

Prez. Mahama Fact-Checked @ NDC 2016 Manifesto Highlight: Mostly False on Primary School Enrolment

President Mahama made a number of claims while highlighting his party's manifesto for the 2016 elections. Some of these claims were fact-checked. The president was found to have been mostly false on primary school enrolment rate, mostly true on downward trend of inflation rates and the number of schools constructed under the removal of schools under trees programme. His claims about beneficiaries under the school feeding programme and the increase in student enrolment between the 2008/09 and 2014/15 academic years were found to be entirely true. The full details of these claims and the basis for the fact-checking verdicts are presented below.

Claim 1: We have achieved almost 97% enrolment rate at the primary school level. The question you'll ask yourself is that where's the 3%?

Verdict: Mostly False

Explanation: This claim was not corroborated by the latest data put out by the ministry of education's [Education Management Information System](#) (EMIS) covering the 2014/15 academic year. The net enrolment estimate for the 2014/15 was 91.0% and not 97% as claimed by the president.

Claim 2: The number of pupils benefitting from the School Feeding Program (SFP) increased from 430,000 in 2008 to 1.7million in 2014.

Verdict: Entirely True

Explanation: The concept of the SFP is to provide children in selected public primary schools and kindergartens in some of the poorest areas of the country with one hot, nutritious meal per day. These meals are prepared using locally grown foodstuffs. The long term objective is to improve pupil enrolment, reduce poverty and promote food security in Ghana.

According to 2014 4th Quarter estimates of the [National Secretariat of the SFP](#), the Programme fed 1,728,682 children in beneficiary schools nationwide.

However, it must be stated that the SFP faces several challenges to its long term sustainability as observed by [reviews](#) carried out on the programme. Challenges concerning institutional coordination and collaboration, financing (delays in payments and low feeding fees per child), monitoring and evaluation, conditions of service for SFP staff, must be effectively addressed to ensure the sustainability and growth of the programme.

Claim 3: A total of 1,614 out of 2,578 basic school projects were completed under the removal of schools under trees program.

Verdict: Mostly True

Explanation: The President's claim was supported by the 2016 Budget Statement and the Education Minister's Meet the Press of June, 2015 report. These official documents indicate that government continued to eliminate schools under trees by completing and handing over "a total of 1,714 school projects out of the 2,578."

In February, 2016, the Ministry of Communication released a list of a first set of 600 schools the government claimed to have finished constructing. These school projects have not been independently verified as at now.

Claim 4: School enrolment increased from just above 7 million in 2008/2009 academic year to almost 9 million in 2014/15 academic year, representing an increase of more than 26%.

Verdict: Entirely true

Explanation: According to the 2014 Education Management Information System (EMIS) data and the Education minister's Meet the Press (June, 2015), the total student enrolment for the Pre-Tertiary education level is 8,578,047 while that of the Tertiary level is 313,845. The total enrolment figure for the 2014/15 academic year therefore stood at 8,891,892.

Claim 5: Ghana the first country in West Africa to achieve the MDG of cutting extreme poverty by half by 2015.

Verdict: Entirely True

Explanation: Ghana's national poverty rate is an estimate of the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line, and whose income levels fall below the level necessary to meet basic needs. In reducing the number of people below both poverty lines; Poor (GHS 1,314 per adult per year) and extremely poor (GHS 792 per adult per year), Ghana has made some impressive gains. Recent reports from the [World Bank](#) and [UNICEF](#) indicate that Ghana's national level of poverty fell by more than half from 56.5% to 24.2%, between 1992 and 2013. Also, extreme poverty between 2006 and 2013 has been halved from 16.5% to 8.4%.

Furthermore, according to the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) status report on the MDGs, Ghana was the first country in Sub-Saharan Africa to meet the MDG 1 target of halving extreme poverty by 2015. These evidences therefore validates the President's claim.

Claim 6: Inflation is on a downwards trend

Verdict: Mostly True

Explanation: Though the rate of inflation has reduced from 19% in January, 2016 to the 16.9% recorded in August, the decline has not been consistent. According to the [Ghana Statistical Service](#), in January of 2016, the rate of inflation was at 19%, it declined to 18.5% in February, but rose again to 19.2% in March. Inflation again marginally reduced to 18.7% in April, but increased to 18.9% in May. The rate of inflation then declined to 18.4% in June, and again in July to 16.7%. Last month (August) the inflation rate has marginally gone up again by 0.2 percentage point to 16.9%. If evidence about fluctuating inflation rates in election years are anything to go by, the inconsistency in inflation rates observed in 2016 so far may continue.