour

21. Were you afforded the opportunity to withdraw and replace with another child of your preference if you happen to have a challenge with this one?

**Support for fostering**

22. What kinds of support do you receive to enable you care for the child?

Probe: Provisions for child maintenance, health, education etc.

23. How has outside support been in terms of the provisions for the child?

Probe: extended family, friend, agency

### **Relationship with biological parents**

24. What has been your relationship with the child's biological parents since placement?

#### **Closing questions:**

25. What would determine your continuous involvement with this programme?

Probe: terminate relationship, follow-up on progress, consider the possibility of adoption

26. What advice do you have for other persons who will want to engage in formal foster parenting?

**Debriefing:** Do you have any question or clarification concerning all that we have talked about?

**Thank you.**

