

Gender

Panellists call for stronger support systems for women

By Joshua Bediako Koomson

PANELLISTS at a summit on advancing women's leadership, entrepreneurship and impact have called for stronger support systems, greater workplace understanding and increased societal recognition to enable women to thrive in leadership, business and family life.

The call was made during the 'Women Who Build' Summit which was held in Accra last week Tuesday.

The event focused on empowering women and amplifying their impact across business, technology and community development.

Biological challenges

Speaking during a panel discussion, the Head of Programmes and a lecturer at the School of Communication Studies at Wisconsin International University College Ghana, Baaba Cofie, stressed the need for employers and society to better understand the unique biological challenges women face throughout their lives.

She said many women navigate health conditions, infertility, pregnancy and other gynaecological challenges while simultaneously managing careers, businesses and leadership responsibilities.

"We are women with a biological



• Panellists after the summit

makeup, and a lot of women struggle through the phases of life as a result of their biological makeup," she said.

Ms Cofie urged organisations to provide greater support to women facing such challenges, emphasising that the need for support should not be mistaken for weakness.

"If they are going through this, they need more support, and it's not because they are weak. You have very strong women," she stated.

Drawing from her personal experience, she recounted spending six months in hospital while running a newly established business.

"I was in hospital for six months. I had just started my business. We were having meetings in my hospital room to get work done," she said.

She acknowledged that while some

women are able to persevere through difficult circumstances, many others require understanding and flexibility to balance their health and professional responsibilities.

"Sometimes people say women are being too weak, that they are always in pain. Is it legit? It is legit. That support is so needed," she added.

Identity and leadership

Also speaking on the panel, the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of ChurchSpace, Edwards Day-Antwi, challenged societal expectations that often require women to downplay their achievements and ambitions to conform to traditional gender roles.

Reflecting on her experiences as an entrepreneur in Ghana, she said women should not be forced to choose between

building successful careers and having fulfilling family lives.

"I feel like giving women the option to have it all, and not have to choose to step aside because I want to have a family or because my husband is pursuing his career, is important," she said.

Mrs Day-Antwi argued that women should be able to maintain their identities and pursue their ambitions while remaining supportive partners and mothers.

"I think it's okay for women to have their own identity and still be a wife, to still be a powerhouse, to still be the mogul, and still be the loving, adoring wife," she stated.

She further criticised social norms that discourage women from openly embracing their success and leadership.

"I've learned that you have to whisper your power and let a man roar, and then everyone cheers," she said, drawing applause from participants.

According to her, society must create more space for women to excel without feeling pressured to diminish themselves or step aside for others.

Childcare support

Mrs Day-Antwi also highlighted the lack of affordable and reliable childcare as one of the biggest barriers facing working mothers.

She revealed that she stepped away from her career after more than a decade in local government because she could not access childcare that met her expectations and was within her budget.

"One of the things that I wish I would have had was childcare. We are bringing these babies into the world and expected to do our jobs well and not be concerned about where they are," she said.