

Prof. Darkwah calls for stronger support for women entrepreneurs

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A Professor of Sociology at the University of Ghana and Convenor of NE-TRIT, Prof. Akosua Darkwah, has called on stakeholders to rethink how they support women entrepreneurs in the country.

She said there was the need to build a stronger ecosystem that promotes growth and innovation among women-led businesses.

According to her, such an approach would enable women entrepreneurs to access the resources and networks they need to thrive, while contributing meaningfully to Ghana's economic development.

Prof. Darkwah made the call in Accra yesterday during a roundtable dialogue with the media.

She stressed that simply providing credit or training was not enough, noting that a more holistic approach was needed to address the systemic barriers confronting women entrepreneurs.

"We need to create an ecosystem that encourages innovation, risk-taking and collaboration among women entrepreneurs," she said, urging stakeholders to work together to build a more enabling environment for women-led businesses.

Prof. Darkwah also underscored the need to recognise the

long-standing contribution of women to Ghana's economy, citing historical accounts of women's involvement in market activities as far back as 1856.

She said it was important to assess how loans given to women were utilised and whether they translated into real business growth.

"And it's important to think about if you are using a lot of ingredients as a sign of success, it's important to ensure that the ingredient is actually reflecting growth in the business, and not just paying back," she said.

Prof. Darkwah further emphasised the need for training programmes that encouraged innovation and diversification, rather than the replication of existing products.

She also highlighted the importance of access to markets, payment platforms and reliable transportation systems to support the movement of goods.

"Somebody has to sell it for you to be able to access it. Our foods are also processed and a lot of that food processing is being done by women," she added.

She called for stronger partnerships and legacy projects that would enable women to expand their businesses and create lasting impact.

Prof. Darkwah also stressed the importance of systems that could quickly address disputes and conflicts, enabling women to recover their investments and continue growing their enterprises.

She further highlighted the need to recognise the value of women's time and energy, as well as the importance of infrastructure that supports their economic empowerment.

The Head of Programmes at STAR-Ghana Foundation, Mrs Eunice Agbenyadzi, said

academia, financial institutions and other stakeholders were working collaboratively to promote women's enterprises in Ghana.

She noted that women accounted for about 42 per cent of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the country, making their contribution to the economy significant.

However, she said women-led businesses continued to face unique challenges, including limited access to finance, difficulty in entering new markets, lack of access to land and gaps in skills development.

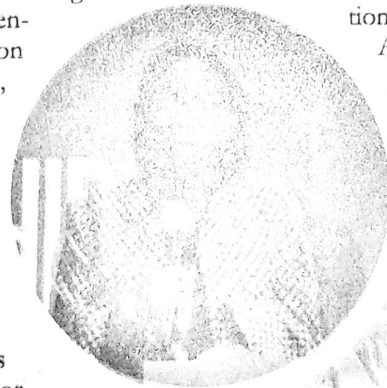
Mrs Agbenyadzi said the roundtable discussion focused on addressing these barriers and identifying the roles various stake-

holders could play in supporting women entrepreneurs.

"When women entrepreneurs succeed, income is generated, employment is created, and they contribute to building our economy. Yet women's businesses face peculiar challenges," she said.

She added that efforts were being made to support women-led businesses at all levels from small-scale rural enterprises to large firms — by improving access to land, credit and markets.

She also stressed the importance of tailoring financial products to meet the specific needs of women and strengthening Women's Development Banking Units within financial institutions.



• Prof. Darkwah (Inset) speaking at the programme