

Affirmative Action Act requires m

— Minister designate for Gender

By Diana Mensah,
PARLIAMENT HOUSE

THE Minister designate for Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoCSP), Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, has stressed the need to allocate resources to ensure the full implementation of the Affirmative Action Act.

She, therefore, pledged to establish a Gender Equity Committee and sub-committees, when approved, to ensure that initiatives implemented were aligned with the Act.

“We must ensure resources are made available, intensify advocacy, and increase sensitisation about the Affirmative Action Act as that will form the backbone of our strategy,” she added.

Appearing before the Appointments Committee of Parliament yesterday, the Minister designate underscored her commitment to advance the President’s goal of ensuring equity.

“I will play a key and instrumental role in realising this vision and when I am

approved I will ensure sufficient social protection for vulnerable groups,” she said.

That, she said, would include expanding and strengthening protections for children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations in society.

Addressing the issue of community development, Dr Lartey said she would support initiatives that would uplift the people of Nungua and similar communities, particularly in areas of education and social welfare.

LGBTQ+

Answering a question from the Minority Leader, Alexander Afenyo-Markin, on her thoughts on advocating the country to legislate on LGBTQ+ issues and the President’s earlier response

on the issue, Dr Lartey expressed the belief that teaching children their family values was crucial and would offer a more sustainable approach.

“No Ghanaian will disagree with instilling a sense of identity in our children so they can understand right from wrong and define themselves within our cultural

framework”.

“The President’s earlier statement did not rule out legislation but emphasised sustainability through early value education. If children are taught these values from a young age, it will help,” she said.

National School Feeding Programme

Dr Lartey emphasised that the government would maintain and improve on the National School Feeding Programme.

She said improving the nutritional quality of school meals was a priority and her administration would ensure that the programme was not only continued but was also of high quality.

Consequently, she called for the decentralising of the school feeding programme to ensure a timely supply of food items.

That, Dr Lartey said, would allow the ministry to monitor the quality of meals more closely at the district level, adding that, “Part of my experience lies in local governance, which involves

decentralisation”.

Appearing before the Appointments Committee of Parliament yesterday, Dr Lartey said she would collaborate with all stakeholders involved to develop an effective implementation strategy, where the beneficiaries of the programme received the best service, and also support the service providers to meet the required standards.

Addressing the issue of the National School Feeding Programme from a question posed by the Minority side, Dr Lartey said the NDC manifesto intended to address the current bottlenecks surrounding school feeding and the capitation grant.

“If everyone involved is truthful, transparent and accountable, I believe we can significantly reduce the bottlenecks affecting the quality of food provided to the children,” she added.

Dr Lartey said when approved, she would work with suppliers and the local authorities to ensure quality, timely delivery, balance and adherence to nutritional standards.

Responding to a question from the Member of Parliament (MP) for Okaikwei Central, Patrick Yaw Boamah, on strategies to ensure that caterers and service providers did not go on strike, the minister

more resources for full implementation

designate assured the committee of her commitment to dialogue with stakeholders to find sustainable solutions.

Framework

Dr Lartey said she would work with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education to ensure all necessary payments and arrears were made to avoid further disruptions.

"From my checks with the ministry, I understand that payments for about 40 days have already been made, with 31 days still in arrears," she added.

She further outlined plans to ensure timely disbursements and enhance the quality of meals served to schoolchildren.

Vulnerable

Answering a question from the Minority side on lessons learnt in her role as an ECOWAS in-country expert for the Children and Street Project from November 2020 to December 2021, Dr Lartey said families needed support to secure proper income-generating activities to reduce their vulnerability.

In addition, she stressed the need to preserve the extended family system, which had traditionally been a safety net in the African culture.

She expressed the belief that that would ensure that even in cases of separation, children could rely on aunts, uncles or other family members to stay off the streets.

"One key lesson I learnt is the thin line between stability and vulnerability. Vulnerability often arises from separation, divorce or a lack of child maintenance. Many children on the streets are from broken homes or single-parent households," she added.

On how her party's manifesto intended to address vulnerable children and the implementation of policies devoid of partisanship, Dr Lartey said her approach would be based on a needs assessment.

"Regardless of political affiliation, support will be directed towards those who genuinely fall within the vulnerability bracket. Transparency and accountability will guide this process," she said.

She said the party manifesto proposed an "Orphan and Vulnerable Child Support Scheme" as a protective mechanism for children, including those affected by trafficking.

The plan, she added, would include developing a framework to ensure their safety, provide support for reintegration and prevent exploitation.

Women's Bank

Addressing the rationale behind the Women's Development Bank, Dr Lartey said the bank aimed to empower women economically and address financial inequities.

The implementation of the bank, she said, would involve inter-ministerial collaboration, particularly with the Ministry of Finance.

The bank, she said, would be properly licensed by the Bank of Ghana and would operate with more flexible terms such as lower interest rates, and be introduced at the district level to support women in building their businesses and achieving economic independence.

"While the bank focuses on women, it indirectly benefits households and communities as women reinvest in their families and local economies," she explained.

"The bank will address the gap in the traditional banking system, which tends to favour men". Most women, especially those in the informal sector, lack the collateral required for conventional loans, and struggle with high interest rates," she added.



• Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, Minister designate for Gender, Children, and Social Protection, answering questions before the Appointments Committee of Parliament