

# Gender

## Ark Foundation, Ghana launches 'Shelter Treasury Fund'

By Diana Mensah



**T**HE Ark Foundation, Ghana, has launched a fundraising initiative to raise GH¢10 million to provide sustainable support and safety accommodation to survivors of domestic violence in the country.

The initiative dubbed: "The Shelter Treasury Fund", is to sustain and expand the operation of the foundation to provide crisis intervention, safe housing, legal aid, counselling, medical treatment and skills training to women and children affected by domestic

violence and trafficking abuse in the country.

It is also to raise awareness, empower and rebuild the lives of survivors of gender-based violence.

It was held on the theme, "Women united against violence: Working with men to end the silence on abuse", it underscores the shared responsibility of both men and women to collaborate to create a safe environment and to transform societal norms that perpetuate violence against women and children.

It also introduced various tiers for the donation, with certificates of appreciation for contributors.

The launch was also to mark the

foundation's 25th anniversary.

### Objective

The Executive Director of the foundation, Dr Angela Dwamena-Aboagye said reports from the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) 2019, indicated that the country spent an estimated \$19 million annually for assisting women and girls who faced violence.

She said 27 per cent of women in the country had experienced and continued to face some form of domestic violence, hence the need to create a sustainable fund to cover operating expenses, expand shelter capacity and develop vocational training programmes for survivors to gain more financial independence.

The foundation, she said, since its inception in 1995, had advocated the rights of women and children, provided a safe place and support for over 5000 women and children fleeing violence.

Dr Dwamena-Aboagye, therefore, called on the government to establish a dedicated shelter for victims of domestic violence to ensure they stay safe and rebuild their lives independently.

She said, "After 25 years, we remain committed to providing safety, healing and empowerment to survivors of violence. But to sustain these services,

we need more than courage; we need the resources to continue this work for generations to come."

A Clinical Psychologist & Lecturer at the Methodist University Ghana, Dr Adolf Awuku-Bekoe, said there was a need to protect and provide psychological support for survivors to reconnect with themselves, alleviate emotional pain and rebuild their confidence and self-esteem.

He said while physical injuries could be treated medically, emotional scars and sleeplessness required psychosocial support to restore hope and regain a fulfilling life.

### Commendation

The Chief Executive Officer and Lead Communication Strategist of the Strategic Communications Africa Ltd. (Stratcomm Africa), Esther Cobbah commended the foundation's 25-year commitment to supporting and providing life-saving services to domestic violence survivors across the country.

The Women's Economic Empowerment Advisor at the Frannan Field Support Services Project - Canada, Francesca Pobee-Hayford called for the effective implementation of laws against violence and the establishment of shelters to empower survivors to break free from abuse cycles.

### Appreciation

A survivor, Charlotte Owiafe narrated her harrowing experiences of abuse and rejection, leading to severe psychological trauma and a desire to run away and commit suicide.



Angela Dwamena-Aboagye (5th from right), Executive Director, The Ark Foundation, with Anthony Selom Dzadzra (right), Director, Policy Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring and Evaluation, Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources; Dr Adolf Awuku-Bekoe (right), Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in Psychology, Methodist University College Ghana, and some dignitaries after the launch and 25th anniversary ceremony. Picture: ELVIS NII NOI DOWUONA