

Women empowerment: challenges still remain

By Augustina Tawiah

THE Deputy Chief of Staff at the Presidency, Nana Oye Bampoe Addo, has stated that despite the gains Ghana has made in girls and women empowerment, there are still challenges that confront women and girls.

She said the challenges included addressing gender-based violence, economic empowerment of women so that they get the resources to work and women's representation in Parliament, which were still an issue for the country.

Additionally, she said girls and young women continued to face entrenched barriers to leadership and participation in decision-making while gender norms, limited access to resources and lack of voice

persisted.

"In Ghana, women constitute approximately 50.7 per cent of the population, yet they hold only 14.9 per cent of parliamentary seats as of the 2024 elections, a slight increase from 14.5 per cent in 2020. At the local government level, the disparity is even more pronounced with women making up just 4.1 per cent of elected assembly members in the 2023 District Level Elections," she said.

Ms Addo said that at the launch of She Leads Social Movement by Plan International Ghana.

She Leads Movement

The movement is a network that brings together over 1000 girls and young women and partners of the She Leads programme in Ghana.

It seeks to increase girls' activism on issues that affect

them and to hold power holders accountable and responsive.

Ms Addo said sub-Saharan Africa had seen women's representation in national Parliaments rise from 12 per cent in 2000 to 25 per cent in 2020.

She was, however, quick to add that the progress was uneven with countries such as Rwanda, which had achieved 63.7 per cent female parliamentary representation while others lagged significantly behind.

She mentioned the gains made in women's empowerment in Ghana, including the election of the first female Vice-President of Ghana, Prof. Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang; the passage of the Affirmative Action Bill and the Domestic Violence Act 2007, adding that those gains did not come easily and that they were the results of years of

advocacy, protest and persistence.

She mentioned the government's commitment to gender inclusion and youth empowerment to include the allocation of GH¢51.3 million as seed funding for the establishment of the Women's Development Bank and the President's pledge to meet the 30 per cent quota under the newly passed Affirmative Action Act of 2024.

Girls

Ms Addo urged girls and young women to lead boldly, challenge injustice and hold leaders accountable while charging the movement to be a force for accountability, transform deeply embedded gender norms and unite local, regional and national efforts to empower girls and young women to take up space and demand their rights.

The Country Director of

Plan International Ghana, Constant Tchona, said the launch of the movement marked a transformative moment in the collective journey towards gender equality, youth empowerment and inclusive development.

He said it was also a bold declaration that girls and young women would no longer stand at the margins of leadership and decision-making but then stand at the centre where they rightfully belonged.

"At Plan International Ghana, we believe deeply in the power of girls and young women. When they are given the tools and the space to lead, they do more than transform their own lives - they uplift families, reshape communities and challenge long-standing systems of exclusion and inequality," he said.

The Country Coordinator of the She Leads project said the project was started in 2020 when a group of consortiums came together to tackle the issue of empowering girls to, among others, contest for positions.

However, she said the project was ending in September so they decided to transform it into a movement that would continue to champion issues of girls and young women.

The Deputy Head of Mission of the Netherlands Embassy in Ghana, Wendy van Meel, said the Dutch government was firmly committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls in all their diverse identities and experiences.



• Some members of the She Leads Movement with dignitaries that were present at the launch of the movement