

‘BE TRUTHFUL WITH CENSUS OFFICIALS

The Government Statistician, Dr. Grace Bediako, has said census officers are under oath to keep all personal information strictly confidential and renewed her call on Ghanaians to be truthful and forthright with their answers during the forthcoming census.

Dr. Bediako made the call at the launch of the 2010 World Population Day in Accra last Tuesday. The global theme for this year’s event is: “Everyone Counts”, and Ghana has chosen the theme: “Quality data: A tool for effective planning and development”.

This year’s event focuses on data and the 2010 round of censuses being conducted throughout the world.

Highlighting the role of census in national statistics and governance system, she said the exercise was one of the main sources of data within the national statistical system, adding that every national statistical system must, from time to time, update its database with a national census to ensure accuracy and relevance of the data system.

She indicated that the census would provide an up-to-date socio-economic data for planning at both national and sub-national level, basic indicators for tracking the government’s development policies and goals on areas such as health, education and housing and also basic indicators to track the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

She stated that the census would provide the Electoral Commission with the data for any revision of electoral areas and constituencies and provide the country the opportunity of updating the national sampling frame.

She said the census was complemented by administrative data and sample surveys such as the Ghana Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) among others.

According to Dr. Bediako, the statistical system of Ghana, which had been in existence since 1948 with the establishment of the position of the Government Statistician to provide governance structures and process with basic data, had weakened over the years and, as a result, not all expectations and needs of users, both governmental and non-governmental, were adequately met.

She said for that reason, in 2009/2010, the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), with key partners, ministers, departments and agencies, the United Nations and several development partners

launched the Ghana Statistics Development Plan (GSDP) to strengthen the statistical system, provide direction for and systemize the production of statistics and enhance the availability and accessibility of data to all segments of society.

“The census is about who, where and what about us as individuals, households, communities and a nation,” she said, adding that it would also let us know how we were evolving and what progress we had made as a nation.

Although she was unable to indicate the day to be declared as ‘census night’, she said that would be announced soon and indicated that everybody was expected to remain where she or he resided on census night, while those who could not be referenced to a home would be enumerated where they would be met on census night.

She urged the media to sensitize, educate and mobilize Ghanaians to support, co-operate with and participate in the census at all levels and also support the national, regional and district authorities, the private sector, development partners and donors for the census.

In a statement read on behalf of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Thoraya Ahmed, Obaid, the UN Resident Co-ordinator in Ghana, Ms. Ruby Sandhu-Rojon said censuses, surveys and vital statistics provided critical data which were crucial “as we strive for universal access to education, HIV prevention, treatment, care and support and reproductive health and the achievement of the MDGs.

The acting Executive Director of the National Population Council, Madam Marian Kpakpah, said the implications of changing population age structure for the country’s development required adequate planning and pointed out that presented challenges for Ghana’s socio-economic development that would require a relook at policies, strategies and programmes as they related to education, health, employment, social security and food security.

The Minister of Information, Mr. John Tia, who chaired the function, said all stakeholders, especially the media who served as channels through which information on various programmes and development initiatives was communicated to policy makers and the general public, had major roles to play in the exercise.

The Vice-President of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Mr. Affail Monney, said the exercise should be spared the political lenses and supported with the needed assistance by all to make it successful.

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