

## **Middle Income Status Is Just Statistical Hypothesis**

The Ghana Statistical Service's recent announcement that the country has crossed into a middle income status has come under yet another authoritative question mark.

Yesterday, Ms. Ruby Sardon-Rojon, UN Resident Coordinator for the United Nations Development Programme, told The Enquirer matter-of-factly that the announcement was just a statistical statement, implying that Ghana still has a long way to go in the march towards becoming the peers of the likes of South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia and South Africa.

Currently, Ghana is a pursuer of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which is the United Nations' Programme that is packaged for and aimed at encouraging development by improving social and economic conditions in the world's poorest countries.

By its status as an MDG pursuing country, Ghana is effectively classified as being among the poorest countries of the world.

Ms. Sardon-Rojon is just one of many noteworthy administrative officials who have dangled question marks on the Statistical Service's recent claim that Ghana has become a middle income country.

Hon Alban Sumana Bagbin, Minister for Water Resources, Works and Housing, is on record to have uncharitably questioned the claim, questioning its commonsensical basis when the country is struggling to even eradicate Guinea Worm.

IMANI Ghana, a policy think tank, is also on record to have questioned the reliability of the data collection process for compilation of figures which claimed correction of the country's GDP from 5.9% to 6.6% and placed the economy's value at US\$44 billion.

According to Ms. Sardon-Rojon, this may be true as far as statistical hypothesis goes but not in real terms, including assessment from the point of view of the Ghana's march towards achieving the MDGs.

The MDGs stipulated time frame for achievement is just four years away as much touted 2015 is the set year target, but after 11 years of pursuing the Goal, Ghana still has an estimated 1.2 million food insecure people.

According to projections, the number is very likely to increase to 2 million during the lean season (March-September) or following shocks such as floods and drought.

This population lives on food devoid of the required nutrients. The national rate of underweight children under 5 is 14% but reaches 27% in the three northern regions.

The national chronic malnutrition rate causing stunting is 28% while for the Northern and Upper regions, it is 32% and 36% respectively. This is considered as serious by all standards.

Based on body mass index (BMI) nine percent of women of productive age (15-49 years) in Ghana are considered malnourished. Low pre-pregnancy BMI contributes significantly to maternal mortality rate of 350 deaths per 100,000 live births.

“Ghana’s situation on MDG 4, which is Reducing Under Five Mortality By Two-Thirds, experienced some improvements to 80 mortalities per 1000 live births in 2008, down from 111 deaths per 1000 live births in 2006, however it is still above the world average of 65, developing countries’ average of 72 and the MDG target for Ghana which is below 60 per 1000 live births,” Miss Rojon said at a European Union-MDG stakeholders meeting in Accra yesterday.

Vice President John Dramani Mahama said at the same workshop that Ghana’s sanitation problem is a constant embarrassment to the country.

In relation to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, Ghana’s sanitation stands at just 12.4% as against the global average of 61%, Developing Countries’ average of 51% and the sub Saharan average of 31%.

It is obvious that in declaring Ghana as a Middle Income Country, the Statistical Service did not take into consideration comprehensive all embracing data as the bare facts from Ghana’s struggle to achieve her MDGs after 11 years leaves much room for improvement.

However, even the data that the Statistical Service presented in support of the declaration came under question as Franklin Cudjoe of IMANI Ghana openly doubted its collection process on Joy FM saying, “I don’t think just waking up and announcing this (is acceptable) especially in this kind of economy where data quality is a serious issue.

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