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Gender Relations in Nigeria's Democratic Governance

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Abstract

The imperative of popular participation to democratic governance has engendered intense academic discourse on the political alienation of women across the globe including Nigeria. Based on recent research study carried out, it has been realized that despite the increasing global agitations for gender equality, the situation in Nigeria, following the demise of military rule in 1999, is nothing to write home about as women representation in the national parliament in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections recorded a dismal 6.3%, 8.8% and 7.3% respectively. Of the factors explored, research findings reveal that four major factors are responsible for women's marginalization in political participation, namely; socioeconomic, cultural heritage, political acrimony and institutional designs. This paper therefore argues that any measure directed towards redressing the low political participation of women in Nigeria will only be superficial unless the structural factors that limit women's political empowerment in the country are addressed.

Keywords: Gender, Participation, Politics, Democracy, Nigeria

Background of Study and Statement of Problem

Democratic government is predicated upon freedom, justice and equal treatment of all citizens— men and women alike, by the society (Nwabueze, 1993:2). This is because democracy presupposes equal opportunity platform for political participation and decision making process (Sodaro, 2001:27). Since equal political participation is *sin qua non* to democracy (Anifowose, 2004), a society cannot be truly democratized without the full and active participation of women who constitute about 50% of the population of each country. Incorporation of gendered perspective in policy making process is thus imperative for sustainable democracy. Gender equality is globally accepted as a requisite for achieving development and democratic governance that give men and women equal voices in decision-making, policy implementation and attaining MDGs (Ezeilo, 2008).

Despite widespread democratization in most countries and the struggle by the feminist movements for the integration of gender balancing in the national politics of countries over the world however, women who constitute about 50% of Nigeria population still remain

systematically alienated from politics and decision making process in the country (Agbalajobi, 2010 & Arowolo & Aluko, 2010).

The phenomenon of women low participation in Nigeria's politics became worrisome following the demise of military rule and then the transfer of power to a civilian democratic administration in 1999. Nigerian Government in its efforts to tackle this phenomenon of low women's political participation ratified some national and international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1989 and adopted a National Policy on Women in 2000 (replaced by a National Policy on Gender Equality in 2007 and Platform for Action, the National Committee on Affirmative Action, the Additional Protocol to The African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa 2003, The African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality 2004, The National Gender Policy 2006, etcetera (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003; Ajayi, 2007). After three consecutive democratic change of government (1999, 2003 and 2007) however, gender inequalities, discriminations and stereotypes continue to exist in all spheres of the Nigerian polity, preventing women from developing and exercising their full human capabilities and to play a powerful role in sustainable democracy. The objective of democratic consolidation in Nigeria cannot be realised if the womenfolk who constitute about half of the national population continue to be marginalised.

It is against this backdrop that it has become important to interrogate the currency of the phenomenon, factors accentuating it and measures to reduce phenomenon or engender a gender balance. This paper is divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction while section two is the conceptual analysis. Section three undertakes an analysis of gender relation in Nigeria's politics. Section four is the research method and section five focuses on an empirical survey of factors responsible for this phenomenon. Section six concludes and draws policy recommendations for improved women's political participation in Nigeria.

Gender, and Democracy: A Conceptual Discourse

The relationships between gender and democracy are complex. It is necessary therefore, to make a conceptual clarification of the terms gender and democracy in order to enhance our understanding of the subject matter. Gender has been viewed as the socially constructed attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being male and female and which determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context (Waylen, 1994; Henderson, 2006). Oostergaard (1992) defined gender as the qualitative and interdependent character of women's and men's position in society. According to him, gender relations are constituted in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of women and men. Such relations are not necessarily biological but a matter of social convention. Thus Colley (1987) sees gender roles as referring to behaviour patterns which are differently displayed by the sexes. These patterns are also established through socialization and determine attitudes and life styles for men and women. Gender roles are therefore matters of socio-cultural determination and are subject to change (Ajayi, 2007; Enemu, 2005:227). Shapiro (1991) emphasizes that we are all trying to pass as a gender which is decided by cultural systems, not our biological sex. Gender division are not fixed biology, but constitute an aspect of the wider social division of labour and in turn, is rooted in the conditions of productions and reproduction and reinforced by the cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society

(Kendall, 2004; Frye, 1983:146 & Frank, 1995:144). Historically, these attributes, opportunities and relations are skewed against women in favour of men (Omotola, 2007). Thus the universal asymmetrical pattern of gender relationship in which women are subordinated to men is cultural and not biological or immutable.

Democracy though not a new phenomenon, has emerged as the most significant trend in the world politics over the past decade. Democracy entails equal opportunity for men and women to get involved and determine the control of power of a society (Pateman, 1970; Agbaje, 1999:193 and Anifowose, 2004:205). It is predicated upon freedom, justice and equal treatment of all citizens— men and women alike, by the society (Nwabueze, 1993:2). As noted by Sodaro, (2001:27), it presupposes equal opportunity platform for political participation and decision making process. Political participation is therefore germane to democracy and fundamental to the stability and legitimacy of every political system (Anifowose, 2004, Agbalajobi, 2010; 75). It occupies a vital place in Thus Almond and Verba (1963) conclude that combination of three political orientations -parochial, subject, and participatory, result into a routine, stable and democratic system. Since equal political participation is *sin qua non* to democracy, a society cannot be truly democratized without the full and active participation of women who constitute about 50% of the population of each country. The incorporation of gendered perspective in politics and policy making process is thus imperative for democratic. Giving men and women equal voices in decision-making and policy implementation is therefore a requisite for achieving democratic governance.

Gender Relations in Nigeria's Politics

Throughout the history of Nigeria, there has been varying levels of women's political participation. In pre-colonial Nigerian societies though women's political participation was not equal to that of men, the position of women in traditional political governance was complementary rather than subordinate (Mba, 1982:37; Nwankwo, 1996:20 & Ikpe, 2004:23; Akinboye, 2004:236; Ajayi, 2007; Awe, 1992:11). The complementarity role was however embedded in sex segregation, which determined gender position, status and power in the society and provided women their own spheres of operation and control (Olojede, 1990:82).

The advent of colonial administration however, destroyed the traditional systems of women's political participation in Nigeria (Allen, 1972; Omotola, 2007; Lewu, 2005:65; Mba, 1982; Ikpe, op.cit:30). The creation of patriarchal government by colonial administration, its gender policies and economic interests reinforced and generalized patriarchal values and perpetuated gender inequality in the country (Kamene, 1991, Olojede, 1999; Akinboye, 2004:237). The legislative council created in 1922 though with limited African representation for instance, is noteworthy in Nigerian political development. Yet the colonial government consciously excluded women from this council (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003:77). These practices significantly marked the beginning of masculinity of politics and women's alienation from the mainstream Nigeria's politics (Allen, 1972; Ajayi, 2007:138). In fact while women in South Western Nigeria voted for the first time in the nation's electoral history in the 1959 general elections, their Northern counterparts did not enjoyed franchise rights until 1976, fifty-four years after the elective principle was introduced to Nigeria (Enemu, 1999:232).

Women political activism such as the Aba women riot against colonial tax policies of 1929/30, the Ngwa women's opposition against the municipalisation of their community in 1954, the Eastern Region women's opposition to new school fees in 1958; and the series of protests between 1946 and 1958 by the Abeokuta Women's Union led by Mrs. Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti though were invaluable in the country's struggle for independence (Nwankwo, 1996:16; Adu, 2008:27), however, the limited gains made by women did not translate into participation in decision making during this colonial period. Men dominated in the first political parties. Women did not feature prominently in the leadership of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) and other parties during the nationalist era and after independence (Ahonsi-Yakubu, 2001:151). In the 1958 elections only Wurola Esan got appointed to the Senate of 36 members, while no woman was elected to the 312-member House of Representatives and none was in the federal cabinet (Nwankwo, 1996:17).

The low participation of women in politics was also fostered by the nature of post-colonial politics. The ethnic and personality based, paternalistic and acrimonious politics of the post-independence era were detrimental to women's participation (Ojo, 2003; Aina, 2004:227; Ikpe, 2004:35). In the first republic, there were only four female legislators in the whole of the country, a number that was so negligible as to give women the necessary influence and they could not play any active role in decision-making process (Nwankwo, 1996:17, Omotola, 2007:37). The imposition of military, an era that followed this period from 1966 did not foster women's participation in politics and very little was heard of women at the helm of affairs (Anya, 2003). Military rule was an all-male affair and while it lasted women played only a peripheral role (Adeleke, 2002).

The year 1999 marked the beginning of a new dawn in Nigeria as it returned to civilian government after the demise of military rule. Women political participation though witnessed an improvement over previous experience; however, this new era saw women taking a similar low participation in the Nigeria's political process. The 1999 general elections saw only 181 positions worn by women out of the 11, 881 available positions throughout the country (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2003:63). In the same elections there were only five (4.6%) women out of 109 senators elected into the Senate, while 13 (3.6%) women were elected into the House of Representatives of 360 seats i.e. 6.3 percent women representation in the national parliament (Ajayi, 2007:139). While there were 36 gubernatorial seats, no female featured. Nigeria had only one female deputy Governor – Chief Kofoworola Akerele-Bucknor, deputy governor of Lagos State (1999 -2003), and of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the federation only 12 (1.21%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27). At the local level, out of the 774 local government chairpersons across the nation, only 9 were women and 143 out of the 8,700 councillors were women (Babatunde, 2003; Anifowose, 2004:210).

The poor performance of women in this election was the basis for the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Gender and Development Action (GADA) held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the objective of enhancing women's active participation in Nigerian politics (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003:64). The 2003

elections did not witness any significant improvement however. In these elections, only 21 (6.1%) women out of the 339 members, won seats in the House of Representatives. Similarly, of 109 senatorial seats, only 3 (2.7 %) women were elected in to the Senate (UNDP Report, 2005:47; Ojo, 2003:16). The 36 gubernatorial positions in the federation had no woman and out of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, only 38 (3.84%) women were elected (Adu, 2008:27). In the 2007 elections, a total of 7, 160 candidates (both men and women) contested in the April elections. Of this number, only 628 women representing 8.8% of the total candidates participated. A total of 3,141 candidates contested for seats in the National Assembly. Of this number, only 209 or 6.7% were women. In these elections, 25 (6.9%) women out of the 358 seats were elected into the House of Representatives and 9 (8.3%) women out of the 109 seats were elected in to the Senate that is 7.3 percent women representation in the national parliament. While out of the 36 gubernatorial seats available, no woman was elected, there were only 6 women out of the 36 deputy-governors in the country.

Of the 990 seats available for the States House of Assembly in the country, only 54 (5.5%) were women (INEC, 2007; Nigeria CEDAW NGO Coalition Shadow Report, 2008:10). Thus the percentages of women in the national assembly were 2%, 4% and 6% and in the States' Houses of Assembly across the nation were 1.21%, 3.84% and 5.5% in the country in the 1999, 2003 and 2007 elections respectively. In terms of ministerial appointments, only 4 out of 49 ministers were women in 1999, 6 in 2003 and 7 in 2007. The improvement in women political representation indicated in the analysis above was due to the conscious affirmative efforts of the Obasanjo administration to involve more women in political administration. As a result, political parties took a decision to waive for the women the payment of pre-registration levies for political aspirants in the country. In addition, the national summit for all women politicians organised by the International Human Rights Law Group, CEDPA, GADA held on June 28, 2002 in Abuja with the objective of enhancing women's active participation in Nigerian politics and the awareness campaigns by these and other gender-related organisations and NGOs spurred women in the federation to vie for political candidature in the 2003 and 2007 general elections (Akiyode-Afolabi & Arogundade, 2003:64; Adu, 2008:27). It is obvious from this analysis however, that women's political participation in the country still remains at a dismal level in spite of the affirmative actions and institutions of the government to encourage their participation, thus falling short of the desired result of giving women the opportunities and access to political advancement. Women's representation in the National Assembly currently stands at 6.9 per cent in the House of Representatives and 8.3 per cent in the Senate, far below the 35 per cent minimum representation stipulated in the National Gender Policy. Thus the perception that democracy would automatically boost women political participation has not been validated after nine years of return to civilian rule.

Research Methods

The study engaged survey research method. Primary data were collected through the use of in-depth interviews and well-structured questionnaires. However, secondary data involving extensive and thorough library research and examination of existing publications, existing reports and websites including reports from government agencies, international organizations, published and unpublished articles are used to construct supporting reviews of the study. The empirical study employs interview and questionnaire designed to collect

data on factors militating against women’s political participation in Nigeria. The population of the study consists of women within Lagos and Ogun State Nigeria. The choice of Lagos and Ogun State is based on the fact they are among the earliest politically civilized and vibrant states in Nigeria. Furthermore, each of these states belongs differently to each of the two dominant political parties in Nigeria. While Lagos State is Action Congress of Nigeria (AC) controlled State, Ogun state is controlled by Peoples’ Democratic Party (PDP). The choice of these two states as area of study therefore provided a platform for comprehensive investigation of women political participation in Nigeria. A total of 400 women were randomly selected and 400 questionnaires administered to them. Out of this number, 346 (86.5%) valid and complete responses were received and analyzed. The study uses five-point anchored Likert scale and also the instrument was adapted from similar study (Hossain, et’ al, 2009) which established their validity. The reliability of the collected data was tested. The Cronbach's Alpha for the collected data is 0.978. In social studies research, 0.70 or more alpha value will be good enough to insure data reliability. Data gathered were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 15.0). The data was analyzed based on statistical description and regression.

Analysis of Data and Presentation of Result

Table 1.0 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

| Age Distribution of Respondents | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
| 18 – 30 | 120 | 34.6 |
| 31 – 40 | 122 | 35.2 |
| 41 and above | 104 | 30 |
| Distribution of Marital Status of Respondents | | |
| Status | Frequency | Percentage |
| Single | 122 | 35.2 |
| Married | 160 | 46.2 |
| Divorced | 30 | 8.7 |
| Widow | 34 | 9.8 |
| Occupational Distribution of Respondents | | |
| Place of Work | Frequency | Percentage |
| Government Establishments | 114 | 32.9 |
| Private Establishments | 136 | 39.3 |
| NGOs | 32 | 9.2 |
| Others (students & unemployed) | 64 | 18.5 |
| Educational Distribution of Respondents | | |
| Qualification | Frequency | Percentage |
| Tertiary Education | 250 | 72 |
| Secondary School Education | 66 | 19 |
| Primary School | 30 | 8.7 |

From the analysis above, more of the respondents (226 or 65%) were above 31 years of age. Furthermore, there is a high level of literacy among the respondents as 250 or 72 % of them have education qualification up to tertiary level while 66 (19%) had maximum of secondary

education and only 30 (8.7%), primary School education. These afforded the researcher the opportunity to gather very useful information as respondents are experienced, understood and are able to contribute to the subject matter.

Table 2.0. indicates participants' responses on the determining factors of low participation of women in Nigeria's politics.

Table 2. 0. Response to Factors Responsible for women's Low Political participation

| Variables | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Undecided | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|--|-------------------|------|----------|------|-----------|------|-------|------|----------------|------|
| | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % | f | % |
| Socioeconomic factors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lack of adequate education | 28 | 8.1 | 88 | 25.4 | 18 | 5.2 | 112 | 32.4 | 100 | 28.9 |
| Lack of enough financial resources | 24 | 6.9 | 48 | 13.9 | 54 | 15.6 | 128 | 37 | 92 | 26.6 |
| Cultural Factors | | | | | | | | | | |
| Patriarchal culture | 28 | 8.1 | 88 | 25.4 | 10 | 2.9 | 140 | 40.5 | 80 | 23.1 |
| Male Domination in the society | 8 | 4.6 | 64 | 18.5 | 14 | 4.04 | 112 | 32.4 | 140 | 40.5 |
| Women's multiple responsibilities | 40 | 11.6 | 62 | 17.9 | - | - | 124 | 35.9 | 120 | 34.7 |
| Religious binding | 31 | 8.9 | 100 | 28.9 | 15 | 4.3 | 100 | 28.9 | 100 | 28.9 |
| Acrimonious Politics | | | | | | | | | | |
| The use of gangsters in Nigeria's politics | 44 | 12.7 | 68 | 19.7 | 6 | 1.7 | 116 | 33.5 | 112 | 32.4 |
| The use of thugs in Nigeria's political activities | 40 | 15.1 | 60 | 17.3 | 5 | 1.4 | 80 | 23.1 | 161 | 46.5 |
| The practice of godfathers in Nigeria's politics | 30 | 16.2 | 64 | 18.5 | 8 | 2.3 | 82 | 23.7 | 162 | 46.8 |
| Institutional Designs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Majority Electoral System | 28 | 8.2 | 40 | 11.6 | 26 | 7.5 | 148 | 44.8 | 104 | 30.1 |
| Lack of Quotas system | 32 | 9.2 | 24 | 6.9 | 18 | 5.2 | 140 | 40.5 | 132 | 38.2 |
| Lack of provision for gender equality | 28 | 8.1 | 32 | 9.2 | 4 | 1.2 | 142 | 41.0 | 140 | 40.5 |
| Historical Legacies | | | | | | | | | | |
| Legacy of Military rule | 74 | 21 | 66 | 19 | 67 | 19.3 | 108 | 31.2 | 31 | 9 |
| Legacy of Colonialism | 92 | 26.6 | 124 | 35.8 | 68 | 19.7 | 42 | 12 | 20 | 5.8 |
| Naturally women have no | 116 | 33.5 | 127 | 36.7 | 48 | 13.9 | 32 | 9.2 | 23 | 6.6 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| interest in politics | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

The result of the descriptive statistical tests on the factors responsible for the low political participation of women in Nigeria is presented in table 3 below.

Table 3.0. Descriptive Statistics of Factors responsible for Women's Political Participation in Nigeria.

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|-----|---------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Lack of adequate education | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.5202 | 1.35171 |
| Lack of enough financial resources | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.6243 | 1.21005 |
| Patriarchal culture that pushes women back in the private sphere | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.4509 | 1.30735 |
| Women multiple responsibilities | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.6445 | 1.40936 |
| Religious binding | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.3988 | 1.39248 |
| Male dominance in the society | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.9480 | 1.19062 |
| The use of gangsters in Nigeria's politics | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.5318 | 1.43471 |
| The use of thugs in Nigeria's political activities | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7601 | 1.46958 |
| The practice of godfathers in Nigeria's politics | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.6185 | 1.49360 |
| Majority electoral system | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.7514 | 1.22844 |
| Lack of specified percentage of seat reserved for women (quota system) | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.9480 | 1.24303 |
| Lack of provision for equal gender representation in party nominees | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 3.9624 | 1.23066 |
| Military legacy of women alienation from governance | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.8728 | 1.30596 |
| Colonial legacy of women alienation from governance | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.3468 | 1.16268 |
| Naturally women have no interest in politics | 346 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 2.1879 | 1.18785 |
| Valid N (list-wise) | 346 | | | | |

Socioeconomic Factors: A list of socio-economic factors that might affect women's political participation was included in the questionnaire and the participants were asked to express the extent of their agreement with each of them. Analysis of the participants' answers is summarized in Table 3. It can be seen from the reported mean in the table that lack of enough financial resources and inadequate education are the basic socioeconomic factors that hinder their political participation. Women do not own resources, they are usually co-owners and as such property lies in hands of men. The few literates among women are usually marginalized and isolated by the society. Consequently, women are unwilling to commit their meager financial resources to political activities since the likelihood of being supported by their political parties and men counterparts is low. The awareness campaign and other orientation activities of Gender and Development Action (GADA), Civil Liberties Organization, National Council of Women Societies (NCWS) Women in Nigeria (WIN) among

others, though have helped to increase the level of women's political literacy this however, has not translated to women's significant featuring in the mainstream politics of the states.

Cultural Heritage: A number of cultural factors that may affect women's political participation were listed for the participants to see whether they affect them. The findings presented on table 2 shows that patriarchy system which recognizes male domination in the society, institutional arrangements that restrict women to family responsibilities and religious orthodoxy are cultural factors that affect women's political participation. While protestant religion is beginning to encourage women's prominence in public life, religious orthodoxy however, continues to place limitation on the extent of female's featuring in political activities. The mechanism of sex segregation and *pudah* are found to restrict women's empowerment by limiting their exposure to interact with male and female constituents and to attend public meetings. These factors have relegated women to be subordinate to men and has created women's inferiority complex.

Political Acrimony: The results of table 2 show that the acrimonious patrimonial system of political godfatherism, thuggery and gangsterism which made the political terrain too dangerous for the female gender to tread constitutes great hindrance to women's political participation in Nigeria. In addition, the society's belief that politics is for men and only boorish women get involved, constitute a barrier to women's featuring in the mainstream politics. Women who get involved in it are stigmatized by fellow women and most men as a result would not encourage their wives to be involved in politics. This situation is further worsened by the practice by political parties of holding meetings at odd periods, e.g. nocturnal meetings.

Institutional Designs: The institutional designs which this study found to hinder women's political participation in the mainstream politics include the practice of majority electoral system instead of proportional representation, lack of gender electoral quota systems and constitutional provision for equal gender representation in parties' political nominees. All these institutional designs impede women's significant involvement in political activities. Though affirmative action and gender equality have been appreciated in the country, however, there is hitherto no specific guideline and modality of affirmative actions and no conscious efforts made by the government to entrench such constitutional policies for implementation in Nigeria.

The results presented in table 2 shows that the legacies of colonial and military administration in Nigeria have weak impact on the low women's involvement in the mainstream politics in Nigeria. Participants did not also agree that low political participation among women is a result of the apolitical nature of the female gender.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite global campaign for gender equality, women's political representation in Nigeria is still at dismal level failing to achieve the critical mass of 30% women's representation in the country's parliament. The imperative of democratic consolidation in Nigeria requires that women, who constitute half of the national population, find prominence in the mainstream political development of the nation since democracy is only achievable on the altar of equal participation of every citizen of the society, males and females alike. It is therefore conclusive that any corrective measure adopted to address the low participation of women

in Nigerian politics will only be superficial unless the nation's socioeconomic, cultural and political factors that limit women empowerment are decisively addressed. On the basis of findings of this study, the following policy recommendations are suggested for enhancing women's political participation in Nigeria.

The Federal Government of Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1995. CEDAW should be domesticated in Nigeria immediately. This will expunge the conflicting and discriminatory provisions in Nigerian Statutory, Customary and Religious laws that reinforce male supremacy and perpetuate patriarchal system in Nigeria. An Electoral bill explicitly specifying and clarifying guidelines for modalities and implementations of affirmative actions that enhance women's empowerment should be passed into law in the country. For instance, 50% of financial cost of registration as a candidate for political positions and election campaign should be borne by the government. Every national political party should reserve 30% of all elective positions for women. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should ensure that this policy is obeyed and any political party that fails to follow it should be disqualified. Electoral quota system is an effective tool for addressing low women's political representation. There should be constitutional provision for electoral quota system of 50% of the seats in the National Assembly, States' House of Assembly and Local Government Councils in Nigeria reserved for women in Nigeria.

Government should engage the support of the mass media and partner with women's movement, NGOs and civil society for vehement campaign against women subordination, discrimination and stigmatization in the society. Furthermore, education of women is useful to destroying inferiority complex and to give aspiring women courage and confidence to compete with men. Women education should target the adult population both in the cities and rural areas. Governments should therefore establish evening and week-end education programme for adult women who as a result of one limitation or the other could not attend the formal education. National Youth Service Corps members should be engaged in this programme instead of deploying them to various organisations where they are rejected or redundant for a whole year of their services. Lastly the creation of a political environment supportive of and conducive for women's participation is a responsibility of the government. Government must curb the menace of electoral violence and the use of political thugs and gangsters to suppress and witch-hunt political opponents in the country. Election Task Force should be established by the government with membership drawn from The Nigerian Police which should be on ground throughout election periods for immediate investigation of the use of political thugs and gangsters during political campaigns and voting by political parties or aspirants, and conviction of such acts through the adjudication of Election Tribunal should lead to automatic disqualification of such political party or aspirants by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

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