

Address digital gaps for gender equality — Participants

By Mohammed Ali

THE 2025 Rise Women's Conference (RiWoCo) in Accra has warned that Ghana risks losing ground on gender equality if barriers to women's participation in the digital economy and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) are not addressed with deliberate measures.

The conference, held on August 15, 2025, was organised on the theme, "Beyond declarations: Advancing gender equality & inclusive leadership for transformative governance."

Organised under the EPL Co-Impact Women on the Rise Initiative in collaboration with the Office of the Head of Civil Service, the gathering brought together government officials, development partners, academics and technology advocates to explore how women and girls can fully benefit from digital opportunities and pursue leadership in STEM.

Delivering the keynote address, Prof. Eugene Kofuor Maafo Darteh of the University of Cape Coast said equality in the 21st century could not be achieved without women's inclusion in technology.

"We cannot talk about equality in the 21st century without talking about

technology.

"If women and girls are excluded from this space, they are excluded from the future of work. We cannot build tomorrow's leaders if we do not support today's girls to pursue STEM without fear or bias," Prof. Darteh said.

Affordable data

The Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dr Agnes Naa Momo Lartey, noted that the digital divide remained wide, particularly in rural and low-income communities.

She called for investment in broadband expansion, subsidies to make data affordable, and stronger digital literacy programmes to build women's confidence.

Dr Momo Lartey added that safe digital spaces were equally important, stressing the need to enforce anti-harassment rules both online and offline. Scholarships, mentorship and gender-responsive research, she said, were also needed to sustain progress.

"The government cannot do it alone. We need private partners to expand access and subsidise data costs for women and girls.

The Country Director of EPL Ghana, Juliet A. Amoah, said women should not only use technology but also drive innovation.

She explained that the Women on the Rise Initiative connected aspiring young women with mentors who could guide them through academic and professional challenges.

"Mentorship and access to tools must go hand in hand with policy measures that remove barriers for women," she said.

Digital fraud

During discussions, participants raised concerns about confidence and social norms that limited women's use of digital tools.

A pilot project that supplied tablets to women farmers showed that many handed the devices to their husbands or sons because they lacked confidence to use them.

Others spoke about online scams and digital fraud, which discouraged market women from using mobile money and other financial technologies.

Educators and civil society representatives also shared experiences of projects that had made a difference.

Officials from the Ghana Education Service cited a UNICEF-supported programme between 2018 and 2021 that helped 1,000 girls at risk of child marriage pursue STEM education.

Social media

Some participants questioned the long-term impact of initiatives such as Girls in ICT, calling for stronger follow-ups to ensure trainees continued in the digital space.

Others proposed more practical digital training that connects directly to livelihoods, such as teaching women how to use mobile phones and social media to market their businesses.

"The very platforms that sometimes disempower women, from YouTube to TikTok, can be used to empower them if properly leveraged," one contributor observed.

The conference resolved that progress depended on three areas: affordable access to digital tools, early mentorship, and steady policy reforms.



• Participants in the 2025 Rise Women's Conference