GENDER AND GOVERNANCE: WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Etwop Thomas Odora†, Delphine Uwimbabazi

Masters of Science in Governance and Regional Integration, Pan African University (African Union Commission) Thematic Area: Governance humanities and social science

ARTICLE INFO

Corresponding Author:
† *Delphine Uwimbabazi*

Masters Student at Pan African University (African Union Commission) Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences
Mail Id: duwimbabazi1990@gmail.com

*Contact details: +250783725755
+23772036335*

ABSTRACT

Nigeria is one of the countries in Africa with low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions and this is a big concern to many Nigerians and other International Actors. However, efforts have been made by the government and non-governmental organizations to increase the level of participation of women in politics. The under-representation of women in political participation gained root due to the patriarchal practice inherent in our society, much of which was obvious from the pre-colonial era to date. However, the Government and International Organizations' have put much effort to address this issue. This paper was looked at Gender and Governance and a depth discussion on women's participation in politics in Nigeria, challenges, and policies being put in place to address the issue of low participation of women in politics and Governance.
Keywords: Gender and Governance, Women Participation, Gender Equality and Politics.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a term widely used in the global world today, and it has been attributed as one of the key factors in development worldwide. The western world just like the third world, where you have Africa is still trying to align their policies to Gender to ensure all-round development in all sectors of governance. But sadly, African countries are still very far behind their western counterparts and among the least of them is Nigeria. This work seeks to make a strong case for gender mainstreaming in the political sector in Nigeria. This work argues that women political participation is low, and this is not because of the absence of laws to promote women involvement in governance (political participation). Nigeria has signed on to major international instruments and it has the constitution and National Gender policy 2009 to ensure gender equality. However, women do not yet constitute a critical mass in decision making in the Nigerian society. There is a huge gap between men and women in the decision-making process in Nigeria and this have had its own consequence on the development of Nigeria. This paper argues that there is a strong relationship between gender equality/ women empowerment and governance and subsequently, development. It further recommends various strategies that should be adopted to ensure effective participation of women in key decision making processes in other to ensure overall development for all in Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The Relationship between Gender, Governance, and Development:

Gender, which is differentiated from sex, refers to the social construction of behaviours in alignment with masculinity or femininity, rather than biological conditions of maleness and femaleness. Gender has been defined as the socially constructed identities, behaviours, and practices tied to being a girl/woman or boy/man. Gender is a relation of inequality and women/girls are the most affected in this unequal relationship. Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy to bring in gender perspective to all aspects of policymaking and activities by building capacity and accountability. With mainstreaming, gender concerns are seen as important to all aspects of development, for all sectors, and areas of activity, and a fundamental part of the planning process [1]. Owing to their perceived potential to promote balance and equitable and sustainable development, gender-sensitive approach to governance and decision making has gained in wider recognition in development discourse over the last two or three decades. It occupies key positions in the development agenda of the United Nations, African Union, and Network for African Development (NEPAD), and the African Peer Review Mechanism. These institutions, instruments, and partnerships consider gender-inclusive decision making as a good strategy for promoting representative

democracy, good governance peace, and sustainable development. The discourse on "engendering" governance process at the international, national and local levels centres primarily on the importance of integrating women into the decision making and governance processes [2].

The increasing discourse and promotion of issues of women has been attributed to some developments around the world in recent decades; the impacts of feminist movements, the roles of women in the struggles for human rights, economic justice, issue of systemic gendered violence (war, rape, domestic violence), and small but significant improvements in the percentages of women engaged in formal politics. The UN Decade for women (1976-1985) marked the convergence of these issues and movements. The Global Women's conferences (Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi, Beijing have nourished international connections among women. United Nations itself in the Declaration of Women's equal rights and the convention to eliminate sex discrimination have all impacted the growing international focus conditions of women and global commitment to gender equality [3]

The World Bank defines governance as the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes among others, the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced. To CIVICUS, participatory governance is about empowering citizens to participate in processes of public decision-making that affect their lives. Governance happens at five interconnected levels – the household, community, local and national government, and global institutions. Most of the definitions agree that the central component of governance is decision-making (Institute on Governance website 2009). However, put simply, governance refers to decision-making by a range of interested people, or "stakeholders", including those in formal positions of power and "ordinary" citizens. These decisions have a huge impact on the ways in which women and men lead their lives, on the rules they are expected to abide by, and on the structures, that determine where and how they work and live [4].

The World Bank (2001) has outlined seven governance principles that are identified to be fundamental to the overarching goals of social justice and equality: accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, inclusiveness, upholding rights, and following the rule of law. The overall effect is to ensure that people prone to marginalization – including women – to participate equally in governance institutions and practices by voting freely in elections, by standing as elected representatives or through their involvement in other forms of government planning and administration. Also upholding and guaranteeing the full protection rights of vulnerable and marginalized people at all levels and government being responsive to the diverse needs of the population is as important as ensuring fair treatment by the state (equity).

In all these and recognizing the need to involve every member of the society in decision making, no society treats its women as well as its men (UNDP, 1997). UN Committee on the Status of Women 1981 reported that women compose of one-half of the world population;

they perform two-thirds of the world's work hours. In spite of the considerable advancement in gender equality, gender discrimination remains pervasive in many dimensions of life worldwide. The Gender gap is widespread in access to and control of resources, economic opportunities, in power, and political voice. Women and girls bear the largest and most direct cost of these inequalities - but the cost cut more broadly ultimately harming countries. The nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across countries and regions but the reality is that no region of the world is women equal to men in legal, social, economic rights. Women are everywhere, poorer in resources. Women are underrepresented in elite positions of decision making power. There is gender division of labour with women concentrated at lowest paid jobs, least protected and least powerful and influential positions [4].

Gender equity, however, is strongly linked to the quality of life for everyone in every country. The fundamental principle is that empowering women and improving their status is essential to realizing the full potential of economic, political and social development. For this reason, gender equality is a core development issue, a development objective in its own right. It strengthens countries abilities to grow, reduce poverty and to govern effectively [3]. According to the World Bank (2001), the level of corruption is lower where the influence of women in public life is greater. These findings lend additional support for having women in the labour force and in politics since women can be an effective force for rule of law and good governance.

Despite the merits of inclusive governance and participation, the reality, however, is that not all stakeholders have the required power or leverage to influence decisions. Large gender disparities in basic human rights in resources and economic opportunity, and in political voice are pervasive around the world, in spite of the recent gains, and these disparities are inextricably linked to poverty and lack of development. Gender inequalities hinder development and that any efforts to achieve much-needed development in any country must address gender inequality. Gender inequality undermines the effectiveness of development policies in fundamental ways yet this is an issue that often lies at the periphery of policy dialogue and decision making both at the national and international arenas. Part of the neglect comes from policymakers' reluctance to deal with topics that they deem inextricably associated with societal norms, religion, or cultural traditions. Part comes from a belief that gender gaps should be addressed by advocacy, not policy. And part comes from ignorance of the nature of gender disparities and the cost of those disparities to peoples' wellbeing and countries prospect for development (World Bank, 2001).

Gender and Political Participation in Nigeria

Nigeria, just like many African countries have huge gender issues and that explains why as a group, we focused our study on Nigeria. The 1999 Constitution of Nigeria clearly stipulates gender equality, but customary and religious laws continue to restrict women's rights. The women's rights of Nigeria are very limited in terms of access for resources (land ownership and credit) and

opportunities (education, training, occupation), especially for the North Islamic women. There is The National Gender Policy that focuses on women empowerment. There is also The Strategic Initiative on Gender holds goals to achieve empowerment for women's political capacity. It aims to have 30% of managerial positions occupied by women by 2015.

Nigeria has also ratified and signed on to many international conventions and instruments that seek to promote gender equality. Nigeria is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1985 Children's Rights Convention 1991. UN Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 5.5. On the continental level, Nigeria is a signatory to the African Union Charter (Agenda 2063) 6:50 Aspiration 6:47 which enjoins governments in Africa to ensure women empowerment in all spheres of life which will eventually lead to women occupying at least 50% of the elected public offices at all levels and half of managerial positions in the public and the private sectors. The sixth African Regional Conference on Women 1999 sees as one objective of government policy to 'ensure that there is an irreversible critical mass of women in decision making positions' (JICA report 2011).

Despite all these, Gender disparity continues to exist in Nigeria at all levels and it is much pertinent when it comes to women participation in politics. There is a huge gender gap between men and women in critical decision-making bodies in the country. Nigeria has the lowest number of parliamentarians in sub- Sahara Africa and ranks 133rd in the world for the female opportunity as only 16 percent of its cabinet members are women. In addition to this, only 9 out of the 109 senate seats and 23 out of the 360 house of representative seats are occupied by women. Women's political participation has also been grossly undermined by the predominance of a powerful class of male political elite, who have historically dominated at the party level, much less winning the elections (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). This is represented below-

Figure 1: Member of Senate by Sex (1999 - 2015)

Figure 2: Member of House of Representatives by sex (1999 - 2015)
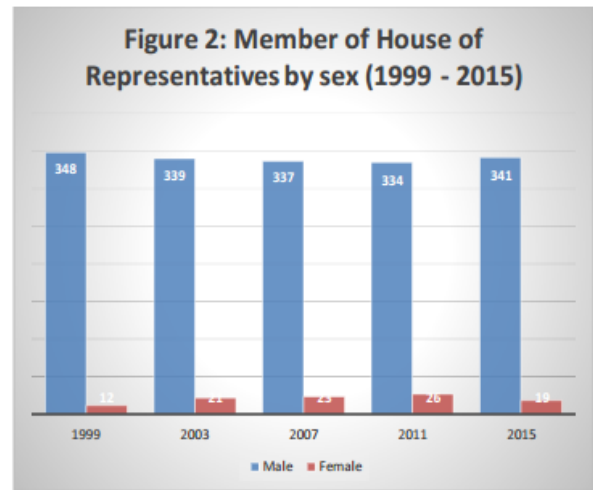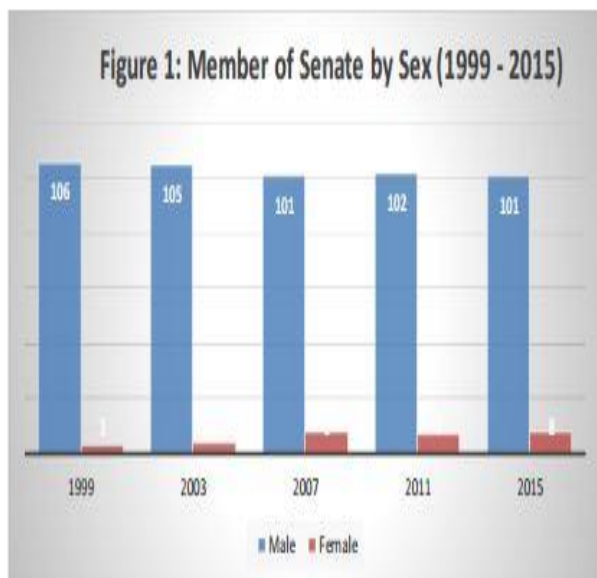
The number of women at the House of Representative currently is to 19 (5.3 percent) out of 360 members. Only 4 percent of local government councilors are women and up to one-third of Nigerian women have been subjected to violence [8].

Table 1: Current Representation of Men and Women in Elective Positions (2015) (Adopted from the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria)

Position	Men	women	Total
President	1	0	1
Vice President	1	0	1
Senate	100	9	109
House of Representatives	337	23	360
Governor	36	0	36
Deputy Governor	32	4	36
	507	36	543

These are reflected in the performance of the country on the various rankings of gender and governance worldwide. Nigeria ranks low in gender indexes. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, 2017, Nigeria ranks number 122 out of 144 selected countries in the world in overall gender equality. In the same report, in the area of political participation, with a score of 0.052, Nigeria ranks. According to the Global Gender Index 2017 when it comes to Political empowerment it ranks 135 out of 144 with a score of 0.052. This is against the global average parity of 0.227. Women in parliament it ranked 139 with a score of 0.059 out of the global average of 0.279 the percentage of women in parliament stands at 5.6% against 94.4 for men. The gender parity for women in Parliament is 0.06. Nigeria ranks 103 in Women in ministerial positions against the global average of 0.209. The percentage of women is 12.0% as against 88.0 for men. The gender parity for this sector is 0 .14.

According to the Global Gender Index, out of 144 selected countries worldwide, Nigeria ranks 122 with a score of 0.64 in gender, the same report places Nigeria at number 26th in Africa, beaten only by Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, and Mali. The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2017 ranks Nigeria at number 35 overall in governance performance in Africa and 31st on gender scope.

The UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) ranks Nigeria under low Human Development Index, ranking 152; Nigeria has ratio 48.1 and ranks 35th in the world. The report acknowledges that Women's political participation progress is slowing down. The effects of these are that most policies are gender-blind or at best gender neutral as men dominate in the decision-making process. Governance, therefore, will be carried out based on the perspectives of men and will ultimately ignore the needs and views of women.

Challenges Affecting Women Participation in Politics in Nigeria

The above statistics speak volumes about the level of women's active involvement or participation in the politics and overall development of Nigeria. Although the statistics above captures only elective positions at the federal level, the story is the same or even worse in executive appointments in government and business and not different at the local level. It appears that women are invited only to complete the numbers in the political arrangements. Although women typically turn up in large numbers at virtually every political election, where they even constitute more than half of the population in many countries, they are visibly absent in key government and other offices. Similarly, women remain concentrated in the so-called "female professions" and, at best, in the middle-level management positions. This, therefore, ensures that they remain excluded from the decision-making processes at higher organizational levels. Thus, women are grossly under-represented wherever key and sensitive decisions are being made, regardless of the institution. The challenges facing women are enormous, however, researchers have shown that the under listed are likely responsible for the huge marginalization of Nigerian women in politics [3].

The Patriarchal system which refers to a society ruled and dominated by men over women is a fundamental challenge in Nigeria. Men remain at the helm of affairs and make decisions virtually exclusively, even when the issues border on women. The few women who venture into "the man's world" feel inhibited to speak, especially when they are in large, male-dominated assemblies. Those who muster up enough courage and strength to speak receive very scant attention and respect.

The economic dependence of women is also an issue. More than men, women suffer an acute lack of access to capital for business and other purposes. With limited access to land or total denial of land-ownership rights, it remains a daunting task for most women to engage in sustainable economic activities of any commercial significance. Women's unequal access to, and control of, resources is, therefore, an important problem and is at the heart of the causes of their low level of political participation. This is particularly so as politics has largely been monetized and made expensive to venture. There are major disparities in employment opportunities and also access to Resources. When it comes to employment in the Federal civil service, 69% are men against 31% for women. The percentage of women in the federal ministries is 32.4%. In accessing loans and other bank facilities, the percentage is 78% for men against women 30%. There is a clear case of inequality in access to resources in Nigeria [5] these

problems are exacerbated by relative illiteracy and low educational levels of women in Nigeria. The National Adult Literacy Survey, 2010 published by National Bureau of Statistics revealed that the adult literacy rate in English in Nigeria is 50.6 percent.

Although there is no clear relationship between education and political participation, there is no doubt that education is essential in all spheres of life. Higher percentages of school dropouts in Nigeria are girls and the main reason is related to challenges associated with menstruation and lack of basic facilities for the girl child. Also, early marriage and forced marriages are hampering the development of the girl child. It presents a most disempowering factor for women's development, as it serves to limit the educational attainment of females, especially in the rural and traditional societies.

Additionally, electoral violence is one other factor that impedes women. This phenomenon is curiously gaining ascendancy in a number of African countries and serves as a strong deterrent to the full participation of women, who are generally considered to be the weaker sex on account of their physiological make-up. Social institutions play its part: social norms, customs, laws, rights, as well as economic institutions like markets shape roles and relations. Also, household relations create inequality as well as the bigger economy. Reforming institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities is therefore important to change the existing relations [5].

Recommended Strategies to address the issues of political participation:

Policies are classified into the following types, Gender Blind Policies, and Gender Aware. We recommend that the government adopt the gender-aware approach. These policies recognize that women are development actors as well as men [6]. There are three types of gender-aware policies; gender neutral, gender-specific, and gender redistributive policies.

Gender-Neutral Policies:

These kinds of policies use knowledge of gender to initiate policies that benefit both sexes effectively to meet their gender needs. It usually works within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities. Gender-Specific policies use the knowledge of gender differences in a given context to respond to the practical gender needs of women or men Gender- Redistributive Policies are policies that are intended to transform the existing distribution of power and resources to create a more balanced relationship between men and women, touching on strategic gender needs. They target both sexes, or women or men separately [7].

The recommendation is the mainstreaming of gender into the country's data collection instruments and methods and also in policy formulation and implementation. Nigeria's data collection is problematic as there have been challenges with data. The population census is highly problematic (insufficient and inaccurate) and it is recommended that the government take population data seriously. Not only is the data important, it must also be gendered to reflect the realities of the day. Yearly publication on women and men in Nigeria will create awareness or gender statistics

development in Nigeria among others. It will also help in the overall planning of the development of the nation.

Poverty exacerbates gender disparities. Promoting economic development also opens an avenue for gender equality in the long run - evidence from around the world. It is, therefore, important for Fostering economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal access to resources and participation. Development ensures equality. Taking active policy measures to redress the persistent gender discrimination in command over political voices and resources, social protection, reducing the cost of roles of women (domestic) strengthen women's participation in political life.

It is recommended that the Gender Redistributive policies be implemented in Nigeria. The reason is that there are various policies are only targeting specific gender needs of the country but the structural inequality persists. The strategic needs ought to be addressed. Mainstreaming gender requires that government makes effort to put issues of gender at the forefront. Gender analysis offers a more comprehensive explanation; it enables us to "see" how women are important to the picture.

The Government must enact policies to stop such cultural practices such as early child marriage, domestic violence whilst adopting affirmative action to promote the education of women and women representation. Women must constitute a critical mass of the decision-making process. The Women in Development Approach to development is recommended to address the specific gender needs whereas the Women and Development must be adopted to tackle both Strategic Gender Needs.

CONCLUSION

There can be no one-size-fits-all formula for promoting gender equality. Effective action requires also that policy makers take account of local realities when signing and implementing policies and programs. Nevertheless, enhance development effectiveness, gender issues must be an integral part of policy analysis, design, and implementation.

REFERENCES

Brody A., [2009] Gender and Governance Overview Report Issue 21 [4].

Eweama, P, [2009] Gender Statistics in Nigeria Issues and Challenges. UN Global Forum on Gender Statistics, Accra Ghana [5].

Fonjack, J.A., & Endeley, J. B., [2013] Women in Anglophone Cameroon: Household gender relations and the participation in local governance [2].

Naila Kaber [1992] Gender and Health an Introduction Vol 23 Issue 1[6].

Horn J., [2013] Gender and Social Movements. Overview Reports) [1].

March, C., Smyth, I., and Mukhopadhy, M., [2005] A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks. Oxfam [7].

Milazzo, A. & Goldstein M., [2017] Governance and Women's Economic and Political Participation: Power Inequalities, Formal Constraints and Norms. Background paper for the 2017 World Development Report on Governance and the Law [3].

Oluyemi, O., (N.A) Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria_paper.pdf Accessed on the 28th/11/2017 [8].

World Bank [2001] Engendering Development through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice. A co publication of the World Bank and Oxford University Press

UNDP Gender Development Index (GDI) http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-development-index-gdi

World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, 2017, https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017

2015 Statistical Report on Women and Men in Nigeria. National Bureau of Statistics, November 2016 edition.

Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, Abuja, Nigeria) Publication 2016.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) 2011: Country Gender Profile Nigeria Final Report Public Policy Department Mitsubishi UFJ Research & Consulting Co., Ltd. Accessed on the 5th/05/2018.

Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) 2017 http://s.mo.ibrahim.foundation/u/2017/11/21165610/2017-IIAG-Report.pdf?_ga=2.7743666.1244721928.1516423597-1430646014.1513849462 Accessed on the 21st/08/2018.