

# Gender

## Female traditional rulers call for legal backing



From Joana Kumi, ELMINA

**Q**UEEN mothers and female chiefs from the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem (KEEA) District have made a clarion call for legal backing to reinforce their roles as key stakeholders in community development and traditional governance.

The traditional leaders made this appeal during a training programme organised by the Women Aspire Network under the Project "She Leads" held in Elmina last Thursday.

The event brought together 14 female traditional leaders from the KEEA District to interact with legal practitioners and the Regional Director of the Department of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

The Enohen of Anomabo, Nana Akrufi VI, noted that queen mothers were deeply rooted in their communities and were often aware of the needs and challenges faced by their people.

However, she said their efforts were sometimes hindered due to a lack of legal backing and protection.

"We are in touch with our communities. We know what is happening and what is best for our people. But often, when we speak up or take action, we are threatened, especially if it involves someone in a political or leadership position. Legal support will protect us and help us do our work effectively," she said.

Nana Akrufi also urged women to support one another and eschew jealousy and criticism, particularly when women occupy positions traditionally held by men.

"It is worrying that some women criticise and envy others who have broken barriers. That mindset must stop. We must be each other's keepers," she added.

### Bill on aged

She called on the government to consider passing a bill that would support caregivers of the elderly.

"Old age should not be a time of suffering. It is a blessing and a stage of life that must be respected and protected by society," she stated.

A legal practitioner from Citadel Legal Consult, Kezia Kenneth Azumah, advised the traditional leaders to distinguish between legal and customary matters.

She explained that cases involving criminal offences such as rape and physical assault should be handled by the courts, not at the traditional level.

"There are legal processes for dealing with serious offences. When traditional leaders try to resolve these matters themselves, it can lead to tragic outcomes, including loss of life," she warned.

Mrs Azumah also highlighted the

dangers of verbal abuse, saying it could be just as harmful as physical violence.

She further condemned the stigma associated with women who were unmarried or divorced due to abusive relationships.

"Some women walk away from marriages to protect their lives and sanity, but society often judges them harshly. That must change. No one knows the pain they endured," she said.

The Nifahen of Benyaadze, Nana Efua Eku IV, described the training as enlightening and empowering. "I have learnt so much. I thank the Women Aspire Network for this initiative. We, as women leaders, must also do more to promote girls' education in our communities," she said.



• Nana Akrufi VI (seated 3rd from right), Enohen of Anomabony, and Kezia Kenneth Azumah (standing left) together with other dignitaries and participants