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By Prof. Abomaye-Nimenibo, Williams Aminadokiari Samuel & Michael Jack Eyo, Mni
Obong University

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The Cessation of Gender Inequality in Nigeria and Women's Participation in Partisan Politics

Prof. Abomaye-Nimenibo, Williams Aminadokiari Samuel [α] & Michael Jack Eyo, Mni [σ]

Abstract- The study focuses on gender inequality and women participation in Nigerian politics, it was discovered that traditional, socio-economic and political and cultural structures aid discrimination against women lead to law of contribution of women to social development. The finding shows that despite global effort to improve the poor condition of women through conventions and conferences such as CEDAW, MDGs, among others, gender discrimination has no abetted. Some of the main factors militating against women's effective participation in politics are illiteracy, poverty, money politics, intimidation, harmful traditional practices, violence, cultural and religious barriers. It is suggested that more effort is required by civil society, groups and government agencies for greater awareness on gender issues and rekindling effort of all stakeholders in quest to formulating politics and programmes towards reduction of gender inequality. Actions recognized by Nigerian laws. The recommendation also suggested that in order to ensure active participation of women in politics, government and political parties should increase the level of awareness of women by organizing seminar, workshops not only in the cities but also in villages.

I. Introduction

Before the British colonization of what is today Nigeria, women's voice in the communities was rarely unheard-of could not be ignored. Thus, women seldom participated in the decision-making and administrative processes of their communities. Mba (1982) and Awe (1992) stated that despite this marginal participation as compared with the men, their views were important and critical to community life. Their roles in the societies were complementary to that of men, rather than being completely subordinated to them.

Colonialism and its practices altered this arrangement and reinforced indigenous gender hierarchies negatively and thus pushing women to the background. In other words, colonialism exploited Africa's gender social division of labour negatively to the disadvantage of women, thus increasing women's vulnerability to violence and exclusion (Mama, 1997; Amadiume, 1995). In effect, the exclusion of women from the public sphere resulted in an unequal gender order, so that in wealth, power and status, women were in a disadvantaged position relative to the men.

Author α: B.Sc., M.Sc., Ph.D (Econs), Director of Post Graduate Studies, Obong University, Obong Ntak, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
e-mail: wasanim2006@yahoo.com
Author σ: Associate Professor, B.Sc (Political Science), M.Sc (Political Science/International Relations and Diplomacy), MPA (Academic) in Public Administration, LL.B (Laws), B.L, LL.M (Laws) and Ph.D in International Relations. Head of Department of Political Science/Public Administration, Obong University, Obong Ntak, Akwa Ibom State.

At independence, Nigeria did not significantly reconstitute the inherited colonial patriarchal structures that limited women's participation in the public sphere. Hence, women still had limited access to both tangible and intangible societal resources.

The Nigerian women were still faced with various restrictions such as low participation in politics (Aluko & Ajani, 2006); widowhood rites and disinheritance (Oyekanmi, 2008); female genital mutilation, poor access to education, healthcare, jobs, land credit, early marriage, etc (FMWA, 2006) during the first Republic and early military regimes in the country.

However, in recent times, successive Nigerian governments, in reaction to the various International Conventions and Covenant on women, have undertaken legislative and administrative reforms that would give women full access to economic and productive resources. These have resulted in an improvement in the status of women who now occupy ministerial positions and seats in the legislature. For example, during the Obasanjo administration, there were six women ministers out of a total of thirty-four and ten women special advisers out of a total of thirty-five as well as twenty-one female representatives out of a total of three hundred and sixty in the National Assembly (Afolabi- Akiyode, & Arogudade, 2003). Women have also enjoyed an increased presence in the labour market and education. As of 2010, women's participation in the industrial sector stood at 11%. Similarly, women's represented 87% of those employed in the service sector (FMWA, 2006).

It was only during the first International year for Women in 1985 that Nigeria began to make deliberate efforts to reckon with women in public affairs and nation-building.

The military government established a commission for women Affairs with the intent to remove duplication of programmes and efforts to strengthen inter-agency linkages and complement similar programmes as well as define sectoral responsibilities to promote the general welfare of Nigerian women. States were also instructed to establish directorates of women affairs.

This was in line with the United Nations (UN) Declaration of a decade for women (1975-1985). The evidence was the emergence of many women organizations that were formed by voluntary members of society. In reality, some of these organizations were

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formed before the UN declaration. Interestingly, these organizations were formed by women themselves to achieve their emancipation and improve their potentials. Examples of such organizations, are the NCWS – National Council for Women's Societies, WIN – Women in Nigeria, FO MWAN – Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria and OYUN Progressive Women Association.

However, attempts made to open up most of the rural areas where women are mostly based have been of tremendous effect. Thus, even women in the villages have become aware of the change going on around them. The regime under review and its concerted efforts have initiated and appointive positions were reserved for women.

To further the participation of women in politics, the regime of Olusegun Obasanjo of the (PDP) People's Democratic Party, scrapped all fees required of women political contestants to enable them to participate in the future elections. The government also sent about 30 women to India to see and learn how to establish a small scale industry to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of the country.

In recent times, development has made it possible for women to participate in those activities which were the exclusive reserve of the men. Considerable attention has been focused on making women more prominent in terms of contributing to the economy and development of their countries, hence their participation in politics has been viewed to be a major factor of nation-building.

The Beijing conference of 1998 added impetus to the empowerment of women in Nigeria. The various programmes embarked by the Nigerian government such as Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP) and Family Support Programme (FSP) have assisted so much in advocating the development course of the womenfolk (Egwanwon, 2002).

The Better Life Programme in supporting the level of awareness given to women as to what their role should be in regards to politics. The belief that information rules the world, has been emphasized because, without the requisite information at the disposal of these women, the efforts of the government would be in futility (Ene, 1997).

However, women's progress has been painfully slow. These improvements notwithstanding, women in Nigeria are still faced with enormous obstacles as the growing recognition of their contributions in recent times has not translated significantly into improved access to resources or increased decision-making powers. Women still hold only 3% representative in national government and still constitute the majority of the poor and the illiterate. Women still constitute 65% of the 70% of Nigerians living below the poverty line with their income and purchasing power being very low compared with US$1,628. (UNDP, 2006). Similarly, while males constitute 58% of Nigeria's adult literate, females constitute 41% (UN, 2005).

Lack of awareness by the rural women has prevented them from sending their girl child to school. The situation leaves many girls untrained and unqualified to hold public positions.

Women's participation in politics is a contentious issue in Nigerian political life. The issue of inequality has therefore been perceived by different people, especially the womenfolk, as an attempt to erode their fundamental rights.

Despite the global efforts to improve the poor conditions of women through numerous conventions and conferences such as the International Women's Year Conference in Mexico City (1975), with several resolutions to promote equality, development and peace in the world, the UN for women, which aimed at creating awareness on the marginalization of women, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) intended to guarantee women's equal rights with men in all spheres of life, including education, employment, healthcare, suffrage, and marriage, as well as the International Safe Motherhood Initiative, in Kenya (1987), and the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, that stressed the importance of gender equality, International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994, the number of women in social and public life remained unimpressive in so many countries of the world.

This means that these policies have not been translated to the anticipated equality and development. Many governments have assented to the numerous treaties, conventions and covenants yet the implementation has not been effective, leading to little or no impact on the set objectives.

Even though the State has embraced gender mainstreaming, it is evident that gender inequalities are still persistent. This shows that the situation has not changed at all or much.

Given this development, what is gender inequality? does gender inequality limit the opportunity for women to participate in politics, what measures can be adopted to improve women's participation in politics?

These studies seek to investigate the major problems of inequality that inhibits women participation in politics and to proffers solution to enhance gender parity and women participation in politics. This study would bring to the fore the various dimension of gender equality/inequality in the various spheres of Nigeria society such as in the economy, education, politics, health, legal right, it will also highlight the reasons while the progress in achieving gender equality in Nigeria has been painfully slow, the study will be of immense benefit to scholars and students on gender parity and policymakers and fill a gap in the literature in the area.

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Conceptual Clarification

(i) *Gender Inequalities*

Gender inequality often stems from social structures that have institutionalized conceptions of gender differences. Culture stereotypes are a possible explanation for gender inequality and the resulting gender disparity. According to Margaret (1982), women have been traditionally designated to occupations that require low skills. While these skills are culturally valued, they were typically associated with domesticity. Therefore, an occupation requiring high skills is not economically valued. Men have been traditionally viewed as breadwinners or workers, so jobs held by men have been historically and economically valued and paid higher wages.

Gender inequality can further be understood through the mechanism of sexism. Margaret (1982) opined discrimination takes place in this manner as men and women are subjected to prejudicial treatment based on gender alone, Sexism occurs when men and women are framed with two social cognition.

Benevolent sexism takes place when women are viewed as possessing a low degree of competency and a high degree of warmth. Although this is the result of a more positive stereotype of women, this still contributes to gender inequality as the stereotype is only applied to women who only conform to the caring and nurturing stereotypes, making women still being discriminated against as they are not viewed in the positive light. In addition, this form of sexism has negative effects or notions on women, which include the idea that women are weak and in need of protection from men.

Hostile Sexism takes place when women are viewed as having a high level of competency but a low degree of warmth. This form of sexism is framed as an antagonistic attitude towards women and occurs, as women are perceived to be attempting to control men, either through sexual seduction or through feminist ideology.

Discrimination also plays out with networking and preferential treatment within the economic market. Men typically occupy positions of power within the job economy. Due to taste or preference for other men, because they share similar characteristics, men in the position of power are more likely to have and promote other men, thus discrimination against women.

Kurts in Ebere (2003), believes that gender has to do with the social complex relationship between males and females in the society as well as the power and economic differential associated with them. Inequality has to do with social factors in society. It deals with activities that are appropriate for males and females and what rights, resources and powers inequality has as a form of discrimination against the female folk. Which gives inadequate participation of women in developmental issues and the decision-making process.

According to Bukoye (2007), discrimination is any distinction and exclusion made based on sex that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, employment or exercise of power by women irrespective of their marital status.

According to Colemen (1987), Gender inequality or discrimination remains pervasive in many dimensions of life worldwide. This is so, despite considerable advances in gender equality in recent decades. The nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across countries and regions, but the patterns are striking.

In no region of the developing world are women equal to men in legal social and economic rights. Gender gaps are widespread in access to and control of resources in economic opportunities, in power and political voice. This has dealt a deadly blow to development. Women who are intelligent and resourceful are relegated to the background simply because of age-long tradition and culture. What this means is that these women cannot contribute their quota to development. This situation plays out in Nigeria where women's participation in the economy and politics is less than 20% because of the deep inequality practised all over the country.

The study adopted the theory of sexism which is the attitude and institutions, often unconscious, that judge human worth, on the ground of gender or sex roles. It could be prejudice or discrimination, against women based on their genders. The proponents of this theory include Karl Marx, Peter Glick, Susan Fsick, Mary Anstell etc.

The theory emphasizes fundamental, physical and psychological differences between men and women, cultures and societies are deciders of gender women oppression is in connection with the production.

Fundamental, physical and physiological/ biological, differences between men and women, in part, account for the ascribed masculine supremacy, and patriarchy inevitability in societies. (Mariete S. 2005) Partriachism is the most crucial form of feminine domination, the legitimacy of which ironical rests upon tradition.

Ann Oakley and Sherry have espoused the view that culture and society are the deciders of gender roles. In their respective analysis, they opined that culture is the total of human societies accumulation of traditions, values, norms prescription of behaviour, among other things, over the years of their existence (George, 1990).

Accordingly, these legacies are transmitted from generation to generation, and members of a culture determine gender roles. Consequently, the universal subordinate status of women in politics is historical, having been determined by culture and

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society, and which members think of as absolute and unchangeable. In essence, the cultural order puts men above women.

Accordingly, the order bestows on man, the responsibility to guard the terms and the cultural foundation up which the development of society and the home is founded, while the women guard the home unity and health as well as integration of society through rearing, including the nurturing of off-springs when they are young (Abayomi, 2000). The Marxist analysis of the women question takes a different dimension. It examines the status of women concerning the economic system, rather than the relationship between men and women. The endpoint is that women's oppression is in connection with the production.

Marxist feminists, consequently focus on housework and its relations to capital arguing that house workers directly under the capitalists, the men (husbands) act as the domestic capitalists or compradors, who subject the housewives to exploitation and labour at home including providing services like laundry, cooking, cleaning the environment and child-rearing, are not subjected to economic evaluation or monetization and be so rewarded accordingly.

Women's oppression will cease to exist, in the projection of George, when class oppression disappears as a result of proletarian revolution, which will invariably emancipate both men and women from capitalist exploitation. Unfortunately, the dream of women liberation and emancipation from men's oppression may not be attainable because of the demise of communism, which had intended to provide the ideological framework and foundation for such revolutionary Putsch by the oppressed workers. Gender theologists in their justifications' rationalize religious injunction as the determining basis for gender inequalities in society.

These theoretical factors are assembly deterministic of the sex roles in the society, and by extension, decide life opportunities and how far each sec can go in the societal scheme of things.

Ambivalent Sexism has two sub-components: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism which means “well-wishing or friendly: Traditionally, only hostile sexism was considered relevant, but recently, a strong stream of research has been conducted to show the detrimental effect of benevolent sexism.

Ambivalent Sexism offers a reconceptualization of the traditional view of sexism to include both subjectively benevolent and hostile feedings towards women. The tradition of the benevolent component is a major contribution because it addresses the interdependence that men and women share.

Benevolent and hostile sexism both reinforce traditional gender roles and preserve patriarchal social structures by sharing the common assumption that women are the weaker sex, the two forms of sexism differ in their expression. Benevolent sexism is defined as subjectively positive attitudes of production, idealization and affection towards women in traditional roles while hostile sexism is defined as their negative equivalent of domination, degradation, and hostility. Men can hold types of sexist beliefs without contradicting each other "women need to be protected as they are deemed to be incompetent at work.

a) Political participation

Women participation in politics, according to Momodu (2003) the issues should be seen from four perspectives: access, participation, representation and transformation. Access to political institutions, participation (which includes control of power within such institutions), quantitative and qualitative representation and the result will be a social and political transformation in the polity. Enhance Women's roles in politics and development, can be achieved when these four conditions are fulfilled.

Women in politics are sustained for three reasons, firstly, politics is an important arena for decision making. Individuals who hold official positions in government get to decide how to allocate scarce resources, such as tax revenues. Public officials make decisions that may help some people at the expense of others. The decision by public officials often affects people's individual choices by encouraging some behaviours and outlawing others.

Secondly, political power is a valuable good. Policymakers hold power over other social institutions, such as the family. Third, holding a political position is 'to hold a position of authority (Paxton, 2010). Women in positions of authority and power can influence decisions on issues that bother women and impact positively on the lives of the female gender.

Political participation, according to Igwe (2002), is the degree of involvement of the people in governance and related institutions of society, such as the economy and culture. It involves participation in political campaigns and debates, attending caucus or strategy meetings of political parties, voting during elections, standing as candidates for elections, and holding government and party positions. It also includes freedom of expression, association, right to free flow of communication, influence on decision process, and right to social justice. It also expresses such rights to demand better social and health services, better working conditions, and an increase in wages, amongst others Okolie, 2004).

The essence of political participation in any society, whether civilized or primitive, is the participation, acquisition and control of power and dispensing power to organize society, harness and distribute resources and influence decision making in line with organized or individual interests (Arowolo and Abe, 2008). All groups, including those of women, seek to influence the

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dispensation of power in line with their articulated interests as a fundamental motive of political participation.

Today women increasingly seek power equality and distribution and redistribution of resources in their favour. However, careful observations have indicated that the involvement of women in Nigerian politics is largely noticeable at the level of voting and latent support. Adeniyi (2003) has identified violence and other forms of electoral conflicts perpetrated by male and female youth as the major barriers confronting and inhibiting women active participation in Nigerian politics. Arguments are on the increase on the specific role women should play in society or women should engage in other socio-economic and political activities like their male counterparts. It is, however, believed that while the natural relationship between mother and her child may compel and confine her to sedentary activities, it is also important that such mother should contribute her quota to the development of her family and that of her society at large.

The continuous marginalization of Nigerian women denies them the opportunity of performing these functions. It is interesting to note that society recognizes the value of women as voters in a democratic process, yet they are perceived as incapable of governing, thus limiting their ascendance to the pinnacle of decision-making and participation in the power structures. This explains why women take the risk of having their needs subsumed under the interest associated with their membership of a particular class, ethnic group, or culture or women organization.

b) Causes of gender inequality

The poor participation of women in politics and governance has been a major concern at the global level. In Nigeria, the number of women participating in politics is not proportionate to that of men rising global focus on issues of gender equality, aided by calls such as that of goal three of the Millennium Development Goals, is bridging the gap created by long-term discrimination against women, and helping to make women more visible in politics.

The following issues are the challenges facing women are enormous, researchers have shown that the under listed are responsible for gender inequality and low participation of Nigerian women in politics.

1. *Patriarchy:* It refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women, which in turn has given to women being looked upon as mere household wives and non-partisans in the 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 regard for human rights and are quick at compromising their virtue for indecent gains. Therefore, women aspirants who venture 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 the National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult.
4. *Poor Financing:* Competing for political positions in Nigerian requires huge financial backup. Most Nigerian women who seek these positions could not afford to meet the financial obligations therein, despite the wavers given to women aspirants by some of the political parties. And so, they could do little or nothing to outweigh their male counterparts.
5. *Political Violence:* Nigerian elections have always been characterized by one form of violence or another since the return of democracy. Female aspirants to various political parties cannot withstand political violence; therefore, women participation in politics is drastically reduced.
6. *Religious and Cultural barriers:* Both Christianity and Islam do not accord women many roles in public life, and the same is obtainable in most cultural values, where women are seen culturally as the sex who should be quite submissive and full of virtue. However, they are not to be seen in the 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.
7. Political Godfatherism is one of the concepts that open narrow doors when it comes to deciding who gets in the political scene. However, it affects women participation in Nigerian politics. Literarily because Godfathers are seen in Nigeria to be men who have the power personally to determine both who gets nominated to contest elections and who wins an election. Godfathers are people of questionable wealth and influences who robbed political parties of their conventional and legitimate functions of presenting clear and coherent programmes based on which the candidates presented by them are chosen by the voters.

c) The causes of gender inequality in Nigeria

1. *Improper Education*

"Knowledge is power". It might not be a strong point, but this is pointing more towards some parts of Nigeria that are rejecting western views on women, to stick to cultural ones. Education is nothing if you leave all you learn in school and still behave like a savage when you get back home. In other words, it must be obvious that you are educated. There are two ways to this, a community that's poorly educated can never know the worth of women and a woman that is not

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educated cannot know her rights, talk less of the myriad of things she's capable of contributing to modern society. It has also been noticed that parents don't usually encourage the education of their female children because they believe it will be of no benefit to them, as any money or success she earns in the future, due to her education, will be of her husband's, not theirs.

2. *Tradition and Culture*

Tradition is said to be the custom of a particular society, while culture is simply the way of life. Women are never appointed traditional rulers because it is deemed an abomination on almost every ethnic group. Why should a woman be leading when there are able men to that could lead?" such is the typical cultural dogma that has plagued many thrones and political seats in Nigeria. Don't even dare suggest female leadership to the elders of the community, you might lose your head.

3. *Mentality*

It is hard to keep "mentality" as a standalone point, as it is largely influenced by culture and tradition. However, if you look at it subjectively, from a women's view, it stands alone, how? Many women are not ambitious because they believe top positions are not meant for men. Even some ladies complain about having a female boss simply because are used to having a male boss. It almost seems clandestine for women to want to occupy a political position or the hot sit in a company. such a mentality is usually created and forged by a woman's immediate environment. If you have seen women lead, you would think that it is normal for women not to lead even if you were not directly told.

4. *Religion*

It is not a secret that religion is one of the top contributors to gender inequality in the world. Religion is one of the many things that guide the masses in living a good and peaceful life and is one of the biggest contributors to peace on earth. However, some religions or religious practices restrict women to just domestic roles, making it impossible for them to even think about holding a political post.

II. The Challenges of Nigeria Women in Socioeconomic/Political Development

The international concern for women has gained serious recognition and ascendancy attracting various governments to the needs of women inclusion in their political and leadership positions.

Egonmwan (2002) observed that Nigeria's involvement of its womenfolk in developmental activities assumed a visible dimension when the United Nations Organization declared the year 1975 as the international year of women and since then march 8th of every year have been set aside by the UN for celebrating the occasion.

In July 1980, an agreement was reached by all member states that every nation should recognize the need for the involvement of women in nation-building. Consequently, Africa's collective appreciation of women's participation in politics found concrete expression in the Lagos Plan of Action which was the policy voice of African Heads of State and government in a meeting held in Lagos, April. 1980.

African states developed policies and strategies for women's full participation in politics and all other developmental activities. Nigeria's response to this was the establishment of the National Commission on Women Development (NCWD) at the national and state levels in the country.

The basic function of this commission committee was to promote awareness among women. The federal government also signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

This convention otherwise known as CEDAW (2009) as international organizations including the UN, AU and ECOWAS were enjoined to compel African countries to ensure women have adequate representation in politics, access to health care, ensuring proper education and access to credit and loan facilities. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also recognizes the radical equality of men and women in dignity.

Therefore, African women as indispensable transmitters of family values, need to be culturally, socially, economically and politically empowered to enable them to attain their optimum goals in life. It is noteworthy to mention some countries of the world that top the list of gender equality particularly women's full participation in the politics such as

According to World Economic Forum (2009) Iceland, Finland, Norway Sweden and New Zealand. The developing countries including Nigeria are yet to institutionalize gender equality. (World Economic Forum, 2009).

Akirinade (1990) observed that women participation in politics in Nigeria dates back to 1929 during the Ikot Abasi women riot. Since then Nigerian women have delved into different aspects of partisan politics first by campaigning for men or husbands as candidates of their choice. It is quite easy to use women as campaign tools because they can be easily mobilized.

Through Queen Amina of Zaria, a new role was defined for women, because of her bravery and exemplary leadership. Nigerian women became aware of the roles they could play by assisting the men in politics.

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Nigerian women have continued to contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the human race, but about 60% of the total population of women are yet to fully participate in politics even though they have made several efforts to the progress of the nation. (Dibia, 2004).

To improve a lot of women Nigerian government has started operating scholarship schemes for interested candidates that do exceptionally well in science and other related subjects realizing the need for education in supporting women's active participation in all spheres of life. (Buchanan, 1993).

For this reason, two technical colleges have been devoted to the enhancement of women development in the country. Today federal and state ministries of education seek to encourage parents to send their female children to school.

In support theory of a prominent monarch, Ashiru (2009) in Kaduna state, advised parents to see the girl child education as a task to be achieved and a vital issue to the development of society. In his words "If you educate a man, you educate a person, but of is educate a woman, you educate a society.

Of all the various policy instruments for ensuring women are not excluded from decision making. Legal Aid Council and Legal Literacy Council according to Dibia (2004) are the most popular components of a government effort to reduce family abuse, and the Family Law Centre offers advisory and legal advice on all family legal problems free of charge to low-income people.

Akande and Kuye (1986) also pointed out that free publications are targeting school-age children in the hope that they will read it to their mothers while also learning on their own.

The legal Aid council has contributed to the abrogation of the customs which was discriminatory against Nnewi women in the inheritance of the property of their husbands which was repugnant to natural justice and the constitution.

Between 1999-2007, the then president Olusegun Obasanjo announced the establishment of a new ministry for women's affairs in his 2000 budget speech as earlier earned led by General Sani Abacha's legacy of 1995.

The rationale for women's ministry was to encourage women to enter the labour force and supply a wide range of talents and services demanded by the general public.

a) Nigerian Women in Governance

Democratic government has been observed to be an adequate and most enabling style of governance that enables citizens active participation in their affairs. As quoted in Obi (2007) Aristotle explained that democracy exists whenever those who are free and are well off but, being the majority are in control of the government.

It has been described as continuous responsiveness of government preferences of its citizens considered as political equals. Nigeria experiencing the rule of democracy may have geared its actions towards encouraging women in the participation of politics.

Even though there is diversity in culture and language of the units that made up Nigeria, yet the zeal to participate in the affairs of the nation be it federal, state or local government is aroused in the of the citizens. Obi (2007) Democracy accommodates different ethnic units, culture, sex and religions and guarantee individuals rights. Therefore under democratic governance, Nigerian women have been advised to use the opportunity to come forward and contribute their quota to nation-building. (Obi, 2007).

Women are therefore enjoined to take their proper position in governance without waiting for the men to offer them an opportunity that may not be easy. The emphasis on the equality of persons which is the cardinal pursuit in democracy should be an added advantage. It accords respect to every individual and emphasizes numerical strength.

Nwafor and Ezegbe (1998) confirmed the necessity of involving women in democratic governance as an imperative that should be given adequate attention. This is because democratic governance is an opportunity for an individual to exercise his or her right, irrespective of age, sex, gender or class.

As observed by Mirya Zuniga (1995) giving women the opportunity to participate in politics through adequate empowerment will be a fruitful effort, and not domination over others but an increased power of their self-esteem and internal force, and according to Dighe (1995), an empowered woman is someone with a sense of self-worth and self-confidence, someone who critically analyses their social and political environment and thus exercise control over the decisions affecting her life. Women empowerment goes beyond all the cultural stereotypes that have relegated women to the kitchen. It involved a conscious effort to equalize the power between men and women. It also involves active political participation, sound educational opportunities, among others. (Amujin, 2007).

Gender inequality is the reason behind greater poverty, slower economic growth, weaker governance and a lower standard of living of people. There is a correlation between gender discrimination and underdevelopment. A UNDP analysis confirmed a very strong correlation between its (UNDP's) gender-related development indices and its"Human Development Index. (World Bank)

With the UN research and analysis, above Nigeria is still found wanting on the extent it involves it

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women folk in governance. Giving women the opportunity to participate in politics has contributed immensely to governance and positive impact on the female rural dwellers.

Ijere (1992) women are known to form the backbone of rural development; a successful development without the involvement of rural communities is a haphazard development. (Ijere, 1992)

Political participation starts in the rural communities where the government is closer to the people and when women are allowed to start from their local government.

For women to achieve this aim, their economic empowerment would ensure their active role in politics. Women therefore should have access to the necessary tools and resources for their self-actualization.

The great opportunity given by the Obasanjo regime went a long way to ameliorate the poor conditions of women and removed practices militating against their development and full participation and active politics.

To disabuse the minds of their male counterpart from Jeth joining gender stereotypes hinges on women's ability to convince men that their new social space and new gender identities are non-threatening, mutually benefiting and greater than a zero-sum game". (Dibia, 2004).

The notion of women as homemakers and men as providers should be changed for the mutual understanding that both men and women should participate in the labour market regardless of gender and domestic responsibilities.

Women can therefore combine family and work based on the government's accommodative policies. Okpoko (2002) opined that women should forge a link between themselves both the literate and the illiterate, ones to dialogue and share experiences and fully integrate themselves in the political affairs of the nation.

Emphasis has also been laid on functional skill building which will also assist greatly to empower women in active participation in both productive and community development.

Aboh (2009) observed that despite the various programmes and conferences for women, Nigerian women continue to wriggle in the pains of relegation and gender-based discrimination in the allocation of positions, (political, economic) and that no poverty alleviation programme has ever been a target at women alone in Nigeria and despite the International Day for Rural Women set aside to recognize the rural women, Nigerian rural women can still not reckon with. Women, in general, is still classified as the poorest 70% of the world's poorest people are women. Convention on the Elimination of all forms Discrimination against women has marked its 30th anniversary, yet the profile of women who participated in development and nation-building activities is nothing to be compared with that of the menfolk.

The president of the National Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ) is of a counterview. There is hope for the Nigerian woman, women are presently being trained and re-retrained to fit into the job of politics as well as entrepreneurial skills to build their capacity utilization. Although Nigerian women still have a long way from achieving equality with their male counterparts, there is progress in women education as confirmed earlier in this study. A good number of Nigerian women are now found in all sorts of training institutions all over the country and outside the shores of Nigeria to improve their level of education which will thereafter pave way for their involvement in politics.

Awareness is being created by various organizations calling on women to participate in partisan politics. Nigerian women now occupy various positions as ministers members, senate members, house of representative members of the state house of assembly. Deputy governors, commissioners and other political appointments. For instance, the Obasanjo administration The result of our investigation proven that the regime under our focus in its first term appointed about 7 women as members of the executive council while in his first term more than seven women were appointed into the cabinet. Our findings in chapter four gave a detailed account of our findings.

Unfortunately, the national literacy rate for females is 26% compared to 72% for males and in a certain state, the female literacy enrolment and achievement rates are much lower, for example, girls net enrolment in Sokoto state is 15% compared to 59% for boys. (UNICEP, 2002).

III. Summary, Conclusion / Recommendation

a) Summary of findings

The study was designed to examine gender inequality and women participation in politics in Nigeria. Based on the study, it was discovered that the problems of gender inequality in Nigeria have receded as modern society has redefined the role of a woman, which is vastly different from what it used to be in the middle ages. However, patriarchy and gender inequality engendered by religious beliefs, and diverse cultures are still prevalent. Women are still largely considered to be inferior to men, as women are only deemed fit to be home keepers and child bearers.

There exists gender imbalance. Several direct and related policies have not been implemented, leading to little or no impact on the set objectives.

Most of these policies on poverty reduction, fertility reduction, maternal mortality reduction, can be more effective if bold steps are been taken to improve the status of women checks against discrimination

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against women. If there is a bottom-up approach, which encompasses grassroots participation in the decision-making process, gender disparity issues might be less and its unintended consequences drastically minimized.

Poor child health maternal health, HIV infection, rural-urban residence, early marriage, household headship, illiteracy, man-hours at work, wages, income, employment, means of production, senior positions, and parliamentary seats are some of the development indications that have not been substantially addressed for women. The overriding influence of custom and tradition are especially obvious. For instance, the non-discrimination clause in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is not taken into cognizance when policies are being formulated. The gap in gender issues such as property inheritance rights, divorce, reproductive health rights, discrimination against women and harmful cultural practices, if abridged can make a big difference for gender concerns.

b) Conclusions

The problems of gender inequality should not be ignored by any society. Though usually viewed as a human rights problem, gender equality is vital for attaining progressive and sustainable economic development and a peaceful environment. This is because women are more than 50% of the population of Nigeria. According to United Nations Population Fund, gender inequality hinders the growth of countries, development of individuals, and progress of societies.

c) Recommendation

1. *Support Women for Local Elections*

Many career politicians gain their first experience in governance and through campaigning and running for local office. Catherine Samba-Panza served as Mayor of Bangui.

Supporting women for local elections would reassure both potential female candidates and party leaders that women can win competitive elections. Women should be encouraged to participate in grassroots politics and development

2. *Diversify the pool of female candidate*

Women have a unique capacity to shed light on the often obscured needs of marginalized groups. AFRICAN LEADERSHIP AND TENURE ELONGATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA he most vulnerable members, including children and ethnic and religious minorities. When marginalized groups exist in government, society is more stable and less likely to experience armed conflict. Women are advised or encouraged to actively participate in governance to bring their experience to bear an issue to state concern.

3. *Raise Societal Awareness of women's leadership*

The contributions of women are waved by male colleagues as inferior at times of decision making. Developing a curriculum for Civic Education that emphasizes women's leadership deemphasized cultural norms against it will ensure that future generations are more receptive to female political participation.

Female office holders' should be trained on media that make them role models for African girls and boys.

4. *Create Cross-Party Women's Caucuses*

Most women lack the power and influence enjoyed by their male colleagues. Women public office holders should be encouraged to form Cross-party caucuses as mediators in inter-party disputes and curb disagreements in civil society.

A female cross-party caucus is made up of women from all ethnic groups, which enables legislators to find common ground on various issues and leverage their collective power to push through important legislation.

5. *Build Capacity of Female Leaders*

However, concrete steps can be taken to immediately enhance women's political leadership. Through pieces of training to build their capacity and knowledge around various issues and to connect them with civil society activists who can be key allies in creating beneficial new policies.

While African women have made great strides in recent decades, there is still work to be done to ensure that they have a primary role in their nation's government and wider society. By advocating for the above five steps, international and regional organizations can provide valuable support to Africa's amazing women leaders. These women can, in turn, model meaningful inclusion for governments around the world.

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