Peruvian, 116, stakes claim to oldest-woman crown

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A 116-year-old Peruvian living in extreme poverty in the heart of the Andes is in the running to become the oldest person in the world.

Born December 20, 1897, Filomena Taipe Mendoza is only three months younger than Japanese Misao Okawa, who is the world's oldest person according to Guinness World Records and the US-based Gerontology Research Group.

Peru's Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion says Taipe Mendoza's identity card shows the date she was born.

"I am not of the past century, young man, but the other one... I am very old," she told an official accompanying her to cash the first check of a retirement program for seniors living in extreme poverty.

"My secret to longevity is a natural diet: I always ate potatoes, goat meat, sheep milk, goat cheese and beans," said the wizened Taipe Mendoza, who has never left her dirt-poor village in Huancavelica.

"Everything I cook comes from my garden. I never had canned soft drinks.

"I had a very hard life, I was very a young widow with nine dependent children and I worked hard to raise them. Only three of them are alive," the ministry quoted her as saying.

"I wish I still had teeth," she added of her one wish.

The pension means Taipe Mendoza will now get free medical care and receive every month about 250 Soles ($90).

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