

Making the Investment Case for Maternal Mental Health in Ghana

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Mental health in Ghana



Population of 34 million+
40% <15 years old



Earliest recorded kingdoms
in 11th centuries
(Dagbon and Bonoman)

Independence in 1957
(Kwame Nkrumah)



100+ ethnicities
Linguistic and religious
diversity



Mental health in Ghana

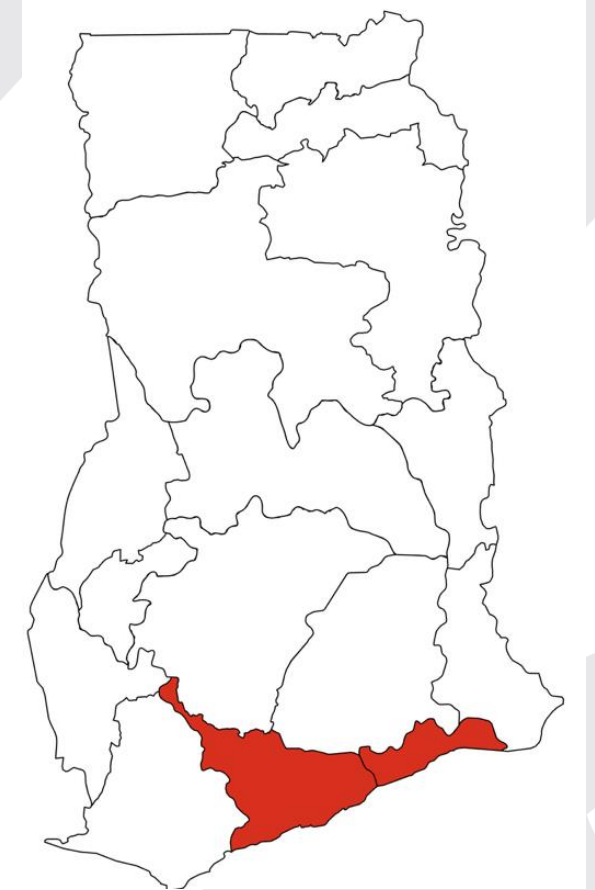
2012 Mental Health Act (Act 846) –
decentralizing mental health care and creation of
Mental Health Authority



3 psychiatric hospitals and
psychiatry/psychology units
in major hospitals

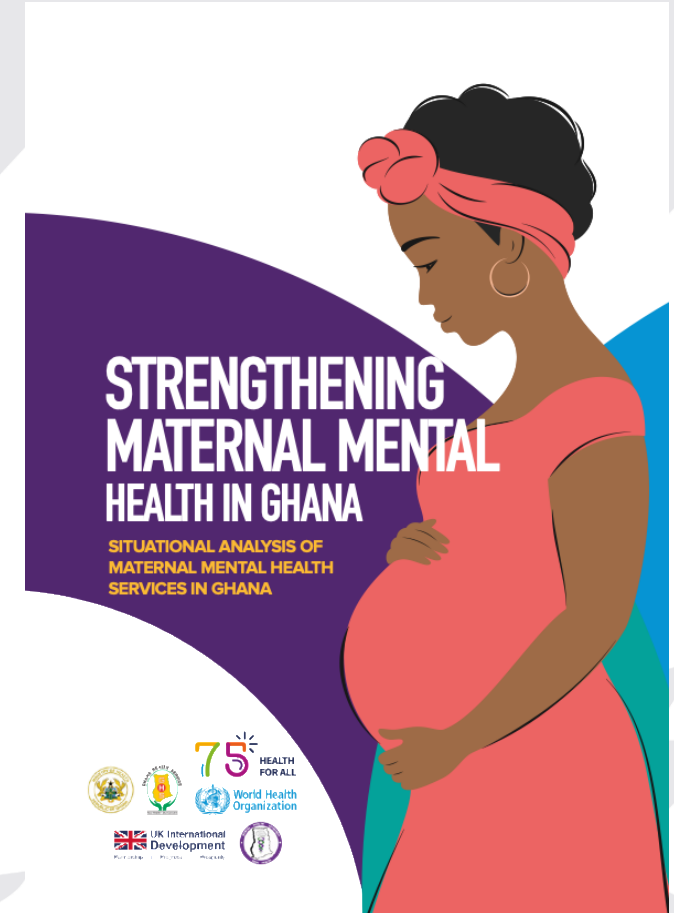
10.32 mental health
professionals per 100,000
population

High rates of depression (25.2–57%),
anxiety (53.3–84%), and stress (9.7–
49%) among adults and youth



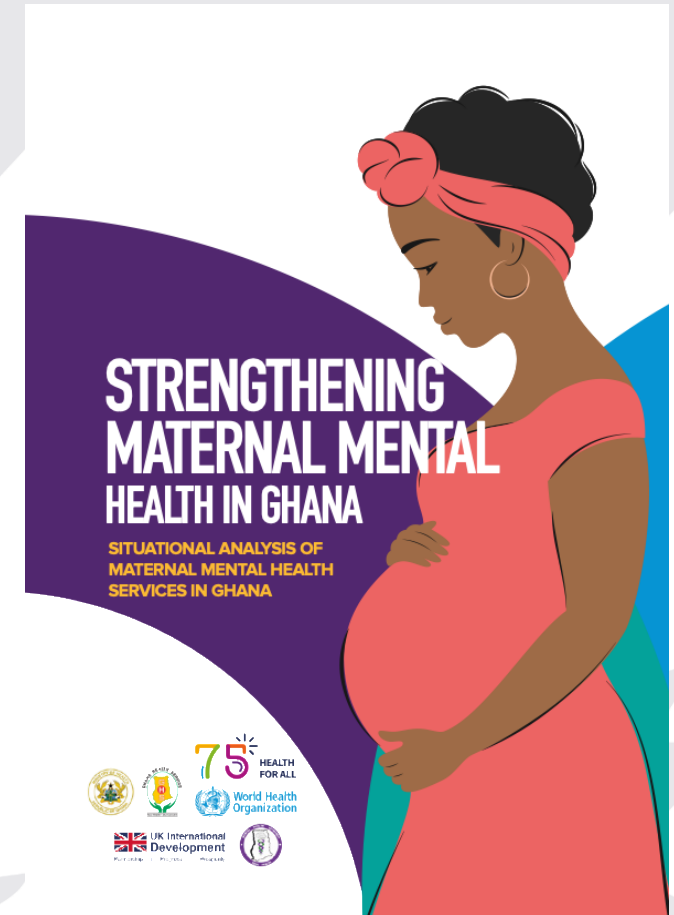
Maternal mental health in Ghana

- High burden of perinatal depression
 - 9-50%, varying by population, region, measure
- Limited data on perinatal anxiety and other mental health conditions
 - 13-15% suicidal ideation
 - 18.5% psychosis



Maternal mental health in Ghana

- Multilevel barriers to treatment
 - Insufficient training: 75% of primary healthcare nurses and midwives have inadequate knowledge of perinatal mental health problems
 - Low density of mental health professionals and unclear referral pathways
 - Stigma, low mental health literacy, and spiritual attributions reduce help-seeking



Economic cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana

What is the lifetime economic burden of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana?



Economic cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana

What is the lifetime economic burden of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana?

- [GEMMH Cost Calculator Tool](#)
- 877,748 mother-child pairs (2023)
 - Mother: depression, anxiety, mortality, productivity loss...
 - Child: mortality, adverse birth outcomes, illness, healthcare costs...
- Nationally representative data (DHS, MICS), international databases (WHO, World Bank), and peer-reviewed literature (Ghana, South Africa)

Economic cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana

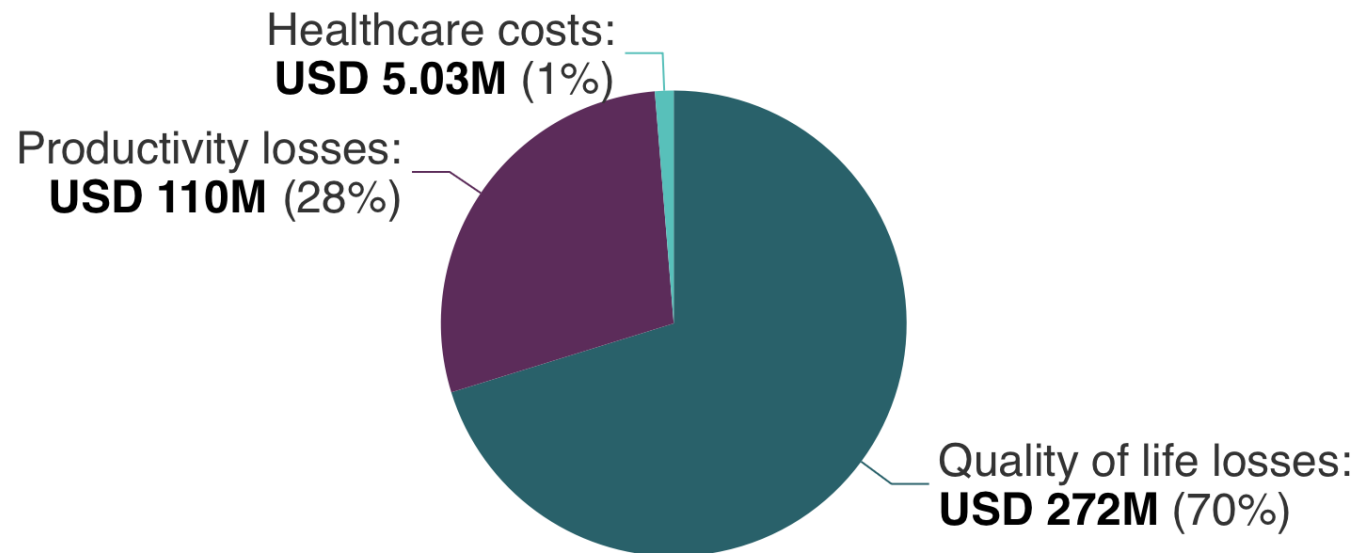
Total Cost

USD 388 Million

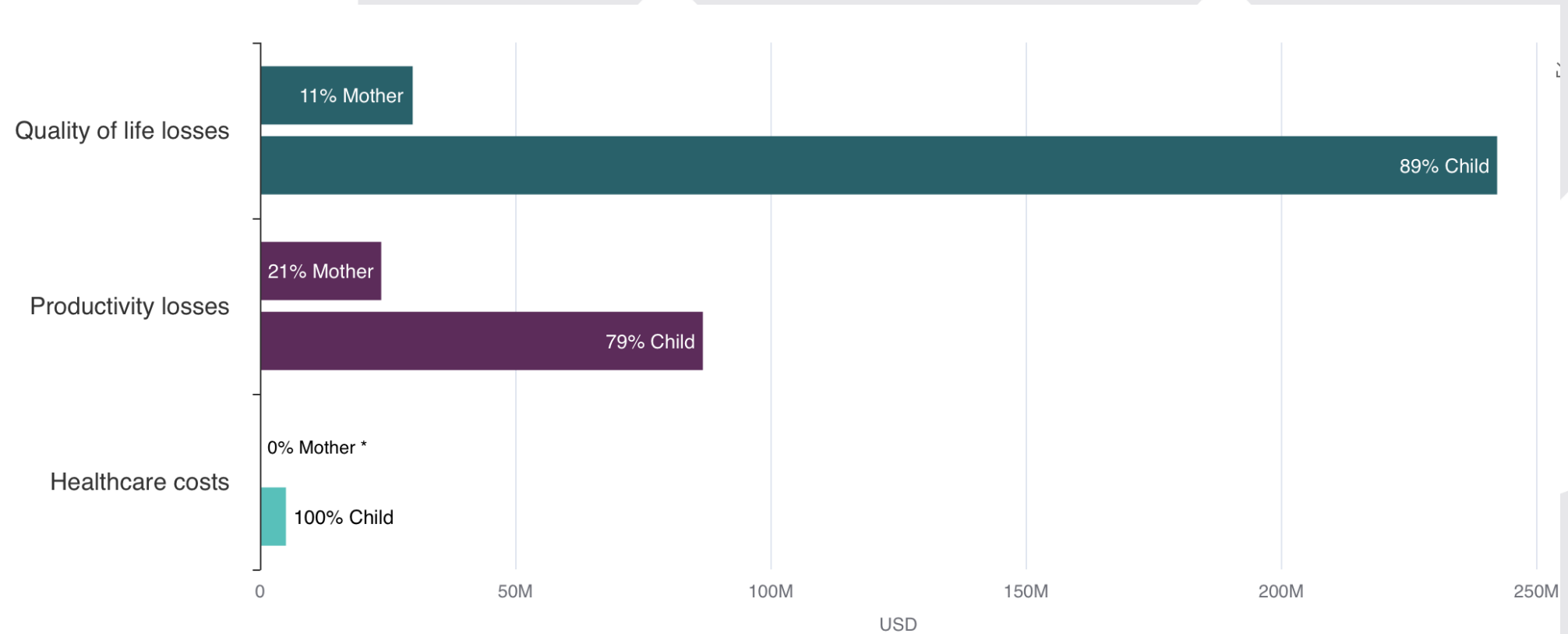
Of these costs:

14% relate to the mother

86% relate to the child



Economic cost of perinatal depression and anxiety in Ghana



Implications for maternal mental healthcare in Ghana

1. Multisectoral integration and equitable access
 - Social protection, education, gender-based-violence response systems
2. Cross-sector capacity building, advocacy, and community support
 - Equipping health and non-health actors with competences for screening, basic psychosocial support, and referral
3. Intersectoral governance, data systems, accountability, and sustainability
 - Integrated surveillance systems and sustainable financing



Implications for maternal mental healthcare in Ghana

- Policy also emphasizes building national capacity for maternal mental health research
 - Evaluating impact and implementation of interventions to promote maternal mental health



Jacobs CIFAR
Research Fellowship



Prevalence and correlates of mental health difficulties in young Ghanaian children

Marilyn N Ahun ^{1,2,3,4}, Josie Brooks,^{2,5} David Djani Kotey,⁴
Ramanakumar V Agnihotram ², Richard Appiah ^{4,6,7}



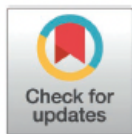
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Community-identified priorities for parenting and parental mental health in coastal Ghana: Formative insights to shape a multi-component intervention

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Richard Appiah^{2,3,4}, Marilyn Naana Ahun^{1,2,5*}

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Thank you!

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