

Graphic Business

GSE marks Gender Equality Day with call for financial access

By Emmanuel Kwame Asante

THE Head of Strategy and International Relations at the Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE), Diana Okine, has called for stronger efforts to improve women's access to finance, saying financial inclusion remains key to achieving gender equality and economic justice.

Speaking at the "Ring the Bell for Gender Equality" ceremony in Accra to mark International Women's Day, she said the initiative sought to highlight the role of capital markets in promoting equal opportunities for women and girls.

She said the programme, organised in collaboration with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the United Nations Global Compact, aimed to push institutions to support policies and financial systems that enable women to participate fully in economic life.

Mrs Okine said the annual event formed part of a global campaign led by the World Federation of Exchanges and its partners to mobilise stock exchanges around the world to support women's economic empowerment.

She said more than 114 stock exchanges



• Diana Okine (left), Head of Strategy and International Relations at GSE, and Nathalie Akon, Division Director for the IFC for West Africa Gulf of Guinea, ringing the bell for gender equality with other executive members behind

across the world were participating in the initiative, demonstrating a growing commitment by financial institutions to address long-standing gender gaps.

"Capital markets had an important role in shaping opportunity and supporting inclusive growth, and events such as this reminded institutions that gender equality must remain part of the economic agenda," she said.

Financial access concerns

The Division Director for the International Finance Corporation for West Africa Gulf of Guinea, Nathalie Akon, said women entrepreneurs still faced

several barriers that limited their ability to grow their businesses.

She said access to finance was only one part of the challenge, adding that women also needed better education opportunities, safety, ownership rights and inclusion in large business value chains.

"Women entrepreneurs had continued to face financial restrictions and limited access to major contracts, and without addressing those barriers, their businesses would remain small and vulnerable," she said.

Mrs Akon commended the government for announcing plans to establish a

women's bank to support female entrepreneurs and expand access to finance in Ghana.

However, she said the initiative alone would not resolve the broader challenges affecting women's economic participation.

"The women's bank was an important step, but closing the financial gap required addressing education, safety, financial rights and opportunities within major supply chains," she said.

She noted that although progress had been made in some areas, such as education for girls, economic empowerment for women remained slow in many countries.

She said conflicts in parts of West Africa, particularly in the Sahel, had also threatened some of the gains made in advancing women's rights.

"Progress in women's economic participation had been slow, and in some regions, we had even seen setbacks in the rights that women previously gained," she said.

Mrs Okine said global data continued to highlight the scale of inequality faced by women, despite improvements in legal frameworks in many countries.

She said the World Bank Group report, "Women, Business and the Law 2026", showed that women worldwide held only about 64 per cent of the legal rights available to men.

She said women also earned about 20 per cent less than men globally, while many female entrepreneurs continued to struggle to secure loans, assets and leadership opportunities.