

PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA: LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

Since the beginning of recorded history, men have dominated the political landscape and the governance of Nigeria. This is not to claim that women have never before taken part in governance or politics at any level. Information reveals that there were great women in the past that ruled and dominated kingdoms but currently the statistics rather that grow has nosedived. Accordingly, this paper reiterates that the Sustainable Development Goal 16 recognizes women's political participation and aims to achieve responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels by 2030. In light of this, this paper attempts to discuss the extent of women's political participation in Nigeria and offers solutions to their apathy. The paper concludes that the government should, as a matter of policy, make deliberate efforts to ensure that women are actively involved in politics and government because there cannot be an inclusive society without women participation.

Keywords: Women, Politics, Participation, Challenges, Prospects, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

The underrepresentation of women in the political climate is a gross deficit on the democratic process globally and it calls to question the legitimacy of our present day democratic ideal (WOMEN IN POLITICS, n.d.). Participation of women in politics is recognized by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG). Sustainable development is one that is handed down from generation to generation. The present generation enjoys the benefits without depleting it and ensures that future generations are beneficiaries of the development. SDG 16 provides for the promotion of Just, Peaceful and inclusive societies. The United Nations explains that Goal 16 of the sustainable development goals is dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels (SDG Tracker, 2013). The fundamental objective of this goal is to promote peaceful societies at national levels, in addition to the role of cooperation at the international level (SDG Tracker, 2013).

There are some indicators to the goals and indicator 16.7 encourages responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Very instructive is the first arm of the indicator above. It provides that:

Proportions of positions (by sex, age, person with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distribution. Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive by sex, age, and disability and population group (Indicator 16.7.1).

The goal is to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels by 2030.

To achieve this goal noted by the first indicator: the ratio of proportion of women in the lower chamber of parliament is weighed against the proportion of eligible women in the national population. If the ratio is less than one, then women are under-represented in parliament, relative to the proportion of women in the eligible population. In the same vein, if the ratio is less than one, then women are under-represented in parliament relative to the proportion of women in the eligible population as at 2022 (SDG Tracker, 2013).

The above analysis indicates that a major component or aspect of an inclusive society is active participation in political processes by women (World Federation of United Nations Associations, 2018). Therefore equal participation of women in leadership in political and public life are very necessary to achieving the sustainable development goals by the year 2030 which is barely eight years away. Parity democracy and the promotion of women in decision-making positions are therefore important areas of action for every nation (SDG Tracker, 2013). Parity democracy means the equal representation of women and men in decision making positions. This may be a bit further than quotas as it is founded on the basis that women are not a minority rather, they represent more than half of humanity- a quantitative dimension- and one of its components is a qualitative dimension (SDG Tracker, 2013). This notwithstanding, available data reveals that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision making all around the world and it may not be possible to achieve parity in the very near future (UN Women, 2022).

This paper addresses the issue of increased participation of women in politics. To tackle this topic, the paper is divided into five parts including the introduction. Part II discusses the historical perspective of women's participation in politics albeit briefly, Part III discusses some relevant Legal frameworks in support of women while Part VI presents the challenges to women's participation in politics while Part V presents the solutions to the challenges of under representation and Part VI concludes the paper.

II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

In pre-colonial times, Nigerian women participated actively in the political affairs of their communities. It is observed that in pre-colonial Bornu, women played key roles in the administration of the state, complementing the roles played by their male counterparts (Oloyede, 2016). Women were also prominent in the political history of Zaria (Oloyede, 2016). The modern city of Zaria was founded in the mid-16th century by a woman known as Queen Bakwa Turuku and her daughter Amina later succeeded her as Queen (Oloyede, 2016). Queen Amina was noted as a great and powerful warrior. She was the first women to become the Sarauniya (queen) in male dominated society during her reign from 1575-1610 (Labor, 2021). She expanded the territory of the Hausa people of North Africa to its largest borders in history (Oloyede, 2016).

The Yoruba land had female traditional chiefs assisting the Obas. They were made up of eight titled ladies of the highest rank. Moremi of Ife played very significant role. Others include Emotan of Benin Kingdom and Omu Okwei Ossomari (Oloyede, 2016). Emotan and Moremi were great amazons that showed unprecedented bravery and strength in politics of Benin and Ife kingdoms while Omu Okwei held sway in the commercial stage of Ossomari in the present day Delta State (Oloyede, 2016). There were about 17 (seventeen) women that were actively involved in the administration of their kingdom in the pre-colonial era (Kolawole, 2013).

During the Colonial era, women's participation in politics was affected as they were denied franchise. Women in southern Nigeria became eligible to vote only in the 1950's. This led to the appointment of three women into the House of Chiefs. These women were Chief (Mrs.) Olufunilayo Ransome Kute; Chief (Mrs.) Margret Ekpo and Janet Mokelu (Both women were appointed into the Eastern Nigeria House of Chiefs). The political parties had women's wings which had very little functional relevance (Kolawole, 2013).

It was during the post-colonial period that Nigerian women began to be actively involved in the political climate. This participation saw Mrs. Wuraola Esan from Western Nigeria, emerging as the first female member of the federal parliaments in 1960 (Kolawole, 2013). Again in 1961 Chief (Mrs.) Margret Ekpo contested election into the eastern Nigeria House of Assembly and won in 1961 – 1966 (Kolawole, 2013). Miss Ekpo A. Young and Mrs. Janet Mokelu also contested elections and won. These women were members of the Eastern House of Assembly. Women were still disenfranchised in the northern political space even after independence (Kolawole, 2013). This trend later changed in 1979 with the return of civilian rule. This disenfranchisement made it difficult for active female politicians such as Hajia Gambo Sawaba to vote and be voted for (Kolawole, 2013).

The trend did not improve much during the second Republic (1979-1983). A few women were elected into the House of Representative at the national level and few more were elected into the state Houses of Assembly. It is trite to note that within this period; only two women- Chief (Mrs.) Janet Akinrinmade and Mrs. Adenike Egun Oyagbola were appointed Ministers of Internal Affairs and National Planning respectively. The only female Permanent Secretary was Mrs. Francesca Yetunde Emmanuel who was first appointed into the federal Ministry of Establishment and later to the federal Ministry of Health. Some female commissioners were appointed in 1983. The only woman that was elected to the Senate was

Ms. Franca Afegbua. Very few women won elections into the local government Council during this period.

The Buhari led military junta of December 1983 became the first regime to formally introduce the quota system with respect to the appointment of women in governance (Oloyede, 2016). The direction was that at least one female must be appointed as a member of the Executive Council in every state. Interestingly, all the states complied with this directive and some states even had two or three female members. In the early part of 1990, two women emerged as Deputy Governors. These were Alhaja Latifat Okunu of Lagos State and Mrs. Pamela Sadauki of Kaduna State (Oloyede, 2016). There was no female ministerial appointee and no female was appointed to the Supreme Military Council or the Armed Forces Ruling Council (Oloyede, 2016).

During the Third Republic in the 1990, the local government elections witnessed the emergence of few women as Councillors and only one lady emerged as the Chairman of a local government council in the Western part of Nigeria. No female emerged in any of the states for the gubernatorial seat but two females became Deputy Governors – Alhaja Sinatu Ojikutu of Lagos State and Cecilia Ekpenyong of Cross River State (Oloyede, 2016). The senatorial elections of 1992 saw Mrs. Kofor Bucknor Akerele emerging as the only woman to be elected into the senate (Oloyede, 2016). Only few women were elected into the House of Representative and one of them was Chief (Mrs.) Florence Ita Giwa who represented the Bakassi people of the Cross River Constituency (Kolawole, 2013). Babangida's Transitional Council appointed two women in January 1993 – Mrs. Emily Aikhmhokuede and Mrs. Laraba Dagash. Two females were again appointed in the Interim National Government of Chief Ernest Shonekan. General Sani Abacha's regime also saw the appointment of female ministers (These women include: Chief (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande and Ambassador Judith Attah.).

During General Abdulsalami Abubakar's military regime (1998 – 1999), two women were appointed to the Federal Executive Council and they were Chief (Mrs.) Onikepo Akande and Dr. Laraba Gambo Abdullahi as Minister of Commerce and Minister of Women Affairs respectively. The return of democratic rule in the Fourth Republic which began in May 1999 brought great expectations to the struggle for women's participation in politics. Despite all the efforts made, we are yet to meet the 30% and 35% affirmation as contained in the Beijing Platform for Action and National Gender Policy respectively. If democracy is about fair representation of all interest groups in the society, the low representation of women is therefore

a breach of the principle of democracy and does not show that SDG 16 as discussed earlier is going to be achieved by 2030.

From 1999 – date, Nigeria has produced four male Presidents and Vice-Presidents – President Olusegun Obasanjo 1999-2007, President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua 2007-2010, President Goodluck Jonathan 2010-2011 and 2011-2015, and President Muhammadu Buhari 2015-date. These presidents all had male Vice-Presidents. The Senate has also been dominated by males. In 1999, only 3 women out of 109 members, this represents (2.8%). In 2007, we had 8 women (7.3%). This numbers reduced to 7 in 2011 (6.4%) and 8 (7.3%) in 2015. In 2019, there were 7 women in Senate in the Ninth Assembly and 11 were elected into the House of Representatives (Olorok, 2019). 4 women were elected as Deputy Governors, 40 women were elected in the 36 States Houses of Assembly (Olorok, 2019).

Mahmood Yakubu, the INEC Chairman noted that:

It is common knowledge that the number of women elected to public offices in Nigeria unfortunately dwindled despite efforts made ahead of the general elections to enhance women participation in the electoral process by various stakeholders. The INEC held several programs and activities to sensitize and mobilize more women to participate in the electoral process with the ultimate goal of having them elected to more public offices. These programs held countrywide at the urban, as well as grass root levels. Sadly, out of 2,970 women who contested for different political offices, only 62 were elected. The above data shows 4.17% women representation in the 2019 general elections, as against 5.65% elected in the 2015 general elections to the National Assembly (Olorok, 2019).

The INEC Chairman noted that the scenario needs to be vigorously interrogated to improve women’s participation in the electoral process. He reiterated that the development of any nation required the participation of both men and women but that gender inequality was still very noticeable in the political leadership of Nigeria. He observed that although gender inequality was still very noticeable in the political leadership of Nigeria. He further noted that although gender inequality remained a constraint on growth and poverty reduction, a more equitable gender reduction is an accelerator to poverty reduction (Olorok, 2019). He further observed that at the last elections, “women formed long queues and cast the majority of the votes in all the election, yet, only very few women were elected” (Olorok, 2019).

Nigeria is getting ready for another round of elections for the 2023 mandates. On the 24th April 2022, the First Lady of Nigeria, Aisha Buhari hosted the Presidential aspirants for the 2023 elections to (Iftar) Ramadan Breaking of Fast at the State House, Abuja. She used the opportunity to urge the aspirants to choose women as their running mates ahead of the 2023 general elections (Ige, 2022). In addition to this, the nomination forms for all political positions have been made free for women. With this and other incentives, are we going to see more women participating in the 2023 general elections?

It is interesting to note that the primaries for the 2023 elections have been concluded and names of aspirants for national elections forwarded to INEC. On 21 September 2022, INEC published the names of candidates from 18 political parties vying for the federal positions. The breakdown is as follows: 1, 101 candidates are vying for 109 senatorial seats while 3, 122 candidates for federal constituencies i.e. the House of Representatives seat bringing the number to 4, 223 candidates for 469 legislative positions (Ndujihe et al., 2022). With regard to Gender distribution, 3,875 are males, 35 of them vying for President and Vice President, 1, 008 for Senate, and 2,832 for the House of Representatives. On the other hand, 381 females are in the race- 1 for Presidency, 92 for Senate and 288 for the House of Representatives. There are also 11 persons with disabilities (PWD) in the contest (Tolu-Kolawole et al., 2022).

The above figures represent the list approved by INEC on September 20 2022 as the final list of candidates for the national election pursuant to the provisions of the Electoral Act (2022). In Anambra State, 28 persons were cleared for the Senate and 98 for the House of Representatives. Out of this number there are only 3 women for Senate and none for House of Representatives (Ndujihe et al., 2022). In Abia State, 33 candidates are vying for Senatorial seats and 81 for House of Representatives. Of these numbers 3 females are for Senate and 12 for House of Representatives (Ndujihe et al., 2022). In Delta State, 39 candidates were cleared for Senate and 94 for House of Representatives (Ndujihe et al., 2022). In Bayelsa State, 30 persons were cleared for Senatorial election and only 3 are women while 27 are males (Tolu-Kolawole et al., 2022).

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA

This section analyses the laws that have been put in place locally and internationally which Nigeria has assented to or ratified that can be the basis for women to rise and participate in politics in Nigeria. Earlier, we discussed the relevant sustainable development goals that can be seen as the bedrock for actualizing the participation of women in politics. Hereunder, the discussion will begin with the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (CFRN 1999) as altered or amended which is the *grund norm*.

1. *The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*

Section 15(2) of the Constitution (1999) provides under its political objectives provides that ‘national integration shall be actively encouraged whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, religion, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited’. Participation of women in politics promotes and encourages national integration as already mentioned in this paper and the constitution reiterates the position by emphasizing that in pursuance of this objective no one shall be excluded based on the grounds of sex or similar criteria’s (Aloamaka et al., 2021).

Similarly, section 40 (a) of the Constitution (1999) further provides that: ‘Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons, an in particular he may belong to any political party, trade union or any other association for the protection of his interest’. By this provision, women can join any political party or union of their choice for the protection of their interest and finally, the provision on non-discrimination states that ‘no citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth. They can vie for any elective position in the country and should not be discriminated upon. But this has not always been the case with women in Nigeria. There is a need for government to encourage and where necessary and appropriate, ensure that organisations adopt non-discriminatory policies and practices so as to increase and raise the number of women in such organisations particularly where the government funds such organisations (Aboh & Aloamaka, 2022).

2. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*

This Convention in its preamble, the Convention expressly notes that ‘extensive discrimination against women continues to exist’ and notes that such discrimination ‘violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human dignity’ (CEDAW, 1979) and went on to define discrimination in very broad terms. It posits that discrimination against women shall mean any:

Distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

State Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

Apart from the two provisions highlighted above, the Convention was more particular and direct in its mandate on State Parties with regard to the right of women in political and public life and it provides that:

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right:

- (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies;
- (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all level of government;
- (c) To participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country (CEDAW 1979).

This provision is very apt and useful in the light of the current trends in the political field. Unfortunately, Nigeria has ratified this Convention but yet to domesticate it in line with section

12 of the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Therefore, the Convention does not have a direct application within the territory of Nigeria.

3. *The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)*

The UDHR (1948) guarantees the right of every citizen to participate in the political life and processes of his country and to participate in government. Specifically, the Universal Declaration provides that: 'Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives'. This provision reaffirms the provision of Article 1 of the UDHR (1948) which says that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights...' Women are born free and equal with men and have the right, to run for elective offices and to participate in the government of Nigeria whenever the opportunity presents itself. The UDHR although a declaration has become customary international law as its provisions are contained in constitutions of the nations of the world and have therefore become a binding legal instrument.

4. *Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953)*

This is another piece of legislation that protects the rights of women to be politically involved in the politics and government of their nations and to equalize the status of men and women in enjoyment and exercise of political rights in line with the United Nations Charter (1945) and the UDHR (1948), article 1 of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953) therefore provides that 'Women shall be entitled to vote in all elections on equal terms with men, without any discrimination; article 2 of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953) therefore provides that Women shall be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination; article 3 of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953) therefore provides that women shall be entitled to hold public office and to exercise all public functions, established by national law, on equal terms with men, without any discrimination'.

Here the rules are firmly established and women are to have equal opportunities as men in the political realm. They are to participate in the government of their country. They are to vote and be voted for without any form of discrimination.

5. *African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981)*

This document was put together by the Organisation of African Unity in Banjul on the 19 January 1981 as the regional human rights instrument. This document was ratified by Nigeria and domesticated in line with section 12 of the Constitution of the federal Republic of Nigeria. Sadly, the provisions of this treaty are subject to the constitution by virtue of section 1 and 3 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). This is because the provisions of the treaty runs contrary to the provisions of the Constitution and therefore not applicable in the domestic courts of Nigeria but nevertheless, its provisions are law and binding on Nigeria in the Regional and international Courts as the absence of a provision in the domestic law will not vitiate the provisions of a treaty that a country willingly signed up to.

6. Having regard to that, we present the position of the charter on the rights of citizens to participate in the political affairs of their nations. Article 13(1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981) provides that: “Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with provisions of the law.” In essence, there are plethora of laws encouraging the participation of women in politics and by extension the government and public life of their nations. Why then are women not living up expectation in this regard? The next section of the paper discusses the challenges that have kept women back in actively participating in politics.

IV. CHALLENGES TO WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

It is obvious from the laws examined that the problem is not in the absence of local and international laws encouraging the participation of women in politics and the government. The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) noted that although Nigeria has adopted a national gender policy (NAN, 2022), women’s participation in politics remains low. This observation was made during a workshop in Abuja tagged “Strengthening Participation of Women in Nigeria’s Political Process” (Jannamike, 2021). Some of the challenges militating against the active participation of women in politics include but not limited to:

- a. **Stigmatization:** Women who actively participate in politics are seen as promiscuous and shameless. The political clime in Nigeria is perceived to be for individuals who have no regards for moral virtues and uprightness. They trample on rights of others in

order to achieve their political desires. They are seen as desperate and are ready to compromise standards for indecent gains. This puts the women in very bad light. In addition to this, meetings of political parties are held at night. In this clime, women are not expected to stay out late or to come home very late. When this happens, most marriages end in divorce and a divorced woman is looked upon by the society as irresponsible and because we cherish the institution of marriage. Most women would rather not participate in politics (Jannamike, 2021).

- b. **Most women are tied down by domestic responsibilities and lack of support from their families.** A woman is to be seen and not heard. Managing the home front and ensuring the comfort of her husband, children and other family members becomes her primary responsibility. Sometimes, this primary duty also affects the careers of women in other fields of endeavour. Due to inability to cope with the several expectations, they resign their jobs and become sit at home mothers (World Federation of United Nations Associations, 2018).
- c. **Lack of requisite training and education:** Poor access to or lack of education is tantamount to poor access to gainful employment. This is a major drawback. Women are engaged in unpaid labour, and suffer unequal inheritance rights and discrimination. The resultant effect is that women are not likely to be able to afford to follow through the process of getting leadership positions (Agbalajobi, 2021).
- d. **Patriarchy:** The patriarchy system of society is that society that is ruled and governed by men. The men are in control of everything including the woman. This has presented the women as mere housewives/chattels thereby not allowing the women to participate in politics and be a part of the decision making process/organ of the society (Oloyede, 2016).
- e. **Stigmatization:** Due to the way politics is played in Nigeria, it is believed that those who join politics have no milk of human kindness. They can violate the human rights of others and have a penchant for indecent gains. It is no longer news that women in politics are regarded as loose, promiscuous and shameless.
- f. **Finance:** The high cost of politics prevents women from actively participating and putting themselves up for election. Most often, women do not have money to pay for the mandatory expression of interest and nomination forms. For 2023 elections, a woman who wants to vie for the office of the President in the All Progressive Congress

(APC) for instance would make available the sum of N100, 000,000.00 (One Hundred Million Naira) only but this has been addressed now as the expression of interest forms have been made free for women irrespective of the office of choice.

- g. **Political Violence and Upheavals:** Elections in Nigeria most times have attendant violent reactions. It will be out of place to think that women should get involved in the violence. Even in the legislative chambers, we see violence from men. We need to change the narratives.
- h. **Cultural and Religious Practices:** Our religious practices hinder women from participating in politics. Christianity and the Islamic faith restrict the women. Women are not expected to be seen in public. This is a major setback to women's participation in politics. There's need for re-orientation for all especially the men.
- i. **Lack of Support from family and the general body of women:** Any woman who signifies interest in politics will first and foremost be torn apart by the women. The support from ones family cannot be quantified as it helps to motivate and push the lady to achieving success. When women indicate interest, fellow women do not vote for them. We do not believe in ourselves. Statistics shows that the population of women is about 49%. This may not be the actual figure as we have not conducted a national census in over 10 years. When you go to the tertiary institutions, you would discover that there are more female students even in the primary and secondary schools. If we make use of our numbers and support fellow women, they cannot lose elections to whatever political interest they express, and this will help us achieve the necessary and required balance.
- j. **Lack of Confidence:** Women lack confidence in themselves. Women have succeeded in other fields, why not in politics. We must constantly assure ourselves that we have the capacity. Running homes cannot be an easy affair and that is where we develop our administrative competencies. We have built strong homes and children, why don't we stretch it further to the larger society. We have allowed men to build on our foundations with straw, let that attitude change. The family is the smallest unit of the society, if we have built strong families, we can build a strong nation because the nation in question is made up of our individual families.
- k. **Poor Media Coverage to Female Candidates:** Men are given qualitative media coverage more than their female counterparts. Women or female candidates are often

subjected to gender related electoral violence, threats and hate speech, due to the perception that women want to get what is traditionally for men.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

1. **Advocating for women political participation through gender mainstreaming mechanisms:** This aims at drafting, promoting and monitoring laws and policies to ensure that gender equality issues are taken into account in national policies. This mechanism can be formal like setting up a commission or a committee or informal process, like a caucus or working group.
2. **Advocacy:** This is a very strong tool. Advocacy by women's organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) has a dual benefit. It can influence gender representation in the political process and secondly, it can help challenge and change male-centric attitudes and culture.
3. **There is a need to develop the competency of female hopefuls or aspirants** and this can be achieved in several ways:
 - a. Through political mentoring and training programs which will prepare women for political work and enhance their political skills.
 - b. Local-level positions equip women with the requisite skills necessary for higher levels of public office and careers in national, regional and global politics. Women should be encouraged to participate in local politics as this is particularly effective at raising women's participation in political processes.
 - c. Building women's platforms, networks and pools of potential candidates are a feature of many contemporary development programs.
 - d. Consistent training is very crucial for female candidates. This produces a better result than the stand-alone trainings during a phase of the electoral cycle. Local women leaders or trainees should be engaged to pass their knowledge to others. This increases the relevance and impact of trainings.
 - e. Women should be encouraged to fund-raise and establish fund raising networks in order to reduce the problem of financial constraint.
 - f. Leadership skills provide opportunities to strengthen elected women's influence and leadership. This can be done through orientation programs for newly elected women,

governance skills training, networking opportunities and providing opportunities to foster policy dialogue.

4. Government should support and encourage women's political participation by funding the initiative in political parties. These initiatives include seminars, training events, lobby to get more women elected and provision of networks for female politicians.
5. **Increase access to political institutions:** This can be achieved through gender integration. Election management institutions should be trained to identify and address the barriers to women's voting before elections and promote trust and integrity in the electoral process through:
 - i. Formal and informal caucuses should be established to provide support inside the legislature. Support can be drawn from a wide range of international actors. This will help the women caucuses to stay motivated and continue to work.
 - ii. Political parties must strive to identify potential female candidates, increase public demand for female party candidates and leaders and foster alliances with men to support gender equality.

6. **Adoption of Quota System**

More than half of the countries of the world use some form of electoral quota for their parliament. There are 3 recognized types of quota system in the electoral process:

Candidate quota: this can either be at the selection or election stage. At the selection stage, this system mandates that a certain number or percentage of women is represented in the pool of candidates that are up for discussion. At the election stage, candidate quotas ensure that a certain percentage of all nominated candidates are women. This system can be achieved by including it in the constitution or the electoral Act.

Reserved seats: This requires that a certain number or percentages among those elected are women. Like the candidate quota, reserved seat quota can also be achieved by including it in the constitution or the electoral law of Nigeria.

Voluntary party quota: This occurs where political parties introduce quotas requiring a certain number or percentage of women to be in the pool of candidate. These quotas are voluntary unlike the candidate quota or reserved seat quotas.

Quota system is an efficient tool for increasing the number of women participating in political process. It helps to promote a critical mass of women into politics.

7. There is need to increase political party support for women and reduction of violence against women train people to monitor and report violence establish emergency phones number for women to call in cases of threat. In Bolivia, Law 234 is the landmark law against harassment and political violence against women. The law was passed in 2012. Such a law should be passed in Nigeria. Bolivia has 53.1 percent of women as Parliamentarians and 44.1% as councillors as at 2014 (UN Women, 2018). In Latin America women hold 27.3% of local positions as Council members, an increase of 6.5%. In Brazil, in order to promote women's political participation, they developed the Brazil 50-50 initiative to achieve gender parity (UN Women, 2018). In Mexico, the State approved a federal judicial Protocol to address gender based political violence against women. It was updated in 2017 with electoral courts as its main authority (UN Women, 2018).

The protocol has its shortcoming as it's a political statement but it has created the awareness and Mexico is pushing for a law in this regard. During the 2018 elections in Mexico 48.2% of women were elected to the lower House of Federal Congress and 49.2% to Senate representing the 3rd and 4th highest rates globally (UN Women, 2018).

VI. CONCLUSION

The full and equitable participation of women in public life is very essential to building and sustaining strong and vibrant democracies. When women fail to play active roles in politics, it is very likely that policies made will not be in their favour. Women need to participate in order to bring attention to issues that affect them and be able to change attitudes towards gender. However, it is important to observe that participation is more than just numerical strength/ presence in decision making forum. It is more about effective articulation of issues that matter to women and men and the ability to influences and monitor policies. It is very crucial that women are not just participating in the political process but they are more involved in critical decision making processes as well.

So many issues have been raised in this paper and solutions proffered. One critical issue is the absence of domestication or implementation of international laws that Nigeria has ratified. Nigeria needs to amend the constitution and bring it in line with current and best practices in the political clime. Women are coming out gradually but a lot still need to be done

in order to encourage more women to come out if we must achieve the sustainable development goal that requires nations to ‘leave no one behind’. Our democracy will be more vibrant with more women. Some African nations are already taking the lead in this regard. Countries like Tanzania, Ghana, and Liberia are coming up with legislations to encourage more participation of women in politics and government. Nigeria should do likewise.

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