

Dialogue highlights systemic barriers to women's entrepreneurship

By Kwame Larweh

A ROUND-TABLE dialogue on women's entrepreneurship has underscored the urgent need to strengthen institutional systems, address structural barriers, and rethink support mechanisms to enable women-led businesses to thrive in Ghana.

Held at The Palms by Eagles in Accra recently, the event was organised by STAR-Ghana Foundation and partners on the theme, "Women's Enterprise in Ghana: Strengthening the Ecosystem for Growth."

A sociologist and gender scholar, Professor Akosua Keseboa Darkwah, delivering the keynote address, challenged conventional approaches to supporting women's entrepreneurship and called for deeper, more systemic thinking.

Economic history of women

She situated women's economic activity within Ghana's long history, reading from a 170-year-old travel log by Botanist William Daniel, which

described markets operated almost entirely by women and children.

Professor Darkwah cautioned against using loan repayment rates as the sole measure of success for microcredit programmes.

She also called for a shift in training approaches, urging skills development programmes to encourage innovation and product differentiation rather than saturating the market with identical goods.

Unpaid care work, infrastructure gaps

She described how women's productive work is constrained by inadequate infrastructure—particularly water—

and the daily demands of caregiving. "Only 22 per cent of Ghanaians have access to water out of their tap; if you don't have a polytank and a pump, you walk with a Kufuor gallon, that is time and energy that could go into growing a business," she stated.

She called for a redistribution of care work, asking: "What role will the state play? What role will partners—husbands, sons, fathers—play in unburdening us so we have the time, energy, and mind to focus on our enterprises?"

NDPC affirms commitment

Delivering a solidarity message, Richard Tweneboah Kodua of the NDPC reaffirmed the commission's commitment to

embedding gender equality and

women's economic empowerment into national planning.

He noted that the 2026-2029 Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework includes a dedicated section to guide Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs), and Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in implementing programmes that remove barriers for women entrepreneurs.

The NDPC has also developed practical tools, including the Gender-Responsive Planning Toolkit and the Unpaid Care Work Toolkit, to help institutions design policies and budgets that respond to the specific needs of women and men.

"Women entrepreneurs are not merely business owners; they are innovators, job creators, and vital drivers of national economic growth," Mr Tweneboah Kodua said. "Supporting women entrepreneurs is not only a moral responsibility but also a strategic investment in Ghana's inclusive growth and sustainable development."

Quoting Kofi Annan, he added: "There is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women."

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