

**STATEMENT BY HON. NANA OYE LITHUR, MINISTER FOR
GENDER CHILDREN AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, AT THE
MINISTRY'S CHRISTMAS DONATION TO THE ELDERLY IN
TAMALE
12th JANUARY, 2016**

NORTHERN REGIONAL MINISTER

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

OFFICIALS OF THE REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL

DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE NHIA

DISTRICT CHIEF EXECUTIVES

CHIEFS AND QUEEN MOTHERS

OUR MOTHERS AND FATHERS

THE MEDIA

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

Yesterday, we began the extension of free registration of elderly persons onto the NHIS to the three regions of the north of our country in Bolgatanga, where we started registering approximately 1300 elderly persons at a new year party for elderly persons. We are here this morning to do the same thing and we shall extend it to Wa before we go back to Accra.

Bringing this project to northern Ghana is very important to the Government because we know that due to the migration of young people to other cities, many of our older persons are left in circumstances that require assistance.

Our coming here today is a continuation of the Government's numerous interventions for the welfare of the elderly who spent their youthful years to build this nation. Today we shall make presentations to our mothers and fathers and register them free of charge onto NHIS so that they can access free healthcare. This is a demonstration of our continuous resolve as a Government to ensure that the elderly in our society are well taken care of. The mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection includes making the concerns of the aged a part of the development agenda through the use of social protection interventions to achieve national development.

It is in fulfilment of this mandate that we have so far registered **10, 000** elderly persons in the Greater Accra, Volta, Eastern, Ashanti, Regions free for NHIS. We have extended the free NHIS registration to inmates of prisons. We have registered **6000** inmates of the Nsawam, Koforidua, Kumasi, Ankafu, Sekondi, Ho and Navrongo Prisons. We shall do this in all prisons in Ghana. Later today, we shall continue the exercise at the Tamale Prison.

We are very much concerned about the health of our senior citizens. That is why in celebrating UN Day for the Elderly in 2015, we organised a health walk and screening exercise for about 250 elderly persons in Accra.

Last year, we signed an MOU with some institutions from Denmark to provide geriatric care services in Ghana. This agreement shall address the healthcare needs of the elderly in Ghana. I am happy to inform you that a technical team will soon present an implementation plan of the MOU for consideration. The agreement will result in financial and technical support for Geriatric Education by mainstreaming geriatrics into the main nursing and medical curriculum in Ghana. It will also support a Trainer-of-Trainees Program to develop a geriatrics curriculum in Ghana's nursing colleges beginning with the government nursing colleges.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have begun a nationwide rollout of the EBAN Elderly Welfare cards. So far, 9,526 elderly persons in the Central, Western, Volta, Eastern and Greater Accra Regions have been issued with the Eban Elderly Cards. This card will enable elderly persons to get priority access in banking halls, hospitals and get 50 percent rebate on Metro Mass Transit buses. I am glad to announce, that during the third quarter of the year we shall extend the EBAN elderly welfare card project to the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions.

Ladies and gentlemen, the NDC government is not paying lip service to its claim to social democratic principles. It is demonstrating that claim in verifiable terms. Today, a greater percentage of beneficiaries of the

Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme is made up of the elderly, 65 years and above. For the Northern Region 10,947 households representing 37 percent of total beneficiaries in the region are elderly persons 65 years and above. We care about the elderly because they have been found to form a critical group of vulnerable people in Ghana.

Therefore, the Government is putting in place the necessary structures to ensure that elderly persons in Ghana are properly taken care of. We have inaugurated the Ageing Council whose duty it is, to regulate the implementation of the National Ageing Policy launched under late President Prof. John Evans Atta Mills. We have also established an Ageing Desk at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection to address issues on the elderly in the Ministry.

By these interventions, the Government of President Mahama is not just putting a one-off smile on the faces of our beloved mothers and fathers for their contributions to society. We are also making sure, that ageing should no longer be a dreaded experience. We believe that as we consolidate and strengthen our social protection systems to provide a safety net that ensures inclusiveness, many more excluded and vulnerable people would enjoy a better life.

This year holds a lot of promise for older persons in Ghana. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection will organise a National Ageing Policy and Pensions Conference to bring all stakeholders in ageing together this year. The conference will afford participants the opportunity to share ideas on best practices for caring for older persons.

The MoGCSP submitted drafting instructions for the Attorney General's Department for the development of the Ageing Bill. The Attorney General has finalised the Bill and it shall be presented to Cabinet this first quarter. The Ministry will work to ensure that the Bill is passed by Parliament. When passed, the act will see to the establishment of an aged fund which will be used to address ageing challenges and create a social safety net for older persons

We will continue to register older persons onto the NHIS to enable them to enjoy free medical attention any time they need it. We shall also continue to rollout the EBAN welfare card project to cover not less than 25000 elderly persons nationwide.

Through these well thought out interventions, the Government of H.E John Dramani Mahama, would be setting the pace in eliminating the challenges of exclusion, marginalization, degrading treatment, and lack of income

security as well as lack of access to health, housing and many other challenges faced by our senior citizens.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to extend our thanks to the NHIA for the generous collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection. I also thank our donors for assisting us with the items we are donating today. I thank the National Lottery Authority, NEWMONT, Zoomlion, ADB, Ghana Airport Company, Uniliver and Japan Motors for their generous donations. This is proof that care for the elderly is a collective responsibility and not just the Government. I trust that other individuals and organisations would emulate this worthy example.

I wish you all a very healthy and prosperous 2016.

God Bless us all.