

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY HON. NANA OYE LITHUR, MINISTER FOR GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION DURING A WORKING VISIT BY THE UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN TO THE GENDER BASED RESPONSE CENTER AT MALLAM ATTA MARKET**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this event. My special welcome to you Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin and to thank you for deciding to pay a working visit to this Gender Based Response Centre at Mallam Atta market here in Accra. These centres here at Mallam Atta and Agblogbloshie markets, Dr. BABATUNDE OSOTIMEHIN, are a response by the Government of Ghana to the menacing challenge of Gender Based Violence. Ghana is moving the fight against Gender Based Violence from the advocacy level to providing services that will practically intervene to curb the practice. It is for this reason that we have set up these response centres at Mallam Atta and Agboblgoshie with the assistance of the UNFPA. And we thank the UNFPA for their invaluable assistance.

Just yesterday Ghana launched the campaign against child marriage which is another form of Gender Based Violence. The programme was launched by H.E Dr. Lordina Mahama, First Lady of Ghana. H.E. John Dramani Mahama, President of Ghana was himself present at the launch giving testament to the fact that the Government of the NDC is waging a relentless war against Gender Based Violence. We intend to win this war, in spite of the available statistics that show that GBV is still present in many Ghanaian homes, schools, markets, workplaces, etc.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ghana like many other countries in sub Saharan Africa has high rates of Gender-based violence. Rape and defilement, female genital mutilation or cutting, child or forced marriage, trafficking of girls and women, sexual harassment at the workplace, wife beating and many others are the commonest forms of Gender Based Violence in our part of the world. Perpetrators range from intimate partners and family members to strangers and some institutional actors.

The figures show, that the problem is still pervasive. Statistics from the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) of the Ghana Police Service indicate that in 2014, out of the 17,778 cases of various forms of violence received nationwide, 4,415 were assault on women, and 335 were rape cases and defilement of girls' accounted for 1,296. A study

on violence against women conducted by the Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre (Gender Centre) indicates that one in three Ghanaian women suffer from physical violence at the hands of a past or current partner. In addition, 3 in 10 Ghanaian women admit to having been forced to have sex by their male partner and 27 percent of women have experienced psychological abuse, including threats, insults, and destruction of property.

Ladies and gentlemen, one of the areas with high population of people, especially women is the market centres. Also a lot of young boys and girls from rural communities travel to the cities in search of menial jobs such as head potorage or 'kayayei' and hand truck pushing.

Many of these vulnerable persons use the market centres as their places of abode. Some of these vulnerable women, boys and girls suffer physical, sexual and emotional abuses. It is in response to this that the Ministry of Gender Children and Social Protection in collaboration with UNFPA is embarking on the establishment of community response centres for GBV survivors in three selected markets in Accra and Kumasi. Agblogbloshie and Mallam Atta have been established. Oforikrom will soon be established.

The main aim of the Response Centre is to increase survivor safety and perpetrator accountability. The centres will coordinate and link core services, and provide immediate to long term health care, access to police, legal and counselling services. The response centres would also do the following:

- Manage Gender-Based Violence Cases as primary mechanism to identify GBV survivors at the market level
- Provide counselling and follow-ups by service providers, especially the Police.
- Counsellors will continuously keep track of process of services that would include trauma prevention, HIV, Pre- and Post-test counselling and Prophylaxis (PEP) adherence counselling.
- Establishment of community/market paralegals.
- Provision of care and support and refer where necessary to response Centre.
- To provide mechanism that would facilitate information in an integrated and coordinated manner

This initiative is consistent with the Domestic Violence Act, (Act732). Indeed, Ghana has put in place the necessary legal and policy framework

to effectively address Gender Based Violence. Last year we launched the National Gender Policy proving beyond doubt the commitment of the Government of the NDC led by H.E President John Dramani Mahama to push the gender agenda forward for true gender equality and human rights in our society. We have submitted the Affirmative Action Bill to Cabinet for approval. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection has co-sponsored the Intestate Succession and Property Rights of Spouses Bills with the Ministry of Justice and Attorney-General. The Domestic Violence Legislative Instrument has been finalized with legal advice from the Attorney General's Department. A consultative meeting has also been held with the Parliamentary Subsidiary Legislation Committee for consideration before it is laid in Parliament for passage.

Apart from these, the Ministry has been having extensive engagements with local communities and organized men's groups on ending sexual and gender based violence in Ghana. Training workshops for news editors, reporters and talk show hosts have been organized since last year.

To improve justice for victims of sexual and gender based violence, a National Stakeholders Dialogue on Improving Prosecution and Adjudication of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) cases was organized with

high ranking members of the judiciary, police service and officials from the Attorney General's official last year.

We have organized gender dialogues on Ghana's Women Machinery, the Affirmative Action Bill and Sexual and Gender Based Violence for a total of about 3000 participants.

The MoGSCP collaborated with a team of doctors and facilitated fistula repairs for 82 women from the Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Central Regions and organized regional advocacy and sensitization durbars on fistula and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) targeting 600 people in the Volta, Northern and Upper West Regions.

In December last year, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection organized a Christmas party for the head porters, popularly called Kayayei and registered about 1000 of them here at Mallam Atta Market and Tema Station free of charge onto the National Health Insurance Scheme to help them get easy access to healthcare.

The following are clear from all the interventions we as a Government have put in place for women empowerment since 2013. We shall no longer tolerate unfair treatment for the vulnerable in Ghana. We shall no longer

allow Gender Based violence to be meted out to the vulnerable in Ghana. Women empowerment remains key to our development process as a country. The Government of H.E John Dramani Mahama will therefore jealously guard and promote the rights and welfare of all vulnerable persons in Ghana, especially women and children.

Thank you very much.