

MONITORING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. This is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics in line with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively. The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices. The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 6.7 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent. For instance, out of the 36 recently confirmed ministerial appointments by the administration now in power, only six (6) are women, representing 16.7 percent. In the National Assembly, women constitute 5.6 percent of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5 percent of the Senators. Also with the fifteen years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999-2015), Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation. This paper seeks a critical review of the importance of data in monitoring women participation in politics in Nigeria vis-à-vis the affirmative declaration. Recently, the National Center for Women Development embarked on the collection of a national data on involvement and participation of women in politics in Nigeria (1999 to 2015). One of the objectives of the data collection is to provide a baseline for the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The data collation of the exercise is ongoing. Hopes are high that the result will show the progress steadily made to achieving the affirmative declaration and determine how the gap that erstwhile existed has been closed as well as measure the variation between where we are and the affirmative action of 35 percent. Also, it will improve evidence-based planning and programming involving women in decision making; increase the support of key stakeholders on measures to increase representation of women in decision-making and further improved awareness of new advocacy tools among stakeholders to support the campaign for increased representation of women in decision making in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS: Gender Equality, Politics, Women, Electoral Process, Patriarchal, Political activist and political participation.

INTRODUCTION

Under international standards, both men and women should have equal rights and opportunities to everything worldwide, most especially to participate fully in all aspects and at all levels of political processes. Globally, women constitute over half of the world's population and contribute in vital ways to societal development generally. In most societies, women assume some key roles, which are: mother, producer, home-manager, and community organizer, socio-cultural and political activists. Of these many roles mentioned, the last has been engendered by women movement.

In line with global trend, Nigerian women constitute nearly half of the population of the country. But despite the major roles they play with their population, women roles in the society are yet to be given recognition. This is due to some cultural stereotypes, abuse of religion, traditional practices and patriarchal societal structures. In Nigeria the awareness about the role of women in development of a nation came up in 1980s. The International Conference on women in Beijing in 1995 enhanced the effective participation of women in politics in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, about 51 percent of women are involved in voting during elections. Despite these, women are still under represented in both elective and appointive positions. Available statistics revealed that overall political representation in government of Nigeria is less than 7 percent (Agbalajobi, 2010). This shows that Nigeria has not attained 30 percent affirmative as prescribed by the Beijing Platform of Action.

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions this is a growing concern to many Nigerians. However, concerted efforts have been made by government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics, in line, with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. However, in Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively. The under representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which were obvious from pre-colonial era till date. However, the re-introduction of democratic

governance has witnessed once again an increase in women political participation both in elective and appointive offices in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES: This paper seek a critical review of the importance of data in monitoring women participation in politics in Nigeria vis-à-vis the affirmative declaration. Also examine factors militating against women participation in politics vis-à-vis the socio-religious and economic limitation place upon them, despite the raising advocacy platform to ensure greater inclusion of women in politics.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Pre-colonial era

Politically, in the pre-colonial era, Nigerian women were an integral part of the political set up of their communities. For instance, in pre-colonial Bornu, women played active roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by male counterparts. Also, Women also played a very significant role in the political history of ancient Zaria. The modern city of Zaria was founded in the first half of the 16th century by a woman called Queen Bakwa Turuku. She had a daughter called Amina who later succeeded her as Queen. Queen Amina was a great and powerful warrior. She built a high wall around Zaria in order to protect the city from invasion and extended the boundaries of her territory beyond Bauchi and she made Zaria prominent Commercial Centre. The story was not different in ancient Yorubaland, where Oba ruled with the assistance of a number of women referred to as female traditional chiefs. They consisted of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. The significant role played by prominent women such as Moremi of Ife, Emotan of Benin and Omu Okwei of Ossomari, cannot be ignored. Moremi and Emotan were great amazons who displayed wonderful bravery and strength in the politics of Ife and Benin respectively, while Omu Okwei dominated the commercial scene of Ossomari in present day Delta State.

The table below shows the statistics of women traditional rulers in the Pre-colonial days in Nigeria.

Table 1: Statistics of Women Traditional Rulers in Pre-colonial days.

S/N	Name	Town/Village	LGA	State	Type of Rule	Date
1	Luwo Gbadiaya	Ife	Ife Central L.G.	Osun	Ooni of Ife	Pre-colonial days
2	Iyayun	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
3	Orompoto	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
4	Jomijomi	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
5	Jepojepo	Oyo	Oyo L.G.	Oyo	Alaafin	Pre-colonial days
6	Queen Amina	Zauzau		Kaduna	Emir	Pre-colonial days
7	Daura	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
8	Kofono	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
9	Eye-moi	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1705- 1735 AD
10	Ayo-Ero	Akure	Akure	Ondo	Regent- Monarch	Pre-colonial days 1850- 51 AD
11	Gulfano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
12	Yawano	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
13	Yakania	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
14	Walsam	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
15	Cadar	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
16	Agagri	Daura	Daura Emirate	Katsina	Queen	Pre-colonial days
17	Queen Kanbasa	Bony	Bony L.G.	Rivers	Queen	Pre-colonial days

Source: Kolawale, Adeigbe, Adebayo & Abubakar (2013)

Colonial Period

Colonialism affected Nigerian women adversely as they were denied the franchise. It was also only in the 1950s that women in Southern Nigeria were given the franchise. Three women were appointed into the House of Chiefs, namely Chief (Mrs) Olufunmilayo RansomeKuti (appointed into the Western Nigeria House of Chiefs); Chiefs (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (both appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The women's wings of political parties possessed very little functional relevance. (Kolawale et al, 2013).

The Post-Colonial Period

During this period, Nigerian women began to play very active roles. In 1960, Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria became the first female member of the Federal Parliament. In 1961, Chief (Mrs) Margaret Ekpo contested and won the election, becoming a member of the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly till 1966, Mrs. Janet N. Mokelu and Miss Ekpo A. Young also contested elections and won, they became members of the Eastern House of Assembly. In northern Nigeria, however, women were still denied the franchise even after independence until 1979 that is, the return of civilian government. As a result of this denial, prominent female politicians like Hajia Gambo Sawaba in the North could not vote and be voted for.

Second Republic (1979-1983), saw a little more participation of women in politics. A few Nigerian women won elections into the House of Representatives at the national level and also few women won elections into the State Houses of Assembly respectively. However, During the same period, only two women were appointed Federal Ministers. They were Chief (Mrs) Janet Akinrinade and Mrs Adenike Ebun Oyagbola, Minister for Internal Affairs and Minister for National Planning respectively. Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel was the only female Permanent Secretary (first in the Federal Ministry of Establishment and later Federal Ministry of Health). A number of women were appointed Commissioners in the states also.

In 1983, Ms Franca Afegbua became the only woman to be elected into the Senate. Also, very few women contested and won elections into the Local Government Councils during this period.

Return of Military rule in December 1983

With the advent of Buhari led military rule, the first formal quota system was introduced by the Federal Government as regards the appointment of women into governance. He directed that at least one female must be appointed as a member of the Executive Council in every state. All the states complied with this directive; some states even had two or three female members.

In the early 1990s, two women were appointed Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State. There was, however, no female minister, as well as no female member of the defunct Supreme Military Council or the later Armed Forces Ruling Council.

Third Republic

The 1990 transition elections into local governments heralding the Third Republic saw few women emerge as councilors and only one woman emerged as Chairperson of a Local Government Council in the Western part of the country. During the gubernatorial elections, no female governor emerged in any of the states. Only two female Deputy Governors emerged, namely: Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Mrs. Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State. In the Senatorial election held in 1992, Mrs. Kofo Bucknor Akerele was the only woman who won a seat in the Senate. Very few women won election into the House of Representatives. One of these few was Chief (Mrs) Florence Ita Giwa who won in the Calabar Constituency.

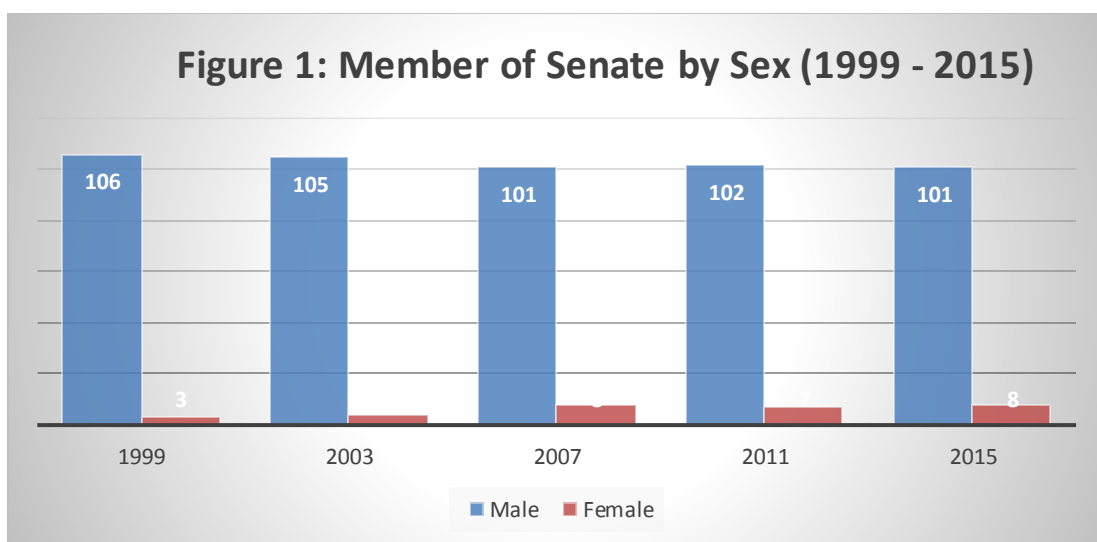
President Babangida's Transitional Council appointed two women in January 1993, namely Mrs. Emily Aiklmhokuede and Mrs. Laraba Dagash. In the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan, two female ministers were appointed into the cabinet. General Abacha administration also had a number of female ministers at various times in his cabinet, including Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah. During the military regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar (June 9, 1998 - May 29, 1999), there were two women in the Federal Executive Council: Chief (Mrs) Onikepo Akande (Minister for Commerce) and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi (Minister of Women Affairs), (Kolawale et al, 2013).

RE-INTRODUCTION OF DEMOCRACY (The Fourth Republic)

The return of democracy in May 29, 1999 gave hope for a new dawn in the struggle for more participation of women in Nigeria politics. Democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society and the low representation of women is a violation of the principle of democracy. Despite all efforts put in place, we are yet to meet the 30% and 35% affirmation as contained in Beijing platform for action and National Gender Policy respectively. There have been five administrations between 1999 and 2015. President Obasanjo occupied the office of president between 1999 and 2007, President Umaru Musa Yaradua (2007-2010), President Goodluck Jonathan (2010-2011; 2011-2015) and President Muhammadu Buhari (at present). The position of vice president in Nigeria followed the same trend as that of the president. Four males have dominated the seat since the return of democracy in 1999.

The Senate and House of Representative

Since the return of democracy in 1999, the Senate has been dominated by males. In 1999 there were only 3 women out of the 109 members representing 2.8 per cent of the members of the Senate. In 2007 the number increased to 8 (7.3 per cent). However, there was a decrease from 8 women members in 2007 to 7 in 2011 which is 6.4 per cent and 8 (7.3 per cent) in 2015. See the Figure 1 and Table 2 below.



Member of House of Representative

In 1999, the number of women in the House of representative was 12 out of 360 members which was about 3.3 per cent but increased to 21 (5.8 per cent) in 2003. It was 26 (7.2 per cent) in 2011, in 2015 the number of women in the House of representative decrease to 19 (5.3 per cent) out of 360 members. See figure 2 and table 2 below. For other elective positions see table 2.

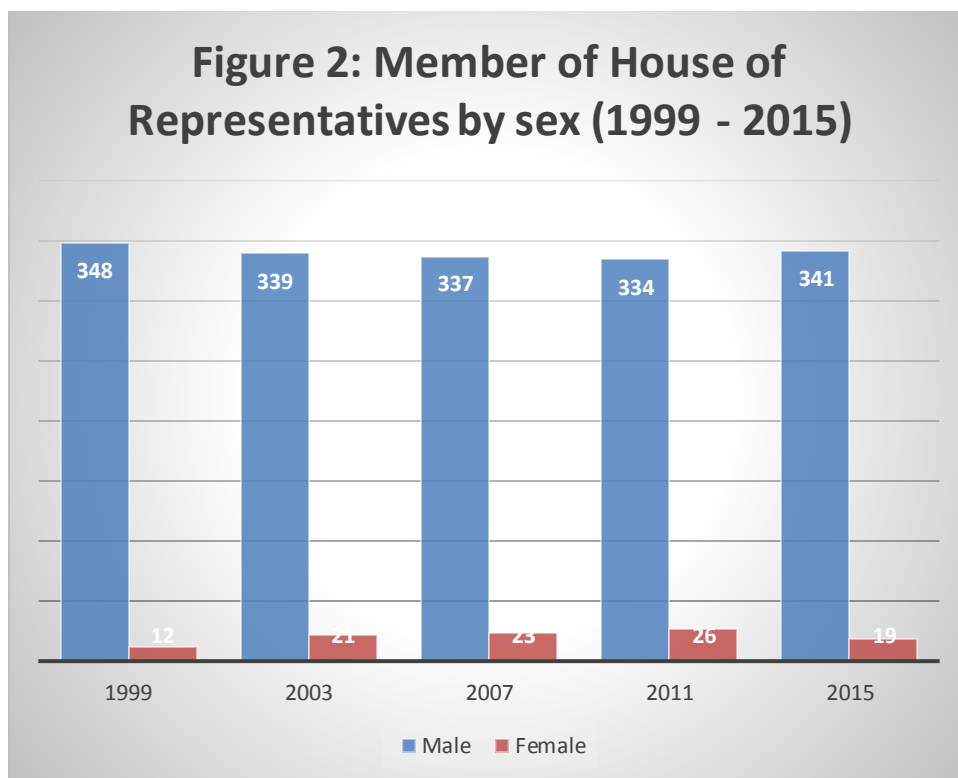


Table 2: Elective Position (1999 – 2015)

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015	
	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women	Seat Available	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Vice President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4(3.7)	109	8 (7.3)	109	7(6.4)	109	8(6.4)
House of Reprs	360	12(3.3)	360	21(5.8)	360	23(6.4)	360	26(7.2)	109	19(5.3)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
Deputy Governor	36	1(2.8)	36	2(5.5)	36	6 (16.7)	36	3 (8.3)	36	4
State House of Assembly	990	12(1.2)	990	38(3.8)	990	52(5.3)	990	62(6.3)		
SHA Committees Chairpersons	829	18(2.2)	881	32(3.6)	887	52(5.9)	887	—		
L.G.A Chairpersons	710	9(1.2)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	—		
Councilors	8,810	143(0.02)	6368	267(42)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	—		

Source: Hundred Years of Nigerian Woman, Nigeria Centenary Country Report on Women, December, 2013.

Men without Women: An analysis of the 2015 General Election in Nigeria by Nse Etim Akpan

Appointive position

In 1999 and 2003 out of 130 federal boards of public corporations only 7 (5.6 per cent) were women. During the period, out of 47 cabinet ministers appointed only 7 were women which represent 14.89 per cent. One woman was appointed as Director-General of a government regulatory agency. Special Advisers and Senior Special Assistance were 2 women respectively. Six (6) women were appointed as Special Assistant, 8 women as permanent secretaries and one woman as special assistant to the Vice President. In 2011 more women were given political appointment, 12 women were appointed as Ministers out of 42 which represent 30 per cent and 4 women out of 20 as Special Advisers. In this present regime only 6 women were appointed as Ministers out of 30 ministerial appointees

EFFORT MADE TOWARDS FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA.

Several efforts have been made to address the low representation of women in elective and appointive positions in Nigeria; among such efforts are the establishment of Women Political empowerment office and Nigeria Women Trust Funds, Women Lobby Group. Other efforts include the institution of an INEC gender policy, the national multi stakeholder dialogue; the initiation of several interventions to actualize affirmative action and the convening of the Nigeria Women Strategy Conference. National Center for Women Development in collaboration with National Bureau of Statistics are making efforts to have evidenced based data about this issue. Presently the available data are not harmonized. The data collation covers the period 1999 – 2015

One of the objectives of the data collection is to provide a baseline for the implementation of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The data collation exercise is ongoing. Hopes are high that the result will show the progress steadily made to achieving the affirmative declaration and determine how the gap that erstwhile existed has been closed as well as measure the variation between where we are and the affirmative action of 35 percent. Also, it will improve evidence-based planning and programming involving women in decision making; increase the support of key stakeholders on measures to increase representation of women in decision-making

and further improved awareness of new advocacy tools among stakeholders to support the campaign for increased representation of women in decision making in Nigeria. It will also erase the un-harmonized data at present. (Daniel and Faith, 2013).

CHALLENGES AFFECTING WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA

The challenges facing women are enormous, however, researchers have shown that the under listed are likely responsible for the huge marginalization of Nigerian women in politics.

- 1. Patriarchy:** It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given rise to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in decision making process in households not to talk of coming out to vie for political positions.
- 2. Stigmatization:** following the way politics in Nigeria is played, it is being perceived that it is for individuals that have no regards for human right and are quick at compromising their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who ventured into politics are looked upon as shameless and promiscuous.
- 3. Low level of education:** The low participation of women in education is also part of the shortcomings. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 per cent while literacy in any other language is 63.7 per cent (female adult age 15 and above). This explains why most women are least qualified for political offices due to low educational attainment. This is also an effect of colonialism, where men were more favoured than women.
- 4. Meeting Schedules:** The time scheduled for caucus meetings to strategize and map out political plans either for the pre or post- election periods are odd and is not conducive for responsible and family women. The slated time are often time which women are expected to take care of their children and family. This method of schedules is viewed as an attempt to side-lining women from engaging in political process.

5. **Financing:** Competing for political positions in Nigerian requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions could not afford meeting the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers giving to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.

6. **Political Violence:** Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants of various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced.

7. **Religious and Cultural barriers:** Both Christianity and Islam do not accord women much role in public life, and same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as quite submissive and image of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in public domain. And so it is a challenge to women participation in politics, more so, women found in the corridor of politics are not often religious in practice.

RECOMMENDATION

Following the trends and happenings around the political environment in Nigeria, it is becoming clearer that women may never achieve the mandated 30% affirmation as enshrined in the Beijing plan of action except the following recommendations are adhered to:

1. Political parties should create a support network for prospective aspirant by pairing them with established women politicians who will be playing key role as mentors and provide capacity building for young or aspiring female politicians as to enhance and develop them ahead of subsequent elections.

2. Building mass Coalition of women support and advocacy group using NGOs and Grassroots women associations to coordinate support and advocacy for fellow women aspirants.

3. To create enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in decision making process in a sustainable and effective way that is free from violence and harassments of any kind.
4. Establishment of legal funds to assist women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices of any form at all levels of political processes.
5. Introducing quota system at all levels of government and Identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders such as Independent National Electoral Commission and political parties to ensure strict adherence to it.

CONCLUSION

Women Participation in Nigerian politics is a topic of importance. Politically, women have been relegated to the background, despite the tremendous effort put forward by government and non-governmental organizations following the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action and National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of women both in elective and appointive positions. It is worthy to note that Nigerian women are still being marginalized due to the style of leadership inherent in the country. Despite the challenges women are facing, women activism and advocacy, education of women, positivity on the part of successive governments towards women empowerment and interest of women to participate in politics is getting a lot of positive energy. This is an indication that the participation of women in politics has a bright future. Therefore, the relevant stakeholders are advised to advocate for the protection of women from abuse, empower them economically and politically and review the necessary legislations to accommodate the growing interest of women in politics both elective and appointive positions.

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