The Federal Government has commenced the payment of N5,000 monthly to one million vulnerable Nigerians.

In a statement released, Monday, by Laolu Akande, Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity to Vice president Yemi Osinbajo, the government stated that the payment was effected through the Conditional Cash Transfer, CCT, of the government's Social Investment Programmes, SIP.

According to the statement, one million Nigerians would receive N5,000 monthly payments under the CCT as a form of social safety net for the poorest and most vulnerable as budgeted for in the 2016 Budget.

Mr. Akande added that many of the beneficiaries have already reported receiving their first payments in the first batch that commenced last week.

"In the first batch that commenced last week, nine states would be covered, and many of the beneficiaries have already reported receiving their first payments by Friday last week, December 30, 2016.

"Funds for the commencement of the payments in four states were released last week to the Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS) – the platform that hosts and validates payments for all government's social intervention programmes. Funds for another set of five states to complete the first batch of nine states would follow soon."

The statement listed Borno, Kwara, Bauchi, Cross Rivers, Niger, Kogi, Oyo, Ogun and Ekiti states as states in the first batch to commence the CCT statement. It however said that the states were selected because they had a social register that identified the vulnerable and poorest Nigerians.

"Though the sequence for the payment of the money would be operationally managed by NIBSS, beneficiaries in Borno, Kwara and Bauchi States have started receiving the money. The other states in the first batch to commence the CCT payments are Cross Rivers, Niger, Kogi, Oyo, Ogun & Ekiti States," Mr. Akande said.
“The nine pilot states were chosen because they have an existing Social Register that successfully identified the most vulnerable and poorest Nigerians through a tried and tested community based targeting (CBT) method working with the World Bank. However other states have already begun developing their Social Registers and would be included in subsequent phases of the CCT implementation.”

According to the statement, the federal government, with the support of the World Bank, has adopted the CBT for developing the social register in the other states around the country for transparency, objectivity and credibility in the selection of the poorest and vulnerable Nigerians. Hence, the federal government will soon commence community mobilisation for the creation of the register in more states, to expand the scope and reach of the CCT across the country.

Other states listed to have complied with the stipulated framework provided and are set for the community based targeting method for development of social register include Plateau, Jigawa, Adamawa, Anambra, Benue, Enugu, Katsina and Taraba States.

These states, Mr. Akande said, are to be followed by Delta, Gombe, Kaduna, Kano, Imo and Ogun States. The government also assured that once the information garnered are entered into the social register, cash transfers would be disbursed to beneficiaries.

“Once the community mobilisation, identification and selection processes are completed, the information garnered from the poorest households would be entered onto the Social Register in the states and the National Register at NIBSS, after which the cash transfers would be disbursed to the beneficiaries.”

The statement also disclosed that funds approved for the SIP are domiciled with the Ministry of Budget and National Planning.

Meanwhile, the federal government said that with the commencement of the CCT, the Buhari administration is now implementing four of the federal government’s SIP.

Mr. Akande said the N-Power Volunteer Corps designed to hire half a million unemployed graduates has now engaged 200,000, and the National Homegrown School Feeding Programme now runs in three states.

He said the Buhari administration has also kicked-off the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme, GEEP.

“Under GEEP, soft loans ranging from N10,000 to 100,000 have been designed for artisans, traders, market women among others. Already, thousands of cooperatives, market women associations, farmers and enterprising youths, have been identified and registered for the purpose, on an ongoing basis, and the disbursement of the soft loans through the Bank of Industry have started since Nov 25, 2016.

“At the last count, for the first phase, beneficiaries have been drawn from the Federal Capital Territory, FCT, Abia, Adamawa, Bauchi, Delta, Imo, Kwara, Kano, Katsina, Lagos, Osun, Oyo, Ogun and Kogi States.”

The statement however said that regarding the GEEP, disbursements were halted and deferred until after the festive season but vetting and approval of beneficiaries are now being continued Commenting on the 200,000 beneficiaries of the N-power programme, Mr. Akande said about 100,000 graduates have been physically verified, adding that they have started receiving their N30,000 stipends.

“Regarding the 200,000 beneficiaries of the N-Power programme, close to 50 per cent of the graduates, have now been physically verified, and started receiving their monthly stipends of N30,000 last week. A second batch of 300,000 unemployed graduates are expected to be selected early this year to make up the half a million target set by the Buhari administration.

“The verified graduates are now being deployed to work as assistant teachers in schools, as community health aides and as agricultural extension workers, in more than 20 States of the Federation. These sates include; Abia, Adamawa, Bauchi, Anambra, Benue, Cross Rivers, Borno, Gombe, Edo, Jigawa, Katsina, Plateau, Kogi, Osun, Rivers, Zamfara, Niger, Sokoto, Ogun and Taraba.”

In the same vein, the government said it has also started the implementation of the National Homegrown School Feeding programme designed to feed 5.5 million school children for 200 school days in the first phase of the programme. According to the statement, the initial design was to feed pupils in 18 States but funding challenges had affected an earlier take-off. It however said that the programme has now commenced in Osun, Kaduna and Anambra States, adding that more states are expected to join this new year.
The federal government reiterated its commitment to touching the lives of millions of vulnerable Nigerians, especially in the new year, in fulfilment of its Change agenda.

"In the new year, it is the plan of the Federal Government to scale up the implementation of the SIP to touch the lives of millions of Nigerians in fulfilment of its promises and in furtherance of its Change agenda," Mr. Akande said.