

Gender

Female political aspirants call for psychosocial support after elections

By Rebecca Quaiocoe Duho

SOME female political aspirants in the 2024 general election have called for psychosocial support for women who contest elections but do not win.

They said that was necessary due to the mental trauma that one goes through during the process leading up to the election.

At a meeting organised by ABANTU for Development, a women's rights organisation supported by the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), to share and learn from women who contested, particularly in the 2024 election but were not successful, the women stated that it took courage to contest political elections in Ghana.

The meeting, which was on

the theme, "We stood boldly but did not win our seats," formed part of ABANTU's implementation of a project titled "Strengthening activism for a Gender-Responsive Elections 2024 in Ghana".

Among some of the notable women present were a former Gender Minister, Dakoa Newman, who lost the Okaikoi South Constituency seat in the 2024 election; Catherine Afeku, a two-time Member of Parliament for the Evale Edwira Constituency in the Western Region and 2024 aspirant; former Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Hawa Koomson, who lost in the 2024 parliamentary election in the Awutu Senya East Constituency.

Others are Eunice Ohenewaa Ansu, the Municipal Chief Executive, Juabeng Constituency in the Ashanti Region, who contested the Juabeng Constituency seat in the 2024 elections but was

not successful; Vivian Nuzagl, 2024 parliamentary aspirant for Efigya Kwabre in the Ashanti Region, among others.

Ms Newman, who gave the keynote address, said, "If we want more women in politics, we need to look at our responses to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during elections as the way we respond to such violence could deter other women from entering politics".

Elections

She said normally, in elections, the odds were against women just because they were women, and to 'add salt to injury', people label women in politics with all sorts of derogatory tags that deterred the younger ones and others who were faint-hearted but could do the work, from also entering into politics.

On implementing the Affirmative Action (AA) Act, she said that using only the act would not help achieve the required 30 per cent women representation in decision-making in the country.

She, therefore, called on women and women's groups to also participate in the constitutional review process

so that the Constitution would give the AA Act the needed backing and support.

She called for financial support to back women who contested elections, saying, "If this is not done, many women would contest but will not win."

She also called for independent evidence-based research from CSOs in research for female candidates, so that they knew their strength in their constituencies and provided them with the

needed technical support so that they could win.

Panel

During a panel discussion, Ms Afeku called on women not to give up when they lose but rather to use it to build themselves up and improve for the next election.

Ms Afeku, who has contested in her constituency five times, urged women contestants to use the insults thrown at them to their advantage and not let those insults break them.

Mrs Ansu, a banker for 18 years before venturing into politics, also called on women to be bold and committed to whatever they venture into, especially politics.

Ms Koomson, on her part, said violence against women

was one of the things that deterred women from venturing into politics.

She, however, called on women not to be deterred but rather to be bold and courageous in their endeavours.

She added that politics without money does not work for women and called for financial support from NGOs for women in politics.

Support

Ms Nuzagl called on women not to give up even when they are bruised and battered during an election, but to keep trying till they succeed.

Other contributors who also contested the 2024 elections but were unsuccessful called on society, especially chiefs and constituency executives, to ensure that women get a level playing ground when contesting national or any other election.

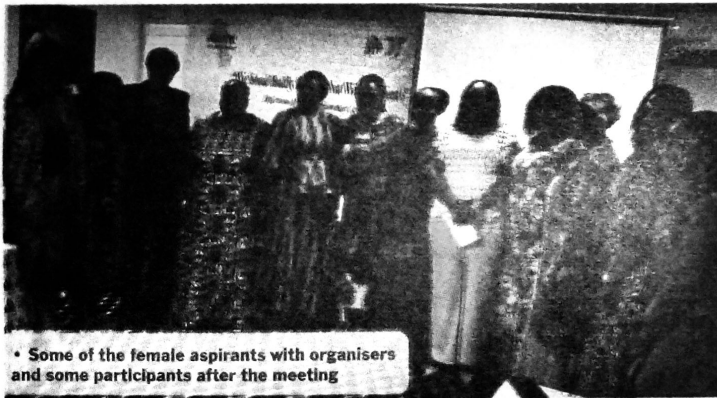
The Executive Director, ABANTU, Dr Rose Mensah-Kutin, in her remarks, said the meeting formed part of the organisation's efforts to deepen women's political representation and build leadership solidarity beyond elections.

A senior social policy advisor, Dr Esther Offei Aboagye, who moderated the meeting, said the bravery of the women contestants was worth emulating by the younger generation.

She called on people to come out and speak against gender based violence during elections so that it does not put others off.

Writer's

email:rebecca.quaiocoe-duho@graphic.com.gh



• Some of the female aspirants with organisers and some participants after the meeting