

Bawumia Fact-Checked: Claim about the Collapse of Free Maternal Health Care - Mostly False

Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia in addressing a rally in Bolgatanga on Sunday, August 28, 2016, claimed that the Free Maternal Health Care programme had collapsed. After fact-checking, his claim was found to be mostly false. However, other claims made about the collapse of the teacher and nursing training allowances were found to be completely true and mostly true, respectively. The details are presented below:



Claim 1: “The Free Maternal Care has collapsed.”

Verdict: Mostly False

In 2008, the Free Maternal Care (FMC) programme was introduced to provide free access to medical care services like antenatal, delivery and postnatal care at health facilities. The FMC programme which is implemented under the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was also to facilitate the meeting of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 which revolved around reducing child and maternal mortality ratios. Contrary to Bawumia’s claim that the program has collapsed, key indicators show that the intervention is still active albeit fraught with some challenges.

Figures from the [2013 Annual Report on the NHIS](#) show that new registrants under the FMC has significantly increased from 383,216 in 2009 to a member size of 2,901,952 in 2013. According to this same report, in 2012 approximately 9 out of 10 pregnant women in Ghana attended at least one antenatal visit during the term of their pregnancies, 72.3% made 4 or more antenatal visits in the same year. Two years later, the [2014 Ghana Demographic Health Survey \(GDHS\)](#) results also showed that 97.3% of pregnant women received at least one antenatal care service from a skilled provider. From the 2014 GDHS, almost nine in ten women (87.3%) made

four or more antenatal care visits to health facilities. Also, according to GDHS results in 2003, 2008 and 2014, the percentage of pregnant women who delivered in a health facility rose from 46% in 2003, to 57% in 2008 and 73.1% in 2014. Furthermore, from an Institutional Maternal Mortality Ratio (IMMR) of 230 per 100,000 live births in 2007, the [2014 Ghana Health Service Annual Report](#) show an improvement to 143.8 per 100,000 live births in 2014. Stillbirth rate was also reported to have stagnated at 1.8 in 2014.

All these considerable progress in the access to maternal healthcare has been attributed to the continuous implementation of the FMC program under the NHIS.

Regardless of the continuous operation of FMC, the programme like its implementing agency has been challenged. In an [assessment report on the health sector in 2014](#), only 34% of all women with expected pregnancy were registered and given premium exemption under the FMC policy as against 72% in the year 2012. Interestingly, the report could not explain the reduction and called for further analysis. Again, in a [2014 Unicef evaluative report](#) on the FMC programme in Ghana, some challenges were highlighted. These challenges included the shortage of human resources, inadequate levels of privacy during deliveries, poor supervision, inadequate programmes for the continuous training of staff, increased cost of insurance claims resulting in time lag between service provision and claims payment, cost of medical supplies and the inability of the programme to cover transport to health facilities. The latter challenges were also cited by a study conducted by the Navrongo Health Research Centre (NHRC) on the FMC policy in the Upper East Region.

Regardless of the challenges faced by the FMC programme that have been outlined above, the programme or policy is still very much in operation and continues to contribute to improving maternal health care in the country.



Claim 2: “The teacher training allowance has collapsed.”

Verdict: Completely True

In 2013, government announced that it was discontinuing the then policy of providing teacher trainees with monthly allowances. According to the ministry of education, the allowance scheme was hampering the full operation of Colleges of Education (CoEs). This was because the allowance scheme had compelled the Colleges of Education to implement a quota system that ensured they only admitted the number of students that government will be able to support under its budget. According to the government and a study by the National Education Research Front (NERF), this led to CoEs operating at about 40% of their capacity. The scrapping of the allowances, according to government, will enable it channel resources into expanding admissions to CoEs. This claim by government was vindicated by the more than 60% rise in admission from 9,000 in 2013 to 15,400 in 2014 as reported in the 2015 Budget Statement. This policy decision was also to ensure equity among other teacher trainees in institutions like the University of Education and the University of Cape Coast who did not benefit from the allowance scheme. All teacher trainees were rather to have access to student loans under the Student Loan Trust Fund. Though this policy direction was supported in various degrees by several civil societies such as the National Education Research Front (NERF), VIAM Africa, IMANI Ghana, GHAYODEC, among others, it has generally been unpopular among teacher trainees and other groups. The NPP believes that with effective revenue management, the party was going to reinstate the allowance scheme when voted into power.

In conclusion, it is true that under the current government, the allowance scheme that teacher trainees enjoyed is no longer in existence.



Claim 3: “The nursing training allowance has collapsed.”

Verdict: Mostly True

Similar to the government's position on the teacher training institutions, allowances paid to nursing trainees had also been discontinued. Again, reasons proffered included the need to redirect funds into expanding admissions and infrastructure. Here as well, the NPP has made a campaign promise to restore the allowance if voted into power.

However, unlike the teacher trainees, the government appears to have relented on this position. In a [Ministry of Health press release](#), the government is to pay an abated allowance of GHS 150 to trainee nurses in the country.

This according to Tony Goodman, the P.R.O. of the Ministry is a “stop-gap measure till all nursing training institutions can access student loans from the Student Loan Trust Fund.”

However, checks made at the Ho and Mampong nursing training institutions indicated that trainee nurses have not yet received any allowance monies.

In conclusion, though the nursing training allowance as it used to be in operation was discontinued, the government has recently introduced a stop-gap measure of the payment of an abated allowance to all nursing trainees.