***Women’s Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria***

***Edited by Oladokun Omojola***

***BLURB***

The constitution in most countries frowns at gender discrimination. Local, multinational and multilateral organizations in many developed and developing nations have instituted policies and taken actions that address cases of injustice against women. But gender inequity appears to be an issue beyond what constitutional provisions and corporate strategies can address.

How, for instance, does a statutory provision guarantee equal visibility of men and women in a news report, especially in a neoliberal democracy where the general patriarchal character of the media aligns with the logic of commercialism which prioritizes profit and targets mainly those who have the means of purchase? Invisibility of women in the media is a global issue and a great concern in Africa. This volume – ***Women’s Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria*** – however, is about a country of over 160 million people, roughly divided equally between male and female.

The book, through empirical analyses and qualitative discourses, agglomerates several perspectives regarding how visible women are in the turbulent Nigerian political terrain and the response of the media in that direction - all in a concerted effort to resolve the burning issues. It turns out that aggressive play by women on the political turf, “conscious reporting” of women by journalists and increased use of ICTs by women are a few of the practical ways of bridging the wide gap.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables vii

List of Figures ix

Acknowledgments x

Introduction xi

Chapter One 1

Media Content Consumption and Influence on Women’s Political Visibility

*Oladokun Omojola* and *Ngozi Morah*

Chapter Two 29

Television Influence and Political Participation of Nigeria’s Unseen Minorities

*Stella Aririguzoh*

Chapter Three 53

Exploring the Indifference of Women and Minorities in Nigeria’s Politics

*Victoria Ajala*

Chapter Four 73

Media Access as Barrier to Women’s Political Emergence in Nigeria

*Ibitayo Popoola*

Chapter Five 91

Muted Gender: How Nigerian Press portrays Female Politicians

*Ganiyat Tijani Adenle* and *Lai Oso*

Chapter Six 111

Women’s Political Invisibility in Nigeria and the Imperative

of Deliberate Media Agenda

*Kehinde Oyesomi* and *Olusola Oyero* Chapter Seven 129

African Women and Socio-Political Imperatives of ICTs

*Wilson Joseph, Nuhu Gapsiso* and *Musa Usman*

Chapter Eight 147

Communication Strategies for Nigerian Women’s Participation in Politics

*Chijioke Odii* and *Luke Anorue*

Contributors 163

Introduction

The audience, media channel, message and message speed are all important aspects of a mass communication system. But more important is the appeal of the message. Is the message useful to the audience but a loss to media owners or workers? Is it significant to media owners but not of any profit to the audience? Is the message in the public interest? Does it promote development? Questions about the communication situation of a message have remained due to their social significance. Media scholars, professional communicators and sociologists have endeavoured to proffer answers, judging from the numerous studies that have been carried out.

Women’s involvement in politics at all levels and its coverage in the media is an area that makes the situation of communication messages a big issue. It appears that news about women is hardly news for many media houses in terms of coverage the women get and with regard to the amount of news content they access and consume. The preponderance of men in the news, and in many cases to the detriment of women, requires a re-examination. Nigeria has been selected as a case study for this re-examination, having exhibited the requisite characteristics – democratic regime, vibrant media, women advocacy, etc.

Chapter One of this book – **Women’s Political Visibility and Media Access: The Case of Nigeria** - exposes the connection between the logic of commercialism and its influence on the visibility of the politically active women. This logic restricts the diversity of news content in favour of those who have the means of purchase, which are mostly men. Focus group evaluations of the situation show a connection between women’s low visibility in the news and their inconsequential access to content. One surprising evaluation attributes the connection to unconscious reporting! That brings to the fore journalistic consciousness-raising as an issue in media responsibility.

In Chapter Two, significant relationships are found between citizens’ exposure to television broadcasts and political participation. The broadcasts encourage them to seek more information about political parties and election candidates. However, it turns out that the influences of television on participation of the residents are affected by citizens’ own inadequacies.

Chapter Three traces women’s political participation in Nigeria and advises the womenfolk to avoid a reoccurrence of dismal outings in the previous elections and be strategic about the future. It finds that 79 percent of respondents do not want to contest elections because “contesting is not for poor women” and of sheer disinterestedness, among other reasons. The chapter adds these are political diseases that are curable through increased media socialization, persuasive communication and elimination of violence at campaign rallies.

Chapter Four contends that inadequate media access is a major barrier to the realization of women’s political aspirations in Nigeria. Notwithstanding the fact that women constitute 49.96 percent of the country’s population, their political involvement is very low, hovering around 2 percent. Surprisingly, the Nigerian media have been found to contribute to this scenario as demonstrated in their discriminatory advertisement rates for electioneering communications. This chapter advocates the removal of all barriers militating against women’s political visibility.

Chapter Five reiterates the poor showing of the media in their coverage of women as politicians. Besides that, the photographs published about them do not add any significant value. Surprisingly, wives of male politicians are found to take the shine away from professional female politicians! It submits that until women make bold moves and adopt the transformative approach which involves substantial risk-taking in politics, the constant media focus on their male counterparts and their families may remain for a long time.

The assertion of lack of exposure of female politicians is proved again in Chapter Six, with only 13 percent of stories on politics devoted to women. The chapter reports that 90 percent of stories on women were published inside the pages. This may not be unconnected with the general problem of women’s invisibility. Deliberate media agenda for women offers a possible solution to this challenge.

Chapter Seven emphasizes information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a critical tool needed by women to enhance their socio-political and economic visibility. This can be achieved through the collaborative efforts of stakeholders which should be strategically articulated and harnessed.

Chapter Eight discusses two adapted strategies for increasing women participation in the Nigerian political arena. First is the Applied Communication for Development (ACD) Model, which involves advocacy, social mobilization and programme communication. Second is the Assessment, Communication, Analysis, Design and Action (ACADA) Model, which involves situation evaluation, behaviour scrutiny, social mobilization and communication analysis. These models entail cyclical actions that can reverse the subjugation of Nigeria women in politics.

The reader can come to his or her conclusion after going through the book. But one thing stands clear: women are a critical part of development that must be cherished and appreciated. However, the onus is on them to do everything humanly and legally possible to firm up their political vitality in order to be relevant in the development process and become visible targets of media coverage. The world can hardly wait.