

# AWE empowers women with skills

BY CECILIA LAGBA YADA

**T**HE Academy of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) over the weekend graduated a total of 75 trainees who participated in the 6th cohort training.

The 13-week training, which took participants through, planning your dream, identifying your customer, how to market services or products, social marketing, Branding and social media marketing, was funded by the United States of America Embassy.

Participants were also trained in financing and accounting, customer management, risk management, taxation, confidence building, strategic planning and how to pitch business ideas.

According to the Country Lead Implementor, Dr Shola Safo-Duodu, this year's cohort was different from the previous years as AWE focused on women who already set up their business for at least two or three years to scale them up in terms of business planning and pitching to investors.

"And the courses are structured

in such a way that it answers a particular section of a business plan," she mentioned.

She noted that previous years, the applications were opened to all women and not only women with business and the application that came through were too much and making the screen process difficult.

Dr Safo-Duodu added that they initially targeted 70 women but had

to exceed their target due to the good and potentially great business that applied.

Also, she noted that because all the sessions were online, they looked out for women who were computer literate, so they could easily access their phones and computers and interact with the facilitators well.

"The programme is actually a

friendly one because even on your phone, you can actually register and run it on your phone, without having to worry about missing out on your work days or absenting yourself from work to attend sessions," she said.

Safo-Duodu further noted that as part of the programme, the trainees would be mentored for three months to ensure that they

were applying what they learnt from the workshop in their businesses.

"At the end of the cohort like this, the USA Embassy will open a call for application which is called 'Business Plan Competition' and all these women have the opportunity to participate in the competition and stand the chance of winning \$20,000 grant to invest in their businesses," she explained.

She added that 14 women have won the grant from the previous cohort and have managed to improve upon their businesses in terms of branding and were doing well in the market space.

The US Ambassador to Ghana, Mrs Virginia Palmer, emphasised the importance of investing and improving women's businesses, adding that "because when women's businesses do well, the economy does well, families do better, communities do better, and Ghana does better."

This, she urged, the women to apply for the Africa Development Fund grants, which offers winners both cash grants and capacity building training on how to run a good cooperative.



• Dr Safo-Duodu (seated third right) with Mrs Virginia Palmer (seated third left) with some executives and participants of AWE after the event