

SUPPORTING STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON SAYING 'NO' TO SUICIDE ON OUR UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES BY HONOURABLE DR SEBASTIAN N. SANDAARE, MP FOR DAFFIAMA/BUSSIE/ISSA - 16 MARCH, 2017

Mr Speaker, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to contribute and congratulate the Hon Member who made the Statement. Mr Speaker, we are all at risk of suicide. In every 40 seconds, somebody in the world commits suicide. The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that annually, about one million people die through suicide.

In Ghana, data from the Mental Health Unit says that about 1,500 Ghanaians lose their lives by committing suicide. In about two weeks, as a country, we have lost about 10 lives through suicide. Mr Speaker, this is worrying and it makes suicide an issue of public health concern. The issue of suicide is not only a public health issue, but also an economic issue. This country loses about seven per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) due to problems of mental health.

The factors that contribute to one committing suicide are not just one. Psychological, economic, social, cultural and legal problems come together to make one vulnerable to committing suicide. It is however known that, about 90 to 95 per cent of the causes of suicide are due to mental health problems, especially, depression.

Mr Speaker, I see that we are all at risk because there is a thin line between normal and abnormal mental state and any of us within a second could be moved from a normal to an abnormal mental state. We face this daily because we all cross the line at a point in time, from normal to abnormal and come back to normal. We are only seen as abnormal when we cross the line and we stay there for too long. Therefore, we should see the issue of death through suicide as an issue that needs holistic attention.

Mr Speaker, I share in the fact that we need to have more counselling centres, but it is also true to say that, the first place for counselling is the family. The family is the first place that we could give proper counselling to our children and parents should take it up, observe and talk to them and let them know that life is good no matter the pressure. It is good to live and enjoy life than to end their lives.

We should talk about suicide in our churches, mosques and wherever we gather. In our schools, it is not just about counselling centres, but we should ensure that all the students are observed and that challenges that we face with mental health in this country would be given the needed attention. Mr Speaker, stigma is one of them. If any of us here, who is looking normal visits a mental health unit, the moment they leave that centre, people think that they are mad.

Mr Speaker, if you think that I am joking, just visit the Accra Psychiatric Hospital and before you leave there, people would ask if there is something wrong. That is the problem that we have in this country, that even when a normal person has a small problem, and they need a specialist attention at any mental health unit, people think that he or she is mad. That should not be so. Let us give attention to our mental health care, and ensure that we facilitate the passage of the

Legislative Instrument (L.I.) of the Mental Health Act. Lastly, the issue of suicide is not only about law, whether we criminalise or decriminalise it, somebody who intends

to commit suicide, would do it because he or she is willing to die than to live. Let us, as a country, see it as a holistic problem and develop a comprehensive prevention strategy to address the issue of suicide in this country. Mr Speaker, in conclusion, let us say no to suicide and together we could prevent millions of people dying from suicide.

Mr Speaker, thank you and I congratulate the Hon Member who made the Statement.