Recent economic indicators and indexes place Ghana’s fiscal growth above marginal lines. The discovery of oil and gas has contributed immensely to a steady economic growth in the country. A recent World Bank report observed that Ghana’s economic performance improved in the first half of 2017, after substantial fiscal slippage in 2016. The fiscal deficit for the first half of 2017 was 2.7% of GDP—on track to meet its target of 3.5% of GDP. These indicators project Ghana’s economic viability and robustness on a high pedestal. However, poverty is very much prevalent in Ghana especially in rural areas specifically in the three Northern Regions of Ghana.

Inequality and unfair wealth distribution continues to increase, deepening the gap between the rich and poor in society. There is an unfair distribution of national assets with resources centred at the capital city to the detriment of the rural poor. The elite class which includes corrupt politicians, business men, public servants and religious leaders in the country forms the top echelons of the wealth table while teachers, petty traders, farmers, market women, fishermen form the base of the wealth table. The worst affected are the weakest and most vulnerable specifically women and children. The poor spend most of their time on unpaid household activities or they are paid below the minimum wage of GH9.60.

The poverty distribution is marked by underdevelopment which is heavily concentrated around the three Northern Regions namely Upper East, Upper West and Northern Regions. Also, along the Coastal belt of Ghana specifically rural Volta, Central and Eastern Region experience abject poverty.

Several economic, social, political and cultural factors that establish social exclusion continue to play the foremost role in extending poverty and creating disparities of outcomes and prospects in Ghana. This social exclusion denies the urban and rural poor, women, children and young people the prospects and experiences they need to improve on their living standards. High disparity in social and economic status is a harmful antidote to development and destabilises the social structure.

People who live in poverty are confronted on a daily basis with issues of access to proper healthcare, increased maternal mortality, and lack of portable drinking water, inadequate schools, poor sanitation, lack of electricity, unmotorable roads, mal-nutrition, bad infrastructures and social service delivery. This situation invariably influences mass migration into wealth concentrated areas resulting in high-security issues, traffic congestion and pressure on the existing social amenities.

People living in poverty stricken areas constantly become victims of political assurances. They are given monies, roofing sheets, t-shirts, during political campaigns to influence their vote. This results in political auctioning, where the highest bidder gets elected to represent the people and that continuum creates a cycle of political treachery. Ultimately, the voters have little impact on political and economic outcomes. This system creates politicians who recklessly siphon and rape the resources of the country through inflated costs of materials, engaging in dubious contract signings among other heinous activities enriching themselves at the detriment of the poors.

People living in poverty are relentlessly preoccupied with ways to fend for themselves. When they get involved with the law, they get hefty sentences and they are unable to procure the services of an attorney to appeal. A classic example is when a man gets sentenced to 5 years imprisonment for possession of cannabis. Clearly, this offence does not warrant the jail term. Another instance is when a 22 year old was slapped with a 30 year old prison term for robbing totaling GHc9700. The justice system does not provide protective cover for the poor in society.

The health sector is not left out, recently there was a revelation of a US$40million grant at the Ghana Diabetes Foundations. The money was a donation from the American Diabetes Foundation to help Ghana control diabetes. What this means, is that poor diabetes patients are dying needless deaths. This chronic corruption in the health sector is happening amid shortages of basic health facilities and bad service delivery.

Maternal mortality resulting from poor health care, poor roads, and inaccessible rapid transportation system. Ghana is still far behind in terms of combating maternal mortality rate. In 2016, Nine hundred and fifty-five (955) maternal deaths were recorded nationwide. This alarming rate of maternal mortality predominantly occurs in poor communities, especially in the three Northern Regions. According to the Ghana Health Service, the National Health Insurance Scheme does not cover the cost of conveying women in labour to the facilities and this may be one of the major factors explaining the reluctance of mothers to deliver at the facility; therefore accounting for the maternal and child mortalities.

The current health minister Kwaku Agyeman-Manu observes that there are still significant variations in health and nutrition status across wealth quintiles and geographic regions in Ghana. Malnutrition is one of the biggest challenges in poverty stricken areas. The need to afford three square balanced diets is a problem in these place making them susceptible to health-related implications. This situation forces some parents to engage in hazardous activities like trafficking their children at low prices in order to survive and also to ease the burden of having to fend for them.

Also in the educational sector, inequality manifests itself in the lack of educational facilities available for teachers and pupils. In 2017, the Upper East Regional Directorate of the Ghana Education Service (GES) disclosed that 334 basic schools were under trees whilst 246 schools were in a dilapidated condition in the region. There are several other pupils who go through such ordeal in order to be educated. This poor situation misses the mark in addressing human resource constraints and poor quality of education continues.

The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund as well as multi-national or domestic corporations play a significant role by aiding government with financial assets to ensure the promotion of inclusive and holistic growth. Also, these organizations provide poverty alleviation facilities to the government to ease the burdens of the citizens in undertaking social intervention projects and others. However, the tragedy at once is that these international organizations set out various conditional clauses in the agreements. These fiscal discipline cripples the government and further deepens the poverty lines. The recent IMF programme that Ghana signed up to saw Ghana practicing zero percent financing from the central bank as well as removing subsidies in some areas, cutting down expenditure and increasing the price of utilities.

Given the severity of problems relating to the intersection of poverty and human rights, the Special Rapporteur must visit the three Northern Regions namely Upper East, Upper West and Northern Region, Volta Region, Eastern and Central. Also, the Special Rapporteur must visit the fishing communities in the country, as most of them are marked by abject poverty which causes them to indulge in hazardous activities like child trafficking and child slavery.

Viewed against the backdrop that social injustice and corruption have strong nexus with poverty, the Special Rapporteur should meet with the Media Center for Social Center (MCJ Ghana) an independent, non-partisan Ghanaian based non-profit media organization dedicated to the promotion of free, fair, just, informed and developed individuals and society where governance institutions and their leaders are held accountable and responsible for their actions and inactions. Also Challenging Heights is an organization that works to end child trafficking, reduce child slavery and promote children’s rights. They work in underserved coastal communities in Ghana, providing support to women and children in hard-to-reach areas that are at risk of child trafficking.