

# Business

Inflation for October 2024

22.1%

Source: Ghana Statistical Service

## 75 Business owners graduate from Academy of Women Entrepreneurs

By Beatrice Laryea

**S**EVENTY-FIVE women entrepreneurs from across the country, all with established businesses, have graduated from the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) after completing 20 weeks of intensive training.

The graduates, part of Cohort Six of the AWE programme, participated in a range of courses, including strategic business planning, business proposal development, marketing strategies, financing and accounting, customer management and trade (exports and imports).

Fully funded by the US Embassy in Accra and coordinated by the Sabala Development Centre, the programme offered online courses under the guidance of expert facilitators.

Participants had to complete assessments throughout the programme to qualify for graduation.

The AWE programme is designed to empower women entrepreneurs by enhancing their business competitiveness, pitching skills, and ability to attract investment, among other key objectives.

### Ceremony

Last Saturday's graduation ceremony at the University of Ghana featured an exhibition where the graduates

showcased products from their businesses, including clothing, food, beads, footwear, furniture, healthcare and skincare products, as well as decorative and fashion items.

The vibrant event kicked off with musical performances, a video presentation highlighting the AWE 2024 programme, and clips of Cohort 6 members sharing their life-changing experiences from the training.

The ceremony concluded with the presentation of certificates to the graduates, along with special awards for those who excelled during the programme and the facilitators.

### Job creation

At the event, the US Ambassador to Ghana, Virginia E. Palmer, highlighted that one of the United States' key priorities in Ghana was fostering economic growth and job creation.

She explained that Cohort Six of AWE specifically focused on supporting women with existing businesses rather than startups, to ensure long-term sustainability.

"This training is a crucial element because we want to empower and develop women entrepreneurs as drivers of economic growth and job creation. We are also working to improve Ghana's business climate, and I believe this is an exciting innovation for this cohort," Ambassador Palmer stated.

She encouraged the graduates to take full advantage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which provided duty-free access to the US market for Ghanaian products. "We want all Ghanaian entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs, to leverage this opportunity," she said.

The ambassador also expressed her gratitude to the facilitators, US government programme alumni and mentors, particularly those from the Fortune Global Women's Mentoring Programme, Mandela Washington Fellows, Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), and the Regional Leadership Centre (RLC) in Accra, for their valuable contributions.

"I commend you for investing in your growth and I'm confident that you'll achieve great success and embrace the vision of all women without limits. So I am again just proud and honoured to celebrate this event with you today.

"And then continue to support one another through those networking events. We need to look after each other. So this graduation is a big event and it is something you should be proud of. It's a milestone," she said.

"This is the beginning of a partnership with each other and women entrepreneurs across Ghana and beyond and the beginning of greater prosperity for your businesses, your families, your communities and Ghana."

### Resilience

For her part, a Lead Implementer of AWE, Dr Shola Sarfo Duodu, emphasised that the event was not just a celebration of the graduates' impressive achievements, but also an opportunity to honour the resilience, vision and limitless potential that defined every woman who embarked on the entrepreneurial journey.

She commended the US Ambassador, Her Excellency Virginia E Palmer, for her unwavering dedication to empowering women worldwide, which had played a key role in creating opportunities for many of the women being celebrated today.

Addressing the graduates, Dr Sarfo Duodu encouraged them to become role models, champions of empowerment, and transformational leaders in their communities and beyond.

"You stand before us as role models proving that there are no limits to what women can achieve with courage, determination and the right support. Today, you step forward not just as entrepreneurs but as leaders, change-makers and ambassadors of what women's empowerment can accomplish," she said.

"This celebration would not have been possible without the vital partnerships that fuel our Academy - the support of the US Embassy and its public affairs team, the Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Access Bank and the hardworking team behind the Academy of Women Entrepreneurs. Together, we have created a space where knowledge, opportunity and empowerment intersect, allowing these women to bring their entrepreneurial visions to life.