



NETRIGHT sounds alarm over unpaid care work draining women's potential

BY CECILIA YADA LAGBA

THE Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), a non-governmental organisation championing the rights of women has called for urgent national action against unpaid care work and time poverty, which continue to hinder the economic, educational, and political advancement of women and girls in the country.

As stated by Global Affairs Canada (GAC), unpaid care and domestic work can be defined as caregiving that is undertaken without monetary compensation, and encompasses both direct care of others, including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and indirect care such as cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, and related activities like collecting water and fuel.

According to NETRIGHT, Ghanaian women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid care work, such as childcare, housework, and caring for the sick and elderly, which contributes to time poverty and hinders their



• Ms Patricia B. Akakpo (middle) with the participants Photo: Victor A. Buxton

economic empowerment.

Addressing participants at a national consultation meeting in Accra yesterday, the Head of Secretariat of NetRight, Mrs Patricia Blankson Akakpo, described the disproportionate care responsibilities shouldered by women and girls as "an invisible burden" that has been largely ignored in macroeconomic policymaking.

Organised by NETRIGHT under the United for Care-Sensitive Approaches to Rights and Empowerment (UCARE) project, in partnership with Alinea International

and other development partners, with funding support from Global Affairs Canada.

The six-year initiative is being implemented in ten districts across the Northern, North East and Savannah Regions, and focuses on reducing the unequal and unfair burden of unpaid care work on women and adolescent girls.

Notably, she said according to United Nations Women, women perform over 3 times more unpaid care work than men globally, adding that in the Ghanaian context, a report by the Ghana Statistical

Service showed that women in the northern part does twice the national average of 3.07 amount of unpaid care and domestic works.

"Unpaid care work brings a lot of burden on women and girls, this work, caring for children, cooking, cleaning, fetching water goes unrecognised in economic plans, yet it's critical for the survival of families and the economy," she asserted.

The consultative meeting brought together 50 key stakeholders made of government officials, Policy Makers, Academia, civil

society organisations and the media seeks to initiate a national level dialogue on unpaid care work and time poverty among key actors.

Highlighting findings from a Ghana Statistical Service 2012 report, the Director in charge of Surveys and Census Organisation Directorate, Mrs Abena Osei-Akoto, stated that, Ghanaian women work on average 13 hours a day, yet only 40 per cent of that time is remunerated and remaining 60 per cent was unpaid care and domestic work.

According to her, a total of 93.1 per cent of women were engaged in unpaid care work as compared to their counterparts whose total was 79.4 per cent.

She added that, taking care of children top the table for ranking of unpaid care activities by average hours with 5.3hrs, followed by cooking with 5.1hrs and ironing being at the bottom with 1.0hrs.

She explained that there was a need to invest in time-saving technologies, affordable and accessible childcare services, and infrastructure that reduces the distance and time women spend performing essential domestic duties.