Social Welfare Department define conditions for placing children in Orphanages

Accra, March 14, GNA- Conditions imputable to poverty should never be the only justification for the removal of a child from parental care into orphanages, says an official of the Department of Social Welfare, Child Right Promotion and Protection.

Mrs Helena Obeng Asamoah, Deputy Director stressed that poverty should not be an excuse to separate children from their families to live in orphanages, but should be seen as a signal for the need to provide appropriate support to the family.

She said 80 per cent of children living in orphanages had families and could have been supported to live in their own communities.

Mrs Obeng Asamoah made the observation, at a press conference to throw light on adoption, and the need for children to be inculcated into the family system, in Accra on Thursday.

She said institutional care does not adequately provide the level of positive individual attention from consistent caregivers, compromises the emotional, physical, mental and social development of the child, and are at risk of sexual abuse, lack of stimulation and harsh discipline.

She said: “This is not to say that we do not need orphanages or children’s home, they serve very good purposes but children should not be there most of their lifetime.”

Mrs Obeng Asamoah said: “Child development is holistic. The child develops physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually as defined within the child’s culture.”

She said long periods in an institution make it harder for a child to assimilate back into a family and community, and deny access to the life-long attachment and community support systems that family relationship and communities can provide.

She urged stakeholders who take decisions on children requiring alternative care to avoid unnecessary delay in taking decisions about children so that they do not wait too long in institutions.

Mrs Victoria Natsu, Deputy Director, Department of Social Welfare, Justice Administration said adoption is the legal process which permanently transfers all the legal rights and responsibilities of being a parent from the child’s birth parents to the adoptive parents.

She said it is a lawful process by which a person becomes a lawful member of a family different from their birth family.

She said Ghana accepted the absolute obligation to protect children without parental care, by ratifying the UN Convention on the rights of the child.

Mrs Natsu said Ghana had been identified to be one of the African countries that are experiencing a soar
in inter-country adoption.

She noted that as part of reforms in child care, there are discussions on the possibility of Ghana preparing to be part of the Hague Convention since many inter-country adoptions are taking place.

Ms Natsu noted that the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection is concerned about the state of affairs with regards to inter-country adoption and had initiated moves to address the anomalies and inconsistencies in the practice.

She said the Ministry aims at ensuring that Ghana goes through an effective transition on reforms in adoption and put in place a system that would weed out practices that might not auger well for children who are subjects of adoption.

The Ministry had directed that with immediate effect, all agencies that claim to be involved in inter-country adoption in Ghana, but have not been given any authority should close down, or if found to be engaging in the practice it would find itself in the grips of the security agencies.

“The Ministry is committed to ensuring that children are protected and that any arrangement about children in need for care and protection would be carried out only in accordance with the guiding principles of the best interest of children being paramount,” Mrs Natsu said.

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