

Females with disabilities push for accelerated action on inclusion, empowerment

By Diana Mensah

WOMEN with disabilities have called for accelerated action in policy, leadership, economic empowerment, inclusive education, accessibility and healthcare access.

These, they said, would give more meaning to inclusivity and empower them to also realise their potential and contribute their quota to national development.

The Vice-President of the Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD) and a professional teacher, Sirina Mahamadu, made the call at an event to mark this year's International Women's Day (IWD) which was commemorated on March 8.

The forum was the "EmpowerHer Barrier Breakers Conference 2025," Organised by the women's committee of the Women and Girls with disabilities mobilisation and Empowerment Platform in Accra.

It was held on a special theme: "Rights, Respect & Resilience for Women & Girls with Disabilities Accelerate Action," to advance the rights, recognition and resilience of

women and girls with disabilities in the country, to align with women with disabilities who continue to face systemic barriers in education, employment, quality health care and social participation.

The maiden edition brought together women with disabilities, youth advocates, policymakers, corporate and civil society leaders and abled allies who are championing the disability rights movement.

Discrimination

Ms Mahamadu, who is also physically challenged, called for an end to systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities.

"People with disabilities (PWDs) also have all the talent, we have all the gifts. Please, don't kill our abilities. Don't kill our God-given talents. You are killing people with disabilities silently. We are forcing them onto the streets with the

discrimination, limitation to access and stigmatisation," she stated.

The GFD Vice President recounted how after completing teacher training, she faced resistance from school authorities who refused to recognise her qualifications, adding that: "despite excelling in science, I was placed in vocational studies without consultation.

"I was trained to teach science and math, but they gave the social studies teacher my subjects just because I am a person with a disability, and a woman," she said.

Commitment

The Member of Parliament (MP) for Builsa South Constituency, Clement Abas Apaak, reaffirmed the government's commitment to implementing tangible legislative and structural changes for persons with disabilities.

He said the government was committed to implementing the amendment of the PWDs Act, five per cent employment quota for PWDs, free tertiary education for PWDs, a standardised national sign language, implement the Affirmative Action Bill, launch an empowerment programme for

women and girls with disabilities.

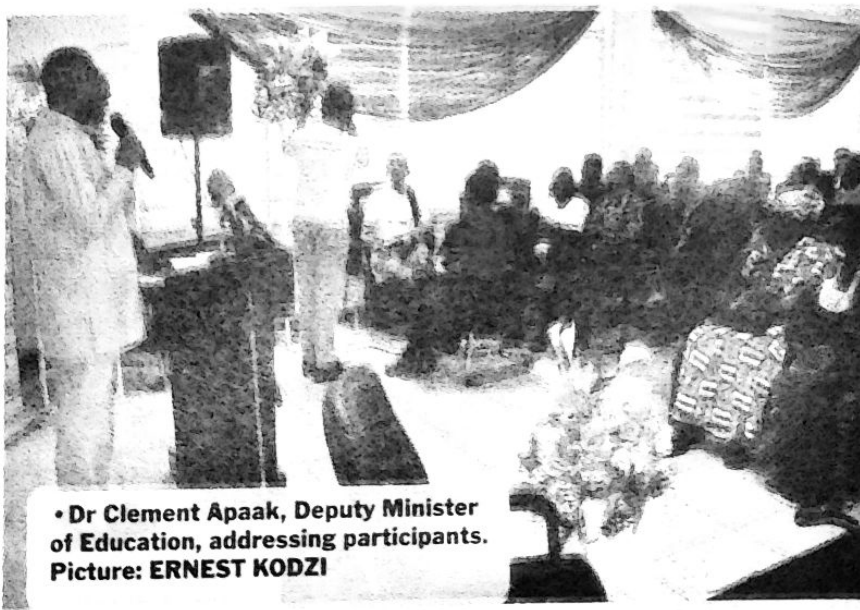
Mr Apaak said Parliamentary Caucus on Disability was committed to raising awareness among parliamentarians and the public, providing a platform for discussions on disability-related concerns, supporting legislation and policies that promote disability inclusion and engaging with organisations of persons with disabilities and other stakeholders.

The Gender Advocate at GFD, Martha Coffie, stressed the need for a paradigm shift in the way disability rights are addressed.

She called on the government, corporate institutions, and religious bodies to work together to ensure equitable access to health care and remove the barriers that prevent women with disabilities from receiving the care they deserve.

"Our school system is not inclusive enough. We need specially trained teachers — peripatetic teachers — who can cater to the diverse needs of students with disabilities," she added.

Ms Coffie also called on the government to enforce labour laws that protected the rights of persons with disabilities in employment and a justice system that prioritised accessibility, protection and trust, ensuring that women with disabilities could confidently report abuses without fear of being ignored or further victimised.



• Dr Clement Apaak, Deputy Minister of Education, addressing participants.
Picture: ERNEST KODZI