



• Emma Efua Tandoh (inset), Founder, Out Spoken Edge, speaking at the event

Gender equality, collaboration not battle — Emma Tandoh

By Jemima Okang Addae

AN entrepreneur, Emma Maame Efua Tandoh, has questioned whether the approach to gender equality has been misguided, arguing that it should be a collaboration rather than a battle between men and women.

“For years, we made gender equality a battle between men and women, when in reality, it should have been a collaboration all along,” she said.

Ms Tandoh added that creating sustainable solutions were more important than only raising awareness about the problem.

“We focused on shouting, but the problem is quietly creating sustainable solutions, in my opinion. We have assumed that more panels, hashtags and slogans mean progress, but does it really?” she asked.

The entrepreneur was speaking during the Development Bank Ghana (DBG) engagement with female students of Design Technology Institute (DTI) in Accra, as part of activities to commemorate the International Women’s Day 2025, observed annually on every March 8th.

Allies not adversaries

Ms Tandoh further stressed the need for men to be considered as allies rather than adversaries in the pursuit of gender equality.

She said they must also consider how small intentional decisions could drive real change, rather than relying solely on “loud conversations”.

Sharing her personal journey, Ms Tandoh, Founder of ‘Love Ankara’, a

footwear and accessories brand, recounted how she built a successful shoe manufacturing company and tech start-up—not because she was given a seat at the table but because she “created her own table”.

She highlighted the significance of technical and vocational education in challenging gender roles, saying “skills have no gender”.

Ms Tandoh said women earned 24 per cent less than men for the same work and that many of them were trapped in informal, low-paying jobs with no legal protection.

She added that women in the country were less likely to be online than men, limiting their ability to build digital businesses and access online skills.

Leadership

On women leadership, Ms Tandoh observed that only 14 per cent of parliamentary seats in the country were occupied by women, one of the lowest in Africa.

“When a woman finally became a Vice-President, the reaction wasn’t all celebration. In the beginning, there was some skepticism, why, because our system is never designed to put a woman at the top,” she said.

On gender-based violence Ms Tandoh said that about 27.7 per cent of women in the country had experienced some form of violence.

She said that the solution was not only in mentorship but funding women and providing them with access to capital, expertise and training.

Highlight

■ Women must consider men as allies in pursuit of gender equality rather than adversaries.

“When women have money, they take control of their choices, their futures and their impact,” Ms Tandoh said.

Support

The Founder of DTI, Constance Swaniker, stressed the vital role of men in supporting gender equality.

She also advised women not to rely on the “feminine card” but seize available opportunities to grow in male-dominated fields, adding “when you give opportunities to girls in male dominated spaces, they are actually much better because we pay attention to detail”.

Swaniker advocated inclusive and supportive environments where both men and women would thrive without discrimination.

For his part, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of DBG, Michael Mensah-Baah, said the bank offered support to women-led businesses through skills development and funding.

He recognised that women-led businesses faced unique challenges that required a tailor-measured approach in resolving.