



NETRIGHT calls for stronger gender focus in national reforms

BY AGNES OPOKU-SARPONG

THE Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT) has urged the government and development partners to place women at the centre of national reforms to ensure meaningful and lasting social progress.

The call was made at NETRIGHT's Policy Conference on Gender and Social Development in Accra yesterday, where speakers highlighted the need for stronger participation, accountability and investment in gender equality.

Presenting an overview of gender and social development in Ghana, Dr Esther Offei-Aboagye

said reforms would only make real impact if women move from being consulted to becoming full co-creators of policies.

She explained that participation should not be symbolic or limited to the same familiar faces.

"Instead, market women, farmers, youth, traditional authorities, faith leaders and survivors of abuse must be actively engaged in planning, implementing and reviewing national programmes," she said.

She called for structured dialogues across rural and urban communities, guided by culturally sensitive facilitators, to ensure that policy reflects real experiences.

According to her, inclusivity in national and district budget forums must be strengthened, with clear feedback systems so communi-

ties see that their concerns are taken seriously.

Touching on education, Dr Offei-Aboagye stressed the need to close gender gaps in enrolment, retention and completion rates, while expanding adult literacy and encouraging girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Convenor of NETRIGHT, Prof. Akosua Darkwah, urged participants to think boldly about alternatives to the systems that hold inequalities in place.



• Ms Patricia Blankson (inset) speaking at the programme **Photo: Victor A. Buxton**

She encouraged reflection not only on meeting targets such as the SDGs, but on the future being shaped for the next generation.

She said Africa had produced many powerful ideas for building societies that serve their people, and



Ghana

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this thinking to

reshape its development path.

Head of Secretariat at NETRIGHT, Patricia Blankson-Akpo, said Ghana's efforts at social development would not succeed unless gender inequalities and social exclusion were addressed with intention and political will.

She noted that global and national economic challenges, rising costs of living, unemployment and limited social protection were hitting women the hardest, especially those in informal jobs.